

Under Massive Pressure, Trump Backpedals on Russia “Meddling”

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Speaking at the White House Tuesday, US President Donald Trump attempted to walk back statements he made just 24 hours earlier at his summit in Helsinki, Finland with Russian President Vladimir Putin in which he questioned claims by US intelligence agencies that the Russian government “meddled” in the 2016 election.

Trump’s about-face followed a full-court press campaign by all US media outlets, the US intelligence agencies, the Democrats, and leading figures in the Republican Party, who demanded that he reaffirm the US government’s confrontational stance toward the world’s second most powerful nuclear power.

In the weeks leading up to Trump’s meeting with Putin, the Democrats treated him like an invincible colossus. It was impossible, they said, to seriously oppose his reactionary Supreme Court nominee, and nothing could be done to hold him to account for his criminal policy of breaking up refugee families, which was called child torture by the United Nations.

In fact, the Senate had just voted with overwhelming bipartisan support to approve his massive Pentagon budget increase, which included provisions for keeping open the Guantanamo Bay prison camp and allowing the fascistic demagogue to proceed with his unprecedented military parade in Washington.

But the moment Trump did something that cut across a central pillar of American foreign policy, the Democrats and the media ferociously sprang into action.

Trump’s questioning of the unproven narrative of the intelligence agencies was met with absolute hysteria and the implication that anyone failing to hold their unsubstantiated allegations as incontestable is nothing but a Russian agent.

In the post-World War II period, even within the tradition of American cold war liberalism, the activities of the FBI and CIA were always treated with extreme skepticism: as enormous and real threats to the survival of American democracy.

For nearly half a century, it was noted, J. Edgar Hoover ran a police state-within-a-state through the FBI. The FBI and CIA, functioning as a law unto themselves, spied on and blackmailed American political figures, carried out coups around the world and were widely believed to have been involved in the assassination of an American president.

The Watergate scandal, the Church Commission of the 1970s and the Iran-Contra scandal of the 1980s, not to mention the intelligence agencies' role in fabricating the "evidence" of weapons of mass destruction ahead of the invasion of Iraq, their criminal mass domestic surveillance and their role in drone murder, made clear that these are criminal organizations, willing to use any means to expand their own power at the expense of democracy.

But now, these organizations have been elevated by the media into America's quintessential guardians, and their word declared to be the gospel truth. Any discussion of their role in torture, domestic spying and drone assassinations has been shelved.

Trump was denounced as a traitor, in language that seemed to invite a military coup. His conduct was squarely declared "unacceptable" and he was, so to speak "shown the instruments." The warning last year by Senate Minority Leader Charles Schumer,

"You take on the intelligence community—they have six ways from Sunday at getting back at you," was demonstrated in practice.

Faced with implacable and universal pressure from within the political and media establishment, as well as the military and intelligence apparatus, Trump was forced to beat a retreat.

This entire sordid episode expresses the degree to which there is overwhelming institutional commitment within the US ruling elite for conflict with Russia, if necessary to the point of nuclear war. This war drive, which aims at the transformation of Russia into what would be for all intents and purposes a colony of American imperialism, has become an unchallengeable pillar of American foreign policy. Trump can commit any violation of human rights, can traduce constitutional norms at will, but he may not question this axial precept of American politics.

The universality with which this argument is accepted within the US political establishment makes clear, as the *World Socialist Web Site* has long insisted, that there exists no constituency for democracy within the American ruling elite.

It likewise vindicates the assessment by the WSWS that the fundamental dispute between Trump and the Democrats centers on foreign policy. What cannot be allowed is any divergence from what are seen as the key strategic interests of US imperialism.

In other words, the Democrats' opposition to Trump is entirely from the right. On domestic issues, the Democrats are effectively in alliance with Trump. They support his tax cuts, his attacks on social spending, and, with minor caveats, his reactionary social and immigration policies. They distinguish themselves from Trump only in that they identify unconditionally with the US intelligence apparatus, and are more directly ruthless in the pursuit of US geopolitical interests, as opposed to Trump's more transactional focus on economics.

The various factions of the ruling elite, in other words, are fighting out their differences through the method of the palace coup, of reactionary intrigue within the state. But one voice has not been heard in this ferocious, right-wing faction fight: that of the working class.

In addressing the crisis that has erupted within the state as the result of the coming to power of Donald Trump, the working class must bring its own methods to bear: those of the

class struggle, animated by the socialist perspective of the International Committee of the Fourth International. Only through these means can the ruling class's drive to war and dictatorship be averted.

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