

Trump's Big Lie, accusing China of spreading COVID-19, a prelude to US war against China

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The following speech was delivered by Peter Symonds, national editor of the WSWs (Australia), to the 2020 International May Day Online Rally held by the World Socialist Web Site and the International Committee of the Fourth International on May 2.

Welcome from Australia to everyone taking part around the world in this online May Day Rally.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the advanced, inner rot of the capitalist system, which prioritises the obscene profits of a super wealthy few over the lives and health of the vast majority of the world's population.

As thousands continue to die every day, there is a crying need for international collaboration to marshal the scientific know-how, the medical and health resources and to work out scientifically the best means for controlling and ultimately halting the further spread of the virus.

However, not only has the outmoded nation-state system of capitalism proved a barrier to international cooperation to combat the deadly virus, but all of the geo-political rivalries that were driving towards a global war, prior to the outbreak of the pandemic, are erupting with renewed virulence.

The most destabilising factor in world politics is American imperialism, as it desperately seeks to shore up its dominant global position through every available means, including the use of its massive military machine.

In the midst of the pandemic, the Trump administration, backed in the US by the Democrats and the media, is engaged in a vicious propaganda campaign, based on unsubstantiated allegations and outright lies, to blame China for the coronavirus.

Trump has cut off funding to the World Health Organisation—the body that provides help and advice to countries around the world to combat this and other diseases—on the bogus claim that it colluded with China to cover up the outbreak.

In fact, Chinese authorities acted promptly to warn the world. From January 3, they regularly informed WHO of its progress, quickly identified the agent and on January 11 provided WHO with the genetic makeup of the virus. On January 23, Wuhan went into lockdown to prevent the further spread.

Whatever the limitations of the Chinese response in grappling with an unknown virus, they pale into insignificance in comparison to the failure of the Trump administration to take any action for weeks, in response to known dangers, with the result that tens of thousands have died.

Moreover, Trump has given credence to the far-right conspiracy theory that the virus originated in a Wuhan virology laboratory, and was either accidentally or deliberately released. He claimed this week to have seen evidence to support the allegation, despite the fact that the Office of the Director of National Intelligence had just stated it believed the coronavirus was “not manmade.”

This Big Lie, spawned by Trump's fascistic former adviser Stephen Bannon, has been amplified throughout the US media in the face of overwhelming scientific evidence to the contrary, that the pandemic is the result of animal to human transfer.

US efforts to scapegoat China, backed by allies such as Australia, are a crude attempt to deflect attention from its own criminal negligence, amid mounting opposition in the working class. But it is much more.

American strategists are deeply fearful that the pandemic will result in a further decline in the economic and strategic position of US imperialism vis a vis China and its other rivals.

First under Obama and now under Trump, the US has aggressively sought to undermine China diplomatically and economically, while engaging in a rapid military build-up throughout the Indo-Pacific in preparation for war. Under Trump, the so-called “war on terror” has been supplanted by the “great power conflict”. His economic war against China leads inexorably to military confrontation and combat.

The Trump administration is now actively discussing retaliatory economic sanctions and other measures against China. At the same time, it has continued its naval provocations against China in the South China Sea.

A quarter century of criminal US wars for dominance in the Middle East and Central Asia is metastasizing into the drive to catastrophic war between nuclear-armed powers. It is no accident that the Trump administration has torn up the treaty on intermediate range ballistic missiles, and that this year’s military budget gives top priority to the development of new nuclear weapons.

The capitalist classes around the world have no solution to the rapidly deepening economic crisis exposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, other than class war against the working class and war against their rivals. The survival of humanity depends upon the international working class putting an end to the bankrupt profit system and its outmoded division of the world into rival nation states.

Beijing has no progressive answer to the aggressive US military build-up and war drive. Its only response is to vacillate between futile attempts to appease Washington, on the one hand, and, on the other, to engage in an arms race that can only end in a disaster for mankind.



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