52. THE DEFENSE OF DEMOCRACY

WHEREAS, the founding slogan of the American Federation of Teachers—Democracy in Education; Education for Democracy—reflects our long-standing dedication to the cause of democracy, and more than a century of battles on its behalf; and

WHEREAS, democratic government is essential if Americans are to guarantee our freedom, our rights and our common good; and

WHEREAS, democracy is necessary for working people and unions to secure our economic livelihoods, to ensure a decent standard of living, to have voice and rights in the workplace, to elect to government representatives who are committed to a fair and just economy and the interests of working people, and to freely advocate for a progressive agenda on behalf of the many, and not just the wealthy few; and

WHEREAS, for the American Federation of Teachers, democracy is not simply a form of government, but also—in the words of our founding member John Dewey—"a way of life" that extends to civil society and the economy, which is why we see a vibrant and robust system of public education as an essential component of democracy and crucial for its survival; and

WHEREAS, authoritarian governments have always sought to suppress unions and other free institutions of civil society as threats to their rule; and

WHEREAS, in recent years, there have been disturbing developments in the American polity and society that have chipped away at the foundation of our democracy: a deluge of unlimited, unaccountable “dark money” of wealthy individuals and corporations into the political process after the Citizens United case; extreme gerrymandering of electoral districts; polarization on the far right; the calculated obstruction of normal governmental processes; voter suppression measures aimed at denying the franchise of poor people, people of color and youth; and union-suppression measures designed to undermine the freedom of association of working people to organize into unions and engage in collective action; and

WHEREAS, the 2016 elections brought a full-fledged “crisis of democracy” to the United States, as an authoritarian populism of the far right personified by Donald Trump took control of all three branches of the federal government, as well as many state governments; and

WHEREAS, under the Trump administration, attacks on the bedrock of democracy—on the rule of law and the Constitution; on First Amendment freedoms of expression, association and the press; on the right to vote in free and fair elections; on unions and other institutions of civil society; and on governmental officials who have refused to transform themselves into handmaidens of these
undemocratic attacks—have grown in intensity and now represent a clear and present danger to American democracy; and

WHEREAS, central to Trumpism—as it has been to other authoritarian populist movements of the past and present—is a demagogic appeal to racial and other resentments, targeting our fellow Americans: immigrants and refugees; Muslims, Jews and other minority religions; Latinos, African-Americans and other people of color; women; LGBTQ people; and people with disabilities; and

WHEREAS, these demagogic appeals have led to increased acts of discrimination and of violence against our fellow Americans, such as those undertaken in August 2017 in Charlottesville, Va., by white supremacists and neo-Nazis; and

WHEREAS, this “crisis of democracy” is not distinct to the U.S., but reflective of an ominous international trend in the growth of authoritarian populist movements of the far right; and

WHEREAS, authoritarian populist regimes of the far right now control governments across the globe, from Hungary, Poland and Turkey to India, the Philippines and Russia, and present real threats throughout much of the rest of Asia, Europe and North America; and

WHEREAS, the pattern in this “crisis of democracy” is not violent usurpation of democratic rule, but the assumption of power through electoral means, followed by the incremental dismantling of the institutions and practices of democracy; and

WHEREAS, there is convincing evidence of political collaboration between Donald Trump and elements of his campaign and administration, on the one hand, and authoritarian populists of the far right internationally—most significantly, the Russian government with its interference in our elections, on the other hand; and

WHEREAS, democracy, in the United States and around the world, now confronts a threat unseen since the rise of totalitarianism in the 1930s:

RESOLVED, that the American Federation of Teachers affirms the centrality of democracy to our core mission as a union of educators, healthcare professionals, and state and local government workers, and recommits itself to the defense of democracy—in government, civil society and the economy—both in the United States and internationally; and

RESOLVED, that the AFT affirms our opposition to developments that have undermined American democracy in recent years—the presence of unlimited “dark money” in the U.S. political process, extreme gerrymandering, voter suppression and union suppression; and

RESOLVED, that the AFT condemns the attacks on American democracy by Donald Trump, his administration, the Republican majorities in Congress and in politically aligned state
governments, as well as their political collaboration with authoritarian regimes of the far right internationally, especially with the government of Russia and its interference in our elections; and

