

The CIA Democrats vs. Julian Assange

Patrick Martin
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The lawsuit filed by the Democratic National Committee (DNC), naming WikiLeaks and its founder Julian Assange as co-conspirators with Russia and the Trump campaign in a criminal effort to steal the 2016 US presidential election, is a frontal assault on democratic rights. It tramples on the First Amendment to the US Constitution, which establishes freedom of the press and freedom of speech as fundamental rights.

Neither the Democratic Party lawsuit nor the media commentaries on it acknowledge that WikiLeaks is engaged in journalism, not espionage; that its work consists of publishing material supplied to it by whistleblowers seeking to expose the crimes of governments, giant corporations and other powerful organizations; and that this courageous campaign of exposure has made both the website and its founder and publisher the targets of state repression all over the world.

Assange himself has been effectively imprisoned in the Ecuadorian embassy in London for the past six years, since he fled there to escape efforts by the British, Swedish and American governments to engineer his extradition to the United States, where a secret grand jury has reportedly indicted him on espionage and treason charges that could bring the death penalty. Since the end of March, the Ecuadorian government, responding to increasing pressure from US and British imperialism, has cut off all outside communication with him.

The reason for the indictment and persecution of Assange is that WikiLeaks published secret military documents, supplied by whistleblower Chelsea Manning, revealing US war crimes in Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as diplomatic cables embarrassing to the US State Department because they detailed US attempts to manipulate and subvert governments around the world.

The Democratic National Committee on Friday filed a 66-page complaint that reeks of McCarthyism, with overtones of the Wisconsin senator's demagoguery about "a conspiracy so vast" when he was spearheading the anticommunist witch hunts more than 70 years ago. After detailing a long list of supposed conspirators, ranging

from the Russian government and its military intelligence agency GRU to the Trump campaign and Julian Assange, the complaint declares: "The conspiracy constituted an act of previously unimaginable treachery: the campaign of the presidential nominee of a major party in league with a hostile foreign power to bolster its own chance to win the Presidency."

Such language has had no place in official American public life since the right-wing political gangster McCarthy left the scene in the late 1950s. Ultra-right groups like the John Birch Society kept alive such smear tactics in ensuing decades, but they were relegated to the fringes of the political system. Now the Democratic Party has sought to revive these methods as the central focus of its bid for power in the 2018 elections.

In the targeting of WikiLeaks, the antidemocratic content of this campaign finds its foulest expression. The DNC suit asserts, without the slightest evidence, that "WikiLeaks and Assange directed, induced, urged, and/or encouraged Russia and the GRU to engage in this conduct and/or to provide WikiLeaks and Assange with DNC's trade secrets, with the expectation that WikiLeaks and Assange would disseminate those secrets and increase the Trump Campaign's chance of winning the election."

According to Assange and WikiLeaks, however, the material from the DNC and from Clinton campaign Chairman John Podesta that it made public in 2016 was provided by an anonymous whistleblower whose identity WikiLeaks does not know because it observed its normal security practices to preserve secrecy and protect its sources. Not a shred of evidence has been presented to prove otherwise.

The DNC legal complaint cites the negative consequences of the WikiLeaks revelations in passages worth quoting:

135. The illegal conspiracy inflicted profound damage upon the DNC. The timing and selective release of the stolen materials prevented the DNC

from communicating with the electorate on its own terms. These selective releases of stolen material reached a peak immediately before the Democratic National Convention and continued through the general election.

136. The timing and selective release of stolen materials was designed to and had the effect of driving a wedge between the DNC and Democratic voters. The release of stolen materials also impaired the DNC's ability to support Democratic candidates in the general election.

But the DNC lawsuit does not explain *why* the WikiLeaks material was so damaging. On the contrary, it says nothing about the actual content of what was leaked, other than claiming that it included “trade secrets” and other proprietary information of the Democratic Party leadership.

The material published by WikiLeaks about the Democrats fell into two main categories. First were internal emails and documents of the DNC showing that DNC Chair Debbie Wasserman Schultz and her top aides were engaged in a systematic effort to block Clinton's challenger Bernie Sanders and make sure Clinton received the Democratic nomination. In other words, while complaining that Russia was engaged in rigging the 2016 campaign, the DNC was seeking to rig the outcome of the Democratic primary contest.

The second batch of documents came from Clinton campaign Chairman John Podesta and included the transcripts of speeches delivered by Hillary Clinton to financial industry groups for fees as high as \$300,000 per appearance. In these remarks, she reassured the bankers that they need not be alarmed by any campaign rhetoric about punishing them for the financial skullduggery that triggered the 2008 Wall Street crash and destroyed the jobs and living standards of millions of working people. She made clear that a Clinton government would continue the pro-Wall Street policies of the Obama administration.

The DNC suit is a deepening of the effort by the Democratic Party to become the premier party of the CIA and the military-intelligence apparatus as a whole. In targeting WikiLeaks and Assange, the Democrats are embracing the smear by CIA Director Mike Pompeo—now Trump's choice for secretary of state—that WikiLeaks is a “non-state hostile intelligence service,” allegedly allied with Moscow.

If, moreover, Assange is a traitor because he exposes

the lies and crimes of the US government, then by implication all those publications, websites and individuals who defend him and challenge the government propaganda disseminated by the corporate media are themselves complicit in treason and should be dealt with accordingly.

As the *World Socialist Web Site* has previously explained, the anti-Russia campaign mounted by the Democrats is a reactionary concoction, backed by no factual evidence, aimed at pushing the Trump administration to sharply escalate the war in Syria and adopt a more aggressive policy against Russia. At the same time, it has been used as the justification for a massive and coordinated campaign to censor the Internet. The manipulation of search and news feed algorithms by Google and Facebook will be followed by more direct efforts at the suppression of left-wing, anti-war and socialist publications.

The campaign has also served to position the Democrats as the party that stands up for the “intelligence community” in its conflict with the Trump White House. This is now being supplemented, in advance of the November midterm elections, by an influx of candidates for Democratic congressional nominations in competitive districts drawn heavily from the ranks of the CIA, the military, the National Security Council and the State Department (see: “The CIA Democrats”).

The conduct of the DNC demonstrates the reactionary and bankrupt character of the claims by liberal and pseudo-left groups—all of whom have maintained a complete silence on the isolation and persecution of Assange—that the election of a Democratic-controlled Congress is the way to fight back against Trump and the Republicans. The truth is that the working class confronts in these parties two implacable political enemies committed to war, austerity and repression.



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