

On the attempted assassination of Donald Trump

WSWS Editorial Board
14 July 2024

There are still many unanswered questions about the circumstances behind the attempted assassination of former US President Donald Trump on Saturday. Whatever the provenance of the attack, one thing is certain: It will produce a further sharp lurch to the right of the entire political establishment.

In remarks delivered on Sunday evening, President Biden stated that an investigation was ongoing into the purported shooter, who has been identified as 20-year-old Thomas Matthew Crooks. “We do not know the motive of the shooter yet,” Biden said. “We don’t know his opinions or affiliations. We don’t know if he had help or support, or if he communicated with anyone else.”

The circumstances of the attack, in which one Trump supporter was shot to death and two others were critically wounded, suggest serious security negligence, given that Crooks had access to a rooftop location with a clear line of sight to where Trump was speaking, and, at 150 yards, well within rifle range. He was able to fire at least half a dozen shots before he was killed by a Secret Service sniper.

As of yet, no scenario can be excluded, given the intensity of the divisions within the ruling elite itself, primarily over foreign policy.

Even at this initial stage, however, there are definite political conclusions that can be drawn. The attempted assassination is a concentrated manifestation of the crisis of not only the American political system, but the entire society.

As always when confronted with an event that exposes the deep political and social fissures that pervade the United States, the political establishment and media take refuge in hollow and self-deceptive platitudes. These were summed up in Biden’s declaration on Sunday that “there is no place in America for this kind of violence or for any violence for that matter.”

This is a Disneyland image of the United States that has

nothing whatsoever to do with reality. In 2022, the number of homicides in the United States totaled 21,593. There is a specific category of killings that is known as “mass casualty events.” Every year American police summarily execute 1,000 people on one or another pretext.

But domestic violence is inextricably linked to the role of the United States as the principal instigator of violence in the world. Over the last 30 years, the number of people killed as a consequence of the direct or indirect actions of the US government number in the millions.

Biden declared several times that acts of political violence are an aberration: “This is not who we are” is his favorite refrain. This statement is perhaps the most convincing evidence of Biden’s senility. In the course of his own lifetime he has passed through the experience of numerous political assassinations, of which the most politically consequential were those of President John F. Kennedy in 1963, Malcolm X in 1965, and Martin Luther King and Sen. Robert F. Kennedy in 1968. And as he well knows, these four assassinations involved state conspiracies.

The response of the Democratic Party and Biden, in particular, to the attempted assassination has been thoroughly cowardly and duplicitous. It would be sufficient, in the aftermath of this failed attack, to state that individual violence cannot serve any progressive purpose, whatever the target or the intentions of the attacker.

But the Democrats go far beyond that, with expressions of solidarity, praise, even affection for the fascist ex-president, whom Biden referred to repeatedly as “Donald” during his remarks on Saturday night. No Democrat has even made the obvious point that Trump himself has repeatedly called for and supported violent assaults by right-wing forces.

In 2017, Trump praised the neo-Nazis and fascists who

staged a white supremacist march in Charlottesville, Virginia. In the course of 2020, Trump instigated a series of armed attacks by militia groups against state capitols, in opposition to COVID-19 lockdowns, leading to the failed attempt to kidnap and murder Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer. Trump specifically praised the homicidal actions of Kyle Rittenhouse, the teenage fascist who carried out a vigilante attack on demonstrators against police violence in Kenosha, Wisconsin, in 2020.

The high point of political violence came on January 6, 2021, when a mob summoned to Washington by Trump stormed the Capitol, seeking to kill or capture members of Congress and even Trump's own vice president, Mike Pence, in a last-ditch effort to block the certification of Biden's election victory and make Trump a dictator-president.

Biden's remarks on Sunday evening were full of empty platitudes and absurdities. "We cannot allow violence to be normalized," he declared. "It's time to cool it down." Whatever the disagreements, politics must be an arena for "peaceful debate," he said. "We stand for an America ... of decency and grace."

Decency and grace ... The Biden administration, along with the entire political establishment, has backed a genocide in Gaza that has killed nearly 200,000 people, according to estimates published by *The Lancet* medical journal. The involvement of American imperialism in homicidal wars abroad inevitably has its impact on the political situation in the United States itself.

The Republicans have responded without hesitation to seize on the shooting of Trump to blame the Democrats for inciting the attack. The Democrats respond with spineless capitulation. According to a report in Reuters, "Rather than verbally attacking Trump in the coming days, the White House and the Biden campaign will draw on the president's history of condemning all sorts of political violence, including his sharp criticism of the 'disorder' created by campus protests over the Israel-Gaza conflict, campaign officials said on condition of anonymity."

The Democrats' response is driven by two overriding considerations. First, they are always seeking to retain the support and collaboration of the Republicans, including if they take power after the 2024 elections, to continue the escalating global war, which is the central priority of Biden and the Democratic Party.

Second, the Democrats are continuously seeking to cover up the steady growth of political reaction in America, for fear of igniting a social explosion. What

pervaded Biden's remarks on Sunday was a deep fear that the entire social and political situation in the United States is breaking apart.

This is what motivates the incessant appeals, repeated by Biden on Sunday night, to "unity," which Trump has also raised. There can be no "unity," however, in a country so riven by class antagonisms as the United States. There can be no "unity" with a ruling class that is driving headlong into world war and dictatorship.

Socialist Equality Party presidential candidate Joseph Kishore noted in a statement published Sunday on X:

The real significance of the call for "unity" is an appeal for solidarity within the ruling class.

In his call for unity, Biden is pleading with the Republican Party not to allow the factional divisions within the corporate and financial oligarchy to undermine the interests of the ruling class as a whole, of which the war abroad and the war on the working class at home are the essential components. To achieve such a "unity," the Democrats are prepared to make every compromise imaginable.

The protracted crisis of American democracy intensifies by the hour. The critical issue is not the "unity" of the nation, but the unity of the working class, in the United States and internationally.

The only resolution to the crisis of American democracy is the intervention of the working class through independent action and on the basis of its own interests, building new organizations of struggle and advancing a revolutionary socialist program.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact