

# Millions say: Change the system, not the climate!



By JEFF MACKLER

The week of unprecedented massive and worldwide climate mobilizations that began on Friday, Sept. 20, represented an historic breakthrough in the consciousness of the world's people. An estimated 7.6 million people in 185 countries from every continent on earth except Antarctica mobilized in unprecedented numbers to condemn the governments and politicians of the world for ignoring the impending climate catastrophe that threatens the future of humanity and, indeed all forms of life on the planet.

The week-long Global Climate Strike included some 6100 separate events, largely organized by young people, who struck their schools and took to the streets supported by the broadest array of climate and social justice organizations, community groups, native peoples' coalitions, trade unions, and left socialist parties ever.

In great part, responding to 16-year-old Swedish student Greta Thunberg's call for a worldwide student strike, a new generation of politically conscious youth rose to fight for their right to a safe and secure future.

The placards and banners held by many thou-

sands of youth marching up San Francisco's Market Street on Sept. 20 were matched in political intensity, clarity and passion by those displayed by youth everywhere

They declared: "The earth is not dying. She's been killed by capitalism." "You know it's time for change when children act like leaders and leaders act like children." "I am striking for every living thing." "I want to be a T-Rex. But I don't want to go out like one! Act Now to Save Our Planet!" "My education means nothing without a future." "I've seen smarter cabinets at IKEA." "I just took a DNA test. Turns out I am 100% terrified for the future." "Capitalism Sucks our Resources!" "You'll die of old age. I'll die of climate change!"

July 2019 was the hottest July ever recorded. Hundreds of thousands of hectares of irreplaceable forest have gone up in smoke in the Amazon, and unprecedented forest fires have ravaged Greenland, Siberia and Alaska. Hurricane Dorian in the Bahamas, typhoon Faxai in Japan, torrential rains in southern Spain—the list is long, showing the dramatic effect of a 1.1°C increase in the earth's average temperature over the past century and a half.

The so-called 2°C limit projected to be a "safe" in-

(Above) Climate protesters march on Sept. 20 in Johannesburg, South Africa.

crease in the earth's temperature is far from being so. Leading climate scientists around the world today agree that it is imperative to stay significantly below the 1.5°C level formally set by the 2015 UN Paris Climate accords, but without any enforceable mechanisms.

Since 2015, greenhouse gas emissions have continued to rise, leading directly to oncoming disaster, with forecasts of up to 7°C or more expected by the end of the century that will render vast coastal areas uninhabitable, threaten fundamental food supplies, expose billions to deadly temperatures, obliterate basic clean water supplies across the globe, accelerate the already massive ocean pollution and related species die offs, and too many associated horrors to contemplate.

The UN Climate Action Summit was held Sept. 23 in New York City. Although few, if any, of the 196 countries that were expected to attend have met their already inadequate commitments made four years ago in Paris, the UN Secretary-General called for "plans to

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# Women's soccer and the fight for equal pay

By ANN MONTAGUE

After winning the 2019 World Cup, the USA Women's Soccer Team immediately returned to what could eventually become their biggest win of all. What they were really after was no secret to anyone. Echoing throughout Stade de Lyon, the stadium where they had become world champions, was the explosive chant: "Equal Pay, Equal Pay!"

Everyone from the sports reporters to the thousands of fans watching the game knew exactly what that meant. It was a reference to the huge pay disparity between male and female soccer players. The top of the agenda for this women's team now became the fight off the field for respect and equal pay.

Months before the team co-captains, Megan Rapinoe and Alex Morgan, led their U.S. team to their 4th World Cup championship, they and 26 teammates filed a lawsuit against the U.S. Soccer Federation (USSF) for all the disparities. When returning from France in celebration, they were treated to a ticker-tape parade through the streets of New York City.

While celebrating the game that they clearly love, they were also preparing for mediation with the USSF.

Union organizers could learn a lot from the street organizing that became a live broadcast of the massive support for their demands of the USSF. The parade was being streamed live and ev-



(Above) Megan Rapinoe.

eryone heard thousands of young girls all along the route shouting "Equal Pay, Equal Pay."

In return, the ceremony that followed showcased the diversity of girls' soccer today as each player came forward with a young soccer player on each arm. As they announced the player's name they also announced where each young player lived, and it was clear they were from every borough in New York City.

The players did not shy away from using the media and their platform even as the head of the USSF sat just two feet away.

"We are standing up for what we be-

lieve in. We are all standing up for women in sports who are not getting opportunities or respect around the world." When the co-captain of the team, Megan Rapinoe, spoke, she explained further, "To have a complete and informed conversation around equal pay you have to talk about racial and gender inequity—not just money, but equal rights."

Fifty years ago, the passage of Title IX prohibited educational institutions that receive any federal funding from discriminating on the basis of sex. It guaranteed students the right to an en-

vironment free from sexual harassment and protected the rights of pregnant students. In addition, it required equal athletic opportunities for girls and boys. That meant girls' soccer teams.

Soccer has taken off as one of the most popular sports for young girls. In the U.S. the number of girls playing high school soccer has increased from 700 to 390,000. As a result of playing soccer from a young age, their skills and abilities have also greatly improved, which means that the crowds who show up to watch them have also increased.

Sixty thousand people packed into the stadium to watch the Women's World Cup this year. Fox Sports also reported viewership of 20 million, including on-line streaming. Telemundo reported 1.6 million viewers on the Spanish-language station. This is 22% higher than viewership of the Men's World Cup.

After inspecting the audited financial statements of the USSF, *The Wall Street Journal* noted: The ability of the women's team to generate gate revenues that equals or exceeds the men's team is an important battleground and central to an ongoing lawsuit filed against the USSF by 28 members of the U.S. women's national soccer team in March."

## Rapinoe and Kaepernick

Megan Rapinoe is one of the most popular players on the World Cup team. That is not only because she kicked the

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## JOIN SOCIALIST ACTION!

Socialist Action is a national organization of activists committed to the emancipation of workers and the oppressed. We strive to revitalize the antiwar, environmental, labor, anti-racist, feminist, student, and other social movements with a mass-action perspective. Recognizing the divisions that exist on the left and within the workers' movement, we seek to form united front type organizations around specific issues where various groups have agreement. In this way we seek to maximize our impact and demonstrate the power and effectiveness of mass action.

In the process we hope to bring activists together from different backgrounds into a revolutionary workers' party that can successfully challenge the wealthy elite—whose profit-driven system is driving down living standards and threatens all life on this planet.

We are active partisans of the working class and believe in the need for independent working-class politics—not alliances with the bosses' parties. That is why we call for workers in the U.S. to break from the Democratic and Republican parties to build a Labor Party based on the trade unions.

We support the struggles of those who are specially oppressed under capitalism—women, LGBT people, national minorities, etc. We support the right of self-determination for oppressed nationalities, including Blacks, Chicanos, and Puerto Ricans. We are internationalists, and hold that workers of one country have more in common with workers of another than with their own nation's capitalist class. We seek to link struggles across national boundaries, and to build an international revolutionary movement that will facilitate the sharing of experiences and political lessons. We maintain fraternal relations with the Fourth International.

Socialist Action believes that the capitalist state and its institutions are instruments of the ruling class, and that therefore they cannot be used as tools of the working class but have to be smashed. That is why we fight for revolution. When we fight for specific reforms, we do so with the understanding that in the final analysis real social change can only come about with the overthrow of capitalism, the establishment of a workers' government, and the fight for socialism. Our ultimate goal is a truly democratic, environmentally sustainable, and egalitarian society organized to satisfy human needs rather than corporate greed. We invite you to join us in the struggle to make the world a better place!

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# A new phase in Mumia's case

Cherri Gregg / KCBS

By JOHN LESLIE

At a meeting in Philadelphia on Sept. 28, organizers discussed the opening of a new phase in the fight to free Mumia Abu-Jamal, the noted journalist and political prisoner who was convicted on false charges of killing a Philadelphia police officer in 1981. Last year, in a series of court appearances, Mumia's lawyers challenged Mumia's conviction and argued for a new appeals process under the *Williams v. Pennsylvania* decision.

Terrance Williams had been convicted and sentenced to death for robbery and murder. Ron Castille, the chief justice of the Pennsylvania Supreme Court, had been the district attorney of Philadelphia when Williams was tried, convicted, and sentenced to death. When Williams appealed, his attorneys asked that Justice Castille recuse himself from the case given his previous role as prosecutor. Castille refused. The U.S. Supreme Court ruled that a prosecutor who later becomes a judge should recuse himself or herself if asked to hear an appeal in a case they had prosecuted.

Mumia's attorneys sought to prove Castille's involvement in his prosecution, since Castille had refused to recuse himself from Mumia's appeal. They also argued on the basis of bias. On Dec. 27, 2018, Philadelphia Common Pleas Court Judge Leon Tucker ruled in favor of Mumia Abu-Jamal, holding that the actions of former Pennsylvania Supreme Court Judge Ronald Castille had demonstrated a "lack of impartiality" and "the appearance of bias."

Attorney Judith Ritter explained to the Sept. 28 meeting that this was based on the discovery of a 1990 letter from DA Castille to Governor Bob Casey urging him to sign death warrants for death row inmates "to send a clear and dramatic message to all police killers that the death penalty in Pennsylvania actually means something."

Initially, the current Philadelphia district attorney, Larry Krasner, had indicated that he planned to appeal Tucker's decision. Krasner reversed course on April 17, withdrawing his appeal. This represents a major victory in the fight to free Mumia Abu-Jamal.

## What was in the boxes?

On Dec. 28, 2018, employees of the district attorney's office announced that while searching for office furniture they had found six previously "unknown" boxes labeled with Mumia's name. Activists immediately questioned the circumstances under which these boxes were "misplaced." In these boxes, Mumia's attorney, Judith Ritter, discovered new information that points to prosecutorial misconduct in Mumia's original trial.

For example, the notes of prosecutor Joe McGill from 1982 indicate the race of potential jurors in Mumia's case, a potential violation of the *Batson* decision, which states that a juror may not be dismissed through a prosecutor's peremptory challenge on the basis of race and that the prosecutor must provide a valid reason for doing so.

With the agreement of Judge Sabo, the DA's office failed to notify the defense that a supposed eyewitness, Robert Chobert, a cab driver, had a suspended driver's license and at the time of the trial was on probation for an arson-for-hire crime in which he threw a Molotov cocktail at a school. Also in the newly-discovered information was the fact that Chobert had written a letter to McGill demanding to know, "Where's my money?" During the 1995 appeal, it was revealed that Chobert believed that the DA's office would help him get his license back.

Another witness, Cynthia White, had pending prosecutions for prostitution and was brought to testify against Mumia from jail in Massachusetts. Prosecutors



(Above) Judith Ritter, lead attorney for Mumia Abu-Jamal, speaks to the press.

offered to help White out with her cases in exchange for her testimony. Defense lawyers were not notified. In a memo from after Mumia's trial, assistant DAs were told to "talk to Joe McGill" before proceeding with charges against White. It's unusual that a homicide prosecutor would take an interest in minor cases.

Another recent development is that Maureen Faulkner, the widow of Officer Faulkner has filed a motion *pro se* alleging that District Attorney Krasner and others in his offices have conflicts of interest in Mumia's case and asking that the case be taken from the jurisdiction of the DA and placed under the aegis of the state attorney general, who has been hiring former ADAs fired by Krasner.

