

Jacobin downplays “No Kings” mass protests and shields Democratic Party

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Two days after millions of people demonstrated in the June 14 nationwide “No Kings” protests against President Trump’s dictatorial moves and attacks on immigrants, the Democratic Socialists of America-aligned magazine *Jacobin* published an article by Branko Marcetic titled “‘No Kings’ was a rebellion in Trump’s country.”

The demonstrations mobilized broad layers of the population in record numbers, including workers, young people and immigrants. They were largely spontaneous, with virtually no support from the leadership of the Democratic Party or the trade unions. The hand-made signs invoking the American Revolution and the democratic, anti-monarchist origins of the United States expressed the powerful resonance of these traditions in the political consciousness of the American people.

There were over 2,000 separate protests across the country, mobilizing between 5 and 11 million people. The event shattered the official narrative of the Democratic Party, the trade unions and the corporate media that Trump is all-powerful, massively popular and invincible. It showed that his is a government of crisis, isolated from the broad mass of the population and highly vulnerable to a movement of the working class, which will emerge in an eruption of class struggle. This was underscored by the miserable failure of his military parade in Washington D.C. that evening, which mobilized only a few thousand attendees.

None of this is presented in Marcetic’s article, which seeks to downplay the political significance of the mass protests and cover up the Democratic Party’s complicity with and capitulation to the Trump regime.

The article is significant for what it leaves out. It gives no expression to the revolutionary crisis revealed by the protests. At no point does Marcetic mention the attacks on immigrants or the anger felt by the population seeing friends, coworkers, and family being snatched by masked thugs from schools, hospitals, court houses and work

places. The words “working class,” “capitalism,” “socialism” and “revolution” do not appear. Marcetic downplays the size of the protests, giving the conservative estimate of 2 to 6 million people.

There was an absence of race-and gender identity-focused appeals in the protests. *Jacobin* and other pseudo-left publications have promoted identity politics, what the Democratic Party has adopted as supposedly “left” politics, in opposition to class politics. They have promoted the attacks on the progressive legacy of the American Revolution and Civil War as summed up in the *New York Times*’ “1619 Project.”

In opening the article, Marcetic writes that “for many,” Trump’s election last year showed that “the country had eagerly accepted his worldview as their own, was fully on board with his political program, and that resistance was futile. Media outlets, businesses, and other institutions quickly folded or bent the knee to the incoming administration...”

What institutions? First and foremost was the Democratic Party, which Marcetic does not name. Joe Biden set the tone by inviting Trump, whom he had warned during the campaign was a fascist, to the White House, pledging a smooth transition and wishing his administration success.

Marcetic continues, writing that the second Trump administration “didn’t meet anything approaching the kind of widespread pushback and energized, large-scale protest that had hounded Trump in his first term.” In fact, despite the capitulation of the Democrats and the union bureaucracy, total protest activity this year is estimated to be three times higher than at this point in Trump’s first presidency.

The attitude of the Democratic Party to the mass protests was summed up by the response of its so-called “progressives” to June 14. Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders spoke at one of the smallest rallies, some 500

people in Stowe, Vermont, and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez boycotted the 100,000-strong demonstration in New York, speaking instead at a fundraiser for DSA member and candidate in the Democratic primary for New York City mayor, Zohran Mamdani.

Marcetic's article primarily consists of a detailed survey of the protest turnout in major cities, smaller cities, and rural areas that voted for Trump, with particular attention to voters in places where Trump won in 2024. Without openly saying so, Marcetic makes an assessment of the prospects for the Democratic Party in the 2026 midterm elections, writing: "But there's a more important point to be made here. The turnout in liberal cities and even in Trump-voting towns and counties doesn't necessarily mean that anti-Trump voters outnumber the president's supporters in these areas or their states — in many cases, they don't. But it does suggest that voters opposed to Trump's agenda... are vastly more energized than his supporters... Trump's public support is a lot softer and more passive than his 2024 victory made it seem."

Marcetic does not address the question of how and why Trump won the 2024 election, after having led an unsuccessful coup to overturn his 2020 defeat on January 6, 2021. Trump's electoral win was not a victory for his program, but the consequence of the entire presidency of Joe Biden, which oversaw a massive growth of social inequality, imposed austerity and inflation on the population, continued Trump's policy of "forever COVID," and focused on the waging of the proxy war against Russia in Ukraine and supporting Israel's genocide in Gaza.

In concluding, Marcetic writes that June 14 "shows that the country has not necessarily changed as drastically from the years of the highly flawed but well-organized liberal 'Resistance' that plagued Trump's first term as it may seem — just people's willingness to make their opposition known."

This, then, is the perspective of Marcetic and the DSA—a revival of "liberal resistance," in other words, the containment of popular opposition to Trump's fascist policies within the confines of the capitalist two-party system via the Democratic Party. What they fear and oppose is the development of an independent and revolutionary movement of the working class.

Marcetic writes, "It should also be a wake-up call for institutions that have opportunistically and cynically shifted rightward in the wake of the election to meet what they see as a changed public mood, or out of fear of the White House." Again he refuses to name the Democratic

Party, while imploring it to shift its rhetoric to better capture and stifle the potentially revolutionary development of political consciousness in the working class.

The *World Socialist Web Site* wrote of the protest:

The demonstrations shocked not only the Trump administration but its nominal opposition in the Democratic Party, which like the Republican Party is a faction of the ruling oligarchy. The Democrats and their political apologists in the pseudo-left, like the DSA, spread pessimism and discouragement because they are far more afraid of the eruption of a mass movement of the working class than of Trump's fascist attacks.

Trump and his drive toward dictatorship rely entirely on the cowardice and complicity of the Democrats and the union bureaucracies, aided by the pseudo-left, who are helping to prop him up. The opposition to Trump and his dictatorial program is explosive, and can only be settled by mass working class struggle.

The protests must elevate to be consciously politically independent of the framework of capitalist politics. This requires fighting for the political independence of the working class: breaking from the Democrats and Republicans. It is not merely a question of more demonstrations, but to give this mass opposition a socialist political program and build a revolutionary leadership in the working class on a world scale.



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