

Scientists take a stand against “Wuhan lab” witch-hunt

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The open embrace by the US media of the conspiracy theory that COVID-19 was released from the Wuhan Institute of Virology has incited a right-wing campaign against scientists researching the origin of the pandemic.

Scientists who have for years warned about the dangers posed by infectious diseases and have sought to defend society from a raging pandemic are being scapegoated in a vicious witch-hunt.

But leading scientists, under relentless and slanderous attack not only by the far-right gutter press but by the “mainstream” media, have taken a courageous and principled stand, defending science, international collaboration, and the fight to save lives in the ongoing pandemic.

Since the publication by the *Wall Street Journal* claiming to present new evidence for the Wuhan lab conspiracy theory, the *Washington Post* has declared the theory “credible,” while the print and broadcast media have joined in the right-wing chorus condemning scientists for having rejected the false theory.

Since the start of the pandemic, Dr. Anthony Fauci, director the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) has been publicly associated with a scientific approach to COVID-19. Despite making accommodations to Trump’s criminal “herd immunity” policies, and the abandonment of public health measures under Biden, Fauci has argued against conspiracy theories and other forms of right-wing hysteria.

For this, he has been the main target of vilification and violent threats by the right-wing mob, best summed up by the demand by Trump’s former campaign CEO Stephen K. Bannon for Fauci’s head to be put on a pike outside the White House.

But this campaign went into overdrive on Tuesday with the publication by the *Washington Post* of hundreds of emails by Fauci from March 2020.

The emails show that Fauci and his colleagues, including Kristian G. Andersen, director of Infectious Disease Genomics at Scripps Research Translational Institute and Peter Daszak, president of the Ecohealth Alliance, discussed and investigated the lab-leak theory before categorically rejecting it on the basis of a thorough scientific investigation.

But right-wing pundits and politicians have seized upon the emails as evidence of a “smoking gun,” claiming that the

scientists’ good-faith investigation of all possible theories, and the rejection of the “Wuhan lab” theory, constitutes evidence of a conspiracy to suppress the allegedly genetically-engineered origins of the pandemic.

Leading the charge was Congresswoman Marjorie Taylor Greene, an advocate of the QAnon and Pizzagate conspiracy theories who claimed that Jewish bankers are responsible for wildfires in California. ‘He needs to be FIRED!’ Greene demanded.

“Anthony Fauci should be in prison,” wrote Charlie Kirk, the head of the right-wing Turning Points campus organization. “#FIREFAUCI” tweeted Rand Paul, the far-right anti-vaccination Republican senator.

The front page of the right-wing UK *Daily Mail* blared, “Fauci’s smoking gun emails.” The fascist Fox News pundit Tucker Carlson declared that Fauci should be under “criminal investigation.”

“Corrupt Media Ignore Smoking Gun Emails In Order To Protect Fauci,” writes the *Federalist*, which advocated early in the pandemic that infected people engage in “chicken pox parties” to infect others.

The mainstream press joined in, with NBC News demanding that Fauci explain his discussions with Chinese health officials, and pressing him on whether the government did “enough to investigate the origins of the virus.”

On Sunday, Peter Daszak, co-leader of the subgroup on Animal and Environment for the World Health Organization’s investigation into the origins of COVID-19, was denounced in a hit piece in the British *Daily Telegraph* as having “sympathized with the Chinese government.”

Replying to this right-wing campaign, Kristian G. Andersen, who discussed the origins of the disease with Fauci in March, reiterated on Twitter his opposition to the “Wuhan lab” conspiracy theory, explaining the fact that the consideration—and possible rejection—of theories is critical to how science works:

As I have said many times, we seriously considered a lab leak a possibility. However, significant new data, extensive analyses, and many discussions led to the

conclusions in our paper. What the email shows, is a clear example of the scientific process.

Andersen cited his March 17, 2020, peer-reviewed paper in the *Nature* science journal where he and his colleagues wrote:

The genetic data irrefutably show that SARS-CoV-2 is not derived from any previously used virus backbone... Instead, we propose two scenarios that can plausibly explain the origin of SARS-CoV-2: (i) natural selection in an animal host before zoonotic transfer; and (ii) natural selection in humans following zoonotic transfer.

Peter Daszak added on Twitter:

This is called science, folks. You look at the evidence, generate hypotheses, discuss with others, dig deeper, refute some hypotheses, find evidence to support others, then you come to a conclusion & make that public. The peer-review is critical, & was done over & over again.

Daszak retweeted a recent editorial in *Nature* calling on scientists to “protect precious scientific collaboration from geopolitics,” declaring, “Researchers, institutions & governments must all play their part to guard against a chill in scientific collaboration.”

Leading scientists have prominently shared and discussed a recent article by Dan Samorodnitsky, a biochemist and senior editor at *Massive Science*, who presented a devastating critique of the “Wuhan Lab” theory in layman’s terms:

One hypothesis requires a colossal cover-up and the silent, unswerving, leak-proof compliance of a vast network of scientists, civilians, and government officials for over a year. The other requires only for biology to behave as it always has, for a family of viruses that have done this before to do it again. The zoonotic spillover hypothesis is simple and explains everything. It’s scientific malpractice to pretend that one idea is equally as meritorious as the other. The lab-leak hypothesis is a scientific *deus ex machina*, a narrative shortcut that points a finger at a specific set of bad actors.

series of widely read and discussed articles debunking the Wuhan laboratory lie. On Tuesday, we published an article pointing out that Michael Gordon, the lead author of the *Wall Street Journal* article that led the US media to declare the story “credible,” had co-authored the debunked “aluminum tubes” report, together with Judith Miller, that spearheaded the US propaganda campaign before the 2003 military onslaught against Iraq.

On Sunday, we published an article entitled, “How the US media declared the ‘Wuhan lab’ lie ‘credible,’” explaining the central role of former Trump campaign CEO Bannon in promoting the conspiracy theory.

Peter Daszak thanked the *World Socialist Web Site* for its coverage, writing, “Thanks for resurfacing this!” When he came under right-wing attack for this statement, Daszak defended the *World Socialist Web Site*, writing:

I thanked them for resurfacing evidence of link between nefarious characters like Miles Guo, Lude & political activists on the right. Factually laid out in that article, on CNN & NYT which they cite. Last time I checked we’d moved beyond McCarthy in the US!

In the coming days, the *World Socialist Web Site* will do everything in its power to warn working people all over the world about the right-wing witch-hunt against the world’s leading experts on infectious diseases. We stand ready to work with scientists in defending a scientific approach to the pandemic, which is critical to saving lives. Working people, who are the target of the ruling class’s herd immunity policies, must come to the defense of scientists who have sought to arm society with the knowledge necessary to stop the pandemic!



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In recent days, the *World Socialist Web Site* has published a