## The frame-up and mass struggle

Mumia Abu-Jamal, an award-winning journalist and former member of the Black Panther Party (BPP), was convicted of the 1981 murder of police officer Daniel Faulkner in a frame-up trial featuring unreliable witnesses and little physical evidence. The district attorney's office used Mumia's former membership in the BPP to argue for the death penalty. At the time of the trial, Judge Albert Sabo, also a member of the FOP, was overheard by a white court stenographer, saying that he was going to "help them [prosecutors] fry that n\*\*\*\*r."

The Philadelphia DA's office is well known for biased prosecutions and suppression of evidence in both death penalty and other cases. The DA's office was exposed for a 1986 training video that taught assistant DAs how to keep Blacks off juries. In Mumia's case, crime scene photos taken by photojournalist Pedro Polokoff showed cops holding guns taken in evidence with their bare hands, and showed the hat of deceased Officer Daniel Faulkner placed on top of Mumia's brother Billy Cook's VW, though it appears on the sidewalk in the official police photos. The ballistics evidence was questionable. The Polokoff photos also don't show the cab allegedly driven by Chobert at the scene.

An international mass movement grew in response to

Mumia's case. The movement's steadfast determination to save Mumia's life helped win a reversal of the death sentence, which was commuted to a life sentence.

## Mumia's health problems in prison

Although Mumia's death sentence was overturned, he was later struck by a series of potentially life-threatening illnesses. It became clear that the Department of Corrections was neglecting symptoms of diabetes. He experienced chronic fatigue, painful itching, and eczema, which worsened when doctors prescribed a topical ointment. In 2015, Mumia was hospitalized for diabetes and in the same year initiated legal action to receive treatment for Hepatitis C. It took a two-year struggle to get life-saving medication for Mumia's Hepatitis C.

More recently, Mumia's supporters have successfully fought to make sure that he received cataract surgery to stave off the threat of blindness. The left eye was successfully corrected on Aug. 29, and the next surgery is to be this month. At every turn, Mumia and his supporters have struggled to make sure that he received proper treatment in the face of death by medical neglect.

The success of the next phase of the legal case depends on our ability to build a mass mobilization of all supporters of human rights and justice around the demand, Free Mumia! It wasn't legal arguments alone that beat back the threat of execution. Working people and the oppressed can't rely on the courts, cops and capitalist politicians to protect us. Now is the time to intensify the fight to free Mumia Abu-Jamal.

On Oct. 4, a march for Mumia and all victims of police violence took place in Philadelphia. Activists assembled at the statue to former mayor Frank Rizzo, notorious for his racist and brutal methods when he was chief of police, and marched to the Locust St. site where Mumia was wounded in 1981 and arrested for allegedly killing Officer Faulkner.

## ... Women's soccer & equal pay

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winning goal in the World Cup final, but because of her outspoken activism. When Rapinoe is not playing for the USA Women's Soccer Team, she plays professionally for the Seattle Reign FC. It was before that team's game in 2016 that Rapinoe became the first female athlete to kneel in solidarity with NFL quarterback Colin Kaepernick.

In response to questions from the press, she explained, "Yes, it was very intentional, being a gay American I know what it means to look at the flag

and not have it protect all of your liberties. It was something small I could do as a nod to Colin Kaepernick and I intend to keep doing it in the future. It is important to have white people stand in support of people of color on this. We don't need to be the leading voice, of course, but standing in support of them is something really powerful."

Rapinoe often pays tribute to Audre Lorde and wears her name on her jersey. She explains why she chose her: "She was a woman, a lesbian, a feminist, a person of color, a civil rights ac-

tivist. She understood so clearly that change does not come from playing by the existing set of rules."

The week following the parade through New York City became a media tour for the co-captains of the team. Megan Rapinoe and Alex Morgan were in demand to appear on all the late-night talk shows as well as network news interviews. The questions were all about pay equity and the status of their lawsuit.

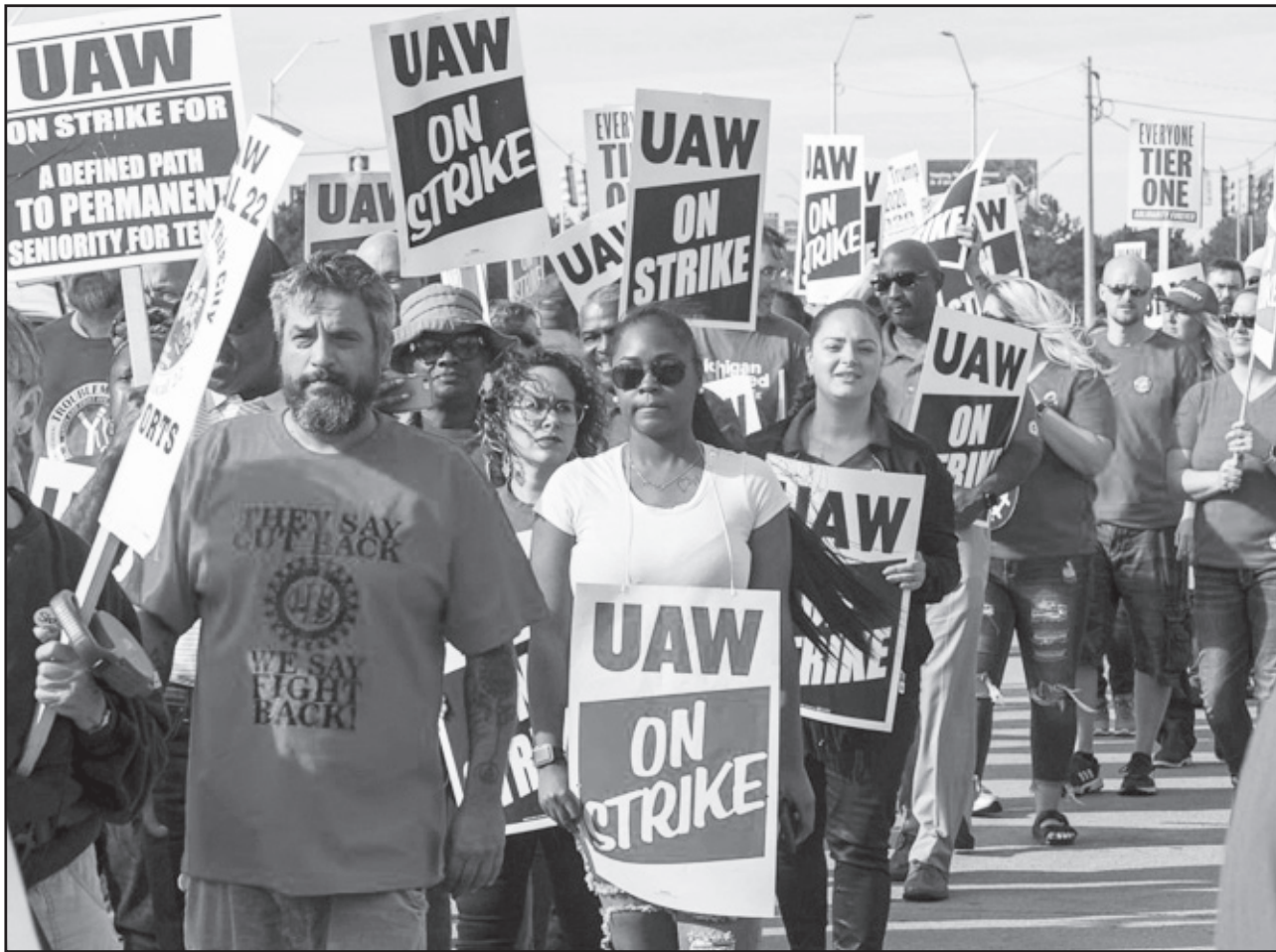
Throughout the week, Rapinoe always found a way to talk generally

about equality and mention that the team had five gay players and a gay coach. This was significant because for years lesbian athletes and their coaches were forced to stay in the closet, although it was always an open secret.

In August mediation broke down. The spokeswoman for the players explained, "It is clear that USSF and its Board of Directors fully intend to continue to compensate women players less than men. They will not succeed. Should the case go to Federal Court, the team is confident in its ability to win."

Rapinoe told the press, "We won't accept anything less than equal pay. This is about women being treated equally in the workplace."





## Solidarity with the GM strike!

By JIM FARRELL

At midnight on Sept. 15, the United Autoworkers Union (UAW) contract with General Motors (GM) expired and almost 50,000 workers downed tools and walked off the job. During the recession, the UAW and its members had agreed to deep concessions to keep GM afloat. Now, GM is prospering and CEO Mary Barra is one of the highest paid executives in the U.S., with a total compensation package of almost \$22 million annually—281 times the median salary of a GM employee.

Meanwhile, workers are subjected to two-tier wages and threats to their pensions and health care. The company cut off workers' health care just a few days into the strike and only recently reinstated it. One GM worker in Langhorne, Pa., told *Socialist Action*, "How can people live like this? It's wrong."

On Oct. 1, the UAW notified members that the latest offer from GM was unacceptable. UAW lead negotiator Terry Dittes said, "This proposal that the company provided to us on day 15 of the strike did not satisfy your contract demands or needs. There were many areas that came up short like health care, wages, temporary employees, skilled trades and job security to name a few." After over two weeks on strike, workers are beginning to receive \$250 in weekly strike pay.

### Solidarity is key

The solidarity between established and more recently hired workers against the two-tier is a sign of a shift in class consciousness. The GM strike has reportedly caused workers at Ford and Fiat-Chrysler to advocate for a walkout in solidarity with GM workers. Teamsters, Steelworkers, Communications Workers, and other unions have demonstrated solidarity with strikers and shown up at the picket lines. The Teamsters union announced that its drivers would not deliver cars to GM dealerships, but nonunion independent truckers and FEDEX drivers have not honored picket lines.

Eleven GM strikers were arrested on Sept. 18 at the Spring Hill, Tenn., plant for blocking a scab truck. GM is also threatening to reopen assembly plants in Arlington, Texas, and Wentzville, Missouri, with scabs. There have been several incidents of strikers being hit by scab vehicles. This writer witnessed a nonunion delivery truck drive through the line at the GM parts warehouse in Langhorne, Pa.—almost running down several strikers.

One of the contentious issues in the strike is the hiring of temporary workers, who, despite being union members, work for half the hourly wage of permanent workers, and with fewer benefits. There is also no clearly laid-out path for temps to become permanent employees. The hiring of temps was one of the concessions given to the three main U.S. automakers during the Great Recession.

One GM worker, John Ryan Bishop, a UAW member and former temp, told the *Detroit Free Press*, "As a temp you're doing the same work as the other people and making half the wages, and you don't get profit

sharing, and you feel like you contributed just as much to this and you don't reap the award..." Temp workers also don't qualify for participation in the 401K retirement program.

Speaking at a strike rally in Langhorne, Pa., on Sept. 28, a Local 2177 officer said, "One thing I want to say is that General Motors totally miscalculated this strike. They totally did not think that the UAW was going to come together like they did. ... All across the country, including our local union, this strike has brought us all closer together."

He went on to discuss the issue of temps: "One of the big issues is the temporary employees. Some of the employees, temporary employees, are doing the same exact job as people making the full rate. It's wrong. They get no benefits, no bonuses."

### The restructuring of auto

For decades, autoworkers have been under attack by the Detroit-based "Big Three," who blamed foreign competition and lack of worker productivity for their troubles. The UAW has been a willing accomplice by supporting labor-management cooperation schemes and workplace restructuring. Automation, increased use of outsourcing, the increased number of temps, and downsizing have changed the auto industry.

