

STATEMENT BY BOB AVAKIAN

August 1, 2020

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CRITICAL SITUATION,
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TRUMP/PENCE REGIME,
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1 The situation today holds truly unprecedented and momentous challenges, with profound implications not only for the people in this country but for all of humanity. Three years ago, I spoke to this reality—which has become even more pronounced, and even more dangerous, in the time since then:

We are confronted by—we are now being ruled by—a fascist regime: relentlessly assaulting civil rights and liberties and openly promoting bigotry and inequality; acting with callous disregard or cold-blooded malice toward those they consider inferior and a drain or stain on the country; on a mission to deny health care to millions who will suffer and many who will die without it; crudely degrading women, as objects of plunder,

breeders of children without the right to abortion or birth control, subordinate to husbands and men in general; defying the science of climate change, attacking the science of evolution, and repudiating the scientific method overall; a regime brandishing an arsenal of mass destruction and threatening nuclear war; intensifying state terror against Muslims, immigrants, and people in the inner cities; unleashing and giving encouragement and support to brutal thugs spewing vile “America First,” white supremacist, male supremacist, and anti-LGBT venom—a regime that boasts of all this and declares its intention to do even worse.

This is a regime headed by “a demented bully” with his finger on the nuclear button. It is a regime that, without exaggeration, threatens not just greatly heightened suffering for the masses of humanity but the very existence of humanity itself, through its intensified moves to further the plunder of the environment and its boasts of unequalled weapons of mass destruction and its blatant declaration of willingness to use those weapons, including its massive nuclear arsenal.

I have also emphasized that it is this system of capitalism-imperialism which, through its “normal workings,” has brought forth this fascism, and that *no fundamental change for the better* can be brought about under this system, and instead this system must be overthrown and replaced by a radically different and far better system, in order to abolish and uproot all relations of exploitation and oppression, and the violent conflicts they give rise to—all of which is *built into*

the foundations of this system and its ongoing functioning and requirements.

Right now, for everyone who is concerned with ending injustice and oppression, and with the question of whether humanity will have a future worth living—or will have a future at all—removing the Trump/Pence fascist regime from power is an immediate, urgent question and truly historic imperative.

And, for those who understand the need for revolution, for the overthrow of this system, as the *fundamental* solution to the continuing horrors this system causes for the masses of humanity (whether this system is ruled through an open fascist dictatorship, or the disguised “democratic” dictatorship, of the ruling capitalist class), *the immediate struggle to oust the Trump/Pence regime from power must be approached not as a “diversion” from (or “substitute for”) building the movement for the revolution that is needed, but precisely as part—a crucial part and urgent requirement—of the overall work of building for this revolution.*

**Our fundamental goal, and guiding star, remains:
REVOLUTION—NOTHING LESS!**

In everything we do, including in all the struggles we take part in that are themselves short of revolution, our consistent approach is, and must be, to make all this serve that fundamental goal of revolution and the emancipation of all humanity.

Normally, we revolutionary communists argue that people should not vote in bourgeois elections, which serve to reinforce the existing system of capitalism-imperialism and feed popular illusions that exploitation, oppression and injustices can somehow be “reformed away” short of getting rid of the system that gives rise to these horrors in the first place. But is this the right position to take in relation to this particular election?

To answer this, we need to look at the whole picture.

2 Already, in the nearly four years it has been in power, we have been forced to witness and endure the horrors already committed, and the grave danger posed, by the Trump/Pence regime. Trump ran his campaign on 2016 on what amounted to a straight-up fascist program, including blatant white supremacy and male supremacy, and xenophobic racism toward immigrants, particularly those from Mexico and other countries which Trump regards as “shit-holes,” as well as open advocacy of torture and thuggery by police and Trump’s “civilian” supporters. And, once in power, Trump has blasted ahead with the implementation of this program, steamrolling over any “institutional norms” that stood in the way of this, even in the face of impeachment—and with heightened arrogance and momentum once his fellow fascists in the Republican Party voted to acquit him in the Senate.

