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European Languages

زبانهای اروپایی

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30.04.2025

Trump's first 100 days of counterrevolution and criminality



President Donald Trump arrives on Marine One at the White House, Sunday, April 27, 2025, in Washington. [AP Photo/Manuel Balce Ceneta]

The first 100 days of a US presidency traditionally serve as a benchmark for assessing a new administration's agenda and direction. The practice began with Franklin Delano Roosevelt, who, in 1933 in the midst of the Great Depression, summoned Congress into special session and passed 15 major bills laying the foundation for the New Deal.

This was a period in which American capitalism was on the rise. The American ruling class, responding to the danger of revolution, enacted, not without bitter internal conflict, policies of social reform. If Roosevelt's first 100 days, in his own words, started "the wheels of the New Deal," Trump's first 100 days have set into motion the machinery of counter-revolution and criminality.

From his first day in office, Trump has worked methodically to establish a presidential dictatorship, following a blueprint drawn up by his fascist advisors. This began on January 20, when he signed a series of executive orders attacking free speech, undermining

constitutional protections like birthright citizenship, expanding military and executive powers and launching a broad assault on immigrants and political opponents.

In the ensuing weeks, the White House has moved to implement this agenda: seizing students for opposing the Gaza genocide, deporting immigrants under the Alien Enemies Act to concentration camps in El Salvador, deporting at least three US citizen children to Honduras, and detaining hundreds of migrants last week in Florida, in the first of a planned series of joint federal-state mass roundups.

The administration has threatened to deport en masse US citizens—whom Trump refers to as “homegrown”—and is carrying out an unprecedented assault on the judiciary, most recently with the arrest of Judge Hannah Dugan. Yesterday, Trump signed a series of new executive orders instructing Attorney General Pam Bondi and Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem to pursue “all necessary legal remedies and enforcement measures” against so-called sanctuary cities, while simultaneously bolstering legal protections for police officers accused of violence and murder.

In recent weeks, the regime has turned its attention to the universities, seeking to rewrite curricula and purge faculty in an American version of the Nazi process of *Gleichschaltung*, or “bringing into line.” Drawing on the precedent set by the Biden administration, Trump’s officials—many of whom can barely suppress the urge to give fascist salutes—are conducting this campaign under the cynical banner of combating “antisemitism.”

Even sections of the media now acknowledge the far-reaching implications of Trump’s actions. On Monday, the *New York Times* cited legal scholars warning that the United States is on the brink of dictatorship. Columbia’s David Pozen spoke of “authoritarian constitutionalism,” Yale’s Jack Balkin declared the constitutional system “on a knife’s edge,” and New York University’s Burt Neuborne called Trump’s assault on the judiciary “an existential threat to American constitutional democracy.”

What social and historical conditions have produced the Trump administration? How is it possible to explain not only his election but his reelection? Such questions are rarely asked, let alone seriously answered—because they point not to Trump’s personal attributes but to the character of American capitalism itself.

As the *World Socialist Web Site* explained in a statement published the day after the election, Trump’s return to the White House expresses “the violent realignment of the American political superstructure to correspond with the real social relations that exist in the United States.”

Trump is the embodiment of the oligarchy, the personification of its putrefaction. He represents the political underworld in power.

The financial operations surrounding the \$TRUMP meme coin reveal the character of those running the government. Last week, Trump and his cronies announced that the top holder of the cryptocurrency would win a dinner with the president, sending its market capitalization soaring by \$700 million. In just 48 hours, insiders—including Trump himself—pocketed nearly \$900,000 in trading fees.

This blatant financial scam differs only in degree, not in kind, from the daily operations of the cartel known as Wall Street. The United States is ruled by a criminal financial aristocracy that has amassed unimaginable wealth. In 2024, the final year of the Biden administration, 19 billionaire families increased their fortunes by \$1 trillion. The entire political system functions as their instrument.

This oligarchy is waging a massive social counterrevolution against the working class. In its first 100 days, the administration—through the “Department of Government Efficiency” (DOGE) overseen by Elon Musk—has fired tens of thousands of federal workers, dismantled public agencies, slashed corporate and environmental regulations and begun preparing hundreds of billions in cuts to what remains of the social safety net.