A 2008 article in *Labor Notes* pointed out, "... the UAW's deal with the auto makers was this: do whatever you need to do to boost profits, as long as you maintain the wages and benefits of (a steadily shrinking number of) workers at the Big Three. That 'whatever' included lean production, outsourcing to non-union parts plants at home and abroad, the sale of GM's and Ford's parts divisions in 1999 and 2000 (lopping off 52,000 workers) and, today, buyouts. There were 466,000 GM hourly workers in 1978 and in 2006, 112,000" ("End of the road: If the auto industry is dead, what does that mean for workers?").

Another factor in the decline of the UAW is the growth of nonunion plants in the South, as well as the spread of right-to-work laws in the Midwest. Five states in the Midwest contain the majority of Big Three operations—Kentucky, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, and Wisconsin—and since 2011, all but Ohio have become right-to-work states. In 2018, UAW membership declined by 35,000, but the number of autoworkers in these states increased by almost 160,000 since 2011.

Distrust of a class-collaborationist union bureaucracy is most certainly a factor in the failure of organizing drives in the South. Why would you trust a union that clearly has sold out the interests of members? The corruption and lack of backbone of the union bureaucrats is one explanation for the number of UAW members who have quit in right-to-work states.

### A surge in workers' struggles

The increased combativity among workers is manifested in an uptick in strike activity and organizing. The teachers' strikes in various states caused increased excitement and awareness of unions.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, "In 2018, there were 20 major work stoppages involving

485,000 workers. ... The number of major work stoppages beginning in 2018 was the highest since 2007 (21 major work stoppages). The number of workers involved was the highest since 1986. ... Educational services and health care and social assistance industry groups accounted for over 90 percent" of idled workers.

In July, nonunion coal miners in Kentucky began a protest against their former employer, Blackjewel LLC, by blocking a railroad track that carries coal trains, demanding back pay after being laid off. Blackjewel had filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy on July 1, leaving 1700 miners and their families in dire straits. Many of these workers had voted for Trump because of his promise to revitalize the coal industry. These workers' decision to take collective action, and the support given by the surrounding community and the labor movement, shows the potential for the mobilization and self-organization of workers. The blockaders abandoned their protest on Sept. 26, but the coal trains have not moved pending a court decision.

### The need for a class-struggle fightback

The UAW bureaucracy, wracked by accusations of corruption, has repeatedly sold out their members and other industry workers in the past. What is needed is a clear, class-struggle upsurge by rank-and-file autoworkers.

To achieve their demands, the union must decisively strike to win. The UAW should take a page from the past history of the union and lead an all-out strike against the auto bosses.

This includes mass blockades and occupations if necessary. The Blackjewel miners offered an important lesson by obstructing the railways leading out of the mine. An increasingly dissatisfied and combative working class would follow the lead of such militant strike actions.

In recent days, various Democrats running for president have shown up at picket lines to declare their solidarity, but they are doing very little to mobilize their voting base to join the lines.

In 2007, Obama said: "Understand this: If American workers are being denied their right to organize and collectively bargain, when I'm in the White House, I'll put on a comfortable pair of shoes myself. I'll walk on that picket line with you, as president of the United States of America." Despite his promises, however, Obama did very little for union members, and his policies favored the interests of the ruling rich. During his campaign, Obama promised to fight for the Employee Free Choice Act (EFCA), which was quickly forgotten.

The Democrats, who like to portray themselves as "friends of labor" during election cycles, are, in fact, enforcers for the class enemy on Wall Street. Militant unions cannot fight for their members alone. The labor movement's subordination to the Democrats must end. What is needed is a combined struggle to build a Labor Party based on fighting unions. ■

### Defend the Venezuelan Embassy Protectors! U.S. Hands Off Venezuela! Bay Area Tour

Meet Kevin Zeese, Margaret Flowers and David Paul, who face one-year prison sentences and \$100,000 fines based on the spurious charge of "interfering with government operations." These courageous Embassy Protectors occupied the Venezuelan Embassy in Washington, D.C., for 34 days.

**Saturday, Oct. 12, 6:30 pm, Sacramento: Fundraising dinner, Southside Park Cohousing, Common House: 434 T St. (Directly behind 440 T St.).**

**Sunday, Oct. 13, 10:30 am, Oakland, Public Meeting, Niebyl Proctor Marxist Library, 6501 Telegraph Ave.**

**Sunday, Oct. 13, 3-6 pm, Santa Rosa, Peace and Justice Center of Sonoma County, 467 Sebastopol Ave., Santa Rosa.**

**Monday, Oct. 14, 6-9 pm, San Jose, dinner and Public Forum, San Jose Peace and Justice Center, 48 S 7th St.**

**Tuesday, Oct. 15, 4-5:20 PM, San Francisco State University, EP 101 College of Ethnic Studies 1600 Holloway Ave.**

**Tuesday, Oct. 15, 6:00-7:45 PM, City College of San Francisco, Louise & Claude Rosenberg Jr. Library & Learning Resource Ctr., Room 301, 50 Frida Kahlo Way.**

**Wednesday, Oct. 16, 6:30, Berkeley, Potluck, 7:30--9 pm, Meeting, Berkeley Fellowship of Unitarian Universalists, 1924 Cedar St. at Bonita.**

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For information contact tour coordinator: jmackler@imi.net 510-268-9429



By JOHN LESLIE

Protests have rocked Egypt since Sept. 19 as protesters have taken to the streets demanding the downfall of President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi following the revelations of a corruption scandal.

Construction magnate Mohamed Aly posted a series of videos on social media exposing el-Sisi, el-Sisi's wife, and elements of the military for corruption and millions of dollars in misallocated funds. Aly called for protests to drive el-Sisi from power, sparking demonstrations smaller than the massive protests that brought down Hosni Mubarak in 2011 as part of the region-wide Arab Spring upsurge. The protests have also been motivated by rising prices and a reduction in state food subsidies.

In January 2011, Egypt's protest movement grew to tens of thousands—bringing the working class, women, and youth into motion. On Feb. 11, Mubarak resigned, handing power to a military junta. Subsequent elections brought Mohammed Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood to power with significant support from a section of the revolutionary movement that had brought down Mubarak. The Muslim Brotherhood had only played a limited role in the 2011 mobilizations.

Morsi attempted to impose an Islamic constitution on the country despite mass opposition. A military coup, led by Defense Minister el-Sisi, overthrew the Muslim Brotherhood government. El-Sisi was subsequently elected president in May 2014 in a rigged election. His regime brutally repressed unions and popular movements. The state structure that maintains el-Sisi in power is very much the same as the regime led by Mubarak.

El-Sisi's government has been a valuable asset of U.S. imperialism in the region, helping to subvert anti-government protests in Sudan and aiding in the strangulation of Gaza on behalf of the U.S. and Israel. Donald Trump has referred to el-Sisi as his "favorite dictator."

The failure of the Tahrir Square protests to move beyond demands for democracy and the misguided support of the popular movement for the Muslim Brotherhood had the consequence of demobilizing the movement and allowed the old regime to reassert itself behind a new mask.

# Protests erupt in Egypt



(Above) A nighttime protest in Cairo's Tahrir Square against the el-Sisi regime.

In the recent events, state security forces moved quickly to repress demonstrations and blocked streets leading to Tahrir Square, the center of the 2011 protest movement. Well over 2000 protesters have been arrested, as have journalists, lawyers, and political figures.

Human rights attorney Mahienour El-Massry was seized by the police outside of a court building in Cairo as she prepared to represent Mohamed Baker. Baker, a lawyer and director of the Justice Center, was arrested in a court building in Cairo on Sept. 29, along with activist Alaa Abdel Fattah, whom he was representing.

The struggle for democracy and the fall of the regime requires an all-out fight under the leadership of the working class and its allies. This means rejecting illusions in bourgeois parties and figures.

Egypt's potentially powerful working class has yet

to speak and act in its own name. Building fighting unions and a revolutionary workers party will be difficult under conditions of repression, but an independent class struggle is the best way forward. A working-class revolution in Egypt would reignite the struggle for democracy and justice in the whole Middle East and North Africa.

As we go to press, several days of protests have taken place in Iraq, no doubt encouraged by events in Egypt. Iraqi demonstrators—demanding jobs, investments in the crumbling infrastructure, and an end to government corruption—have been met with armed repression, resulting in over 100 deaths to date.

Down with the Egyptian regime! Free all political prisoners! Stop the repression! ■

## Algeria: Free Louisa Hanoune and all political prisoners!

By STEVE XAVIER

A closed-door military tribunal in Algeria sentenced the General Secretary of the Workers Party, Louisa Hanoune, to 15 years in prison after a frame-up trial. Hanoune has been detained since May 9 awaiting trial. She was charged with conspiracy against the authority of the army and of the state. The purpose of the stiff sentence is to strike fear into the movement for democracy in Algeria.

The Workers Party has been affiliated with the international current associated with the legacy of French Trotskyist Pierre Lambert. Hanoune was the party's presidential candidate in 2004, 2009, and 2014, and the first woman to run for president in the country.

The Workers Party gave general support to the former regime of President Abdelaziz Bouteflika on grounds that it was "anti-imperialist." Bouteflika was overthrown last April after protests against corruption, lack of democracy, and unemployment.

In the past, Hanoune was considered close to people in the Bouteflika regime. Her arrest was made in conjunction with the arrests of three men associated with the regime, including two who had been heads of the government's intelligence operations and Bouteflika's brother, Saïd. Hanoune was charged with having a meeting with the three men last March, before Bouteflika was deposed.

While appearing as a witness at the trial of Saïd Bouteflika, Hanoune warned of an "Egyptian situation" taking place in Algeria. She stated, "Once in power, [Egyptian ruler Abdel] el-Sisi ordered the imprisonment of even the naïve people among the activists and political parties who supported him, believing that the army would open a true democracy." This was taken as indicating a parallel to the current military government of Gen. Ahmed Gaïd Salah, and she was arrested.

Overall, during months of protests, hundreds have been arrested, including students and political and other civil society activists. Security forces have also arrested and detained journalists covering the continued anti-government demonstrations. On Sept. 22, police arrested Sofaine Merakchi, a freelance correspondent for the Beirut-based TV channel Al Mayadeen and other foreign news agencies. If convicted of the charges against him, Merakchi could face up to seven years in prison.

In a statement, the Workers Party wrote: "For the PT, through this expeditious political trial, Louisa Hanoune has been condemned for giving an example, in order to



terrorize and try to silence all the voices that oppose those in de facto power.

"The same goes for Lakhdar Bouregâa, Samira Mes-souci, Samir Benlarbi, Foudil Moumala, and tens of political prisoners and prisoners of conscience.

"It is the people's revolution that seeks to end with the system/regime that is targeted, and it is through terror that the latter wants to abort the former, to force through its roadmap by seeking to organize the presidential elections of 12 December 2019 against the opinion of millions of Algerian men and women.

"This is why the Workers' Party, which calls to witness Algerian men and women, calls to all the parties, unions, organizations, personalities ... to show their rejection of the arbitrary treatment that is hitting its General Secretary. Because, through the abject condemnation of Louisa Hanoune, it is the multi-party system that is attacked; it is democracy that is assaulted by the counter-revolution."

Earlier this year, the president of Algeria, Abdelaziz Bouteflika, was confronted by a general strike and mass demonstrations of workers, women, and youth demanding that he step down after 20 years in power. The spark that ignited the movement was Bouteflika's announce-

(Left) Protest in Algiers in July. Sign reads, "Nothing can stop a people on the march for its freedom."

ment of his intent to run for a fifth term in office. The movement quickly grew to take up social and political demands.

Bouteflika resigned on April 2, and an interim government composed of his many of his allies took the reins of power. By pushing Bouteflika from power, the army tried to pose as an ally of the mass movement, but in reality merely changed the public face of the regime as an act of self-preservation.

