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Channeling Hitler, Trump threatens to “root out” leftist “vermin”



Former President Donald Trump speaks at a campaign rally Saturday, Nov. 11, 2023, in Claremont, N.H. [AP Photo/Reba Saldanha]

In a statement Saturday on his social media platform and then in a campaign speech that night in New Hampshire, ex-President Donald Trump made his most explicit threat so far to jail or kill his political opponents if he returns to the White House, denouncing “radical left thugs that live like vermin.”

In the final words of a nearly two-hour-long speech, Trump declared, “We pledge to you that we will root out the communists, Marxists, fascists and the radical left thugs that live like vermin within the confines of our country, that lie and steal and cheat on elections. They’ll do anything, whether legally or illegally, to destroy America and to destroy the American Dream.”

He went on to voice the real fears of the American capitalist class that its most dangerous enemy is inside the United States, not outside: “The real threat is not from the radical

right. The real threat is from the radical left, and it's growing every day, every single day, the threat from outside forces is far less sinister, dangerous and grave than the threat from within. Our threat is from within."

The fact that Trump, the former president and current frontrunner in the Republican primary, is publicly announcing plans to establish a presidential dictatorship must be taken as a warning by workers and young people. Sections of the US ruling class, confronted with a growing strike wave and mass anti-war protests, favor the creation of a fascist dictatorship.

The Veterans Day speech was Trump's most open use of Hitlerian language in threatening to destroy his enemies if he returns to power. A series of commentaries in the corporate press noted the similarities between his speeches and those of the fascist leaders of the 1930s. One column in the *Washington Post* quoted passages from *Mein Kampf* and their parallels in Trump's recent speeches, including the description of opponents as "vermin," characterizing a targeted group (Jews for Hitler, migrants for Trump) as "poisoning the blood" of the nation, and warning that the most dangerous enemy of the nation was within, in the socialist and communist left, not outside.

None of these commentaries, however, suggested that Trump's parroting the speeches of Hitler is not coincidental, but conscious and deliberate. He is a longtime admirer of the most monstrous figure of the 20th century. At least one of his ex-wives told a biographer that Trump kept a book of Hitler's speeches by his bedside. His father Fred had belonged to the KKK and was known to have Nazi sympathies, which he passed on, along with a billion dollars, to his son.

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Saturday was hardly the first time that Trump has made such remarks. As long ago as an October 2019 speech to an audience in Minnesota consisting largely of police, he declared that his political opponents were guilty of "treason," threatened "civil war" and boasted that he would stay in office for "16 more years."

Throughout 2020, Trump sought a pretext to launch a military-police coup against the American population, first in response to the mass protests over the May 25 police murder

of George Floyd in Minneapolis, then as the likelihood of his defeat in the presidential election became apparent, to overturn the result of that vote. After the election, he fired the defense secretary who had balked at the use of the Insurrection Act to declare martial law and installed loyalists at the Pentagon. His efforts to remain in power culminated in the January 6, 2021 fascistic attack on the Capitol, which narrowly failed to capture Vice President Mike Pence or Speaker Nancy Pelosi and disrupt the transfer of power to Biden. All these facts are well known in official Washington and occasionally commented on in the corporate media. But what is entirely excluded in such discussions is the most fundamental question: What does it say about America in 2023 that a fascistic figure such as Trump plays such a prominent role in the political landscape? How is it possible that an ex-president who sought to overthrow the Constitution to remain in power, less than three years ago, is by far the leading candidate for the presidential nomination of the Republican Party, and is currently favored in many polls to defeat Democratic President Joe Biden in the 2024 election, now less than a year away?

The main responsibility for this state of affairs lies with the Democratic Party and Biden himself, who have made concession after concession to the Republican Party over the last three years in order to obtain bipartisan support for the central goal of the Biden administration: preparing and carrying out a program of military aggression which has brought humanity to the brink of World War III.

The most important decision of President Biden came within days of his entering the White House: There would be no serious effort to hold Trump and the Republicans responsible for the attempted political coup of January 6 or the wider assault on democratic rights. The transformation of the Republican Party into an increasingly fascistic organization was tolerated, even accommodated.

Two-thirds of the Republicans in Congress voted not to certify Biden as the winner of the 2020 election, hours *after* the Trump-inspired mob had been dispersed from the Capitol grounds. Nonetheless, Biden has sought endlessly to reach agreement with the congressional Republicans through concessions on domestic policy, provided only that they support the anti-Russian policy which has been the focal point of the Democratic Party since a pro-NATO gang of fascist sympathizers seized power in Ukraine in the Maidan coup of 2014.

The US-backed expansion of NATO to Russia's borders finally succeeded in provoking Putin's reactionary invasion of Ukraine in 2022, which has led to the present military stalemate. The eruption of the war between Israel and Gaza has become the pretext for a

further escalation of US militarism, this time directed against Iran and its allies, including Syria, the Houthis in Yemen and Hezbollah in Lebanon. A regional war looms. The ultimate target of US imperialism is China, and the wars in Ukraine and Gaza are only building blocks for an even more terrible US-China war that would threaten human survival.

Trump is particularly crude in his striving for dictatorship, but this is a class policy, not a personal one. The loudmouth billionaire is only giving voice to much deeper tendencies, which find expression through the Democratic Party as well. The drive to war requires the suppression of democratic rights at home and the imposition of the costs of war on the working class.

The Biden administration and the Democrats are currently denouncing any criticism of the Israeli government as antisemitism, effectively demanding it be banned. The charge of antisemitism is entirely bogus and serves as a political cover. The real meaning of such arguments is to attack the democratic right of the American people to criticize the foreign policy of the US government. Criticism in time of war will be denounced as treason and criminalized.

In the final analysis, the American ruling class will seek to deal with its most powerful enemy at home—the working class—with the methods Benjamin Netanyahu is currently employing in Gaza. There will be no “red lines” to hold back the use of the police and military in domestic repression. The Democratic Party does not represent a genuine opposition to Trump, only a different route to the same goal of authoritarian rule and violent suppression of democratic rights.

For the time being, there are differences between Biden and Trump as to the methods to be employed to defend the interests of the capitalist ruling elite. Trump favors the immediate use of force, at the bloodiest levels. Biden advocates, as a safer course, relying on the trade unions to constrain and suppress the class struggle, and on “left” safety valves like Bernie Sanders and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez to keep the working class tied politically to the Democratic Party, and through it, to the capitalist system.

But these instruments for controlling and diverting the class struggle are increasingly discredited. Workers are defying the unions by rejecting contracts and forcing strikes. They are beginning to organize independently, following the lead being given by the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC), established on the initiative of the world Trotskyist movement.

The Democratic Party goes into a presidential election year with a widely despised 80-year-old incumbent whose personal decrepitude mirrors the state of the capitalist two-party system as a whole and the reformist pretenses of the Democrats in particular. Millions of working people and youth look upon the prospect of a Biden-Trump rematch with disgust. They want a real alternative, which is being provided by the Socialist Equality Party.

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