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USA

Minneapolis General Strike and Federal Agents Murder Another Person

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The day after a remarkable one-day general strike in Minneapolis held to protest federal agents' murder of Renée Nicole Good, on January 26 federal agents murdered a second person, Alex Jeffrey Pretti, an intensive care nurse at the Veterans Affairs Medical Center. Federal spokespeople immediately declared that Pretti was a domestic terrorist who had intended to "massacre" federal agents who, they said, shot him in self-defense but videos of the event contradicted the government's claim.

One can see clearly in the videos that Pretti, holding a telephone in his hand to video ice agents, stepped up to assist a woman who had been pushed down, when he was attacked by seven agents who knocked him to the ground, pepper sprayed him, and beat him. The agents then discovered that Pretti was carrying a concealed handgun, as he was permitted to do under state law, though he never brandished the weapon. Agents took his gun from him and then a Border Patrol agent shot him ten times, killing him.

As had happened earlier with Good's murder, Federal agents took command of the shooting site, and even though state officials with a judicial warrant demanded a right to examine the scene the Department of Homeland Security refused. Despite the below zero temperatures (-6 degrees Fahrenheit, -21 Celsius), hundreds of people took to the streets to protest Pretti's murder and a thousand showed up for a spontaneous outdoor memorial service for him. Governor Tim Walz, who had earlier ordered the National Guard to stand ready, now mobilized it to keep order in Minneapolis.

President Donald Trump, a Republican, has threatened to invoke the Insurrection Act which allows the president to mobilize the U.S. military. He now says that Democratic governor Walz and Democratic Mayor Jacob Frey "are inciting Insurrection, with their pompous, dangerous, and arrogant rhetoric." So far, Trump has not sent in the military troops though his Justice Department is investigating the governor and mayor for allegedly impeding Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents.

The Minneapolis general strike against ICE on January 23, supported by labor union, religious groups, and community organizations mobilizing under the slogan "Day of Truth & Freedom" and calling for "no work, no school, no shopping" virtually stopped economic activity in the city. One hundred clergy members who gathered at the airport and blocked the facility were arrested for failure to comply with police and released, while tens of thousands marched through downtown Minneapolis. Hundreds of small businesses closed for the day in protest while others permitted employees to take the day off. Everywhere people shouted "ICE out." There were also protests in other cities across the country, despite the sub-zero temperatures, snow, sleet and ice in half the nation.

Unlike Europe or Latin America, we don't have general strikes in the United States. The Minneapolis general strike is unprecedented in contemporary America. Not since 1934 has there been a general strike in Minneapolis and no other city has gone on strike since the Oakland general strike of 1946. But it has also been a long time since federal officers have beaten, gassed, and murdered white U.S. citizens with impunity. We have gone beyond the reactionary McCarthyism of the 1950s. The events in Minneapolis confirm that we now live in the grip, the death grip, of an authoritarian government, but also that there is a powerful, popular resistance. We are in a struggle for justice, for democracy, and for our lives. And that struggle goes on, most intensely in Minneapolis, but also everywhere else in the country. And the end is not in sight.

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