

The normalization of American-style fascism

Patrick Martin
17 July 2024

Even before it reaches its full depth of reaction, with the nomination Thursday of Donald Trump as its presidential candidate, the Republican National Convention has already demonstrated the transformation of the Republican Party into the political vehicle for an American-style fascism.

General characteristics of all fascist movements—hatred of socialism and Marxism, extreme nationalism, subordination to the will of the one great leader—are combined with features derived from the history of America.

Thus, for the Jews vilified by Hitler and the Nazis, the Republicans substitute “illegal” immigrants as the target for demonization, though antisemitism is also rampant, if not overt. The ideological cement is supplied, not by Germanic myth-making, but by evangelical Christian fundamentalism.

The cynical Manhattan swindler, whose sexual escapades and vulgarity were tabloid fodder for decades, is portrayed as a Christ-like savior. Speaker after speaker at the convention proclaimed Trump’s narrow escape from assassination last Saturday as the direct intervention of God into American political life.

This was combined with a fraudulent pseudo-populism, with candidates from impoverished backgrounds—including vice presidential nominee J.D. Vance—highlighting their working class roots, while there was no discussion of the enormous wealth of the vast majority of those leading the party, headed by the billionaire Trump. Nor was there any hint that the tax cuts and other policies outlined in the party platform would overwhelmingly favor the super-rich at the expense of working people.

Tuesday night’s speakers echoed these themes, in a revolting display of reactionary conformity that was nonetheless treated by the corporate media as a powerful demonstration of a party that was well on its way to victory in the November elections.

A few examples:

Kari Lake, candidate for US Senate in Arizona, declared her love for “everybody in this great arena tonight” but made an exception for the news media, declaring, “You have spent the last eight years lying about President Donald Trump.” Lake is a strident advocate of Trump’s “stolen election” lies and includes those who attacked the US Capitol on January 6, 2021 in her paean to “his amazing patriotic supporters.”

Mike Rogers, candidate for US Senate from Michigan, former FBI agent and congressman, claimed, “In all my time working to protect America, I have never seen anything like the Biden-Harris open border policy. They are rolling out the red carpet for violent gangs, fentanyl, Chinese spies, individuals on the terrorist watch list.”

Senator Rick Scott of Florida said he foresaw a second Biden administration in which “Democrats erased the Southern border and flew so many illegals into our country that the cartel started getting frequent flyer miles. It was easy for Democrats to rig the elections. They allowed all the noncitizens to vote.” This is an only slightly cleaned up version of the neo-Nazi “Great Replacement Theory,” which claims that liberals and Jews are conspiring to bring in millions of immigrants to “replace” the white population of America.

House Speaker Mike Johnson, third in line to the presidency after Biden and Kamala Harris, claimed a religious basis for the founding of the United States: “We understand that our rights do not come from government. They come from God.”

The crowd cheered this affirmation of religion and then again when he denounced “the radical woke progressive left,” which he said, “has disdain for those principles. Right? They have a very different vision for what America should become. They want to tear down

those foundations and remold us into a borderless, lawless Marxist, socialist utopia.”

The Biden administration is a ruthless imperialist government that is just as adamantly opposed to socialism and the working class as any fascist Republican. Johnson’s diatribe, echoed by many other speakers, only demonstrates that what Trump & Co. really fear is not the Democrats but the threat of the working class led by a genuine socialist revolutionary movement.

It was only after Trump and Vance arrived for the final hour of Tuesday night’s session that the true depths of the political reaction were displayed. The would-be dictator and his running mate came, apparently, for the purpose of hearing a line-up of former rivals prostrate themselves before the party’s supreme leader. These included Senator Ted Cruz and Senator Marco Rubio, who ran against Trump in 2016, and former UN Ambassador Nikki Haley and Florida Governor Ron DeSantis, who challenged him for the nomination this year.

All four performed the roles to which they had been assigned, including Haley, who was not even invited to the convention until after the failed assassination attempt, and DeSantis, who was initially not accorded a speaking slot. But it was Cruz who gave what is perhaps the most reactionary tirade in modern American history, at least in terms of the two main capitalist parties.

He focused on demonizing immigrants in terms that outstripped many Nazi diatribes against Jews. He claimed an “invasion” by 11.5 million migrants since Biden took office, and portrayed them as murderers, rapists and child abusers, who were grabbing “teenage girls and boys” who were being “sold into a life of sex slavery.” He recounted a handful of well-publicized cases involving migrants committing crimes of violence, although police statistics show that migrants are far less likely to be involved in such acts than those born within the United States.

Whipping up his audience, Cruz claimed to be giving voice to these victims of migrant crime: “Tonight, I speak for Kate and Lincoln and Rachel, tonight, I speak for Jocelyn,” invoking their deaths to denounce Biden and hail Trump.

One of the final speakers, Sarah Huckabee Sanders, former White House press secretary under Trump and

now governor of Arkansas, brought the religious adulation of the fascist ex-president to fever pitch. “God spared President Trump from that assassin, because God is not finished with him yet,” she claimed. “And he most certainly is not finished with America yet, either.”

The attitude of the corporate media to this disgusting spectacle gave an indication of how the American ruling elite as a whole is positioning itself to embrace a second Trump presidency, including those sections long opposed to Trump as an untrustworthy and erratic representative of their interests, particularly in foreign policy.

There was not a hint in the media coverage that the political tenor of the convention was in any way unusual or unprecedented. The Republican Party was being transformed into Trump’s party, pundits said, but no one used the word “fascism” or suggested that this transformation was a mortal threat to the democratic rights of the American population.

No doubt, behind the scenes, representatives of the military-intelligence apparatus and Wall Street are working with Trump insiders to assure that the central priorities of American imperialism, above all the war in Ukraine and the program of global aggression—in Gaza, against Iran, ultimately against China—are maintained and carried forward.

The disgusting spectacle at the Republican National Convention, which continued on Wednesday and will conclude on Thursday, is the expression not just of one party, let alone one individual, but of the political and social system as a whole. Under conditions of escalating global war and extreme social inequality, the American ruling class is reveling in filth and backwardness.

The Democrats, who are scheduled to hold their own convention in one month’s time, are another expression of this same process.



To contact the WSWs and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact