

The American Hitler and the morality of the ruling class

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The unavoidable conclusion that must be drawn from the speech delivered on Wednesday night by Donald Trump is that the American president is a political criminal. If one grants that there exists a moral boundary, even in the realm of imperialist geopolitics, between the generally sinister pursuit of capitalist great power interests and fascist bestiality, the leaders of the US government have passed over it. The names of Trump, Vance, Hegseth, Rubio and Miller will live in perpetual infamy alongside those of the Nazi ringleaders of the Third Reich: Hitler, Goering, Himmler, Von Ribbentrop and Goebbels. The judgment of history will be merciless.

But that judgment will be delivered not only against individuals, but also, and more profoundly, against the social class which raised them to power and in whose interest they have committed their monstrous crimes against the people of Iran. Herein lies the significance of Trump's Wednesday night rant. It exposed the irreversible political and moral putrefaction of the American ruling class.

Trump is not the first president to commit crimes. His predecessors have ordered the invasions of countries, the overthrow of governments, and the torture and assassination of individuals identified as opponents of American interests. But some attempt was made by previous administrations to provide at least some legal and democratic justification, however threadbare, cynical, deceitful and hypocritical, for their actions. The contempt for domestic and international law—and, along with it, the repudiation of any adherence to democratic principles—could not be openly embraced as the bases of state policies. When criminal acts were exposed, they were excused, with formal expressions of regret, as unfortunate departures from official enforcement of legal norms.

That stage has passed. Trump's speech was remarkable for its lack of disguise. He chose words that exposed with unvarnished bluntness the deliberately genocidal aims of American actions. "We're going to bring them back to the Stone Ages, where they belong," he declared. He threatened that the United States would strike "each and every one of their electric generating plants very hard and probably simultaneously." He boasted of the decapitation of the leadership—"They're all dead"—and then added, with the coarse self-assurance of a Mafia don, "We have all the cards. They have none."

Trump threatened the destruction of the material foundations of social life for an entire country, explaining that Iran's oil sector had thus far been spared only because its destruction "would not give them even a small chance of survival or rebuilding."

What found expression in these remarks was not simply the pathology of an individual, but the essential character of a social layer that has become habituated to criminality and no longer feels compelled to apologize for it.

For 35 years, since the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, the American ruling class has conducted foreign policy with a sense of impunity. The existence of the USSR, which emerged out of a socialist revolution of the working class and which had played a decisive role in

the defeat of the Third Reich, imposed a certain level of restraint on the conduct of imperialist foreign policy. But the Stalinist dissolution of the Soviet Union removed all those restraints. The ruling class was enthralled with the belief that the application of violence provided the solution to all the problems of the capitalist system.

The road to Trump's speech runs through the initial invasion of Iraq in 1991 and the 1999 bombardment of Serbia. It continued, in the aftermath of the 2001 invasion of Afghanistan and the 2003 assault on Iraq, through the vast machinery of torture and abuse exposed at Abu Ghraib and in the CIA black sites, through waterboarding and the whole lexicon of "enhanced interrogation" invented to give bureaucratic respectability to sadism. It runs through the 2011 bombing of Libya, where the destruction of a state and the public degradation and murder of Gaddafi were greeted in Washington by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton with the chilling gloat, "We came, we saw, he died." And it runs, above all, through Gaza, where genocide has been elevated into policy, starvation into strategy, the obliteration of hospitals and refugee camps into a recognized instrument of war.

Gaza has established a new norm. That is one of the most critical political facts of the present period. For more than two years the world has watched the methodical destruction of an entire people, carried out with the full backing of the United States and the connivance of all the imperialist powers. Tens of thousands have been killed. Whole families have been wiped out. Civilian life has been shattered with a coldness that has stunned millions. The lesson drawn in ruling circles has not been that such crimes are intolerable. It has been that they are possible. The conclusion reached in Washington, London, Berlin and Paris is that the old restraints no longer apply, that any act, however monstrous, can be normalized provided it is carried out with sufficient force and supported by a sufficiently brazen propaganda apparatus. Trump's speech belongs to this new political environment. It is the language of a ruling class that has learned from Gaza that mass murder can be conducted in broad daylight.

The assault on Iran has given this new norm its fullest and most terrible expression. Measures that were first applied against a minuscule territory inhabited by 2.5 million people are now being used on a vast country with a population of more than 90 million. On February 28, 2026, the United States and Israel launched nearly 900 strikes in 12 hours against Iran, timing the attack to coincide with ongoing nuclear negotiations—a deliberate act of perfidy that mocked the very concept of diplomacy. The opening salvo killed the supreme leader, decapitated the senior military and political command, and struck targets across at least 26 of Iran's 31 provinces. What followed was a sustained campaign of devastation: over 11,000 targets struck within the first month, more than 300 hospitals and medical facilities damaged or destroyed, tens of thousands of residential buildings reduced to rubble, schools obliterated, cultural heritage sites defaced, desalination plants wrecked and a nuclear power station repeatedly bombed. The war's most horrifying single atrocity—the destruction of an elementary girls' school in Minab, which killed more

than 170 children—was met not with contrition but with denial. The operation was christened “Epic Fury,” a name chosen not to conceal the savagery but to celebrate it.

