The Trump administration's war against society

Joseph Kishore—SEP candidate for US president
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Amidst the expanding coronavirus pandemic in the United States, the Trump administration is implementing a reckless and socially criminal "open up the economy" policy that will result in hundreds of thousands of deaths that could, with correct policies, be prevented.

Trump, in an interview with ABC News aired on Tuesday night, exuded indifference to the consequences of the policies his administration is carrying out. "There'll be more death," Trump said, "the virus will pass, with or without a vaccine. And I think we're doing very well on the vaccines but, with or without a vaccine, it's going to pass, and we're going to be back to normal."

On Monday, former New Jersey Governor Chris Christie, a close advisor to Trump, bluntly told CNN that it was necessary for the American people to "sacrifice" their lives by going back to work. "The American people have gone through significant death before [in World War I and II] … and we've survived it. We sacrificed those lives." The "sacrifice," he added, was necessary to "stand up for the American way of life."

When asked whether he thought the American people would accept up to 3,000 deaths per day by the end of this month, as projected by a leaked internal report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Christie replied: "They're gonna have to."

Even as the virus spreads, the Trump administration is ending all pretense of prioritizing the saving of lives. To underscore this point, the White House announced on Tuesday that it is planning on shutting down its "coronavirus task force" as the country moves to "open up." Trump has already cancelled press conferences of the task force, and the administration is clearly preparing to get rid of its most prominent spokesman, Dr. Anthony Fauci.

The drive to open up the economy is taking place under conditions in which the spread is accelerating. By mid-day Tuesday, the official number of new deaths in the United States was 2,350, up sharply from 1,324 recorded the previous day. The death toll has now passed 70,000. Less than a week ago, the Trump administration stated that it expected that the death toll would reach 75,000 by August. In reality, that toll will be reached before the end of this week.

The pandemic is expanding rapidly in rural areas and throughout the Midwest. There is a rise in the number of deaths in Texas, which is the first indication of the disastrous consequences of a premature back to work movement.

The *New York Times* noted in an article published on Tuesday, "Rural towns that one month ago were unscathed are suddenly hot spots for the virus. It is rampaging through nursing homes, meatpacking plants and prisons, killing the medically vulnerable and the poor, and new outbreaks keep emerging in grocery stores, Walmarts or factories, an ominous harbinger of what a full reopening of the economy will bring."

Dakota County, Nebraska, a center of the meatpacking industry, now has the third-most cases on a per capita basis in the country, after reporting no cases as late as April 11. Nearly 600 meatpacking workers in the region tested positive for the virus last month. The number of cases is increasing sharply in Illinois, Maryland, Virginia, Wisconsin, Iowa, Kansas, New Mexico and many other states.

In addition to Christie's statement about the necessity for "sacrifice," Trump declared on Tuesday afternoon that the American people are "warriors," with the implication that they must be willing to give their lives to the cause. What is the "war" and what is the

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"cause"?

The war that the administration is carrying out is not a war against the pandemic. Its policy is that of "herd immunity"—that the coronavirus should be allowed to run rampant with nothing done to stop it.

The war that Trump is waging is a war against society. The "sacrifices" are those demanded by Wall Street. As for the "cause," it is the enrichment of the corporate-financial oligarchy. The "American way of life" invoked by Trump and Christie that is to be defended has nothing to do with the lives and interests of the vast majority of the population, who want to protect themselves, their families and their coworkers. Rather, it means going back to work and dying for profits.

The Trump administration is articulating a policy with distinctly fascistic characteristics, but it is a policy that is embedded in class interests. After first downplaying the pandemic, the Trump administration and Congress utilized the crisis atmosphere to carry out a multi-trillion-dollar bailout of Wall Street. Even amidst economic conditions and mass unemployment not seen since the Great Depression, and an expanding death toll, share values continue to rise relentlessly.

The homicidal policy of the Trump administration and the new Wall Street Bull Market are two sides of the same phenomenon. The interests of the corporate-financial elite are completely alienated from and opposed to society. The enrichment of the ruling elite is dependent upon the suffering of the mass of the people.

Having vastly expanded the debt level of the United States, the ruling class is compelled to intensify its exploitation and impoverishment of the working class. This is the central force behind the mad drive to return to work. Millions of workers have been unable to receive any unemployment benefits, while small businesses have been cut out of access to loans as part of the Paycheck Protection Program. The aim is to create an economic imperative for a return to work.

The Trump administration has the advantage of not facing any significant opposition within the political establishment. The policy of massive enrichment of the oligarchy is bipartisan. The handout to Wall Street, sanctioned by the CARES Act, was passed unanimously in the Senate, with every single Democrat and Republican voting for it, including Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders.

Whatever nervousness may exist in the media over the social implications of Trump's policy, the back to work campaign is also bipartisan. The campaign to ensure that the "cure is not worse than the disease" was initiated by the *New York Times* and its columnist Thomas Friedman, who continues to campaign for a strategy based on "herd immunity." As the Trump administration implements a policy that will lead to widespread deaths, there is no statement of opposition from the Democratic Party.

It is becoming increasingly clear that the fight against the pandemic is inseparable from a fight against the capitalist system. The conflict between the needs of society and the profit system is not just a theoretical question. It is demonstrated in practice every single day.

All social resources must be directed not to bailing out Wall Street, but to securing the needs of the working class. Non-essential production must remain closed as every measure is taken to preserve life and contain the virus. All workers must receive full income and benefits until it is possible to return to their jobs under safe conditions. Mortgages, student loans and other payments to the banks must be cancelled.

The Socialist Equality Party unequivocally denounces the "back to work" and "return to normal" campaign.

The fight against the pandemic is inseparably linked to a struggle against the ruling class and its dictatorship of economic and political life. It is, therefore, a political struggle to mobilize the working class against a lawless government and the capitalist system that it defends.

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