

Part I

TRUMPISM IN POWER, AIDED BY THE SOFT-ON-TRUMP LEFT, THREATENS LIFE AND LIBERTY

It may not be possible to stop US president Donald Trump before he launches the country and the world into a monstrous war, even a nuclear war, with North Korea or Iran. Similarly, the real threat Trump poses to Americans' civil rights and liberties could be just as fatal to revolutionaries and progressives. The unthinkable must be acknowledged and our support for the Resistance to Trumpism must be intensified.

A crucial aspect of this process is to fight the continuing attempts to “normalize” Trumpism. In September, erstwhile critics of Trump suddenly described him as bipartisan, reasonable, and a new man, merely because he said that he loves the DREAMers (undocumented immigrant youth) and seemingly cut a deal with Democrats regarding their legal status. Nothing became of the alleged deal. Around the same time, even supposedly liberal Hollywood compromised its opposition to Trumpism. At the Emmys (an American TV awards ceremony), former White House spokesman Sean Spicer was recruited to perform a surprise comedic bit, playing himself. The audience roared. It was as if his months of lying to the public and attempting to intimidate the news media were all just theater, instead of actions for which he should be denounced and punished.

It is wearying, but necessary, to keep saying “this is not normal.” Otherwise, we may come to accept the unacceptable.

Another crucial aspect of the fight against Trumpism is to combat and root out the idea that the left can somehow win over Trump's base and turn white nationalists towards revolutionary socialism.¹ As we discuss in a later section of these Perspectives, that is a pipe dream of a segment of the “left” that wants power for itself, and which acted in ways that helped Trump win the 2016 US election. Marxist-Humanist Initiative (MHI) redoubles its commitment to fight such accommodation. Trump must be removed and Trumpism must be rooted out.

What Trump Has Already Accomplished

Trump's history in office is a nine-month long push to resurrect and legitimize racist, white supremacist, misogynist, anti-Semitic, anti-labor, anti-immigrant, and anti-poor sentiment and

¹ We use the term *white nationalist* to refer to the ideology of people like Trump, Steve Bannon, and Pat Buchanan, and not only neo-Nazis and members of groups like the Ku Klux Klan. In an [important recent essay](#), Ta-Nehisi Coates calls Trump “the first white president” and writes that “his ideology is white supremacy, in all its truculent and sanctimonious power.”

action—and to help the rich, including through policies and laws that exploit and destroy the earth.

It is true that he has not succeeded in getting a single major piece of legislation through Congress. And the Resistance, as well as pushback from some federal judges and ethical civil servants, have blocked some of his intended actions and have forced him to moderate others. Nonetheless, the scope of Trump's power and the harm it has already done are shocking. The following is a *partial* list of what he has accomplished:

1. Taken the US to the brink of nuclear war with North Korea, and kept us on that brink
2. Encouraged violence against African-Americans, immigrants, Jews, the left, and the press
3. Encouraged and legitimated racism, Nazism, and white supremacy (see our [editorial on Charlottesville](#))
4. Increased deportation of immigrants and instituted a phase-out of the DACA program
5. Imposed three “Muslim ban” travel restrictions, yet to be finally adjudicated illegal
6. Reduced the quota for refugees to be admitted to US in 2018 to a paltry 45,000 (out of [22.5 million refugees](#) world-wide)
7. Failed to send vital aid to Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands after the hurricanes that hit them (he has also been lax since then on providing aid to these islands as well as Texas and Florida)
8. Reduced and reversed enforcement of criminal and civil anti-racism laws
9. Reduced and reversed enforcement of LGBT rights
10. Banned transsexuals from serving in the military, even though many are serving, and no one was bothered by it
11. Cheered on Congress' multiple attempts to redistribute tax money from the poor to the rich by reducing health-insurance requirements and subsidies, including Medicaid, and backed congressional “repeal and replace” bills that would end health insurance for 21–30 million people
12. Issued executive orders to weaken the Affordable Care Act (“Obamacare”) by reducing the number of conditions and people it covers, and by making it harder to sign up for, which threatens to cause it to collapse
13. Taken administrative actions to harm women's health, including by permitting employers to exclude contraception from health insurance coverage; he also backs legislation to outlaw abortion after 20 weeks and to defund Planned Parenthood
14. Re-instated the “gag rule” that bars any foreign aid that includes funds for abortion or even for information about abortion
15. Pushed Congress for tax cuts that will benefit only the very rich, but hurt the poor and middle class
16. Proposed a budget and tax “reform” that would create a massive budget deficit that would ultimately have to be contained by slashing funds for education, transportation, infrastructure, and health programs for the elderly, poor and disabled