RESOLVED, that the AFT abhors the demagogic appeals of Trumpism to racial and other resentments: Such prejudices have no place in a democratic polity and society, and are a cancer in the American body politic; and

RESOLVED, that to defend American democracy, the defeat of Trumpism, both in federal and state governments, is a strategic imperative to which the AFT is wholeheartedly committed, starting with the 2018 elections; and

RESOLVED, that as a union of educators and other professionals, the AFT is committed to the development and use of a civic education that provides American youth with a full understanding of the importance of democracy, and the skills, knowledge and disposition to be active citizens in a democracy; and

RESOLVED, that to accomplish these objectives, the AFT will join forces wherever possible with other defenders of democracy—in other unions and education organizations; in the movements for civil rights, immigration rights, religious freedom, women’s rights, LGBTQ rights and disability rights; and among elected officials.

Submitted by: AFT Executive Council

☐ Adopted    ☐ Adopted as Amended    ☐ Defeated    ☐ Tabled
☐ Precluded by____________________   ☐ Referred to__________________

53. “REV IT UP”: REGISTER, EDUCATE, VOTE!

WHEREAS, the American Federation of Teachers, its state federations, locals and councils, and its members have a long, proud and distinguished history of being leaders and active participants in strengthening the democratic process and promoting civic engagement; and

WHEREAS, the AFT and its members promote and defend the freedom of working people to earn a decent living, to access important public services like good schools and high-quality healthcare, and to retire with dignity; and

WHEREAS, the AFT and its members champion economic and racial justice, and a strong and vibrant democracy that includes a free press, an independent judiciary, a thriving labor movement, a stable system of checks and balances, the protection of the right to vote and the civil rights of all; and
WHEREAS, the Koch brothers, the DeVos family, other right-wing plutocrats, and elected officials like Illinois Gov. Bruce Rauner are committed to destroying the labor movement, gutting public education and public services, and rigging the political and economic systems against working families; and

WHEREAS, the Trump-McConnell-Ryan tax cut is a scam that further rigs the economy against working families, providing 83 percent of the tax breaks to the top 1 percent at the expense of investing in public education, infrastructure and healthcare, and adding $1.5 trillion to the national deficit, which would require cuts to Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security in order to pay for corporate giveaways; and

WHEREAS, the Trump-DeVos agenda, with a complicit McConnell-Ryan Congress, is predicated on destabilizing and defunding public education and vital public services, including expanding private school voucher programs, favoring for-profit colleges over the needs of students, cutting Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) programs by 25 percent, and attacking and defunding the Affordable Care Act; and

WHEREAS, a vibrant system of checks and balances, as envisioned in the United States Constitution, is needed more now than at any time in recent memory, to safeguard democracy and ensure that all people have the representation they need to achieve a better, more secure life for themselves, their families and their communities—a checks and balances system that can be achieved through the 2018 elections; and

WHEREAS, the positive change being sought by the resistance movement, as exemplified by the Women’s March, the #MeToo movement, the immigrant rights movement, and the Parkland High School-inspired March for Our Lives, can be advanced and secured through successful elections in 2018; and

WHEREAS, the educators of West Virginia, Oklahoma, Arizona and Colorado rallied an entire country and demonstrated the power and effectiveness of union collective action, action that achieved gains for educators, children and public schools, and these gains can be further advanced by electing pro-public education, pro-working family candidates; and

WHEREAS, the results of the special elections in 2017 and 2018 have demonstrated that Americans reject the divisive policies of the Trump-McConnell-Ryan agenda and instead want candidates and policies that advocate for public education, quality healthcare and an economy that works for all Americans; and

WHEREAS, the 2018 elections are an opportunity to renounce the divisive politics and reverse the anti-worker policies that have besieged our country, and instead to elect leaders who will fight for working families at the local, state and federal levels; and
WHEREAS, Illinois Federation of Teachers and American Federation of Teachers members have historically turned out to vote in very high numbers, but nationwide more than 40 percent of eligible voters did not vote in 2016, underscoring the need to engage and mobilize union family members and the general public, including young voters and voters from communities of color; and