The mass movement has not stopped and has continued to call for the downfall of the regime and a new, democratic constitution. The regime is calling for elections on Dec. 12, but the popular movement has mobilized to condemn these sham elections.

Despite our political criticisms of Louisa Hanoune and the Workers Party, we recognize that her imprisonment by the military government is an attack upon the entire Algerian workers' movement. Free Louisa Hanoune and all political prisoners! Stop the repression! ■



# ‘A hardline Trotskyist running a 2020 campaign that makes Bernie look like a centrist’



Socialist Action

(Left) Socialist Action presidential candidate Jeff Mackler with VP candidate Heather Bradford at pipeline protest in Minnesota.

By MAXWELL STRACHAN

Below is an interview with Socialist Action presidential candidate Jeff Mackler. The article is reprinted from VICE magazine, Sept. 27, 2019.

Jeff Mackler is to the left of the left of the left. A self-proclaimed Trotskyist, he believes Bernie Sanders and the Democratic Socialists of America—the growing party focused on the “let wing of the possible”—are unnervingly compromised. He thinks “Medicare for All” doesn’t begin to go far enough, that most wealth taxes are far too kind to the rich, and that anything short of complete eradication of the military budget is an imperialist victory. And don’t even get him started on self-proclaimed capitalist reformers like Elizabeth Warren.

“I’m a full-time professional revolutionary,” Mackler told VICE. “I’m not a reformed socialist, like Bernie Sanders.”

Mackler is also running for president as a representative of his political party, Socialist Action, for which he’s served as national secretary for more than three decades. “We are Trotskyists, I-S-T-S, not Trotskyite, which is the word that Stalin used to discredit us and murder us,” he said. Socialist Action’s website suggests readings by the likes of Karl Marx, Fidel Castro, and Vladimir Lenin. It lists “revolution” as a primary aspect of the political program. And it even counts Pulitzer Prize-winner Alice Walker among its small collection of supporters.

Ahead of a Midwest tour this week, Mackler spoke to VICE about the Democratic Party, the 2020 election, and why democratic socialism—despite being in vogue in the Trump era—doesn’t begin to go far enough. The interview has been edited and condensed for clarity.

**VICE: For people who don’t know, how would you sum up your own political positions?**

**Jeff Mackler:** I start with the fundamental premise that all of the problems that increasing numbers of people are aware of in U.S. society—racism, poverty, homophobia, transphobia, sexism, endless wars, environmental destruction, un-payable student debts, people being evicted, gentrification, and a myriad of other issues—are inherent in the capitalist system. And we have to organize working people, win them over, build a mass revolutionary party that is deeply embedded in all of the social struggles, challenge capitalist rule, and abolish it.

In these troubled days, when capitalism is in crisis worldwide, the receptivity to socialist ideas is at an all-time high. And we’re happy about the prospects for the future. All the polls today show that the majority of youth in the country under 30 prefer socialism to capitalism [Editor’s note: true]. That’s because

they’re experiencing in their personal lives the horrors of capitalist society. They’re not sure at this point what socialism means. But in general, most consider it an egalitarian society that fights for the majority, that fights against the 1 percent—actually one-hundredth of 1 percent—who rule the nation.

**How would you compare your version of socialism with other socialist organizations, like DSA, or democratic socialism more generally?**

The difference between Socialist Action and DSA is day and night. DSA has the uninterrupted history of supporting the Democratic Party and supporting every candidate that the Democrats put forward. So, for example, DSA member Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and the rest of her gang in the 2018 midterm elections—regardless of their proclamations—supported every Democrat running in the United States from right-wing Blue Dog racist Democrats in the South to moderate Democrats to supposedly left-wing Democrats.

[Editor’s note: In September, Ocasio-Cortez, who actually challenged and defeated an incumbent Democrat in New York, backed progressive Marie Newman’s bid to unseat Rep. Dan Lipinski, a “pro-life” Democrat in Illinois.]

In our view, the Democratic Party is a 100 percent capitalist party. It’s ruled by the richest people on Earth, as is the Republican Party. It supports the military budget completely. And it supports the simple fact that a handful of people, the 1 percent, owns and controls and dominates every major institution in capitalist society. They want to reform capitalism, which is the position of most social democrats around the world. We want to abolish it.

**If you abolish capitalism, are there any aspects of it that you’d like to keep around? What economic system would you put in place?**

We would fundamentally transform the fundamental nature of the capitalist system, while retaining and expanding the democratic rights that people fought for in the original American Revolution. The second American revolution ended slavery. The third American revolution that we fight for will end capitalist oppression, economic domination, endless wars, trillions for the military budget, inadequate healthcare systems, racism, poverty, unemployment and all the other evils that, as I said, are inherent in the capitalist system.

**I wondered if you watched any of the Democratic debates so far.**

I’ve watched most of them. They’re extremely informative. And they tell us that the fundamental differences, rhetoric aside, between all the candidates are very, very little. Let’s take Elizabeth Warren. She announced among her many plans that she is for a 2 percent [tax of] all incomes in the United States over \$50

million [Editor’s note: Warren’s proposed tax would hit wealth, not income, over that threshold]. And she enumerates all the great things she could do with that revenue.

Well, that’s so absurd in my view. Our platform calls for a 100 percent tax on all incomes over \$200,000.

To even consider yourself a liberal or progressive and say that the people who have \$50 million in wealth are going to be punished with a 2 percent [tax] on everything over that \$50 million is just simply absurd. So we have fundamental differences on every question.

Bernie and Elizabeth and others are advocates of single-payer health care, but in the context of maintaining the privately owned health-care system in the United States, which is one of the most horrendous, profit-making, extorting systems in the world. These hospitals continually lay off workers, install computers to replace workers, proletarianize the medical profession, and extract huge profits. We would nationalize the entire health-care industry, and make it the most extensive in the world, free for everyone with no cost. And pay for it by not only ending the military budget but by taxing the heck out of the ruling class, who we would seek to abolish and take their wealth.

**So you’re saying that Medicare For All doesn’t go far enough?**

Exactly. It’s a good step relative to what we have now, Obamacare, and that had some positive aspects. And in truth, Socialist Action is for every reform even under capitalism that advances the needs, however modestly, of working people, and defends their basic democratic and social rights.

**Do you consider Bernie Sanders a socialist?**

In no way is he a socialist. He is what they call in Europe a democratic socialist. [But France, Germany, Sweden, Denmark, Finland]—there’s nothing socialist about these countries. In every one of them, the vast wealth of the nation is in the hands of a tiny elite, extremely similar to the United States. They are in competition with each other. And in order to maximize their ability to exploit more profits, they take it out of the hands of the working class, which is the case of every nation on Earth.

**Certainly though, “Medicare for All,” “College for All,” “Housing for All,” eliminating student loan and medical debt—they would be transformative for the country?**

Absolutely, we are for college, not only college, but education for all from the cradle to the grave. And we think that that cannot be the case under capitalism. None of these proposals they make have any basis in reality. And I mean that seriously, because in order to implement them, it’s not a matter of words and campaign promises. President Obama made many of those. It’s a matter of fundamentally transforming the economic nature of the system.

You [need to] have a candidate that challenges capitalist rule, which means a whole bunch of things: abolition of the police, massive investment in infrastructure, a fundamental transformation of the entire energy system. That is, a Green New Deal presided over by working people that guarantees jobs for everyone in a transition to a socialist society at top union wages.

No candidate says that, even Bernie. He says he’s for the Green New Deal, but the Green New Deal is based on the continued existence of the polluters, of the monopoly capitalist oil industry. They just want to tax them a bit more and regulate them a bit more. And maybe cut down the trillion-dollar grants that are embedded in the tax bills that they get every year. They want to regulate the polluters. We want to abolish the polluters. We want to nationalize their wealth completely and put it under the control of a working class that literally rules society.

**It’s not hard to see Elizabeth Warren or Bernie Sanders taking issue with you, in particular, saying their ideas have no basis in reality.**

It’s true. My ideas have no basis in reality in the

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# SS Winnipeg, Neruda, and 'A Long Petal of the Sea'

By LAZARO MONTEVERDE

VALPARAISO, Chile—This year marks the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the arrival of the ship *SS Winnipeg* in Valparaiso, Chile. Not many radicals from the U.S. know of the *Winnipeg* and the great poet Pablo Neruda's role in the event, which is a shame. It is one of many instances of heroism and direct action on the part of the left before and during World War II.

Pablo Neruda worked as a Chilean diplomat from 1927 (when he was 23) to 1943. He served in Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Singapore, Argentina, Spain, and France as the Chilean consul. Before, during, and after his diplomatic career, he wrote and published steadily. Neruda published his second book when he had just turned 20. "Twenty Love Poems and a Song of Despair" became a bestseller and established his reputation as a writer. While he continued to publish love poems during his entire career, his poetry became more political as he served in his various diplomatic posts.

In 1936, when the Spanish Civil War broke out, Neruda was stationed in Madrid. He strongly supported the Republic. He raised money for solidarity activities, and spoke and wrote in defense of the Republican cause. Radicalized by the war and the murder of his friend Federico Garcia Lorca, he became a communist and would later become a leader of the Chilean Communist Party. Some of his best collections of political poems come from this period. They include "Spain in Our Hearts" and "Residence on Earth."

"Spain in Our Hearts" is included in some English translations of "Residence on Earth" but was also published in Spanish and English as a separate book. The poem's title has been used by Adam Hochschild in 2016 for his excellent biography of Americans in the Spanish Civil War. Neruda's other great collection of political poems is "Canto General," published in 1950.

In 1939 Franco defeated the Republican forces around Barcelona and soon afterward created a dictatorship that lasted 46 years. Hundreds of thousands of Republican soldiers, supporters, and activists fled to France, where they were placed in concentration camps. Some were released or escaped; some were able to obtain passage to other countries or join the French Foreign Legion. Many, however, were trapped in the camps. These Republicans were later transferred to Nazi work camps or extermination camps.

Realizing the danger that these Spaniards faced, Neruda lobbied his government, raised money, and organized a ship, the *SS Winnipeg*, to take 2200 Spanish refugees to Chile, where they received political asylum. Originally designed to carry up to 97 passengers, Neruda had the ship gutted and retrofitted so that it could hold a maximum number of people. The *Winnipeg* left France on Aug. 4, 1939, arriving in Arica (in the far north of Chile) on Aug. 26. The ship arrived on the night of Sept. 2 in Valparaiso. The next day, the refugees were welcomed by massive crowds of supporters. Some refugees stayed in Valparaiso, a second group traveled to Santiago, and a third group boarded a train to Argentina. To give a sense of Neruda's act, one might recall that Oskar Schindler, made famous by the Spielberg movie "Schindler's List," saved 1200 lives. Neruda saved 2200.

Cognizant of what he was doing, Neruda would later write: *Let the critics erase all my poetry, if they wish, but this poem that today I remember, will never be erased ever* (translation by the author). The Chil-



(Above) Spanish refugees who sailed on the *Winnipeg*, seen after docking in Chile in 1939.

ean government ordered Neruda to only take skilled workers who were not political. Neruda defied his government and took people of all social classes, from lowly peasants and workers to professionals and intellectuals. Many were also, of course, socialists and communists.

The anniversary of the *Winnipeg's* arrival is being celebrated in Chile during August and September with talks, workshops, film festivals, book releases, dance performances, art exhibits, and an official ceremony in the Chilean congress. Perhaps the most interesting event is a reenactment of the arrival of the *Winnipeg* in Valparaiso on the night of Sept. 2 and the day of Sept. 3. Actors will play the role of some of the refugees, but many roles will be played by ordinary Chileans who attend the event.

