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By Barry Grey
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Trump steps up fascist agitation, targeting Fauci

In a series of campaign rallies and tweets, President Donald Trump has stepped up his efforts to incite fascist violence against his political opponents. Underscoring the connection between Trump's support for violent far-right militias, his plotting to remain in power regardless of the outcome of the Nov. 3 vote and his homicidal "herd immunity" coronavirus policy, the president has in recent days targeted Dr. Anthony Fauci, the director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases.

Fauci is widely recognized as one of the foremost authorities on infectious diseases. He has increasingly criticized Trump's opposition to measures to contain the spread of the virus, such as mask-wearing, testing and contact tracing, and opposed Trump's promotion of the anti-scientific and deadly "let it rip" policy advocated by White House adviser Dr. Scott Atlas.

Since returning to the White House after his brief hospitalization for COVID-19, Trump has doubled down on his campaign against social distancing, holding rallies with thousands of unmasked supporters packed together in super-spreader events. He has portrayed his own recovery and supposed immunity as proof that the dangers of the pandemic have been vastly exaggerated and that it is safe to fully reopen schools and businesses.



President Donald Trump watches as Director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases Dr. Anthony S. Fauci delivers remarks during a coronavirus briefing.

(Official White House Photo by Andrea Hanks)

This is under conditions of an explosive growth of infections and hospitalizations across the US and internationally, along with rising daily death tolls. As average daily infections in the

US top 60,000, hospitalizations nationwide are up more than 30 percent from just four weeks ago.

In a conference call Monday with campaign staff, to which a number of reporters were invited, Trump said, "People are tired of COVID. I have the biggest rallies I've ever had... People are saying, 'Whatever. Just leave us alone.' They're tired of it."

He added, "People are tired of hearing Fauci and these idiots, all these idiots who got it wrong... He's been here for 500 years. Every time he goes on television, there's always a bomb, but there's a bigger bomb if you fire him. But this guy's a disaster."

Trump also reiterated his call for Joe Biden to be jailed, calling him a "criminal." This was combined with more false claims of massive voter fraud and the assertion that the only way he could lose was if the election was "rigged."

Later on Monday, in an exchange with reporters on an airport tarmac in Arizona, Trump said of Fauci, "I don't want to hurt him. He's been there about 350 years. I don't want to hurt him."

One is reminded, hearing this extraordinary remark about the government's top expert on infectious diseases, of the famous quote attributed to King Henry II of England preceding the assassination of Archbishop of Canterbury Thomas Becket: "Will no one rid me of this meddlesome priest?"

Later, at an afternoon rally in Prescott, Arizona, Trump directly linked Biden to Fauci, saying, "Biden wants to lock it down. He wants to listen to Dr. Fauci."

The attacks on Fauci followed the airing Sunday night of a CBS *60 Minutes* segment in which Fauci criticized Trump's handling of the pandemic. He said he was not surprised that Trump had contracted the virus given the White House's lack of safety measures. He also acknowledged that the White House was seeking to silence him.

Fauci has already become a target of far-right Trump supporters. He and his wife have received death threats by email, phone and text message. The *60 Minutes* broadcast included a clip of Fauci and his wife taking a walk, flanked by two security guards who are part of a permanent federal security detail.

It is less than two weeks since the FBI and Michigan authorities announced the indictment of 13 militia members for their involvement in a far-advanced plot to kidnap and murder Michigan's Democratic Governor Gretchen Whitmer and seize control of the state legislature. Since then, a fourteenth suspect has been arrested and authorities have acknowledged that the plot included plans to assassinate the Democratic governor of Virginia.

The alleged plotters include individuals who participated in armed demonstrations against coronavirus lockdown orders earlier this year at the State Capitol building in Michigan. Similar rallies, replete with Nazi insignia and Confederate flags, were held in Virginia, Minnesota, Ohio, Texas and other states. Trump tweeted his enthusiastic support, urging his supporters to "liberate" Michigan, Minnesota and Virginia. The fascist militiamen were warmly greeted by sympathetic police.

The exposure of what Michigan's attorney general called "the tip of the iceberg" followed Trump's injunction during his debate with Biden for the Proud Boys to "stand back and stand by," a thinly veiled order to prepare for violent attacks against protests should Trump refuse to accept defeat at the polls.

Similar threats are being made against other elected officials around the country who are seeking to enforce coronavirus restrictions. A Kansas man was arrested on Oct. 16 after allegedly sending text messages to a Wichita official requesting the home address of Democratic Mayor Brandon Whipple in order to kidnap and kill him.

Trump has responded by repeatedly attacking Whitmer and denouncing her administration for supposedly refusing to fully open the state, thereby legitimizing and egging on the fascist forces behind the coup plots. In fact, Whitmer, like Democratic governors around the

country, has obeyed the dictates of big business, sanctioning the reopening of the auto plants, schools and universities and lifting restrictions on other businesses.

Trump delivered yet another fascistic rant Monday night in Tucson, Arizona, absurdly casting Biden, a right-wing corporate shill, as a front man for “socialists, communists and Marxists.” He hit on all of his far-right tropes and dog whistles, attacking mail-in ballots, immigrants and China. In an appeal to racism, he claimed to be “saving” the suburbs by blocking the construction of low-income housing. He gave a shout out to anti-Semites by denouncing “left-wing globalists and lobbyists, the wealthy donors.” He lavished praise on the police, the military and the ICE immigration Gestapo.

He attacked Whitmer, saying her policies had turned Michigan into a “prison,” and reiterated his call for Biden to be jailed, calling “the Biden family” a “criminal enterprise.”

In a direct incitement to far-right militias, Trump referred to the Second Amendment and gun rights no less than eight times. Underscoring his drive to build a fascist movement around his “Führer” persona, Trump had his operatives in the crowd initiate a chant of “Superman, Superman, Superman!”

Trump speaks for sections of the US corporate oligarchy that are responding to the unprecedented economic, social and political crisis of American capitalism by seeking to build a fascist movement and establish dictatorial rule in anticipation of a massive upsurge of working-class struggle. The conspiracies surrounding the Nov. 3 election are far advanced and ongoing and pose immense dangers to democratic rights.

The greatest asset of Trump and the forces he represents are their nominal opposition in the Democratic Party. The Democrats are neither willing nor able to seriously oppose the drive toward dictatorship because they represent fundamentally the same class interests as Trump and the Republicans.

They are doing everything in their power to downplay the dangers exposed in the Michigan plot and Trump’s refusal to commit to a peaceful transfer of power. For the most part, Biden and the Democrats choose to remain silent on the conspiracy so as to chloroform the public. Their greatest fear is that an alerted and aware working class will respond to the threat with a mass movement from below that will threaten the capitalist system itself.

On Sunday, the Senate Democratic caucus released an official statement on the party’s plan to combat Trump’s threats to override the election outcome. It made no mention of the plot against Whitmer and Virginia Governor Ralph Northam and characterized Trump’s efforts to delegitimize any unfavorable result as mere “disinformation.” The American people, the statement advised, should “be patient” and take no action to prevent the overthrow of the Constitution and establishment of a dictatorship.

Should Biden win the election, the forces represented by Trump will continue to promote the growth of fascist tendencies, claiming the election was an illegitimate “stab in the back.” A Democratic administration will desperately seek to conciliate with these forces, while pursuing a policy of militarism, austerity and censorship.

These developments show that there can be no serious fight against the pandemic, depression levels of unemployment and poverty, and the growth of fascism outside of an independent movement of the working class in opposition to the entire political establishment and the capitalist system it defends.

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