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زبانهای اروپایی

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17.11.2024

## **The Democrats Deserved to Lose 1,000 Times Over**

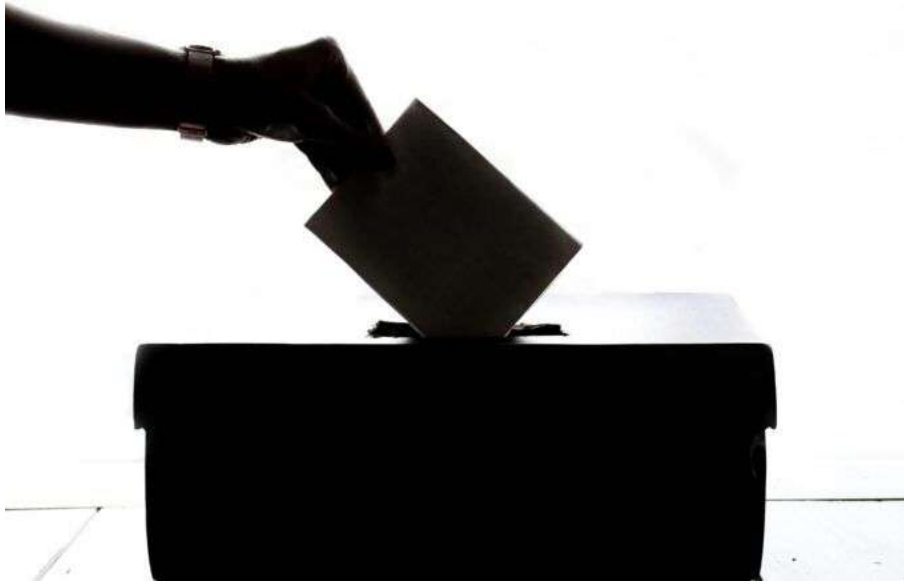


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What happened in this year's election was not some kind of flowering of American fascism, but a rebellion against a hated, out-of-touch Democratic Party elite.

The primary driver of the election outcome was an angry working-class rejection of the status quo and deep cost-of-living crisis proudly presided over by the Democrats. Traditional Democratic voters who had faced sky-high grocery prices, gas, rent, alongside crumbling social infrastructure were told to buck up and vote for Kamala Harris, or else. They were told to ignore the genocide in Gaza, and worse yet to vote for the genocider.

The only thing the Democrats offered to working people was a recycled anti-Trump campaign.

Predictably, the Democrats hemorrhaged working-class support and managed to lose ground in virtually every part of their base: the Arab and Muslim American community, Black voters, Latino voters, young people, and even women.

As the Financial Times reported, “the majority of lower-income households or those earning less than \$50,000 a year voted for Trump this election. Conversely, those making over \$100,000 voted for Harris, according to exit polls.” Tellingly, this last demographic was the sole one where Harris gained ground: voters who make \$100,000 or more voted 42% for Biden in 2020, and 51% for Harris.

Harris abandoned a raft of progressive policies that are wildly popular, some of which were featured on ballot initiatives that won by big margins in states that went for Trump. Voters approved minimum wage increases, including to \$15/hour (Alaska and Missouri), expanded workers’ ability to earn paid sick leave in three states (Alaska, Missouri, and Nebraska), rejected school vouchers (Colorado, Kentucky, and Nebraska), and opted to ban anti-union captive audience meetings (Alaska).

The media narrative that Harris lost because working-class voters are moving to the right is false. That’s not to say there weren’t elements of right-wing ideas reflected in the result. Both parties’ disgusting embrace of anti-immigrant ideas has whipped up anti-immigrant sentiment, which was without a doubt reflected in the Trump vote. But fundamentally, it’s the Democratic and Republican Parties that are moving further and further to the right, as they attempt to make working people pay for the long-term crisis of capitalism.

While the vote for Trump was largely *against* Harris, there are millions who do have a false nostalgia about Trump, with positive illusions that he will bring back lower prices and end the wars.

All such ill-founded hopes will soon come crashing down. Despite his isolationist rhetoric, and his false claims when talking to Arab-American audiences that he would bring peace in the Middle East, Trump is every bit a warmongering representative of the billionaire class as is Harris. Trump is no friend of working people, and he will double down on his past attacks on oppressed groups. In terms of the genocide in Gaza, he will certainly do his best to help Netanyahu “finish the job.”