While the voyage of the *Winnipeg* is virtually unknown in the English-speaking world, this may soon change. Isabel Allende's latest book, "Larga Pétula de Mar" (2019) is about to be published in the U.S. in January 2020 with the title "A Long Petal of the Sea" by Ballantine Books. The book was published in June in Spanish and is being sold throughout North and South America. Allende is the most read living author from the Spanish-speaking world. Her 28 books have sold over 72 million copies and been translated into 42 languages. While mostly known for her novels written in a magical realist style, she also writes historical fiction, children's books, and deeply felt autobiographical works. All of her books are political, some more than others.

have not read the English translation (obviously—it has not been published yet) but have read "Larga Pétula de Mar." It is high quality historical fiction based on extensive research, well written, and engaging as a novel. My experience with her books in Spanish and English is that the translations are very good. I expect that the Ballantine Books translation will live up to that high standard.

"A Long Petal of the Sea" spans 56 years of history, beginning in 1938 in the midst of the Spanish Civil War, moving through the voyage of the *Winnipeg* and

the refugees' adaptation to Chile, moving through the Allende years of third-way socialism and the dictatorship of Pinochet from 1973 to 1990, and ending with the transition to democracy. Many of the minor characters are real, such as Salvador Allende and Pablo Neruda. The main characters, Victor Dalmau and Roser Bruguera, are composites of the real refugees who traveled to Chile on the *Winnipeg*. Sorry, there are no spoilers in this review. I will only say that every event Allende describes is based on historical events.

We live in a world culture awash in the ideology of capitalism. Each and every one of us drowns in this flood of capitalist discourse. Yet within that flood, there are cultural works and authors that present an alternative vision with which we can construct a socialist world. These works and authors are like life preservers we can hang onto amidst the flood. Several genres lend themselves to anti-capitalist discourse, including poetry, historical fiction, detective fiction, and even science fiction. Isabel Allende's historical fiction falls within this tradition. She doesn't just tell a good story in an engaging manner; she educates her readers politically.

The anniversary of the *Winnipeg's* arrival in Chile and the publication of "A Long Petal of the Sea" come at an opportune political moment. The treatment of the Spanish Republican refugees by the French government, which closed its borders and placed the Spanish who succeeded in crossing the frontier in concentration camps, mirrors the U.S. government's treatment of Central American refugees. As in the U.S., French politicians and media demonized the Spanish, calling them criminals, rapists, and freeloaders.

The U.S. media has focused on the Central American refugees at the U.S. border. This refugee crisis is part of a larger crisis tormenting all of the Americas. In South America, the concern is with refugees from Venezuela and Haiti. Chile, for instance, has received

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## ... Campaign

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framework of the capitalist system. Every politician that has ever existed on this Earth [within a capitalist system] starts with the premise that we have to start with the exploitative system that we have. A revolutionary says we have to end the exploitative system we have.

There's two things in my mind that can end life on Earth, or severely limit it. One is an uncontrolled asteroid smashing the planet to bits, which happened in the past and fundamentally changed life on Earth. The other is the capitalist system. It's a worldwide, repressive, exploitative, war-making system. To abolish it requires the organization of the working people, their unions, and the oppressed working together to challenge capitalist rule.

**The sort of irony of your criticism of the Democratic Party is that they themselves have been facing a lot of criticism from others for their so-called**

**shift toward socialism. I wonder what you thought of that?**

Well, I know that Trump and the morons who attack [Sanders] charge Bernie Sanders and others with being socialist. That's just a reversion to McCarthy-era red-baiting to discredit an idea by putting a label on it and associating that label with Stalinism in the Soviet Union, a repressive, bureaucratic state that had nothing to do with socialism.

I think that the Trump types, Fox News types who are experimenting with red-baiting Cold War-type rhetoric are going to pay a price for that because there's an increasing interest in socialism. When our comrades were in the streets in cities across the country last Friday passing out our campaign literature [during the climate strike], signing up people for membership, selling our newspaper, *Socialist Action*, we got an incredibly wonderful, warm response, especially from young people.

**I have to ask you, after all this, do you prefer a Warren or a Sanders to, say, Joe Biden or one of those more centrist candidates?**

Not in any way. This is a carefully orchestrated show.

In the end, 99 percent—including DSA—will end up supporting every Democrat there is, because they're wedded to the impossible notion that the Democrats are better than the Republicans. Obama was elected as a progressive. He deported more people than any president in the history of the United States. Trump's rhetoric aside, Obama was the great deporter. And the same thing with [former President Bill] Clinton. He posed as a liberal, and he twisted the criminal justice system [in a way] that allowed the ruling class to literally enslave millions of people in the prison-industrial complex.

The goal is the exploitation of human beings for profit, whether that means wars, persecution of immigrants, racism, sexism, homophobia, attacks on transgender people. That's the norm of capitalism, and every one of the Democrats is wedded to that system. In 2016, Bernie Sanders rose to the podium of the Democratic Party's national convention and supported Hillary Clinton, and that's what every Democrat will do if they want to keep their job as part of the ruling class's exploitative two-party system. ■



# Philosopher Antonio Gramsci: How revolutionary?



By **MARTY GOODMAN**

*"The old world is dying, and the new world struggles to be born; now is the time of monsters."*

*"I'm a pessimist because of intelligence, but an optimist because of will."*

*"To tell the truth is revolutionary." — Antonio Gramsci, Italian communist leader and philosopher (1891-1937).*

*"We must stop this brain working for 20 years." — Prosecutor at Antonio Gramsci's 1928 trial in fascist Italy.*

Google the name of Antonio Gramsci, the Italian Marxist philosopher, Communist leader, and a prisoner of fascism, and you will find an amazing 16 million results. Gramsci has been used and misused by revolutionaries, reformists, and even bourgeois politicians, including rightists.

Say what they will, Gramsci viewed himself as a working-class revolutionary—a communist—for his entire life.

Interest in Gramsci began with the posthumous publishing of his "Prison Notebooks" in Italy in 1948-51. It then exploded worldwide in the 1960s until today. Buoyed by scholarly studies, his writings are frequently read to demystify social control under capitalism.

Gramsci's concepts of "hegemony," "war of maneuver," and "war of position" were used recently by two long-time U.S. radical writers, Carl Davidson and Bill Fletcher Jr. (Links International, July 2019). For decades they've urged activists to work for change within the Democratic Party. Hegemony in this case would mean securing working-class dominance within a rich man's party, the Democratic Party—a goal that is impossible to achieve. But, that highlights Gramsci's contradictions as a theoretician.

## **Background: Gramsci and Italian Marxism**

Gramsci was born into poverty in 1891 on the Italian island of Sardinia. His college years were spent in the working-class hotbed of Turin in Italy's industrialized north. Gramsci was an admirer of Turin's militant workers' "factory councils." The Fiat autoworkers, 40% women, struck massively in 1920 and occupied Fiat plants—some with arms in hand—but were sold out.

In 1923, the German revolution was likewise defeated due to indecision, ultra-leftism, and Moscow's bureaucratic intervention. Both defeats heavily influenced Gramsci. Mistakenly, Gramsci viewed these failures and others as mere facts, not betrayals.

In October 1922, the "March on Rome" signaled the triumph of Benito Mussolini's Italian fascism. By that time Gramsci had become a leader within the left of the Italian Socialist Party (PSI) and, in 1924, the head of the Italian Communist Party (PCI).

Gramsci was also a PCI representative in parliament. He chose to remain in Italy, bravely defying Mussolini's repression.

Strategically, the PCI's ultra-left leader Amadeo Bordiga and Gramsci refused any united anti-fascist front with the PSI. The PSI had signed a pacification pact with Mussolini and shamelessly told workers, "Do Not Resist!" Nevertheless, the position of the Communist 3<sup>rd</sup> International was in favor of a united front of all working-class forces, a concept Gramsci came

around to in 1923. Mussolini banned all opposition parties in autumn of 1926 and arrested Gramsci in November. Gramsci spent 11 years in a fascist prison.

Gramsci was nearly immobile due to a deformed spine after being dropped when very young and suffered additional torments. In the end, "His teeth fell out, his digestive system collapsed ...[he] vomited blood ... [suffered] chronic insomnia ... and headaches so violent he beat his head against the wall" (Antonio Gramsci, "Selections from the Prison Notebooks, Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith, eds. International Publishers, 1971, p. xcii). Released to a sanatorium, Gramsci died in 1937.

He nevertheless managed to write 33 notebooks on capitalist society, in a dim prison light, under prison censorship and extreme deprivation. Gramsci frequently used coded language to evade censors.

Gramsci's notebooks, the PCI believed—falsely—endorsed their political trajectory toward a parliamentary strategy and loyalty to the capitalist order. Gramsci's writings gave the PCI an intellectual gravitas as it cynically moved rightward.

Postwar Italy saw the PCI disarming its mass-based, anti-fascist partisans and entering a capitalist government. The rightward drift continued in the 1970s and '80s as the party embraced an unapologetically reformist trend known as "Euro-Communism," an ideological embellishment for parties educated in Stalinist class-collaboration. In the 1970s, the PCI supported the Christian Democratic government's austerity measures in the wake of the 1974 recession. Moreover, the PCI opposed abortion rights. Once the largest Communist Party in the Western world, the PCI dissolved in 1991 and its leadership formed the Democratic Party.

## **Gramsci's ideas and their meaning**

"Hegemony": The term was used in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries by Marxists Karl Kautsky and Vladimir Lenin and in communiqués of the Communist Third International. Gramsci made "hegemony" a more central concept than his predecessors.

Gramsci said hegemony manifests itself socially in two ways, as "domination" and as "intellectual" and "moral leadership" ("Selections," p. 57). Simply put, hegemony functions in society as both consent and coercion, within civil society (the media, the church, schools, etc.) and the state (police, army, courts).

"War of maneuver" and "war of position": Gramsci viewed society in the East as more unstructured, less complex and rigid, enabling the Bolsheviks to "easily" topple capitalism in Russia in 1917. In the East, the "state is everything," Gramsci wrote. He called the class struggle there a "war of maneuver."

In the West, society as more multi-layered, complex and surrounded by fortifications, "trenches," an "outer ditch" of civil society that surrounded and protected the capitalist class from frontal assault. The class battles in the West were usually incremental and more a battle of "persuasion" and "consent," mediated within "civil society." In the West, said Gramsci, "[The] actions of the masses [are] slower and more cautious" (#4 p. 40). Thus a "war of position" was an aspect of Gramsci that tended to be "defensive," in contrast to Trotsky's aggressive prognosis.

In any case, Gramsci argued that a revolutionary hegemony must be achieved before a revolution, itself problematic.

Gramsci's reformist (non-revolutionary) interpreters mistake the extension of working-class hegemony to deny the need for revolution entirely. Such misinterpretations envision a traditionally incremental, reformist path to socialism. But, Gramsci never denied the need for revolution in the East or West.

Gramsci's conception of the social dynamics between coercion and persuasion changed many times. Early on, Gramsci gave first importance to civil society over the state. Much later he wrote, "Civil society and state are one and the same," sensing society as essentially a monolith of repression and persuasion.

Gramsci's vision of change included a central role for the "subaltern" or popular classes, meaning the voices of the working classes, including the peasantry concentrated in Italy's impoverished South.

In the culture of the oppressed were ideas Gramsci labeled "common sense," which congealed over time into concepts at a fundamental level. Those ideas were circulated by "organic intellectuals," whom Gramsci said, were the "repository of revolutionary values" and "a permanent persuader" throughout the working class. Gramsci uniquely extended his concept of "the new intellectual" to the vast number of those performing industrial work. Gramsci even claimed that all men (and women — MG) are "philosophers" (Peter D. Thomas, "The Gramscian Moment," Haymarket Books 2010, p. 411).

