

Trump escalates political conspiracy despite White House pandemic

Andre Damon, Joseph Kishore
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US President Donald Trump spent his first day back in the White House on Tuesday confronting a deepening crisis for his entire administration.

The White House itself has emerged as the principal national hotspot of the pandemic, with the fallout from the September 26 Rose Garden nomination ceremony for Judge Amy Coney Barrett continuing to grow. Late Tuesday night, it was reported that Trump's fascistic adviser, Stephen Miller, tested positive, following Monday's announcement that White House Press Secretary Kayleigh McEnany had contracted the virus.

On top of the spread among top White House officials and Trump advisers, almost the entirety of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, including General Mark Milley, the chairman, are now under quarantine after being exposed to Admiral Charles Ray, the vice commandant of the Coast Guard, who has tested positive for COVID-19.

While Trump has returned, many White House offices are empty and will remain so for at least another week. As for Trump himself, while his doctors claim that he "reports no symptoms," the president has been pumped full of steroids and other drugs, and the illness is far from having taken its full course.

Trump's decision to return to the White House from the Walter Reed Medical Center Monday night was clearly motivated by deep concerns over the impact of his sickness on his position and political conspiracies.

Unless all the polls are totally wrong, Trump's political position is deteriorating, and he faces the danger of a substantial defeat. But this fact does not alter his plans. The more desperate the crisis of the administration, the more Trump calculates that his ability to remain in office depends entirely on his ability to utilize extra-constitutional measures. Such conspiracies cannot be orchestrated from a hospital bed

in Walter Reed. Trump requires control over the apparatus of the state.

In relation to his effort to stack the Supreme Court, Trump's main focus on Tuesday was to demand that Senator Mitch McConnell scrap discussions in Congress over a new stimulus bill in order to focus all his attention on pushing through Barrett's nomination before November 3.

Then there is the matter of the symbolism surrounding Trump himself. His cultivation of a far-right and fascistic movement is highly dependent on his persona—the "great leader," immune from danger and particularly immune from the coronavirus pandemic, the seriousness of which he has downplayed and continues to downplay. The "leader" cannot be confined to the hospital bed.

Trump's return to the White House on the Marine One helicopter Monday night, complete with his salute from the White House, was clearly inspired by Leni Riefenstahl's *Triumph of the Will*, the 1935 Nazi propaganda film whose opening scenes depict Adolf Hitler descending by airplane and appearing on a balcony.

The commentary among Trump's supporters in the media sought to present him as a battlefield commander risking his own health and safety alongside the American people. "The reason he didn't hide from the virus is he didn't want America to hide from the virus," Fox News host Greg Gutfeld explained. "If he was going to ask America to get back to work ... he was going to do the same thing, he was going to walk out there on that battlefield with you."

Thus, the catastrophe produced by the "herd immunity" strategy spearheaded by the White House, which has killed more than 200,000 people and has come back to infect the White House itself, is to be

turned into an example of Trump's strength. Trump quickly seized on his own illness as a justification for doing nothing to contain the virus. "Many people every year, sometimes over 100,000, and despite the Vaccine, die from the Flu," he tweeted on Tuesday. "Are we going to close down our Country? No, we have learned to live with it, just like we are learning to live with Covid."

None of this can cloak the deep crisis engulfing the administration. The more desperate the situation becomes, however, the more reckless will be Trump's actions. His conspiratorial coup plotting continues, and there is still one month before the election. Trump has many tricks up his sleeve, including the possibility of a military provocation, an "October Surprise," that would be used to rally support in the name of "national unity."

There is one factor that works in Trump's favor: the duplicity, spinelessness, and fundamentally reactionary character of the Democratic Party. The Democrats can claim no credit for the crisis of the Trump administration. Rather than exposing his plots, they have done everything they can to stifle mass opposition to Trump's fascistic conspiracies and cover-up the danger of dictatorship.

The Democrats and their affiliated media responded to the announcement of Trump's illness—which came only days after the presidential debate in which Trump made an open appeal to fascistic violence—with effusive hopes for a speedy recovery "for the sake of the nation" and "national security," as the *New York Times* put it this past Saturday. Trump has answered the Democrats' prayers to "get well soon" by returning to the White House so that he can resume his preparations to overturn the election results.

The principal fear of the Democratic Party, a party of Wall Street, the Pentagon and the intelligence agencies, is that it might say anything that will spark the enormous wellspring of popular opposition that would be directed not only against Trump but the capitalist system.

On Monday night, Biden declared at an NBC Town Hall event that he was sorry for calling Trump a "clown," declaring that this was too "divisive." As Trump stokes civil war, Biden's call is for "unity."

The Democrats want to keep the escalating crisis within the state apparatus from escaping the confines of the state apparatus itself. In the event of a contested

election, their appeal will be to the military as the arbiters of power—itself a concession to the increasingly dictatorial and authoritarian direction of American politics.

However the political crisis within the state apparatus develops over the next month, American democracy is at death's door. The serendipitous accident of the White House pandemic cannot restore health to a social and political system that is rotten to the core.

Trump has set into motion a fascistic movement, which has significant support within the state apparatus and the financial oligarchy. The ruling class is implementing a policy that has already led to death on a massive scale. Tens of millions of people face an increasingly desperate situation, confronting mass unemployment, hunger, and homelessness. The economic house of cards on Wall Street, inflated with trillions of dollars in cash from the Federal Reserve, hovers continuously on the brink of collapse. And the pandemic is entering a new and even more dangerous stage.

To the extent that opposition remains subordinated to the Democratic Party, it will provide Trump with the opportunity to recover. If he cannot, the Democrats will come to power with an olive branch in one hand for Trump and the Republicans and a stick in the other to be used against the growing opposition of the working class.

The working class must utilize the next four weeks and beyond to unify and coordinate its struggles against the ruling class's policy of "herd immunity," social devastation, war, police violence and authoritarianism into an independent and revolutionary movement for socialism.



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