In public health, Trump has unleashed a campaign of destruction headed by anti-vaccine conspiracy theorist Robert F. Kennedy Jr., who has fired over 20,000 public health workers and discouraged vaccination programs, leading to the resurgence of diseases like measles and whooping cough. In education, Linda McMahon is overseeing efforts to dismantle public education and impose privatization, deepening the assault on basic social rights. And on Monday, hundreds of researchers around the country were informed by email that they had been “released” from their work of preparing the next National Climate Assessment, due out in 2028.

Democratic forms of rule are incompatible with the massive concentration of wealth or the policies necessary to maintain this wealth.

Nor are democratic forms compatible with the endless wars waged by American imperialism to maintain global hegemony. The limitless and escalating wars of American imperialism that followed the end of the Cold War have transitioned, under Biden and the war against Russia, into the initial stages of world war.

Whatever conflicts exist within the state over foreign policy and Trump’s trade war measures, Trump is building on this foundation. His threats to annex Greenland, seize Canada and retake the Panama Canal aim to secure US domination of the Western Hemisphere in

preparation for conflict with China. His deepening of the Gaza genocide—now in its final stages of ethnic cleansing and mass starvation—exposes the barbarism of American imperialism, whether or not Trump fulfills his grotesque dream of building casinos atop the bones and rubble.

The crisis in the United States is not a simple repetition of the 1930s. Unlike Hitler, Trump does not yet have a mass base. He has been able to capitalize on the widespread hatred of the entire political system, but he remains deeply unpopular. And he is presiding over a government of extreme crisis.

At 100 days, Trump's approval rating stands at just 39 percent, with 55 percent disapproving, according to a *Washington Post*-ABC poll. CNN reports his economic approval ratings have plunged to 35 percent amid fears over tariffs and inflation. Only 22 percent "strongly approve" of his presidency, while twice that number "strongly disapprove." There is growing opposition to all aspects of Trump's policies, including his assault on immigrants.

Even more significant are the mass protests involving millions of workers and youth in over 1,500 large cities and small towns across the United States. The demonstrations on April 5, 12, 19 and beyond have revealed a powerful undercurrent of opposition—systematically ignored or buried by the corporate media. Workers and young people are moving into struggle despite the blackout and the Democratic Party's efforts to suppress them.

The basic question now confronting millions is: What is to be done?

The actions of the Trump administration over the past 100 days have profoundly shocked working people and youth across the United States and around the world. But no section of the political establishment offers a way forward.

The Democratic Party is not a force for resistance to dictatorship—it is its facilitator. Over the past 100 days, the Democrats have passed Trump's spending bill to keep his government running and pledged to "work together" with the fascist-in-chief. Their response to Trump's assault on democratic rights has been limited to feeble statements while continuing to enable his agenda.

That Trump could be reelected at all is a devastating indictment of the Democratic Party. His return to power is the product of its bankrupt record: its fixation on identity politics for privileged layers of the upper-middle class; its indifference to workers' suffering under inflation; and its relentless pursuit of endless war—first in Ukraine, now in Gaza. The Democrats, no less than Trump, serve the ruling oligarchy.

As for figures like Bernie Sanders and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, they function as pressure valves, instruments for trying to maintain the stability of capitalist rule. Over the weekend,

Sanders reiterated that he is “on the same page” with the Democratic Party, telling NBC’s *Meet the Press* that “We’re not trying to start a third party.” Instead, he insisted, “We’re trying to strengthen American democracy,” lamenting only that the Democrats “lack a vision for the future.”

For workers and youth, however, there is no “future” without a ruthless break with the Democratic Party and the entire framework of bourgeois politics. There is no future outside of the struggle for socialism.

The basic issue is one of perspective. Massive battles are on the horizon: against dictatorship, against war, against social inequality. These struggles cannot be subordinated to any faction of the capitalist ruling class. They must be armed with a socialist and internationalist strategy aimed at the abolition of the capitalist system itself.

The urgent task is the building of a revolutionary leadership to guide these struggles. This is the central aim of the Socialist Equality Party and the International Committee of the Fourth International.

The Socialist Equality Party is spearheading the fight to build a mass working class movement to defend democratic rights and oppose the drive to fascism and dictatorship. We urge all workers, students and youth who are seeking a way forward to attend our International May Day Online Rally on May 3, join our party and take up the fight for socialism.

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