17. Rescinded administrative policies meant to reduce risks, created by Wall Street, to individuals and to the stability of the financial structure of the country and the world, increasing the likelihood of future financial crises
18. Rescinded, through decree or decimation of enforcement agencies, consumer protection polices intended to curb abuses by drug companies, manufacturers, and agribusiness
19. Rescinded, through decree or decimation of enforcement agencies, protections of workers' rights, health and safety
20. Taken the US out of the Paris Climate Accords and encouraged climate-change denial
21. Deregulated federal lands and waters causing dangerous environmental exploitation and pollution
22. Encouraged opposition to scientific knowledge and supported faith-based ideology instead
23. Appointed a right-wing ideologue to the Supreme Court, increasing the chance that it will soon tilt all the way to the right
24. Made a shambles of the Departments of State, Environmental Protection, Education, Health, and others; many nonpartisan experts are gone and Trumpite ideologues are making policy
25. Increased US participation in the wars in Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, and all over the Middle East and the world
26. Failed to do anything about ageing infrastructure
27. Cut funds for health, education, and scientific research
28. Pardoned former sheriff Joe Arpaio, who was convicted of contempt of court for refusing to cease extreme racial profiling and harsh detention of immigrants²
29. Reversed a requirement for pay transparency that would have helped address the pay gap between white men and almost everyone else
30. Reversed the decision to put the first woman—the great Black Abolitionist, Harriet Tubman—on US paper currency
31. Engaged in rampant, illegal self-dealing to enrich himself, his family, and business friends, establishing a kleptocracy beyond anything ever before seen in the US
32. Continued his public insults of and attempts to intimidate women, people of color, and anyone who disagrees with him—even judges, Congresspeople, and “gold star” military family members (who have lost a loved one during military action)
33. Threatened to cut US payments to the United Nations, which would force it to cut programs that aid the poor

² This pardon also signaled to Trump's appointees and cronies that they need not rat on him in an attempt to save themselves from prosecution in the ongoing investigations of his campaign's cooperation with the Russian government as it interfered in the US election, because he will pardon anyone involved who is convicted of a crime.

34. Turned a blind eye as Myanmar's security forces have launched [a campaign of murder, rape, and arson](#) against the majority-Muslim Rohingya population of the country's Rakhine state, causing more than 500,000 people to flee into neighboring Bangladesh

“F—ing Moron,” “Heading Towards World War III”

As Trump continues to [threaten North Korea with obliteration, and that country's government responds in kind](#), US diplomatic, military, and security-establishment leaders are warning that he is undermining diplomatic efforts and very possibly goading Kim Jong-un, head of North Korea, into starting a war with the US. An alternative scenario is that a trigger-happy Trump could cause a war accidentally. The fact that he stayed “on script” when he spoke to the South Korean National Assembly on November 7—when he was just 35 miles from the North Korean border—does not mean that he will not revert to “fire and fury” rhetoric when he leaves the area. Although the literal words of his speech did not descend to that level, it was so insulting and bellicose that he sounded as if he were a hair's breadth away from launching nukes.

