

Alan Woods, leader of pseudo-left RCI, hails election of Trump as “kick in the teeth” to US ruling class

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On November 6, following the announcement of Donald Trump's victory in the US presidential election, Alan Woods, leader of the Revolutionary Communist International (RCI), the successor to the International Marxist Tendency (IMT), published an article that starkly illustrates the complacent and anti-Marxist orientation of his political tendency.

Revealingly titled “Trump victory: a kick in the teeth for the establishment,” the article echoes Trump's fraudulent claims of being an anti-establishment figure while downplaying the immense dangers posed by a Trump presidency to the working class.

David North, the chairman of the International Editorial Board of the *World Socialist Web Site* and national chairman of the Socialist Equality Party (US), in his introductory remarks to the post-election online webinar “The Election Debacle and the Fight Against Dictatorship,” warned:

Now, it is not the position of the SEP and the WSWS that the accession of Trump to the presidency is the equivalent of Hitler's 1933 victory. The United States is not Weimar Germany, and the transformation of the United States into a police state dictatorship backed by a mass fascist movement will not, whatever Trump's intentions, be achieved overnight.

But it would be politically irresponsible, and actually contribute to the success of Trump's aims, not to recognize the dangerous implications and real consequences of last Tuesday's election. At the very least, it is necessary to take Trump at his word.

This warning applies in full to Alan Woods' presentation of the significance of Trump's election. Bordering on infatuation, it seeks to dismiss the dangers from Trump's plans for dictatorial rule and social counterrevolution.

Woods writes:

The ruling class of America – firmly supported by the governments of Europe – was determined to keep him [Trump] out of office, by fair means or foul. After Trump was ousted in the 2020 election, everything was done to prevent him from standing again... All the numerous attacks against him rebounded and turned against those who were seen – correctly – as being involved in a conspiracy to prevent him from re-entering the White House.

This portrayal is false. The ruling class was not “determined to keep

[Trump] out of office.” Significant sections of the financial and corporate elite, including billionaires like Elon Musk and Peter Thiel, actively supported Trump, viewing his authoritarian and pro-business agenda as a means of furthering their own class interests. Others, like Jeff Bezos, have proclaimed their support for Trump after the election.

When Woods writes “...by fair means or foul” and affirms Trump's claims of a “conspiracy to prevent him from reentering the White House,” he is legitimizing the presentation of Trump as the victim of “lawfare” and a conspiracy by the deep state. Woods implies that the prosecution of those involved in the attempt to overturn the 2020 election should be seen as part of a conspiracy against Trump, channeling Trump's own propaganda that “All the cards were stacked against him.”

In fact, in advance of the election, Trump and the sections of the corporate and financial oligarchy backing him were “determined” to use all means, “fair or foul” to return to the White House, actively plotting to reject the outcome of any election that did not lead to his victory. As it turned out, the complete bankruptcy of the Democratic Party allowed Trump to secure an electoral victory. Having won office, Trump is rapidly assembling a government of, by and for the oligarchy, while utilizing all means, “fair or foul,” to implement his agenda.

As for the Democratic Party, it did everything it could to create the conditions for Trump's return. The Democrats had four years in the White House to prosecute Trump for his attempt to overthrow the Constitution. It took no serious measures to do so. In his inauguration speech two weeks after the January 6 fascist attack on the Capitol, Biden said he wanted a “strong Republican Party,” even though the Republican Party for the most part supported the coup attempt and continued to defend the ex-president.

This was because the Democratic Party's overriding priority was the preparation for war against Russia and China, and that required support from the Republicans. Going after Trump seriously would cut across this war policy. At the same time, Biden and the Democrats were fearful that the explosive crisis of American capitalism and breakdown of its traditional forms of rule could lead to the breakup of the two-party system, which is how the US ruling class maintains its political domination of the working class.

