

<https://www.internationalviewpoint.org/spip.php?article4886>



USA

# Trump's Road to Ruin

- IV Online magazine - 2017 - IV506 - March 2017 -

Publication date: Tuesday 7 March 2017

---

**Copyright © International Viewpoint - online socialist magazine - All rights reserved**

---

**To Donald Trump's credit, he instantly produced the most immense tsunami of popular revulsion to greet any incoming occupant of the White House. From the snarling menace of his "America First" inaugural address, to his cabinet of multi-millionaire and billionaire reactionaries, to the pending removal of millions of people from health insurance, to assaulting women's reproductive rights and attempting to bar Muslim travelers, to attacking Black youth and every vulnerable population, the fear and loathing he's generated have opened up a new period of organizing and resistance.**

Hundreds of thousands of people have poured into the streets, diverse in their political viewpoints but unified by the need to defend basic human decency. With his team's promise to wage a permanent campaign of White House councilor Kellyanne Conway's brilliant "alternative facts," Trump has even managed to provoke the corporate media to report when he tells blatant falsehoods. That's an impressive achievement: These same media, clinging to their precious pretense of impartiality, never used to proclaim that George W. Bush or Ronald Reagan "were lying, even when they knew it full well."

All that is the good news, of course. The bad news is that even a well-hated and despised administration can wreak tremendous damage and irreparable harm. Make no mistake, we are facing the greatest civil liberties and human rights emergency in many decades. The ban on immigration from seven Muslim countries was never intended to be "temporary." Rather, it was likely to expand "with the intent to terrify Muslim communities and the general U.S. population. The dangers of violent attacks against Muslims, and of some (real or staged) terrorist incident, are growing alarmingly, and the Trump gang's strategy-of-tension is barely hidden.

The crisis is both at home and global. In his very first week, Trump successfully wrecked the United States' international standing and made its population less safe. He poisoned the United States' relations with Mexico. With his attempted immigration ban "and with the botched Navy Seals raid in Yemen that killed an unknown large number of civilians" he handed the religious-totalitarian fanatics of the "Islamic State" and al-Qaeda a major victory, and began draining the deep reservoir of pro-American sentiment among ordinary Iranians.

The Trump gang declared war not only on refugees who can't fight back, but also "by promising to withdraw from the Paris climate agreement" on Nature, an adversary that's undefeated and won't be intimidated by gag orders on climate scientists. On the other hand, Trump won the well-deserved support of Geert Wilders, the Netherlands politician who's campaigning to ban Islam and bring down the European Union, the French ultra-rightist Marine Le Pen, and the Greek neo-Nazis of Golden Dawn. Donald Trump, along with Vladimir Putin, have become twin white hopes of the rising pseudo-populist, racist and anti-immigrant forces in a whole series of European states.

The imperial Middle East mess that Trump has made even worse, and the damage he's wreaking in Europe and potentially on the world economy, all need to be discussed in their own right. Here we want to focus on the politics of ruin and resistance in the United States.

Executive orders have come with such speed "many apparently issuing from the toxic lagoon known as the mind of top advisor Steve Bannon" that observers find it difficult to understand whether Trump is following a well-planned strategic rightwing agenda, employing "shock and awe" tactics to overwhelm opposition, or is unhinged.

In general, government policy decisions are a complex interaction of conflicting material and political, corporate and state interests, along with ideological considerations. Some of Trump's pronouncements appear driven purely by

ideology or opportunism —” pledging to precipitously move the U.S. embassy in Israel to Jerusalem, threatening Mexico, making absurd claims about the size of his inaugural crowd. Others are vicious but predictably part and parcel of an agenda to satisfy the disparate sectors of the extreme and religious right: pledging to wipe out abortion rights, erasing the EPA’s climate change web page, threatening federal funds for cities that don’t cooperate in anti-immigrant sweeps.

If a few leading Republicans like Lindsey Graham and John McCain are voicing the embarrassment and shock that others are surely feeling, that doesn’t mean that an open split is around the corner. The Republican coalition is held together by the promise that holding power will give each reactionary sector a big piece of what it wants.

The molester-in-chief will give the religious right control of the Supreme Court and “liberty” to engage in anti-LGBT discrimination. Corporate America will get huge tax cuts, Wall Street deregulation, and a pending “right-to-work” assault on what remains of the unions. We don’t yet know whether Trump’s demand for an investigation of non-existent “vote fraud” is purely egomaniacal, or signals a Republican move toward vote suppression on a nationwide scale. Still to come are the GOP’s budget proposals, which by all reports will test the outer limits of economic lunacy.

This is a very dangerous moment, even if there are comical overtones. The immediate emergence of a powerful protest and resistance movement also makes it a hopeful one.

### Fighting Back

We knew that Trump was the most despised incoming occupant of the White House in modern history. The women’s demonstration in Washington, DC was initiated by an individual Facebook post and was rapidly incorporated by an organizing committee which, although certainly tied to the Democratic Party, was admirable in its centering of Black, Muslim, LGBT and general feminist concerns.

The event itself was one of those occasions that surpasses all expectations, not only in Washington DC but in big and medium-size cities all over the country, and internationally. [See the call for “a new, more expansive feminist movement” with a March 8 strike in this issue.]

