

“Führer” Trump declares war on the world, and the working class

Patrick Martin, David North
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The inauguration of Donald Trump will be remembered in history as an obscene fascist spectacle, in which the incoming president delivered a vile, hate-filled diatribe against the outgoing administration, immigrants, broad swaths of the US population that he views as enemies, the people of Latin America and, finally, the world’s population beyond the Western Hemisphere.

In a grotesque example of life imitating political fiction, Trump himself appeared as the incarnation of President Buzz Windrip, the brutal media con man and demagogue imagined by the great American writer Sinclair Lewis in his anti-fascist novel *It Can’t Happen Here*.

Lewis’s dystopian novel was published in 1935 and was intended as a warning against the rise of fascism in the United States. In defense of a crisis-torn capitalism and in pursuit of profits and unlimited wealth, the American ruling class would place in power its own national version of Germany’s Hitler. Ninety years later, the grotesque inaugural ceremony of January 20, 2025 has vindicated Lewis’s warning.

Trump made no attempt to conceal the fascist inspiration of his inaugural diatribe. The speech was explicitly modeled, in both tone and content, on the first radio speech given by Hitler on February 1, 1933, two days after being elevated into the post of German chancellor. Hitler’s speech was devoted to a venomous denunciation of the Weimar Republic and its leaders, whom he accused of betraying the mythical German “*Volk*.” All the traitors would be swept away, and Germany would be restored to greatness.

Trump has appropriated Hitler’s perspective of the “Thousand-Year Reich” and rebranded it as his promised “Golden Age” of America. However, it will be “golden” only for Trump and the other billionaire oligarchs who were seated in attendance at his inauguration, including Elon Musk, Jeff Bezos and Mark Zuckerberg, the three richest Americans. They were joined by Trump’s international fascist allies like Italy’s Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni and Argentina’s President Javier Milei.

Past and present leaders of the Democratic Party, including the departing President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris, former presidents Clinton and Obama, and congressional leaders like Charles Schumer, Bernie Sanders

and Hakeem Jeffries attended the ceremony as well. They listened quietly and respectfully as Trump publicly berated and denounced them. None of them had the political courage, let alone sense of history and commitment to democratic principles, to walk out of the proceedings and publicly denounce the installation of a fascist president. Instead, they joined in hailing a “peaceful transfer of power” to the most reactionary government in American history.

Trump reiterated his plans for American expansionism, saying his government would “take back” the Panama Canal. He said he would issue an executive order designating criminal gangs in Mexico, El Salvador and Venezuela as “foreign terrorist organizations,” a status similar to that of ISIS and Al-Qaeda, which would provide a pseudo-legal justification for US attacks on those countries.

Trump hailed the record of President William McKinley (1897-1901), who seized Cuba, Puerto Rico, Guam and the Philippines in the Spanish-American War, and vowed to restore McKinley’s name to Denali in Alaska, the highest mountain in North America. He also called for renaming the Gulf of Mexico the “Gulf of America,” while leaving unspoken (but clearly implicit) his calls in recent weeks for the US takeover of Greenland and annexation of Canada as the 51st state.

Trump announced that he would immediately sign executive orders declaring a “national emergency” on the US-Mexico border and deploy the military to repel what he has repeatedly depicted as an “invasion” of the United States by a foreign enemy. This is part of a package of anti-immigrant orders which will include reinstating the “Remain in Mexico” policy, which violates international law by expelling all asylum claimants, and ramping up the police-military apparatus to carry out an escalating series of raids against immigrant neighborhoods and job sites. This could lead to the round-up of hundreds of thousands, and ultimately millions of working people.

This assault on democratic rights will soon extend to the entire working class, native-born as well as immigrant. Trump seeks to outlaw all opposition, let alone resistance, to his sweeping program of cutting social benefits to finance both an extension of his 2017 tax cuts for the rich—set to expire this year—and a further massive expansion of the US military

machine.

