The Mamdani-Trump Pact and the bankrupt politics of the upper middle class pseudo-left

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In his speech on election night on November 4, New York City Mayor-elect and Democratic Socialists of America member Zohran Mamdani declared that his victory was ushering in a "generation of change." If "we embrace this brave new course," he stated, "we can respond to oligarchy and authoritarianism with the strength it fears, not the appeasement it craves."

Speaking directly of Trump, Mamdani added that "if there is any way to terrify a despot, it is by dismantling the very conditions that allowed him to accumulate power." Barely two weeks later, Mamdani met with this very "despot" in the White House and pledged a "partnership" with Trump. Mamdani's "brave new course," as it turned out, was neither brave nor new, and it led directly into the warm embrace of the fascist president.

The immediate political consequence of Mamdani's visit will be to confuse and disorient the very people who brought him to office. After all, a significant factor in Mamdani's victory was the widespread and deeply-felt hatred of Trump, particularly among young people. Among broader layers, it confirmed the fact that there is significant support for socialism, including in the financial center of world capitalism. Mamdani's public embrace of Trump will, and indeed is intended to, frustrate and demoralize this sentiment.

The response of the DSA and its publications, particularly *Jacobin* magazine, is the most grotesque cynicism and lying. In two articles—"The Right Can't Figure Out What to Do With Zohran Mamdani" by Ben Burgis and "Zohran Mamdani Knew How to Handle Donald Trump" by Peter Dreier—*Jacobin* portrays the mayor-elect's deference to Trump as a stroke of strategic brilliance.

In explaining Trump's embrace of Mamdani, Burgis writes that the fascist president was "seemingly charmed by the mayor-elect." Trump, Burgis notes, remarked after their meeting that he and Mamdani "agree on a lot more than I would have thought."

Burgis, however, does not refer to the actual political content of this agreement, as expressed in the press conference. This includes Trump's praise for Mamdani's decision to retain NYPD Commissioner Jessica Tisch, a Trump ally who has targeted anti-genocide protesters; Mamdani's support for Trump's bogus "peace" plan in Gaza (never mentioned in either article); and, most significantly, his embrace of the administration's anti-immigrant operations. As Trump put it during the press conference, "If there are horrible people, we want to get them out. … He [Mamdani] wants to get them out more than I do."

In an effort to account for Trump's apparent change of heart, Burgis offers up pop psychology. Trump, he claims, has an "animal instinct to bully those who seem vulnerable but flatter the charismatic and the popular." Burgis speculates that Trump was momentarily "dazed and smiling" after meeting Mamdani, unsure of how to proceed.

The article's title claims that "The Right Can't Figure Out What to Do With Zohran Mamdani." In fact, it can. It is milking Mamdani's pathetic opportunism for all it is worth.

Dreier follows the same basic script. He praises the "smart, good looking, and charismatic" Mamdani for carrying out a "charm offensive." He declares that, due to declining poll numbers and other signs of crisis, "Trump must be wallowing in self-pity right now. He needed, more than anything else, some good photo ops and some flattery. Mamdani, who is more intelligent, strategic, and disciplined than Trump, accommodated him."

Drieier, perhaps conscious of the language of Mamdani's victory speech, chose not to use the word "appease." Regardless, this is an incredibly damning admission, which *Jacobin* presents as if it were a political virtue. That Trump "needed" flattering photo-ops—and Mamdani "accommodated him"—is an acknowledgment that, under conditions of growing crisis and popular opposition, Mamdani provided Trump exactly what he wanted.

The Mamdani-Trump meeting, however, was not an improvised public relations stunt. It was a political act. In the days immediately following his election victory, Mamdani's team reached out to the White House to request

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the meeting. This was a deliberate decision, aimed at forging a "partnership" with the fascistic Trump administration, of legitimizing a regime that is waging a war on democratic rights, of promoting the fiction that Trump is some sort of "populist" and not a representative of the oligarchy.

Mamdani's statements can be interpreted in no other way. Indeed, on Sunday, in an interview on NBC's "Meet the Press," Mamdani was asked if he still considers Trump to be a "fascist." The mayor-elect stated, "That's something that I've said in the past. I say it today." He quickly added that "what I appreciated about the conversation" with Trump is that they "wanted to focus on what it could look like to deliver on a shared analysis of an affordability crisis for New Yorkers." What's a little fascism between budding political allies?

What "shared analysis," one might ask, would a supposed "democratic socialist" have with a fascist representative of the capitalist oligarchy about the "affordability crisis" in New York or anywhere else?

The answer is to be found not in the armchair psychoanalysis of *Jacobin*, but in the class analysis of Marxism. The DSA speaks for privileged sections of the upper-middle class that are deeply opposed to a fundamental redistribution of wealth. It is not and has never been independent from the oligarchy and the state apparatus. Politically, it is a faction of the Democratic Party, a party of Wall Street and the military-intelligence agencies.

Indeed, a significant factor in the gushing of the DSA over Mamdani and his love fest with Trump is a feeling within these layers that Trump is not so bad after all. Dictatorship, fascism, genocide, mass deportation might just be ok if there is a little space for the upper-middle class pseudo-left.

There is precedent for this brand of "left" collaboration with the far right. In August 1939, Stalin's Soviet Union signed the infamous Hitler-Stalin Pact, aligning with Nazi Germany in a temporary "non-aggression" agreement that disoriented millions of workers and helped pave the way for World War II. Today's alliance between Mamdani and Trump flows from a similar logic. And within the DSA, and *Jacobin* in particular, there is a very strong influence of Stalinism.

As the WSWS wrote 10 years ago, following the experience of Syriza in Greece, answering the question, "What is the pseudo-left?":

> The pseudo-left is anti-socialist, opposes class struggle, and denies the central role of the working class and the necessity of revolution in the progressive transformation of society. It counterposes supra-class populism to the independent political organization and mass mobilization of the working class against the capitalist system. The economic program of the pseudo-left is, in its essentials, pro-capitalist and nationalistic.

Mamdani's actions once again demonstrate that the use of the term "pseudo-left" is not an epithet or a throw-away phrase, but a political and class characterization. There is nothing "left" about these forces.

Mamdani met with Trump as he was threatening to execute leading members of the Democratic Party, overseeing Gestapo immigration raids in Charlotte, presiding over the Gaza genocide and preparing to direct the military to violently repress protests. These are vast crimes with the most far-reaching implications, crimes in which the DSA is implicated as enablers.

The events of the past several days must be a turning point for all those who genuinely oppose fascism and dictatorship and want to fight for socialism.

For Mamdani, his meeting with Trump, held before he even takes office, will define him for all time as a political scoundrel of the lowest order. For the hundreds of thousands of young people and workers who supported Mamdani in the election, who were drawn to his rhetoric and viewed his victory as a sign of hope, the lesson must be drawn.

The fight for genuine socialism, for the interests of the working class, requires an irreconcilable break with the Democratic Party and the bankrupt politics of the pseudo-left. Their strategy leads not to socialism, but to confusion, demoralization and betrayal.

Flowing from this experience, the task must be to turn, as Lenin put it, deeper into the masses of workers and youth, the development of the class struggle centered on the factories and workplaces, and the building of a revolutionary leadership. We urge all those who see the necessity of this struggle to join the Socialist Equality Party and build the political movement required to put an end to capitalism, fascism and war.

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