

The US pseudo-left's conspiracy of silence on the Matamoros workers' rebellion

By Alex González
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It has been three weeks since the start of the courageous strike by 70,000 “maquiladora” workers in Matamoros, Mexico, and self-described “socialist” news outlets in the US have still not written a *single article* about the walkout.

The *World Socialist Web Site* alone has extensively reported on the strike and fought to rally support for the Mexican workers from workers in the US, Canada and around the world.

Jacobin magazine, which is closely aligned with the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), *Socialist Worker*, the publication of the International Socialist Organization (ISO), and *Socialist Alternative* are engaged in a conspiracy of silence as tens of thousands of highly exploited Mexican workers wage an historic fight against US and Canadian corporations reaping billions in profits.

The pseudo-left has remained silent as company thugs have beaten workers, the corporations have fired hundreds of strikers, and police have threatened the workers with violence.

They have not reported that workers have successfully slowed production thousands of miles away in the US and Canada. They have not reported that the strikers, by withholding their labor, have caused the companies an estimated \$40-\$50 million in losses *per day* and won widespread support among Canadian and US autoworkers laboring under similar conditions of exploitation carried out with the collaboration of the unions.

The pseudo-left's silence is not the result of ignorance. The WSWWS has made the strike movement widely known in English, publishing 29 articles on the strikes since January 15, or roughly 1.5 articles per day.

Rather, this silence is a conscious effort to keep workers and youth from learning the truth, because the truth threatens the material interests of the affluent upper-middle class on whose behalf the pseudo-left speaks.

The Matamoros strike began as a wildcat action organized in opposition to the Mexican unions. Workers held a mass protest outside of the headquarters of the Union of Laborers and Industrial Workers of the Maquiladora Industry

(SJOIIM) on January 12. Outraged that they would not be receiving a wage increase and yearly bonus, the workers confronted union leader Juan Villafuerte, shouting, “We no longer want our union,” and “You only steal from us.”

The maquiladora unions, like their counterparts worldwide, are hated by workers for pocketing four percent of workers' wages each week in dues while acting as nothing more than industrial labor police. By organizing their actions outside of the control of the trade unions, largely through social media, the maquiladora workers recognized that only through their own independent and unified strength could they achieve their demands. One of the most popular banners of the strike reads: “The union and the companies kill the working class.”

The workers quickly formed independent factory committees and went from plant to plant, informing their coworkers of what had taken place. One day after the initial demonstration, 70,000 workers from 45 plants were on strike.

The pseudo-left organizations are opposed to the Matamoros workers because they support the trade unions and increasingly occupy prominent positions in the unions' corrupt apparatus. They demand that workers accept the authority of these right-wing, nationalist and pro-capitalist organizations, which have devoted their efforts over the past four decades to suppressing the class struggle and helping to impose plant closures, layoffs, wage cuts and other concessions, leading to a record transfer of wealth from the bottom 90 percent to the top 10 percent.

The pseudo-left groups routinely support every betrayal carried out by the unions—most recently the sellout of the Los Angeles' teachers' strike—declaring them “victories.”

The maquiladora workers' rebellion has completely exploded their lying narrative. The strike has demonstrated that the power of the working class can be mobilized only through a rebellion against the unions. In Matamoros, the unions sought to prevent the workers from going on strike in the first place and then threatened them with firings. The workers organized their own factory committees to fight

for—and win—a 20 percent wage increase and \$1,700 bonus.

The pseudo-left has also hailed Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO) as a transformative figure and defender of the Mexican working class. The day of AMLO's inauguration in December 2018, *Jacobin* wrote that AMLO would “represent the people.” It hailed the “equal representation of women in the cabinet and in Congress.”

A December 5 article on *Socialist Worker* stated that AMLO's election had shown “democratic openings” and could “improve the economic conditions of working class Mexicans.”

These treacherous lies have been fully exposed in Matamoros. From the beginning, AMLO's minimum wage increase was a ploy to camouflage the creation of a new pro-industry free economic zone near the US border.

When the strike wave unfolded to the dismay of the ruling class, AMLO and his party, the Movement for National Regeneration (Morena), intervened to put an end to the walkout. On January 27, the Morena leader of the Senate called fellow Morena activist and labor lawyer Susana Prieto and gave orders to shut down the strike “for the economy of the state and municipality not to collapse.” An AP report on February 1 noted that AMLO and Morena leaders “actively discouraged the Matamoros union from seeking the pay increase.”

The pseudo-left's silence on Matamoros exposes the bankruptcy of its nationalist orientation. The DSA, ISO and Socialist Alternative promote the “democratic socialist” Bernie Sanders, who echoes Trump's anti-immigrant rhetoric and economic nationalism and has blamed Mexican workers for job losses and low wages in the US. The Matamoros strikers, by contrast, have directly appealed to American and Canadian workers for support, and received a powerful response.

The Matamoros strike also undercuts the identity politics agenda of the pseudo-left organizations, which claim that social questions must be explained primarily through the prism of race or gender. The Matamoros workers, however, are identifying themselves as a *class* and demanding that they all be treated equally, without regard for nationality, physical traits or sexual orientation.

At its root, the silence of the pseudo-left is explained by its class position. The DSA, ISO and Socialist Alternative represent the interests of privileged sections of the middle class, including the trade union executives, who make up the wealthiest 10 percent of American society. These layers increasingly derive their wealth from the rising stock market, the exploitation of the working class and the dominant position of American capitalism.

A development like Matamoros threatens their income and

social standing. A rebellion by workers against the trade unions would halt the cash flow from union dues, which is a major source of the personal wealth of thousands of union executives. A sharp reduction in union dues is an explicit demand of the Matamoros strikers!

Two opposed, global processes are clashing in Matamoros.

On the one hand, the working class is striving to unleash its social power through independent action by breaking the straitjacket imposed by the nationalist trade unions. Its impulse is toward international unity, as workers everywhere increasingly recognize that confronting international corporations requires an international strategy.

On the other hand, to arrest this process, the ruling class is more and more relying on so-called “left populist,” i.e., nationalist and pro-capitalist, politicians, along with the pseudo-left, to divert social unrest into the safe channels of the capitalist political system. Through its dishonest silence, the US pseudo-left is demonstrating its outright hostility to the life-and-death struggle of one of the most oppressed sections of the international working class.

The Socialist Equality Party and the World Socialist Web Site call for workers to form their own democratically elected rank-and-file committees independent of the trade unions and to attend and support the February 9 demonstration in opposition to GM plant closures. The demonstration aims to arm the growing class struggle with an international socialist perspective and program.

To contact the WSW and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

<http://www.wsws.org>