

United States: Trump's Firing of Comey Furthers His Authoritarian Perspective

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Trump fired FBI Director Comey for one reason: He wasn't 100 percent loyal to Trump. The boldness of the move was to underscore Trump's drive to establish an increasingly authoritarian presidency.

His ambition is a threat to democratic rights and the already eroded and restricted bourgeois democracy in the U.S.

At the same time, the affair has revealed further dysfunction between and within the two major parties, and unprecedented interference in the election and its aftermath by the intelligence agencies. An example is Comey himself.

In the course of the election campaign Comey acted out of character for a head of the FBI. He publicly entered the campaign with announcements that he was investigating both Clinton and Trump. Clinton, for her use of a private email server that compromised "classified" documents (state secrets), and Trump for ties to Russia. It appeared Comey was jockeying to be a player whoever won to further whatever were his aims.

Perhaps he was thinking of how former FBI Director, the sinister J. Edgar Hoover, gathered compromising material on presidents and congress people to further his interests.

Just before the election, when everyone thought Clinton would win, Comey went public to state that the investigation of Clinton was reopened (he had said it last summer that it was closed, but at the same time publically lectured Clinton for 15 minutes on how irresponsible she had been). Trump praised Comey for doing so.

After the election he stepped up public warnings about Trump's connection with Russia, including an investigation on how Putin had interfered in the election to favor Trump. The Democrats jumped on board this campaign, as did much of the media with the exception of the powerful pro-Trump outlets and right wing talk show hosts. Investigations have been promised in Congress. No concrete proofs of any assertions have yet been revealed.

Trump pressed Comey to back off, but it is now clear that he refused, and Trump fired him. To rub salt into the wound, a few days later Trump held a meeting with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and Ambassador to the U.S. Sergey Kislyak. It was with Kislyak that people in the Trump campaign met. The U.S. press and members of Congress were not invited, but a Russian press photographer was.

This meeting defied those who are calling for an investigation of his ties with Russia. He in effect boldly affirmed those ties, and challenged his detractors to go ahead with their investigations. Now there is a new charge, that Trump revealed classified information to the Russians at this meeting.

Some progressives have backed the FBI and the anti-democratic system of massive classifying of documents embarrassing to the government, hoping the FBI will help impeach Trump.

Relations between Trump and Putin seemed to have soured after Trump's ineffective cruise missile attack on Syria, but that was short-lived.

Before and during the election campaign, Hillary Clinton proposed to step up aggression against Russia. She was speaking for a section of the ruling class. The struggle over what course to take regarding Russia is not over, and its outcome is unclear.

The anti-Trump media, Democrats, liberals and some socialists claim that Trump is Putin's puppet. The reverse is more nearly true. Russia is much weaker than the U.S. The U.S. has imposed many sanctions on Russia. The idea that Russia could impose any sanctions on the U.S. even if it wanted to is laughable.

U.S. power has been revealed in the vast attack on computer systems throughout the world, including against Russia. It seems that NSA has developed very powerful cyber warfare weapons, and criminals got hold of one, modified it to turn it into a ransom demand on all its targets. The weapon was either stolen by the criminals, or it was sold to them by someone in NSA.

In any case, we now know NSA has these powerful cyber warfare weapons that can invade and disable any computer system anywhere. You can be sure that if they have them, they use them, even if in a more targeted way, without leaving traces.

What Putin wants from the U.S. is reduction of the sanctions, recognition of Russia's interests in its neighbors, and for NATO to stop its aggressive stance. What Trump wants from Russia is greater opportunities for Exxon (whose former chief is now in Trump's cabinet) and other Big Oil and Gas companies for access to Russia's resources in those areas. Russia's main exports are not capital goods, like Germany's, or consumer goods including assembled U.S. products, like China's, but these raw materials, oil and gas.

Trump is probably also interested in furthering his family's businesses in Russia. After all, what's the point of being President if the office can't be used to bolster your fortunes?

Comey's firing was one shot in Trump's drive to tame the FBI and other spy and political police agencies. The warning is clear: loyalty to Trump is not a request. Your head is in the balance. But we can expect forces in these agencies to fight back. The intelligence agencies are one part of the "deep state." The armed forces are another, and so far they have been loyal to Trump.

The Trump administration in its first months has begun an offensive against democratic rights. His Attorney General, Jeff Sessions, has stated that his Justice Department will no longer review police departments guilty of racist murders and many other violations of the rights of Blacks. The Obama administration had begun such reviews, although inadequate, prodded by the Black Lives Matter protests.

Sessions, as a Congressman before assuming his new post, was well known as being the most vociferous "law and order" advocate even among the Republican far right wing. He recently received an award from the New York City police mutual aid and defense society. In accepting the award, he gave a speech in which he ordered federal prosecutors to make sure they threw the book at defendants and pursued the harshest penalties possible. He said the "War on Drugs" will be stepped up - a war not on drugs but on mainly Black and brown people, which has resulted in mass incarceration, where the U.S. with five percent of the world's population holds twenty-five percent of the world's prisoners behind bars.

This shameful reality will now only get worse.

Trump has unleashed the Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency (ICE) in a growing drive to deport the undocumented, which has sown massive fear and terror in Latino communities.

Trump continues to try to impose his ban of Muslims entering the country, and build his “wall” on the Mexican border.

The disarray in both the Democrats and Republicans revealed in the election in the massive response to both Sanders and Trump as anti-establishment candidates had its roots in the drive by the whole ruling class to make the working people and lower middle class pay for the crisis that began with the Great Recession and continued after. The capitalists made sure they themselves didn't bear the brunt.

While Sanders proposed pro-working class reforms (although not breaking with the Democratic establishment), Trump championed white racist fears, claimed he would “bring back” good paying jobs and presented himself as the strongman who could cut through Washington's disarray and set things right.

The resistance to him has revealed even more dysfunction. How this will play out cannot be predicted. Trump has high disapproval ratings, but the disapproval ratings for the Democratic Party are even higher, over 65 percent. At the same time, Trump's supporters remain solid. A poll of voters who supported Trump showed that 96 percent of them would vote for him again.

Right now, Trump continues his drive to become the strongman, the autocratic president while retaining a façade of bourgeois democracy. If he is deposed, that can only come about by impeachment in the Republican-controlled House, and then trial and a vote by two-thirds in the Senate. That would cause turmoil in the Republican Party with Trump voters opposed, so that is not in the cards, at least not yet. If Trump does fall, there will be even more of the disarray that Trump played on to project his authoritarian presidency, that possibly could set the stage for something even worse, a move by his “deep state” opponents to find a pretext to declare a state of emergency, as has happened in France under Hollande.

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