

Time magazine picks fascist Trump as “Person of the Year”

Patrick Martin
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Time magazine has named President-elect Donald Trump Thursday as its “Person of the Year” for 2024, writing that it had chosen Trump, “For marshaling a comeback of historic proportions, for driving a once-in-a-generation political realignment, for reshaping the American presidency and altering America’s role in the world...” Following the glowing cover story was a lengthy and obsequious interview by four top writers and editors at the magazine, including Editor-in-Chief Sam Jacobs, conducted at Trump’s Mar-a-Lago estate.

The day the *Time* cover story appeared, Trump took a bow before his most important audience—Wall Street—ringing the opening bell at the New York Stock Exchange Thursday, as family members and cabinet nominees applauded, and the assembled corporate executives and stock traders chanted “USA! USA!” Among those standing beside Trump was *Time* CEO Jessica Sibley.

While the accolades were nauseating, they were also entirely predictable. Trump was *Time*’s “Person of the Year” in 2016 as well, and most presidential election winners have been glorified in similar fashion. This is a necessary ritual for the American ruling class, as it seeks to maintain a fig leaf of popular legitimacy for the man it has selected as its “commander-in-chief.”

But there is something particularly diseased and dishonest about the tributes now being paid to Trump. The fawning over Trump by *Time* magazine is part of a general “normalization” of the fascistic president in the media. Yesterday’s “existential threat,” a corrupt fascist reactionary in visible physical and mental decline, is now presented as a world historic leader.

The words “fascism” and “dictatorship” do not appear in the 5,000-word cover story in the magazine nor in the nearly 12,000-word transcript of the interview with Trump. Two remarks by the interviewers capture the character of the exercise and the grotesque distortion of

political reality on which it is based. “You’ve realigned both political parties, you’ve changed America,” one declares. “There’s got to be something that you understand about winning votes or the American people that your opponents maybe don’t give you credit for.” Another interviewer tells Trump later, “You have galvanized a social and political movement that has transformed this country.”

The truth is that Trump’s fascist demagogy has not “galvanized” a mass movement from below. He owes his political “comeback” not to mass popular support, or any political genius on his part, but to the fecklessness and bankruptcy of the nominal opposition. The Democratic Party refused to make any politically serious response to the attempted coup of January 6, 2021, when for the first time in American history, a president defeated at the polls sought to cling to power by force.

President Joe Biden declared in response to the failed coup that his goal was to maintain a “strong Republican Party.” His Department of Justice limited its prosecutions over January 6 to the fascist thugs who actually attacked the Capitol. Meanwhile their organizers and instigators, in the Trump entourage, the Republican Party and the military-intelligence apparatus, were free to plot Trump’s return to power.

Democratic Party leaders made it clear that continuing and escalating an aggressive imperialist foreign policy directed at Russia and China required sustaining the two-party system at home, which gives the financial oligarchy a political monopoly and suppresses working class opposition. Even in its final weeks in office, sustaining the US-NATO war against Russia in Ukraine, and the crimes of the state of Israel in the Middle East, remains the top priority of the Biden-Harris administration.

Trump’s top priority, by contrast, is to prepare for imperialist world war by first shoring up the home front, drastically expanding the police-state infrastructure within

the US itself. Initially this is to take the form of a colossal attack on immigrant workers, rounding up and deporting millions. But the police-military mobilization necessary to accomplish this will be directed against working people as a whole, whatever their place of birth.

It is notable that several times during the interview with *Time*, Trump described the presence of migrants in the United States, whether they crossed the US-Mexico border without papers or entered legally under programs like Temporary Protected Status, as an “invasion.” This is not just a rhetorical phrase but a claim of legal and constitutional justification for any and all repressive actions undertaken by the new administration.

Asked about the ban on the use of federal troops for domestic law enforcement purposes, under the legal prohibition known as “posse comitatus,” Trump replied, “Well, it doesn’t, it doesn’t stop the military if it’s an invasion of our country, and I consider it an invasion of our country. I’ll only do what the law allows, but I will go up to the maximum level of what the law allows.”

Trump repeated his long-disproved lies about countries emptying their mental hospitals and jails to send inmates and prisoners to the United States and even claimed that popular revulsion against supposed criminal immigrants was more important than economic distress due to inflation in his election victory. Grocery prices were important, he said, but “what was an even bigger factor, I believe, was the border.”

There is not the slightest evidence that this is true. Trump’s efforts to demonize Haitian immigrants in Springfield, Ohio, and Charleroi, Pennsylvania, blew up in his face, as even local Republican officials rejected his claims that immigrants were eating pets or committing crimes. Opinion polls suggest widespread support, by a sizable majority, for a more humane treatment of immigrants, rather than the savage crackdown advocated by Trump’s fascist acolytes like Stephen Miller and Tom Homan.

Time magazine made nothing of this, accepting Trump’s declaration that it would not be necessary to set up massive detention camps for immigrants because they would be deported from the United States so quickly. The journalists asked no question to Trump about the impact of mass raids into working class neighborhoods searching for “illegals” or the implications of deploying the US Army for such purposes.

At the same time, the magazine left unchallenged Trump’s claims of a popular mandate that should enable him to rule without any significant check. “The mandate

was massive,” he declared. “I did win the greatest election that a lot of people say we had in hundreds of years.”

In fact, Trump won slightly less than 50 percent of the popular vote, with a margin that ranks in the bottom half of US presidential victors historically. He ran well behind Biden’s margin in 2020 or Obama’s in 2008 and 2012, and even behind George W. Bush in 2004. His party controls Congress by the narrowest of margins, 53-47 in the Senate, 220-215 in the House of Representatives. In the five battleground states that had US Senate contests, Republicans lost four, even though Trump won the presidential vote.

None of these facts and figures will stop the corporate media from hailing Trump’s “political capital” or stop the Democrats from cowering before his supposedly invincible popular support. But the policies outlined by Trump in his *Time* interview—tax cuts for the wealthy, deregulation for corporate America, full pardons for those who attacked the Capitol on January 6, persecution of his political enemies, to say nothing of the war on immigrants—will meet powerful resistance from below, from the working class.

Trump already foreshadowed this by admitting, in both his interview with NBC, broadcast last Sunday, and his interview with *Time*, that he cannot assure any reduction in inflation, particularly in grocery prices.

Speaking at the stock exchange, Trump told CNBC he would deliver “an economy the likes of which nobody’s ever seen before.” Indeed he will: Trump will boost the fortunes of the fossil fuel industry, the crypto speculators, and finance capital as a whole, at the expense of the working class. The result will be an explosive intensification of the class struggle on a scale not seen in generations.



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