

# In name of fighting fascism, ISO promotes class collaboration and Democratic Party

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Many workers and youth have been rightfully appalled by the rise of far-right political organizations and forces around the world. In the United States, a series of events unfolded before the midterm elections that exposed the growth of fascistic forces in the US.

Eleven people were killed at the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh on October 27 in the deadliest anti-Semitic attack in US history. The shooter, Robert Bowers, was motivated by both anti-Semitism and hatred of Central American immigrants, whom he called, echoing Donald Trump, “invaders.”

This atrocity was a product of Trump’s fascistic agitation in a series of campaign speeches, whipping up chauvinist and xenophobic sentiments among his base. Just days before the synagogue shooting, a Trump supporter sent mail bombs to prominent politicians, actors and other public figures associated with the Democratic Party.

In the wake of these events, along with the midterm election results on November 6, the International Socialist Organization (ISO) in the United States published a statement on November 7 with the headline: “A call to unite and fight the far-right menace! ISO statement on building a new, anti-fascist united front.”

The statement advances a perspective for leading working people and youth looking for a way to fight the rise of far-right forces into the dead end of subordination to those sections of the ruling class represented by the Democratic Party. Far from a formula for defeating the far-right, it follows a well-worn path of class collaboration and “popular front”-style politics that historically has led to bloody defeats of the working class and the victory of right-wing forces from the 1930s to the present.

Perhaps most revealing is what the statement does *not* say. The reader will search in vain for the following words: capitalism, socialism, class, working class, Democratic Party. There is no serious political analysis. Fascism as a sociopolitical and historical phenomenon is not explained, nor is its recent growth in Europe and elsewhere. It is simply attributed to the sinister doings of Trump, who is treated as some kind of evil genius.

The growth of far-right forces is thus ripped out of its real context in the global crisis of capitalism, the extreme intensification of geopolitical and social tensions and the

universal lurch to the right of all capitalist parties—from the traditional parties of the right to those supposedly on the “left” of the political establishment, such as the Social Democratic parties internationally and the Democrats in the US.

There is no hint that at the heart of the crisis is a struggle between hostile classes, nor that the working class is the revolutionary force capable of defeating the threat from the far-right by putting an end to its source, the capitalist system.

What one is left with is the bankrupt and two-faced “left” liberalism of figures such as Bernie Sanders, who, of course, the ISO assiduously promotes.

After stating a basic fact, that “fascism is an existential threat to the working class,” the ISO declares that a movement must be built to “confront, demobilize and discredit the growing far-right in this country and around the world.”

And how is fascism to be “confronted” and “discredited”? According to the ISO, “the left must unite with the broadest social layers and largest numbers possible to oppose these racist intimidators.” The statement continues: “The ISO calls for collaboration among organizations and individuals on the left in join in common activity to confront this upsurge in fascist violence.”

This politically amorphous and classless formula is the basis for an alliance with any political tendency or party that claims to oppose fascism and Trump, including sections of the Democratic Party.

The ISO invokes the term “united front”—which in the history of the Marxist movement signifies a tactical alliance between different workers’ parties and organizations, politically independent of any section or party of the capitalist class—to justify its opposite: the political subordination of the working class to the bourgeoisie, in the guise of defending “democracy” against fascism. This was the program advanced in the 1930s by the Soviet Stalinist bureaucracy and its Stalinized Communist Parties around the world to strangle socialist revolutions in France, Spain and other countries. These defeats of the working class bolstered the fascists and paved the way for the Second World War.

It is worth noting that in a recent contribution on *Socialist Worker*, the online publication of the ISO, Chris Wright ended his defense of the Democratic Party as the “lesser evil” with

support for the popular front: “When (semi-) fascism is appearing on the horizon or is already in power, the imperative is to build a united front against fascism,” he said. “The Communist Party in the period of the Popular Front was right about this. It’s time to apply the hard-won lessons of the past.”

