

The Republican National Convention: A frightened ruling class incites fascist violence

Patrick Martin
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The Republican National Convention concluded its third day last night, with a parade of speakers combining endless homages to the police and military with denunciations of protests against police violence as mobs and anarchists.

The convention's verbal violence was complemented by the physical violence unfolding in Kenosha, Wisconsin, where a fascist gunman opened fire on people protesting against police violence in the wake of the police shooting of 29-year-old Jacob Blake.

The gunman, 17-year-old Kyle Howard Rittenhouse, killed two people and seriously wounded a third, and then was allowed by police to pass through their lines carrying his weapon and return to his home in Illinois, where he was later arrested.

Rittenhouse is a fervent Trump supporter who attended a campaign rally in Des Moines, Iowa on January 30, and can be seen on video sitting in the front row only a few feet away from the president. He posted a TikTok video from the event. When an ultra-right paramilitary group, the Kenosha Guard, issued an appeal for right-wing gunmen to come to the city and reinforce the police against protesters, Rittenhouse was only one of a number who responded.

There is a direct chain of causation from the White House to the gas station in Kenosha where Rittenhouse opened fire on innocent people. Trump's constant diatribes against protesters and in support of the police, since the protests first began after the May 25 police killing of George Floyd, included retweeting the notoriously racist slogan, first issued by a Southern sheriff during the civil rights movement, that "When the looting starts, the shooting starts." Rittenhouse put these words into action.

In his speech Wednesday night, Vice President Mike Pence included Kenosha in a list of Democratic-run cities where anarchy has supposedly been unleashed, including

Portland and Seattle, and said nothing about the murder of protesters by a Trump-loving fascist.

In the course of two-and-a-half hours, not a single convention speaker raised the events in Kenosha or expressed the slightest regret or concern over the actions carried out by Rittenhouse. He had been named Wednesday morning, and his identity as a Trump supporter was certainly known before the convention session began at 8:30 p.m.

This collective silence betokens consent: the Republican Party has become the party of vigilante violence against those protesting against police brutality and other forms of oppression. This was already demonstrated Monday, when Mark and Patricia McCloskey, the wealthy vigilante couple who pointed weapons at Black Lives Matter protesters in St. Louis, addressed the convention. They hailed Trump as the defender of the suburbs against (black) invaders.

What finds expression in Trump is the drive of the most reactionary sections of the bourgeoisie to create the basis for a fascist movement. There is not now a mass social base for such a movement, but Trump makes his appeal to the police and other front-line agents of repression like the Border Patrol and Immigration and Customs Enforcement, sections of the military, and ultra-right and fascist elements mobilized on the basis of racism, anti-immigrant bigotry and anti-communism.

The fascistic tone was set from the opening moments of the convention, when the first speaker declared Trump to be the "bodyguard of Western civilization," standing up to "the vengeful mob that seeks to destroy our way of life, our neighborhoods, schools, churches and values." On Wednesday, congressional candidate Madison Cawthorn addressed the convention, despite reports of his visiting a Hitler vacation resort, the Eagle's Nest, and posting on social media that seeing the facility used by "the Führer" had been "on his bucket list."

Today, according to press reports, Republican congressional candidate Marjorie Taylor Greene, an open supporter of the fascistic QAnon online conspiracy theory, is to be an invited guest at the White House when Trump gives his acceptance speech. Greene won the Republican primary for the 14th Congressional District in Georgia and is expected to win the general election in the heavily Republican district.

The Republican convention is a contemptible array of maniacs, toadies, money-grubbers and outright fascists, but that fact does not lessen the danger that it represents. It is a remarkable and ominous development that one of the two major capitalist parties, half of the official political system of American capitalism, has been put at the disposal of a president who is seeking to incite a fascistic movement to establish authoritarian forms of rule in the United States.

The danger arises not from the intrinsic strength of the social forces Trump represents and appeals to, but from the role of the Democratic Party and the middle-class “left”, as well as the corporate-controlled unions, in blocking and suppressing the struggles of the working class.

In all his political operations, Trump seeks to take advantage of the bankruptcy of the opposing bourgeois party, a bankruptcy rooted in social interests. The Democratic Party is a capitalist party, dedicated to the enrichment of the financial aristocracy, complaining perhaps about the fairness of the distribution of wealth within the top one percent of society—it should be allotted with more concern for racial and gender diversity—but not challenging the fundamental structure of the profit system.

The real nature of the Democratic Party “opposition” to Trump was expressed in the extraordinary comments made by Hillary Clinton, the Democratic presidential candidate defeated by Trump in 2016. In an interview last week, she advised the 2020 Democratic nominee not to give up prematurely if the outcome of the vote on November 3 is close. “Joe Biden should not concede under any circumstances because I think this is going to drag out, and eventually I do believe he will win if we don’t give an inch and if we are as focused and relentless as the other side is,” she said.

Biden is supposedly the favorite in the election, ahead in the polls both nationally and in all the “battleground” states that will decide the contest in the Electoral College. But Clinton’s advice is not to cave in too early! Clinton was obviously recalling the premature surrender of Al

Gore in 2000, who made a concession call to Bush which he later had to retract. Her advice is nonetheless remarkable, both as a glimpse of her own expectations and what she thinks of the fighting temper in the Biden camp.

Nor has any Democrat said what they will do if Trump simply refuses to accept the results of an unfavorable election and leave office—other than to suggest, as Biden did earlier this summer, that he would count on the military to escort Trump out of the White House.

The real social position of Trump and the Republicans is demonstrated in the common characteristic of all the various reactionary and fascistic appeals made at the Republican convention: fear.

Trump and his acolytes are operating in an environment dominated by a growing wave of social protests: the mass demonstrations against police violence, which brought millions into the streets; the mounting resistance of teachers, autoworkers and all sections of the working class to being driven back to unsafe workplaces under conditions of a deadly pandemic; and the growing indignation of the population as a whole as the death toll from coronavirus mounts towards 200,000, while the Trump administration and state governments, Democratic as well as Republican, sabotage any collective social response to the disaster.

The unbridled hysteria at the Republican convention is not just a display for electoral purposes. It demonstrates a profound sense of isolation and weakness, not merely on the part of the ultra-right convention-goers, but on the part of the financial aristocracy itself, which sees itself increasingly under siege.

When speaker after speaker denounces socialism, and declares that if Trump is defeated socialism will follow inevitably, they falsely attribute this danger to Biden and the toothless Democrats. But their real concern is the growing development of a mass movement among working people directed against the capitalist system.



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