WHEREAS, the AFT, its members and the labor movement are longtime leaders of collective action and are trusted voices on issues of importance to our country, and unions, historically and today, are the best vehicle for working people to join together to seek and secure a better life and the American dream:

RESOLVED, that the American Federation of Teachers, its state federations and its locals commit to engaging and mobilizing our 1.7 million members, their families, their communities and the general public to elect pro-public education, pro-public service and pro-worker candidates at the local, state and federal levels in the 2018 elections; and

RESOLVED, that the AFT, its state federations and its locals will “REV It Up” in 2018. We will dedicate the necessary resources to effectively register and mobilize new voters, and to educate all voters on the issues of this election; and

RESOLVED, that AFT members will care, fight and show up to vote in the 2018 elections.

Submitted by: Illinois Federation of Teachers

☐ Adopted ☐ Adopted as Amended ☐ Defeated ☐ Tabled
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54. ENCOURAGING AND SUPPORTING MEMBERS TO RUN FOR ELECTED OFFICE

WHEREAS, thousands of American Federation of Teachers members have taken to the streets and state capitols this year to protest conditions that have become dire for students and patients—pressuring those with power to listen to our many voices speaking as one. We have pushed the needle in the direction of the future, and we must continue to push further; and

WHEREAS, AFT members must become those wielding the power. It is far past time that public sector workers, educators and healthcare professionals took the seats of school board members, councilpersons, mayors and legislators at county, state and federal levels. When we work to amplify our voice, we can win elections and deliver majorities for the causes that matter to working people; and
WHEREAS, when an AFT member becomes a councilperson or a school board member, we have the experience and the knowledge to make choices that are best for our students and our colleagues; and

WHEREAS, when a healthcare worker joins the state legislature, safe staffing becomes a top priority; and

WHEREAS, when a public employee becomes mayor, employees are treated with respect, and demands for collective bargaining, workplace safety and healthcare and retirement benefits are put into action; and

WHEREAS, when our voice is heard from the dais, it amplifies the voices of millions of labor leaders across the nation:

RESOLVED, that the American Federation of Teachers and its affiliates are here to guide every AFT candidate who steps forward to put his or her name and our movement on the ballot; and

RESOLVED, that we will train, walk door to door with, make calls for and raise the funds necessary for each AFT candidate to be successful in the quest for public office. The first step is knowing that your voice matters and will be a valuable addition to any discussion at any level of government; and

RESOLVED, that those who seek to destroy labor unions, privatize public education and empty out pension funds will no longer go unchallenged at the ballot box; and

RESOLVED, that we will fight back, and we will win. The AFT and the AFL-CIO are ready to back your candidacy for office. We can stop the race to the bottom by putting our members on top in every election.

Submitted by: Health Professionals and Allied Employees

☐ Adopted ☐ Adopted as Amended ☐ Defeated ☐ Tabled
☐ Precluded by_________________________ ☐ Referred to_______________

55. DEFENSE OF THE MUELLER INVESTIGATION

WHEREAS, in May 2017, Robert Mueller received bipartisan support to oversee an investigation into any links and/or coordination between the Russian government and individuals associated with the campaign of President Donald Trump, and any matters that arose or may arise directly from the investigation; and

WHEREAS, as Mueller has subpoenaed more officials for questioning, including Trump, it is possible that Trump will fire Mueller before his investigation is complete; and

WHEREAS, firing Mueller and shutting down the investigation of Trump’s various forms of misconduct and abuse of power will create a constitutional crisis; and
WHEREAS, as educators, we fervently defend the principles of democracy and cannot allow the American presidency to be turned into an authoritarian regime; and

WHEREAS, it is essential that an independent investigation be completed into wrong-doing, collusion and obstruction of justice by Donald Trump and members of his Cabinet and team:

RESOLVED, that the American Federation of Teachers supports the Mueller investigation and demands its completion; and

RESOLVED, that the AFT supports bipartisan efforts in Congress to protect the Mueller investigation; and

RESOLVED, that the AFT opposes and condemns any threats by President Trump to use firings or the presidential power to pardon to undermine the Mueller investigation.