Trump recently told a meeting of top US military and civilian leaders that he wants to increase the US nuclear arsenal ten-fold, even though it is already able to kill everyone in the world many times over. This impelled [his own Secretary of State](#) to refer to him privately as a “f—ing moron.” [Stuart Rollo](#), an international-security researcher, warned in the *New York Times* that a US nuclear buildup would be profoundly destabilizing: “American nuclear advances threaten to start a new arms race and change the logic of mutually assured destruction, which has undergirded nuclear stability since the 1950s.”

World leaders are holding their breath to see what may develop. Many are simply shunning Trump. Yet he himself takes the Korean threat of nuclear conflagration so unseriously that he continuously insults Kim Jong-un and calls him “Little Rocket Man.” And according to an October 12 [Quinnipiac University poll](#) (question 48), a frightening 46% of Republicans approve of the possibility of a preemptive strike against North Korea that Trump has been threatening.

Military analysts are scared, because a “second Korean war” would likely cause one million casualties on the first day alone, including hundreds of thousands of US citizens in the area. Top officials in Trump's own government have recently warned Congress of the danger. But no one believes that Trump will refrain from tweeting provocations against Kim Jong-un for very long.

His provocations motivated Republican Senator Bob Corker of Tennessee to warn in October that “we could be [heading towards World War III](#) with the kinds of comments that he's making.” (Corker also announced that he would not run for another term in Congress, which frees him to criticize Trump publicly and to act on principle.)

Blatantly Racist, Deliberate Neglect of Puerto Rico

Trump's treatment of Puerto Rico—whose residents are US citizens—is particularly shocking. As of November 5, 46 days after Hurricane Maria struck the island, 60% of its population still

lacked a power source to provide electricity and cell phone towers. Thousands still have no access to clean drinking water or sufficient food. The death toll is increasing due to the spread of disease, especially diseases transmitted through unclean water.

Nothing like that dire emergency exists in Houston or Florida, which were hit by hurricanes about the same time. This disparate federal standard of aid reflects naked racism. Trump has not hidden his disdain for Puerto Ricans or his belief that they are unworthy of substantial US government aid (see [this article](#), written ten days after the hurricane; conditions have improved little since then).

Puerto Rico's economy had already been in a severe crisis, with a power grid on the verge of collapse and a power company that was bankrupt. It has an enormous debt to bondholders that is impossible to pay. A half million people had already moved to the mainland since the Great Recession set off a permanent local recession. Now, thousands more are leaving because of the hurricane. Families are being torn apart as parents send their children to the mainland US because their schools are closed. The ageing and de-skilling of the population accelerates. The dangers exacerbated by Trump's deliberate neglect may destroy the island's future.

But to Trump and his white nationalist-stacked government, this is fine, just as it is fine for him to continue to insist that there were ["good people" among the white supremacists who marched and murdered in Charlottesville](#). His attempts to make racism legitimate are indeed frightening.

The Republican Party Will Not Stop Trump

As terrifying and morally repugnant as Trump is, there is little reason to hope that the Republican-controlled Congress will try to stop him. It is true that Corker, as well as two other Republican Senators—Jeff Flake and John McCain—have called his actions a “danger to democracy” and a “debasing of the nation.” And most other Republican congresspeople are reported to agree with them. *Yet almost none of them will say so publicly.* As a number of pundits have pointed out, this is reminiscent of McCarthyism. In the 1950s, Senator Joseph McCarthy scared the whole government into going along with him for many years, as he conducted an anti-Communist witch hunt and ruined the lives of thousands of people.

Trump is by no means popular among Americans. His approval rating is at a [historic low among US presidents of the last 72 years](#). The elections for state officials in several states on November 7 resulted in a big sweep for the Democratic candidates. The winners included many women and people of color, as well as a transgender woman, Danica Roem. She won a seat in the Virginia legislature, ousting a 13-term conservative Republican who had boasted that he was Virginia's “chief homophobe.” The voter turnout was high and a major issue was healthcare—people don't want to lose it.

The latest election was widely seen as a referendum on Trump, and he lost decisively. So why does the Republican Party continue to stick by him?