**The Democrats Are Not a Lesser Evil — Nor Are the Republicans**

Outrageously, the Democrats are looking to scapegoat working-class voters, telling them they are racist and sexist for not supporting Harris, while themselves undoubtedly preparing to make further overtures toward the erstwhile Republican establishment.

But we should not be surprised because the Democratic Party was never a working-class party. They were always a party of the bosses. They were originally the party of the slave owners, then after that the party of brutal Jim Crow segregation. They carried out vicious attacks on the labor movement, including many times calling in the National Guard to attack striking workers. They have actively supported, or led, every single bloody war of U.S. imperialism, including launching the Vietnam War. Now they're responsible for a genocide.

Led by Biden-Harris, the Democrats broke the strike of the railroad workers. They stabbed Bernie Sanders and working people in the back twice, making sure that a candidate with working-class demands would not be allowed to represent the party in the general election. Rather than fight back, Sanders in turn sold us out by backing Biden and then Harris to the hilt.

Then there is the long line of Democratic Party "reformers" who were elected as part of a new left wing of the party, including AOC, who were almost immediately absorbed into the machine rather than doing battle with the party leadership.

Sanders and AOC have spent the last four years shilling for the Democratic Party and gatekeeping working people's movements. They should not be given an ounce of credibility in their attempt to appoint themselves as leaders of Resistance 2.0 against Trump 2.0. They would take us right back down the dead-end road to the Democratic Party.

In my ten years of elected office in Seattle, as a socialist councilmember, the [Democratic Party was at every stage an enemy of our movements](#). There are no Republicans on the Seattle City Council, so the Democrats alone carry the water for big business. I don't mean Democrats were sometimes a hindrance. I mean they fought tooth and nail to either block everything we fought for or water it down — from the \$15 minimum wage to our Amazon Tax on big business to our renters' rights bills.

The Democrats are not the lesser evil, they are one of the most powerful capitalist parties in the world.

The Republicans are also in no way shape or form a party of working people, either, and never will be. They are a thoroughly anti-union, pro-war, vicious right wing party, and were so long before Trump.

The problem is systemic — it's about which *class* the Democrats and Republicans represent. They represent the capitalists, as do the vast majority of parties around the world under capitalism. And they will continue to do so ruthlessly, regardless of any attempts to reform them. Even if it costs them crucial elections, as it just did the Democrats.

This is the reason why [Marx and Engels emphasized in 1850](#) that the working class must have its own parties and candidates:

Even where there is no prospect of achieving their election the workers must put up their own candidates to preserve their independence, to gauge their own strength and to bring their revolutionary position and party standpoint to public attention. They must not be led astray by the empty phrases of the democrats, who will maintain that the workers' candidates will split the democratic party and offer the forces of reaction the chance of victory. All such talk means, in the final analysis, that the proletariat is to be swindled. The progress which the proletarian party will make by operating independently in this way is infinitely more important than the disadvantages resulting from the presence of a few reactionaries in the representative body.

### **No Votes for Genocide!**

My organization, Workers Strike Back, endorsed Jill Stein and energetically campaigned for every possible Stein vote, including in the swing states. We didn't do this because we expected Stein to win, or get 5% of the vote, or because we think the Green Party is the new major party working people need.

We campaigned for Stein as the strongest independent left, antiwar candidate, with the goal of building the antiwar movement and the workers' movement, of using the campaign to illustrate why working people must completely *reject* both parties of the bosses, and to then take that momentum beyond the election to begin to build an alternative.

The first major step of our fight was mobilizing the protests at the Democratic National Convention (DNC), where Workers Strike Back organized a rally with Jill Stein's campaign, Abandon Harris, Revolutionary Blackout Network, and others.

We continued that united front throughout the campaign. In particular, Workers Strike Back focused on the state of Michigan, alongside Abandon Harris, since it has the highest population of Arab American and Muslim voters in the country.

The large vote for Trump in the Arab American community reflects a wider rejection of the Democrats — one born of betrayal. It was particularly sharp because of the

unbelievably horrific nature of the genocide in Gaza which Democrats asked voters to forget about. They didn't.

In the end, Workers Strike Back spent a significant amount of our time in Michigan convincing voters *not* to vote for Trump and to vote for Stein instead. We were largely successful in this though we were far too small of a force to stop the broader turn toward the Republican Party motivated by the desire to punish Harris. We are also proud of every vote we took away from the genocidal Vice President.