Submitted by: Berkeley Federation of Teachers, Local 1078

☐ Adopted    ☐ Adopted as Amended    ☐ Defeated    ☐ Tabled
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56. DEMAND THAT TRUMP RESIGN OR BE REMOVED

WHEREAS, Donald Trump’s belligerence is a threat to the future of humanity around the world; and

WHEREAS, as long as he is president, no immigrant community is safe from deportations, none of us are safe from violent attacks by Trump’s racist and fascist supporters, and we live with the ever-present threat of Trump launching a war with North Korea that could become a nuclear World War III; and

WHEREAS, Donald Trump is a self-confessed sexual predator at the center of countless scandals, including the sexual assault of over 16 women; and

WHEREAS, he openly defends Ku Klux Klan and fascist terror after the horrific events of Charlottesville, Va., including the murder of Heather Heyer; and

WHEREAS, Trump is waging frontal attacks on public education, workers and unions; and

WHEREAS, there is more than enough basis for Congress to impeach him or remove him as unfit and unable to discharge the duties of a president; and

WHEREAS, there is nothing automatic to the process of ending Trump’s failed presidency. Mass action, including from organized labor and people of conscience, remains vital to defeat Trump and his threats to democracy; and

WHEREAS, whether he is impeached or forced to resign—TRUMP MUST GO NOW!
RESOLVED, that the American Federation of Teachers joins the rising chorus calling for Donald Trump’s immediate resignation or removal.

Submitted by: Berkeley Federation of Teachers, Local 1078

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57. OPPOSE THE DAKOTA ACCESS PIPELINE

WHEREAS, part of the Dakota Access Pipeline, a project of Energy Transfer Partners costing $3.4 billion and slated to carry 470,000 to 570,000 barrels of oil per day across four states from the Bakken oil fields to a port in Illinois where it would be refined for shipment overseas, has thus far been constructed on land over which the Standing Rock Lakota have treaty rights; and

WHEREAS, this construction has damaged or destroyed sacred sites, including burial grounds; and

WHEREAS, this construction has been done without the consent and against the wishes of the Standing Rock Lakota; and

WHEREAS, the proposed completion of the pipeline would take it under Lake Oahe, a dammed section of the Missouri River less than a mile from the Standing Rock Lakota reservation, endangering their only water supply, as well as the drinking water of 18 million people downstream, should there be a leak; and

WHEREAS, leaks in oil pipelines, while under-reported in mainstream media, are not uncommon; and

WHEREAS, this pipeline was originally proposed to cross the Missouri River above Bismarck, North Dakota, until concerns about its threat to the safety of that city’s water supply were voiced and the project was redirected to the current location; and

WHEREAS, the oil from the Bakken oil fields is fracked oil, further casting in doubt the overall environmental impact of this project; and

WHEREAS, the wisdom of continued production of oil as an energy source is questioned by many scientists and environmentalists; and

WHEREAS, even if domestic oil production is deemed to be of sufficient importance, this oil is not for domestic consumption but instead for overseas sales; and

WHEREAS, the jobs resulting from this project are fewer in number than claimed, and green energy solutions will create more long-term employment in the building trades and other sectors; and

WHEREAS, the jobs promised to the American public and our brothers and sisters in the building trades resulting from this project are fewer in number than claimed by Energy Transfer Partners; and
WHEREAS, the Standing Rock Lakota and their water protector allies—representing more than 300 First Nation tribes, indigenous peoples from around the world and other concerned people—have nonviolently resisted efforts of Energy Transfer Partners and its allies—including the Morton County Sheriff’s Office, the North Dakota Highway Patrol, the national guard and law enforcement from nearby states—to install the pipeline; and

WHEREAS, their nonviolent, prayerful resistance has been met, even in subfreezing weather, with highway blockades, attack dogs and militarized police weaponry, including water cannon, sound cannon, frozen rubber bullets, tear gas, pepper spray, constant noisy aerial surveillance and possible interference with the ability to communicate electronically with the outside world, among other military tactics; and

WHEREAS, U.S. military veterans who traveled to pipeline protest camps to put themselves between the militarized police and the unarmed water protectors have said that the sites of confrontation looked “like a war zone”; and

WHEREAS, Amnesty International has called upon the U.S. Department of Justice to investigate the policing of the Dakota Access Pipeline demonstrations; and

