

Capitalist elections and socialist revolution

written by Struggle - La Lucha
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SLL photo: Andre Powell

On Oct. 28, 1980, Marxist thinker and fighter Sam Marcy wrote about a presidential debate between incumbent Democrat Jimmy Carter and Republican Ronald Reagan. An excerpt appears below.

This was at the beginning of what Marcy called “the historic reversal which the ruling class is trying to impose upon the working class by embarking on the road to reversing basic and fundamental concessions which the working class and oppressed have won in decades of struggle.” The war of the rich against the rights of the

workers and oppressed has continued unabated for 40 years, with the presidency of Donald Trump marking its all-time low (so far).

On this [the “historic reversal”], both candidates are in full agreement. Their method differs slightly, but their objective is the same. Individual elements in the ruling class may have their preferences for either Reagan’s or Carter’s method. But what binds the ruling class together in approving both candidates is that Carter and Reagan share a common objective — reversing the previous era of rising expectations among the masses — and are both bent on solving the incurable economic crisis of the ruling class at home by expanding its adventurous role abroad.

A hundred years ago, Frederick Engels, the co-worker of Marx, writing in the still relatively progressive stage of capitalism, wrote that participation of the workers in bourgeois elections is an “index of the maturity of the working class” and of the progress it is making in educating itself for the day when it seizes power. Engels’ impeccably correct statement of his time cannot be wholly regarded as applicable in the circumstances of the imperialist epoch as it has evolved in the U.S. today.

The working class, as an independent class, which was what Engels was writing about, is totally excluded from the bourgeois political process. No avenue whatsoever has been left open for truly independent working-class participation in the U.S. as it has in the European arena and in Engels’ time. On the contrary, the manipulation of the electoral process by the bourgeoisie and the strangulation of virtually all independent forms of initiative and political participation is an index of the deterioration of the ruling-class political system.

Engels’ analysis is, of course, applicable as it concerns the importance of the effort to break through the bourgeois political process by every conceivable method and utilize the bourgeois election, no matter how restrictive or narrow the opportunity may be, so long as it is not an effort to legitimize bourgeois, imperialist

parliamentarism, but to undermine its political system in a revolutionary way by exposing it to the masses and educating them in the process.

Because so many working-class organizations in the post-Lenin era have once again fallen prey to the illusion that they can change the system by parliamentary means, as in Europe as well as here, it is all the more necessary not to abandon the political arena to bourgeois parties or their lackeys.

On the contrary, it is imperative for the working-class vanguard party to unceasingly and energetically pursue the electoral arena as part and parcel of its overall activities in the class struggle, to promote class consciousness among the working class and the oppressed masses, and to prepare for the task of the revolutionary abolition of the rotting system of monopoly capitalism.



El lobo está en la puerta: Movilizar a la clase trabajadora contra unas

elecciones robadas

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30 Sept. — Desde nuestro último artículo, “Elecciones del 2020 e inestabilidad capitalista: ¿Cómo debemos prepararnos?”, el presidente Donald Trump ha declarado varias veces que no dejará el cargo si las elecciones presidenciales “no son justas”. Queriendo decir, si no gana. Puede que sea la primera vez que un presidente de Estados Unidos ha dicho abiertamente que no aceptará el resultado de la votación, lo que indica que no habrá una transferencia pacífica del poder.

Esta no es una amenaza frívola. Trump tiene a su servicio: su propia fuerza policial paramilitar ya probada desplegándose contra manifestantes desde Washington, D.C., hasta Portland, Oregon; el Departamento de Seguridad Nacional; como también el apoyo de los departamentos de policía más virulentos y reaccionarios; y una miríada de grupos violentamente racistas.

En el debate del 29 de septiembre en Cleveland contra su oponente demócrata Joe Biden, después de que el moderador le preguntara si condenaría a los supremacistas blancos, incluyendo a los Proud Boys, un grupo violento y racista de extrema derecha, Trump declaró: “Proud Boys: retrocedan y esperen”, reconociendo así que él era su líder.

Más adelante en el debate, Trump rehusó decir que aceptaría los resultados de las elecciones y se negó a decirle a sus seguidores que se mantuvieran en calma o evitaran la violencia. “Si veo decenas de miles de papeletas, no puedo estar de acuerdo con eso”, dijo, instando a sus seguidores a ir a las urnas y a que “observen con mucho cuidado”.

Si alguien se engaña creyendo que Trump está firmemente contra la guerra, su

perorata de 9 minutos en la Asamblea General de las Naciones Unidas el 22 de septiembre debería aclarar las cosas. Fue una diatriba nacionalista de preparación para la guerra contra China, junto con Irán, Venezuela y Cuba. Aunque esto no es inusual para Trump, fue una desviación del subterfugio utilizado por la mayoría de los políticos capitalistas en el escenario mundial.

“Cuando alguien te muestre quién es, créale a la primera” es un dicho que la escritora y poeta Maya Angelou hizo famoso. Deberíamos creerle a Trump.

Creciente Represión

Los ataques estatales al levantamiento de Black Lives Matter [La vidas negras importan] contra el racismo y el terror policial se han intensificado.

En Louisville, Ky., Attica Scott, la única representante estatal negra, y su hija de 19 años fueron arrestadas el 24 de septiembre acusadas de delitos graves por disturbios durante las protestas después de la decisión del gran jurado que exoneraba a los asesinos de Breonna Taylor. Otras veinticuatro personas fueron arrestadas al mismo tiempo, además de las 127 detenidas el día anterior.

Esto sigue a las acusaciones draconianas contra miembros del Partido por el Socialismo y la Liberación y el Partido de Primera Línea para la Acción Revolucionaria en Aurora, Colorado.

El gobernador de Florida Ron DeSantis, anunció recientemente un proyecto de ley, la “Ley para combatir la violencia, el desorden y el saqueo y proteger la aplicación de la ley”. Ésta intensificaría drásticamente los cargos penales contra los manifestantes. Bloquear el tráfico se convertiría en un delito grave de tercer grado, pero los conductores que intencionalmente arrojen sus vehículos contra la multitud no serían responsables de las lesiones o muertes ocasionadas.

Destruir o derribar monumentos, como las estatuas confederadas, se convertiría en

un delito de segundo grado.

Estos recientes acontecimientos hacen que sea aún más imperativo que la clase trabajadora intervenga activamente en lo que sin duda será una serie de grandes crisis este y el próximo año.

Lecciones de las Elecciones del 2000

Las elecciones del 2000 enfrentaron a los demócratas Al Gore y Joe Lieberman contra los republicanos George W. Bush y Dick Cheney. Éstas fueron robadas mediante la total supresión del voto de negros y de la clase trabajadora en Florida.

Después de varios polémicos meses de lucha, a veces incluso en la calle, el caso fue resuelto por la Corte Suprema de los Estados Unidos anulando una decisión de la Corte Suprema de Florida que ordenaba un recuento. Bush fue declarado ganador. Ni siquiera fue el antidemocrático Colegio Electoral, sino que sólo nueve magistrados de la Corte Suprema eligieron al presidente.

En ese entonces, James Baker era el principal asesor legal de la campaña de Bush y supervisaba la operación de recuento de Florida. Baker fue responsable de la estrategia de llevar el caso a la Corte Suprema de Estados Unidos después de perder en un esfuerzo profundamente corrupto a nivel estatal.

