

Donald Trump's campaign takes a fascistic turn

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In a speech delivered by Donald Trump to an audience of thousands in West Palm Beach, Florida, the Republican candidate turned his campaign in a more distinctly fascistic direction. Presenting himself as both the savior of America and the victim of a ruthless political and economic establishment, Trump sought to connect deep-seated social anger among masses of people with an “America First” program of anti-immigrant xenophobia, militarism, economic nationalism and authoritarianism.

Responding to the latest allegations of sexual abuse, Trump proclaimed that he is being targeted by international bankers, the corporate-controlled media and the political establishment who fear that his election will undermine their interests.

He offered as an alternative his own persona—the strongman leader who is willing to bear the burden and make the sacrifices necessary for a pitiless struggle against such powerful adversaries. Trump warned that the November 8 election would be the last opportunity for the American people to defeat the powerful vested interests that are supporting Hillary Clinton.

The clear implication of the speech is that if Trump loses the election, the struggle against the political establishment will have to be carried forward by other means: in other words, by force and violence.

Unlike other Trump speeches, which have largely consisted of rambling and disconnected improvisations, the West Palm Beach address, followed several hours later by no less explosive remarks at a mass rally in Cincinnati, was carefully prepared. Trump read from a teleprompter, and the argument was delivered coherently.

There is little doubt that the speech was scripted for Trump by his campaign chairman, Stephen Bannon, on leave as CEO of the *Breitbart.com* web site, a gathering place for the so-called alt-right, an amalgam of ultra-right, white nationalist and neo-Nazi tendencies.

The fascistic character of the speech lies in its

combination of an appeal to real social grievances—Trump referred explicitly to “the disenfranchisement of working people”—with racist, chauvinist and dictatorial solutions. This includes not only the demand for jailing Hillary Clinton, now a refrain of every speech, but his calls for his supporters to prevent a “rigged” election by blocking access to the polls for voters in “certain communities.”

Trump denounced the “global power structure that is responsible for the economic decisions that have robbed our working class, stripped our country of its wealth and put that money into the pockets of a handful of large corporations and political entities.”

He continued: “Just look at what this corrupt establishment has done to our cities like Detroit and Flint, Michigan—and rural towns in Pennsylvania, Ohio, North Carolina and across our country. They have stripped these towns bare, and raided the wealth for themselves and taken away their jobs.”

He went on to cite internal Clinton campaign emails published by WikiLeaks this week, documenting how, as Trump put it, “Hillary Clinton meets in secret with international banks to plot the destruction of US sovereignty in order to enrich these global financial powers.”

After the top congressional Republican, House Speaker Paul Ryan, publicly broke with Trump Monday, declaring that he would neither campaign for him nor defend him, Trump responded with the declaration, “It is so nice that the shackles have been taken off me and I can now fight for America the way I want to.”

The West Palm Beach speech demonstrates what Trump has in mind.

The Democratic Party and the Clinton campaign have played a critical role in enabling Trump to advance his fascistic campaign. Throughout the primary campaign, Bernie Sanders drew larger and more enthusiastic crowds than Trump for his denunciations of Wall Street and the

power and privilege of the “millionaires and billionaires.”

Once Sanders quit the race and threw his support to Clinton, the epitome of the political establishment, the Democrats created the conditions in which Trump can present himself as the sole opponent of the status quo. He is seeking to draw on the social anger that previously animated support for Sanders. Indeed, he has repeatedly denounced Clinton for the corrupt, backroom maneuvers aimed at undermining Sanders, which Sanders himself has worked to cover up as he campaigns for Clinton.

Trump’s claim to oppose the establishment on behalf of the working people is pure demagoguery. He owes his own career as a billionaire real estate and casino mogul, media celebrity and presidential candidate to the very forces—the financial elite, the corporate media and the political establishment—that he now falsely claims to oppose.

But the Clinton campaign does not even attempt to respond to Trump’s social demagoguery, because it is tied by a thousand threads to the corporate and Wall Street oligarchy. Clinton is running as the designated successor of Barack Obama, responsible for the largest transfer of wealth from working people to the financial elite in history.

Unable and unwilling to offer the slightest hint of genuine social reforms, the Democratic Party seeks to fight Trump on the most banal and bankrupt level. While his sallies against Clinton strike home because her corruption and role in the establishment are so self-evident, her campaign is unable to generate any genuine enthusiasm or support, particularly among young people.

Instead of a genuine exposure of Trump, the Democrats have substituted political provocations of a reactionary character.

The Clinton campaign, warned of the impending release of masses of politically incriminating documents by WikiLeaks, sought to preempt this exposure by denouncing the leaks as a conspiracy engineered by Russia and its president, Vladimir Putin. Clinton is appealing for support from sections of the Republican Party, above all the neo-conservatives of the George W. Bush administration, responsible for the war in Iraq, the widespread use of torture and other crimes.

The anti-Russian campaign has been combined with an effort to demonize Trump for a series of purported sexual offenses, with a barrage of video and audio recordings, together with the testimony of alleged victims.

The Democratic campaign and its media allies are using methods similar to those the ultra-right employed in its efforts to oust Bill Clinton from the White House in the

1990s. They are seeking to stampede public opinion with increasingly sensationalized material. These methods degrade political discussion and distract popular consciousness from the real issues in the election.

It would be wrong to conclude that masses of people are attending Trump’s rallies and supporting his campaign because they want a fascist solution to their problems. He is drawing support because, from the rotten miasma of official politics, including the self-absorbed identity politics of the Democratic Party, layers of the middle class and working class find nothing that appeals to them. Trump’s appeal is that he is seen as shaking a collective fist at the political elites.

However, there is a real danger. If Clinton wins the election, the policies that she will pursue will only increase the anger and social discontent among broad masses of the population. Clinton would come to power as one of the most despised candidates in American history.

The election now just over three weeks away will resolve nothing. The critical task is to build a political leadership that can give a genuine, progressive expression to the interests of masses of working people. This is the significance of the Socialist Equality Party election campaign of Jerry White for president and Niles Niemuth for vice president.

In the aftermath of the elections, facing ever expanding war and increasing economic distress, masses of working people will look for solutions outside of the existing political structure. This solution must be provided by a revolutionary socialist movement.



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