Anthony Fauci gives aid and comfort to COVID-19 “lab leak” conspiracy theory

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In an interview aired Sunday on Meet the Press, Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, said he had an “open mind” about the fascist conspiracy theory that Chinese and American scientists, including himself, created COVID-19.

Asked by moderator Chuck Todd, “What can we do to once and for all, sort of, figure out whether the lab leak is a viable theory?” Fauci replied by stating that China “has not been at all transparent enough for us to feel comfortable about it.”

Todd continued, “Where are you on this now? I mean, everybody’s always curious, ‘Where is Fauci on the lab leak theory?’”

To this, Fauci replied, “I have a completely open mind about that, despite people saying that I don’t. I have a totally open mind about that.” He added the caveat that “evidence strongly points to this being a natural occurrence,” before concluding, “We still all have to keep an open mind as to what the origin is.”

The “lab leak” theory refers to the conspiracy theory concocted by fascist ideologue Steve Bannon and his Chinese expatriate business partner Miles Guo that China’s Wuhan Institute of Virology, with the collaboration of the National Institutes of Health under Fauci himself and the EcoHealth Alliance under Peter Daszak, created COVID-19 and then released it, deliberately or accidentally, into the city of Wuhan, China.

If “people” say Fauci did not have an “open mind” about the conspiracy, it is because Fauci previously categorically rejected it and correctly called its advocates liars.

When Fauci testified before a Senate committee in July 2021, ultra-right Senator Rand Paul accused him of “responsibility for four million people dying around the world from a pandemic.” Paul added, “All the evidence is pointing that it came from the lab, and there will be responsibility for those who funded the lab, including yourself.”

Fauci replied, “I totally resent that… And if anybody is lying here, Senator, it is you.”

In May 2020, Fauci replied to a question from a reporter about the lab leak “theory” by saying, “Everything about the stepwise evolution over time strongly indicates that [this virus] evolved in nature and then jumped species.”

Since Fauci made these comments, a mountain of evidence has emerged pointing to the natural origins of COVID-19, and none to substantiate the “lab leak” conspiracy theory.

In a series of papers published between December 2021 and March 2022, scientists Michael Worobey and Kristian Andersen demolished the conspiracy theory, establishing a direct connection between the location of the earliest COVID-19 cases and the Wuhan live-animal market, showing that the market was the epicenter of the disease and documenting the route by which COVID-19 spread from wildlife to humans.

Fauci’s newfound openness to the 'lab leak” theory is based not on science, but on politics. In the midterm election, despite lack of popular support for Trump and his fascist claims of a “stolen election,” the Republican Party was able to exploit public disaffection with the Biden administration to gain a narrow majority in the House of Representatives.

The day after the election, Biden declared, “I’m prepared to work with my Republican colleagues.” The Republicans have made clear that a major focus of the House under their leadership will be the effort to witch-hunt scientists by promoting the “lab leak” conspiracy theory, as well as targeting Fauci himself for

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supposedly advocating too stringent mitigation measures against the pandemic.

The panel discussion following Fauci's comments revealed the political content of this collaboration.

Matt Gorman, the former communications director of the National Republican Congressional Committee, commented:

> I think one issue when it comes to oversight that will get folks on the Freedom Caucus but also these folks in Biden states will be the origins of COVID. And not making it personal but being like, "Look, how do we prevent another global pandemic," and to your point about China, "What are they covering up?" You will never ever, ever lose voters by taking on China.

To this, moderator Chuck Todd replied, "Look at Dr. Fauci, he's ready to have these same conversations. I think you're not wrong on this that that is a more unifying place to start than someplace else."

Fauci's statements are part of a broader effort within the political establishment to revive the discredited "lab leak" theory of the origins of COVID-19. This is motivated be two factors.

First, there are the geopolitical imperatives of American imperialism, which sees China as a principal economic and military competitor. The effort to blame China for COVID-19, beginning in the earliest days of the pandemic during the Trump administration, has always been part of the broader anti-China campaign of the US ruling class.

Second, the promotion of the lie that China is responsible, deliberately or accidentally, for unleashing the virus is aimed at creating a alibi for the criminal policy of the ruling class, particularly in the United States, which has led to death on a mass scale.

Over one million people have died in the United States from COVID-19. These deaths are the direct result of the "herd immunity" policies adopted under the Trump and then Biden administrations, which saw the premature reopening of schools and businesses, followed by the systematic dismantlement of infrastructure to track the spread of COVID-19, accompanied by public statements by both presidents discouraging the wearing of masks.

Fauci played a role in this. Under both Trump and Biden, Fauci served to give government policy a scientific veneer, taking a semi-critical attitude to Trump's statements, but uncritically endorsing effectively the same policies when implemented under Biden.

When, in December 2021, in the midst of the greatest surge of the disease to date, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention slashed its recommended quarantine time from ten days to five, Fauci justified the action, saying, "On balance, if you look at the safety of the public and the need to have society not disrupted, this was a good choice."

The slashing of quarantine times gave corporations cover to force workers to come back to work while sick, turning every factory, store, hospital, school, airport, and warehouse into an incubator for the disease.

In January 2022, instead of denouncing the dismantling of public health measures in the face of the surge of the Omicron variant, Fauci raised the prospect that the Omicron variant would be the equivalent of a "live-virus vaccination."

As a result of these policies, over the past year, more than 250,000 Americans lost their lives to COVID-19.

The ruling class fears that at some point there will be a movement to demand accountability for this social and political crime. Thus it attempts to pin the blame for the pandemic on an external enemy while exonerating American capitalism for the death or disabling of millions of people.

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