Woods presents Trump's election as a defeat for the ruling class. How, then, does he explain the record surge on Wall Street in response to Trump's election? Not to mention the abject capitulation of the Democratic Party to the incoming president and aspiring dictator, with Biden pledging the “smoothest” possible transition and leading Democrats, from Bernie Sanders to Nancy Pelosi, declaring their desire to “work with” Trump to ensure a “successful” administration?

Woods writes of the election: “[T]his was a kind of ‘Peasants Revolt’ – a plebeian insurgency and a crushing vote of no confidence in the existing order.” Those voting for Trump “are looking for a radical alternative,” he

adds. “This might’ve been provided by Sanders, if he had decided to break [with] the Democrats and stand as an independent. But he capitulated to the establishment of the Democratic Party, and that disillusioned his base... In the absence of a viable left-wing candidate, millions of people who felt alienated and politically dispossessed took advantage of the opportunity to deliver a well-aimed kick against the establishment.”

Trump was able to exploit social grievances, but to present his victory as a “plebian insurgency” is an expression of abject prostration and political bankruptcy. How can a vote for a billionaire far-right candidate who declares his intention to establish a dictatorship on “day one” of his administration and mobilize the military to deport millions of immigrants be a “well-aimed kick at the establishment?”

It is notable that Woods laments that Bernie Sanders did not take the advice of the IMT to launch an independent party, which the IMT pledged to support in 2016. The IMT was part of the pseudo-left fraternity that oriented itself to the Sanders campaign, in line with its basic perspective of pressuring the Democrats to the left.

Going even further, Woods writes: “Donald Trump has played a most important role in placing the working class at the very centre of US politics for the first time in decades.” In the hands of Woods, Trump, a billionaire conspirator intent on imposing a social counter-revolution, is transformed into an agent of historical progress. He has even “played a most important role” in elevating the working class to the center of American politics!

Continuing his glorification of Trump, Woods presents him as a potential brake on the escalation of war. He writes: “In essence, his inclination is towards isolationism. He is averse to any idea of America getting entangled in foreign alignments of any sort – whether that be the United Nations, the World Trade Organisation or NATO itself.”

Further on, he writes: “However, it is not at all clear that he will be in favour of a war with China, which is both economically and militarily a very formidable power.”

There is nothing in Trump’s record, his recent statements or the politics of those he has appointed to staff his incoming administration to support this view. Recently, Alex Wong, Trump’s incoming deputy national security adviser, posted on social media the following in relation to China:

The United States and its people have to be prepared for a level of tensions, regional destabilization and—yes—possible conflict that we have not seen since the end of World War II.

Woods is trying to make Trump out to be something of a pacifist. Nothing could be further from the truth. There do, of course, exist differences in tactics within the ruling class. On domestic issues, certain sections have preferred to utilize the trade union bureaucracy to stifle the working class. Other sections of the ruling class seek the cultivation of far-right vigilantes and police repression against the working class. On foreign policy, a main disagreement is whether or not China should be the more immediate target.

But Trump and the Republicans are absolutely ruthless representatives of American imperialism. Significantly, Woods says nothing about Trump’s even more naked support for Israeli genocide against the Palestinians than that of the Biden administration, and his condemnation of even rhetorical efforts to distance the US from the mass murder and ethnic cleansing that is taking place.

Woods does not characterize Trump as a fascist, only a right-wing politician. His refusal to identify Trump as a fascist is connected to the position of the RCI’s predecessor organization, the IMT, on the January 6, 2021, coup attempt. As the *World Socialist Web Site* reported at the

time, Woods wrote: “This was not an organized insurrectionary coup on the verge of overthrowing the US government and imposing a fascist regime to crush the workers and the left. Far from it!”

This position is rooted in the dangerous illusion that the ruling class and military in the United States remain committed to democratic forms of rule. The IMT asserted that the January 6 coup attempt was an isolated act, involving only Trump and the crowd who stormed the Capitol building, going as far as to claim that “Trump and his diehard supporters in Congress almost certainly did not plan for the crowd to invade the Capitol, but they were playing with fire... Trump’s attack dogs... broke free of their leashes.”