The answer is that Trump's support among the “base” that brought him to power remains unshakeable. This base does not constitute a majority of Americans; it may not even constitute a

majority of Republican voters. But it is particularly rabid, and it disproportionately turns out to vote in Republican primary elections, so it wields outsized power over the careers of Republican politicians. And candidates selected by this narrow base can and do win general elections as long as enough mainstream-Republican and independent voters continue to regard such candidates as lesser evils than their Democratic opponents.

Thus, the vast majority of Republicans in Congress are cowed by, and do the bidding of, the base—and the moneyed interests that underwrite this base, such as the Mercer family that funds Breitbart. And thus, Trump continues to “play to the base” instead of pursuing policies and behaving in ways that the majority of the country wants.

Special Counsel Robert Mueller is investigating Trump’s business ties to Russians connected to the regime of Vladimir Putin, that country’s president. He is also investigating the Trump campaign’s collusion with that regime to interfere in the 2016 US presidential election and obstruction of justice by Trump and his underlings. Mueller has begun to indict people from the election campaign for various crimes. It appears as if enough evidence has emerged to prove that Trump committed “high crimes and misdemeanors”—the requirement for impeachment—but the investigation process is not moving fast enough to prevent more devastation by Trump right now.

Even were it proceeding more rapidly, it is very unlikely that Trump will be removed from office via the impeachment process as long as Republicans control Congress. A majority of the House would have to vote to impeach him, and two-thirds of the Senate would have to vote to remove him. Given that support for Trump among his base is unyielding, and given the power that this base exercises over Republican politicians, this is almost inconceivable unless and until the Republicans suffer a landslide electoral defeat—hopefully, next year, when the whole House of Representatives and a third of the Senate is up for election. And for the same reason, it is unlikely that Trump’s Cabinet will remove him via the 25th Amendment to the US Constitution.

The best hope for Americans and people throughout the world (whose disapproval of Trump is even stronger than it is at home) is instead popular mobilization from below—i.e., the Resistance, which we discuss in detail later in these Perspectives. On September 15, a group of political scientists disclosed polling results which indicated that 61% of Americans opposed to Trump “would [join a general strike](#) to help end the Trump presidency.” This of course does not mean that we would be making Mike Pence the president. A general strike that brings down Trump could surely bring down Pence and the rest of the Trump regime as well.

Trump’s Threat to Liberal Democracy

The more Trump is forced into a corner by the Mueller investigation and the Resistance, the more likely it becomes that he will respond with repressive measures against leftists and liberals—banning our organizations, jailing those of us in the US, inciting violence, etc. It also becomes more likely that he will try to suspend civil liberties such as voting rights, freedom of speech, and rights of those charged with crimes. He may even take extraordinary measures to protect himself, and his family and friends, from prosecution and impeachment, such as trying to

suspend parts of the Constitution and trying to put himself above the law by pardoning himself in advance of criminal charges.

Trump frequently rails against the news media, for exposing his lies, and rails against the judicial system, for thwarting his policies. He could easily provoke a Constitutional crisis by jailing journalists or defying the courts.

In our August 2016 editorial that warned against [the extraordinary dangers of Trump and Trumpism](#), we wrote:

[T]he upcoming election is fundamentally a referendum on civil liberties, freedom of the press, and separation of powers in the U.S. government. A Trump victory would be a decisive victory for those who regard these rights as expendable; and they will be expendable. The fact that the authoritarian strongman who rules over us came to power “democratically,” and the fact that a majority of voters effectively endorsed his plans, would be used to legitimize the abrogation of more than two centuries of bourgeois democratic rights.

This remains all too true—except that Trump was elected by a minority whose votes counted for more than the votes of the majority in the Electoral College.

His Justice Department is throwing the book at “violent” anti-Trump protesters, such as “antifas” who tossed garbage cans at a protest during his inauguration. Some of them have been indicted for felonies, as has one anti-racist Charlottesville demonstrator. And Trump continues to use rallies to incite his base to attack protesters and the media.