WHEREAS, the Department of the Army has published in the Federal Register a “Notice of Intent to require an Environmental Impact Statement” regarding Energy Transfer Partners’ request to drill under Lake Oahe in order to complete its pipeline:

RESOLVED, that the American Federation of Teachers condemns the actions taken against the Standing Rock Lakota and their water protector allies; and

RESOLVED, that the AFT supports the Standing Rock Lakota in their opposition to the pipeline; and

RESOLVED, that the AFT supports an Environmental Impact Statement that finds the Dakota Access Pipeline in its present location unacceptable; and

RESOLVED, that the AFT questions the need for the pipeline at all; and

RESOLVED, that the president of the AFT shall communicate with President Donald Trump demanding that he provide clear documentation that he does not own stock in Energy Transfer Partners or Phillips 66, either directly or indirectly.

Submitted by: California Federation of Teachers

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58. IN SUPPORT OF REGISTERING ELIGIBLE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS TO VOTE

WHEREAS, about 50.7 million students attend public schools, according to the National Center for Education Statistics; and
WHEREAS, voting in local, state and federal elections is a core right, an obligation of citizenship and a primary vehicle to ensure the United States remains a government by and for the people; and
WHEREAS, in 1971, the 26th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution was adopted, lowering the voting age to 18; and
WHEREAS, according to the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement, 16.9 million youth voters became eligible in 2016 to vote in their first presidential election; and
WHEREAS, voter turnout in the 2016 presidential election dipped to its lowest point in two decades with only about 55 percent of voting-age citizens participating; and
WHEREAS, data from Pew Research Center indicates that people between the ages of 18 and 35 are now as large a political force as the baby-boom generation, comprising more than 31 percent of the overall electorate; and
WHEREAS, the lack of participation in the electoral process deprives individuals and communities of agency, voice and representation; and
WHEREAS, as a leader in the struggle for educational justice and labor rights, the American Federation of Teachers has the responsibility to educate and empower working people, students and citizens:

RESOLVED, that the American Federation of Teachers will embark on a voter registration drive for eligible high school students and others eligible to vote; and
RESOLVED, that the AFT will seek to work with our community and civil rights partners to increase voter education, registration and participation; and
RESOLVED, that the AFT will educate, assist and empower those who, though ineligible to vote, need to understand their individual rights as well as the roles and responsibilities of active citizen engagement.

Submitted by: United Federation of Teachers, Local 2

☐ Adopted       ☐ Adopted as Amended       ☐ Defeated       ☐ Tabled
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59. ON AFT DEMANDS FOR POLITICAL ENDORSEMENTS

WHEREAS, the teacher rebellions across the country demonstrate our collective power in the face of austerity to demand healthcare for all, pensions for all, a robust public sector, and taxing the wealthy to fund schools and public services; and

WHEREAS, healthcare inflation and a broken private insurance system continue to put downward pressure on the life standards of workers across the country; and

WHEREAS, the more than $1 trillion in college debt accrued by our students just to make it in America has burdened them with a lifetime of bank payments and reduced earnings; and

WHEREAS, burgeoning social movements—like #BlackLivesMatter, #RedforEd, #DefendDACA, #55Strong, #MeToo, #MarchForOurLives, #NoDAPL—have shown us all a path to transforming our society to benefit the vast majority instead of the wealthy few; and

WHEREAS, the United Teachers Los Angeles has demanded $20,000 per student by 2020 in its recent contract fight, and all our low-income students need double the per-pupil expenditures to fully fund Title I, IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) and a national sustainable community school model; and

WHEREAS, universal/full-day and cost-free child care, pre-K and programming are increasingly costly and unavailable to the majority of working families—there is a dire need to alter course and implement a public sector solution to the problem:

RESOLVED, that the American Federation of Teachers will support the following demands nationally:

1. Single-payer healthcare/Medicare for All;
2. Free college for all;
3. Universal/full-day and cost-free child care;
4. Double the per-pupil expenditures for low-income K-12 districts; and
5. Tax the rich to fully fund the IDEA and Title I.

