

Trump's firing of Bannon: The military asserts control

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Trump's firing of his fascistic chief political strategist Stephen Bannon marks a new stage in the bitter factional conflict within the American ruling elite.

The dismissal came three days after Trump's press conference on Tuesday, in which the president defended the Nazi and white supremacist demonstrators who rampaged through Charlottesville last weekend. Trump's remarks triggered an unprecedented political crisis in Washington. Powerful sections of the ruling elite fear that the self-exposure of the US president as a fascist sympathizer is severely damaging the credibility of the United States internationally and creating the conditions for social explosions at home.

On Thursday, the pressure on the White House from within the state and the corporate establishment reached a new pitch with a public email rebuking Trump from James Murdoch, chief executive of 21st Century Fox and son of Trump ally Rupert Murdoch. Also on Thursday, New York Republican Congressman Peter King called for the firing of Bannon, and Bob Corker, the Republican chairman of the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee, questioned Trump's stability and competence.

Wall Street, nervous over reports that Trump's chief economic adviser, former Goldman Sachs President Gary Cohn, was considering resigning, fired a shot across the administration's bow with a broad stock market sell-off. The Dow fell 274 points on Thursday, its biggest one-day loss in three months. Traders on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange cheered Friday when news broke of Bannon's removal.

The decision to fire Bannon was made by Trump's recently appointed White House chief of staff, retired Marine General John Kelly. The forces leading the push within the administration included Kelly; National

Security Adviser H. R. McMaster, an active duty general; Defense Secretary James Mattis, a retired general; former Goldman executive Cohn; and Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, the former CEO of Exxon Mobil.

The direct control of the military in alliance with Wall Street over the affairs of state has, if anything, been increased.

Internecine conflicts within the ruling class have raged since Trump's inauguration, centering on differences over US imperialist foreign policy. The Democrats and a section of Republicans have lined up with dominant factions of the military and intelligence apparatus to demand that Trump take a more aggressive line against Russia and more rapidly escalate the wars in Afghanistan and Syria.

The announcement of Bannon's removal came as Trump was meeting with his top generals and intelligence officials at Camp David to discuss their proposals for an increase in US troop levels in Afghanistan. Trump, backed by Bannon, has up to now resisted the Pentagon plan.

On Wednesday, the liberal *American Prospect* magazine published an interview with Bannon in which he boasted of his plans to purge opponents at the State and Defense departments, attacked Cohn by name for pulling back on trade war against China, and dismissed US war threats against North Korea, saying, "There's no military solution, forget it."

The following day both Tillerson and Mattis issued statements reiterating Washington's readiness to carry out a nuclear attack on North Korea.

A significant section of Wall Street bankers and corporate CEOs, many of whom have disassociated themselves from Trump's pro-fascist remarks, see the removal of Bannon as a step toward reining in the factional warfare within the administration and

between Trump and the Republican Congress. They see this as essential to carrying out Trump's pledges to slash corporate taxes, remove business regulations and provide a profit windfall in the guise of infrastructure reform.

There is nothing progressive or democratic about the concerns motivating the generals, Wall Street bankers and Democratic and Republican politicians who pushed for Bannon's removal. All of the vying factions within the ruling class are agreed on the need to intensify the attack on the living standards and social conditions of the working class. Trump's own efforts, in alliance with Bannon, to build up a fascist base are fundamentally directed toward the violent suppression of working class opposition.

Bannon, who immediately resumed his post as head of the fascist Breitbart News, will continue to exercise significant political influence over the Trump administration. He told Bloomberg News that he will be "going to war for Trump against his opponents," adding, "I'm now free. I've got my hands back on my weapons."

As for Trump, he is doubling down on his efforts to whip up extreme right-wing elements. He is proceeding with plans to hold a rally next Tuesday in Phoenix, Arizona, at which he is expected to announce a pardon for former Arizona sheriff Joe Arpaio, who led a witch-hunt against immigrant workers and was convicted of contempt of court for defying a judge's order to stop illegally detaining Hispanics.

The danger of world war, the growth of poverty and social inequality and the destruction of democratic rights will not be halted by palace intrigues or cabinet shakeups. Neither Trump nor Bannon are the cause of political reaction and the growth of far-right forces. They themselves are noxious manifestations of the crisis and decay of American and world capitalism.

There is no faction of the capitalist class that is capable of offering policies to address the urgent concerns of working people for jobs, education, pensions, health care, peace and basic rights. The Democratic Party has presided no less than the Republicans over nearly half a century of social reaction. Its main concern is to divert social anger away from a struggle against capitalism and channel it behind nationalism, trade war and expanded military aggression around the world.

The only progressive basis for opposing Trump is the independent mobilization of the working class in opposition to the entire political establishment and the capitalist system it defends.

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