

Trump's fascistic diatribe: On the road to World War III

Patrick Martin
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The speech delivered by Donald Trump Friday at his inauguration as president has no parallel in American history. It was a violent, nationalistic tirade, with distinctly fascistic overtones. Trump proclaimed his program to be “America First,” threatening the rest of the world with dire consequences if they did not submit to his demands, both economic and political.

The speech was anything but an “inaugural address” in the sense of outlining at the beginning of an administration the general ideals to which it will be devoted and attempting to give these some universal significance, however hollow, clumsy or hypocritical the effort might be.

In a few cases, most famously Abraham Lincoln's, the inaugural address has endured and become a political landmark. In the modern era, Franklin Roosevelt declared, in the midst of the Great Depression, that the American people had “nothing to fear but fear itself.”

Trump's message was just the opposite: “We fear the world, but the whole world must be made to fear us.”

Any conception that once he actually assumed office a “presidential” Trump would emerge was quickly dispelled by the tenor of his remarks. He glared, he ranted. He had only one tone of voice: an angry shout. The speech gave a jolt, signaling to the world that the new American president is an out-of-control megalomaniac.

Unlike American presidents for the past century who have postured as leaders of the “free world” or suggested that the United States had a stake in global development, Trump treated all foreign countries as economic enemies and blamed them for the crisis of American capitalism. “We must protect our borders from the ravages of other countries making our products, stealing our companies and destroying our jobs,” he said.

Trump won the election in economically ravaged industrial states such as Pennsylvania, Ohio, Michigan and Wisconsin by cynically exploiting the social

devastation in factory towns and rural areas, offering an entirely reactionary and bogus solution to the crisis, based on economic nationalism.

This was the main theme of his inaugural address, as he claimed, “[W]e've enriched foreign industry at the expense of American industry... and spent trillions and trillions of dollars overseas while America's infrastructure has fallen into disrepair and decay. We've made other countries rich, while the wealth, strength and confidence of our country has dissipated over the horizon.”

Trump summed up his chauvinistic perspective with the sentence: “The wealth of our middle class has been ripped from their homes and then redistributed all across the world.” Not true! The wealth produced by working people has indeed been stolen and “redistributed,” but not to foreigners. It has been seized by American capitalists—the tiny elite of financial aristocrats like Trump himself and much of his cabinet, the billionaires and multi-millionaires.

Hitler's “big lie” was to blame the Jews, not the capitalists, for the devastating consequences of the crisis of the profit system that produced the Great Depression of the 1930s. Trump's “big lie” offers a different scapegoat to divert popular anger over the economic crisis that erupted in 2008, but it is just as false and reactionary.

As in Germany in the 1930s, the perspective of restoring national greatness through economic autarchy and military expansion leads inevitably to war. Trump's speech is a direct substantiation of the perspective advanced by the Socialist Equality Party: the growth of American militarism over the past quarter century stems from the effort of the US ruling elite to find a violent solution to the long-term economic decay of the United States.

Trump's speech was shot through and through with language drawn from the vocabulary of fascism, with the

assistance, no doubt, of his top political aide, Stephen K. Bannon, former chief of Breitbart News, a haven for “white nationalists,” i.e., white supremacists, anti-Semites and neo-Nazis.

The new president declared, “We share one heart, one home, and one glorious destiny.” He demanded “a total allegiance to the United States of America,” hailed “the great men and women of our military and law enforcement,” called for “a new national pride,” and concluded that “we all bleed the same red blood of patriots.”

His blood-curdling pledge to destroy “radical Islamic terrorism, which we will eradicate from the face of the Earth” will be taken as a threat, legitimately, by the broad masses of the Middle East and the entire Muslim world, some 1.6 billion people. Trump has already declared that they are to be banned from entering the United States.

There is no question that Trump’s speech will be read as a declaration of war, not only in Beijing, Moscow and Tehran, but also in Berlin, Paris, London and Tokyo. When he said that “it is the right of all nations to put their own interests first,” he was announcing the onset of a dog-eat-dog struggle among the major imperialist powers for markets, sources of raw material and cheap labor, and key strategic positions. The inexorable logic of this struggle leads to world war.

Trump’s policy of military expansion and extreme nationalism has the most ominous implications for the democratic rights of the American people. He speaks for a ruthless financial oligarchy that will brook no opposition, foreign or domestic. His call for a Fortress America, mobilized against every country in the world, means the suppression of all domestic dissent.

It is notable that Trump’s speech discarded the democratic rhetoric that is traditional for inaugurations. There was no paying tribute to the electoral process, no appealing to the tens of millions who did not vote for him, no reassurance to those opposed to him that their rights will be respected, no pledging to be a president of “all the people.” There was not even an acknowledgement that he had received under 46 percent of the vote, trailing his Democratic opponent Hillary Clinton by nearly three million votes.

On the contrary, Trump denounced “a small group in our nation’s capital,” identified as “politicians” and “the establishment,” in other words, everyone seated around him on the western face of the Capitol building—congressmen, senators, former presidents. He declared that they would be deprived of all power because

“we are transferring power from Washington, DC and giving it back to you, the people”—with Trump himself, of course, acting as the stand-in for “the people.”

There is only one politically serious conclusion that can be drawn from this inauguration: Trump is seeking to develop an American fascist movement, offering a false enemy to be held responsible for the crimes and failures of capitalism, demonizing anyone opposed to his policies as disloyal, and presenting himself as the personification of the popular will and the only one who can deliver a solution to the crisis.

Trump has assembled a cabinet of billionaires, right-wing ideologues and former generals. The Trump administration will go much further than anyone imagines in pursuing a program of war, attacks on democratic rights and the destruction of jobs and living standards for working people.

The Democratic Party will do nothing to oppose Trump. The Democratic Party leadership, from Obama on down, sat through Trump’s militaristic and anti-democratic diatribe as though listening to a “normal” political address. Obama has spent the transition period spreading complacency about the incoming administration, while the congressional Democrats pledge to work with Trump and embrace his toxic and reactionary economic nationalism.

Working people are in for great shocks. Whatever the initial confusion, whether they voted for Clinton, for Trump, or refused to choose between them, they will learn quickly that this government is their enemy. American capitalism has embarked on the road to disaster and nothing can stop it but a revolutionary movement of the working class.



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