Baker más tarde se convirtió en secretario de estado de Bush. John G. Roberts Jr., uno de los abogados del equipo de Baker, fue recompensado por Bush con un nombramiento para la Corte Suprema. Roberts es ahora el presidente del Tribunal Supremo.

Como escribió Gary Wilson de Struggle-La Lucha en “Los codiciosos partidarios petroleros de Donald Trump quieren más”:

“El ex secretario de Estado James Baker consideró votar por Joe Biden en

noviembre, pero en cambio seguirá respaldando a Donald Trump, revela una nueva biografía sobre el proceso que describe una razón clave para el continuo apoyo republicano al presidente estadounidense plagado de escándalos', The Guardian informa.

"Aunque la 'miríada de escándalos éticos que rodean a Trump eran desconcertantes', dijo Baker a los autores, 'valió la pena por haber conseguido jueces conservadores, recortes de impuestos y desregulación'.

"Sí, Trump les está dando exactamente lo que quieren".

El Papel del Partido Demócrata

En el 2000, el Partido Demócrata luchó contra el robo electoral con una mano atada a la espalda. Retiró a Jesse Jackson de organizar manifestaciones. El senador demócrata Joe Lieberman, quien luego se convirtió en presidente del Comité Senatorial de Seguridad Nacional, rompió filas y pidió que se concediera la victoria a Bush.

Esto debería servir como una lección para no contar con el Partido Demócrata para proteger los derechos del pueblo. En el análisis final, no se podía confiar en que el Partido Demócrata defendiera a los votantes afroamericanos. Al final, su lealtad fue solo para el Gran Capital.

Los lectores deben tomar nota de que después de esas elecciones y los ataques del 11 de septiembre, EUA inició la interminable "Guerra contra el terrorismo" y la segunda guerra contra Irak. En EUA, la expansión del aparato represivo del estado se engrandeció, una tendencia que V.I. Lenin describió en el folleto "El Estado y la revolución".

En el 2002, se aprobó la Ley de Seguridad Nacional y en el 2003 se formó el Departamento de Seguridad Nacional. Hoy, es el tercer departamento más grande

del gabinete y está coordinado en la Casa Blanca por el Consejo de Seguridad Nacional. Tiene 240.000 empleados. Por ley, los empleados del DHS [por sus siglas en inglés] no pueden estar representados por un sindicato. Peter Andreas, profesor de la Universidad de Brown, describió la creación del DHS como la reorganización gubernamental más importante desde la Guerra Fría.

Si bien se están haciendo comparaciones entre el 2000 y hoy, es importante señalar que el 2020 es mucho más volátil puesto que el capitalismo está en una decadencia más profunda. El sistema imperialista estadounidense, que está en contracción, se encuentra en competencia directa con el crecimiento de la economía china.

Elecciones de 1876, libertad negra y Reconstrucción

Las elecciones de 1876 también fueron completamente manipuladas y básicamente anularon la era de la Reconstrucción posterior a la Guerra Civil con un acuerdo que tuvo profundas consecuencias. Samuel J. Tilden había vencido a Rutherford B. Hayes tanto en el voto popular como en el Colegio Electoral. Pero después de muchas maniobras, Hayes fue declarado ganador.

El líder marxista Vince Copeland lo explicó mejor en su libro “Elecciones de mercado”: “La historia del cambio de votos de 1876 no es solo una de corrupción en las urnas, sino de traición de proporciones colosales. Dirigida en primer lugar contra el pueblo negro, en segundo lugar contra la mayoría blanca del norte que había sacrificado tanto en la Guerra Civil, y tercero contra los blancos pobres del sur, que ahora se convirtieron lentamente en sirvientes para linchamientos al servicio de la misma clase que más los oprimía.

“Se había llegado a un acuerdo con Carolina del Sur, Florida y Luisiana en nombre de la clase dominante del Sur, de que se pondría fin a la Reconstrucción y que las entonces tropas revolucionarias de la Unión se retirarían de su ocupación del Sur.

“Por otro lado, era realmente cierto que estos estados – y casi todos los estados del Sur – habían amañado las elecciones, particularmente contra los votantes negros. Pero si los republicanos hubieran iniciado un proceso para revertir esto, habría significado una continuación de la Reconstrucción, algo que ellos mismos no querían”.

¿Por qué plantear 1876? Porque ilustra lo absolutamente antidemocráticas que son las elecciones capitalistas y muestra el factor determinante detrás de esta traición: la alianza entre el capital del Norte y los terratenientes del Sur, que se basó en el desarrollo económico capitalista.

Además, tiene otro significado hoy para nosotros. El actual movimiento antirracista y antiterrorismo policial, Las Vidas Negras Importan, es una continuación de la lucha que fue detenida por la contrarrevolución contra la Reconstrucción, literalmente el período más democrático de los Estados Unidos.

La traición de 1876 subraya la importancia de preservar, defender y expandir lo que ocurre hoy en las calles. Aunque no sea reconocido por muchos de los que se unen a la lucha espontánea que está teniendo lugar ahora, aquella revolución inconclusa por la libertad del pueblo negro se está resucitando hoy.

Lo que está básicamente en juego en la lucha actual es si este movimiento será aplastado por las fuerzas reaccionarias y fascistas encabezadas por Trump, o si crecerá de una manera que pueda implementar cambios mucho más profundos que lleguen al corazón del sistema capitalista. Por supuesto, hay mucho más que eso; en última instancia, esta reacción está dirigida a toda la clase trabajadora.

Crisis capitalista y guerra imperialista

La clase dominante de Estados Unidos ciertamente preferiría una transición pacífica después de las elecciones. Esto le indicaría al mundo y a la población en su conjunto

que su sistema es estable.

Pero eso puede que no sea posible en el 2021. El capitalismo como sistema está en profunda contracción, y la crisis inminente dentro de las estructuras gobernantes del estado capitalista es más grande que nunca.

La guerra imperialista está cada vez más cerca; es imperativo que la clase trabajadora vea esta elección desde una perspectiva internacional. ¿Qué significan estas elecciones y sus secuelas para los pueblos del mundo, especialmente para aquellos países que luchan por alguna independencia?

La perorata contra China de Trump en las Naciones Unidas puede parecer disparatada. Pero la realidad es que él está dando la posición del Pentágono. La guerra es la consecuencia natural del imperialismo y del conflicto del capitalismo con sus competidores. La estrategia del “pivote hacia el Este” ya estaba en la mesa antes de que Trump asumiera el cargo.

Independientemente del resultado de las elecciones, el peligro de una guerra imperialista – ya sean guerras indirectas a través de subsidiarios, intervenciones directas, sanciones y bloqueos más profundos – se intensificará y amenazará con agravar la pandemia y la crisis climática.

Prepararse para la intervención de la clase trabajadora

Es muy difícil predecir exactamente hacia dónde se dirige todo esto. ¿Trump tiene la fuerza para llevar a cabo y conducir un golpe? ¿Cómo reaccionará la Corte Suprema? ¿Qué papel jugarán los militares? Todo esto es importante. Pero el factor más importante es reconocer que el peligro es real.

La clase obrera y los socialistas revolucionarios no pueden quedarse al margen y esperar a ver qué van a hacer las fuerzas burguesas. Esto sería peligroso.

El papel histórico desempeñado por los terroristas de derecha durante las crisis capitalistas es reprimir a los movimientos de masas de la clase trabajadora y a la propia clase trabajadora.