Submitted by: Chicago Teachers Union, Local 1; United Teachers Los Angeles, Local 1021; Professional Staff Congress, Local 2334

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60. AGAINST “AMERICA’S FOREVER WARS”

WHEREAS, the U.S. government wages endless wars under the pretext of the “war on terror”—described in a *New York Times* editorial on Oct. 23, 2017, as “America’s Forever Wars”;¹ and

WHEREAS, the primary agenda of these wars is to further the interests of U.S. corporations² and the ruling elite, with the consequence of lower investments in public services like healthcare, education and environmental protection; and

WHEREAS, the United States historically has pursued a foreign policy motivated by the aim of controlling resources, markets and labor, starting with territorial expansion (Manifest Destiny, the dispossession of indigenous populations and the seizure of Mexican lands); through the annexation of Pacific and Caribbean islands; to the military occupation of countries like Haiti and Nicaragua, a policy that the United States continued in Afghanistan and Iraq; and to the arming of friendly authoritarian regimes like Pinochet in Chile and Suharto in Indonesia, which continues today with regimes like Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the Philippines; and

WHEREAS, imperialist wars have historically depended on racism, from the genocide in the Americas and the African slave trade, through the wars for control of key areas in Indochina and Latin America, to today’s mass bombing and displacement of populations in the Middle East;³ and

WHEREAS, U.S. workers, aware of the harms war causes to our fellow workers at home and abroad, have in the past opposed it and helped force the United States to withdraw, as in the movement against the war in Vietnam; and

WHEREAS, more recently, U.S. unions, in spite of the pressures on unions to support these wars, have taken anti-war actions, such as the AFT vote at its 2006 convention for immediate withdrawal of U.S.

¹ This editorial also points to the far-flung U.S. empire of military bases, with troops deployed “in at least 172 countries and territories.”

² International financial institutions like the World Trade Organization, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, and trade pacts like the North American Free Trade Agreement, facilitate super-exploitation of reserves of low-wage labor and unequal exchange of resources and commodities. Military force backs up current economic and political forms of big-power coercion, as in the U.S., NATO and allied attacks on Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya, with their rich resources. Both allies and rivals of the United States are building up their militaries for the “Great Game.” See David Harvey (*The New Imperialism*), Samir Amin, John Smith, Jayati Ghosh, Michael Klare, Utsa Patnaik, Alfred McCoy and many other scholars. McCoy’s 2017 book *In the Shadows of the American Century* explores this new landscape of domination in a multipolar world. The duty of workers everywhere is to oppose imperialist domination and the wars that enforce it.

³ For the use of racist ideology to justify imperialism and sometimes win workers to support it, see the work of W.E.B. Du Bois, Mahmoud Mamdani and Gerald Horne.
troops from Iraq, and the AFL-CIO 2017 convention resolution on war and militarism;⁴ and
WHEREAS, there is an urgent need to prevent an impending global war between the major powers by stopping the “resource wars”⁵ now being played out across the world to control supplies of oil and strategic minerals, wars that could be started at flashpoints like the Korean Peninsula, the Middle East, the South China Sea and the European borders of Russia⁶:

RESOLVED, that the American Federation of Teachers condemns “America’s Forever Wars” on the pretext of a “war on terror”; and
RESOLVED, that, as a union of educators, the AFT will raise awareness of the domestic costs of the nation’s wars, which impact investments in labor and public services and foster racial divisiveness; and
RESOLVED, that the AFT will support anti-war groups in exposing and by opposing the policy behind these endless wars, through curricula, teach-ins, articles, conferences, protests, rallies, sit-ins and other forms of action.

Submitted by: Professional Staff Congress, Local 2334

☐ Adopted       ☐ Adopted as Amended       ☐ Defeated       ☐ Tabled
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⁴ https://aflcio.org/resolutions/resolution-50-war-not-answer
⁵ Michael Klare’s term has since become standard, notably for the oil wars justified by the Carter Doctrine of U.S. intervention to protect oil interests. Carter’s adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski laid out this strategy in The Grand Chessboard.
⁶ See John Pilger’s documentary The Coming War on China and articles by U.S. strategic planners. Rather than supporting the “patriotic gore” of one’s “own side” in such a conflict, workers in all countries will gain by uniting to oppose global war.