The IMT’s American section wrote in the aftermath of the January 6 coup attempt that fascism is only a threat “... if the working class fails to take power over the next decade or two, and only after a series of serious defeats.”

In fact, the events of January 6, 2021, and the Trump phenomenon as a whole are the outcome of a protracted process of crisis and decay of American democracy, going back decades. The Supreme Court decision in the 2000 election, undemocratically handing the presidency to George W. Bush, the loser of the popular and electoral vote, was not opposed by the Democratic Party, revealing, as the *World Socialist Web Site* analyzed, the absence of any significant constituency within the ruling class for the defense of democracy. Supreme Court Justice Scalia articulated the outlook of certain layers of the ruling class when he said that there was no constitutionally protected right to vote for the president.

Woods’ failure to characterize Trump as a fascist is not an oversight. He and the RCI explicitly reject designating Trump and his administration-in-waiting as fascist. The founding conference, held in June of this year, which transformed the IMT into the Revolutionary Communist International, adopted a manifesto that includes the following passage:

Superficial impressionists on the so-called Left internationally foolishly see Trumpism as fascism: Such confusion cannot help us to understand the real significance of important phenomena.

This nonsense leads them directly into the swamp of class-collaborationist policies. By advancing the false idea of the “lesser evil,” they invite the working class and its organisations to unite with one reactionary wing of the bourgeoisie against another.

It was this false policy that allowed them to push voters to support Joe Biden and the Democrats—a vote that many people subsequently bitterly regretted.

By constantly harping on about the alleged danger of “fascism,” they will disarm the working class when faced with genuine fascist formations in the future. As for the present, they miss the point entirely.

Behind this grotesque complacency and prostration before the fascist threat lie profound pessimism and a demoralized rejection of the possibility of the working class playing an independent and revolutionary political role. This is the content of asserting that declaring Trump a fascist automatically means adopting the position of “lesser evilism” and supporting the Democrats.

According to Woods and the RCI, one cannot at once recognize the fascistic, violently counterrevolutionary and anti-working class content of Trump’s policies—embodied in the assemblage of billionaires, political gangsters and quacks in his incoming administration—and at the same time fight for a break with the Democrats and the political independence of the working class. But that was precisely the program advanced by the Socialist Equality Party in its 2024 presidential election campaign, headed by Joseph Kishore and Jerry White.

A fascist in the White House is not the same as the consolidation of fascist rule in America. There will be massive working class resistance and battles against Trump's policies that will create the objective conditions for the building of revolutionary leadership and the mobilization of the working class on the basis of a socialist and internationalist program.

In order to deny that Trump represents anything fundamentally different in American politics—that his government will simply be a continuation of political reaction—Woods omits in his article, as does the RCI in its founding document, any concrete discussion of his actual policies. He says nothing about Trump's pogromist attacks on immigrants, who play for Trump the role played by the Jews in Hitler's fascist agitation, and his pledge to use the military to deport millions of immigrant workers beginning on day one of his administration.

He is silent on Trump's promise to destroy "the enemy within," whom he identifies as left-wingers and socialists. He says nothing about Trump's promise to cut \$2 trillion from the federal budget, rip up all regulations on big business and fire hundreds of thousands of federal workers. He is silent on Trump's deranged threats of massive tariffs and global trade war, the antechamber to World War III.

Woods' downplaying of the danger represented by Trump is of a piece with the overall analysis put forward in the RCI founding document, which denies the immediacy and depth of the crisis of American and world capitalism.

On the danger of imperialist war, the RCI writes: "In the past, the existing tensions would already have led to a major war between the Great Powers. But changing conditions have removed this from the agenda—at least for the present."

The document goes on to dismiss the danger of nuclear warfare, stating that "a world war is ruled out under present conditions..." Toward its conclusion, the document states: "For the reasons outlined above, the present crisis will be prolonged in nature. It can last years, or even decades..."