En “El Klan y el gobierno: ¿enemigos o aliados?” Sam Marcy escribió: “El crecimiento del fascismo en todas partes ha estado ligado firmemente a las grandes empresas; ese es su salvavidas. ... Incluso en los llamados mejores tiempos, el gobierno capitalista no solo tolera organizaciones terroristas como el Klan, sino que una vez que la lucha de clases de los trabajadores y el pueblo oprimido adquiere el carácter de un genuino levantamiento de masas, el gobierno capitalista es más propenso que nunca a alentar y promover grupos como el Klan y otros medios de represión.

“Es imposible llevar a cabo una política antifascista consistente a menos que se tenga en cuenta el factor clave y decisivo para rendir y destruir la amenaza fascista: la clase trabajadora, el pueblo oprimido y sus aliados”.

En nuestro artículo anterior escribimos: “Preparémonos para noviembre: a convocar una huelga general del pueblo.

“No debe haber una aceptación pasiva de una elección robada, independientemente de cómo se desarrolle. Cualquier circunstancia de este tipo debe considerarse ilegítima. Hay mucho en juego. La clase trabajadora debe prepararse lo más posible para intervenir en su propio nombre. No podemos esperar por los demócratas, especialmente si se inclinan a sentarse y esperar otros cuatro años, ni podemos ceder y permanecer al margen.

“En cambio, deberíamos prepararnos para una huelga general del pueblo. Ya estén empleados o desempleados, estudiantes, jóvenes, organizados o no organizados, el objetivo es cerrar el sistema mediante una acción masiva. Para aquellos que puedan, planeen marchar en Washington, D.C. y ocupar la capital hasta que Trump se vaya.

Necesitamos apelar directamente a los sindicatos y a la comunidad.

“Si Biden prevalece, no significa que la lucha haya terminado.

“Estará presidiendo una crisis capitalista y no tiene respuesta alguna para nuestra clase. Nuestro mensaje debe ser impulsar enérgicamente al movimiento para exigir: ¡Acabemos con el terror policial y la supremacía blanca! ¡Atención sanitaria para todos! ¡Cancelar alquileres y ejecuciones hipotecarias! ¡Trabajos o ingresos garantizados para todos! ¡Derechos de los trabajadores y pago por trabajo riesgoso! ¡No a las guerras y las sanciones”!

Hay muchas ideas buenas sobre cómo movilizarse; todas deben aplicarse de la manera más enérgica posible.

El futuro de la humanidad depende de lo que hagamos en esta crítica coyuntura. El capitalismo está literalmente en un callejón sin salida y puede hacer muy poco para resolver las principales crisis que afectan al mundo, ya sea la pandemia, el catastrófico cambio climático, los incendios en California o la atención médica, la vivienda, la comida y el empleo para el pueblo.

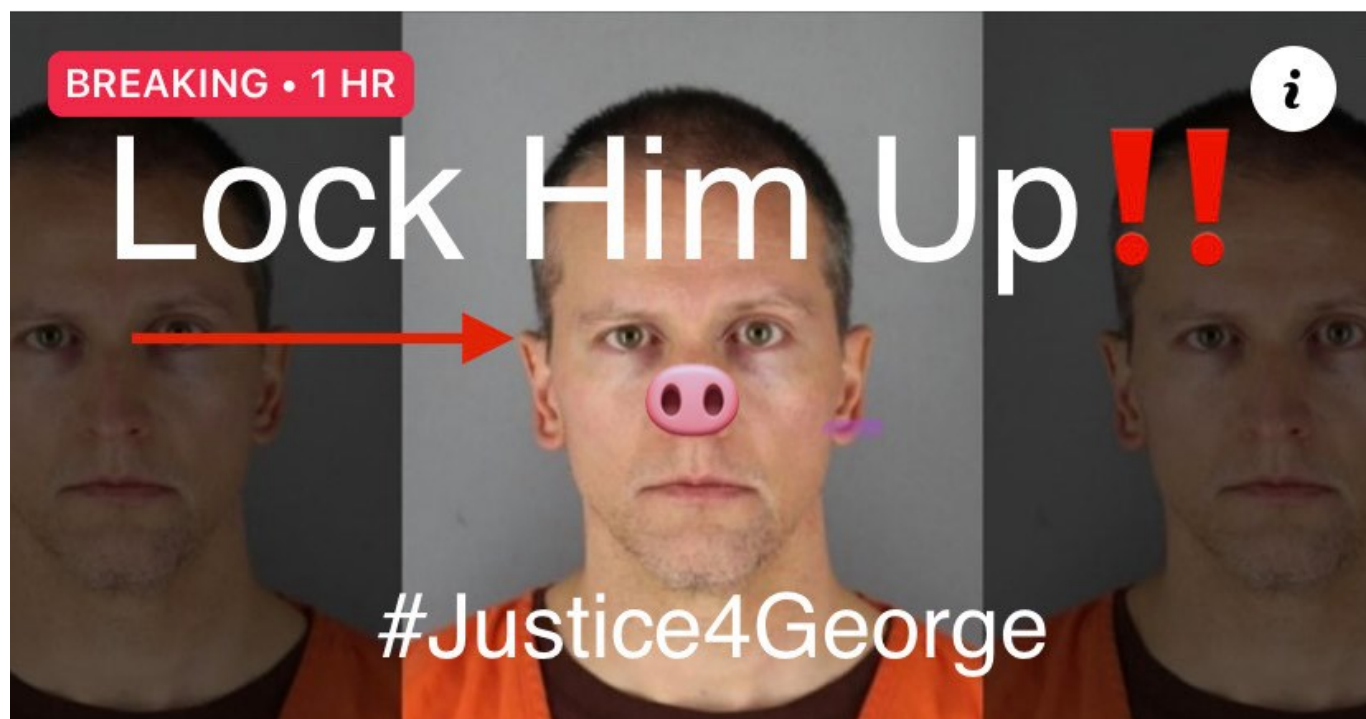
Como sistema, el capitalismo está tan ligado a la explotación de personas negras y marrones e inmigrantes que se ve incapaz de responder incluso a la más modesta exigencia de respetar los cuerpos negros.

El socialismo es la respuesta. En esta coyuntura, el lobo está a la puerta y se necesitará unidad y audacia para detenerlo.



Minneapolis: Lock up killer cop Chauvin, Oct. 8

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Thursday, October 8, 2020 at 7 PM EDT - 9 PM EDT

Hennepin County Government

Hosted by Black Lives Matter Twin Cities Metro, Communities United Against Police Brutality (CUAPB) and 7 others

This is a Public Service Announcement: Killer Cop Chauvin is on the loose! Lock him up and throw away the key! What do we want? Justice! When do we want it? Now! For who? George Floyd!

On [Facebook](#)



Baltimore takes to the streets for Breonna Taylor

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On Sept. 26, hundreds of people and dozens of cars took to the streets of Baltimore to demand justice for Breonna Taylor and the end of the racist U.S. police state. The march and caravan were called by the Peoples Power Assembly and the Ujima People's Progress Party.

The demonstration came in response to a Louisville, Ky., grand jury's decision to charge only one of the cops who participated in the March 13 attack where Breonna Taylor was murdered inside her own home. Adding insult to injury, the charges against the officer did not include murder or manslaughter.

At the time of her death, Taylor was serving her community as an emergency medical technician. She was a frontline worker in the fight against COVID-19.

Taylor's family immediately denounced the decision as disrespectful to Breonna's memory. The family's attorney, Ben Crump, condemned the decision and demanded a new special prosecutor be appointed to the case.

