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The inauguration of Donald Trump: An event that will live in infamy

20 January 2017

The inauguration of Donald Trump as the 45th president is among the most ignominious events in the history of the United States. More than \$100 million is being spent on the celebrations of the new president's installation. In vain! No amount of money can dispel the nauseating stink that pervades every aspect of this inauguration. Nor can the fraudulent orchestration of public festivities conceal the widespread sense that the country, with the installation of the new administration, has embarked on a path that will lead to a disaster of unimaginable dimensions.

History has caught up with American capitalism. The protracted process of economic and social decay has been covered over for decades with democratic phrases that served to disguise the gap between the official political myths and the underlying reality. But the mask has now come off. Donald Trump personifies the corruption, ruthlessness, parasitism and essentially fascistic mindset of the capitalist oligarchs who control the United States.

Trump will lead a government of the rich, by the rich, and for the rich. Joining the billionaires in Trump's cabinet and White House staff are retired generals, tapped for the key national security positions, and ultra-right ideologues appointed to oversee programs and social services that they have devoted their political efforts to destroying. Working people will pay for huge tax cuts for the super-rich and a massive military buildup through the gutting of social programs like public education, Medicaid, Medicare and Social Security, savage exploitation on the job, and the erosion of whatever remains of basic democratic rights.

Internationally, Trump's "America First" chauvinism sets the stage for escalating economic and geopolitical conflicts. The last quarter century of war—beginning with the invasion of Iraq in 1991 and continued with the unending "war on terror"—will prove to have been only a prelude to even bloodier military operations. Even before taking office, Trump has made it clear that the United States views even its longstanding European allies as competitors who, to the extent that they get in the way of American interests, will be dealt with as enemies.

Within the ruling elite there are sharp divisions over tactics, reflected in the unprecedented political conflicts that have erupted after the elections. However, the attacks on Trump from top Democrats and Republicans are centered not on the ultra-right policy he is pledged to carry out, but rather on the direction of American war planning. The factions of the corporate elite and military-intelligence apparatus that backed Clinton want to ensure that there is no retreat from the aggressive posture towards Russia, while Trump has directed his rhetorical attacks, for now, against China and, most recently, Germany.

However bitter the disputes, all sections of the ruling class are united in their conviction that 1) American imperialism must pursue its global interests even at the risk of war; and 2) the attack on the social interests and political rights of the working class must be intensified. That Trump speaks and tweets not only for himself but on behalf of the ruling class is proven by the fact that his cabinet selections of billionaires and generals are sailing through the Senate confirmation proceedings with negligible opposition. As for Obama, he devoted his final press conference Wednesday to vouching for the political legitimacy of the incoming administration and declaring that, having won, "it is appropriate for [Trump] to go forward with his visions and his values."

With the accession of Trump, the ruling class anticipates the revival of a mythic American past—a land where the capitalist oligarchy is free to exploit the population and pollute the environment to its heart's content; where the working class is deprived of any significant social rights, including the right to public education, medical care and retirement security; where police can maim and kill with no questions asked; where corporations can underpay workers, fire them at will and even use child labor; and where the basest prejudices are cynically encouraged and essential democratic rights are trampled upon.

But this nightmarish and dystopian vision of a capitalist hell cannot be realized without the unleashing of social conflict on a scale that will dwarf the great industrial struggles of the 1930s. The coming political and social shocks will jolt the American working class into action. Skeptics—who are to be found in abundance among university academics and in the anti-Marxist pseudo-left political organizations of the affluent middle class—dismiss the very possibility of mass working class struggle. Those who reject all efforts to politically educate the working class point to the absence of mass revolutionary consciousness. However, their skepticism expresses their own ignorance of and indifference to the historical processes that lay the foundations for revolutionary eruptions. As Leon Trotsky, the greatest strategist of revolutionary class struggle of the last century, wrote:

The swift changes of mass views and moods in an epoch of revolution thus derive, not from the flexibility and mobility of man's mind, but just the opposite, from its deep conservatism. The chronic lag of ideas and relations behind new objective conditions, right up to the moment when

the latter crash over people in the form of a catastrophe, is what creates in a period of revolution that leaping movement of ideas and passions which seems to the police mind a mere result of the activities of “demagogues.”

For all the bombast and braggadocio of Donald Trump, his administration is, in the final analysis, the product of the desperate crisis that afflicts American capitalism. Its reckless policies will set into motion forces both within the United States and internationally that it cannot control.

In this new situation, the most urgent political task is the building of a revolutionary socialist movement of the working class, independent of and opposed to the parties of big business, the Democrats as much as the Republicans. This is the work to which the Socialist Equality Party in the United States and its co-thinkers in the International Committee of the Fourth International are dedicated.

The SEP fights for a socialist and internationalist response to the Trump administration and the crisis of the capitalist system. In opposition to oligarchic control of the wealth of society, the SEP demands the transformation of the gigantic corporations and banks into democratically controlled public utilities, to serve social needs, not private profit. We call for a massive redistribution of wealth to advance the goal of social equality and to ensure the fundamental rights of the working class to a well-paid job, quality health care and education, a secure and comfortable retirement, and a healthy environment.

In opposition to the nationalist poison of the ruling class and the drive to war, the Socialist Equality Party fights for the international unity of all workers. Workers must oppose every effort to scapegoat immigrants or workers of other countries, and reject every effort to sow divisions along racial and gender lines.

Trump’s call to “Make America Great Again” is in reality a call for class war, military violence and dictatorship. In response, workers must embrace the proud banner of international unity, equality and socialism.

We urge working people and all those looking for a way forward against the Trump administration to read the *World Socialist Web Site* and join the SEP to build a new revolutionary leadership in the working class.