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European Languages

زبانهای اروپایی

By Barry Grey
26.01.2020

Trump steps up attacks on immigrants, democratic rights in midst of impeachment trial

As the fourth day of substantive proceedings in the Senate impeachment trial got underway Friday, President Donald Trump stepped up his appeal to right-wing forces and intensified his attacks on democratic rights, becoming the first ever president to make a personal appearance at the annual March for Life rally in Washington DC.

The march is held every year to mark the 1973 Roe v. Wade Supreme Court ruling legalizing abortion and demand its repeal. In brief remarks, Trump attacked the “far left” for “working to erase our God-given rights.”



President Donald Trump speaks during the annual “March for Life” rally on the National Mall, Friday, Jan. 24, 2020, in Washington [Credit: AP Photo/ Evan Vucci]

He said the Democrats have “embraced the most radical and extreme positions taken and seen in this country for years and decades, and, you can even say, for centuries.” He denounced New York lawmakers for supposedly cheering legislation that would “allow a baby to be ripped from the mother’s womb right up until delivery,” and repeated the lie that Virginia’s Democratic governor “stated that he would execute a baby after birth.”

Prior to Trump’s appearance at the rally, the Department of Health and Human Services—whose secretary, Alex Azar, was also in attendance—warned that it would give California 30 days to drop its requirement that private insurers cover abortions, after which it would slash federal funds for health care programs in the nation’s largest state.

This boost to anti-abortion forces was the latest in a series of moves by Trump to counter the Democrats’ impeachment drive with appeals to right-wing and fascistic elements, including incitements to violence against his political opponents.

Less than two weeks ago, he retweeted an image of House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Senate Minority Leader Charles Schumer dressed in Muslim garb and standing in front of an Iranian flag.

On Monday, the eve of the opening of his Senate impeachment trial, Trump tweeted support for thousands of gun-rights activists, including many militia members carrying military-grade weapons, who rallied in Virginia’s capital of Richmond on Martin Luther King Day to protest mild gun control legislation making its way through the Democratic-controlled state legislature.

On Tuesday, he confirmed that he plans to announce as soon as this coming Monday an expansion of his unconstitutional travel ban on seven countries, most of which are majority-Muslim. He reportedly will add seven additional countries, including Nigeria, Africa’s most populous state.

On Wednesday, speaking from the billionaires’ conclave at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, Trump said he would consider cutting entitlement programs in his second term, including Medicare and Social Security.

On Thursday, the State Department announced a new policy, which took effect Friday, denying visas to pregnant women suspected of wishing to give birth in the US in order to ensure US citizenship for the child, under the birthright citizenship provision of the 14th Amendment to the US Constitution. Trump has denounced the post-Civil War provision, enacted to grant citizenship to the freed slaves.

Also on Thursday, the administration finalized a rule stripping away environmental protections for streams, wetlands and groundwater, handing a victory to real estate developers and speculators.

None of this has been broached by the House Democratic impeachment managers in three days and a total of 24 hours of arguments for the conviction of Trump and his removal from office by the Senate. The prosecution completed its presentation on Friday with a defense of the second article of impeachment, obstruction of Congress, following more than two days of detailed and repetitive speeches reviewing evidence from the House impeachment inquiry on the first article, abuse of power.

With Republicans in control of the Senate, 53 to 47, and a two-thirds vote needed to convict Trump and remove him from office, there is little doubt of the outcome of the process. The hours and hours of speeches by the seven House managers have only underscored the right-wing and militaristic basis on which the Democrats are opposing Trump and seeking his removal. Absent is any reference to Trump's real attacks on democratic rights, on immigrants, and on the social conditions of the working class.

This largely accounts for the lack of engagement of the population in the proceedings in the Senate, despite the fact that they mark only the third impeachment trial of a president in US history, and the target, Trump, is hated and despised by a substantial majority of the American people.

