

Mueller encourages drive to remove Trump

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In a surprise statement Wednesday, Special Counsel Robert Mueller provided ammunition to the sections of the American ruling class that have concluded it is necessary to remove President Donald Trump from office prior to the 2020 elections.

Mueller appeared before the press to make his first public statement on the two-year investigation he headed into supposed Russian interference in the 2016 elections and possible collusion and obstruction of justice by Trump and his advisers. The former FBI director hewed closely to the wording in the report he issued on April 18, but he pointedly contradicted White House claims that his report exonerated Trump of criminal violations.

Mueller stressed that he could not charge Trump with a criminal offense due to long-standing Justice Department rules barring the indictment of a sitting president for federal crimes. But he did not clear Trump of criminal obstruction of justice, suggesting on the contrary that were it not for the Justice Department policy, he would have indicted the president.

The retiring special counsel said, “[I]f we had confidence that the president clearly did not commit any crime, we would have said that. We did not, however, make a determination as to whether the president did commit a crime.”

He then essentially invited Congress to launch impeachment proceedings against the president, saying that “the Constitution requires a process other than the criminal justice system to formally accuse a sitting president of wrongdoing.”

Mueller, a longtime fixture in the US intelligence and police establishment, made his intervention as the spokesman for a growing faction within the ruling class and the state that is losing confidence in the ability of Trump to manage the affairs—international and domestic—of US imperialism.

Consider what has happened in the 10 weeks since the public release of the Mueller report:

- Trump’s regime-change coup in Venezuela has fizzled, leaving Maduro in power and the US-backed

pretender Guaido isolated and exposed as a US puppet with little popular support. This has only encouraged those within the administration who are pushing for a military intervention.

- Trump has intensified the trade war with China, increasing economic uncertainty and threatening to topple the financial markets. The concerns within the corporate-financial elite were expressed this week by JPMorgan Chase CEO Jamie Dimon, who warned of the dire consequences of an all-out tariff war.

- Trump has dispatched a carrier task force to Iran and threatened to “end” the country in a provocation that could lead to all-out war and quickly involve nuclear-armed powers such as Russia and China.

- During the president’s just-completed trip to Japan, Trump publicly disputed the positions of his top foreign policy advisers on North Korea and indicated differences on possible military intervention against Iran.

- Trump has declared his support for far-right populist leaders in Europe who attack the European Union, further weakening the basic structure of international relations established by the US after World War II to promote its hegemony.

- Domestically, the White House is rejecting any congressional oversight and asserting unlimited presidential powers while appealing to fascistic elements, undermining the constitutional structures that have underpinned capitalist rule in America.

It is not that the section of the ruling class who opposes Trump disagrees with him on this or that bellicose policy decision, including intervening in Venezuela and intensifying pressure against China. Rather, the concern is that Trump is too volatile and unpredictable to carry out US imperialist strategy. Moreover, the persistent concern from within powerful factions of the intelligence and military apparatus is that the administration has not been sufficiently aggressive against Russia.

It is for this reason that the Democrats’ opposition to Trump has centered not on his very real crimes: his mass detention—in conditions the UN said were tantamount to

torture—of immigrant children, his declaration of a state of emergency to fund his border wall, his abuse of his pardon power to defend war criminals—but on absurd and concocted allegations that his election victory was the result of a conspiracy with the Kremlin.

All of this is taking place under conditions of a rising tide of working-class struggle within the US and internationally and growing popular interest in socialism, creating a mood of fear and panic within the ruling class. Sharp differences over foreign policy, under conditions of a continuing decline in the world economic position of the United States, are compounded by fears that the Trump administration is too erratic to deal with the requisite skill with an insurgent working class at home.

Mueller's appearance fueled demands for Democratic House Speaker Nancy Pelosi to change course and approve the initiation of impeachment proceedings. New Jersey Senator Corey Booker joined Democratic presidential candidates Kamala Harris, Elizabeth Warren and Julian Castro in calling for impeachment.

Former Vice President Joe Biden, the Democratic front-runner, said that "impeachment may be unavoidable" if the president continues his present course. Republican Congressman Justin Amash, the lone Republican supporter of impeachment, tweeted, "The ball is in our court, Congress."

Jerrold Nadler, the chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, which would oversee impeachment proceedings, declared at a press conference that "all options are on the table."

Any move to impeachment, however, would itself threaten a breakdown of the entire political system. Even if the House were to impeach Trump, it would require the support of a substantial section of Republicans to convict him in the Senate and remove him from office, which would mean the political disintegration of the Republican Party. Nor is there any confidence within the political establishment that Trump would peacefully accept being removed from office. There are fears that he would appeal to his fascist base to defend his rule arms in hand.

Even were Trump to be removed by Congress, he would be replaced by the no less reactionary vice president, Mike Pence.

The critical issue for the working class is to respond to the political crisis of capitalist rule by intervening on the basis of its own program and perspective. The conflict within Washington is between two rival right-wing, militaristic factions of the same ruling elite who are operating behind the backs of the population.

However this conflict is worked out, it will produce an intensification of the drive toward war and the destruction of democratic rights, including the persecution of Julian Assange and Chelsea Manning—which both factions fully support. In his own remarks, Mueller made a point of reasserting the bogus claim that WikiLeaks functions as an instrument of Russian government attacks on "American democracy."

The Democratic Party, far from representing a democratic and progressive alternative to Trump, will not hesitate to call upon the military and its allies in the CIA and FBI should the outrage of workers over war, inequality and repression threaten the existence of their system. The Democrats have devoted all their efforts since Trump's inauguration to suppressing and dissipating popular opposition to his administration and channeling it behind a right-wing, pro-war policy.

Indeed, the main reason for the Democratic leadership's resistance to impeachment is its fear of anything that might provide an opening for the working class to mobilize in its own interests.

The working class cannot afford to remain a passive spectator as the ruling class works out its internal conflicts, inevitably at the expense of social and democratic rights. The fight of the working class for its interests, including an end to war, a vast redistribution of wealth and social equality, raises the urgent necessity for a mass political movement, independent of and opposed to both the Republicans and the Democrats, against the capitalist system and its state.



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