Gramsci also philosophically battled a vulgarized theoretical model of Marx's famous "dialectical materialism" ["dialectics" refers to interaction and change — MG] emanating from a growing Soviet bureaucracy. Intellectual pursuit, including science, was measured by loyalty to the increasingly authoritarian Stalin regime and his cult of mediocrity. Unfortunately, Gramsci left unexamined bureaucratic hegemony in the worker's movement, Trotsky's forte.

Gramsci did criticize, for instance, Communist leader Nikolai Bukharin's book "The Popular Manual." Counterposed to Bukharin (later executed by Stalin) was what Gramsci called "Historical Materialism," a more "objective" historical method that was grounded in practical activity (praxis), rather than a distorted, turgid "dialectics" that excused every twist and turn of Stalin's policies.

Concerning Stalin and Soviet leader Trotsky, just before his imprisonment, Gramsci addressed a letter to Stalin to be delivered by the PCI's Stalinist leader Togliatti. The letter objected to the persecution of Trotsky, but was never delivered.

Imprisoned, Gramsci was largely unaware of the battle against Stalin's class-collaboration and repression. Nevertheless, Gramsci did attack Trotsky for ultra-leftism, but without possession of Trotsky's documents.

## **The Gramsci discussion**

Marxist historian Perry Anderson accurately described the shortcomings of the book, "The Gramscian Moment," this way: "There is scarcely one concrete reference to what is known of his politics, let alone to the politics of his reception, in Italy or elsewhere." More: "It's not our task to pass judgement" on the treacherous PCI leadership (Perry Anderson, "The Antinomies of Antonio Gramsci, Verso 1976, p. 13, p. 105).

Another disappointing disconnect was a Gramsci panel at the 2017 Left Forum in New York. Speakers addressed concepts like "hegemony," but not the hegemonic grip of the Democratic Party and the urgency with which workers must break with both parties of capital (see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ut034uc8UxM>).

In all of the works about Gramsci that I cite—with the useful exception of "Trotsky and Gramsci"—embarrassingly little is said about the fundamental cleavage between Stalinist and Trotskyist strategies.

Stalinist parties sought multi-class "popular fronts," in which workers' movements submerged themselves or even joined "democratic" capitalist parties and/or governments, with disastrous results—i.e. Spain, France, Italy, and elsewhere worldwide. Trotsky proposed united fronts of workers' organizations to fight fascism while organizing for revolution, never trusting the capitalist enemy. Different dynamics of "hegemony" would result between an electoral-reformist approach and revolutionary tactics, i.e., general strikes, factory occupations, and/or the seizure of state power.

Lenin, unlike Gramsci, has not been subject to as much misinterpretation. To be honest, the concept of hegemony is so vague that it cannot become an ac-

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# ... Climate

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achieve carbon neutrality by 2050” and “ways to fight fossil fuel subsidies” as well as “carbon taxation and stopping the commissioning of new coal-fired power plants after 2020.” Few believe that any enforceable goals will emerge from this umpteenth summit if capitalism’s profit first and foremost prerogatives and its endless fossil-fuel wars are allowed to continue unchallenged.

“In order not to change the climate, we must change the system,” read a Sept. 19 statement of the Fourth International, a worldwide party of eco-socialist advocates operating in some 70 countries. “Our hope is in what *has* changed. The global mobilizations led by young people have stirred the conscience of the world’s working people and thus opened the door wider than ever for the construction of new and independent mass action, united front type mobilizations that are capable of posing and implementing socialist solutions that can only be contemplated with the abolition of capitalism itself.”

Millions mobilized in the U.S., with entire school systems shut down, as in New York City, where the school board itself was compelled to bend to student and parent pressure to facilitate student participation in the Manhattan mobilization that drew over 250,000 people. Some 800,000 mobilized across Canada, with half a million joining the protests in Montreal.

In cities across South Africa, and indeed, across the African continent, mobilizations of youth and working people challenged the polluting fossil-fuel corporations largely dominated by foreign conglomerates. In Cape Town, more than 1000 grade-school and university students marched to Parliament to demand that President Cyril Ramaphosa order an end to all new coal, gas and oil mining projects, 100% renewable energy by 2030, and mandatory climate change education as part of school curricula.

In Johannesburg, young people shouted, “Act now or there will be hell and high water.” Other placards read: “F\*\*k carbon capitalism” and “Corrupt greed = climate crisis,” as well as “Eco-socialism now” and “Climate justice is social justice.”

Protesters demanded the government declare a “climate emergency and ensure a just transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy that protects workers and communities.” South Africa is the continent’s largest producer of greenhouse gases, ranking 14th in the world, thanks to its heavy dependence on coal power. The country “produces more carbon dioxide than Britain, despite having 10 million fewer people and an economy one-eighth the size,” according to *The Economist* magazine.

## Strikes take place across Africa

Strikes were planned for at least seven Nigerian cities, such as Lagos, which is clogged by mountains of toxic waste, including thousands of tons of e-waste from the EU, particularly the UK and Germany. Protests were organized in Port Harcourt, capital of the country’s oil-producing region, whose residents and their possessions have been covered in soot for the past few years, believed to be the result of destroying illegal oil refineries.

Similar actions were organized in Ghana, which losing its rainforests faster than any other country, with a 60% increase in primary forest loss from 2017 to 2018. In Senegal, the Friday marches in Rufisque and Thies were followed by a march in the capital, Dakar, on Sept. 27. Air pollution in Dakar is causing more and more respiratory problems, in large part because of dirty sulphur-laden diesel fuel.

As we go to press, reports are pouring in with news of similar mass mobilizations in Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda. Kenyan protesters carried placards stating: “The seas are rising and so must we” and “Wind energy blows me away,” as well as “Be part of the solution, not pollution” and “There is no planet B.” Kenya is expected to see more deadly droughts and floods due to climate change.

Patrick Bond of the South African-based Economic



(Above) Young protesters in Sydney, Australia, Sept. 20.

Freedom Fighters organization summarized a political and social perspective that is applicable to the emerging climate struggles worldwide. Said Bond: “Over 70% of industrial greenhouse gas emissions in the past three decades have been produced by 100 companies. But big business ignores appeals or legislation and the established parties and politicians are on their payroll. We can only control what we own. Therefore, the first step is to take the big energy industries as well as major banks and industries, building, transport and agro-business from the hands of the capitalists into public ownership.

“With those resources, a science free from the profit driven limitations of capitalism is possible. Instead of investing billions in subsidies for fuel corporations, we can develop ecological technologies and materials. We stand for everyone’s right to a good job and a life free of poverty, oppression, devastation and destruction. The big companies and their colossal power must be democratically controlled and managed by the working class and the society as a whole. This will guarantee that no jobs are lost but converted to socially useful ones with no loss of pay.”

Bond continued in his Sept. 27 roundup statement on the African climate mobilizations: “It is ordinary people who suffer most from climate change. And it is those working-class people who have the power to change history. We need to continue the youth climate strike; broaden it by reaching out to working-class people and trade unions and unite in a mighty strike: a shutdown of the capitalist economy. This also shows the potential to take economic power into our hands.”

Bond added, “Human beings are part of the ecosystem—capitalism is not. Fight capitalism to replace it with a society based on needs, not profits—a democratic socialist society! Make a real difference by joining a fighting, internationalist, socialist alternative.”

In the U.S., Socialist Action members mobilized across the country to partake in the planning and building of the World Climate Strike actions. Thousands of young people took our 2020 presidential election campaign literature, met our candidates, Jeff Mackler and Heather Bradford, and signed our contact lists, while scores asked to join our revolutionary party.

## Strengths and weaknesses

While the U.S. Climate Strike mobilized millions in the streets and focused international attention on an issue of world importance, it was not without serious limitations. Leading climate and social justice organization, from 350.org to the Sierra Club and Amnesty International and a host of other NGO-type formations largely limited their proposals to achieve climate justice to the electoral process, and especially on the 2020 presidential elections, where the “Dump Trump!” and vote Democratic Party themes dominate their speeches and literature.

350’s executive director, May Boeve, for example,

stated on Sept. 20 at the New York City mobilization, “We have been fighting alongside the student leaders and organizers of the U.S. Climate Strike to push the climate crisis into the center of the 2020 debate and propel the bold vision of the Green New Deal in Congress and across the country.”

No doubt the “Green New Deal,” pressed forward by the liberal wing of the Democratic Party, already dead on arrival in the U.S. Congress, will nevertheless be pressed forward as a solution posed as attainable in the context of capitalism’s privately owned fossil fuel monopolies.

Amy Goodman’s “Democracy Now!” (democracynow.org) team was on the scene on Sept. 20, with Goodman stating, “So, yes, we are not there yet, but the momentum is building to send the message that nature does not negotiate. We cannot change the science. And all that we have in our world to change now is political will. And to existing political leaders, they need to understand that political will is a renewable resource. So, if they don’t get their act together, they will find themselves out of power, if they’re not willing to listen to the appeals of our children.”

Indeed, even the courageous Greta Thunberg, who demonstrably sailed to New York on a sustainable craft, repeated the same electoral advocacy. Inherent in this simplistic mantra that the only realistic solution to the climate crisis rests in voting for capitalist politicians who pose themselves as friends of the environment, as opposed to the climate deniers, is an implicit acceptance of the increasingly discredited notion that the racist, sexist, exploitative, polluting, war-making capitalist system can be reformed to meet the needs of the world’s people.

The week of actions during the U.S. Climate Strike thus had its own contradictions. On the one hand, it mobilized unprecedented millions around the world to the existential crisis facing all humanity. It demonstrated the power of mass mobilizations to stir the conscience and change the minds of the earth’s people. It demonstrated for the world to see what the repeated poll results have recorded, that is, that the majority of U.S. youth under the age of 30 prefer socialism to capitalism.

But the mobilizations also demonstrated the still existing power of the capitalist establishment, its corporate media, and its “graveyard of social movements”—the Democratic Party—to significantly retain the capacity to direct fighting social movements into the safe channels of capitalist reformism. Breaking with this two-party duopoly via the formation of independent working-class-based united front coalitions that aim to challenge capitalism’s march to extinction remains a central priority, or better a necessity, to save the earth’s people from its would-be destroyers.

Join Socialist Action! ■

## Antonio Gramsci

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tionable, concrete strategy or tactic other than to simply increase one’s influence.

As Perry Anderson noted in “The H-Word” (Verso 2017, p. 96), “The result has been to detach ideas and demands so completely from socio-economic moorings that they can in principle be appropriated by

any agency for any political construct ... everything becomes articulation [political action — MG]. First hegemony, then populism, are presented as a type of politics, among others ... and they become the definition of all politics as such.”

After decades of discussion, one may still wonder, “What are the actual, practical applications of Gramsci’s Marxism?” In my view, unfortunately, not too many. Gramsci wrote under the watch of prison guards, his analysis was mostly of what Marx called the “superstructure,” that is, the culture of capitalism.

Would he have written differently if he were free? All we have are the notebooks.

Admittedly, Gramsci’s works lend themselves to misinterpretation—and are eagerly seized upon by reformists. Lenin also wrote about philosophy, but also brilliantly and in voluminous detail—as did Trotsky—concerning the dynamics of revolution. Why these two revolutionary giants do not receive the same volume of study as do Gramsci’s contributions says much about the sad state of so-called Marxist academia today. ■



# Northern Lights

News and views from SA Canada

website: <http://socialistaction.ca>

## Canadian unions divided on federal election. Socialists say, 'Vote NDP!'

By GARY PORTER

On Oct. 21 Canadians will elect 338 Members of Parliament.

