

Jacobin on Silicon Valley alliance with Trump: A diversion from socialist politics

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The second Trump administration marks a fundamental and violent realignment of the American political system to serve the interests of the corporate-financial oligarchy. Trump embodies the logic of a ruling class that sees no way out of the deepening crisis of American and world capitalism except through authoritarian rule, militarism and ruthless class war.

At the center of this fascist program is tech oligarch Elon Musk, overseeing the so-called Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE), which aims to slash federal spending by \$2 trillion, dismantle essential social programs and erect an AI-driven mass surveillance regime targeting opponents of the Trump administration.

Musk's elevation to such a position underscores the deep integration of the tech billionaires into the far-right political apparatus, as they seek to preserve their immense wealth and power by aligning themselves with authoritarian and fascist forces. The convergence of Silicon Valley and the most reactionary elements of the ruling class is not only an American phenomenon, but part of a broader global trend.

A February 20 *Jacobin* article, "Tech Workers Can Still Fight Silicon Valley's Overlords," distorts the historical background of these phenomena and presents yet another example of the bankrupt reformist politics of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA). The piece, written by Hagen Blix and Ingeborg Glimmer, is based on their recently published book, *Why We Fear AI*, whose title indicates the one-sided, anti-Marxist approach taken by the authors towards the revolutionary advances associated with artificial intelligence (AI).

Written with the characteristic pessimism of the upper-middle class "left," the piece wrings its hands over the growing integration of Silicon Valley with the fascist Republican wing of the American political establishment, only to offer tepid, reformist prescriptions that do nothing to address the root cause of the crisis: capitalism itself.

At no point does the article mention anything about the need to develop an independent movement in the working class, guided by Marxist principles, to prepare workers for the expropriation and nationalization of these tech conglomerates. In fact, the article entirely omits the terms "working class," "class struggle," "exploitation," "surplus value," "revolution," "expropriate" and "socialism," among other basic precepts of socialist politics.

The central argument of the *Jacobin* piece is that tech workers must somehow reclaim the industry from the clutches of billionaires and reactionary politicians. But reclaim it for whom? The article's proposed solution—a nostalgic appeal to the "collective bargaining power" of tech workers—betrays the class orientation of the DSA and its milieu. In reality, the history of Silicon Valley is one of deep ties to the US military-industrial complex, financial speculation and ruthless labor exploitation. It is delusional to assert that these corporations, which have amassed trillions of dollars by surveilling and exploiting workers across the globe, can somehow be pressured into moral enlightenment.

This kind of "left" criticism is typical of the DSA and its publications.

Its aim is not to expose capitalism as a system that cannot be reformed, but to divert working class anger into the safe channels of the Democratic Party.

Bemoaning the fact that Big Tech has increasingly aligned itself with Trumpian reaction, the article conceals the reality that Silicon Valley was built with the full backing of the Democratic Party. The authors write:

For a while, it seemed like the workers' demands for equity and progressive change could be squared with capital's desire to increase its supply of capable workers. Back in the Obama years, Google's corporate motto was still "Don't Be Evil," reflecting this sense that the drive for profit and progressive values could coexist.

In fact, the Obama administration oversaw the unbridled consolidation of corporate power within the technology sector, granting the major monopolies free rein to entrench their dominance over both the economy and the state.

It was under Obama that tech conglomerates vastly expanded their mass surveillance programs, in collaboration with the intelligence agencies, epitomized by the 2013 secret contract between the CIA and Amazon Web Services, a landmark moment in the fusion of Silicon Valley with the military-intelligence apparatus. This was accompanied by ever-deepening internet censorship by Google, Facebook, Twitter and the other tech monopolies, which above all targeted left-wing websites.

Obama also oversaw the creation of the US Digital Service in 2014, a development now bearing bitter fruit as Musk exploits the agency to staff DOGE, firing workers in the process.

At the same time, Obama's record was defined by ruthless attacks on those who sought to expose the crimes of American imperialism. His administration waged an unrelenting campaign against whistleblowers and journalists, including Edward Snowden, Julian Assange and Chelsea Manning, while driving Aaron Swartz to suicide in 2013. The myth of Obama as a "progressive" stands in stark contrast to the reality of his administration: an era of intensified state surveillance, corporate dominance, and imperialist criminality.

These processes only deepened during the first Trump administration and then under Biden, with Google playing a central role in aiding Israel's genocidal assault on Gaza through Project Nimbus. Far from being a departure from the policies of its predecessors, the Biden administration represented their seamless continuation.