In many ways, it was reminiscent of a Ferguson, Mo., grand jury's decision not to indict Darren Wilson, the racist police officer who murdered Michael Brown in cold blood after Brown had raised his arms to indicate surrender.

For these reasons, the people of Baltimore took to the streets in solidarity with Breonna Taylor, her family, the people of Louisville and all the victims of racist police murder.

'Revolution against racist capitalism'

The march began at the Harriet Tubman Solidarity Center and proceeded first to the Baltimore City Jail. At the jail, the Rev. Annie Chambers spoke directly to prisoners through a sound system. She told the prisoners that the people would continue to fight for their freedom and against the racist criminal justice system.

From the prison, the march and caravan proceeded east past Latrobe Homes, a historic Baltimore public housing development. The demonstration ended at McKeldin Square, in downtown Baltimore, where a rally was held.

Rev. Chambers opened the rally with an impassioned speech calling for a revolution against the racist capitalist system of the U.S. She insisted that she and her brothers and sisters in the struggle would not rest until that revolution was complete.

She was followed by Andrew Mayton, representing the local chapter of the Malaya Movement, and Arnette Johnson, a local activist who fights for the rights of women veterans.

Peoples Power Assembly organizer Sharon Black thanked the crowd for their

dedication on the long march and for staying in the struggle. She then provided a much needed analysis of the upcoming presidential election and the state of the movement.

Black asserted that now more than ever, the movement must defend the victories of the Black Lives Matter struggle in recent months. She argued that the current BLM movement is the continuation of the unfinished revolution of Reconstruction.

The message of the march and rally was clear: The only way to stop Trump's white supremacist wave, and the decades-old racist police war on oppressed communities, is for the poor and working-class people to take to the streets and continue to demand a better world.

SLL photos





Armenia-Azerbaijan: Why capitalism fuels national conflicts in former Soviet Asia

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Fighting erupted on Sept. 27, 2020, between the former Soviet republics of Armenia and Azerbaijan over the disputed region of Nagorno-Karabakh. So far, 360 people have been killed in the fighting, including at least 47 civilians. An earlier war between the two countries in the early 1990s cost 30,000 lives.

The intervention of Turkey's right-wing government, a member of the U.S.-dominated NATO military alliance, and the interests of Western oil and gas profiteers are factors in the bloodshed. The government of neighboring Iran, as well as communist and workers' parties of the region, have called for an immediate ceasefire, warning of the potential for a wider war in the region.

This article, originally published in the April/May 1990 issue of Liberation! A Journal of Revolutionary Marxism, explains how the restoration of capitalism in the former

Soviet Union led to the breakdown of solidarity between peoples and made the region prey for imperialist intrigue. It was written in the last months of the Soviet Union, when the Gorbachev administration was dismantling socialism there.

The tragic bloodshed in the Soviet republics of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan is being used for yet another barrage of anti-communist propaganda in the U.S. news media. Look, they say, socialism hasn't ended national discrimination and hatred between peoples. The Soviet Union, the world's oldest socialist state, is no more than a continuation of the czarist empire, with Russians ruling over and oppressing other peoples. Its collapse is inevitable.

This "analysis" completely avoids two big questions. One is, why, in the nearly 70 years since the Soviet Union was formed, has nothing like this happened before? After all, under the czars, national uprisings, bloody massacres and ethnic fighting were routine events. The other is, what effect has the Gorbachev program of capitalist-style economic reforms had on relationships between nationalities in the Soviet Union?

To find the answers to these questions, a little historical examination is in order.

In 1922, when the Soviet Union came into being on the ruins of the "prisonhouse of nations" that was the old Russian empire, it inherited a terrible legacy of inequality and hatred between nationalities.

In the 19th and early 20th centuries, the czars and Russian and Western merchants and capitalists had plundered and exploited the peoples of the Caucasus, Central Asia and Siberia much as European colonialists plundered Africa and India, and with similar results. In Central Asia (now the Soviet republics of Kirghizia, Tajikistan, Turkmenia and Uzbekistan), illiteracy was universal, disease was endemic and nearly half of all children died before the age of four.

And, like the British in India, the czars pitted people against people — Tajiks against Uzbeks, Kirghiz against Kazakhs, Armenians against Azerbaijanis, Georgians against Abkhassians, and Russians against all the others. One czarist order read: “If the Bashkirs or Kirghiz show an inclination to rebel, they are to be played off against one another and the Russian army spared.”

Describing how life had been in his town before the revolution, an Uzbek farmer told a U.S. writer: “The past was a stairway of years carpeted by pain. The Uzbeks feared to go along the streets of the Arabs; the Tajiks carried sticks when they went through the Uzbek quarter.” (Corliss Lamont, “The Peoples of the Soviet Union,” 1944)

The coming of capitalist industry to some areas only worsened national hatreds. In the 1870s, vast oil reserves drew Western capital to Azerbaijan, and by 1900 that region accounted for at least 50 percent of the world’s oil output. Over 60,000 workers from more than 30 nationalities labored to produce that oil in the city of Baku, which one visitor described as “hell on earth.”

They worked long hours for low pay in dangerous conditions and slept in overcrowded shantytowns without sewers or running water. Thousands died in pogroms and interethnic fighting incited by the oil companies, landlords and the czar’s agents to keep the workers divided.

Bolshevik Revolution

But in 1917, when the Bolshevik Revolution established a workers’ government in Russia, ethnic hatred did not stop the ruling classes of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia from joining together in an anti-communist Transcaucasian Federation backed by Britain, France and the United States. To stop the spread of revolutionary ideas among the people, this regime massacred thousands of soldiers returning home from World War I. Then, in 1918, Britain and Turkey invaded the area, and the

right-wing coalition split along national lines. One-quarter of the population of Nagorno-Karabakh was killed that year in fighting between the capitalist governments of Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Events in Baku

But in Baku itself, events took a very different turn. There, in spite of discrimination and inequality and competition over jobs, common exploitation had laid a basis for class solidarity, and Lenin's Bolshevik Party had built a base among the city's multinational working class. In 1904, a communist-led strike in the Baku oil fields won Russia's first collective bargaining agreement. And in November 1917, led by the Bolsheviks, the workers of Baku seized power in what was to become the Baku Commune.

In April 1918, the Baku Council of People's Commissars, whose leaders included the Armenian Stepan Shaumian, the Azerbaijani Mashad Azizbekov and the Georgian A.S. Djaparadze, nationalized the city's banks, oil industry, fisheries and shipping fleet and seized the mansions of the rich to house the poor. It increased wages, cut rents and implemented an eight-hour day and free universal education.

In July 1918, the Commune was overthrown in a right-wing coup backed by British troops. Shaumian, Azizbekov, Djaparadze and 23 other people's commissars were executed.

On April 28, 1920, after two bloody years of White Terror, a new workers' insurrection restored Soviet power in Baku and an Azerbaijan Soviet republic was proclaimed. Within a year, Soviet republics were established in Armenia and Georgia as well. On December 20, 1922, they joined with Belarus, Russia and Ukraine to form the USSR.

The ending of discrimination and national oppression was a priority of the new

socialist state. At Lenin's initiative, the Soviet government adopted a revolutionary political system that guaranteed political empowerment to the formerly oppressed nationalities. A system of national republics was established, each with its own schools, courts, legislature and equal representation in the Council of Nationalities, one of the two chambers of the Supreme Soviet in Moscow. Each also had the legal right to secede from the Union. Within the national republics, now 15 in all, there were 38 smaller autonomous republics, regions and areas, which also had control over their internal affairs but lacked the right to secede.