His administration is surely gearing up for the possibility of jailing potential troublemakers, as evidenced by such measures as forcing DreamHost, a web-hosting company, to turn over data from a protest website; demanding that states turn over voters’ personal information to the federal government; and giving military weapons to urban police departments. The latter two actions are primarily aimed at suppressing the Black and Latino vote and any uprisings, but the measures are also part of unprecedented federal data-gathering and militarization of the police that may enable Trump to pre-empt nascent rebellions from the left and help those on the right.

At an August 22 “campaign rally”—three years before the next presidential campaign—Trump launched into another virulent denunciation of the “lying press” (a literal translation of the German Nazi epithet *Lügenpresse*). The purpose of Trump's continual attacks on the media is not only to discredit the now daily exposés of his lies and illegal actions. These attacks are also a dangerous assault on the freedom of the press. Furthermore, if Mueller issues an indictment of Trump, or even a report detailing his criminal, possibly treasonous, activity, these attacks will have conditioned Trump's supporters to reject Mueller's findings, to embrace Trump's “alternative facts” instead, and to rise up to protect him.

Yet, despite everything that has already taken place during Trump’s presidency, it may still seem to some that we are caught up in, or whipping up, “hysteria.” It is true that there has not been a sweeping crackdown against leftists—yet. This can give rise to the illusion that the left is safe

under this presidency (even if the undocumented, people of color, and other minorities are not). However, in light of the many warning signs that scream out at us, *the relative absence of repression to date actually means only that the contradictions have not yet reached the point where Trump feels threatened enough, or, conversely, thinks his hold on power is secure enough, to mount a full-scale strike against civil rights and liberties.* We note that a great many Jews in Nazi Germany initially pooh-poohed warnings about the dangers of Hitler's regime.

Those who have criticized MHI for our critical defense of liberal democracy do so from a privileged position. They are not the Black people being shot by cops, the immigrants being deported, or other "collateral damage" that this so-called "left" considers an acceptable price to pay for Trumpism's challenge to the "neoliberal" status quo.

Varieties of "Leftist" Accommodation to Trumpism, and the Marxist-Humanist Alternative

A great many factors combined to hand Trump the presidency. A relatively small one, but one that may have been decisive in the election and may be decisive in the future, was accommodation to Trumpism among parts of the "left."

One variant of soft-on-Trump "leftism" stems from the attitude that one should practice politics that make one feel good, without regard to its effect. Such people "righteously" refused to vote in a way that would have maximized the likelihood of Trump's defeat, even in swing states that can—and did—decide the presidency. The number of votes cast for Green Party presidential candidate Jill Stein in each of the three states that proved to be pivotal to Trump's Electoral-College victory (Michigan, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin) exceeded his margin of victory. In addition, an unknown number of people chose not to vote at all, taking to heart the message—emanating from Stein and many supporters of Bernie Sanders—that Hillary Clinton was as bad as or worse than Trump. We are just now beginning to learn the extent to which the Putin regime fomented such sentiments through exploitation of social media.

Other destructive politics arose from a single-minded, narrow anti-neoliberal "leftism" which insisted that neoliberalism is a greater threat to humanity than proto-fascism.³ In an [interview with WGBH during the election season](#), Stein went so far as to declare that "[t]he answer to neofascism is stopping neoliberalism. Putting another Clinton in the White House will fan the flames of this right-wing extremism." As [one commentator shrewdly noted](#), her plan was to stop Trump by electing him president! Yet, despite the horrors of Trumpism we have experienced thus far, not to mention those that lie in wait, the notion that neoliberalism is a greater danger than Trumpism doggedly hangs on. Glen Ford, editor of *Black Agenda Report*, as well as other "deep state" and conspiracy theorists, touted this line in June of this year, at the Left Forum in

³ By anti-neoliberal "leftism," we do not mean opposition to neoliberalism—which no one on the left supports—but tendencies that oppose neoliberalism *while shirking from opposition to capitalism in all of its forms*, especially tendencies that seek to make common cause with the far right, celebrate the rising popularity of reactionary alternatives to neoliberalism as a progressive blow struck by the working class, and/or regard neoliberalism as the *main* enemy.