Jill Stein beat Kamala Harris in 11 precincts in Dearborn. In two of those precincts, she came within 30 votes of beating Trump. The strongest support was in northeast Dearborn, which has a very large Muslim & Arab population, in those precincts where Workers Strike Back was most active in our canvassing.

In terms of the argument that the war wasn't a significant factor in the election, it reflects the determination of the Democrats and liberal corporate media to continue supporting the massacre. While horror over the war was not the singular reason Harris lost, it was no small factor. As *The New York Times* reported, their internal polling showed that still undecided voters were "six times as likely as other battleground-state voters to be motivated by their views of Israel's war in Gaza."

We should be sober about the relatively low result of the Stein campaign, which appears to be on track to win 750,000 votes – around half of Stein's 2016 total.

Every single one of these votes is important. They represent a courageous stand against the genocide and the two parties of the billionaire class. They are a basis to build on.

But the total vote was much less than the Greens led their supporters to expect.

That lower vote was due to several factors, including the huge pressures of lesser evilism in the race (in which voters were told democracy would end with Trump), the divided left vote (with other left candidates getting over 350,000 votes), and also some of the Greens' own weaknesses.

The most important factor was the failure of the left and progressive unions to support and campaign for Stein. Had progressive labor leaders like Shawn Fain and organizations like the Democratic Socialists for America (DSA) endorsed and campaigned for Stein, the vote could have been far higher.

Even the parts of the U.S. left that didn't openly endorse Kamala Harris tied themselves in knots in this election, as they did through most of Biden's term in office. This desire not to damage the "lesser evil" Democrats allowed the Democrats to run even farther to the right. Some caucuses of DSA, including Reform and Revolution, went so far as to call for a

Kamala Harris vote in the swing states. And now these left organizations, including DSA, have thoroughly undermined their authority with working people who want to fight. There has been a recent increase in people joining DSA to get organized to fight Trump, but be warned, DSA's leadership will be completely ineffective for this task because the organization is now firmly tied to the Democratic Party.

My former organization, Socialist Alternative, while formally saying they supported Jill Stein, did not lift a finger to campaign for her or any other antiwar, pro-worker candidate. Instead, Socialist Alternative stressed again and again how dangerous Trump is, and that it was "correct" to fear him and wrong to punish Harris for supporting genocide. They made it clear they objected to Workers Strike Back campaigning in swing states for Stein. Their position was a word-salad, pseudo-socialist version of lesser evilism. And it is sad to see how far Socialist Alternative is going down this dead-end road.

Socialist Alternative claims to stand for a working-class party, but it's either naive or disingenuous to suggest that this working-class party could come about without major defeats for the Democratic Party!

These people who say they are for revolution don't want to upset the status quo and risk alienating themselves from Democratic Party aligned forces. And they seem to have not learned a thing from our decade-long experience in Seattle, where in order to use our socialist city council office to extract countless victories we had to defeat the Democrats again and again.

### **We Need a New Party for Working People**

We urgently need a new party for working people, but that party is not going to fall out of thin air. It will take a ferocious struggle. And those who support it will be viciously attacked, as Jill Stein and her supporters were in this last campaign.

A new party will NOT develop so long as unions and left organizations continue to support the Democrats — we must stand up against lesser evilism in every election.

There is no way around it, and it does no good to pretend that the effort to build an independent working class force won't damage the Democrats. We have to own that — as Workers Strike Back and I did when I declared "Kamala Harris deserves to lose 1,000 times over" in [my speech in Michigan](#), a clip of which went viral and was watched by four million people.

We are here to ruin things for the Democrats, as we proclaimed during this election, as well as for the Republicans. Throughout their history, the Democrats have ruined things for working people and oppressed people the world over. It is not our job to give them a

helping hand, when a section of the working class is outraged at them, it is our job to help bring them down.

Most of all, it is our job to sever the relationship between working people and the Democratic Party. This did happen in a limited way in this election, and it's a positive step forward. Our challenge is to make that schism between the working class and the Democratic Party permanent. Because the Democrats are and always have been a warmongering party of capitalists.

The other schism that we need to enable and encourage is between the working class and the Republican Party. Because both parties are parties of capitalism. Trump is a dangerous representative of the billionaires, as can be seen in the enthusiastic support of people like Elon Musk, despite the billionaires' overall preference for Harris as a more reliable and less chaotic servant.

### **Is this American Fascism?**

No, this is not the beginning of a fascist dictatorship.