Soviet achievements

Soviet power transformed life in the Caucasus and Central Asia. Illiteracy was abolished, and schools, universities, hospitals and power stations were built for the first time. Life expectancy, under 35 years before the revolution, more than doubled. School systems were set up and books and newspapers were published in over 100 languages, some of which had never before been written down. In the republics of Central Asia, where it was once said, "It is easier to find an oasis in the desert than a literate man" (and a literate woman was unknown), there are today more doctors and college graduates per capita than in West Germany or Britain. Uzbekistan alone has over 30,000 scientific workers, one-third of whom are women.

By 1940, Azerbaijan's industrial output had risen to 18 times what it had been before the revolution while more than 1,300 large industrial enterprises had been built in the Central Asian republics. Today, Uzbekistan, which the czars had reduced to a cotton plantation for Russian industry, manufactures farm machinery and airplanes.

These material gains were accompanied by a profound social revolution. Lands of the rich were seized by the poor, and women were freed from the horrors of child marriage, the bride price and the veil. This was done not just by law but by what author Fanina Halle described as "a mass movement which swept Central Asia like a

tempest. ... Poor women tore the veils from the heads of the rich ... and either set fire to them ... or altered them to clothing for the poor in sewing rooms specially established for the purpose."

In 1929, in "Red Star in Samarkand," Anna Louise Strong wrote about meeting the president of Soviet Uzbekistan, Akhunbabay, a former farm laborer who felt that "the participation of the farmhands in governmental activities was the most important fact" of Soviet power. When Halle visited Uzbekistan a few years later, she met the republic's vice president, Deshakhon Abidova, an Uzbek woman who as a child in pre-Soviet times had been sold to a 65-year-old moneylender as a fourth wife. Abidova described herself to Halle as "one of those cooks of whom Lenin said that they must learn to govern the state."

In her 1936 book, "Women of the Soviet East," Halle wrote about how Baku had changed in Soviet times: "Some of the women who are studying in this club [the Palace of Emancipated Turkish Womanhood] ... the majority of them of working-class origin, are already living in the fine new workers' colonies and garden suburbs laid out in several areas outside town. They have broad, concrete-paved streets, water laid on, drainage and playgrounds for the children. ... Here, Turkish [Azerbaijani] families live peaceably next to Armenians and Russians, and the children are brought up together."

An Armenian told her that "formerly I never made the acquaintance of Turks and took care to avoid them. But what a difference in the last 15 years! Nowadays the Turkish children smile at me with as much friendliness as Armenian children [and] women are sitting here side by side with men." Halle also noted that 18,000 Azerbaijani women were then working in the republic's oil industry, which would have been inconceivable before the revolution.

Such accomplishments were possible because the Soviet state was committed to not only raise the living standards of all Soviet peoples but to promote genuine equality

between them. In the words of the 12th Congress of the Russian Communist Party, "The elimination of actual national inequality is not an easy process ... but eliminated it must be at all costs!"

Affirmative action

In practice, this meant that even at the height of the devastating civil war and foreign invasion that followed the revolution, Lenin's government sent massive material aid, including whole factories, from Russia to those areas whose growth had been strangled under czarist rule. Thousands of Russian Bolsheviks went to work in the Caucasus and Central Asia while thousands of young Asians were trained in the factories of Moscow and Leningrad. In 1918, the Soviet government spent 50 million rubles on irrigation in Central Asia. (It is instructive to compare the industrialization of the Soviet East, which benefited the workers and peasants, with the flight of textile companies to the U.S. South in the same period, which was done to break unions and drive down wages. Today, many of these U.S. companies have moved on to exploit even lower-paid workers in Latin America and East Asia.)

This Leninist policy of "economic affirmative action" continued into the 1980s and made possible such wonders as the Kara-Kum Canal in Turkmenia and the Lake Sevan reclamation project in Armenia. It is now [1990] being drastically cut by the Gorbachev regime in the name of "economic efficiency" and "self-financing." The 1986 cancellation of a long-planned project to use Siberian river water for irrigation in Kazakhstan is an example of this.

The Soviet state also carried out preferential training of women and men of once-oppressed nationalities to occupy all positions in government and industry. Before the revolution, for example, Azerbaijanis had been restricted to unskilled jobs in their own country's oil industry. By the 1930s, Soviet-trained Azerbaijani engineers and scientists were helping to start oil and gas industries in other Soviet republics. This policy too is under attack by Gorbachev.

The progress made by the Soviet Asian republics under socialism, although stunning when contrasted with the poverty in nearby countries like India, Pakistan, Iran and Turkey that are still enslaved by the world capitalist market, did not erase the gap between them and the European Soviet republics. It did, however, create among their people genuine enthusiasm for the socialist system and real confidence that socialist planning and cooperation would lead to a better life for all. It was not “Stalinist repression” but sincere belief in a common communist future that united the nationalities of the USSR during the unbelievable hardships of World War II, when the Soviet Asian republics played a critical role in the battle of production that defeated the Nazi war machine.

Affirmative Action and the raising of the economic and cultural level of the national republics did not fully eradicate national antagonisms, but they did take away their material base. Right-wing nationalism could not get a foothold because it ran counter to the interests of the formerly oppressed regions. The centrally planned economy and the Leninist tradition of putting the development of the national republics over any narrow concept of “economic efficiency” was to their great advantage, despite some shortcomings in practice.

In the 1980s, when U.S. “experts” were predicting that Soviet intervention in Afghanistan would provoke a “Muslim revolt” in Soviet Central Asia, visitors to that region (including this writer) found popular support for Soviet aid to the Afghan Revolution. People identified the U.S.-backed Afghan contras with the British-backed feudal basmachis who had fought against socialism in Central Asia in the 1920s.

Perestroika brings friction

But today, the spirit of socialist solidarity is being sacrificed by the Gorbachev regime on the altar of “self-financing,” “market pricing” and “cost accountability.” No longer are all-Union funds and resources being used to help those republics whose economies are more backward. Large capital projects, still needed in the less-

developed areas, are being cut back or cancelled, and industries considered “inefficient” are being shut down.

Unemployment is now being tolerated and in Soviet Asia it has grown rapidly. (According to a report in the New York Times of March 2, 1990, “In Azerbaijan, the jobless rate is at 27.6 percent, in Tajikistan 25.7 percent and in Uzbekistan, 22.8 percent. In all, three million workers are officially reported as jobless.”)

Instead of cooperation for the benefit of all and central allocation of resources on the basis of need, republics are now in competition with one another, and those that are more dependent on agriculture and raw materials are falling behind those that are more urban and industrial. The gap between regions that had been steadily narrowing under central planning is now being widened.

Also, Gorbachev’s encouragement of private farming and parasitic cooperatives has rapidly increased social differentiation and worsened unemployment in the more agricultural republics, where many had hoped for a transition to state farming instead.

It is no coincidence that the Gorbachev leadership saw fit to undemocratically force the removal of Communist Party Secretaries Geidar Aliyev of Azerbaijan and Dinmukhamad Kunayev of Kazakhstan, the only Turkic-speaking members of the Politburo. (Turkic-speaking peoples are the majority in the Caucasus and Central Asia.) At the 27th Party Congress, Kunayev had spoken out against cuts in central government investment in Kazakhstan and Central Asia.

