



Workers Power US reports on G-20 protests in Pittsburgh

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After 6 continuous days of demonstrations and actions directed against the Group of 20 (G-20) in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, which culminated in a 10,000 participant strong march through the downtown area where the summit took place, world leaders, particularly to the chagrin of Barack Obama, witnessed first hand the willingness of thousands of Americans to protests against such 'abstractions' as global capitalism. It was the largest demonstration the city of Pittsburgh has seen since the protests against the Vietnam War.

Members of Workers Power (US) from the Philadelphia area made the long trek across the Keystone State (Pennsylvania's nickname) to witness and take part in one of, if not the, most important protest since the onset of the recent capitalist crisis.

The Steel City was electric. From all directions people poured into the city as hundreds long-distance travelers flocked to one of the several tent cities erected in protest against the millions who lost their jobs and, thus, homes due to the crisis. The spirit of international working-class solidarity permeating the city was ubiquitously palpable; as tent city activists slept outside in the rain Thursday night and woke to a brisk, chilly morning, they did so to show their solidarity with all those suffering the effects of the recession across the planet.

Residents were ebullient, to say the least, when they found out why we were in Pittsburgh to begin with. Several members from Workers Power spoke with local residents for hours regarding such issues as police brutality, the differences between how officials in Pittsburgh portray the city in the media and how it is in reality (it did not take long to observe the blatantly false notion that Pittsburgh is undergoing a so-called 'revitalization' effort 'especially when so many people throughout the city currently live under some of the most shamefully indigent of conditions), and the historical civil rights battles that engulfed the city during the 1960's.

Around noon on Friday, a group of approximately 30 individuals met at Freedom Corner 'the site where a memorial now stands in remembrance of those fighters who opposed the forced removal of some 8,000 residents from their homes in the name of 'urban renewal' concocted by the Urban Redevelopment Authority beginning in the late 1950's ' where the deliverance of a number of passionate and emotional speeches condemning unemployment, the reduction of state and federal funds towards sustaining and developing education programs, and the utterly deplorable conditions currently prevailing in the health care system, reverberated throughout the surrounding area, ricocheting from one skyscraper to the next.

From there, the two primary mobilizations slicing through Pittsburgh were to converge and combine their forces before storming the downtown portion of the city. Moreover, when they did, it was a remarkable sight. We could literally feel our collective strength growing as more and more people from all corners of the city funneled into the march. Protestors chanted, 'power to the people, not the G-20,' and 'this is what democracy / a police-state looks like.' And what a police-state it was! Local police, National Guardsmen, even out-of-town volunteer police flocked to Pittsburgh to get their chance to fire tear gas, club demonstrators and students, aim piercingly painful sound-truck horns at defenseless bystanders, and even pull unsuspecting protestors into unmarked military-police units without any explanation of what this or that individual was being 'detained' for. It bore deeply in the minds of all in attendance the

striking similarities between the conduct of the American police and other "security forces" at the G-20 protests and the actions of despotic governments and their own repressive apparatuses around the world whom the leaders of the "free world" criticize and levy sanctions and boycotts against while championing the "liberties" of their own so-called "enclaves" of freedom, justice, and reason.

No observer could possibly deny the vociferous speeches given by a multitude of organizations against the crimes caused by capitalism the world over. From local residents, to representatives from Students for a Democratic Society, to even the International Socialist Organization [ISO], all agreed that capitalism was the prime culprit fueling the destruction of the environment, the loss of jobs and of homes, the failure to provide health care treatment for all those who need it, the waging of imperialist wars of plunder in Central Asia and the Middle East, and the systematically malicious campaign to deny workers the right to form their own or join already existing unions.

The march came to a stop outside the main business district where a number of individuals from different groups gave ardent speeches to a clamorous crowd, vivifying their desire to keep the momentum building. The afternoon ended on a most, from our point of view anyway, unexpected note: a rendition of The Internationale. What an invigorating sight to witness such a heterogeneous group stand as one and sing the anthem of international socialism!

The main catchphrase of the day, "build a movement to rid the world of capitalism," was not, however, without ambiguous coloring. What did the speakers mean exactly by "movement"? Naturally, every group had a different explanation. Some argued in favor of the tactic of providing admonition to Barrack Obama and other Democrats in the false hope that they would see reason, and, thus, contritely heed their call for peace, justice, and international cooperation between nations and peoples. In other words, these organizations sought to prostrate themselves and the movement as a whole before those individuals who actively and knowingly promote the interests of and secure their livelihoods by adhering to the dictates of the rampaging and insatiable capitalist multi-nationals and financial institutions, groveling before their feet as they beg for them to stop doing what they do best "exploiting humanity in the interests of profit accumulation.

Surely, the only socialist organization allotted a slot to speak "the ISO" would offer a substantially less naïve proposal for action and offer up a palpably concrete program to build the forces necessary to eradicate capitalism world wide? Yet despite the passionately delivered rhetoric lambasting capitalism and the economic havoc, destitution, and war it creates, there was no definitive answer from the ISO either. The speaker from the ISO berated both neo-liberalism and prior "social-democratic-style" state-capitalism, but there was no mention of the need to break the mass of the working class, the youth, immigrants, women, and other "progressive" forces away from the grand bourgeois and petty-bourgeois forces "not to mention the trade union bureaucrats and their "friends of labor" " who occlude the formation of such an organization that can consign capitalism to the dustbin of history. What socialists need to be fighting for is strike action against job losses and industry closures. Essentially, what was lacking was the call for a new workers' party armed with a program for socialist revolution. Without such a party the working class will not be able to take serious steps forward.

The consequent failure to argue for such proposals and demands is the reason why anarchists take such prominence at summit sieges. Unquestionably, the black bloc "stole the show." They made all the headlines Friday morning after a non-sanctioned, "illegal" protest Thursday afternoon resulted in some of the most violent outburst between State forces and demonstrators. Even though the tactics and strategies used by the Black Bloc are ill conceived and, therefore, entirely incapable of achieving the aim of overthrowing the global capitalist system and the State which protects and facilitates the continued exploitation of the world's population in the interests of said system, their eagerness and energy to fight back against the capitalists if it proves nothing, it proves that young people currently stand at the forefront of the resistance. The perpetuation of the Black Bloc and their increased presence can only be attributed to the failure of the Marxian-socialist organizations to chart an independent course for the workers and toiling poor of the world in the fight for a new social mode of production. Without such a fighting contingent consciously aware of what is necessary to defeat the exploiters, a repetition of the same old stunts and hackneyed speeches is ineluctable.

Although the G-20 protests in Pittsburgh did not actually shut down the summit itself, it did herald great potential

opportunities for future work amongst anti-capitalists forces desiring to build a new world, a world free of capitalist exploitation and oppression worldwide. Between now and the time of the convening of the next United States Social Forum in Detroit, Michigan in the coming year, we must routinely ask ourselves what we want most of all and what we are prepared to do to obtain it.

If we really want to abolish the capitalist system of production and the State that protects it, we must combine our forces under a single banner: around an organization that fights overtly for workers? control of society through a democratically-planned economy designed to meet the needs of all people, not the obscene profits of an modicum of social parasites. The formation of an international fighting organization ? a Fifth International, a mass organization of workers, youth, poor peasants, of the urban poor, women, and all those oppressed by capitalism, is needed to secure our victory. We cannot procrastinate any longer. The time to start building for the Fifth International is our most crucial of tasks.

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