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European Languages

زبانهای اروپایی

PAUL STREET

16.03.2025

## Time to Take a Stand in the Streets: The Trump Regime Must Go



Image by Teemu Paananen.

My social media networks are abuzz with a [bold commentary](#) by D. Earl Stephens, the former Managing Editor of the military newspaper [Stars and Stripes](#).

### Time to “Take a Life-or-Death Stand”

The commentary is titled “There is No Magical Way Out of This — There Will be Blood.”

It excoriates “Americans, and our feeble Democratic politicians in particular,” for “implying by their comatose actions that Democracy is some damn American right and has no end date.” Further:

“America very well might be arriving at hers [her end date, that is –PS] because, yes, it really is that bad right now....Rather than bringing Ping-Pong paddles and groovy, little signs to a

fascist hate-fest disguised as a State of the Union speech [see seconds 32-34 [here](#)], it would be helpful if our meek, out-of-touch Democratic politicians at least pretended they understood the perilous moment we are standing in right now....

“We are in deep, deep trouble, and now would be a wonderful, necessary time to step in front of your favorite mirror and honestly ask yourself what you are willing to do to fight for our country’s survival. We are but six-plus weeks into the repulsive, wannabe-king’s second term and the damage he and his party are causing are already at catastrophic levels. Our air, water, earned benefits, peace, public safety, civil rights, and human rights are all under immediate threat...

“This is only the first course of many that will be served by the vindictive, orange madman, and his pathetic party of supplicants. The insults, the attacks, endless provocations, and thrashing of our Constitution will continue daily. All this carefully planned evil will be aimed at exactly one thing: breaking us. Everything [Trump] is doing is designed to pound us into submission, and he’s having a grand damn [good time] doing it.... He is telling us what he thinks of America and silly things like the Constitution. Kings don’t pay attention to that kind worthless drivel.”

Stephens calls out “the cautious, too-clever Democratic Party and their weak leaders, Chuck Schumer and Hakeem Jeffries” for “dither[ing] while Rome burns. They act,” Stephens notes, “*as if we have all the time in the world*, when time is something that is not guaranteed right now. They seem to somehow have no idea how bad things are about to get, or most certainly will be when elections they seem to be pinning their hopes on roll around next year. ...One of the big mistakes of Joe Biden’s presidency was this notion that everything was going to be OK, and that his idea of America matched the actual circumstances of America” (emphasis added).

“At some point,” Stephens writes, Trump :

“will do something so heinous ... so anti-America ... so dangerous ... that the people who truly love our country will be *forced into the streets to take a life-or-death stand. Sadly, this is actually the best-case scenario, because the worst case is we just go quietly into the dark, gloomy night and become an authoritarian country, where we have zero rights or say in how we are governed....* So the choice is yours: You can continue thinking there is some magical way out of this, or you can begin to take the threat to everything you hold dear seriously, and ACT accordingly” (emphasis added).

### **Appreciation**

That’s some bold and stark language, There’s a lot to be said for Stephens’ rant.

He's right to call Trump's March 4<sup>th</sup> address to Congress a "fascist hate fest."

Stephens' call out of the dithering, dismal, demobilizing Dems – the late Sheldon Wolin's "inauthentic opposition" and my Hollow Resistance [1] – is also right on. They are in fact acting as if we have more time than we really do to block the onset of "authoritarian rule."