Jacobin's analysis is defined by a refusal to acknowledge the fundamental nature of the capitalist state. The authors treat the turn toward fascism as an aberration rather than the inevitable result of deepening economic crisis and social inequality.

The growth of far-right tendencies within the ruling class is not merely a

question of bad actors; it is a reflection of a social system in terminal crisis. The unity of Silicon Valley executives with Trump and his fascist movement is not simply about policy preferences, but class interests.

Blix and Glimmer repeatedly refer to a “class compromise” that until now has supposedly held sway in Silicon Valley, writing:

Alas, the support for H-1B visas may just be the swan song of that older unstable and uneasy class compromise, this constraining force on Silicon Valley’s most reactionary tendencies, that is now fracturing.

Later on, referring to tech executives deploying AI to purge their workforce, they claim, “And in their bet on AI’s deskilling power, they are ready to break free from the class compromise that they clearly experienced not as peace but as a shackle.”

This assertion that a “class compromise” previously governed Silicon Valley but has now unraveled under the pressures of a second Trump administration is a complete distortion of history.

The period of “class compromise” in the United States did not end in 2024 or with the rise of Trump, but with the offensive launched by the Reagan administration in the early 1980s—a counterrevolution against the working class that continues to this day. The smashing of the PATCO strike in 1981 signaled an epochal shift: from this point onward, the American ruling class abandoned even limited compromise and pursued unrelenting class warfare against workers, with the full collaboration of the trade union bureaucracy.

The Reagan class-war offensive, it must be added, was prepared by the anti-working-class policies of the previous, Democratic, administration under Jimmy Carter, who unsuccessfully sought to force striking coal miners back to work with a Taft-Hartley injunction during their historic 111-day national coal strike in 1977-78.

The *Jacobin* article obfuscates the basic Marxist conceptions of labor and exploitation by treating “skill” as a commodity. It claims that “when any commodity, including skills, is scarce and thus expensive, capitalists who depend on that commodity will try to increase its supply.”

This formulation conflates labor and labor power—a fundamental error from the standpoint of historical materialism. Marx demonstrated that labor itself is not a commodity, but rather the ability to labor, or labor power, is what workers sell to capitalists. Therefore, a “skill” is not itself a commodity, but rather a characteristic of a particular form of labor power that tends to endow it with a higher-than-average price on the labor market, i.e., a relatively high wage.

Furthermore, the value of labor power is not determined by “scarcity” in the simplistic manner the article suggests, but by the socially necessary labor time required to reproduce this labor power.

The limited expansion of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education, which the article cites as an example of capitalists responding to “skill scarcity,” is bound up with an objectively progressive development of the productive forces, which requires a development in the education and skill level of tech workers. Insofar as this remains within the confines of the historically outmoded and crisis-ridden profit system, however, this development is doomed to be turned by the ruling elite against the working class and the broad mass of the population.

For tech workers it means a corporate offensive to drive down wages and increase exploitation through the mass production of trained but disposable employees. This is the real content of the previous alliance between Silicon Valley and the Democratic Party, based not on an “uneasy compromise,” but on the shared aim of subordinating workers to the dictates of capital and the state.

The *Jacobin* framework is of design: the central reality of our time: that class struggle, not “compromise,” is the fundamental dynamic of capitalist society. The task of socialists is not to lament the “end” of a mythical class peace, but to arm workers with an understanding of their historical position in society and the revolutionary implications of their struggles.

Jacobin, as always, seeks to prevent any revolutionary response by the working class, including tech workers. The magazine exists to contain social discontent within the framework of Democratic Party politics. In this framework, the piece by Blix and Glimmer presents the trade union bureaucracy—thoroughly integrated into the structures of corporate management and the capitalist state—as a potential counterforce to Big Tech. They specifically state their agreement with a 2024 *Jacobin* op-ed by Shawn Fain, president of the United Auto Workers (UAW), writing:

First, tech workers tend to lean toward left and liberal political positions—just as the working class in general is, in the words of United Auto Workers president Shawn Fain, “the arsenal of democracy,” and just as organizations of the working class have generally been the major historic driver of democratization.