Essentially, everything that is described about this regime at the beginning of this statement is what Trump and those

around him have carried out with a vengeance. This has become all the more flagrant and aggressive with the approach of the election scheduled for this November. And imagine what Trump will do if he is given a second-term “mandate” through re-election this coming November.

The COVID-19 pandemic and the response of Trump and Pence to this has also provided another graphic illustration of the anti-scientific nature of this regime and its utter disregard for the suffering of masses of people, especially those most despised by this regime and most vulnerable to and hit hardest by this pandemic.

But, as horrific as all this has been, it is not just a matter of horrific policies but of **a qualitatively different form of rule, based on brutal repression and violation of what are supposed to be the most basic rights.**

Already we have seen Trump, in flagrant violation of Constitutional principles, send occupying storm troopers, from various federal government agencies, to criminalize dissent and suppress people protesting in Portland and other cities, and to add to the reign of terror against masses of people in the inner cities of Chicago and elsewhere.

We have seen Trump’s crude displays of “America First” jingoism, including his repeated calls for severely punishing those who, in his view, have failed to show the appropriate patriotic fervor, or who have dared to raise criticism and protest against some of the more glaring oppression carried out by enforcers of this system, in particular the ongoing brutality and murder of Black, Brown, and Native

American people by police. We have witnessed his continual encouragement of white supremacist thuggery, by police and by “Second Amendment people” and other “very fine people.”

All this calls to mind the rise to power and the rule of Hitler and the NAZIs in Germany during the 1930s and early 1940s. As Hitler built his fascist movement, thugs would be mobilized to brutalize and terrorize people who didn’t show support for Hitler and the NAZIs—assaulting them on the street and in other public places. Once the NAZI fascist state had consolidated its power, any opposition was severely punished and crushed. All those who did not openly endorse and proclaim the official NAZI ideology were targeted. Large numbers of people were purged from public institutions—all those, in particular Jews but others as well, who were deemed “alien” to the “pure Germanic race” and an obstacle to the monstrous aims of the NAZIs. Beginning with the communists, but before long encompassing the Jewish population, Roma people, homosexuals, and others, concentration camps were filled with those who were considered a threat to the NAZIs or a “stain” on the German nation. And this led, before long, to the mass genocide of millions of Jews in Germany and countries conquered and occupied by the NAZIs.

All this did not happen all at once—but it took place within a relatively short period of time (a decade or so), and with an increasingly accelerating pace. The rule of law was not openly and formally abandoned altogether, but the “law” and “the rule of law” became the same as what Hitler and the NAZIs *said it was*. Much of what Hitler and the NAZIs did,

during their reign of terror and genocide, was “in accordance with the law”—law that they had reduced to nothing more than their barbaric aims and means, murderously enforced by institutions which had been stripped of any meaning or purpose other than what conformed to and served the NAZI agenda, reduced to nothing more than instruments of NAZI atrocity.

In the whole of what Trump is currently doing—including his open calls to overturn Supreme Court decisions and precedents (for example, to outlaw abortion and punish flag burning), along with his repeated violations of the law and due process of the law and his insistence that *he is* the law—we can see the looming shadow of even more overt fascist dictatorship. For that is what fascism is: open and aggressive dictatorship, trampling on and perverting the rule of law, relying on violence and terror, on behalf of the predatory capitalist system and as an extreme attempt to deal with profound social division and acute crises (both within the country and in the global arena). And with the moves by Trump’s “Secretary of Education,” Betsy DeVos—who is herself a Christian fascist whose ultimate goal is to replace public, secular education with schools based on Christian fundamentalist indoctrination—we can see the outline of the Trump/Pence regime version of “official (Christian fascist) ideology.” We can recognize the looming shadow of a situation where not just school children, but everyone in society, will be required to pledge allegiance to a white Christian fascist America.