For decades, one has been subjected to the moral lectures of petty-bourgeois journalists and academics, whose principal historical occupation has been to discover, in the conduct of the Bolsheviks and above all in Trotsky, proofs of the supposedly sinister essence of Marxist “amoralism.” They have filled libraries with denunciations of revolutionary violence, meditations on the “authoritarian impulse,” and pious reflections on the alleged contempt of Marxists for ethical restraint.

Student youth and workers are instructed to believe that the central moral problem of the modern age lies in the intransigence of those who sought to overthrow capitalism. Yet these same circles, when confronted with the actual barbarism of imperialism, display remarkable forbearance. Their categorical condemnations dissolve into nuance. Their moral fervor wanes, and their hostility to violence becomes exquisitely selective. They find endless reserves of moral outrage—which has not subsided even after the passage of more than a century—over the Russian Revolution of 1917. But they are mute when the United States incinerates a society, when Israel buries children beneath rubble, when torture is systematized, when police execute the poor and the dispossessed in American streets. The class content of morality emerges here with extraordinary clarity.

Marxism has always insisted that morality is not an eternal commandment hovering above society, equally binding upon all classes regardless of their material interests and social position. Morality has a history. It has a class basis. The ruling class, no less than its intellectual retainers, speaks endlessly of universal principles while defending a social order founded on exploitation, war and repression. What is now unfolding before the eyes of the world is the real morality of the bourgeoisie, stripped of its democratic ornamentation.

In the age of the historic democratic revolutions of the 18th century, the bourgeoisie based its morality on the second categorical imperative articulated by Kant: “So act that you use humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, always at the same time as an end, never merely as a means.”

Reformulated in the true spirit of Trumpian fascism, the moral principle that guides the bourgeoisie is: “Act always to maximize the power and profit of the oligarchy, treating human beings, whole peoples, and even civilization itself, as disposable assets in the exercise of American force.”

This is the morality of a class whose wealth rests upon financial predation and social ruin. It is the morality of political leaders who regard entire populations as raw material upon which force may be exercised.

The same process is visible within the United States. A government that brutalizes populations abroad will employ the same methods at home. Methods developed in imperialist war find their counterpart in domestic life. The murders of Renée Nicole Good and Alex Pretti, carried out by federal agents, belong to a broader pattern of state violence that long predates the invasion of Iran: the epidemic of police killings, the militarization of local departments, the transformation of entire working class neighborhoods into internal security zones, the routine presumption that the lives of the poor are expendable. The violence of the American state is not divided into separate compartments, one external and the other domestic. It arises from the same source. A ruling class that maintains its wealth through fraud, theft, speculation and war governs by coercion when Constitutional norms become a hindrance.

The degeneration of political life is inseparable from the oligarchic structure of American society. There cannot be extreme concentrations of wealth without corresponding concentrations of power. The rule of a tiny financial aristocracy above the rest of society corrodes and destroys every democratic institution. The courts, the legislature, the media, the universities, the police, the intelligence apparatus, the parties of government—all become instruments through which a parasitic elite

secures its interests. Under such conditions, criminal methods are inevitable. A society governed by billionaires, corporate predators, military-intelligence operatives and political swindlers acquires the character of those who dominate it. To describe such a society as ruled by criminals is a statement of political fact.

And yet the process of decay does not proceed without generating its opposite. The ruling class has moved far along the road of moral disintegration, but broad sections of the population have not followed it to the same destination. Democratic impulses, a sense of justice, an instinctive revulsion against cruelty, a hatred of lies and brutality—these remain deeply rooted among workers and young people. These sentiments are being activated and intensified by the escalation of the class struggle. The conflict between the criminality of the oligarchy and the moral consciousness of the masses is assuming an increasingly explosive character. Every boastful threat, every act of state violence, every public glorification of devastation widens the gulf between the ruling elite and the population over which it claims the right to rule.

Notwithstanding Trump’s boasts and threats, the Iranian people will not submit to American imperialism. They will continue to resist, and it is the responsibility of the American and international working class to come to the defense of the Iranian people. The power of the working class must be mobilized to stop the bombing of Iran and force the end of this illegal war.

The working class and youth must draw from the war the necessary conclusions. It is not enough to be appalled. Horror, left to itself, exhausts itself in impotence. What is required is the development of a socialist movement and genuine revolutionary morality, opposed in every respect to the depravity of the ruling class. Such a morality has nothing in common with the empty sermonizing of the academies or the selective outrage of liberalism. It arises from the struggle against capitalist exploitation and oppression. It is a morality of class struggle, grounded in solidarity, in truthfulness, in the defense of the oppressed, in uncompromising hostility to cruelty and domination, in the conviction that human beings cannot be treated as expendable objects in the service of profit and power. Within it are contained the highest principles of civilization and the deepest aspirations of humanity.

This is the answer to the old slanders against Marxism. The real “amoralists” are not the revolutionary socialists, but the ruling classes and their accomplices, who arm and finance genocide. The criminality of the American ruling class and its international collaborators is being exposed before the eyes of the world. Against that criminality there must be mobilized a force guided by a higher social principle and a higher moral conception. That force is the international working class. Its struggle for socialism is not merely politically necessary. It is the indispensable expression of all that is humane, decent and emancipatory in modern civilization. The survival of humanity depends upon its victory.



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