Stephens is right to say that the existential threat is immediate and that NOW is the time to fight back beneath and beyond the election cycle. As Illinois governor JB Pritzker said in his State of the State Address to the Illinois legislature last month:

"I do not invoke the specter of Nazis lightly. But I know the history intimately — and have spent more time than probably anyone in this room with people who survived the Holocaust. Here's what I've learned – the root that tears apart your house's foundation begins as a seed – a seed of distrust and hate and blame. The seed that grew into a dictatorship in Europe a lifetime ago didn't arrive overnight. It started with everyday Germans mad about inflation and looking for someone to blame...I just have one question: What comes next? After we've discriminated against, deported or disparaged all the immigrants and the gay and lesbian and transgender people, the developmentally disabled, the women and the minorities – once we've ostracized our neighbors and betrayed our friends – After that, when the problems we started with are still there staring us in the face – what comes next? All the atrocities of human history lurk in the answer to that question. And if we don't want to repeat history – then for God's sake in this moment we better be strong enough to learn from it...If you think I'm overreacting and sounding the alarm too soon, consider this: it took the Nazis one month, three weeks, two days, eight hours and 40 minutes to dismantle a constitutional republic. All I'm saying is when *the five-alarm fire starts to burn, every good person better be ready to man a post with a bucket of water if you want to stop it from raging out of control.*"

Stephens is right to say, in essence, that the demobilizing, dollar-drenched Dems are bringing butter knives to a sword fight. They do in fact promote a "magical" faith in American democracy and elections. They are in fact drastically underestimating the depth and degree of the existential menace posed by Trump.

Stephens is right that Trump and his movement are trying to break our will and that the Dems are aiding and abetting them with their pathetic weakness.

Stephens is right that it is preferable for blood to be spilled in a "life and death stand" in "the streets" than for the American people to fall quietly into the clutches of authoritarian rule.

Still, there are six interrelated problems with Stephens' commentary, from my perspective.

### **Fuhrer, Not King**

First, Trump isn't a "wannabe king," he's a *wannabe Fuhrer, a wannabe fascist strongman for life*. This isn't the late feudal age of the absolutist state. We are dealing with 21<sup>st</sup> century Amerikaner fascism. Trump and Trumpism seek a specific form of "authoritarian rule" that Stephens' shows only a brief hint of understanding: capitalist-fascist rule. When and if he figures that out, he can join me and other antifascists in rightly calling the Dems simply "Weimar" – a reference to the weak German bourgeois republic that collapsed in the face of Hitler's Nazi takeover in early 1933.

### **Blood from Resistance**

Second, Stephens would have strengthened his case by pointing out that the aftermath of a successful transition to authoritarian rule (fascist rule to be more precise) in the US will involve far more bloodshed than resisting the transition to authoritarian/fascist rule. People need to know the future blood cost of not acting before they are going to act in ways that could cost blood right now.

### **Patriotic Liberal America First-ism**

Third, Stephens writes about opposition to Trumpist authoritarianism (fascism) he advocates in excessively patriotic terms, framing the struggle that needs to be waged against "anti-America" Trump as a fight "for our country's survival." But the fascist Trump regime *isn't about ending the United States*. It's trying to turn the most powerful country in the world into a grave menace to all of humanity, of which the US comprises 4 percent. Noam Chomsky was hauntingly correct when in January of 2020 (right before Trump got his sick little hands on Covid-19) he identified Trump as "*the most dangerous criminal in human history...Hitler*," Chomsky said – reflecting on Trump's tearing up of environmental regulations and nuclear arms protections – "*had been perhaps the leading candidate for this honor. His goal was to rid the German-run world of Jews, Roma, homosexuals and other 'deviants,' along with tens of millions of Slav 'Untermenschen.'* But Hitler was not dedicated with fervor to destroying the prospects of organized human life on Earth in the not-distant future (along with millions of other species). Trump is. And those who think he doesn't know what he's doing haven't been looking closely."**[2]**

Five years later, the menace to humanity posed by Trump and Trumpism-fascism is further advanced. It isn't just about "our [US-American] air, water, earned benefits, peace, public safety, civil rights, and human rights." *It isn't only about "truly lov[ing just] our country."* *It's about genuinely caring about all of humanity and the planet, life itself across national boundaries.*

It isn't just "Rome" – meaning the United States (an appropriate analogy since emperor Nero's enflamed Rome was a destructive imperial superpower like Trump's smoldering America) – that is burning. It's the whole world that's on fire and "Rome"/the USA is the top fueler of the flames!

