

Trump's fascist rally at Madison Square Garden

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The rally held for Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump at Madison Square Garden in New York City on Sunday night revealed the face of a political movement that is acquiring an ever more openly fascist character.

Media commentators have, appropriately, used the term fascism to describe the movement Trump is building. But while they identify certain features of fascism—including the subversion of traditional electoral methods to violence and intimidation, extreme nationalism and xenophobia—they exclude its most essential content, capitalist counterrevolution.

Some commentators remarked in response to the Madison Square Garden rally that it would likely cost Trump votes. There is no doubt that the display in New York will provoke revulsion among broader sections of the population and not just among those directly targeted by Trump's fascistic filth.

Trump's plan for power, however, is not based on formal electoral procedures but on the methods of civil war. Trump and the Republicans are operating on the basis of a fascist playbook.

This was evident in what was said on Sunday night. In New York City, the media capital of the world, Republican speakers hurled racist and anti-immigrant remarks with abandon. One speaker referred to Puerto Rico, the ancestral homeland of some 6 million Americans, including 1 million New Yorkers, as a "floating island of garbage." Trump adviser Stephen Miller shrieked that "America is for Americans and Americans only," a slogan that is a direct translation from the Nazi mantra, "*Deutschland ist nur für Deutsche*," which was used to justify the mass murder of Jews in the Holocaust.

Trump, for his part, proclaimed that with his victory "the migrant invasion of our country ends and the restoration of our country begins" and that election day would be "liberation day." Tropes of "national rebirth" overcoming "foreign contamination" have long been a staple of fascist movements. The Republican platform includes a pledge to round up and deport 11 million men, women and children, a feat that could only be achieved through a police state. Outlined at Madison Square Garden is a strategy of violent repression on an industrial scale. What Trump is promising must ultimately lead to mass murder.

Violence will first be directed against political opponents, what Trump calls "the enemy within." With the congressional Republican leadership looking on, Trump and his allies again swore blood oaths of revenge against their foes. Given that a little less than four years ago his supporters came within yards of publicly executing Vice President Mike Pence and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, these threats must be seen as deadly real. Speakers referred to the Democratic presidential nominee, Kamala Harris, as "the Antichrist" and "the devil." Another referred to all Democrats as "a bunch of degenerates, low lives, Jew-haters."

Trump doubled down on his rhetoric calling his opponents internal enemies, stating "they're smart and they're vicious, and we have to defeat them," adding, "they've done very bad things to this country. They

are indeed the enemy from within."

This strategy will not be altered by next Tuesday's vote. Trump and the Republicans are preparing to utilize illegal and unconstitutional methods to contest any result that goes against them, utilizing their control of state governments and police forces to challenge electoral results as they did four years ago. The day after the rally, ballot boxes were targeted for arson in Washington and Oregon, a small indication of what is to come.

Trump has behind him substantial sections of the corporate and financial oligarchy, who understand that the ultimate "enemy within" is the working class. Elon Musk, the world's richest person, appeared at Madison Square Garden clothed in black, the traditional uniform of the movement created by Mussolini. Musk has donated \$118 million to the Trump campaign.

Other billionaires and CEOs, in the words of a *Washington Post* article published Monday, are "hedging their bets." This includes Jeff Bezos, the world's second-richest individual and the owner of the *Post*, who blocked the newspaper from endorsing Harris. Oligarchs declaring their neutrality in the election include Berkshire Hathaway CEO Warren Buffett; Larry Ellison, founder of Oracle; Mark Zuckerberg of Meta; and Sundar Pichai of Google.

America's five wealthiest people control a combined \$1 trillion in wealth. All of them have now either endorsed Trump or stated their indifference between the two candidates. America's capitalists are every bit as ready to make a deal with Trump in 2024 as their German counterparts were with Hitler in 1933.

The Democratic Party is not an obstacle to Trump's plots, but an accomplice. The Democratic Party articulates the interests of the same financial elite, as well as the most affluent sections of the middle class, and has been "winning" the money battle from rich donors.

If their public statements are to be believed, the Democrats, innocent babes that they are, just suddenly became aware of Trump's fascism this past week, following reported statements from retired generals Mark Milley and John Kelly. Somehow, they had never noticed this tendency before, despite the attempted overthrow of the government on January 6, 2021.

In fact, the silence of the Democratic Party on the evermore overt fascist evolution of Trump and his MAGA movement was determined by its commitment toward upholding the political stranglehold of the capitalist two party system over the working class. That was why Biden responded to the January 6 coup with a declaration of his support for "a strong Republican Party." Throughout its sputtering attempts to investigate the January 6 coup, the Democrats sought to avoid implicating the Republican Party and its Supreme Court allies in the fascist conspiracy.

Even now, the central thrust of the Harris campaign has been to "reach out across the aisle" to allegedly reasonable Republicans. To the extent that they refer to the danger represented by Trump, they present him as merely an individual out for power, not the leader of one of the two parties of the capitalist ruling elite with substantial backing from the capitalist

oligarchs.

The very conditions that have strengthened fascism—endless war abroad, malignant levels of social inequality and police state repression—are nurtured by the Democratic Party.