It is the Gorbachev regime’s retreat from socialist planning and cooperation, its revival of competition between individuals and republics, that has reawakened old national hatreds. This in turn has played right into the hands of the CIA and those inside the USSR who would like to see capitalism restored. No wonder Gorbachev’s program has been so proudly hailed by the Wall Street Journal and the Bush

administration.

Far from refuting Marxism, the fighting in the Soviet Middle East and Central Asia is a tragic confirmation of the Marxist view that inequality is the source of hatred between peoples and that private ownership and economic competition breed inequality.

The lesson of Nagorno-Karabakh and Baku and Dushanbe and the Fergana Valley is that the Soviet Union must urgently change course away from perestroika and back toward socialist central planning, economic cooperation and equality among regions and individuals. What the Soviet Union needs is not less socialism but more.



Baltimore: March for Housing, No Evictions, Save Public Housing, Oct. 24

written by Struggle - La Lucha
October 8, 2020



Saturday, October 24, 2020 at 2 PM EDT - 4 PM EDT

N. Bond Street and Orleans Street, Baltimore, Maryland

Hosted by Peoples Power Assembly

Join with public housing residents, for a “March & Car Caravan for Housing Justice.”

We are demanding:

- *No evictions, cancel rent during COVID
- *Hands off the Residency Advisory Board/RAB/ Preserve RAB
- *No more sales of public housing units; Stop privatization
- *Where did the \$10.7 million go

We will be marching and car caravanning from Douglas Homes, N. Bond St & Orleans Street. Gather at 2 pm

Initiated by: Rev Annie Chambers, Douglas Homes RAB Delegate; Peoples Power Assembly; Ujima Peoples Progress Party and BRANCHES



Trump cannot order the waves to

rollback against Iran

written by Struggle - La Lucha
October 8, 2020

Iran completes second fuel delivery to Venezuela in defiance of U.S. sanctions

Well, first, congratulations on the tankers going through. It's a great victory, not only for the people of Venezuela and Iran but for the people of the world. It is a defeat for US energy monopolies, who dream of restoring the control they once had of the world's energy resources. The interests of the monopolies and Wall Street banks are at variance with those of the people of the United States. We have no need for permanent war just to keep some corporations wealthy and to keep the wealth of the world pouring into Wall Street. The people of the United States would benefit from cooperation with the people of the world.

What President Rouhani at the UN General Assembly last week said was in such contrast President Trump's hate-filled rant, where he bragged about ordering the murder of General Soleimani and imposing "crippling sanctions" on the people of Iran. He also called Covid 19 the "China virus."

President Rouhani on the other hand spoke of resistance and resilience and against racism war and hatred. He compared the boot of US power on the people in the world to the knee of the Minneapolis cop who murdered George Floyd.

As you know we have a major uprising here in this country against racism, police brutality and injustice. There should be solidarity between the people of this country and the people of Iran and everyone else who is fighting an unjust global order, an unjust order both here and in the world.

The Trump regime in particular represents oil and gas interests. It is pursuing confrontation with Iran and Venezuela because it wants US oil monopolies to again be the center of the world economy. The only way to defeat them is to keep challenging them.

Their imperialist system is in decline, in crisis, which is why someone like Trump is in the White House. People here are rising up against that unjust system. And inside the ruling class they are fighting each other.

A thousand years ago King Canute of England went to the sea and ordered the waves to roll back. He was showing he didn't have absolute power because of course the waves didn't roll back. Trump seems to actually believe he can order the waves of change to roll back, but he can't. Nor can Biden or anybody else in Washington.

The world is changing, and it's in the best interests of the majority of people in the United States to embrace that, to live in peace and solidarity with the people of the world. Bring all the troops and warships and planes home. Stop funding Israel. We don't need any more wars for corporate profit.

Bill Dores is an American political analyst, a writer for Struggle-La Lucha and longtime antiwar activist. He recorded this article for Press TV website.

Source: [PressTV](#)



Election threats for Bolivia

written by Struggle - La Lucha

October 8, 2020

The presidential elections in Bolivia are scheduled for October 18. With only a few weeks to go, and with polls showing disputed results in favor of MAS candidate Luis Arce, there are statements from Bolivia and the United States that are threatening the race.

One message drew attention a few weeks before the October 18 presidential elections in Bolivia: Luis Almagro, secretary general of the Organization of American States (OAS), meeting in Washington with Arturo Murillo, Bolivia's government minister, wrote on his Twitter account his concern about possible election fraud.

Yesterday I met with @MindeGovernment of #Bolivia @ArturoMurilloS. He conveyed to me his concern about possible further fraud in #EleccionesGenerales2020. We committed to maximum efforts xa to strengthen the Electoral Mission of #OEA inBolivia and xa to ensure the will of the people
pic.twitter.com/Ek0J0ZtoVX

- Luis Almagro (@Almagro_OEA2015) September 30, 2020

Ayer me reuní con [@MindeGobierno](#) de [#Bolivia](#) [@ArturoMurilloS](#). Me transmitió su preocupación sobre posibilidad de nuevo fraude en [#EleccionesGenerales2020](#). Nos comprometimos a máximos esfuerzos xa fortalecer la Misión Electoral de [#OEAenBolivia](#) y xa asegurar la voluntad del pueblo pic.twitter.com/Ek0J0ZtoVX

— Luis Almagro (@Almagro_OEA2015) [September 30, 2020](#)

The message was published as part of Murillo's trip to the United States, where it had little impact: a photo with Almagro, and a meeting with the State Department and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). His visit was "official," he said, in response to questions about his sudden departure from the country.

Both men have been key in the coup events. Almagro played a central role from the OAS, both in the initial point of the coup escalation by questioning the election results of October 20, and in accelerating the fall of Morales on November 10 by presenting the audit report in advance.

This political role of the OAS, as well as the lack of veracity of its analysis of the alleged fraud, was denounced by several studies. However, a year later, the OAS has returned to Bolivia with the same head of the Electoral Observation Mission as last year: Manuel González, former foreign minister of Costa Rica.

As for Murillo, he has been one of the main leaders of the policy of threats and persecutions from the de facto government. Appointed from the beginning as head of the government ministry, he has remained in a cabinet where only seven of the 20 ministers of the original team are left.

His internal influence has been recently denounced by Óscar Ortiz, Minister of Economy and Public Finances who was dismissed on September 29th: "President Añez has handed over the future of the government and the country to Minister Murillo, who is a person who does not have the capacity, does not have the

necessary serenity to be able to solve the problems as it should be, which is to seek solutions within the framework of the Constitution and the laws”.

Why did Murillo and Almagro begin to discuss fraud when they had control of the Supreme Electoral Tribunal (TSE) and the OAS Mission? “Hopefully they are not receiving instructions not to carry out the elections or finally, as happened in Honduras, to commit electoral fraud,” denounced Luis Arce, candidate for president for the Movement Toward Socialism (MAS).

The declaration of Almagro together with Murillo, in the final stretch of the elections, raised alarms about the installation and preparation of a possible scenario: the denunciation of fraud on election day in order not to recognize a possible victory in the first round for Arce.

Threats

These are not the only threats to the electoral process. The possibility of the suspension of the legal status of MAS by the Plurinational Constitutional Court (TCP) is still in force. The resolution of the TCP should be after the 18th, according to Sergio Choque, a MAS deputy and president of the Chamber of Deputies, but the possibility still remains.

On the other hand, there have been aggressions against a campaign caravan of the MAS in the department of Santa Cruz, a region where Fernando Camacho, central leader during the escalation of the coup d'état, currently a candidate for president, has greater strength.

We denounce to the international community that violent groups financed by the extreme right in the country are attempting to free our sisters and brothers in #Montero and #Warnes, and are once again driving a situation of total intolerance in #Bolivia. pic.twitter.com/60sWkBd7Mt

- Luis Arce Catacora (Lucho Arce) (@LuchoXBolivia) September 24, 2020

[Hilo] Denunciamos ante la Comunidad Internacional, que grupos violentos financiados por la derecha extrema del país, atentan contra la libertad de nuestras hermanas y hermanos en [#Montero](#) y [#Warnes](#), e impulsan nuevamente a una coyuntura de intolerancia total en [#Bolivia](#). pic.twitter.com/60sWkBd7Mt

— Luis Arce Catacora (Lucho Arce) (@LuchoXBolivia) [September 24, 2020](#)

Both Camacho and Murillo have been singled out for their links to armed, paramilitary organizations, such as the Unión Juvenil Cruceñista, and the Resistencia Cochala, which were deployed during the coup in Santa Cruz, Cochabamba, and La Paz, and in August against mobilizations and blockades by social movements demanding that election dates not be postponed.

The possibility of a scenario of violence has been anticipated in these days by the de facto government. Añez, speaking on CNN, affirmed that if Arce loses the elections “he will not recognize the result and will want to set the country on fire”. Murillo, for his part, affirmed that MAS has “firearms” and that there could be “blood on October 18th”.

Murillo also added that during his trip to the United States he addressed “quite delicate issues that have to do with the security of the State, referring to the threats before the elections,” for which “the United States can help in several ways”.

Accusing MAS of violence is a narrative strategy that was used from the beginning of the coup: under this argument there were persecutions, criminalization of leaders – like Evo Morales himself – organizations and protests. It occurs at a critical point in this case, when political power is at stake.

“Hopefully Murillo is not receiving instructions to convulse the country,” said Arce. Could the de facto government unleash episodes of violence, attribute them to MAS and then use them as a justification to take exceptional measures that could affect the electoral contest? This is the question and threat that is gaining strength as the elections approach.

The objective would be to prevent a return of MAS to government in Bolivia, something that is largely tied to the possibility of Arce winning on October 18 with more than 40% and 10 points difference over the next candidate, thus avoiding a second round.

First and second round

Arce led all the polls since he was presented as a candidate. One of the reasons for this was the division of the right-wing actors who were part of the coup d'état in different roles: Fernando Camacho, Jorge Quiroga, Carlos Mesa and Jeanine Añez.

These actors, united in October and November around the goal of overthrowing Evo, became divided again once the de facto government had managed to settle down, and, above all, when Añez decided to announce her presidential candidacy, something that was not part of the internal agreement and provoked confrontations.

The MAS, in contrast to that fragmentation, managed to articulate itself around the binomial of Arce and David Choquehuanca, with the support of the social, indigenous, and peasant movements and the Bolivian Workers' Central (COB).

The inability of the right-wing candidates to build a common platform was one of the reasons for the electoral postponements from May 3 to August 2, then to September 6, and finally to October 18. This situation of fragmentation brought about the announcement by Añez on September 18 not to run as a candidate and thus avoid a greater dispersion of the vote.

Her resignation from the candidacy occurred two days after the publication of the Ciesmori poll numbers that showed a victory for the MAS in the first round. Her withdrawal brought the expected result: a new poll by the same company, revealed on October 1st, Arce would no longer win in the first round, but would go to a second round against Mesa. As for Camacho, he would be third, and Quiroga, far behind, would be fifth.

A survey by the Latin American Strategic Center for Geopolitics (CELAG) on October 2, however, showed that Arce, with a small difference, would win in the first round, with 44.4% of the votes against 34.0% for Mesa. In contrast, in the case of a second round, the survey indicates that the winner would be Mesa, by a margin of two points.

The challenge to avoid the return of the MAS to the presidency is therefore centered on reaching the second round, scheduled for November 29. That possibility will be played, according to the polls, by a small margin of votes.

The power

The de facto government confronted a paradox: it lost social support as it postponed the elections to prevent the return of the MAS and advance its economic project. Time, instead of favoring Añez, broadened her social rejection. The MAS, on the other hand, remained cohesive, not without tension, and benefited from the poor results of the coup d'état management.

During the months of Añez's presidency, the poverty indexes grew in a context aggravated by the pandemic, the plan to privatize state enterprises, the indebtedness to the International Monetary Fund, and corruption scandals like the purchase of respirators at a premium were exposed.

The firing of Ortiz exposed part of this plot. He denounced the fact that he had not

signed a decree that opened the door to the privatization of the Empresa de Luz y Fuerza Eléctrica de Cochabamba: "I am not willing to sign any decree that goes against the legal system or does not have sufficient legal backing," he declared.

The economic situation, with 55.4%, is the main problem to be solved by the next government, according to the CELAG survey. It is followed by the health crisis, with 20.5%; corruption, with 19.8%, and political conflict, with 4.6%. Arce, who was Minister of Economy with Morales, has an important role to play for his achievements during this time.

Is the national and international power bloc that plotted and led the coup willing to lose the government by the votes less than a year after its victory? That is perhaps the main question circulating since Morales was overthrown. The threats to the electoral process encompass the days before the elections, as well as the actual proceedings of the day, and the hours and days after.

The contest on the 18th will be central for the country and Latin America. The coup d'état in Bolivia was a turning point in a continent marked by a right-wing offensive coordinated with and from US foreign policy. The way in which the election takes place and the result will be a central chapter in this cycle of confrontations.

Source: [Internationalist 360°](https://www.internationalist360.org/)



U.S. war drive against China fuels ‘Mulan’ boycott

written by Struggle - La Lucha
October 8, 2020

When the Walt Disney Company released its live-action remake of “Mulan,” the bourgeois media establishment responded with indignation and hand-wringing. This spread all the way to the U.S. Congress and the Trump administration.

Members of the Congressional-Executive Commission on China [authored a letter](#) to the CEO of Disney, signed by both Democrats and Republicans, demanding that Disney explain the nature of its relationship and collaboration with the Communist Party of China regional bodies in Xinjiang.

It demands that Disney disclose whether officials were aware of “mass surveillance and detention against Uyghurs and other Muslim minorities,” and whether Disney has a policy on “cooperating with entities that are known human rights abusers.” Marco Rubio, Tom Cotton, Jeff Merkley and Ted Cruz are among the representatives and senators who signed the letter. (For background on the U.S. slander campaign

on Xinjiang, read [“The U.S. road to war on China.”](#))

Meanwhile, the U.S., at all levels of government, has supported the detention of immigrants and refugees in concentration camps, where they suffer sexual assault, forced sterilization and inhumane conditions that allow for a deadly spread of COVID-19.

The U.S. has also implemented mass surveillance and encouraged racist violence against Muslim immigrants and Muslim Americans. The U.S. also actively funds and supports countries like Israel, Saudi Arabia and the Philippines, whose government forces commit despicable human-rights atrocities and war crimes on a daily basis.

Talking heads within the bourgeois media establishment who called for the boycott of the “Mulan” remake are being hailed as [activists](#) or [protesters](#), creating massive confusion around the issue. They call for this boycott because this remake is supposedly “pro-China” at a time when China is “committing human-rights atrocities.” In reality, it’s because the U.S. is beating its war drums against China.