Since its high point—winning 103 seats in 2011, making it the Official Opposition, which occurred when a Conservative government was elected under Stephen Harper—the fortunes of the New Democratic Party have been in decline. In 2015, with polls indicating a possible NDP federal government, the right-wing social democratic leadership moved further to the right. The party ran on a promise of a neoliberal balanced budget. The capitalist Liberal Party under Justin Trudeau promised more funds for health and education, admitting it would increase the deficit. They won. The NDP lost 60 seats, reduced to 43.

NDP leader Thomas Mulcair was forced to resign at a party convention owing to the organizing efforts of the Socialist Caucus and other forces. Jagmeet Singh, former deputy leader of the Ontario NDP and a civil rights lawyer, was elected federal leader. Under Singh's unsteady, right-wing social-democratic direction, party support has sagged to between 10 and 14 per cent of the electorate. Donations shrank. Party staff was cut.

In desperation, Singh shifted to the left, calling for concrete steps to tax the rich, including a tax on the assets of those with a net worth in excess of \$20 million, closure of massive loopholes benefitting the rich, extended Medicare, and a form of Green New Deal with strong roles for labour and indigenous people.

At the same time, the party brass strongly centralized its candidate selection process, systematically excluding socialists, Palestinian rights defenders, and labour militants.

With the two major capitalist parties, the Liberals and Conservatives (similar to the Democrats and Republicans in the U.S.), running neck and neck in the current election campaign, and the NDP lagging far behind, the Liberals are calling for "strategic voting" to defeat the even more right-wing Tories.

Both Liberals and Tories are staunch supporters of imperialist aggression in Venezuela, against Syria, and in support of NATO and the apartheid Zionist regime in Israel. The Tories are more openly racist on immigration; they include candidates who oppose abortion rights and gay marriage equality.

In this election the house of labour is deeply divided on political action. Part of the union leadership supports the Liberal Party call for "strategic voting" to defeat the Tories. Jerry Dias, president of Unifor, Canada's largest private sector union with 305,000 members, urges a vote by workers for the candidate most likely to defeat the Tories. At the recent Unifor convention in Quebec City, both Prime Minister Trudeau, who broke the Canadian Union of Postal Workers' strike with back to work legislation in 2018, and Chrystia Freeland, Minister of External Affairs and a principal ally of the Trump imperialist regime, spoke to the delegates. No one was invited from the union-based party, the NDP.

Dias led Unifor out of the Canadian Labour Congress when the CLC opposed his union raiding practices, thereby splitting the labour movement. Unifor has so far utterly failed to save the jobs of thousands of auto workers doomed when GM decided to close the massive Oshawa auto works. Dias indulges in crass nationalism when he calls on workers to boycott cars built in Mexico, rather than demand nationalization of GM Oshawa. Similarly, Unifor urges workers to cross the class line and vote for Liberals instead of the NDP.

Hassan Yussuf, president of the Canadian Labour Congress, says that voters "must elect a government that is committed to a fair Canada for everyone." In the same statement he rails, appropriately, against Conservative provincial governments and the Conservative Party federally. But he does not criticize the Liberals and he does not endorse the union-based NDP.

Dias and Yussuf are leading an ignominious retreat of the Canadian working class, back into the arms of the capitalist parties and away from hard won independent working-class political action in the form of

a union-based, working-class party, the NDP, the only such big party in North America. Unable and unwilling to lead mass struggles against 40 years of austerity and job losses, disillusioned with the sad performance of the right-wing NDP leadership, but again, not in disagreement with their reformist, pro-capitalist program, these "leaders" are acting as agents of the capitalist class in the labour movement.

But there are powerful unions opposing them and supporting the NDP. The 225,000-member United Steel Workers commissioned radio ads that proclaim, "Why would we choose Justin Trudeau when he doesn't choose us. There's only one party that puts working-class people first—Jagmeet Singh and the NDP!"

On their website the Steel Workers urge members to join and campaign for the NDP. The union is directly affiliated and sends delegates to the NDP conventions, as do many other unions. It states, "Jagmeet Singh and the NDP have a bold vision that puts people first—A New Deal for People. With the help of Steelworkers talking politics and volunteering, we can win a strong voice in Parliament that's On Our Side. — Ken Neumann, USW National Director"

The Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) is the largest union in Canada, representing 650,000 workers, of which 60% are women and about 30% are part time, including many in precarious jobs. Its website states: "CUPE is a founding partner of the NDP. We are proud to be New Democrats. Working closely with our party has given CUPE members from coast to coast to coast a strong voice in Canadian politics. Together, CUPE and the NDP can achieve positive change for our members and all Canadians.

"CUPE encourages all members to join and be active in the NDP. As a member, you can participate in riding associations, help shape NDP policy, and run for office as a New Democrat."

On the issue of climate change, CUPE advances the slogan, "There are No Jobs on a Dead Planet."

The leaders of the United Steelworkers Union and CUPE are not socialists. They are privileged bureaucrats who come nowhere near to maximizing the power and impact of their unions by educating and mobilizing their members in mass action on economic and political issues. But they understand the class line in politics. They know, whatever the issues, problems, or circumstances, you do not support the capitalist parties—not ever.

Dias and Yussuf either do not understand this elementary principle, the principle of independent working class political action, or as pro-capitalist labour bureaucrats they just don't care. ■

See "Vote NDP. Fight for Socialist Policies. Build the Socialist Caucus and Socialist Action" in the *Socialist Action Election Manifesto* at: [www.socialistaction.ca](http://www.socialistaction.ca).

## Should Trudeau resign?



By BARRY WEISLEDER

Should Justin Trudeau resign because he dressed up in blackface and brownface at age 29, when he was a teacher, and earlier, thus mocking people of colour and not apologizing for it—until *Time* magazine exposed him on Sept. 18? Should the adult son of a former Prime Minister, raised in luxury and sophistication, have known better?

Well, consider these questions:

Should Justin have resigned when he amended the law to offer corrupt corporations a Deferred Prosecution Agreement, and leaned on his former Attorney

(Above) Prime Minister Justin Trudeau poses in blackface.

General to let SNC-Lavalin off the hook, and then booted her from his cabinet and his party when she refused?

Should Justin have resigned when he spent billions of dollars to buy a leaky pipeline, and pledged to double-track it, against the wishes of Indigenous people whose unceded lands the line traverses?

Should he resign because his policies, including the carbon tax, don't even dent the monopoly power of huge energy corporations, and make a tragic mockery of the modest goals of the Paris Climate Ac-

cord? Should he resign because he blatantly broke his promise that the 2015 federal election would be last "first-past-the-post" vote, to be replaced by a more democratic system of proportional representation?

Should he resign because social inequality has grown, and precarious employment has surged, with no action by his government to make certain that big corporations, giant banks and the super-rich pay significantly more taxes?

Should he resign because he broke the postal workers' strike in 2018, still hasn't paid federal public service workers what they are owed, has done nothing to raise the federal minimum hourly wage, or to implement a long-promised national child-care system, or to stop the gouging of consumers by Big Pharma and Big Telecom?

Should he resign because he increased the budget for the Canadian military by over 70 per cent, and condones the sale of highly destructive weapons to the authoritarian, misogynist regime in Saudi Arabia, which uses said weapons to perpetrate genocide in Yemen and repression at home?

Should Justin resign because he is waging a one-sided economic war against the democratically elected government of Venezuela, and because Ottawa is a founding member of the Lima Group (which includes repressive, anti-democratic states like Colombia, Guatemala and Honduras) that seek to starve Venezuelans and overthrow their constitutional government?

Or because Justin is a prime ally of the Zionist apartheid state and the Hindu

## ... Winnipeg

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over 400,000 refugees from Venezuela in the last 12 months. Other South American countries have received even more. Haitian refugees are now found throughout South America. There are an estimated 150,000 Haitian refugees in Chile today, whereas in the 2002 Chilean census there were fewer than 100 Haitians in the country. This hemisphere-wide refugee crisis is a consequence generally of the capitalist world system, and specifically of U.S. intervention.

Neruda's example shines across history. The crisis must be met with political organizing and direct action; with courage and compassion. Allende's latest novel is a tale of hope and love, well told. It offers a history lesson of the recent past, and indicates the general way forward. Please read it and pass it along to your friends in the English-speaking world, especially in the belly of the beast. ■

chauvinist regime of Narendra Modi in India?

I'd say it was time for Justin Trudeau to resign a long time ago. But we should be very clear that it is the rotten capitalist system that must go, not just the pretentious Trudeau. ■



# Green Party foreign policy: Connected to NATO & U.S. imperialism?

By DIMITRI LASCARIS

The Green Party of Canada declares that that it “begins with the basic premise that all life on the planet is interconnected.” Yet, the Greens’ newly released electoral platform, consisting of 82 pages, says remarkably little about Canada’s relationship with the rest of humanity. A mere two pages of that platform, which appear at the very end, are devoted to that subject.

What can be gleaned from those few paragraphs? On the subject of international relations, the Green platform’s overarching theme is multilateralism:

Canada’s long-standing commitment to multilateralism builds on Lester B. Pearson’s legacy as a Nobel Peace Prize laureate. A Green government will support such international engagement, recognizing that isolationism and nationalistic jingoism create a dangerous path and must be vigorously resisted. We will strengthen Canada’s role in promoting peace and global cooperation.

There is, however, one problem with those lofty words. As author and activist Yves Engler has explained, Lester Pearson was an “aggressive militarist and imperialist”:

During the 1947 UN negotiations over the British Mandate of Palestine, Pearson disregarded the interests of the indigenous Palestinian population. He also played an important role in the creation of NATO, describing its 1949 formation as the “most important thing I participated in.” In the 1950s he backed CIA coups in Iran and Guatemala as well as the violent suppression of independence struggles in Algeria, Kenya, and elsewhere. As prime minister in the mid-1960s, Pearson brought nuclear-tipped Bomarc missiles to Canada, supported the U.S. invasion of the Dominican Republic and the military coup against Ghana’s president, Kwame Nkrumah.

Far too often, Western political elites and the corporate media have behaved as though America and its Western allies constitute the “international community.” The voices of non-Western peoples, which comprise the vast majority of humanity, simply do not matter in mainstream, capitalist political discourse—unless those voices are aligned with American foreign policy.

Lester Pearson was very much a product and a promoter of this phony “multilateralism.”

This brings us to the subject of the U.S.-dominated military alliance known as NATO. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization has been a massively destabilizing force in the world. It is deeply culpable in the destruction of Libya, where slave markets now thrive.



(Left) Elizabeth May, leader of the Canadian Green Party

NATO committed war crime in Serbia and Kosovo. The U.S. government, which dominated NATO from its start in 1949, promised Mikhail Gorbachev that NATO would never expand “one inch eastward”—soon after which it extended to the very borders of Russia. Worst of all, NATO expansionism has helped precipitate a new nuclear arms race, prompting the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists to move its “doomsday clock” to two minutes to midnight.

In addition, NATO relentlessly pressures its member states to spend an eye-watering 2% of GDP every year on defence. The result? In 2017, NATO members collectively squandered a staggering US\$900 billion on merchants of death. In 2017, NATO’s military expenditures constituted 52% of global military spending—nearly 14 times the military expenditures of Russia.