And it must be honestly said that Trumpism-fascism is richly rooted in terrible things that "as American as cherry pie" (H. Rap Brown), historically speaking: savage white supremacy, militant misogyny/patriarchy, xenophobic nationalism, genocidal Manifest Destiny, Christian fundamentalism, reckless capitalist anarchy and ecocide and bellicose imperialism. (Please see the sixth chapter, titled "America Was Never Great: On 'the Soul of This Nation,'" in my 2021 book *This Happened Here: Amerikaners, Neoliberals, and the Trumping of America*). And furthermore, it should be acknowledged that much of that terrible and ongoing history is concentrated in "our" nation's archaic and right-tilted Minority Rule constitution, which has functioned as much as a midwife as a check on the advance of American fascism in recent years.

#### **No Functioning Democracy to Overthrow**

Fourth, Stephens seems to assume that there has been some kind of remotely functioning actual US democracy in place for Trump to destroy. But no such thing existed before Trump, which is no small part of why Trumpism-fascism has been able to rise to power. As the brilliant left sociologist Kim Scipes noted in a ZNet review of my 2014 book *They Rule: The 1% v. Democracy*:

"The contemporary United States,,is neither a dictatorship nor a democracy. It is something in between or perhaps different altogether: a corporate-managed state-capitalist pseudo-democracy that sells the narrow interests of the wealthy business and financial elite as the public interest, closes off critical and independent thought, and subjects culture, politics, policy, institutions, the environment, daily life, and individual minds to the often hidden and unseen authoritarian dictates of money and profits. It is a corporate and financial plutocracy whose managers generally prefer to rule through outwardly democratic and noncoercive means since leading American corporations and their servants have worked effectively at draining and disabling democracy's radical and progressive potential by propagandizing, dulling, pacifying, deadening, overextending, overstressing, atomizing and demobilizing the citizenry. At the same time, American state and capitalist elites remain ready, willing and able to maintain their power with the help from ever more sinister and sophisticated methods and tools of repression, brutality and coercive control."

Professor Scipes' review was published in February of 2015, four months before Trump made his infamous escalator ride and announcement of his fateful 2016 presidential candidacy.

### **Too Much Love for Zelensky**

Fifth, Stephens' commentary is far too complimentary about Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky. No love and much hate for the fascistic ruler Vladimir Putin here, but Stephens wrongly sees Zelensky as some kind of heroic and rugged man of opposition to authoritarian rule[3] when in fact Zelensky is one of many different ruling class actors who have profited while hundreds of thousands of ordinary people have been maimed and killed in a horrific inter-imperialist war.

### **No Explicit Call of Conscience for the Removal of the Trump Regime**

Last but not at all least, Stephens' rant *includes no specific demand in connection with his call for people to take a "life or death stand" in "the streets."* What exactly does he want such a stand to achieve? Does he wish for the Trump regime to be *removed from power* as soon as humanly possible, before it can do any more damage than it already has? That seems implicit in his essay but it's the sort of thing that needs to be made explicit because that's a damn big and bold thing to call for. It's also the right thing to demand! .

The organization Refuse Fascism (RF, on whose board I sit) brings zero hesitation to this question. RF is clear as day about the need for the masses to remove Trump from power well before any future election. The demand for Trump's defeat and ejection is front and center in RF's recent powerful *Call to Conscience and Call to Act:*

#### **"We do not accept their future!"**

"The hour has come for each of us to ask: If we do not act to stop this, what kind of people will we become?"

"We stand up and fight for a future in which no human being is enslaved, subjugated, or deemed 'illegal' ... a future in which the planet can heal and people can be fit caretakers of the earth..."

"There can be no conciliation or collaboration between the world we want and the country they want. We have no common cause with MAGA fascism."

"There is a way to defeat this. We, the undersigned, call on the decent people who don't want to live in a fascist America – who are more than half the country – to courageously rise up as one."



