

21st Century Fascism -- Republican/Trump Style, Part 3: What Can be Done by Steve Jonas

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This column is the third in this series. The first two were fairly easy to write. They first defined traditional, 20th century fascism. They then show how 21st century fascism, in the United States, can be best defined as "functional fascism." That is because it is designed to achieve many of the goals of traditional fascism without employing certain of the traditional forms. Finally, they discuss some of the specific features of Trumpite/Republican functional fascism in the U.S. This part of the set is not so easy, because there are many paths that can be taken in carrying out what we generally call "The Resistance" (e.g., see *The Nation*, Jan. 29/Feb. 5, 2018). And in fact, in the writing, it became two parts, this one on some general thoughts on the topic, and the final one, Part 4, next week on some specifics.

The term "The Resistance" in fact has multiple meanings. They range from that of Refuse Fascism, which focuses on street rallies and mass organizing with the goal of overthrowing "The Trump/Pence Regime," to the strongly anti-Trump, but electoral-politics-focused approach of Alan Grayson's "The Resistance." Some of them may seem complementary, some of them may seem to be opposed to each other.

One major problem for the planners of the (generic) Resistance is how to mobilize its various components so that they can be mutually supportive and work together towards eventually removing the Trumpite/Republicans from power. Already, one can find a good deal of in-fighting among the anti-Trumpists of various stripes. This accomplishes nothing but weakening the movement. Unfortunately, just saying that will not do much to diminish it. But if Trumpite/Repub./fascism is eventually to be defeated, that infighting will have to go. (And oh yes, I'm sure that I will be attacked just for saying that.)

A second major problem is to be faced is just what should replace the Trumpite/-Republican/fascists. If previous experience is to be a guide, especially given what happened in the Spanish Civil War (1936-39), the second problem will be even harder to solve than the first one. BUT, in my view if the Resistance forces cannot agree to resolve those issues sometime down the road rather than right up front, we are never going to get down the road to the dispossession of the Trumpite/Republican/fascists.

Let me begin with the understanding that the United States is a capitalist nation and is also the mightiest imperialist power ever seen on the face of the Earth. The U.S. empire is, however, historically unique. For it does not politically control the territories of its empire, as previous ones from the Roman through the British did. It is rather a functional empire, much like it is now controlled by a functional form of fascism. It has a ruling class, just as every nation has one. And that ruling class controls the political system which governs the country. As I have said in a previous column:

"In the United States, as in most developed capitalist nations today, there is a dominant Political Duopoly. Indeed, the Democrats and the Republicans do have significant policy differences, but those policy differences are over the question of how to best preserve, protect, and expand capitalism, . . . There are also some very significant differences within each of the two major parties about policy and about how they should go about gaining and keeping the levers of power, especially in a nation that has such an incredibly complex system of government [compared to most advanced capitalist countries]. It is complex at the Federal level, with the three supposedly equal branches of government, and it is complex because of the distribution of power and sovereignty between the Federal government and the states. The nature of both distributions has been the subject of constant conflict since the founding the nation in 1789. But again, those conflicts are never over the question of: 'might there not be a better system of control of the productive resources in our society that could benefit everyone, not just for the most part those who happen to own the bulk of them.' "

It is the latter question that various segments of the Resistance will want to be getting at one time or another. As noted, my suggestion is to leave that one, except perhaps in the most general of terms, until sometime down the road. At the

same time, it is of vital importance to realize and recognize that we live in a capitalist society, with a capitalist ruling class, and thus its State apparatus places serious limits on both the process and substance of societal change.

Now, of course, a major feature of the U.S. is that it is a parliamentary democracy, in capitalist terms of course. The great Vladimir Ilyich Lenin put what that means in practice most concisely:

"To decide once every few years which member of the ruling class is to repress and crush the people through parliament -- this is the real essence of bourgeois parliamentarism, not only in parliamentary-constitutional monarchies [which existed widely in Lenin's day], but also in the most democratic republics. "

With this understanding, however, in my view advantage can be taken, in the early to middling days of the struggle, of the anti-fascist elements of the capitalist ruling class, that is those elements which believe that Trumpite/Republican/fascism is not the way to maintain bourgeois-democratic rule. Now I know that I am going to be losing some of you right here, already, by taking this position. But to repeat we do live in a capitalist parliamentary democracy, which has forms and functions that can be taken advantage of in the struggle. Alliances can be built that do not give away progressive, and for some of us, socialist, principles. As long as we hold to those principles for the long run.

But in my view, we cannot get rid of Trumpite/Republican/fascism unless we are willing to build alliances, until it is gone. It has to be understood that the ruling class is currently not unified. In a true crisis time, when its rule is threatened, it either will become so, or the dominant, fascist sector will simply get rid of the non-fascist sector, as happened in Nazi Germany. But that time is not now. However, this situation clearly creates a principal problem for a number of very important elements of the Resistance. I cannot possibly tell them what to do. I can only make some suggestions about how the two major elements can work together, for now, to fight and ultimately dispose of Trumpite/Republican/fascism.

Briefly, they will be covered next week.