

Behind the anti-Semitic and racist attacks in the US

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The coming to power of the Trump administration has encouraged the most reactionary, racist and backward forces in American society. Nearly 100 bomb threats have been phoned in to Jewish Community Centers around the country, all of them so far hoaxes, but causing widespread fear and disruption. Two Jewish cemeteries have been desecrated, most recently Saturday night in Philadelphia, when more than 500 gravestones were displaced or broken—an act that clearly involved a sizeable and determined effort.

Last weekend, an Indian immigrant software engineer was murdered in Kansas City, shot to death in a bar by a bigoted Navy veteran who apparently thought he was killing an Iranian, and who echoed Trump's campaign rhetoric, shouting "get out of my country," before opening fire. This is only the most flagrant in a wave of violence and intimidation against immigrants and Muslims, inspired by Trump's executive orders targeting refugees and immigrant workers.

Trump gave lip service to concern over racist and anti-Semitic attacks at the beginning of his nationally televised speech to Congress Tuesday night. His crocodile tears were belied almost immediately as he returned to his main campaign theme of demonizing immigrants as criminals, drug dealers and gang members.

The president's real attitude to the wave of anti-Semitic attacks was expressed in his remarks at the White House Tuesday to a group of state attorneys general. Trump was asked about the bomb threats and desecration of graves, and he replied, "Sometimes it's the reverse, to make people—or to make others—look bad," he told the state officials.

This was not the first time that Trump has suggested that his political opponents are staging the anti-Semitic attacks in order to embarrass his administration. Trump said much the same thing, albeit in a typically confused

and rambling fashion, when asked about the attacks at his February 16 press conference. "You have some of the signs and some of that anger caused by the other side," he claimed. "They'll do signs and drawing that are inappropriate. It won't be my people. It will be people on the other side to anger people like you."

Similar claims have been promoted by far-right elements like former KKK leader and neo-Nazi David Duke, with the "people on the other side" replaced with the statement that it is Jews who are responsible for the desecrations.

Officials of Jewish groups have criticized Trump's latest remarks, as they have a series of comments and actions that have no serious explanation except as expressions of deep-seated anti-Semitism among key officials in the Trump White House.

The most flagrant was the official White House statement commemorating worldwide observances of the Holocaust, which made no reference to the Jewish victims of Hitler's "final solution," an omission that White House aides said was intentional.

The ties between Trump and the foul swamp of anti-Semitism and white racism have been noted as far back as his notorious reluctance to distance himself from Duke, who fervently endorsed Trump in the Republican primaries.

Trump's closest policy adviser, who has taken on a leading role in virtually every area is Stephen Bannon, the fascist-minded former head of Breitbart News, which has become one of the main Internet watering holes for white racist, anti-Semitic and neo-Nazi elements. In his political utterances, Bannon invokes what are diplomatically described as "dog whistles" for anti-Semitism, thinly disguised tropes like his denunciation of the "corporatist, globalist media" at last week's Conservative Political Action Conference.

Trump himself embraced "America First" as the

theme of his fascistic inaugural address, despite—or because of—the fact that the group of that name in the 1930s was headed by Nazi sympathizer Charles Lindbergh and the slogan became identified with hostility to Jews.

The White House has repeatedly rebuffed charges of anti-Semitism by pointing to Trump's family—his daughter Ivanka converted to Judaism when she married Jared Kushner, now a top White House aide—and to prominent Jewish members of Trump's cabinet like Treasury secretary Steven Mnuchin. The issue is not resolved so easily.

Trump's promotion of anti-immigrant racism and American nationalism has a definite political logic, aligning his administration with the foulest and most retrograde tendencies in American political life. These elements flocked to the Trump campaign and were emboldened both by his election victory and his promotion of figures like Bannon, Sebastian Gorka (associated with the Hungarian neo-Nazi group, the Order of Vitéz) and Michael Anton (who has denounced Islam as a "militant faith") to high positions in the White House.

The Trump administration has been steeped in racism and chauvinism from its first day in office. Significantly, while he was forced to make a perfunctory condemnation of anti-Semitism last week, Trump has not said a word about anti-Muslim or anti-immigrant violence. He said nothing about the massacre of five Muslims at a mosque in Quebec City, Canada, carried out by an ultra-right racist and Trump admirer.

Throughout this period, the major policy initiative of the new administration has been to launch a pogrom-style onslaught against immigrants, whether Muslim refugees fleeing US bombs and missiles in the Middle East, or Mexicans and Central Americans, feeding their families by working at low-paying and arduous jobs across the United States.

The heavily publicized raids, round-ups and mass jailing of innocent people have served as a green light to every racist vigilante in America. The Trump administration is morally and political responsible for the upsurge of anti-Semitism and racism, and it must be held accountable.

The Trump administration, however, is an expression of a profound disease, and one that did not begin with

the entry of Trump and Bannon into the White House. Far-right nationalism in general and anti-Semitism in particular have always been associated with social and political reaction. They are employed by the ruling class to divert popular anger and to create the ideological foundation for war.

The 1930s saw a savage rise of anti-Semitism, not only in Europe, but in the United States as well. This was also a period of racist lynchings in the south, followed during the Second World War by the mass internment of Japanese Americans ordered by the Roosevelt administration.

All of this nationalist filth is again reemerging. Similar forces are on the rise throughout Europe, with parties and organizations that promote Holocaust denial, anti-Semitism, violent attacks on immigrants and the buildup of the police and military—all the trappings of a revival of the fascist forces that were responsible for the greatest crimes of the twentieth century.

In country after country, the ruling class is bringing forward the worst forms of nationalism and religious bigotry. The war policies of American imperialism in the Middle East, with the backing of NATO, have driven tens of millions of refugees to flee their homes. More than a million have made their way to Europe seeking safety and a decent future. But the policy of the Trump administration, and its co-thinkers in Europe, is to brand the victims of imperialism as "terrorists" and bar their entry.

In the final analysis, the mix of fascistic reaction thrown up by the Trump administration is a product of the crisis and breakdown of the capitalist system.

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