Even more amazing was the instantaneous response to the obscenity of Trump’s immigrant and travel ban announced late Friday, January 27, promulgated without advance notice even to the agencies responsible for implementing it, with thousands of people suddenly blocked at overseas airports and hundreds detained —” and some instantly deported —” upon their U.S. arrival. The sheer cruelty of the order galvanized the response.

As demonstrators and concerned lawyers poured into airports to join in solidarity with traumatized families and detainees, clogging the terminals and obtaining emergency court injunctions, the full size and intensity of the enraged opposition came into focus. In fact, we can say that these mobilizations have picked up where the height of the Occupy movement left off. Where they may lead of course is an open question.

It’s an uncomfortable truth that Trump’s brutal attack on immigrants in the name of “security” and “jobs” has historical antecedents: the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, the 1924 law that slammed the door on Eastern European (particularly Jewish) immigration, the “deportation business” of the 1920s analyzed in a previous issue by Emily Pope-Obeda (ATC 182, <http://www.solidarity-us.org/site/node/4640>).

Contrary to myths of America as “the welcoming land of immigrants,” U.S. history is a long record of conflict between

the opening of doors and slamming them shut, as well as colonial settlement and genocidal dispossession of Native Americans, and the war between the expansion and abolition of slavery from the earliest days of the republic. The long struggle between the best and the worst in our society has been dramatically joined once again, in the courts and in the streets.

### Resistance and the Left

It's clear in any case that Trump and his Bannon-Conway-Spicer goon squad will not back down in the face of protest. Trump inhabits an alternate-reality bubble with people whose fulltime job is to reassure him of his tremendousness. Furthermore, Trump does have a base of support that will remain intact "at least until millions of his voters face the loss of their health care, Social Security and Medicare.

Manufacturing jobs lost to automation, and to the global operations of neoliberal capitalism, are not pouring back to the USA. It will take a while for those realities to emerge from the "America First" fog.

Immediately, however, the resistance and mass demonstrations reassure millions of people that they are not alone in their outrage and fear of what's coming. That matters in the face of a continuing onslaught of atrocities "and it tells the world that the global loathing of Trump is not isolated from the sentiments of the U.S. population.

The mobilized rage in the streets forces congressional and state office-holding Democrats to act like a real opposition, if only to maintain their own shredded credibility. On certain issues such as voter suppression and the existence of public sector unions, the Democrats must resist in order to avoid political extinction.

Beyond activities that amount mostly to formal or informal congressional lobbying, nationally, there is a major environmental mobilization planned for April 29 (in Washington D.C. and the West Coast). It would be logical "although we don't know yet " for the massive Latino-led immigrant rights mobilizations of ten years ago to revive around May 1. It's important to recognize that the anti-capitalist left can importantly contribute to these developments without pretending to be the "leadership."

There can be no retreat on defending fundamental civil rights. There are threats to "investigate" Black Lives Matter in McCarthyite fashion. Undocumented immigrants face terrifying prospects. The magnificent response to Trump's immigration ban should be a dress rehearsal for mobilizing around DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) recipients when he goes after them.

At the same time, the working-class sector of Trump's voting base will be savagely hit by the pending destruction of health insurance, Social Security and Medicare. A big problem right now is that the unions are weak and divided "with some (construction unions most importantly) supporting Trump's ecocidal oil pipeline policies, and many workers taken in by protectionist myths. The anti-Trump resistance must have a message to reach the people whom the arrogant, corporate-driven neoliberal Democrats abandoned.

Because so much of what Trump is doing is unpredictable, we should expect the unexpected both in terms of attacks and resistance. And because much of the bourgeois media are more opposed to Trump than to any previous president and given that his business and political dealings present such a target-rich environment, we should expect any number of scandals to be dug up whose implications cannot be known in advance.

Predictably, much of base energized by Bernie Sanders was incorporated into the Clinton campaign, and to our regret the Jill Stein/Ajamu Baraka Green Party campaign did not make a big breakthrough. In the wake of the

election, Bernie Sanders launched his Our Revolution organization which attempts to remold the Democratic Party as a progressive populist force. There is some unhappiness among his supporters with this straitjacketed perspective.

On the left, the fact that Bernie Sanders popularized the idea of socialism, followed by the shock of the election, has galvanized a layer of people toward socialist politics. In the first place, the Democratic Socialists of America "the closest thing to a traditional social-democratic formation in the USA since the fragmentation of the Socialist Party in the early 1970s" has seen an influx of thousands of new members.

Organizations on the revolutionary left including Solidarity have also grown. The test for all of us on the anti-capitalist and revolutionary left will be how to respond, without vanguardist pretensions, to those hundreds of thousands of people horrified by the Trump and white-supremacist rightwing ascendancy, and the thousands gravitating toward left and socialist ideas.

As Donald Trump and his house of horrors continue on their course of ruling to ruin, the emergence of a powerful and unified counter-agenda is the urgent task of the mass movement and its anti-capitalist component.

### [Against the Current](#)

PS:

**P.S.** If you like this article or have found it useful, please consider donating towards the work of International Viewpoint. Simply follow this link: <<https://www.paypal.me/IViewpoint>> " class="spip\_out" rel="external">Donate then enter an amount of your choice. One-off donations are very welcome. But regular donations by standing order are vital to our continuing functioning.