Fascism is not the mistaken policy choice of capitalist parties, much less individuals. As Trotsky explained in a series of brilliant writings in response to the rise of Nazism, fascism is a manifestation of the breakdown of bourgeois democracy under the weight of the contradictions of capitalism.

Mobilizing a mass movement based on the most reactionary sections of the middle class and backward sections of demoralized workers, fascism is the crudest distillation of capitalism—the nakedly violent domination of the working class at home and abroad for profit.

The American experience bears this out. There have been other fascist political formations over the last century, for example, the Ku Klux Klan, the Silver Shirts, the German American Bund, the America First Committee and the John Birch Society. There have been a number of prominent fascist politicians, including Huey Long, Father Coughlin, Charles Lindbergh, Joe McCarthy and George Wallace. And there have been plenty of fascist-minded capitalists, among them Henry Ford, Howard Hughes and William Randolph Hearst.

The emergence of fascism in America owes something to these notorious right-wing pioneers and the toxic antisemitic, anti-immigrant and racist politics they espoused. It owes at least as much to American liberalism and the trade union bureaucracy. All joined hands in the 20th century to raise anti-communism up as a state religion in all but name. The result was the banishment from official American politics and culture of any understanding of the predominance of *class* in the construction of social reality. The far right was always welcome in this world, even if the bourgeoisie did not feel the need to hand it power.

To the extent that American capitalism retained sufficient resilience to contain class contradictions within the framework of traditional democratic procedures, without resorting to methods of civil war, the ruling class held its fascist wing at bay. But that is no longer possible.

During the past 30 years, the capitalist system has been subjected to a series of major economic shocks. The financial crash of 2008 brought American capitalism to the brink of collapse, which was forestalled only by the massive bailout organized by the Obama administration of banks and corporations. The pandemic, which triggered yet another Wall Street collapse, required an escalation of the transfusion of free money into the coffers of the banks and corporations. During the past 15 years, the national debt has been massively increased to approximately \$35 trillion.

Alongside and bound up with the fundamental economic crisis has been the protracted decline in the global position of the United States. The fantasies of unlimited and unchallengeable US domination of a “new world order” following the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 have been shattered by the emergence of major challenges to American hegemony, above all from China.

The American ruling class all but takes for granted that military conflict with China is inevitable. References to “total war” are becoming commonplace in policy journals and in statements by leading political figures. In this regard, the Democrats have been even more aggressive than the Republicans.

The Democratic Party offers nothing but austerity and war—and indeed, pays and arms fascists all over the world who serve as the long, blood-drenched talons of American imperialism, including those of the Azov battalions in Ukraine and the Israeli forces carrying out the “final solution” of the Palestinian “problem” in Gaza and the West Bank.

The fatal combination of financial-economic crisis and the global imperatives of US imperialism drives the ruling class toward war on the working class. The ruling class, which has acquired the character of an oligarchy, is compelled to intensify its assault on the living standards of

the working class.

The Democrats’ main concern with Trump is that his victory might interfere with far advanced plans for war with Russia. They fear the breakdown of the two-party system, that the framework of the bipartisan capitalist state is being undermined. And they are concerned that the exposure of the danger represented by Trump will produce a mass movement from below. Indeed, in response to Trump’s rally in New York, the Democratic Party, including the phony New York “socialist,” Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, mustered no protest against it.

To speak of a “lesser evil” in this situation is politically meaningless. This vindicates the analysis that the *World Socialist Web Site* has made since 2000, when violent demonstrations stopped the counting of votes in Florida, leaving the outcome of the disputed Bush-Gore election to the right-wing Supreme Court majority that handed the victory to the Republicans. That decision, we warned, revealed the absence of any genuine constituency for democracy in the ruling class. Now, after nearly a quarter-century, even the forms of democratic rule are being cast aside.

Amidst these political upheavals, one essential fact must be stressed. The movement of the ruling elites toward dictatorship is in increasingly diametrical opposition to the movement of the working class. This past year has seen mass protests of youth and workers against the genocide in Gaza, in the face of brutal repression and slander. There is mounting opposition in the working class to austerity, exploitation, poverty and social inequality, only partially expressed in the series of strikes throughout the country—including the ongoing strike at Boeing, where workers have rejected two contracts brought back by the union.

There is a powerful objective basis for the development of a movement against the conspiracies of the capitalist oligarchs.

The task is to provide that movement with an anti-capitalist and socialist program that articulates its interests. The poison of national chauvinism, racism and anti-immigrant hysteria must be countered with a fight for the international unity of the working class. The American working class must recognize that the defense of its democratic rights and social interests is possible only in alliance with its class brothers and sisters across the globe.

Throughout this election process, which has laid bare the degradation of the entire American political system, the *World Socialist Web Site* and the Socialist Equality Party have sought to alert the working class, youth and all progressive sections of the population to the magnitude of the crisis. Whatever the immediate outcome of next Tuesday’s election, the crisis of the political system will intensify. After the Madison Square Garden rally, it is impossible to deny the danger posed by the growth of an American fascist movement and the creation of a capitalist military-police dictatorship. The alternative that confronts the working class is either the conquest of power and the establishment of socialism or fascist barbarism and world war.

All those who recognize this danger must draw the necessary political conclusion: Join the Socialist Equality Party and build the revolutionary movement of the working class.



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