

Trump and Clinton brawl in the gutter

By Andre Damon
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The unprecedented level of vituperation employed by both presidential candidates and the atmosphere of violence surrounding the election campaign are malignant expressions of the intensity of the political crisis of the United States.

At a rally Tuesday in Panama City Beach, Florida, the Republican candidate, billionaire real estate speculator Donald Trump, declared, “The election of Hillary Clinton would lead to the destruction of our country.” The previous day he obliquely referred to Clinton as “the devil.” Such denunciations are combined with an attempt to revive the Bill Clinton sex scandals and charges that the entire election is “rigged.”

While Trump’s poll numbers show him losing ground to Clinton, he continues to attract very large crowds. He is exploiting a deep-going anger that exists among layers of workers and lower-middle-class people who have seen a drastic decline in their living standards, a process that has only intensified during the nearly eight years of the Obama administration. The fact that these grievances can find no progressive outlet within the framework of the American political system facilitates Trump’s efforts to channel them in a reactionary and even fascist direction.

The response of the Democratic Party and the Hillary Clinton campaign to Trump is fundamentally reactionary. They do not seek to expose the right-wing politics of Trump or the oligarchic and semi-criminal social interests he actually represents. Rather, Clinton is seeking to outflank Trump from the right on foreign policy by baiting him as an agent of Russia, and to scandalize him on the basis of his sexual exploits. This in no way addresses the social grievances of Trump’s supporters and actually bolsters his effort to portray himself as the victim of a ruthless establishment, laying the basis for him to declare the entire election illegitimate and seek to develop an extra-parliamentary

political movement for the period after the November 8 election.

Besides the sex scandal-mongering and anti-Russian agitation, the other major feature of the Democratic campaign is its relentless focus on Trump’s persona, as though the real estate mogul and reality TV star were an aberrant interloper into America’s political Garden of Eden. How absurd! Trump is the personification of a diseased political culture and a society benighted by an immense stratification of wealth. He embodies the backwardness and corruption that have accumulated in American politics and culture over a period of half a century.

The methods employed by the Clinton campaign are those historically associated with the extreme right and the Republican Party. In flooding the media with sexual exposures, Clinton is adopting the *modus operandi* of the Republicans in the impeachment of her husband, Bill Clinton, which she herself declared at the time to be a “vast right-wing conspiracy.” Sex scandals have long been used to conceal political issues and debase public debate.

The Democrats’ attack on Trump as a stooge of Russian President Vladimir Putin is modeled after the anticommunist spy scares and witch-hunts of the 1950s. Since the eve of the Democratic Convention, the Clinton campaign, backed by the media, has responded to the release of incriminating emails by WikiLeaks and other sources documenting Clinton’s corrupt relations with Wall Street, her efforts to rig the primary campaign against her rival Bernie Sanders, her machinations in regard to her illicit use of a private email server while secretary of state, and her incessant lying to the public with the classic dodge of blaming the messenger.

Without presenting to the public a shred of evidence, the Clinton campaign, the Democratic Party, the US government and the entire media have charged the

Russian government with hacking into Democratic Party computers and leaking emails in order to tilt the election in favor of Trump. Last week, James Clapper, the director of national intelligence, officially declared the Putin government to be the organizer of the leaks. This is the same person who lied under oath to the US Senate in March of 2013 when asked point blank whether the US government was carrying out mass domestic spying.

On Tuesday, the day after WikiLeaks released a trove of Clinton campaign emails, White House Press Secretary Josh Earnest reiterated the charge that the Russian government was to blame for the leaks. He threatened Russia with “retaliatory activity” by the US government. Earnest declared that the US government had “significant capabilities” to “carry out offensive operations in other countries.”

John Podesta, the chairman of Clinton’s campaign, told reporters that “Russian intelligence agencies” were “doing everything they can on behalf of our opponent.”

The Russians have denied the charges. Commenting in the *Intercept*, reporter Glenn Greenwald, who helped expose the NSA spying program, warned about the consequences of the tactics employed by the Clinton campaign against Trump. “In the face of an abusive, misogynistic, bigoted, scary, lawless authoritarian, what’s a little journalistic fraud or constant fear-mongering about subversive Kremlin agents between friends, if it helps to stop him?” Greenwald wrote. He correctly warned, “Come January, Democrats will continue to be the dominant political faction in the US—more so than ever—and the tactics they are now embracing will endure past the election.”

The reactionary methods of the Clinton campaign are determined by the reactionary agenda being prepared for a Hillary Clinton administration. The baiting of Russia is calculated to build an atmosphere conducive to legitimizing the basic axis of her administration: escalation of war in the Middle East and military confrontation with Russia and China.

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