Trump would of course like to be a dictator, but there is simply not the objective basis for that.

The mass of working people do not support the undermining of democracy. One of Trump's most unpopular political moves was January 6th, which was strongly opposed by the overwhelming majority of the working class, including most people who vote Republican.

The capitalist class also would not support Trump destroying democratic institutions in the United States. The capitalists see capitalist democracy, which is highly limited and mainly democracy for the billionaires, as the best possible shell for their interests. They know that if those institutions are shattered (as they were under Hitler and Mussolini) it would be a huge danger to the stability of their system and their ability to make profits.

The capitalists have no love of democracy at all, and will support (and have supported) fascism when they felt sufficiently threatened by revolutionary working-class movements, as they did in Germany and Italy in the interwar period of the 20s and 30s. But right now, the capitalist class feels almost no threat at all from the left, which is incredibly weak and divided, as we just saw in the election.

The main problem with this kind of exaggerated rhetoric about "fascism" is that Democrats and their liberal supporters use it, as they did against George W. Bush (whom these same liberals now adore), in such a way as to suppress the independent left vote and to divide the working class and block it from developing independence from the two

capitalist parties. We need a movement that will fight against the rich and their two parties, that includes working people who voted for both major parties as well as those, like us, who voted for Jill Stein.

### **We Will Be The Ones Fighting Trump**

I fully recognize that many people are now frightened of what a Trump administration will bring. Trump will attack oppressed groups and the left, as he did last time, and we will have to fight back against that, as we did in the wake of his 2016 victory.

What were the Democrats doing after Trump's first election? Barack Obama said: "Give Trump a chance."

We, socialists, were the ones who, under the threat of Trump's Muslim ban, shut down an international airport, SeaTac Airport, with mass civil disobedience. This was the only US airport fully shut down. Also at SeaTac, the Democrats played no role, other than Democrats like Pramila Jayapal doing a photo op there and leaving. In fact, the Democrats were so unhappy about our movement's civil disobedience on that night, that they told me so in repeated phone calls *as* we were protesting at the airport.

When the Supreme Court was preparing to overturn *Roe v. Wade* and the Democrats had rolled over once again, we, socialists and working people and union members, built protests, and our movement won the first abortion rights sanctuary in the country, in Seattle. This made it illegal for Seattle police to arrest anyone who came to Seattle accused of violating an abortion law in another state. Later that year we also won full funding for all abortion needs for anyone inside the city of Seattle, whether a resident or traveling for that purpose.

What was always incorrect with the "Resistance™" was seeing the Democratic Party as the vehicle to fight Trump and the right wing. This is an utterly failed and dead-end strategy. During Trump's first administration, the Democratic Party channeled much of the anger at him back towards passive electoral support for themselves. They discouraged mass movements. Instead, they created a series of nonprofits to suck up the energy and ultimately let off steam without accomplishing anything.

The Democrats won't protect working people or oppressed groups anymore than they did the last time Trump was elected. They will again prioritize the stability of their capitalist system. Their challenge to Trump during his first term was exclusively through the courts. Why? Because they are more afraid of working-class movements, more afraid of working people as a whole, than they are of Trump.



Building unity around a fighting strategy against the wars and for offensive gains for working people's collective interests is what is needed. And the basis of our unity cannot be around how someone voted, for Trump or Harris or a third party, but rather if they are prepared to fight with us against the warmongering billionaire agenda of both parties. We cannot succumb to the idea of blaming working people for how they voted. We need to lead the fight forward.

As I said in Seattle at our rally two weeks ago — we will be the ones fighting Trump. Just like we did last time.

In 2016, after Trump was elected, working people, my City Council office, and my fellow socialists organized protests here in Seattle when the Democrats were sitting shell shocked. We organized protests around the country the following day and tens of thousands of people came out.

### **Next Steps for Our Movements**

We need to build protests at Trump's inauguration, demanding an end to the genocide. Had Harris won, we should have done the same, as I said before the election results came out.

Trump has said he would end the wars — we know he is not antiwar anymore than the Democrats are, and it will be up to mass movements to force an end to all military aid for the massacre in Gaza and the bloodbath in Ukraine.

We cannot follow Bernie Sanders, AOC, or any other self-proclaimed leaders of the "Resistance™" who will try to lead us back into the Democratic Party. We should be prepared that they may hold mass events. We need to be there to explain why working people must reject their bankrupt leadership and fight for an independent path forward.

