

With one million dead, governments abandon efforts to contain COVID-19 pandemic

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This week, the world passed the grim milestone of one million deaths from the COVID-19 pandemic, amid a major global resurgence of the disease. Some 210,000 people are dead in America, 142,161 in Brazil, 96,351 in India, and 76,430 are dead in Mexico.

The disease continues to spread throughout the global South, with India reaching a staggering 80,500 new cases yesterday.

Europe, an early center of the outbreak, is again at the heart of a major resurgence. There were another 7,143 cases of coronavirus reported in the UK in the last 24 hours—the biggest rise since the pandemic began.

Last week, France reported a new high of 16,096 cases on September 24, more than triple the figure reported at the height of the March outbreak.

But with the fall and winter months in America and Europe expected to bring a further resurgence of the disease, governments around the world are abandoning any effort to contain it.

“I sometimes feel like we’ve just given up and are going to let the epidemic continue,” Carlos Del Rio, a professor of medicine at Emory University, told the *Wall Street Journal* Tuesday. Del Rio’s words sum up the attitude that increasingly prevails in presidential mansions and parliament buildings all over the world.

French President Emmanuel Macron, presiding over a country with the worst resurgence in Europe, declared last month that the French population had to “learn to live with the virus,” replacing his rhetoric about a “war” against the disease. “Everything must be done to avoid total lockdown,” Macron said.

The theory of “herd immunity,” once only openly advanced by far-right figures like Brazil’s strongman Jair Bolsonaro, is being openly advocated in the US and Europe, gaining adherents, as the *New York Times* recently noted, “on Wall Street and” among “business executives.”

Nothing sums up the abandonment of any pretense of containing the COVID-19 pandemic more than US President Donald Trump’s effective sidelining of the country’s leading health experts and their replacement with the far-right quack doctor Scott Atlas, who advocates deliberately infecting the population with COVID-19.

Monday marked the second major White House briefing in a row in which the veteran public health experts Anthony Fauci, Deborah Birx, and Robert Redfield were nowhere to be found, and the podium was given over to Atlas.

On September 23, in a press conference overshadowed by Trump’s statements that he would not leave office peacefully if Biden were elected, Trump turned the entire event over to Atlas, who proceeded to denounce CDC director Robert Redfield for “misstating” the danger of the pandemic.

The effective ouster of the nation’s leading public health experts has been accepted without a single statement of opposition or protest by any member of the nominal opposition party.

It was left to the scientists to try to defend themselves. NBC News reported that it overheard a frantic phone call in which Redfield complained that Atlas is “arming Trump with misleading data about a range of issues, including questioning the efficacy of masks, whether young people are susceptible to the virus and the potential benefits of herd immunity.”

“Everything he says is false,” NBC reported Redfield saying in desperation. Asked to comment on Redfield’s statements, Fauci remarked, “I think you know who the outlier is,” in an attack on the quack doctor.

Fauci, Birx and Redfield have argued, at least in public, that the government should seek to contain the pandemic and prevent people from getting sick and urged the public to take measures such as wearing masks.

Atlas, by contrast, advocates that no efforts be made to keep the pandemic from spreading among broad sections of the population. As he put it in July, “Low-risk groups getting the infection is not a problem. In fact, it’s a positive.”

Given these developments, the total lack of reporting, much less criticism, of the White House’s effective embrace of “herd immunity” is staggering.

In April, when Trump speculated in one of his rambling press conferences that COVID-19 might be treated by injecting disinfectants in the lungs of patients, the press could speak of nothing else for days. However irresponsible Trump’s ramblings about quack treatments, they would not have hurt more than the handful of his deluded followers who took his advice.

But Atlas is effectively determining policy for a whole country in a direction that will lead to hundreds of thousands of additional deaths, and there is not a peep of protest from within the political establishment

There are definite class reasons for this silence. In his latest interview with Laura Ingraham, Atlas had one slogan: Open the schools!

But this is exactly what Democratic governors, mayors and state legislatures are doing. New York City, the nation's largest school district, with over one million students, resumed classroom learning Tuesday for elementary school children, with higher grades to reopen on Thursday.

The effort to reopen schools is being spearheaded by the city's "progressive" Democratic Mayor Bill de Blasio and Democratic governor Andrew Cuomo.

The reopening of schools is leading to a major resurgence of the pandemic among school-aged children nationwide, who now make up 10 percent of COVID-19 cases, up from 2 percent in April.

The bipartisan character of the campaign to reopen schools and force teachers back on the job is entirely in keeping with the response to the pandemic, which has been solely dictated by the financial interests of the ruling class.

Earlier this month, veteran *Washington Post* journalist Bob Woodward published a recording of Trump saying that he had consciously sought to "downplay" the threat posed by the pandemic.

But further material in his book makes clear that Trump was at the head of a much broader conspiracy to cover up the threat of the pandemic, to which Congress and leading government officials were a party.

Woodward notes that on February 9, Fauci and Redfield gave a secret briefing to 25 state governors in which they sought to "scare the s**t" out of their audience:

The coronavirus outbreak is going to get much, much worse before it gets better, Redfield warned. We have not even seen the beginning of the worst, Redfield said, letting his words sink in. There is no reason to believe that what's happening in China is not going to happen here, he said. There were nearly 40,000 cases in China then, with more than 800 deaths, barely five weeks after announcing the first cases. I agree completely, Fauci told the governors. This is very serious business. You need to be prepared for problems in your cities and your states. Fauci could see the alarm on the governors' faces. "I think we scared the shit out of them," Fauci said after the meeting.

But Woodward noted that the official press release painted a completely false picture: "The panel reiterated that ... the risk to

the American public remains low at this time." The US media, with its myriad "anonymous sources" in the state intelligence agencies, failed to report on the briefing, and the *New York Times* would not publish an editorial on the COVID-19 pandemic for more than two weeks afterward.

In fact, there is a grisly continuity between the cover-up in the beginning of the year and the ongoing effort to abandon all efforts to contain the pandemic in the United States and throughout Europe.

The sole concern of the world's ruling classes was to use the pandemic as a pretext to carry out the transfer of trillions of dollars onto corporate balance sheets. Within days of the passage of the CARES act, the watchword, "the cure can't be worse than the disease" was blazoned from the opinion pages of the *New York Times* to Trump's Twitter account, as part of a campaign to prematurely lift lockdowns.

The all-out effort to get workers back on the job while the pandemic continues to rage has now led to a massive resurgence of the pandemic, and countless deaths.

From the standpoint of the ruling class, the pandemic now does more good than harm, killing the elderly and freeing up the money that would be used to care for those who can no longer generate profits.

These policies have resulted in more than 200,000 dead in America, and over a million dead throughout the world, and the lives of millions more are threatened.

But along with this grim milestone, another social force is coming to the scene. Workers in over a dozen major workplaces throughout the United States and internationally have formed rank-and-file committees, independent of the corrupt trade unions, aiming to resist the efforts of corporations to cover up infections and destroy whatever safety protocols remain in effect.

As they seek to combat the criminal policies of their employers, workers are placed in struggle against the entire capitalist social order. They must draw the conclusion that the struggle for the preservation of human life and the struggle against capitalism are one and the same fight.



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