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The fascists in the White House

The tirades by President Donald Trump over the past three days have no precedent in the history of the US presidency. Trump, backed by a cabal of advisors in the White House, speaks openly as a fascist, demonizing people of different races and national origins, vilifying socialism, and declaring that those who oppose his administration's policies are disloyal to the country and should leave it.

Trump has directed his vitriol at Democratic congresswomen: Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Ilhan Omar, Rashida Tlaib, and Ayanna Pressley. On Sunday evening, he initiated an attack on Twitter, denouncing them as “radical Left Congresswomen” who “speak so badly of our Country” and “hate Israel with a true and unbridled passion.” Trump cited the comments of Republican Senator Lindsey Graham that “AOC [Ocasio-Cortez] and this crowd are a bunch of Communists” who are “Anti-Semitic” and “Anti-America.”

The president added his own comment along this theme Monday afternoon: “We will never be a Socialist or Communist Country,” he tweeted. “IF YOU ARE NOT HAPPY HERE, YOU CAN LEAVE!”

Perhaps most ominously, during a ten-minute diatribe at the end of a White House media event Monday afternoon to promote American manufacturing, Trump falsely accused Omar of declaring her love for Al Qaeda, which he said was killing American soldiers. The statement was nothing short of an incitement to violence against the representative from Minneapolis, a Somali-American who came to this country as a child and is one of two newly elected Muslim-American congresswomen.

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Trump is playing with fire. He is placing the authority of the White House behind violent attacks on the model of the South Carolina church murders, the Pittsburgh synagogue massacre, and the attacks on mosques in Southern California. This is under conditions where one Trump supporter sent mail bombs last year to leading Democrats and media figures, and a Coast Guard officer, arrested on weapons charges, was found to have drawn up a death list that includes Ocasio-Cortez, one of Trump's latest targets.

It is more than a matter of inciting violence against individual opponents. Trump's campaign of vilification against the Democratic congresswomen has a clear political goal, which goes well beyond his 2020 reelection campaign or these four individuals. He is making an appeal to the most reactionary forces in American society, seeking to build a fascist movement in the United States.

The president of the United States, speaking for significant sections of the ruling class, has declared that anyone opposing the foreign and domestic policy of the ruling class should be subject to prosecution, deportation or physical violence.

US presidents, particularly in the period of Cold War struggle between American imperialism and the Soviet Union, once sought to posture as leaders of the "Free World," representing a country which long identified itself as being "a nation of immigrants." Trump discards that pretense. His ideal America would be a brutal police state in which working people are deprived of all rights and the symbols of national "greatness" are a massive wall along the US-Mexico border and the Dow Jones Industrial Average—which he boasted Monday had hit a record 27,000.

Trump's boasting and bullying are not signs of strength, however, but of weakness and deepening crisis. While he can rely on the leadership of the Democratic Party to collaborate, compromise and prop up his government, there is mounting opposition among working people that threatens a social and political explosion in America. This is expressed in a growing strike movement and in the protests that erupted over the weekend against the impending deportation raids by Immigration and Customs Enforcement in ten major cities.

Millions oppose this government and everything it stands for, but they are trapped in the framework of the corporate-controlled two-party system, in which the supposed alternative to Trump is a Democratic Party completely identified with Wall Street and the military-intelligence apparatus.

The four congresswomen who were the targets of Trump's Twitter vitriol held a press conference Monday afternoon. Each of the four denounced Trump's brutal treatment of immigrants in border detention camps and called for his impeachment.

However, in language that was certainly worked out behind the scenes with House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and other Democratic leaders, the four congresswomen declared that Trump's declaration of war against them was a "distraction," something to be ignored in favor of issues like health care, gun violence, and immigration.

In response to questions from the press, it was notable that none of the four chose to respond to Trump's denunciations of them as socialists, communists and sympathizers of Al Qaeda. Nor did the four Democrats use the word "fascist" to characterize Trump's statements of the previous three days, or his actions against immigrant families.

A similar silence on the political character of Trump's latest rantings prevails in the Democratic congressional leadership, among the Democratic presidential candidates, and in the newspapers and television networks aligned with the Democratic Party, such as the *New York Times*, CNN and MSNBC.

The only concrete action proposed by House Speaker Nancy Pelosi is a resolution of disapproval that would condemn Trump's language while citing President Ronald Reagan—whose right-wing government initiated the ongoing campaign of social counterrevolution and attacks on the working class in America—as a model of civility and tolerance.

The context of Trump's diatribe is significant. It follows an increasingly public denunciation of the four congresswomen by the Democratic leadership for their failure to endorse a bill granting over \$4 billion in funding for Trump to implement his fascistic border policies, which passed with overwhelming Democratic support.

"All these people have their public whatever and their Twitter world," Pelosi told the *New York Times*. "But they didn't have any following. They're four people and that's how many votes they got."

The media response has bolstered the Democrats by criticizing Trump's remarks as "racist" and "xenophobic," while avoiding terms like "fascist" and "Nazi-like," which would more accurately describe the political significance of his statements and would call into question the complacent and utterly passive response of the Democratic Party.

Perhaps the foulest expression of this media campaign was the op-ed column written by Charles Blow of the *New York Times*, who criticized Trump from the standpoint of

identity politics, declaring, “White people and whiteness are the center of the Trump presidency. His primary concern is to defend, protect and promote it. All that threatens it must be attacked and assaulted. Trump is bringing the force of the American presidency to the rescue of white supremacy.”

In effect, Blow legitimizes Trump’s claim that he, a billionaire real estate swindler and “reality television” personality, is the authentic representative and defender of the unemployed coal miner in West Virginia or the laid-off steelworker in Ohio, because of a shared skin color.

Billionaires and the workers they exploit, so long as they are both white, have a common identity and privilege, in the opinion of the race-obsessed *Times* columnist (whose income and personal wealth are undoubtedly well beyond those of workers in the deindustrialized Midwest).

Blow blames workers (not the Democratic Party and its hated candidate Hillary Clinton) for Trump’s election and for the ultra-right policies being carried out by his administration. He concludes that “fellow citizens—possibly a third of them” reveal their racism “through their continued support for him.” This is a slander against the working class.

The ongoing wave of strikes in the United States was touched off by thousands of teachers in West Virginia—a state which Trump carried overwhelmingly in 2016—who defied state law, a Republican legislature, and a Democrat-turned-Republican governor to fight for higher pay and secure benefits and against school privatization and charterization. These teachers, and hundreds of thousands of other workers in subsequent strikes and protests, have demonstrated that class, not race, is the fundamental dividing line in American society.

Trump is not the president of “white people.” He is the president who seeks to use racism and anti-immigrant prejudice to divide the working class and maintain the supremacy of Wall Street and the giant corporations. Politicians and pundits who oppose the unity of the working class in struggle against capitalism play right into the hands of Trump and his effort to build a fascist movement in America.

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