We desperately need a new antiwar party for working people, but there is currently no force with the resources or authority to launch it in the coming months. We can, however, take steps in that direction by severing our ties with the Democratic Party, and laying down the framework for a working-class party.

### **What Kind of Party Is Needed**

Any candidates we run need to be independent of the two parties of the billionaires. They must run on a [clear working-class platform](#) like ending all military support for Israel and demanding a \$25 minimum wage. They must use their campaigns to build mass movements for those demands. They should pledge to only accept the average worker's wage.

They need to use their campaigns, and elected offices if they win, to expose the establishment and disrupt business as usual — you will know they have done so if they are attacked by representatives of the two parties, not embraced or ignored by them.

But we should not look to run dozens or hundreds of candidates — it would be far better if a few ran on a clear working-class basis, rather than many candidates running without accountability to our movements and then selling us out.

Most of all, we need to build a stronger antiwar movement, and a stronger workers' movement with militant rank-and-file organizing.

The labor movement will have a key role to play in a new party, but first we need a section of progressive unions to break with the Democrats.

It was a positive thing that a number of labor unions passed ceasefire resolutions since the onslaught against Gaza began. But then the leaders of these same unions, including Shawn Fain, endorsed Biden and then Harris. History will judge the leaders who looked the other way and gave their support to candidates arming and funding a genocide.

We will be discussing the concrete steps forward at our upcoming [mass organizing conference on February 22nd next year](#) in Seattle. The following day we will hold [Workers Strike Back's first national convention](#), where we will be discussing and laying out our movement's plans, as well as democratically electing a new steering committee.

### **Differences of Strategy in the Presidential Election**

There were a number of differences that came up in our fight for every vote for Jill Stein as the strongest antiwar, pro-worker candidate in the election.

Debates in our movement are very important. We need to have them in an open but also respectful way, so as to maintain unity on a principled basis, but to also arrive at the best strategies and to learn from mistakes.

Some of these debates were held openly during the campaign. We disagreed with the Greens and the Stein campaign about telling our supporters that Stein would win or get 5% or other such exaggerations.

We said this would only serve to demoralize people when the election results came out — and that the votes would be “more likely in the hundreds of thousands than in the millions” as I said at our joint rally at the Democratic National Convention.

The Greens disagreed with us when we said we wanted to defeat Kamala Harris for her support for the genocide and her attacks on working people. We made it clear that certainly we would have loved to have defeated Trump as well, but that we were not in a position to do so.

The Greens have for a long time been trying to avoid appearing to be the “spoiler.” But there is no use running away from it, we need to embrace it. We do need to spoil things for the Democratic Party, which pretends to represent working people, as well as the Republican Party and this entire rotten system.

We must take an offensive stand *against* the Democratic Party. We need to clearly say they don’t deserve our votes, as when I said at a Seattle rally that Harris “deserved to lose 1,000 times over.” We should not be apologizing for our position — the Democrats are not the lesser evil, they are betrayers of the working class, and need to be unmasked.

Another difference came up in the final days of the campaign. We feel it is deeply unfortunate that in the eleventh hour of the election, Jill Stein’s Vice Presidential candidate Butch Ware alienated a substantial section of independent voters with his calling into question abortion rights and the rights of trans athletes. Ware responded to the anger at his comments, but he did not in fact walk back his statements. He mainly said he was misunderstood and that further discussion was needed after the election. In our canvassing and phonebanking we talked to many people who were not only rightly offended by those comments, but had also cast their vote for a different candidate on that basis.

### **Capitalism is the Root Cause of the Crises We Face**

One of the fundamental differences those of us in Revolutionary Workers have with the Green Party and some others in the movement is that we don’t believe capitalism can be reformed.

It must be destroyed and replaced with a socialist world, based on solidarity, genuine democracy, and a rationally planned and sustainable socialist economy. If it is not, capitalism will destroy the environment and take human civilization with it.

That means these two American capitalist parties need to be destroyed as well, and that is one of the first orders of business.

Anywhere and everywhere we build genuine working-class campaigns, we need to do so as disturbers of the political peace, not as collaborators within it.

*Kshama Sawant is a revolutionary socialist, a founding member of Workers Strike Back, and a former Seattle City Councilmember who helped win the first \$15/hour minimum wage in a major city and the Amazon Tax on wealthy corporations to fund affordable housing.*

**NOVEMBER 15, 2024**