

Trump escalates threats of violence and dictatorship

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Appearing at a campaign rally in Muskegon, Michigan, his first visit to the state since 14 right-wing militia members were arrested for plotting to kidnap and murder the state's Democratic governor, President Donald Trump escalated his incitement of violence against his political opponents, as well as his threats to stay in office indefinitely.

Trump sought to whip up the crowd with denunciations of Governor Gretchen Whitmer, only 10 days after a gang of fascists was rounded up while making last-minute preparations for her assassination. "Get the governor to open up your state," he shouted, although virtually all major businesses have been permitted by Whitmer to reopen, including the major auto plants, despite a rising toll of coronavirus infections and death.

"I guess they said she was threatened, right? And she blamed me," Trump said, professing amazement. When the crowd obligingly responded with chants of "lock her up," Trump extended this demand to all his political opponents. "Lock 'em all up," he said, with evident glee.

He went on to proclaim his determination to stay in office for "four years, eight years, 12 years, 16," far beyond the constitutional limit of two terms in office. He mocked his media critics, saying, "You really drive them crazy if you say 12 more years. Then they say he is a fascist." The crowd of several thousand responded with chants, "12 more years, 12 more years." Trump added, "Now the story with the fake news will be, 'He is a fascist!'"

In reality, the corporate media has refused to apply the "fascist" label to Trump, despite his increasingly open effort to develop an armed, violent, anti-democratic movement centered on himself and his family. Neither his Democratic opponents in the November 3 election, Joe Biden and Kamala Harris, nor the congressional Democrats in Washington have dared to use the term, although it is undeniable that this is the trajectory of the Trump campaign and the Republican Party as a whole.

Governor Whitmer protested Trump's language at the Muskegon rally, warning in an appearance Sunday on NBC's "Meet the Press," "It's incredibly disturbing that the

president of the United States, 10 days after a plot to kidnap, put me on trial, and execute me—10 days after that was uncovered—the president is at it again and inspiring and incentivizing and inciting this kind of domestic terrorism."

But other leading Democrats and their media supporters have sought to downplay the issue or avoid it entirely. When House Speaker Nancy Pelosi appeared on ABC's Sunday morning interview program, she responded to a direct question about the Muskegon rally by dismissing Trump's rhetoric as "irresponsible," but did not actually speak Whitmer's name or refer to the plot to take her life. And she concluded, "The biggest antidote to his poison is the vote," without addressing Trump's repeated suggestions that he will defy the outcome of the election and stay in office indefinitely.

Former Vice President Biden also made no mention of the plot to kill Whitmer when he delivered his lone campaign speech of the weekend in Durham, North Carolina, on Sunday. While he cited Trump's statement, after the neo-Nazi march in Charlottesville, Virginia in 2017, that there were "very fine people" among the torch-wielding fascists, he drew no conclusions about the president's present political course. He said nothing at all about Trump's visit to Muskegon, in the state where the president's demands to "Liberate Michigan" were put into practice by more than a dozen fascist thugs.

There is no precedent in American political life for a president of the United States conducting himself in this manner. The Democrats impeached Trump on a largely concocted pretext of no interest to the American people, stemming from their bogus anti-Russia campaign, but they refuse to lift a finger when the president incites a mob and seeks to create a violent fascist movement.

Last week, during his town hall appearance on NBC, Trump only begrudgingly spoke a sentence formally rejecting white supremacy, while he embraced the fascist QAnon conspiracy theory and indicated that he shared its goal of combating "pedophilia." The principal contention of the QAnon campaign is that the Democratic Party is run by

Satanic pedophiles whom Trump will round up and exterminate in a coming “storm.” In that context, Trump’s “lock ‘em all up” remark is chilling.

While the American media has generally dismissed QAnon as the ravings of the lunatic fringe without real consequences for American political life, the *Washington Post* published Sunday a disturbing account of how the Democratic candidate for Congress in a northwest Georgia district faced threats of violence from supporters of his Republican opponent, a candidate who openly embraced QAnon. No one in the state or national Democratic Party lifted a finger in his defense, and he abandoned his candidacy and fled the state.

In the case of Michigan, there is ample evidence that those who plotted to kidnap and kill Governor Whitmer had support from officials in the state Republican Party and connections with political operatives directly linked to the Trump White House. And according to the state attorney general, this plot is just the “tip of the iceberg,” and many other Democratic governors were targeted by similar groups of conspirators.

Neither the media nor the Democratic Party has pointed to the connection between the violent plot against Whitmer and the planned attacks on the right to vote in the 2020 election. But remarkably, when the Michigan secretary of state announced a ban on openly carrying firearms within 100 feet of polling places or locations where absentee ballots are counted, Michigan Republican officials immediately denounced the restriction and said they would file suit to assert the “Second Amendment” rights of pro-Trump thugs who wish to threaten voters in heavily Democratic precincts.

The Socialist Equality Party denounces the threats of violence against Governor Whitmer and other Democratic Party officials. We oppose the politics of the Democratic Party and of Whitmer herself, but we are not indifferent to the threats of violence against an elected governor who received more than 2.2 million votes in November 2018.

There is a tremendous danger of fascist and state violence directed from the highest levels. Only last week, it was revealed that anti-fascist activist Michael Reinhoehl was riddled with bullets by a police death squad, which gave him no warning and gunned him down as he was entering his car in an apartment parking lot in Washington state. The police were acting as part of a US Marshal’s task force under direct orders from Trump and his attorney general, William Barr.

The drive towards dictatorship and fascist violence arises out of the staggering social contradictions in America: the yawning social gulf between the super-rich and the rest of the population, exacerbated by the impact of the coronavirus pandemic. The response of the ruling class is war abroad and repression at home. The Democratic Party cannot oppose

this trend because its own policies are determined by the same class interests.

The only way that this danger can be fought is through millions of working people and young people breaking with the Democratic Party and creating a genuine mass socialist movement that unites the entire working class. The anti-socialist hysteria of Trump and his fascist partisans is a response to the growth of working class militancy, expressed currently in the resistance of workers to being forced back to unsafe workplaces and the opposition of young people to the equally deadly back-to-school drive.

The incitements to violence and fascist attacks will not go away regardless of the outcome of the election. On the contrary, if Trump is ousted in the November 3 vote—and if he is forced to accept the result of that vote—he and his forces will only intensify their efforts. And as the comments of Pelosi and Biden demonstrate, a Biden administration would be far more concerned about working class resistance to the right-wing policies of the Democrats than about the fascist threat.

This reality underscores the significance of the campaign of the Socialist Equality Party in the 2020 elections. With two weeks to go before the election, we renew our call on workers and youth to support our candidates, Joseph Kishore for president and Norissa Santa Cruz for vice president, to vote for them in states where this is possible, and write in their names in all other states.

But the central question is the preparation for the crisis conditions that will follow the elections, whatever their outcome. The working class must build a mass independent political movement fighting for socialist policies and against all the parties and apologists for the capitalist ruling elite and the profit system. This means joining and building the SEP and our youth movement, the International Youth and Students for Social Equality.



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