The popular movement against Trump vs. the corporate media's anti-Russia witch-hunt

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One day after Donald Trump's extraordinary news conference, the battle within the American state only grew more intense. The conflict pits the ultra-right president of the United States against powerful sections of the military-intelligence apparatus, with the corporate media, the Democratic Party and a section of the Republicans serving as mouthpieces of the CIA.

There is no progressive faction in this dispute, which centers on issues of foreign policy and war. Trump is a noxious representative of the financial oligarchy. He has packed his administration with CEOs and billionaires, alongside ex-generals, social reactionaries and outright fascists. His opponents in the political and media establishment are themselves reactionaries, motivated not by democratic principles, but by concerns that Trump is shifting away from the aggressive, militarist policy toward Russia that is backed by the intelligence establishment and was carried out by the previous administration.

On Friday, Trump doubled down on his denunciations of the media, declaring on Twitter that the "media… is not my enemy, it is the enemy of the American People!" He singled out the *New York Times*, CNN and the major broadcast news networks.

The media, for its part, escalated its campaign against the new president, branding him an ally, if not agent, of Russian President Vladimir Putin. The logic of this operation, carrying with it the stench of McCarthyism, is war. The media demonization of Putin, like similar media operations against Noriega, Milosevic, Saddam Hussein, Gaddafi and Assad, is a preparation for military aggression—this time against the world's second biggest nuclear power.

For his own factional reasons, Trump made a true statement at the press conference when he denounced the media as liars and conduits for the dirty tricks of the intelligence agencies.

The barrage of propaganda is exemplified by the editorial pages of the *New York Times*, which has come to play the role of de facto organ of the Democratic Party. The lead editorial and four of seven opinion pieces published in Friday's edition were devoted to painting Trump as a Russian agent.

The editorial, "Bring On the Special Prosecutor," is a textbook example of yellow journalism and character assassination. It employs the time-tested method of stating unsubstantiated allegation as undisputed fact. Thus, it begins, "the question is not whether the Trump administration's ties to the Russia government need to be investigated…"

What ties? None have been proven, certainly not by the *Times*. This does not prevent the newspaper from treating its accusations as incontrovertible facts.

Later, the editorial cites "news that members of the Trump campaign's inner circle were in repeated contact with Russian intelligence agents last year…" But the "news" referenced by the *Times* is its own front-page article published on Tuesday, which contains no evidence, relying instead on assertions made by "four current and former American officials," all of them anonymous.

Even the *Times* felt obliged to hedge its "news" with caveats, such as the acknowledgment that "several of Mr. Trump's associates… have done business in Russia," where "it is not unusual for American businessmen to come in contact with foreign intelligence officials, sometimes unwittingly."

These "facts" lead to the editorial's conclusion that "Mr. Trump's unexplained allegiance to that country [Russia] and its thug of a president, Vladimir Putin," is a "major concern."

This is the modus operandi of McCarthyism. The

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newspaper is not concerned with truth, but with the demands of American imperialism in relation to the campaign against Russia.

The lead editorial was accompanied by another anti-Trump piece of right-wing hysteria, this one penned by the "left" economist and Obama/Clinton apologist Paul Krugman. In an op-ed entitled "The Silence of the Hacks," he declares, "A foreign dictator intervened on behalf of a US presidential candidate—and that candidate won." He adds that "associates of the new president were in contact with the dictator's espionage officials during the campaign," and "the president seems oddly solicitous of the dictator's interests."

The description of Putin as a "dictator" is false. He is a right-wing nationalist and authoritarian representative of the Russian oligarchy. However, he has won several elections, winning support by capitalizing on hostility to US aggression in Eastern Europe. The use of language such as "dictator" (and, in the editorial, "thug") is aimed at creating the ideological justification for yet another war for regime-change.

Putin is the product of the restoration of capitalism in Russia—enthusiastically supported by the *Times* and the American ruling class—which has had disastrous consequences for the Russian working class. In 1993, the *Times* could barely conceal its enthusiasm for Boris Yeltsin's bombing of the Russian parliament building, at the cost of up to 2,000 lives. No democratic qualms then, since Yeltsin was deemed the best vehicle for implementing "shock therapy" to dismantle nationalized industry and destroy the social welfare network.

None of this history is of any significance to Paul "McCarthy" Krugman. He reveals the pro-war sentiment animating his criticisms of Trump when he writes, "[N]othing [Trump] has done since the inauguration allays fears that he is in effect a Putin puppet. How can a leader under such a cloud send American soldiers to die?"

In the coverage by the *Times* and other news outlet, there is not the slightest hint that the declarations of anonymous intelligence agents should be treated with any degree of skepticism. It is as though the CIA's lies about Iraqi weapons of mass destruction (which the *Times* helped promote) had never happened.

Krugman exemplifies the intellectual, political and moral corruption of what passes for the left-liberal intelligentsia. The privileged social strata for which Krugman speaks have seen their income steadily rise with the stock market, while the incomes of workers have collapsed. They have become open defenders of imperialism, the capitalist state and the CIA. The entirety of the official "left," from Michael Moore, who called Trump a "Russian traitor," to Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren, who issued their own anti-Putin statements, has signed on to the anti-Russian campaign.

There is an unbridgeable gulf between the opposition to Trump's reactionary, anti-democratic policies among masses of workers and youth, and the right-wing, pro-war agenda of the intelligence agencies and their representatives in the Democratic Party and the media.

The establishment critics of Trump are doing everything they can to infect public consciousness with the virus of militarism and hijack a popular movement for reactionary ends. It is necessary to warn strongly against any accommodation to their filthy campaign.

The pressing task in the struggle against the Trump administration is a clean and unequivocal break with the Democratic Party. This struggle must be based in the working class, rallying behind it all the genuinely progressive elements of society on the basis of a socialist political program and intractable opposition to US imperialism.

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