Genuine socialists understand fascism as the product of deep capitalist crisis. Facing the prospect of social revolt from below, and having no social reforms to ameliorate the suffering of the masses, the ruling class turns toward authoritarianism and extreme nationalism to defend its rule. “Capitalist society is puking up [its] undigested barbarism,” Leon Trotsky wrote in 1933. He explained fascism as the effort of the ruling class to mobilize the ruined middle class and desperate sections of backward workers to crush the threat of socialist revolution by atomizing the working class and destroying all forms of working-class organization.

Unlike the 1920s and 1930s, neo-fascist tendencies and parties today, such as the Alternative for Germany, the Lega in Italy, Francoist groups in Spain, etc., do not have a mass base of support. They rely almost entirely on the political, financial and media establishment to raise them to the highest levels of the state.

The only reference in the ISO statement to the social and political roots of the far-right is a single sentence: “The conditions that made the development of this odious movement possible—social polarization and crisis—still exist.” Where these conditions came from, why they exist, and which social layers and political organizations promote them—of this, nothing is said.

By omission, entirely deliberate, the ISO statement absolves the Democratic Party of any role in the growth of far-right forces. In fact, it is a product of the political vacuum on the left created by the universal lurch to the right over decades by all of the parties and organizations that have presented themselves as “left” and “liberal” in the past.

They have all, especially since the 2008 financial crash, adopted policies of austerity against the working class combined with militarism and authoritarianism.

Obama, whose election in 2008 the ISO hailed as a “transformative event” in American politics, exemplifies this global process. He presided over an escalation of US wars in the Middle East, the multitrillion-dollar bailout of the banks, brutal wage-cutting and austerity against autoworkers, teachers and public employees, and a vast expansion of illegal surveillance, drone assassinations, deportations and other attacks on democratic rights. He oversaw the greatest transfer of wealth from the working class to the rich in US history.

Since Obama, the Democrats have continued to lurch to the right. They followed their election victory in last month’s midterms, giving them control of the House of Representatives, with pledges to cooperate with Trump’s reactionary domestic agenda while dropping any opposition to his anti-immigrant witch hunt. They are spearheading the drive for internet

censorship in the name of combating Russian “fake news.” Their only serious opposition to Trump is a right-wing attack based on the demand that he escalate US military provocations against Moscow.

This is what enabled Trump, demagogically exploiting social desperation and disgust with Clinton and the Democrats, to come to power.

Another group that falls under the ISO’s appeal to “broad layers” is the anarchist elements of Black Bloc and Antifa, which promote street battles and violent confrontations with far-right forces. The ISO has consistently endorsed and defended the antics of these groups, which play into the hands of the state. The adventurist tactics of such anarchist groups are based on a rejection of the revolutionary role of the working class and the deepest pessimism. They go hand in hand with the most naked political opportunism.

The ISO is part of the broader “pseudo-left,” which utilizes socialist phraseology but actively works to keep workers and youth chained to capitalism—by promoting reformism, bolstering the Democratic Party, defending US imperialist wars in Syria and elsewhere, and propping up the trade union bureaucracy.

The ISO’s November 7 statement calling for a class collaborationist “united front” against fascism signals its own turn further to the right and to an even closer integration with the Democratic Party. This is in large part a reaction to the upsurge of working-class struggle in the US—beginning with this year’s statewide teachers’ strikes—and internationally—expressed most sharply in the mass “yellow vest” protests in France. The growth of the class struggle has been accompanied by a rise of anti-capitalist sentiment among broad sections of workers and youth.

The ISO represents not the working class, but privileged and well-off sections of the middle class. It reacts with fear and hostility to the prospect of an independent movement of the working class. It strives to undercut such a movement by shoring up the right-wing trade union bureaucracy and promoting the illusion that the Democratic Party can be pressured to the left.

The fight against fascism requires the building of a mass movement of workers on an international scale against all bourgeois parties. This struggle is inseparably bound up with a fight against the pseudo-left forces such as the ISO that seek to block the development of a politically independent revolutionary movement of the working class.



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