

The April 19 mass protests against Trump and the need for a revolutionary strategy

Socialist Equality Party (US)
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The latest round of mass demonstrations against the Trump administration which took place Saturday, April 19, in more than 700 cities and towns across the United States, marks an important development in the growing resistance to the threat of fascism.

Exactly 250 years after the battles of Lexington and Concord, which initiated the American Revolution, hundreds of thousands—possibly approaching 1 million—took to the streets to voice their anger against the modern-day tyrants and would-be kings, Donald Trump and Elon Musk. From New York and Chicago, to rural Iowa and small-town Tennessee, the demonstrations once again revealed not only the breadth but the deepening radicalization of opposition to Trump and the capitalist system he represents.

The most striking feature of this weekend's protests was their more militant character compared to previous anti-Trump demonstrations. While the overall turnout was smaller than the April 5 protests, which drew an estimated 3 million people in over 1,500 protests, the sentiments of those who participated Saturday were further to the left, with many expressing a more conscious opposition to the Democratic Party and a growing recognition of the historical parallels between the fascist regimes of the 1930s and Trump's efforts to establish a dictatorship today.

These demonstrations unfolded in open defiance of the official "50501" protest leadership, which in February became connected to the Political Revolution group closely associated with Bernie Sanders and the Democratic Party. The scale of the April 5 demonstration shocked and terrified the entire political and media establishment, who barely commented on them, as well as the leaders of the protests themselves.

Behind the scenes, the Democratic Party undoubtedly exerted pressure on the "50501" leadership to try to cancel the planned April 19 protests. On April 9, the group issued a statement to this effect on its social media channels, declaring, "We just aren't doing a big national push" and instead encouraging people to host picnics, visit libraries or conduct other apolitical activities. This provoked widespread anger and was met with mass defiance by those who protested Saturday.

Significantly, not a single leader of the Democratic Party has commented prominently on the April 19 demonstrations, with none attending or speaking at the major protests. While attempting to take over the protests behind the scenes, all factions of the Democratic Party view any such mass opposition with fear and hostility.

This includes both official "left" Democrats, Bernie Sanders and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, who have remained silent on Saturday's protests which they did not attend. Instead, through their "Fighting Oligarchy" tour, the two have sought to corral opposition back behind

the Democratic Party. At a campaign event last week in Idaho, Sanders revealed his true colors when he allowed police to remove pro-Palestine protesters from his rally, shortly after he declared, "Israel has a right to defend itself."

Also notably absent Saturday were any leading officials from the trade union bureaucracies, which have fully adapted themselves to the Trump administration's unprecedented attacks on the working class, above all, through the mass firing of over 100,000 federal workers. In recent weeks, United Auto Workers (UAW) President Shawn Fain has repeatedly backed Trump's tariffs policy, which is unleashing a trade war that will devastate the American and international working class.

The near-total absence of any of these reactionary forces generated a more concentrated left-wing atmosphere at Saturday's protests, with many denouncing the role of both capitalist parties in facilitating the rise of fascism.

As one protester in New York City told the *World Socialist Web Site*:

We're in the place that we are in now, not just because the Republican Party has been supporting someone like Trump, but also because the Democratic Party has been allowing them to do that. They benefit from this as much as the Republicans do. They'll never let you know that, but they do. The two-party system is a good way to descend into fascism.

She added:

People like to make America out to be a middle class country, and we are not. We are a working class country. The majority of people in the United States are working class. ... We deserve rights no matter what our income is. We deserve the basic necessities to live.

This growing radicalization was not limited to New York. In both Detroit and Lansing, Michigan, Socialist Equality Party members addressed the crowd, receiving loud applause when they denounced the Democrats for enabling Trump and called for a turn to the working class and socialist politics. At most protests, opposition to Trump and the Democrats was connected to a deep-going revulsion with the bipartisan support for the Gaza genocide.

Many demonstrators dressed as Founding Fathers to mark the

250th anniversary of the start of the American Revolution, with many consciously evoking the heritage of both the American and French Revolutions. One sign declared, “They want to give us Germany 1939, we’ll give them France 1789.”

Protesters were acutely aware of and hostile to the Trump regime’s increasingly fascist attacks on democratic rights, immigrants and the entire working class, with signs at every demonstration referencing the illegal arrest of legal resident Kilmar Abrego Garcia—seized without due process and deported to the brutal CECOT prison in El Salvador.

As one protester told the WWS:

Kilmar is the canary in the coal mine. They just grabbed this guy. He’s a legal resident of Maryland. ... If they can do it to him, they can do it to everyone else.

Numerous protesters correctly identified CECOT—where Trump has also illegally deported hundreds of Venezuelan migrants—as a modern-day concentration camp. Just this week, in a White House meeting with fascist Salvadoran President Nayib Bukele, Trump declared his intention to deport tens of thousands of American citizens to CECOT, encouraging Bukele to create a network of massive concentration camps for this purpose.

The deepening radicalization visible in Saturday’s protests, while significant, still remains at an early stage. Above all, the protest movement lacks a broader historically grounded socialist consciousness, which can only develop through the systematic building of a revolutionary party rooted in the working class.

Analyzing the significance of the April 5 protests and the growing opposition to Trump, the Socialist Equality Party stressed:

As of yet, it lacks a clear political program or organizational expression. The working class has not intervened in the situation as an independent and conscious force. Under conditions in which the union apparatus supports Trump and the Democratic Party offers no real opposition, the emergence of mass resistance has taken an initial and largely spontaneous form.

However, this very spontaneity underscores the urgency of political clarification. The working class must be armed with an understanding of the real nature of fascism—not as an individual aberration but as the product of the historic breakdown of the capitalist system. The enemy is not only Trump and the Republicans, but the entire capitalist state, including the Democratic Party, the union bureaucracy and the financial oligarchy that rules America.

This assessment applies as well to the April 19 demonstrations, which largely lacked a clear leadership or orientation to the working class. But objective events are inevitably radicalizing broad sections of workers and youth, whose economic standing and basic democratic rights are being dismantled virtually overnight as the American ruling class hurtles towards dictatorship.

At protests across the US, including in New York City, Chicago, Detroit, San Diego, Seattle, Washington D.C., and other cities, demonstrators warmly received Socialist Equality Party campaign

teams distributing thousands of copies of the SEP statement, “Build a socialist movement to stop Trump’s dictatorship!” The statement concluded:

The fight against fascism and dictatorship is inseparable from the fight against capitalism. This requires the independent, organized and conscious intervention of the working class, armed with a revolutionary socialist program. The working class today is larger, more globally interconnected, and more powerful than ever before. Its radicalization is an objective process, driven by the crisis of capitalism itself.

But this objective strength must be transformed into conscious political action. The Socialist Equality Party (SEP) and the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) are building the revolutionary leadership needed for this historic task.

The critical task is turning to a serious study of politics and the assimilation of the history of the socialist and working class movement, above all, the experience of the 1917 Russian Revolution, which first brought the working class to power.

On May 3, the *World Socialist Web Site* and the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) are hosting the International May Day Online Rally, titled “Socialism Against Fascism and War.” All those entering into struggle against Trump and the threat of fascism should make plans to attend this rally, whose central aim is to unify workers and youth throughout the world, develop socialist consciousness, and lay the foundations for the building of a revolutionary socialist leadership in the international working class.

Attend and help build the International Online May Day Rally!

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