Ratings agencies estimated the combined audience for the six networks covering the Senate trial at only 11 million on Tuesday, dropping 19 percent to less than 8,600,000 on Wednesday. That compares to the over 20 million who watched the testimony of Christine Blasey Ford and Supreme Court nominee Brett Kavanaugh in 2018.

The Democrats' arguments were saturated with animus toward Russia and China that recalled the heyday of anti-communist McCarthyism of the 1950s. They made clear that the opposition of the Democratic Party to Trump has nothing to do with the defense of democratic rights or the social needs of working people, but rather with differences over US imperialist foreign policy, centered on Ukraine and Russia.

The Democrats, acting as the political agents of the CIA, impeached Trump over his temporary withholding of military aid to Ukraine. The claim that Trump used the suspended aid to bully Ukraine into announcing a corruption investigation of Vice President Joe Biden and his son Hunter in order to rig the 2020 election against his likely

opponent, thereby abusing his power and undermining American “democracy,” is an elaborate pretense.

The real issue is Trump’s alleged reluctance to aggressively continue the anti-Russia policy initiated by the Obama administration. Anti-Russia hysteria and the absurd claim that Trump is a stooge of Vladimir Putin have been at the center of the Democrats’ opposition to Trump ever since the 2016 election, and the current impeachment drive is a continuation and escalation of the war-mongering campaign that has included the Mueller investigation and the drive for internet censorship in the name of fighting Russian- and foreign-inspired “fake news.”

The common theme of all of the Democratic speeches in the Senate is the charge that by disrupting military aid to Ukraine, Trump jeopardized US national security, undermined a US ally at war with Russia, and strengthened Putin.

Thus, House Intelligence Chairman Adam Schiff, who is leading the Democratic prosecution, declared on Wednesday: “The United States aids Ukraine and its people so that they can fight Russia over there and we don’t have to fight Russia here.”

The claim is that Russia, by annexing Crimea and backing pro-Russian separatists in eastern Ukraine after the US-backed and fascist-led putsch that overthrew a pro-Russian elected government in 2014, is seeking to “redraw the map of Europe” by means of aggression.

In fact, Russia and Ukraine were part of the same country, the Soviet Union, until the Stalinist bureaucracy dismantled the USSR in 1991, the same year that Ukraine, backed by Washington, declared its independence. In the intervening years, NATO has moved its eastern border hundreds of miles to Russia’s doorstep and surrounded Russia militarily, in preparation for carving up the country in the interests of the imperialist powers.

The US military, in keeping with the National Defense Strategy published in early 2018, has plans in place to attack both Russia and China, including with nuclear weapons.

Concluding his remarks Thursday night, Schiff contended that Trump had to be removed immediately, despite a national election less than 10 months away, because otherwise he would conspire with Russia and China to flood the American electorate with pro-Trump propaganda and “fake news” and steal the election, just as he supposedly did against Hillary Clinton in 2016.

Schiff even fantasized that Trump would sell out US interests in trade talks with China in return for Chinese meddling in the 2020 elections. He asked, “So what if China does overtly or covertly start to help the Trump campaign? Do you think he is going to call them out on it, or do you think he is going to give them a better trade deal on it?”

In his final remarks Friday on the “abuse of power” impeachment article, Schiff questioned Trump’s patriotism, repeating a phrase that had been used earlier by House Judiciary Chairman Jerrold Nadler: “This is Trump first, not America first.”

He hailed Ukraine’s secession in 1991 as “the final nail in the Soviet Union’s coffin,” and proceeded to show a clip of the joint press conference between Trump and Putin at the Helsinki summit in July of 2018, at which Trump questioned the CIA narrative that Putin engineered the defeat of Clinton in 2016.

“You undermine the credibility of your own intelligence agencies,” Schiff declared. “You weaken the country... You’ve just told the world you trust the Russians more than our own intelligence agencies... In the entire length of the Cold War, the Soviet Union had no such success.”

World Socialist 25 January 2020