Trump delivers right-wing tirade against socialism in State of the Union address

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US President Donald Trump delivered a right-wing tirade in his State of the Union address Tuesday evening, ranting against socialism and denouncing his political opponents.

Trump feels emboldened by the failure of the Democrats' impeachment efforts, which are expected to conclude with a vote in the Senate for acquittal today. He utilized the occasion to redouble his attacks on socialism, escalate his assault on immigrants, and present himself as the force responsible for a supposed revival of the American economy.

The annual State of the Union address has long been an exercise in delusion and fraud, but Trump's remarks yesterday brought this ritualistic exercise to new lows. Amidst an extreme crisis of the entire political system, unending wars that threaten to develop into a global conflict, unprecedented levels of social inequality, and growing mass popular opposition, Trump attempted to paint a picture of hope, success, and optimism—all flowing from the beneficence of the president.

"In just three short years," Trump declared, "we have shattered the mentality of American decline and we have rejected the downsizing of America's destiny. We have totally rejected the downsizing," he said. "We are moving forward at a pace that was unimaginable just a short time ago and we are never going back."

The real content of the "recovery" of which Trump boasted was summed up in his declaration that "United States stock markets have soared 70 percent."

Trump, following on Obama, has overseen a further massive redistribution of wealth from the working class to the rich, with trillions funnelled into the stock market through corporate tax cuts and "quantitative easing" by the Federal Reserve.

The supposed rosy state of the economy, however, was belied by Trump's attacks on socialism—that is, mass opposition to social inequality and exploitation—which he presented as the gravest threat to the United States and the world.

"Socialism destroys nations," Trump declared. He added, "One hundred thirty-two lawmakers in this room have endorsed legislation to impose a socialist takeover of our health care system… To those watching at home tonight, I want you to know: We will never let socialism destroy American health care!"

He further denounced the "radical left" for wanting to "provide unlimited free health care" for immigrants. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, who sat behind Trump, was quick to disassociate the Democrats from this position by mouthing the words "not true."

The speech was full of demagogic appeals to Trump's right-wing base, including attacks on immigrants and "sanctuary cities," praise for border officials who have overseen concentration camps on the US-Mexico border, and denunciations of the constitutional right to an abortion.

At one point, Trump took the unprecedented action of awarding a presidential Medal of Freedom to far-right talk show host and demagogue Rush Limbaugh.

If Trump has successes of which he can boast, they consist of getting his far-right agenda through Congress and the courts. He bragged about passing the USMCA trade deal with Mexico, cracking down on immigrants and massively expanding the US military.

All of these policies have been approved by Congress on a bipartisan basis. One of the most significant points in his speech came when Trump hailed right-wing Venezuelan politician Juan Guaidó, whom the US has recognized as the self-proclaimed "interim president" of the country.

Democrats and Republicans alike stood in applause for Guaidó, who was present in the gallery, demonstrating the bipartisan support for US imperialist operations in Latin America and internationally.

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The Democrats also cheered when Trump boasted of the murder of Iranian General Qassem Suleimani, a war crime that brought the United States to the brink of full-scale war with Iran.

When Fred Guttenberg, an invited guest of Pelosi and father of a child killed in the Parkland high school shooting, booed Trump when the president touted his his support for gun rights, Pelosi glared at him and motioned for him to be ejected.

Since Trump came to office three years ago, the Democrats have worked to channel mass opposition to his fascistic administration behind their own conflicts with Trump, centered on issues of foreign policy. This has culminated in the impeachment drive, which is focused on Trump's decision to delay military aid to Ukraine in its proxy war with Russia.

The fecklessness of the Democrats' opposition to Trump was on display in the theatrics of House Speaker Pelosi's interactions with Trump. The media has made much of the fact that Pelosi offered to shake Trump's hand at the beginning of the event, which he snubbed, and her ripping up of Trump's speech afterwards.

More significant was Pelosi's statement after the event. Accompanying a photo of the proffered handshake, Pelosi wrote: "Democrats will never stop extending the hand of friendship to get the job done… We will work to find common ground where we can." In other words, they will work with Trump on key aspects of ruling class policy but oppose him on what they consider critical to the interests of American imperialism.

As for the ten-minute official rebuttal by Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer, it was focused mainly on a tribute to Michigan residents for personally trying to fix the state's notoriously poor roads with "a shovel and a bucket of dirt."

It is one thing for Trump to run circles around the Democratic Party. It is quite another, however, to face down real popular opposition. While the Democratic Party's impeachment drive is in shambles, social opposition is growing and will not be contained within the framework of the sclerotic and reactionary parties on display last night.

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