

Corporate media whitewashes fascist reaction at Republican National Convention

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The response of the corporate media to the outpouring of fascist filth at this week's Republican National Convention (RNC), culminating in the coronation of the GOP Führer Donald Trump, was a combination of cover-up and barely suppressed admiration.

In hour after hour of coverage provided by the cable and broadcast networks, the seven-figure-salaried talking heads pretended there was nothing abnormal or unprecedented in the parade of speakers promoting anti-immigrant racism, extreme nationalism, defense of Trump's January 6 attempted coup, Christian evangelical fundamentalism and total subordination to the Great Leader. The words "fascistic," "authoritarian," even "anti-democratic" were seldom if ever uttered.

The coverage in the "liberal" press was no better. But the fawning press commentary on the degrading proceedings in Milwaukee was entirely in line with the prostration of the imploding campaign of Joe Biden and the Democratic Party as a whole. Biden immediately responded to the near assassination of Trump last Saturday by calling for "unity," denouncing all violence as supposedly un-American, and halting his campaign ads and political attacks on "Donald."

The tone in the press was set by the *Washington Post*. Within hours of the shooting at a Trump rally in Pennsylvania, it posted an editorial ("Turn down the heat, let in the light") that began with praise for the aspiring dictator and possible next president, writing, "Donald Trump has responded commendably to his harrowingly close encounter with a would-be assassin's bullet in Pennsylvania on Saturday..."

It cited Trump's call for "national unity" in a phone conversation with Biden following the assassination attempt and expressed the delusional hope that Trump would moderate his violent rhetoric and instead "turn toward the light."

It then used the shooting to demand that Biden tone down his warnings about Trump's dictatorial agenda, chastising him for telling donors in a private call, "It's time to put Trump in the bull's-eye." It went on to attack anti-war and anti-Gaza genocide protesters, complaining that "Universities have become battlegrounds."

A similarly reactionary, Trump-friendly posture was adopted by **NBC Evening News moderator Lester Holt** in an 18-minute interview with Biden that had been set up prior to the Trump shooting. The interview was taped Monday afternoon, July 15, and aired that evening.

Biden began by reiterating his prayers for Trump's well-being and his claim that violence in politics has "no place in America," an absurdity given the country's history of dozens of political assassinations, including of four sitting presidents.

But when Biden tried to raise Trump's repeated incitement of political violence, citing the ex-president's praise of the neo-Nazis who marched in Charlottesville and his role in the attack on the US Capitol on January 6, Holt made no acknowledgement of Biden's points. Instead, he sought to turn the table on Biden, citing his use of the word "bull's-eye" in his call with donors.

Biden abjectly apologized for his choice of words, but went on to cite

Trump's talk about establishing a dictatorship on day one of a second term, his talk of a "bloodbath" should he lose the election, his promise to pardon the convicted January 6 insurrectionists, and his joking about the beating of Nancy Pelosi's husband.

Holt responded by saying, "This doesn't sound like you're turning down the heat, though. ... what can you and what will you do, at least things you can control, to lower down the temperature, the rhetoric out there?" What he was demanding, of course, was a pledge from Biden to drop even the most lame warnings about the very real dangers of police state rule under Trump.

The **Wall Street Journal** was more blunt in issuing this demand. In its editorial on the Trump shooting published Sunday, July 14 it wrote:

But leaders on both sides need to stop describing the stakes of the election in apocalyptic terms. Democracy won't end if one or the other candidate is elected. Fascism is not aborning if Mr. Trump wins, unless you have little faith in American institutions.

We agree with former Attorney General Bill Barr's statement Saturday night: "The Democrats have to stop their grossly irresponsible talk about Trump being an existential threat to democracy—he is not."

In all of its coverage, the corporate media seeks to conceal from the public the scale and depth of political reaction in the US for fear of social revolution. But in the coverage of the RNC, which began Monday, less than two days after Trump's near assassination, this assumed a new dimension.

It was left to the *New York Times*, the liberal "newspaper of record," to publish the most grotesque and enthusiastic tribute to Donald Trump. In a column that appeared on day one of the RNC, headlined "Donald Trump, Man of Destiny," opinion writer Ross Douthat argued that Trump was an example of a Hegelian "great man of history," who, according to the German philosopher, embodied "the will of the World Spirit."

Douthat wrote:

... Trump shifted his head fractionally and literally dodged a bullet, fell bleeding and then rose with his fist raised in an iconic image of defiance. The scene Saturday night in Pennsylvania was the ultimate confirmation of his status as a man of destiny, a character out of Hegel or Thomas Carlyle or some other verbose 19th-century philosopher of history, a figure touched by the gods of fortune in a way that transcends the normal rules of politics.