A statement from the organization Refuse Fascism (RefuseFascism.org) argues eloquently and powerfully:

Actual lines are being drawn, with catastrophic consequences for all of humanity. If we lose the right to protest—through legal or extra-legal means—all bets are off. Fascism is not just the worst of a pendulum swing. It is a qualitative change in how society is governed. Dissent is piece by piece criminalized. The truth is bludgeoned. Group after group is demonized and targeted along a trajectory that leads to real horrors. All this has been happening for more than three years, yet with concentration camps at the border, Trump acquitted in a sham impeachment trial, and an executive order to protect monuments while First Amendment rights are criminalized with actual jail time, too many still want to bask in the comfortable delusions that this is not really happening. This is fascism. It is happening, and time is running out to stop it.

For far too long, those of us, including the diverse voices represented by Refuse Fascism, who have been pointing to the very real immediate danger—and potentially even greater danger—represented by the Trump/Pence regime were far too often met with arrogant dismissal by those who could not, or would not, see the reality and the trajectory of this regime; who dismissed the danger by *ignoring or downplaying many of the terrible things this regime had already done*; and who then pointed to whatever had *not yet* been done by this regime as supposed “proof” that it *would not* do those

things. Now, at this late and crucial hour, to treat as “alarmist exaggeration” the fascist nature of this regime and its very real parallels with the horrors perpetrated by previous fascist regimes—this is to ignore not only vital lessons from history, but also the extremely dangerous reality of the current situation, including the significance of the fact that Trump—fulfilling his promise to Christian fascists—has stacked the courts, all the way up to the Supreme Court, with legions of Christian fascists and other extreme right-wing judges, who will move to “legally legitimize” the whole horrific program of the Trump/Pence fascist regime.

If this regime is able to further consolidate its power and make further leaps in implementing its horrific objectives, this will result in a devastating setback for any attempt to resist injustice and oppression, and will very likely lead to the brutal repression, and even annihilation, of defenders of democratic rights and proponents of any meaningful progressive reforms, as well as any organized forces fighting for fundamental revolutionary change.

In the most essential sense, the urgent need to mobilize masses of people around the demand to force the removal of this fascist regime is not in conflict with the mass outpouring against institutionalized white supremacy and police terror, or other mass movements against the outrages of this system, but is basic unity with and is crucial for all these struggles, and all this can and must be understood, and built, in a powerful mutually reinforcing way.

3 *Simply relying on voting to oust this regime will almost certainly lead to very bad, even disastrous results.* This is especially true given what this regime is already doing, and what Trump is saying, in relation to the election.

Through completely unfounded attacks on voting by mail, and preparation to intimidate and obstruct Black people and Latinos attempting to exercise their right to vote, moves are already underway by the Trump/Pence regime and its supporters to suppress the votes of those who are likely to vote against Trump. As he did in the 2016 election, Trump has already indicated his likely refusal to accept the result of the election this time if he is not the winner. And now Trump has openly “floated” the idea of “delaying” the election.

Given what Trump has already done, and what he has blatantly declared, as much as it is horrifying it is also very realistic to envision this regime stationing storm troopers, loyal to this regime, in cities all across this country— viciously moving to suppress any expression of resistance or opposition—with the approach of the election, and continuing beyond that.

The ongoing pandemic, or executive orders to quell “civil disorder” (i.e., protests) in many parts of the country, could also serve as pretexts to “postpone” the election, perhaps indefinitely.

And it is certainly not unthinkable that Trump would move to create a “national emergency”—for example, by carrying out acts of war, against Iran or possibly even China—in order

to further institute even more extreme repressive conditions, with even greater numbers of para-military storm troopers occupying cities, in order either to cancel (or indefinitely “delay”) the election, or to control the voting and the results of the election if it is held.

It is of critical importance to continue to build resistance, *right now* and in an increasingly powerful way, against any and all repressive moves by Trump, including by building mass opposition to this regime’s attempts at voter suppression and through mass mobilization in support and defense of those who are targets of such suppression.

With the full awareness of what is represented by this fascist regime, and what it means that Trump is not only seeking to suppress the votes of people who will vote against him but is also preparing to utilize forceful, violent repression to remain in office if he is not declared the winner in the election, it is of critical and urgent importance to build *now* truly massive and sustained mobilization around the unifying demand that this regime must be OUT NOW!—with an orientation of being prepared to continue this even past the election, if the situation requires it.

From the first days of the Trump/Pence regime, Refuse Fascism has been calling out the fascism of this regime and calling for the mass mobilization to drive out this regime that is now, all the more urgently, required. It would have been very good—it could have made a real difference—if all those who hate this regime but failed, or refused, to recognize its actual fascist nature and the great danger to humanity it

poses as such, had much earlier responded to and actively taken up this call by Refuse Fascism. Now, finally, there is a growing recognition, and increasing discussion, about the “authoritarian” nature of this regime, and even the use of the term “fascism” to describe it. (As I have pointed out, on the part of many, this is a case of “Oh, *now* they’re saying” this is fascism, as if that has just become the case. But, with an understanding of the profound stakes involved, it is important to recognize that *now* is better than *never*.) The hour is getting late—but it is still not too late to make this mass mobilization a reality. *Relying on, and confining actions within, the “norms” and “regular channels” of this system, including the upcoming election, cannot solve this profound and urgent problem, especially when dealing with a fascist regime and its fanatical followers that are determined to trample on and tear up those “norms.”*

4 At this critical hour, every appropriate means of non-violent action must be utilized to remove this regime from power. And if, in spite of mass protest demanding the removal of the Trump/Pence regime, this regime remains in power when it is time for voting, then—*without placing fundamental reliance on this*—using all appropriate means to work for the removal of this regime *must include voting against Trump* (assuming the election is actually held). To be clear, this means not a “protest vote” for some candidate who has no chance of winning, but actually voting for the Democratic Party candidate, Biden, in order to *effectively vote against Trump*.

This is not because Biden (and the Democratic Party in general) have suddenly become something other than what they are: representatives and instruments of this exploitative, oppressive, and literally murderous system of capitalism-imperialism. The electoral process continues to be what we revcoms have called it—BEB (Bourgeois Electoral Bullshit). It remains the case that no *fundamental change* for the better can come about through this electoral process, and that, in general and overall, voting under this system serves to reinforce this system, especially if voting is seen as a way—and more so if it is seen as *the* (only) way—to bring about meaningful change.

But this election is different.

It is true that, with every election, the Democrats run the same basic con game—blackmailing people who hate injustice and oppression to vote for them as the “lesser evil”—insisting in effect that, “You may not agree with everything we say, you may even have serious differences and criticisms regarding what we’re all about—but do you want *them* to be in power?!” (the openly white supremacist, male supremacist, climate change-denying plunderers of the environment, and all-around reactionary Republican Party). And the Democratic Party has done this, time after time after time, while itself representing and seeking to preside over this system of capitalism-imperialism which has white supremacy, male supremacy, environmental plunder and wars for empire built into it, at the same time as the Democrats make noises about, and take some steps to implement, minor (and ultimately meaningless) reforms to supposedly address these

outrages. All this has actually contributed to the development of things toward the terrible situation we are faced with now. It has politically paralyzed many who seek an end to such outrages, reducing them to passive dependents on the Democratic Party and its role in the electoral process, while adding fuel to the fire of the die-hard fascist sections of society that insist on absolutely no mitigation of these outrages—no concession to the struggle against this—and in fact demand the brutal reinforcement of this oppression and outrage, in extreme terms.

But, again, this election *is* different—in a crucially important way. The question is not whether Biden and the Democrats represent something “good,” or whether, in fundamental terms, the Democrats are “better” than the Republicans. Both of these parties are *ruling class* political parties, and none of their candidates represent anything “good” in the most basic and essential sense. Biden is not “better” than Trump, in any meaningful way—*except that he is not Trump and is not part of the move to consolidate and enforce fascist rule, with everything that means.*

To approach this election from the standpoint of which candidate is “better” means failing to understand the truly profound stakes and potential consequences of what is involved. The fact is that there can be one—and only one—“good” that can come out of this election: *delivering a decisive defeat to Trump and the whole fascist regime. Doing this would create far better conditions for continuing to wage the struggle against everything represented by the Trump/*

Pence regime and all the oppression and injustices of this system, and would be a great gift to the people of the world.

Again, in these very particular, extraordinary circumstances, if the Trump/Pence regime is still in power by the time of the election, in spite of mass mobilizations demanding the ouster of this regime, then the struggle against this fascist regime needs to include voting against Trump by voting for Biden, while *continuing to build sustained mass mobilization against this regime and everything it represents and concentrates, and being prepared to carry forward this mass mobilization if Trump loses the election but refuses to leave.*

5 In recognizing this, however, it is extremely important to stress once again, in the strongest terms, that, for the reasons spoken to here, *relying* on voting—without this mass mobilization—will very likely lead to disaster.

There is the possibility that Trump could actually win the election—although whether he wins or loses, this election will involve unprecedented moves to suppress the votes of those opposing him and to use other illegal means to enable him to remain in power. And, even more essentially, with the clear understanding of the fascist nature of this regime, and the full implications of that, this regime is *illegitimate*, regardless of the means by which it has come to power and moves to retain and further consolidate power. Hitler and the NAZIs came to power in Germany in the 1930s through the “normal channels” of the “democratic system” there—

including elections—but there was absolutely nothing “legitimate” about their rule and all the truly unspeakable horrors it led to. And the same basic principle applies to the Trump/Pence regime. By its very nature and content, *there is no such thing as “legitimate” fascism.*

Whatever happens with the election—and even if Biden wins and succeeds in actually taking office—there will be no “return to normalcy.” First of all, the fascists—those still in powerful positions, and the fascist “base” in the wider society—will not allow it. And, in any case, no one should *want* it. The “normalcy” of this system has always included the barbaric oppression of Black people and other people of color, with systematic terror, brutality and murder to enforce this oppression. It has always included vicious discrimination, bigotry and violence against immigrants, women, LGBTQ people, and any others regarded as inferior and “alien.” It has always included unjust wars for empire, and continuing crimes against humanity. It now poses a threat to the very existence of humanity through its increasing devastation of the environment and the ever present threat of nuclear war.

The many-sided struggle to oust the fascist Trump/Pence regime must be taken up not as a substitute for but as a part—a crucial part—of moving to *get beyond* all that is represented by and embodied in the “normalcy” of this system.

6 Finally, regardless of what happens with this election, it remains profoundly true—and it is vitally important to recognize, and to act on the understanding—that no *fundamental* change for the better can come *under this system*. Even as sustained mass mobilization urgently needs to be built around the unifying demand of Trump/Pence OUT NOW!, all those who have come to see that institutionalized white supremacy, male supremacy and the many other outrages and crimes against humanity perpetrated under this system are in fact *built into* this system of capitalism-imperialism must work together, in an ongoing way, to build a continually growing movement and to strengthen the organized forces for an actual revolution to overthrow this system.

In summation: Given the truly monumental stakes involved, not only in terms of any particular issue, no matter how important, and not merely in terms of this country, but for the masses of people throughout the world and the future of humanity, there is a great need to approach things and act with the sophistication necessary to handle the complex and difficult contradictions involved in all this—having a broad vision, rejecting petty sectarianism and brittle dogmatism, and not falling into a paralyzing “either/or”: either we fight against white supremacy and police terror, *or* we fight to bring about the removal of the Trump/Pence fascist regime; either we vote in this election, *or* we build mass struggle against outrageous oppression and against this fascist regime; either we oppose this regime, by all appropriate means, *or* we work for revolution. *In this extraordinary and very complex situation—and from the point of view of*

*advancing the struggle toward the goal of finally eliminating all exploitation and oppression, everywhere—there is an urgent need to do all of that, and to do so with an understanding of the correct and necessary relation between the different parts of this overall approach: putting the main emphasis and reliance on mass mobilization, with voting in this extraordinary situation necessary and important but *not* the main thing to be relied upon; and, in fundamental terms, making all this contribute to creating more favorable conditions for, and building up the organized forces for, not only resisting the crimes of this system but finally carrying out the revolution that is needed in order to put an end to this monstrously criminal system and its domination in the world, in any form.*

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