This is a fraud. Parroting Biden, Fain’s invocation of the “arsenal of democracy” revives the World War II-era slogan of the unity of capital and labor in wartime, which has always been aimed at covering up the historic crimes of American imperialism in the interests of facilitating its modern-day wars and the genocide in Gaza. Fain explicitly stated that American workers should return to building “aircraft carriers and tanks” as they did in the 1940s.

Jacobin’s promotion of the union bureaucracies as “organizations of the working class” is a grotesque distortion. Increasingly, over decades, the nationalist union bureaucracies, whether in auto, rail, healthcare, education or tech, have functioned dutifully as enforcers of corporate demands, suppressing strikes, sabotaging struggles, and imposing sellout contracts. Today, under explosive conditions, they are doing everything in their power to stifle the class struggle and prevent any break with the capitalist two-party system.

Fain himself is the embodiment of these tendencies. Under Biden, Fain and the UAW bureaucracy suppressed all opposition among autoworkers and graduate students to the Gaza genocide. Fain headed up the fraudulent “stand-up strike” of 2023 that kept most of the Big Three plants open and imposed a sellout contract that paved the way for mass layoffs and plant closures. Now he has completely accommodated himself to Trump’s fascist program, endorsing his tariff policies, which are leading to global trade war and ultimately world war, while doing nothing to mobilize opposition to the illegal detention of former UAW member Mahmoud Khalil.

A critical feature of the *Jacobin* piece is that the authors view AI solely through the lens of job loss, surveillance and corporate control. While these evils are real, this approach is one-sided. It presents AI entirely as an instrument of oppression, rather than a technological development that—under the control of the international working class—could serve as a powerful tool for the abolition of wage labor and the rational planning of production.

The authors write that the tech oligarchs are “hoping that AI will help them to massively deskill their own workforce and myriad workers beyond that.” They add, “Certainly, Big Tech seems dead set on making this bet on wage suppression through AI.”

Ignoring the increasing sophistication of the most advanced large language models (LLMs) and associated AI tools, they write stupidly, “But even if these models will forever remain crappy alternatives to

competent humans, they may still prove their worth in lowering wages.”

The working class cannot afford to adopt the fatalistic attitude of *Jacobin*, which sees technological progress as an existential threat while omitting its revolutionary potential.

As with all technologies, AI is not, in and of itself, the enemy. Its use is determined by the class that controls it. In the hands of capitalist oligarchs, AI is deployed to maximize profit, speed up automation, impose mass layoffs and expand surveillance. But under the democratic control of the working class, AI could help eliminate drudgery, reduce the work day and expand leisure time for the masses, vastly expand access to knowledge, and lay the foundation for a planned socialist economy based on human need rather than private profit.

What is *Jacobin*’s real social base? Its political outlook is rooted in a privileged layer of the upper middle class—academics, NGO operatives, professionals, and aspiring union bureaucrats and Democratic Party politicians—who are not opposed to capitalism but merely seek a more comfortable position within it.

Their greatest fear is not the rise of fascism but the emergence of an independent movement of the working class. Hence their relentless efforts to tie workers to the Democratic Party.

A genuine fight against the growing alliance between Silicon Valley and the far-right cannot be waged through the Democratic Party or its pseudo-left satellites. The working class must build its own independent organizations of struggle—rank-and-file committees in workplaces and neighborhoods—to unite across industries and national borders, a movement that is spearheaded by the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC).

This is the urgent task facing tech workers, who, despite their often specialized skills and relatively higher wages, are not a separate social force, but an integral component of the present-day international working class. The exploitation of tech workers through the relentless drive for automation, now accelerated by AI, has produced mass layoffs affecting over 500,000 workers globally since 2023. This stems from the same fundamental contradictions of capitalism that confront all workers.

The task is not to “reform” Big Tech, but to expropriate the vast wealth of the corporate-financial oligarchy and nationalize these major corporations, placing the vast and potentially liberating resources of artificial intelligence, cloud computing and automation under the democratic control of the working class.

The Marxist movement has always understood that technology is shaped by the mode of production under which it develops. The fundamental question is which class will control this technology: the capitalist ruling elite, which seeks to use it to erect a fascist dictatorship, or the working class, which must employ it as part of the struggle for world socialism.

The struggle over AI, like the broader class struggle itself, will not be resolved within the confines of capitalist politics. It requires an independent, revolutionary movement of the working class, led by a socialist party that is not beholden to the interests of the ruling class. The only party building such a movement is the International Committee of the Fourth International, which alone fights to arm the working class with the program of international socialist revolution.



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