

After the US elections: An intensification of war and social counterrevolution

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It is less than one week since the US midterm elections, and already the Obama administration, in alliance with Republican and Democratic congressional leaders, is moving aggressively to implement unpopular policies that were entirely excluded from the election campaign.

On foreign policy, the White House announced Friday that the US will send an additional 1,500 troops to Iraq, doubling the number of US soldiers there. Administration officials also said they will request \$5 billion from Congress to fund the operations in the Middle East ostensibly targeting the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS).

President Obama has let it be known that he will seek a new congressional authorization for use of military force for expanded operations in the Middle East (including against Syria). By mutual agreement, Democratic and Republican lawmakers had scuttled out of Washington for their pre-election break without taking up the issue of authorizing the new Middle East war.

These measures give the lie to Obama's pre-election pledge that no US troops will be sent into combat in Iraq or Syria. They were undoubtedly decided on before Election Day, but concealed during the months-long campaign so as deprive the American people of having any chance to express their attitude at the polls. Such is the reality of American "democracy."

On all major questions that affect the lives of the broad mass of the population—beginning with the issue of war—working people have no say. The elections are exercises in deceit and manipulation. All important decisions are made in secret by the military/intelligence agencies and the corporate elite whose interests they defend.

Thus, the first major act by Obama after the election

was to hold a closed-door White House meeting at which the congressional leaders of both parties received their marching orders from General Lloyd Austin, the head of US Central Command, which oversees military operations in the Middle East, North Africa and Central Asia.

The second major announcement, also on Friday, did not come from Washington, but it had the full support of the White House and both parties. This was the approval by federal bankruptcy judge Steven Rhodes of Detroit's "plan of adjustment" to exit bankruptcy.

The plan, drawn up by Emergency Manager Kevyn Orr, a close ally of the White House, is a frontal assault on the pensions and health benefits of city workers, combined with a sell-off of public assets, to pay off the Wall Street banks and bondholders that have been bleeding the city dry for decades.

The bankruptcy of Detroit, once the center of auto manufacturing in America and the world, is part of a bipartisan policy of social counterrevolution that has already produced a massive transfer of wealth from the working class to the rich. In the days since the election, Obama and House Republican leaders have indicated they will seek agreement on a sharp reduction in the corporate tax rate, among other reactionary measures.

Neither party discussed the ever-greater concentration of wealth at the very top or the relentless assault on the working class during the election campaign. Their secret agenda of new handouts to big business and new attacks on social programs and working class living standards was deliberately concealed.

Obama himself delivered a campaign speech in Detroit just days before the election and the deadline for Judge Rhodes' ruling and never even mentioned the bankruptcy. This is the same man who months before had declared he would spend his remaining time in

office focusing “like a laser” on the problem of social inequality.

The Republican victory last Tuesday was not the result of a surge in popular support for the Republican Party or its right-wing policies. It was the result of the collapse of the Democrats. Record-low voter turnout reflected above all the alienation and bitterness of working people and youth who had no interest in voting once again for an administration and party that worked hand-in-glove with the other right-wing party of big business to attack their living standards and democratic rights and go from one imperialist war to another.

The estimated turnout for the elections stands at 36.4 percent, the lowest since 1942 (when many voters were unable to cast ballots due to the Second World War). In many of the most significant states in the country (including California, New York, Indiana and New Jersey), turnout was less than a third. This means that in most races, the winner received the votes of only 15 to 20 percent of the electorate.

The election marked the collapse of the Democrats’ electoral strategy of using the politics of gender, race and sexual preference—the obsession of privileged layers of the middle class—to conceal their agreement with the Republicans on ever more brutal attacks on the working class. The passage of a series of ballot measures to raise the minimum wage, including in states that elected Republicans to Congress and the state house, showed that the masses are moved by basic social and class issues, not the secondary issues that preoccupy the narrow and wealthy base of the Democratic Party.

The Democrats and their pseudo-left allies are proposing various alibis to explain the Democratic debacle, all of which, in one way or another, imply that the working class failed to turn out for the Democrats because it is stupid, racist or both.

Obama himself, in an interview broadcast Sunday on CBS News’ “Face the Nation” program, said the people had somehow failed to appreciate the wonderful things he had done in their behalf. “I think we have not been successful,” he declared, “in going out there and letting people know what it is that we are trying to do and why this is the right direction.” Arrogance and lies! It is precisely because of the things the Obama administration has done—not “for,” but “to”—the vast majority of the people that he is so hated and despised.

The victory of the Republican Party is a distorted reflection of the *leftward* trajectory of millions of workers and youth and a growing awareness that the Democrats, no less than the Republicans, are a party of Wall Street. However, these sentiments, in a political and electoral system dominated by two right-wing parties of big business, could find mass expression only in the negative, i.e., through abstention.

The basic division is not between the Democrats and Republicans, but between a tiny financial oligarchy and the working class, the vast majority of the population. The working class is angry and disillusioned. It increasingly sees through the democratic façade and senses the futility of seeking to address its concerns through the existing political system. This means social opposition must and will develop in conflict with the entire political establishment and the social system, capitalism, it upholds.



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