New York City. (An MHI-sponsored Left Forum panel, [Confronting “Anti-Neoliberal Left” Collaboration with Trumpism and the Far Right](#), put forward a diametrically opposed position.)

Another attitude that contributed to soft-on-Trump “leftism” was the “[after Trump, our turn](#)” view. Actress and left activist [Susan Sarandon](#), a Sanders supporter who later endorsed Stein, expressed this attitude as follows. “Some people feel that Donald Trump will bring the revolution immediately. If he gets in, then things will really explode.” Of course, the “after Trump, our turn” attitude is only an update of the “after Hitler, our turn” thinking of the German Communist Party of the 1930s (see note 9 below). It seems that those who will not learn from history are dooming the rest of us to repeat it.

And there were other destructive attitudes that fueled softness toward Trump within the “left.” There were Putinites, and the barely-distinguishable “anti-imperialists” who preferred Trump in order to enhance Putin’s power and thereby weaken the power of the US. There were those who wanted nothing more than to punish the Democratic Party—irrespective of the consequences for the people of the US and the rest of the world—after their effort to take over the party failed. Finally, there were some nihilists who just wanted to “burn it all down.”

What all of these currents have in common is that they either downplayed the enormity of the threat that Trumpism poses or did not care enough about that threat. They therefore did not feel the need to act in a principled and effective way in a bourgeois election. Instead, they engaged in play-acting at revolution, casting pointless and self-indulgent votes at the ballot box that benefited the forces of reaction.

We are proud that we bought into none of this. MHI warned against “[The Extraordinary Dangers of Trump and Trumpism](#)” before the election, in our August 2016 editorial. We were mocked and denounced for that editorial and for our statements that followed. Yet nearly everything we warned about has already come to pass.

We are not trying to score points against our soft-on-Trump critics by telling them “we told you so.” The point is that those who helped enable Trump’s victory can still change their ways, and acknowledgment of wrongdoing is a precondition for real change. Otherwise, the best we will see from them is a change in their line, not the needed re-evaluation of everything—all of their political positions and political aims—that would allow them to identify the underlying reasons why they were so disastrously wrong. And, in the meantime, publicly holding them accountable for the consequences of their actions helps to prevent others from coming under their influence.

But the crucial point is not the mere fact that they were wrong while we were right. To put it bluntly, it did not take great insight to “predict” that Trump would do the things he said he would do! The crucial point is to understand *why* we were able to “predict” this when they were not. It did not take great skill on our part to reject the many rationalizations for “waiting and seeing” what Trump might do, or for giving him “the benefit of the doubt.” MHI was able to see what was coming because “[\[w\]e have no interests separate and apart from](#)” the interests of “working people and freedom movements of African-Americans and other minorities, women, youth, and all those around the world who are struggling for self-determination.” Consequently, we were not burdened by a desire to spin events with the aim of capitalizing on them to advance the

special interests of our organization or our program for action. We saw what was coming because we analyze trends and take action on the basis of principles derived from Marx's philosophy of revolution. This philosophy looks to the independent, emancipatory self-activity of the masses and a philosophy of human liberation as the motive forces for social change. It does not regard any party, movement, or program that allegedly "represents" the masses as the motive force for social change. It rejects, as substitutionist, all notions that the interests of a particular party, movement, or program are tantamount to the interests of humanity.

When such self-serving elitism is not allowed to cloud one's understanding of Trump and Trumpism, their retrogressive trajectory has been palpably clear from the start.

Of course, saying "we told you so" is not a *sufficient* response to the enormity of the threat that Trumpism poses. In subsequent sections of these Perspectives, we therefore discuss the Resistance and how to combat white nationalism in the tradition of Marx, as well as left populism and "post-truth" politics.