Trump declared that he would make use of the Alien Enemies Act, an infamous measure enacted in 1798, as the basis for his plans for mass detentions and deportations, portraying millions of immigrants fleeing war and poverty as though they were an invading army. The law was last invoked during World War II to violate the democratic rights of German, Italian and Japanese immigrants residing in the United States. Under the act, these individuals were subjected to registration, surveillance, relocation or internment, depending on the perceived threat level.

The purpose is to terrorize immigrant communities and divide the working class, creating the conditions for further repression against all opposition.

The dictatorial character of this program is the subtext of Trump's self-description in explicitly messianic terms, claiming that he escaped an assassin's bullet last summer because he had been "saved by God to make America great again." The pomp and ceremony of the inauguration was suffused with religious and militarist rhetoric and symbols, in keeping with the presentation of Trump as a Christian nationalist chosen by God.

Trump even proclaimed the "manifest destiny" of the United States to send the first astronauts to Mars and plant the American flag on another planet. There is no doubt that governments around the world will take note of this language, particularly in Latin America and Canada.

The slogan of "Manifest Destiny," suggesting a God-given right of the United States to expand at the expense of weaker neighbors, was first put forward by the Democratic Party, then dominated by the Southern slaveowners, in the election of 1844. "Manifest Destiny" was the justification for an aggressive US position on the boundary dispute with Canada in the Pacific Northwest, then the annexation of Texas in 1845 as a slave state, and finally the war of 1846-1848 in which the US seized and annexed half of Mexico. Abraham Lincoln repudiated that slogan as the war cry of the expansionist slave power. Trump embraces it as the war cry of the capitalist oligarchy.

The self-glorifying character of *Führer* Trump's inaugural address was unmistakable. He framed himself as the directing power, announcing sweeping measures to be implemented unilaterally under the guise of declarations of national emergency. Unlike Roosevelt's "100 Days," which consisted of proposals to Congress for legislation which were enacted into law as the New Deal, Trump calls for "100 orders," issued on his own authority. His speech made no reference to Congress or even to the Republican Party, emphasizing instead his unique and singular role.

But for all the nationalistic bluster, and the cowardice and complicity of the Democrats, Trump's speech vastly overestimated the power of American imperialism and underestimated the resistance which the fascist program of

Trump and the Republicans will provoke, both within the United States and on a global scale.

Trump may hail William McKinley, but McKinley was president from 1897 to 1901, at the beginning of the imperialist epoch, when the United States was a rising global power. Trump's presidency comes as capitalism has reached a dead end, both in the US and internationally.

If any other world leader had delivered a speech in 2025 promising such a grandiose program of international aggression and global dominance, their remarks would be viewed as calling into question not just their judgment but their sanity.

Trump's perspective is a delusion, but it is no less dangerous for that. His government will respond ruthlessly and violently, both against the inevitable opposition he encounters from other capitalist governments pursuing the interests of their own ruling classes and, above all, against the resistance of masses of working people at home and abroad.

The Democrats are well aware of the dangers. In his final hours in office, President Biden issued pardons to members of his own family and figures like retired General Mark Milley, former public health official Dr. Anthony Fauci, and the members and staff of the House committee that investigated Trump's attempted coup of January 6, 2021. He expressed concern that the Trump administration would carry out its threats of revenge prosecutions against its political opponents.

The Democrats are concerned about protecting themselves from the wrath of Trump, but they have not lifted a finger to protect millions of immigrants and others in the working class now facing attack by a fascist president. Nor will they.

Trump is reentering the White House as the representative of a money-mad oligarchy, whose staggering wealth is in inverse proportion to its real social base. The venue of the ceremony, inside the Rotunda rather than outside the Capitol in the presence of the public, exemplified the real isolation of the ruling elite.

Elon Musk, unable to control himself, celebrated Trump's installation with two wild Hitler salutes. But the oligarch's enthusiasm for dictatorship is not shared by the working class. The real significance of January 20, 2025 is that it has inaugurated an era of irrepressible class conflict of a magnitude and intensity without precedent in American history.



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