Douthat continued:

For Hegel the great man's role is a fundamentally progressive one. He is ... pushing civilization toward its next stage of development, sometimes committing crimes or trampling sacred things but always in service to a higher aim, the unfolding intentions of a divine process...

What does a man of destiny look like then?

I think we have to say it looks like Donald Trump ... who has become the avatar of the rebellious populism that has remade his era's politics and overthrown or undermined its establishments.

This is an unabashed endorsement of Trump's brand of American fascism, which has now become the official policy of the Republican Party.

The *Times*' coverage of the succeeding days of the convention was punctuated with similarly glowing presentations of the supposed power and confidence of Trump's GOP and the party's impending victory in November.

Some examples:

***New York Times* (July 17), Headline: "In Milwaukee, A G.O.P. Transformation From Dysfunctional to Unified"**

"On Tuesday, Republicans effectively took a victory lap in the middle of the presidential race, expressing a sense of invincibility at their convention."

***New York Times* (July 17), Headline: "A Joyful Fellowship of Patriots"**

"Lara Trump's eloquent remarks" (quote from Kristen Soltis Anderson)

"Sarah Huckabee Sanders knows how to craft and deliver a speech with humor and humanity." (David Brooks)

"Again and again, the cameras showed Trump and J.D. Vance bending their heads together and swapping observations about the program ... as though Vance were the accomplished son Trump has long dreamed of." (Michelle Cottle)

***New York Times* (July 18), Headline: "J.D. Vance Brought What Trump Team Needed"**

"Vance's personal story is genuinely inspiring." (David French)

"Vance's speech was masterly and more than a moment." (Dan McCarthy)

***New York Times* (July 18), Headline: "A Party Now Molded in Trump's Image Prepares for a Coronation"**

"Thursday night, when Mr. Trump accepts the Republican presidential nomination for the third time, will be the culmination of an extraordinary run of good fortune and a testament to his political instincts. His address will also in many ways serve as the Republican Party's coronation of a leader who went from rattling the conservative establishment to refashioning it entirely in his image." (Michael Gold)

Not to be outdone, the *Washington Post* published an article by veteran political correspondent Dan Balz on July 19 under the headline: "A month that upended the campaign leaves Trump in his strongest position yet." Balz wrote:

Suddenly, Republicans are as sky-high and confident as Democrats are down and discouraged. ... Republicans produced a convention here in Milwaukee that highlighted a party that has been reshaped in Trump's image and with delegates fully united behind their nominee.

This, it must be stressed, was published after Trump's degrading and interminably long rant accepting the Republican nomination Thursday night, in which he reiterated his fascist attacks on immigrants, repeated his

stolen election lies, spoke of the "China virus," and claimed that God spared him from his would-be assassin's bullet because he is God's chosen instrument to "save America."

Nor is the response of the middle-class pseudo-left fundamentally different. *Jacobin*, politically aligned with the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), responded to the assassination attempt against Trump and the opening of the RNC with an article posted July 16 by Branko Marcetic under the headline: "**Donald Trump's Near Death Has Reenergized His Movement.**"

Clearly awe-struck by the goings on in Milwaukee, Marcetic wrote:

While Democrats remain in disarray over an unpopular, unsteady incumbent, Donald Trump supporters at the Republican National Convention are newly energized after the candidate's near-death experience—and more committed to victory than ever.

These pitched emotions spiraled into the night's climax, when a bandaged-up Trump emerged, on camera, from a stadium corridor into the convention hall to a rapturous, extended ovation. ... The Republican rank and file have inherent trust in the former president, and not just for the sake of the presidential ticket but for the man himself.

The DSA is a faction of the Democratic Party. Embodying privileged sections of the upper-middle class, it is hostile to and fearful of the working class and unalterably opposed to Marxism and its contemporary representative, Trotskyism, i.e., the International Committee of the Fourth International and the *World Socialist Web Site*. The crisis of the Democratic Party—itsself one expression of the insoluble crisis of American capitalism—sows demoralization and panic in the DSA's midst and even attraction to the figure of the Great Leader sent to stave off socialist revolution.

The transformation of the Republican Party into a Trumpite American version of fascism reflects the bankruptcy and historic crisis of the capitalist ruling class as a whole, including both of its traditional parties—mired in war, genocide and domestic plunder and repression. It is the outcome of a long process of political, intellectual and cultural degradation. It is up to the working class to defend and revive all that is progressive in society and prevent a descent into barbarism by breaking from the parties of big business and adopting the methods and program of world socialist revolution.



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