“Those who have dedicated their lives to service – to teach children, to heal the sick, to conduct life-saving research – refusing to comply with fascist decrees, backed up by all justice-loving people.

“Students and young people whose whole future is on the line making schools and campuses centers of resistance and filling the streets.

“Women and LGBTQ people who are furious at being enslaved and erased —bringing their defiance and rage into the public square.

“People of color and everyone sick to death of white supremacy refusing to go back, bringing the experience and fury of centuries of resistance into this fight.

“Artists, writers, clergy, and legal scholars speaking in many voices to say NO! bringing their voices into the struggle.

“With this: Millions in the streets not allowing business as usual when that business is cementing fascist rule with the vilest degrading morality down our throats. MANY VOICES AND BODIES DEMANDING: THE TRUMP FASCIST REGIME MUST GO! With this we can and must create a political crisis in which the Trump regime cannot govern and implement their fascist program or even maintain his hold on power.

“Waiting for the next elections will be too late. We cannot rely on the Democratic Party’s leadership who complacently rely on the very norms and processes that the Trump regime shreds by the hour.”

Read the call [here](#). And listen to RF board member Coco Das’s powerful reflection on the *Call to Conscience and Action* [here](#), where Das says that the document “justif[ies] a single unifying demand: The Trump Fascist Regime Must Go!. Further:

“Imagine this demand resounding through the streets and institutions and airwaves of the country, bringing society to a halt, filling people with the determination to stay in the streets until their demand is met. *Until this regime faces that kind of political crisis, it can absorb protests against one attack or another.* With their bloody hands on the levers of power and their bloody fangs on people’s necks, the regime will constantly have the initiative while the people will constantly be on the defensive, vulnerable to being divided and conquered and beaten into submission, physically, mentally, and morally.”

Please read the part I italicized above a second time: “Until this regime faces that kind of political crisis, it can absorb protests against one attack or another.” This is a critical point.

Kudos to Dr. Stephens for calling people into the streets to courageously confront the Trump regime and for calling out the inauthentic opposition and hollow resistance pathetically

advanced by the Weimar Dems. But RF's call is *the real shit, people. It needs and deserves to become "a thing" across society right now.*

### Notes

1. Paul Street, *Hollow Resistance: Obama, Trump, and the Politics of Appeasement* (CounterPunch Books, 2020).
2. This quote appears in one of the most poorly titled interviews I've ever read: C.J. Polychroniou, "Noam Chomsky: Sanders Threatens the Establishment by Inspiring Popular Movements," *Truthout*, February 3, 2020, <https://truthout.org/articles/noam-chomsky-sanders-threatens-the-establishment-by-inspiring-popular-movements/>. The truth is quite the opposite of that title: Sanders serves the establishment by sheep dogging real and potential popular movements into the quicksand of American bourgeois electoral clusterf\*#k.
3. "Because Zelenskyy has tasted gun powder and breathed the odious smell of death on the battlefield," Stephens writes, "he wasn't about to be pushed around by some morbidly obese, 78-year-old yacht club bully [Trump] and his toady [JD Vance], who think swinging a sand wedge to free a golf ball from some bunker is dangerous business. Zelenskyy punched back and wasn't having it. He told the truth, and didn't back down. The future of his country is on the line right now, and he acted like it. And therein lies the playbook for dealing with this sadistic bastard — if only the cautious, too-clever Democratic Party and their weak leaders, Chuck Schumer and Hakeem Jeffries, bothered paying attention." Please: Zelensky has many gallons of Ukrainian and Russian blood on his hands, as do Vladimir Putin and Joe Biden and other top imperialist and sub-imperialist actors in the criminal Ukraine tragedy. A good source on this is the reporting of Seymour Hersh [here](#).

MARCH 14, 2025

**Paul Street's** latest book is *This Happened Here: Amerikaners, Neoliberals, and the Trumping of America* (London: Routledge, 2022).