The pandemic and Trump's plots

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Three events over the past three days cast light on the character of Trump's post-election plots and the social and economic interests driving them.

First, on Friday, reports were published in the media of an emergency meeting involving the CEOs of major American corporations in the early morning of November 6, three days after the election, to discuss Trump's claim that he had won. According to the press reports, the meeting included the executives of Disney, Johnson & Johnson, Walmart, Goldman Sachs and other Fortune 500 companies.

One account published by the *Financial Times* (FT) over the weekend stated that the meeting "opened on a dark note, with a warning about the possibility of a 'coup d'état' from Timothy Snyder, the Yale historian and author of *On Tyranny*, who told the business leaders that democracies were almost always overthrown from the inside."

The meeting, held at 7:00 in the morning, demonstrates how seriously the possibility of a post-election coup by Trump to remain in power is being discussed in ruling circles. Many executives, according to the FT, resolved to back Biden out of concern that Trump's refusal to accept the results of the election risked a social explosion. The FT quotes Jeffrey Sonnenfeld, a Yale professor who organized the call, as stating that "there was great concern" that Trump's response to the election "was leading to more cleavage in the country rather than less… They don't want hostile workplaces."

Significantly, one of the most powerful representatives of financial capital, Stephen Schwarzman, the founder of hedge fund Blackstone, defended Trump. "Mr. Schwarzman," the FT reported, "a Republican donor who has been one of Mr Trump's most energetic supporters on Wall Street, sought to assuage such fears [of a coup], saying the president was within his rights to challenge election results and forecasting that the legal process would take its course."

The second event also came on Friday, when Trump made his first public remarks since the election at an event organized to claim credit for progress in the development of a coronavirus vaccine.

Trump focused his remarks on the insistence that, as the pandemic is spiraling completely out of control and the death toll is rising, he will oppose any measures to stop the spread of the virus. "This administration will not be going to a lockdown," Trump said. "Time will tell" who is in office after January 20, Trump said, "but I can tell you, this administration will not go to a lockdown… The cure cannot be … worse than the problem itself."

Trump connected this position directly to the rise on the stock markets. "I see the stock market's up almost 400 points today again, and it's ready to break the all-time record," he said.

Trump's comments on Friday followed by two days the statement of Dr. Michael Osterholm, a leading epidemiologist and adviser to President-elect Joe Biden, that a nationwide lockdown along with economic assistance to workers could bring the virus under control. These statements led to a fall in the markets on Wednesday and Thursday, followed by rapid assurances from the Biden campaign that it was opposed to any nationwide lockdown.

I am the man, Trump was telling the financial oligarchy, who will most aggressively enforce the "back-to-work" campaign in the face of growing popular opposition as the death toll mounts.

The third event came on Saturday, when Trump drove by and saluted a demonstration in Washington DC organized by fascistic groups under the banner of "Stop the Steal," an operation that is connected with Trump ally Roger Stone and figures around Trump's fascistic former chief adviser Stephen Bannon.

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Among those participating were paramilitary groups such as the Oath Keepers, the Proud Boys—whom Trump told to "stand back and stand by" during the presidential debate in September—and the Three Percenters, along with the fascist Alex Jones. Neo-Nazi Andrew Anglin, one of the organizers of the 2017 "Unite the Right" rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, hailed the rally as a "massive victory." It was also addressed by Nick Fuentes, an open anti-Semite, and Republican Congresswoman-elect Marjorie Taylor Greene, a supporter of the fascist QAnon organization.

The demonstration marks an intensification of Trump's efforts to develop a far-right, fascistic movement. Such forces, along with fascistic layers within the police and state apparatus, are to be used to enforce the homicidal campaign of the ruling class in response to the pandemic and the growth of social opposition in the working class. The Democratic Party has deliberately evaded any criticism of the fact that in endorsing the event, the president openly identifies himself with fascist forces.

A warning must be made: Trump remains president, at the summit of executive power in the United States, for another 65 days, and the political situation can move in different directions. And if he is removed from office, Trump is creating a "stab in the back" narrative that the election was illegitimate and that he remains the rightful president.

The Democrats, a party of Wall Street and the military, are opposed above all to anything that will spark popular resistance and opposition from below. They present Trump's actions as merely a personal "temper tantrum" and not a deadly serious threat to overturn what remains of democratic rule in the United States. Moreover, as the rapid disavowal of Osterholm's comments demonstrates, they are opposed to the measures that are necessary to stop the spread of the pandemic.

The central focus of the Democrats' criticism of Trump for refusing to concede the election is not his incitement of fascistic violence or his effort to establish a personalist dictatorship, but complaints that Trump is undermining "national security"—that is, the interests of American imperialism.

The *New York Times*, the main publication of the Democratic Party, has published a series of comments and editorials on this theme over the past week. In an editorial published November 11, the *Times* chastised Republicans for "indulging Mr. Trump's tantrum" over the elections, warning that it "has serious implications for national security." The *Times* concluded that Trump's "acting out is creating a worrisome opportunity for America's foreign adversaries to exploit."

As Trump intensifies his incitement to violence, the Democrats are appealing for unity with his enablers in the Republican Party. According to a report in *Politico*, Biden is reaching out to Trump's former Defense Secretary Jim Mattis "about helping with the transition at the Pentagon and possibly serving in the new administration" in order to "build an effective, bipartisan Defense Department leadership team."

Ten days ago, in the immediate aftermath of the election, the WSWS called attention to the initial statements of Biden that it was necessary to "put the harsh rhetoric of the campaign behind us" and "to stop treating our opponents as enemies." Biden's comments, we explained, "make clear how the Democrats will approach the political conflict in the coming weeks. Everything will be done to block mass popular opposition to Trump's conspiracies. The Democrats want to prevent the emergence of opposition to Trump from threatening the interests of Wall Street and American imperialism."

This is now what is playing out. The conspiracies of the ruling elites can be defeated, but this requires that workers take independent action. A genuine struggle against Trump can be developed only in opposition to the Democrats.

The fight against the threat of fascist dictatorship and the fight against the ruling class policy of "herd immunity" must be conducted as a struggle against the entire financial-corporate oligarchy and the capitalist system. It requires that the working class take power in its own hands and restructure economic life on the basis of equality and socialism.

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