Trump: The political enabler of fascist violence

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In the last eight days there have been three mass shootings in the United States, two of them occurring just over 12 hours apart this weekend. Events like the killings in Gilroy, California (4 dead, including the shooter, and 15 wounded); El Paso, Texas (20 dead and 26 wounded); and Dayton, Ohio (10 dead, including the shooter, and 16 wounded) have become part of the daily life of this country.

Again, as always, the press responds with the required dose of clichés about tragedy and the community coming together, but every serious political question is covered up.

What are these questions?

First, the massacres in Gilroy and El Paso occurred against the backdrop of Trump's open incitement of violence against immigrants and racial minorities. Although Patrick Crusius, the El Paso gunman, went out of his way to absolve Trump in the statement he posted on the internet, there is no question that he and other fascist-minded individuals are acting with full knowledge that they enjoy the sympathy of the government.

It was Trump who declared during the 2016 campaign that he would post bail for any supporter who did violence to a protester, who urged police "not to be too nice" when they arrest suspects, and who pardoned Sheriff Joe Arpaio after his conviction on contempt of court charges related to the illegal detention of immigrants. At a campaign rally only two months ago, Trump posed the question of what could be done with refugee claimants at the border, and grinned broadly when a supporter shouted, "Shoot them!"

Over the past month, the US president has intensified his incitement to violence. As the WSWS noted in the wake of his attack on the city of Baltimore as a crime-ridden, rat-infested hellhole in which "no human being would want to live," "Trump is playing with fire, and he knows it." Trump and his advisors calculate that "his blatant provocations will intensify an already unstable political environment, with an immense potential for violence, and create conditions that will enable him to invoke dictatorial powers to uphold 'law and order.'"

Crusius detailed his motivations in a four-page manifesto published on the internet that begins by hailing the Christchurch, New Zealand mass killer, who murdered 51 people at two Muslim mosques earlier this year. He then declares, in language that echoes countless Trump campaign rallies, "This attack is a response to the Hispanic invasion of Texas. They are the instigators, not me. I am simply defending my country from cultural and ethnic replacement brought on by an invasion."

More is involved, however, than Trump's incitements. The killer in El Paso expresses the emergence of a distinctly fascist tendency in the United States, which combines virulent racism with anti-immigrant hysteria, while making an appeal to grievances against the capitalist system.

The reference to "replacement" in the manifesto signals the fascistic character of the Crusius manifesto. The white supremacists who marched in Charlottesville, Virginia in 2017 chanted "Jews will not replace us" (and were said by Trump to include "many fine people"). Similar language is used by European neo-Nazis and by the New Zealand gunman Brenton Tarrant, all claiming a conspiracy by big business and/or Jews to replace whites in Europe and the United States with immigrants drawn from Asia, Africa and Latin America.

The shooter's statement makes a demagogic appeal to social grievances, including unemployment, low

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wages, heavy student debt and the decline of working class living standards, blaming all these phenomena on a supposed conspiracy by corporate America to replace high-wage American workers by importing low-wage foreign labor. This is also characteristic of fascism, which seeks to provide a nationalistic outlet for the social divisions within capitalist society.

No understanding of this phenomenon is possible without examining the role that has been played by the Democratic Party in legitimizing racialist and race-obsessed politics in America.

Historically, the struggle against racism has always involved the exposure of its underlying illegitimacy. Race is not a genuine category of social analysis, but an antiscientific construct whose bankruptcy is increasingly obvious under conditions where there are tens of millions of children and young adults born of "mixed" marriages.

The Democratic Party politicians and the pseudo-left forces who serve as their political water carriers are just as adamant as a fascist like Crusius that there exist separate and distinct "black" and "white" races. Stacey Abrams, the defeated Democratic candidate for governor of Georgia who is increasingly prominent in the national Democratic Party, proclaimed that there are "intrinsic racial differences," while denouncing, in an article in *Foreign Affairs*, politics based on "the catchall category known as 'the working class.'"

The *New York Times*, which has relentlessly promoted the politics of race and racial division, referred in its news article on the El Paso killings to "aggrieved white men" who "have turned to mass murder in service of hatred against immigrants, Jews and others they perceive as threats to the white race." The *Times* refers to "white men" and "white race" without quotation marks, as it accepts the legitimacy of this categorization and promotes the claim that Trump, in his promotion of racism, is merely articulating the sentiments of "white men."

Finally, the proliferation of mass shootings in the United States is clearly bound up with the generalized atmosphere of violence and the militarization of American society promoted by both parties over the past 30 years, particularly since the onset of the "war on terror" after the 9/11 attacks in 2001. Patrick Crusius had just been born when the mass shooting at Columbine HIgh School took place. His whole life has taken place amid unceasing violence directed by American imperialism against the world.

The sickening regularity of incidents of mass homicide in America, now combined ever more directly with the politics of extreme reaction, is an expression of a deeply dysfunctional society.

The real opposite to race-based appeals is a political struggle based upon class: uniting all those who work and create the wealth of society against the tiny minority of capitalist owners who appropriate that wealth and subject society to their ever more frenzied demands to increase their fortunes. The fight against the growth of the far-right and fascistic violence cannot be waged on the basis of the racialist politics of the Democrats, but on the basis of the fight for socialism.

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