One such “activist” is Joshua Wong, considered the face of the “pro-democracy” movement in Hong Kong. What many don’t know is that Wong and an overwhelming swath of the protest movement in Hong Kong are [funded and supported](#) by the National Endowment for Democracy, a tax-funded “nonprofit” arm of the U.S. State Department founded and designed for regime change operations. Wong is [on public record](#) meeting with some of the same right-wing politicians that signed the letter to Disney.

Many of the other “activists” calling for a boycott of the movie are deeply swayed by the bourgeois media’s Cold War attitude towards China. Even liberal talking heads criticized Trump for freezing funds [meant to benefit Hong Kong protesters](#).

Struggle-La Lucha interviewed Eliza Romero and Chris Jesu Lee of the “Unverified

Accounts” podcast, who released an episode about the hypocrisy and double standards to which the live action remake of “Mulan” is held.

Struggle-La Lucha: Tell us a little about you — your organization, previous projects, etc.

Eliza Romero: I’m a coordinator for Malaya Movement’s Baltimore chapter as well as a blogger and podcast host. My blog and podcast both go under the name “Aesthetic Distance.” I’m also one of the co-hosts of the “Unverified Accounts” podcast, which just launched last week.

Chris Jesu Lee: I’m one of the creators of “Plan A,” an Asian American political/cultural magazine and podcast. Eliza, Filip and I are the creators of “Unverified Accounts”!

Eliza: Filip Guo, our third host, is also one of the creators of “Plan A” and based out of Toronto.

SLL: Tell us a little about your podcast, your fellow hosts, and why you decided to start it.

Eliza: “Unverified Accounts” is a place for Asian American opinions on arts and culture, with politics naturally coming into play. The idea is for my co-hosts and I to air our own perspectives, which are often at odds with those of the majority of neoliberal Asian American celebrities. Every Monday, Chris Jesu Lee, Filip Guo and I discuss movies, books and TV shows that are connected to cultural and political issues that are trending, generally on social media. We’re an alternative to your typical “NPR/NBC/HuffPost Asian American” fare.

SLL: Why did you decide to talk about “Mulan” (2020)? What is your take on it?

Eliza: We talked extensively about the new “Mulan” film in episode 3 of “Unverified

Accounts,” [“Mulan Rouge: The New Red Scare.”](#) We are all big fans of the original animated Disney film from 1998 and were skeptical about the remake. After all, Disney live-action remakes haven’t been very successful, save for a very few. Also, Western movies haven’t always been kind to Asian people or culture. We were curious about how the liberal elite crowd, who are very concerned with positive representation of Asians in the media, would react to a story that is very clearly pro-China and is unsubtly attempting to market to Chinese audiences. We also anticipated pushback since the U.S. is now embroiled in a Cold War with China.

What we found was that regardless of how one feels about China, it’s pretty sickening to watch Asians try so desperately to prove their loyalty to America by creating a moral panic about the movie and/or letting themselves be used as political pawns. Our podcast detailed the hypocrisy in their reasoning — after all, there were no calls to boycott movies that proclaim loyalty to the U.S. or Britain or other imperialist nations, so why single this movie out? The U.S. is the biggest violator of human rights in the world.

If they praise Marvel movies, which are very pro-capitalist, pro-military-industrial complex, pro-surveillance state, how can they boycott “Mulan” for being pro-China? The same people calling for the boycott praised other nationalist movies like “The Good Shepherd,” “Saving Private Ryan,” “1917” and “Dunkirk” too. Why are they okay with the U.S. and Britain doing it, but it’s “immoral” when China does it?

While many boycotters of the “Mulan” remake talk extensively about their love for the original, we found a lot of hypocrisy here too, because narratively, the original and the remake are exactly the same. The only difference is the timing of their releases and current political pressures. It was rather hilarious watching some people try to resolve this cognitive dissonance.

On the representation side of things, there were calls to boycott the movie because “there was zero representation of Asian people” in the production of the film. This

was also hypocritical because they do not criticize the lack of representation behind the scenes in the original 1998 animated film, which was also written, produced and directed by white people and had fewer Asian voice actors than the new version had on-screen. Some consistency, please!

Chris: I thought the movie was pretty bad, as most of these Disney live-action remakes are. But a lot of the criticism has obvious political or personal agendas. The bigger picture story is how unnecessary this movie is because Asia doesn't really need America's approval as much as before. This movie predictably flopped in China. Why would China want to watch a Hollywood knock-off of its own material? It's this loss of American centrality that has so many people enraged and anxious.

SLL: What would you hope to happen if more people listened to this episode? Or your podcast in general?

Eliza: Our podcast is an alternative to the typical neoliberal takes on arts and culture in mainstream media, especially among mainstream Asian American media outlets. With every episode we release, we hope to embolden people to think in other ways or speak up about beliefs they've always held but are afraid to voice. With our "Mulan" episode, we hope to help our listeners see that there are some dark, anti-communist forces at work with the boycott of the film — it's a combination of red scare and yellow peril. And many mainstream Asian liberal elites are weaponizing their own identities to push forward a pro-U.S. imperialist, anti-Chinese agenda.

SLL: Where can people find your podcast or any of your other work?

Eliza: You can find "Unverified Accounts" and "The Aesthetic Distance Podcast" on Apple, Google Play, Spotify and wherever you listen to podcasts. New episodes of "Unverified Accounts" are released every Monday morning. You can find my blog at aestheticdistance.com and I am also very active on social media (Instagram @aestheticdistance/Twitter @aesthdistance1).

Additionally, Malaya Movement Baltimore is an organization that I am very proud to be a part of. It is the Baltimore chapter of the Malaya Movement, a U.S.-based movement against the killing and dictatorship and for democracy in the Philippines. As our name indicates, Malaya (Filipino for “free”) seeks not only to broaden our opposition against fascism but also to broaden support for the cause of freedom, democracy and human rights in the Philippines.

Follow us on Instagram (@malaya.baltimore) to stay updated on all of our upcoming national and Baltimore-based campaigns, actions and educational sessions. You can also [join our movement](#) by filling out this form. If you’re not in Baltimore, that’s okay. We will connect you with the chapter closest to you.



Baltimore teachers demand ‘masks, tests and plexiglass!’

written by Struggle - La Lucha

October 8, 2020

On Sept. 30, the Baltimore Teachers Union (BTU) held a protest and die-in in front

of the Baltimore City Public Schools headquarters in Baltimore City.

Diana Desierto, BTU member and speech language pathologist, explained: “I am out here for the National Day of Resistance to make sure that our students, families and staff in Baltimore City are prepared and will be accommodated with all the things they need to return to school safely.

“I’m here to support my students and their families. It’s been a struggle for them and for all of us. Of course we want to go back to school, we just want to go back safely.”

Baltimore County teacher Jen Russo said: “I want to make sure that all teachers and students are heard in this crisis. Really, the Board of Education in all counties isn’t listening to teachers, even though it’s their safety and lives at stake.”

Among the attendees were two members of the United Food and Commercial Workers union. Worker Jeffery Reeve explained why he came in solidarity: “UFCW Local 400 members have been on the frontlines since day one. Two hundred and sixty-nine of UFCW-represented grocery workers have gotten COVID. They’re union, I’m union, and I’m always looking for some good trouble.”

BTU leaders led a chant that clarified some of their demands: “Masks, tests, and plexiglass!”

