

May Day 2019: The resurgence of the class struggle and the fight for socialism

1 May 2019

On May Day, the day of international working class solidarity, the International Committee of the Fourth International and the *World Socialist Web Site* salute the growing struggles of workers throughout the world.

Developments on the eve of May Day reveal the urgent necessity for the global organization and unity of the working class in a common fight against inequality, war, and reaction. The Trump administration sharply escalated its regime-change operation in Venezuela, encouraging Juan Guaidó to make an open appeal to the military and proclaim an armed uprising against the government of Nicolás Maduro. While Guaidó did not succeed in overthrowing the government yesterday, the US is using it to intensify its campaign, not only against Venezuela, but also against Cuba and Russia, risking a regional and even global military conflict.

Also yesterday, WikiLeaks announced that its founder, Julian Assange, will face sentencing today in a UK court for “violating bail conditions,” and there will be a hearing on Thursday on an extradition request filed by the United States. Last month, Assange was seized from the Ecuadorean embassy in London. If the US succeeds in getting its hands on him, Assange faces indefinite detention or charges that carry the penalty of death.

Along with Chelsea Manning, who is currently behind bars for refusing to testify against Assange, the WikiLeaks founder is being targeted for revealing the crimes of American imperialism.

Assange and Manning are victims of the increasingly open turn of the capitalist ruling elites to authoritarian forms of rule. The central target of the assault on democratic rights is the working class, including the millions of refugees who are being rounded up for arrest and deportation and the workers who have been victimized and persecuted for fighting back, from the imprisoned Maruti Suzuki workers in India to the fired strikers in Matamoros, Mexico.

This May Day is dominated by three interrelated social

and political factors.

First, there is a worldwide resurgence of the class struggle. In the US, strikes by teachers in California, Colorado, West Virginia, Kentucky and other states are the major component of an upsurge in working class-struggle that has produced the highest level of strike activity in 32 years. This is part of an international wave of strikes by educators, including in the Netherlands, Poland, India, Iran, Mexico, New Zealand, Tunisia, Zimbabwe and other countries.

Major struggles in recent months include the strike by tens of thousands of *maquiladora* workers in Mexico, the “yellow vest” protests in France, a general strike in India, mass uprisings of workers and youth in Algeria, Sudan and Zimbabwe, and strikes by auto workers in Hungary and public-sector workers in Germany.

The second factor is the growth of support for socialism throughout the world. Not since the 1930s has there been such widespread revulsion among masses of people directed against the entire social and economic system. Thirty years after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, which was hailed by the ruling elite as the end of Marxism, socialism is on the minds of millions.

These sentiments are deeply rooted in historical experience. The end of the USSR was followed by unending war, deepening economic crisis, the ever-increasing concentration of wealth and the revival of authoritarianism. Billions of people born over the last 30 years have known nothing but deteriorating living conditions.

The third factor is the violent shift of the ruling elite to the right. A palpable mood of fear pervades the ruling class. The bourgeois media is replete with statements from billionaires expressing the isolation felt by a ruling elite that faces, in the words of hedge fund manager Raymond Dalio, “some sort of revolution.” Trump seems incapable of delivering a speech that does not include a denunciation of the “menace” of socialism or a pledge

that “America will never be a socialist country.”

The more the objective movement of millions of workers finds expression in support for socialism, the more sharply the ruling class turns to police state methods and the revival of the ideological and political filth of the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s.

All over the world, the ruling elites are seeking to find some mechanism for intensifying exploitation and subordinating the population to their preparations for war. More than a decade after the financial crash of 2008, social inequality is at record levels and a new financial crisis looms. The US has engaged in more than a quarter century of unending war in the Middle East and Central Asia and is now preparing for “great power conflict” with China and Russia. The imperialist powers of Europe are rearming, determined to stake their own position in global geopolitics.

In the United States, Trump is responding to a heightening of social tensions and divisions within the ruling class by making ever-more naked appeals to far-right forces, including in the military and police, combined with an assertion of presidential power unchecked by traditional constitutional restraints. In Italy, the coalition government includes the Lega party, headed by Deputy Prime Minister Matteo Salvini, who has proclaimed his sympathy with the country’s fascist past and refused to criticize Mussolini.

Far-right and ultra-nationalist parties are in power in Brazil, India, the Philippines, Hungary, Austria and Israel. Such parties have increased their political presence in Spain, France, Sweden, Finland, Estonia and Slovenia. In Germany, the far-right Alternative fur Germany (AfD) is the leading opposition party in the Bundestag and sets the political tone for the policies of the Grand Coalition government.

Recent months have seen a spate of fascist atrocities—the Christchurch massacre, mass shootings at synagogues in Pennsylvania and California—carried out by neo-Nazis inspired in part by the demagoguery of Trump and other bourgeois political leaders.

The neo-fascist right does not have mass support. Its resurgence is the product of active promotion from above and the complete bankruptcy of the organizations and parties that claim to represent the working class—the social democratic parties and trade unions. In the United States, the Democratic Party is doing everything it can to divert popular opposition to Trump behind a right-wing agenda of war, censorship and austerity.

The fight against war, the growth of fascism and

authoritarianism, the ever-greater concentration of wealth, internet censorship, environmental degradation—and in defense of class war prisoners such as Assange and Manning—is inextricably bound up with the fight against capitalism and for socialism.

The central question facing millions of workers and young people throughout the world is: What is socialism and how can it be achieved? The fundamental political lessons drawn from the historical experiences of the working class must be the basis for the education of a new generation entering into struggle. The working class must take matters into its own hands, leading behind it all the oppressed, in a revolutionary struggle against the capitalist system itself.

The essential instrument for carrying out this most urgent of tasks is the revolutionary party—the International Committee of the Fourth International, the world Trotskyist movement. The Fourth International was founded by Leon Trotsky more than 80 years ago on the basis of the defense of the Heritage of Marxism against Stalinism and Social Democracy. Events have vindicated its historical perspective.

On this May Day, we call on all workers and youth around the world to register and take part in the International May Day Online Rally on May 4/5 and join and build the ICFI.

The fifth annual International May Day Online Rally will be broadcast live throughout the world beginning on Saturday, May 4 at 8:00 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time (10:00 a.m. on Sunday, May 5 in Sydney, Australia). We urge all workers and youth to register and make plans to attend.

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