The case for Canada’s withdrawal from NATO is therefore overwhelming. So, where does the Green Party of Canada stand on Canada’s NATO membership? Remarkably, the Green platform says nothing about NATO. But Elizabeth May was asked about NATO recently. In an interview with CBC journalist Vassy Kapelos, May stated:

“I think in terms of our engagement with NATO, we need to re-examine it. Greens are of the view that our involvement in NATO makes sense as long as we can ensure that NATO is part of a movement toward nuclear disarmament. It’s urgent that Canada change our position around the treaty to abolish nuclear arms and nuclear weapons. We haven’t signed it yet. We should and we should use whatever position we have in NATO for some benefit that makes the world a more secure place.”

While May’s stated commitment to the nuclear weapons ban treaty is laudable, her comments on

NATO ignore the reality that there is no reasonable prospect that NATO will denuclearize any time soon. To the contrary, NATO seems hell-bent on upping the nuclear ante. By May’s own reasoning, therefore, Canada should withdraw from NATO, but May cannot bring herself to commit to that ethical and anti-imperialist course of action.

Although the Green platform calls for a reallocation of an unspecified amount of military expenditures to “peace-keeping” (a term sometimes abused to cover up pro-business coups d’etat), it does not call for a reduction in overall military spending—despite the fact that Justin Trudeau’s Liberal government announced in 2017 its intention to increase Canada’s military spending by 73%.

The Green Party platform also declares that the party is “fully aware of the dangers of militarism.” Yet it is virtually silent on the Canadian government’s militaristic conduct—for example, the deployment of Canadian military personnel to Ukraine following a U.S.-sponsored coup d’etat, or the U.S. government’s economic war on Venezuela, which has caused an estimated 40,000 deaths from 2017 to 2018 and which has been aided and abetted by the Canada-led “Lima Group,” or Ottawa’s support for the corrupt, fraudulent and deeply repressive regimes in Honduras, Guatemala, and Haiti. In fact, the only concrete way in which the Green Party platform opposes Canadian government militarism is its call for the cancellation of contracts for the sale of armoured vehicles to Saudi Arabia.

As I have previously written, Green Party member-approved policy calls for an arms embargo on another brazen violator of human rights, Israel, which has subjected Palestinians to an increasingly cruel occupation for over 70 years. In 2018, following a tour of the West Bank, Elizabeth May went so far as to acknowledge that what Palestinians endure in occupied territory is “much worse” than apartheid was for Black South Africans. Yet the Greens’ electoral platform says nothing about Canada’s arms trade with Israel or Ottawa’s deep complicity in the suffering of Palestinians. Not one word.

At the end of the day, the Green Party’s platform demonstrates more “connectedness” to the interests of American imperialists than to the masses of humanity whom the empire ruthlessly exploits. ■

## Women against neoliberal reforms & repression in Ecuador

On Oct. 8, in a deal with the IMF, Ecuadoran President Lenin Moreno raised prices on gasoline more than 100%. This was added to labor reforms and other measures that will drastically affect the standard of living of the people.

Mass protests broke out throughout the country. Demonstrators stormed the parliament building, forcing the government to leave the capital. Below is an Oct. 9 statement signed by hundreds of women and organizations in Ecuador and other Latin American countries.

We, the women who resist—in the streets, in our territories, from our spaces and communities—we are the feminist sisters from Aby Yala, those who combat with our bodies, and sustain life. We sympathize with the criminalized, detained, repressed, and persecuted in these days of protest against the neoliberal economic measures (paquetazo) of Lenin Moreno’s government.

Since the announcement on Tuesday [Oct. 8], of the structural adjustment measures in Ecuador, the different organizations and popular movements, indigenous and social, called for an indefinite strike against the economic violence exerted by the Government/ International Monetary Fund / Business Partnership, that fundamentally affects the popular sectors, the most impoverished and the middle classes.

Because of the national mobilizations, the Lenin Moreno government yesterday decreed a “State of Exception” and enabled the police and armed forces to assume control and order throughout the national territory, suspending the right to freedom of association and meeting to preserve the security of the State, limiting the right to freedom of transit, and determining that necessary requisitions are executed to maintain the services that guarantee order and internal security.

The result of this State of Exception, on noon Oct. 4, is 267 detainees nationwide who have reported gunfire shots, hits, motorcycle violence and inhuman treatment by the police; two fellow indigenous leaders arrested

(Marlon Santi, coordinator of Pachakutik; Jairo Gualinga, youth leader of CONAIE); a young man who, due to the impact of police repression, is in a severe condition; Luis Timpantuña, a university student who lost his eye due to the impact of a tear gas bomb; a young man injured in Cuenca with a tear pump on the cheekbone; and many people we don’t know yet, since the mass media in the country is hiding this reality from the world. Both the Office of the Ombudsman and the IACHR have pronounced themselves denouncing the excessive and disproportionate use of the state apparatus against the protesters, and have urged the Ecuadorian government to guarantee the right to protest and human rights.

We know that it is the state policy that has violated Ecuadorians, by restricting not only our legitimate right to protest but also our possibilities to realize dignified lives. The signing of an agreement with the IMF and the neoliberal policies imposed by the government constitutes a hard blow against the Ecuadorian people, and against those who are historically in situations of greater inequality, injustice and violence: women, young peo-

ple, peoples and nationalities, the working class.

The more social injustice and alliance of the government with the national and transnational ruling classes, the greater discontent in the streets of organizations, movements, groups and popular sectors. The more politics of fear and repression, the more voices demanding that human rights be respected.

Given the police and armed forces brutality, we hold President Lenin Moreno and his Minister Maria Paula Romo directly responsible for the physical and emotional integrity of the detainees; and we demand their immediate freedom.

We demand that the right to protest of the entire Ecuadorian people be guaranteed and the State of Exception be withdrawn throughout the national territory.

We call on the international community, feminist, women, popular and indigenous organizations to pronounce themselves on the severe situation of Ecuador and to be vigilant for the fulfillment of human rights.

We will continue together, until dignity becomes customary!!! ■

## ... Venezuela

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proxy war carried out by Colombia. Fourth, the U.S. could launch a unilateral military strike or a full-scale invasion against Venezuela.

The recent moves by the U.S. and its allies now make the third and fourth possibilities more likely. The *Washington Post* article is practically an announcement of U.S. intentions.

These economic and diplomatic moves against the Maduro government and the people of Venezu-

ela come at a time when the economic war and covert operations against Venezuela are crushing the people. The UN estimates that there are currently 4 million Venezuelan refugees, mostly living in Latin America and the Caribbean. If current conditions continue, the number could reach 8 million by the end of 2020. This would be the largest refugee crisis in the world, surpassing the almost 7 million who have fled the Syrian war.

All peoples of the Americas must mobilize against this war threat. Say no to the economic war against the Venezuelan people! Say no to U.S. covert operations! Say no to war against Venezuela! ■



## U.S. and allies move to entrap Venezuela



By LAZARO MONTEVERDE

Like a chess master who move by move crushes a weaker opponent, the U.S. is systematically moving against Venezuela.

The first in a series of recent moves came from the UN last July 4 when the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights issued a report on Venezuela. This report, critical of the Maduro government while ignoring the economic, political, and covert war against Venezuela, provided a public-relations rationale for intervention. This report was highly criticized throughout Latin America.

The next move came at the Sept. 11 meeting of the Organization of American States (OAS). At the urging of the U.S., 12 of the 19 nations who are part of the Treaty of Rio, known by its Spanish acronym TIAR [Tratado Internacional de Asistencia Reciproca], voted to invoke the treaty provisions against Venezuela. This treaty provides the legal and international justification for military action against Venezuela, including an invasion.

In addition to the U.S., Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, El Salvador, Paraguay, and Venezuela all voted to invoke the treaty. Why would Venezuela vote to authorize military intervention against itself, you may ask? To understand this seemingly bizarre event, we have to look back at an earlier U.S. move.

In April 2017 Venezuela withdrew from the Organization of American States (OAS) and the Rio Treaty in protest of U.S. attempts to use the OAS to intervene in Venezuela. The OAS has a two-year process before a withdrawal is completed. Finalized in April 2019, the OAS, at the behest of the U.S., replaced the legitimate representatives of the Venezuela government with the envoy of U.S. puppet Juan Guaidó. The U.S. puppet government now represents Venezuela at the OAS.

Trinidad and Tobago, Uruguay, Costa Rica, Panama, and Peru all abstained, effectively a “no” vote. The Bahamas was absent, given the crisis provoked by Hurricane Dorian. Cuba is also a member of TIAR but

does not participate in the OAS. In the broader meeting of the OAS following the vote, Bolivia walked out in protest; Mexico (not a member of TIAR) and Uruguay strongly condemned the vote, arguing that TIAR is not an appropriate way to deal with an internal political crisis, such as Venezuela’s.

The pretext for the vote is a series of military exercises that 150,000 Venezuelan troops carried out until Sept. 28 near the Colombia border. While all nations conduct such exercises, including the U.S., the threat of a Gulf of Tonkin type incident is very real. An article appearing in the *Washington Post* on Sept. 12, the day after the OAS vote, warned that the possibility of armed conflict between Colombia and Venezuela is now a “real, and terrifying, possibility.” The *Post* went on to discuss likely scenarios, including a preemptive strike by Colombia based on allegations (as of this writing unproven) that Venezuela is training Colombian guerrillas for a strike on Colombia, and that the guerrillas are now armed and funded by the Maduro government.

The next moves occurred in New York in the last week of September during the 74th UN General Assembly. On Monday, Sept. 23, the TIAR member countries voted to impose a series of sanctions. Declaring the Venezuelan government of links to drug trafficking, money laundering, human rights abuses, the TIAR countries voted 16 to 3 to impose restrictions on designated Venezuelan officials, and created the framework for the imposition of economic sanctions by the other TIAR countries. The TIAR countries stopped short of calling for military intervention but agreed to meet again in approximately two months (late November or early December) to consider additional measures against Venezuela.

On Sept. 25 the leaders of the OAS countries met with President Trump in New York. The main topic of discussion was the crisis in Venezuela. At the meeting President Trump announced direct aid to the U.S. puppet president Juan Guaidó. The U.S. and 50 other countries (out of approximately 200 countries worldwide) consider Guaidó the legitimate leader of

Venezuela. At the meeting, Chilean President Sebastian Piñera criticized China and Russia for their continued support of Venezuela.

On Sept. 26, Colombian President Ivan Duque delivered to the OAS a report entitled “Threats to Democracy, Security, and Regional Peace,” which claims (without substantial proof) that Venezuela is supporting the FARC and ELN in Colombia, as well as engaging in drug trafficking and other crimes. The Colombian president declared Venezuela a threat to Colombian national security and regional peace.

And then on Sept. 27, the UN Human Rights Council, made up of 47 states elected by the General Assembly and not to be confused with the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights that issued the July 4 report, voted to create a commission to travel to Venezuela to investigate human rights abuses. This move was viewed as a way to increase pressure on Maduro’s government. The Chancellor of Chile (Chile’s Secretary of State) said as much to the Chilean media.

The most recent move came on Sept. 30, when the General Secretariat of the OAS released a finding that linked Maduro and the Venezuelan government to drug trafficking and international terrorism. The pieces are now all in place to justify the continued attacks on Venezuela and escalate to full-scale military intervention should the U.S. and its allies so chose.

What is the endgame of the United States? There are four major possibilities. First, the U.S. could continue its current campaign of economic war and destabilization in the hopes that Maduro will step down or be forcibly removed. The economic war against Venezuela would be intensified with the participation of the other TIAR countries. Second, the U.S. could launch a coup such as it did successfully in Chile in 1973 or tried to do unsuccessfully in Venezuela on April 30 of this year.

Third, either through a made-up incident between Colombia and Venezuela or a pre-emptive attack on Venezuela by Colombia, the U.S. could support a

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