Trump’s planned visit to Springfield, Ohio: An incitement to violence

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Speaking Wednesday night at a campaign rally in Uniondale, New York, on Long Island, fascist Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump said that he would be going to Springfield, Ohio in the next two weeks to escalate his demonization of Haitian immigrants in that city. He said he would follow this up with a trip to Aurora, Colorado, a Denver suburb with a large number of Venezuelan migrants.

Trump’s plan to visit Springfield is an incitement to violence. The agitation directed at Haitian immigrants in the city is part of a deliberate effort to transform the Trump campaign into a fascist movement, to transition from right-wing agitation to paramilitary mobilization.

During his nationally televised debate September 10 with Democrat Kamala Harris, Trump openly embraced the fascist lies being spread on social media, claiming that Haitian immigrants were killing and eating pet cats and dogs in the small Ohio industrial city.

Since then, both Trump and his running mate, Senator J. D. Vance of Ohio, have repeatedly invoked Springfield as an example in support of their xenophobic diatribes against immigrants. Trump has pledged that if elected he will launch a massive police-state operation to deport 20 million migrants, and the mass deportations will start in Springfield.

Trump’s plan to visit Springfield comes amidst a campaign that, less than seven weeks before the election, is dominated by violence and extreme crisis. In his remarks on Long Island, Trump lumped together his lies about immigrants and the assassination attempt of September 15, when a man armed with a semiautomatic weapon and a long-range scope was intercepted by a Secret Service agent as he lay in wait for the ex-president on his golf course.

“I’m going to Springfield,” Trump said. “You may never see me again, but that’s OK. Got to do what I got to do.” He continued, pretending to ask and answer a question: “‘Whatever happened to Trump?’ ‘Well, he never got out of Springfield.’”

Contrary to this amalgam, the man arrested in the Florida assassination attempt was not an immigrant, but a 58-year-old native of North Carolina, who voted for Trump in 2016 but then turned sharply against him, partly in response to the Democratic Party effort to portray Trump as a stooge of Russian President Vladimir Putin. The assassin had close ties to Ukraine and had been involved in recruiting mercenaries to fight in the war against Russia.

Whether Trump actually follows through on his threat to visit Springfield remains to be seen. A campaign surrogate, IT millionaire Vivek Ramaswamy, held a “town hall” in the city Thursday night, presumably as a means of testing the waters. Trump carried Clark County, which includes Springfield, by 61-37 percent in 2020, but there is reportedly widespread hostility to his gross slanders of the Haitian immigrants.

The mayor of Springfield, Rob Rue, and the governor of Ohio, Mike DeWine, both Republicans, had indicated they would prefer Trump not visit the city because, as Rue put it, it would be “an extreme strain on our resources.” There have been nearly three dozen bomb threats against schools and other public buildings since Trump slandered the Haitian immigrants in Springfield during his debate with Harris.

Remarkably, Governor DeWine said neither Trump nor Vance—who represents Ohio in the Senate—has contacted the state government since they began to incorporate the “pet-eating” story into their campaign speeches. The reason is obvious: Trump and Vance are fully aware that there is no truth to their claims, and therefore have no reason to consult with state officials or offer assistance. They are using the smears against immigrants solely to boost their campaign and whip up a pogrom atmosphere nationally against migrants.

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Another prominent Ohio Republican politician, Senate candidate and multi-millionaire Bernie Moreno, sent out a fundraising email this week claiming that “tens of thousands of third-world illegal immigrants” are “taking over” Springfield.

Actually, most of the 20,000 Haitians now living in the city are legal residents of the United States, granted Temporary Protected Status after the 2010 earthquake that destroyed much of the country and killed 300,000 people. They were invited to settle in Springfield by local officials and the state government, at the urging of local corporations which needed workers.

In response to Trump’s declaration that he would visit, both state and local governments have begun formal planning for such an event. The Springfield mayor issued an emergency declaration Thursday allowing him to take action quickly against any attacks on city residents. Both neo-Nazi groups and the Ku Klux Klan have threatened violence against the Haitians.

As far as Trump is concerned, the election is only a stage in a broader effort to develop a fascist movement. In this context, the focus on Springfield is being used to whip up racism and xenophobia, which are the toxic fuel of his political campaign and the MAGA movement as a whole. He constantly invokes stories of “migrant crime,” most of them false or grossly exaggerated, in order to split the working class along racial and ethnic lines and incite violence.

The other goal is to discredit the 2024 elections as a whole—in advance of what could well be a humiliating defeat at the polls—with claims that the Democratic Party is encouraging millions of “illegal aliens” to vote in order to offset Trump’s supposedly overwhelming support among American citizens.

This is a thinly disguised version of the Nazi-style “Great Replacement Theory,” according to which Jewish billionaires, headed by George Soros, are plotting to flood the United States with migrants from Asia, Africa and Latin America to “replace” the white population of the country.

The Trump campaign and local Republican officials have filed a series of lawsuits in many of the “battleground” states expected to decide the contest in the Electoral College, challenging voter registration procedures and alleging that Democratic-controlled state governments in Michigan, Pennsylvania, and Arizona, and local governments in many other states are deliberately keeping “illegals” on the voter rolls.

The rhetorical filth produced by the Trump campaign has become a significant driver of political violence. According to press reports, suspicious packages arrived at the offices of at least 15 state election officials, including in several of the “battleground” states, leading to evacuations while the contents were sent out for laboratory testing. So far no poisons like anthrax have been found, but the intimidation is nonetheless real.

It is not only Donald Trump and Kamala Harris who now must campaign behind bullet-proof glass. Similar protections are being set up for election offices where ballots will soon be counted, and police and security guards are being assigned to block the mob-style attacks that took place in several locations in 2020.

While Trump and the fascist Republicans openly prepare for violence, the Harris campaign and the Biden administration refuse to alert the public and have done virtually nothing to prepare for a post-election crisis. It is notable that since Biden issued a dire warning at the Democratic National Convention, when he said that Trump would not respect the results of the election if he lost, the Harris-Walz ticket has effectively dropped the subject.

The Democrats rely on the military-intelligence apparatus, and will make no popular appeal against a second edition of a Trump election coup. They are far more fearful of the independent intervention of the working class into the US political crisis than of anything that Trump and the Republicans would do.

The working class must mobilize to defend immigrants against the fascist incitements of Trump, not through support for the Democrats, but in opposition to both parties of the corporate and financial elite.

This is not only a basic question of class solidarity with immigrant workers. The fascism directed at Haitians and other immigrants will be utilized by the ruling class to target what it considers its principal threat: the growing struggles of all workers against the dictates of the capitalist oligarchy.

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