

Donald Trump's fascist strategy

Eric London
17 July 2019

Donald Trump extended his fascist attacks on four freshmen Democratic congresswomen yesterday, tweeting that Rashida Tlaib, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Ilhan Omar and Ayanna Pressley are “horrible anti-Israel, anti-USA, pro-terrorist.” Denouncing the “Radical Left” and calling the congresswomen “communists,” Trump added, “If you hate our Country, or if you are not happy here, you can leave!”

On Sunday, Trump initiated the provocation by tweeting that the four congresswomen—all of whom are US citizens—should “go back” to the “crime infested places from which they came.” Equating social opposition in general and socialism in particular with support for “terrorism,” he tweeted, “We will never be a Socialist or Communist Country.”

In an editorial board statement yesterday, the *New York Times* called Trump's statements a “gambit to distract from his policy fiascoes, his court losses, his political failures.” At a press conference Monday afternoon, the four targeted congresswomen made similar remarks, referring to Trump's rant as a “distraction.”

This was contradicted by the fact that photographers captured images of written “talking points” Trump used during a Monday press conference. “It's actually DANGEROUS—because it seems like they hate America,” the prepared notes read. “They want America to be SOCIALIST.”

Extrapolating from these notes, Trump referred to the “love they have for Al Qaeda” and claimed that the congresswomen “hate Jews.” When asked by a reporter whether it concerned him that “white nationalists” are ecstatic over his tweets, Trump replied, “It doesn't concern me because many people agree with me.”

Trump is proceeding according to a deliberate political strategy worked out with the White House's fascist brain trust, including Stephen Miller, the architect of Trump's crackdown on immigrants. He is

attacking the four congresswomen with a high level of consistency, repeating political themes common to fascist and far-right political movements.

He equates opposition to his administration and criticism of his personal rule with support for terrorism, paving the way for the criminalization of free speech and critical thought. Trump states that his opponents are “dangerous” and “hate” the nation, suggesting that “complaining” about the policies of the government is treasonous. He presents socialism and communism as foreign ideologies directed against the American people.

These are ideas developed by Nazi theorists such as the jurist Carl Schmitt, who authored the conception of a “state of exception” to justify Nazi totalitarian rule. Lurking behind Trump's assertion that those who are “not happy” and “want America to be socialist” should “leave” the US is the suggestion that if they fail to do so voluntarily, the government will be justified in rounding them up by force.

The calculated, strategic character of Trump's statements is underscored by the context in which they are being made. Yesterday, Trump denounced the “far left” for asserting that the administration is detaining immigrants—including children—in unsanitary concentration camps. “They're not concentration camps, they're really well run,” he said.

Millions of immigrants—significant portions of the working class in 10 targeted cities—are living in fear of impending raids announced by Trump earlier this month. Last week, he threatened to violate a Supreme Court decision barring him from including a question on citizenship status on the 2020 census. On Monday, the administration imposed a new federal regulation effectively barring Central Americans from seeking asylum in the US—a clear violation of international law.

These actions follow his deployment of thousands of active-duty troops to the US-Mexican border and his

declaration of a state of emergency to override Congress and allocate Pentagon funds to build his border wall.

With each of these measures, Trump has used anti-immigrant xenophobia as the tip of the spear to violate basic constitutional norms and establish rule by decree.

Trump and his advisors are attempting to build an extra-constitutional movement linking fascist elements within the state—including tens of thousands of agents of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and Customs and Border Protection (CBP)—with the minority of voters who support his reactionary policies.

The Democratic Party's response combines its typical fecklessness with a race-based appeal that blows wind in the sails of Trump's strategy. The Democratic leadership announced yesterday that it opposes calls from within the caucus to formally censure Trump for his remarks, opting instead to chide Trump with a mild, non-binding resolution upholding Ronald Reagan as an icon of American democracy.

The Democratic Party has mounted no serious opposition to Trump's dictatorial moves, and voted last month to give him an additional \$4.6 billion to fund his war on immigrants.

The Democratic Party-aligned press has responded to Trump's diatribe by viciously denouncing "white people" in general and working class whites in particular. In an article titled "White identity politics drives Trump, and the Republican Party under him," the *Washington Post* yesterday blamed "white grievance" for Trump's recent statements.

The *Post* asserted that "a majority of white Americans express some racial resentment in election-year surveys," citing a Duke University professor to argue that "the feeling of white identity is much stronger among non-college-educated whites than those who went to college."

In a Monday *New York Times* column titled "Trump's America is a 'White Man's Country,'" Jamelle Bouie demanded that the Democrats punish racist white voters by distancing themselves entirely from any appeals to white workers.

"What's more striking than the president's blood-and-soil racism," he wrote, "is how Democratic Party elites—or at least one group of them—are playing with similar assumptions. No, they haven't held out the white working property owner as the only citizen of

value, but they're obsessed with winning that voter to their side."

Such comments, saturated with hatred for the working class, provide fertile soil for the fascists to argue that the racial politics of the Democratic Party require a racial response from the far right. As Stephen Bannon said in 2017, "[T]he longer [the Democrats] talk about identity politics, I got 'em."

The Trump government is a government of perpetual crisis, hated and despised by a large majority of the population. It fears above all the growth of working class opposition within the US, initially expressed in the wave of teachers' strikes and other struggles.

That does not make it less dangerous. Its main asset is its nominal opposition—the Democratic Party. The Democrats are no less petrified over the potential for mass social protest and have devoted all their efforts to containing and diffusing opposition to Trump and his pro-corporate, war-mongering policies.

The Socialist Equality Party fights for a class response to the threat of fascism. Billions of people across the world are horrified by recent developments in the United States. There is no mass support in the US for jailing children in cages and rule by executive fiat. The majority of Trump's own voters did not seek to elect a fascist.

The chief task is to harness the social power of workers of all races and nationalities in a common, international fight for social equality. Establishing the unity of the working class requires a relentless struggle against the poison of racial and identity politics, the reactionary ideology of the upper-middle class.

The president's fascist vitriol does not originate in the mind of Trump the individual. It is the outlook of a significant section of the capitalist class, which is looking to dictatorship to protect its wealth. The fight against fascism requires a fight against its root source—the capitalist system.



To contact the WSWP and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact