

The White House and the fascist rampage in Charlottesville

14 August 2017

After months of deliberate planning and coordination with the police, the Nazi “Unite the Right” rampage in Charlottesville, Virginia reached its deadly apogee Saturday afternoon when a 20-year-old Hitler admirer from Ohio drove his car through a crowd of counter-demonstrators, killing 32-year-old Bernie Sanders supporter Heather Heyer and wounding 14 more people.

The corporate press has focused on Trump’s failure to verbally condemn the violence of the far right. But the American media’s handwringing over Trump’s statements is not only naive. It deliberately covers up the extent to which the White House was involved in encouraging and inciting and even planning the Nazi mobilization in Charlottesville. The White House is crawling with pro-fascist operatives. Why would Trump condemn the actions of those whom he and his pal, Steve Bannon, view as a critical political constituency?

This Nazi riot is not an aberrational event in American politics. It is the product of Donald Trump’s strategy to build an extra-constitutional fascist movement outside the framework of the two parties, itself an expression of the putrefaction and collapse of American democracy under the weight of staggering levels of social inequality.

In the past three weeks, Trump and his advisors—Stephen Bannon, Stephen Miller and Sebastian Gorka—have escalated the administration’s efforts to whip up support among fascist elements who form the core of his political base.

Trump has attacked Republican Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, challenging one of the most powerful legislative figures in his own party. He has made bellicose threats that the US is “locked and loaded” for war against North Korea and appealed to his billionaire constituents as well as the police, immigration and border officials, and the military to support his “tough on crime” and anti-immigrant policies.

In the process, he has emboldened the forces that took over the 22,000-student University of Virginia campus on Friday. The Nazis carried out a torchlight parade across the campus, founded and designed by the author of the

Declaration of Independence, Thomas Jefferson, while chanting “blood and soil,” “Sieg Heil,” and “one people, one nation, stop immigration.”

At dawn Saturday morning, dozens of uniformed fascist militiamen armed with assault rifles and shotguns deployed downtown, establishing military control over the heart of the 50,000-person city. After the militia had secured the area, without police interference, vans filled with people from across the country poured into the city center, unloading hundreds of Nazis armed with guns, knives, chains, metal poles, baseball bats and pepper spray.

What happened next can be described only as a fascist riot. Police withdrew from the scene and Nazis began attacking counter-demonstrators in the streets, shouting racial and homophobic slurs while chanting “Heil Trump.” Straggler counter-demonstrators were pulled into the Nazi melee and beaten mercilessly, while the police looked on.

Brian McLaren, a pastor who had traveled to Charlottesville as a counter-demonstrator, told the press that “the police hung back quite a distance” as the Nazis launched their attack. Then, in the early afternoon, James Fields Jr. of Maumee, Ohio sped through the crowd in his car, flipping bodies over the hood like bowling pins.

Virginia’s Democratic governor, Terry McAuliffe, responded to criticism by stating on Sunday that the police did “great work” over the weekend. McAuliffe, former head of the Democratic National Committee and prominent fundraiser for Bill and Hillary Clinton, said the murder of counter-protestor Heather Heyer could not have been prevented. “You can’t stop some crazy guy who came here from Ohio and used his car as a weapon,” he declared.

The purpose of this weekend’s violence was to send a message to Trump’s detractors in the Republican and Democratic parties that he has an alternative base to which he can appeal. Accordingly, the Nazis held their rally just two hours from Washington DC.

A timeline of the three weeks preceding this weekend’s rampage makes clear the systematic and calculated campaign of the Trump White House to mobilize the most backward and reactionary social forces in the country.

• On July 22, Trump made a bellicose speech to an audience of sailors to mark the commission of a \$13 billion aircraft carrier.

• On July 25, he delivered a speech in Youngstown, Ohio glorifying Christian religious extremism.

• On July 26, the Department of Justice filed a “friend of the court brief” stating that private corporations are not barred from firing employees based on their sexual orientation. That same day, Trump tweeted that his administration would bar transgender people from military service and nominated antigay Kansas Governor Sam Brownback to be the State Department’s ambassador at large for international religious freedom.

• On July 28, Trump told police and immigration agents in Long Island, New York that he loved watching criminal suspects “get thrown into the back of a paddy wagon.” He urged them to rough up people being detained, saying, “Please don’t be too nice.”

• On August 2, Trump and Republican Senators Tom Cotton and David Perdue announced legislation, the Reforming American Immigration for Strong Employment [RAISE] Act, which would slash legal immigration in half. At a press conference announcing the plan, Trump’s advisor Stephen Miller echoed the anti-Semitic language of the German Nazi Party when he denounced CNN’s Jim Acosta as having a “cosmopolitan bias.” On the same day, the media reported that the Justice Department was planning to sue colleges for “discrimination against whites.”

• On August 6, Trump launched a “Real News” program on his Facebook page in an attempt to build a personalist following outside the framework of the mainstream media.

• On August 8, White House aide Sebastian Gorka, who is a member of the Hungarian fascist Order of the Vitez, said the fascist bombing of a mosque near Minneapolis, Minnesota might be a “fake hate crime” that was “propagated by the left.” The following day, Gorka told *Breitbart News* that “white supremacists” are not “the problem,” and that terrorism is the product of Islam.

In the days that followed, Trump launched his war threats against North Korea and Venezuela and made new attacks on the top Senate Republican, Mitch McConnell.

This weekend’s Nazi violence is stamped with the political trademark of Bannon, Miller and Gorka. Nazi demonstration leader Jason Kessler acknowledged after the event that organizers had “networked with law enforcement” for months in advance of the “Unite the Right” provocation.

Kessler also met with several Republican officials in preparation for the Nazi mobilization. Shortly after Trump’s inauguration, Kessler held a press conference with Virginia Republican gubernatorial candidate Corey Stewart to

denounce Charlottesville’s plans to remove the statue of Confederate General Robert E. Lee.

In March, Kessler traveled to Washington, D.C. to meet with Virginia Congressman Tom Garrett, who represents the Charlottesville area. Kessler posted on Facebook that he had “a very productive meeting today with Congressman Tom Garrett,” and acknowledged that he was in discussion with Garrett over how Kessler’s Nazi groups could support Trump’s anti-immigration measures: “We talked RAISE Act and Stop Arming Terrorists: 2 great bills we support,” Kessler’s post read.

The events in Charlottesville and Trump’s drive to develop an extra-constitutional fascist movement are a warning to the working class in the US and internationally. The program of the fascists in the White House and on the streets of Charlottesville is for genocidal war abroad and the mass internment and murder of blacks, immigrants, LGBT people, Jewish people and socialists at home.

Fascism is the excrescence of the decaying social order of American and world capitalism, which, in the figure of Donald Trump, has vomited up a fitting expression. It will not be stopped through moralistic appeals to the political establishment, but only through the mobilization of the working class united across racial, national and ethnic lines and politically armed with a revolutionary program for the socialist reorganization of the US and world economy.

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