

The global protests and the fight against capitalism

Statement of the Socialist Equality Party
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The protests over the police murder of George Floyd have developed into a global movement of unprecedented breadth and scope.

As of Sunday evening, there have been demonstrations in nearly 2,000 cities and towns worldwide since May 25. Large demonstrations were held this weekend in London, Rome, Berlin, Vienna, Madrid, Paris, Lisbon, Warsaw and many other European cities. More than 12,000 people protested in front of the Norwegian parliament in Oslo on Friday. Protests were organized in Australia, India, Pakistan, Tunisia, and Mexico. Tens of thousands demonstrated across New Zealand last week.

The United States is the center of the world movement. Protests throughout the country are entering their third week. There have been substantial popular assemblies in every region and state. Some of the largest of these multiracial and multiethnic demonstrations have taken place in the Deep South, once the bastion of segregation, lynch law and political reaction.

The trigger event for this social upheaval was the murder of Floyd in Minneapolis, Minnesota on May 25. The staggering brutality of this crime horrified the public and generated an overwhelming mood of popular revulsion. But this latest killing, one of more than 1,000 committed by the US police every year, evoked such an eruption of popular anger because the United States was already a social tinderbox, waiting only for an event to ignite the explosion. The same situation exists in countries all over the world.

The global wave of demonstrations is giving expression to an immense wellspring of social and political anger. It is the response to decades of unending war, the destruction of basic democratic rights, and a massive concentration of wealth in the

hands of a tiny ruling elite.

One of the most striking features of this development is its “leaderless” character. Whichever ruling party is currently dominant in any given country, the official attitude toward the growth of social opposition among workers and youth is fundamentally hostile.

In the US, no Democratic or Republican politician speaks to the sentiments animating the protests. The handful of Democrats who have tried to address protests this past week—the Democratic mayors of Minneapolis and New York City, for example—were booed, heckled and driven off the platform.

The attitude of the political establishment to the democratic rights of workers and youth took its most glaring form in the absence of any official response from the Democratic Party to Trump’s attempt to stage a coup d’état and deploy the military throughout the country to suppress opposition.

One of Trump’s chief co-conspirators, Attorney General William Barr, reiterated in an interview Sunday that the president had every right to invoke the Insurrection Act and send in federal troops, even over the opposition of state governors and other officials, although he was not doing so now. Moreover, Barr vociferously defended the actions of federal police and National Guard troops who cleared Lafayette Square next to the White House, driving away peaceful protesters with a hail of tear gas, pepper balls and other riot control weaponry.

The Democratic Party’s response to Trump’s threat to deploy the military has consisted of platitudes and evasions. It has avoided any clear and unequivocal denunciation of Trump’s actions, let alone calling for his immediate removal from office. The Democratic congressional leadership, which impeached Trump for holding up military aid to Ukraine, does not lift a finger

when Trump demands the military occupation of Washington.

To the extent that opposition to Trump's coup d'état was voiced, it came from sections of the military. The media is trumpeting the statements of former General James "Mad Dog" Mattis and other retired officers. But the fact that the main response to Trump has come from ex-generals only serves to demonstrate that the military—not the civilian branches of government—has become the arbiter of the fate of American democracy. A democracy that depends for its survival on the sufferance of the military is on its last legs.

The dangers are very real. The conspirators in the White House have not ceased their plotting. The military is biding its time and considering its options. The police remain armed to the teeth.

Moreover, in the states and cities, Democratic governors and mayors have sought to make an intervention by the Army unnecessary by using the National Guard and massively armed police to do the dirty work of attacking protesters. Already, nearly a dozen people have been killed while protesting and 10,000 have been arrested.

It is entirely natural that at an early stage in the development of a revolutionary crisis, the protesting masses enter into struggle without a clear conception of what they are fighting against and what they are fighting for, but only with an understanding that they can no longer endure the present regime. But the democratic aspirations can be realized only to the extent that the working class comes forward as the leading and decisive force in the unfolding mass movement.

The enemy must be properly identified. It is not just a matter of rogue police forces or racist cops. The source of the attack on democratic rights is the financial oligarchy and the social and economic system, capitalism, upon which its wealth and power are based.

Therefore, the defense of democratic rights must be based on a socialist program aimed at the transfer of political power to the working class and a comprehensive economic restructuring of society.

The Socialist Equality Party calls for workers and young people opposed to police violence to draw the necessary conclusions from their experiences and take up the fight to build a socialist leadership in the working class. The fight against police violence must

be fused with the developing and growing struggles of workers, in the United States and throughout the world, against inequality, exploitation, war, authoritarianism and the capitalist profit system.



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