

# Big business, military tighten their grip on Washington

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It is often the case that the outcome of events reveals the essential issues underlying political developments. This is true of the conflicts that erupted within the ruling class over the Nazi rampage in Charlottesville, which culminated in the dismissal Friday of Trump's chief strategist Stephen Bannon.

The corporate-controlled media has sought to portray the sequence of events entirely in racial terms, with Bannon and other advocates of "white nationalism" now purged, leaving political control of the White House and the Trump administration in steadier and more "moderate" political hands: a group of generals and ex-generals, headed by White House Chief of Staff John Kelly, together with Wall Street financiers such as Gary Cohn, Trump's chief economic adviser, and Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin.

The *New York Times* has led the way, with an editorial Sunday declaring that "Americans accustomed constitutionally and politically to civilian leadership now find themselves relying on three current and former generals—John Kelly, the new White House chief of staff; H. R. McMaster, the national security adviser; and Jim Mattis, the secretary of defense—to stop Mr. Trump from going completely off the rails. Experienced and educated, well-versed in the terrible costs of global confrontation and driven by an impulse toward public service that Mr. Trump doesn't possess, these three, it is hoped, can counter his worst instincts."

In the same edition of the *Times*, a news analysis celebrates what its headline calls "The Moral Voice of Corporate America." In this account, "a chorus of business leaders rose up this past week to condemn hate groups and espouse tolerance and inclusion."

Among those named as part of this "chorus" of "moral" leaders are such corporate criminals as Jamie Dimon of JPMorgan Chase, one of those responsible for the 2008 financial collapse; Mary Barra of General Motors, who

oversaw the cover-up of an ignition-switch defect that killed hundreds of people; and WalMart CEO Doug McMillon, whose company is a synonym for low-wage exploitation.

The ruling elite saw Trump's incautious remarks defending the neo-Nazis who rioted in Charlottesville as a serious threat to the interests of American imperialism abroad as well as the maintenance of social and political stability at home. Powerful corporate interests feared the implications for Trump's agenda of corporate tax cuts, the removal of business regulations, a profit windfall in the guise of infrastructure reform and the gutting of Medicaid and other social programs.

Trump's self-exposure of his efforts to build an extra-parliamentary fascistic base increased the nervousness in financial circles over the danger of a collapse of the speculative bubble that has been built up since the 2008 Wall Street crash.

The response, laid out most clearly by the *Times*, has been to increase the grip of the military and corporate America over the government to an extent unprecedented in US history. It is 56 years since President Dwight D. Eisenhower, in his 1961 farewell address, warned of the dangers to democracy posed by the rise of the "military-industrial complex." He could have no conception of the size, power and degree of dominance exercised by the vast military/intelligence/corporate complex of today.

The first result of this consolidation was the announcement that Trump will deliver a nationwide address tonight, unveiling plans for an expansion of the war in Afghanistan.

What the ruling elite fears above all is the growth of working-class opposition to the Trump administration and the entire political system. Thus, excised from the official narrative promoted by the media is any reference to the reality of social life in America—a country in which 20 individuals control as much wealth as the poorest half of

the population—as well as the reactionary agenda of the Trump administration itself. Nor is there any discussion of war and the crimes carried out by “responsible” leaders such as Mattis, who won his appellation “Mad Dog” for his role in destroying the Iraqi city of Fallujah.

This is replaced with a series of diversionary issues, centered on a grossly distorted presentation of the United States as a country seething with racial intolerance and an exaggerated picture of the strength and influence of neo-Nazi and racist forces. Hence one has the apparently contradictory but in fact compatible phenomena, ubiquitous in the Democratic Party-aligned media, of the promotion of identity politics alongside respectful and even admiring portrayals of the white supremacist thugs who demonstrated in Charlottesville.

Typical was a newsletter released Sunday by the *New Yorker* under the headline, “White Supremacy in America.” In an introduction, David Remnick, author of the hagiographic biography of Obama, *The Bridge*, proclaims, “Make no mistake: neo-Nazis and white supremacists are now at the forefront of American politics.”

Among the featured articles is one by author Toni Morrison titled “Making America White Again,” which insists that “Unlike any nation in Europe, the United States holds whiteness as the unifying force.” In line with the Democratic Party and its various appendages among the pseudo-left organizations of the privileged middle class, Morrison explains the election of Trump as the product of the racism of “white America”:

On Election Day, how eagerly so many white voters—both the poorly educated and the well educated—embraced the shame and fear sowed by Donald Trump. The candidate whose company has been sued by the Justice Department for not renting apartments to black people. The candidate who questioned whether Barack Obama was born in the United States, and who seemed to condone the beating of a Black Lives Matter protester at a campaign rally. The candidate who kept black workers off the floors of his casinos. The candidate who is beloved by David Duke and endorsed by the Ku Klux Klan.

This effort to portray all whites, and particularly white men, as secret supporters of the KKK is a political fraud.

Racism does exist. However, the white supremacists and neo-Nazis who marched in Charlottesville are a tiny minority who are regarded with deep revulsion by the vast majority of working people. A nationwide mobilization could dredge up only a few hundred proponents of this barbaric ideology. Meanwhile, tens of thousands of all races have marched to denounce both Trump and the fascists he defends.

Trump is president today, not because of a mass vote for racism, but because he more successfully appealed to social discontent than the Democratic Party and Hillary Clinton, the personification of the alliance between Wall Street and the military-intelligence apparatus, who did not attempt to conceal her complacent contempt for the plight of tens of millions of working people struggling to survive.

The racist narrative is being used to demonize large sections of the population, buttress the identity politics of privileged layers of the middle class, provide political cover for a massive transfer of wealth to the rich, rally support for a virtual palace coup by the generals and corporate billionaires, and, above all, divert and suppress an independent movement of the working class.

The overriding threat to democratic rights comes not from a handful of fascist thugs, but from the very alliance of Wall Street and the Pentagon that is being touted as the antidote to the racists in the streets.

As for the *Times* and the various affiliates of the Democratic Party, they see the real threat coming not from neo-Nazis, but from a socialist movement of the working class.

The promotion of racist politics and the tightening of military-corporate control over the government go hand-in-hand with the suppression of oppositional views, above all the *World Socialist Web Site*. Thus the decision taken by Google, in close coordination with the state, to censor and blacklist the WSWS through the manipulation of search results. This is the prelude to more aggressive actions to target socialist opposition to the policies of the corporate and financial elite.



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