This politically criminal underestimation of the crisis is bound up with the RCI's perspective of regroupment with and liquidation into Stalinist and pseudo-left organizations in the name of pursuing a "united front" policy. This is the real content of its new "communist" international.

Thus the RCI founding document promotes the Stalinist Greek Communist Party, whose history is one of complicity in all of the counterrevolutionary crimes of the Soviet bureaucracy, from the Moscow trials and murder of the Bolsheviks who led the October Revolution, including Leon Trotsky, to the betrayal of the post-World War II Greek Civil War and the subjection of the Greek working class to the IMF's brutal austerity program by Syriza.

The document states:

The Greek Communist Party (KKE) has undoubtedly taken important steps in rejecting the old discredited Stalinist-Menshevik idea of two stages... It's too early to conclude that the progress made by the Greek communists has been completed.

Most revealing is the falsification of the history of the Marxist movement to exclude the role of Trotsky as the founder of the Fourth International and, indeed, the very existence of the Fourth International since 1938, including its living presence today in the form of the International Committee of the Fourth International and its affiliated Socialist Equality Parties.

The founding document of the RCI states:

What is required is a genuine Communist Party, which bases itself on the ideas of Lenin and the other great Marxist teachers, and an international on the lines of the Communist International during its first five years.

In other words, Stalin destroyed the continuity of Marxism and international socialism and Trotsky's monumental achievement in founding the Fourth International was of no significance. This is, in fact, a political capitulation to counterrevolutionary Stalinism. The rejection of the continuity of Marxism through the Fourth International leaves the RCI free to engage in nationalist and opportunist politics behind the façade of "communist" rhetoric. The result is capitulation not only to capitalism in general, but to its fascist wing.

The complacency and opportunism of the RCI are rooted in its historical origins and long-standing rejection of the Leninist conception of the fight for socialist consciousness.

For the RCI, socialist consciousness develops as an automatic process, leaving out the role of the revolutionary party and its fight to win the working class to a socialist perspective. The RCI openly rejects this task. Its founding document states:

"In the past, you had to struggle to persuade people as to the correctness of communist ideas and Marxist ideas. Not anymore."

Lenin wrote in *What is to be Done?*:

There is much talk of spontaneity. But the *spontaneous* development of the working-class movement leads to its subordination to bourgeois ideology... our task... is to *combat spontaneity, to divert* the working class from this spontaneous, trade-unionist striving to come under the wing of the bourgeoisie, and to bring it under the wing of revolutionary Social-Democracy...

The RCI's prostration before Trump and the fascistic right is a product of its historical origins in the Pabloite Militant Tendency led by Ted Grant.

The Militant Tendency spent the better part of the 20th century sowing illusions in "left" Labourites, operating as an internal faction of the British Labour Party. The national groupings of the RCI's political predecessor the IMT operated as internal factions of pseudo-left parties such as Syriza in Greece, Podemos in Spain, Die Linke in Germany, and the New Popular Front in France. In this way they sowed illusions in political parties that betrayed the working class, carrying out austerity policies and promoting nationalism and militarism.

As David North stated in introducing the *World Socialist Web Site*'s November 10 online meeting in response to the US election: "The time for serious politics has begun." The RCI does not represent serious politics. Its record is that of the deepest entryism in pseudo-left parties and opposition to the fight to raise the political consciousness of the working class.

A fight against Trump is necessary and must be politically prepared in the working class on the basis of a political perspective rooted in an assimilation of the historical experiences of the working class.

The Trump administration will unleash immense struggles, and it would be wrong to see the drive to dictatorship as completed. That will be decided in struggle. However, the RCI is actively disarming the working class and even asserting that Trump's election is a defeat for the ruling class.

Those workers and youth who recognize that Trump is threatening dictatorship, the destruction of the social rights of the working class and world war must take up the struggle to prepare the working class for the

impending mass struggles. This can only be done through a study of the analysis made on the *World Socialist Web Site* and the decision to join and build the Socialist Equality Party in the US and the International Committee of the Fourth International, the world party of socialist revolution.



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