Trump’s illness and the Democrats’ call for unity

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Even by the putrescent standards of bourgeois politics, the response of the Democratic Party to the illness of President Trump must set a new record in political cant, hypocrisy and deceit.

One would think from the effusion of appeals for the president’s speedy recovery and return to the White House that it was Franklin Delano Roosevelt or John F. Kennedy, not Donald Trump, who was the patient at Walter Reed Hospital.

The general theme of the tidal wave of tearful condolences that are pouring in from leading Democrats and their media mouthpieces is: “We love you, Mr. President. All is forgiven.”

Hillary Clinton, the target of Trump’s main 2016 campaign slogan—“lock her up!”—now wishes “the President and the First Lady a speedy recovery.” House Congressional Whip Jim Clyburn, who in early August likened Trump to Mussolini and Hitler, added an adjective and expressed his hope for a “speedy and complete recovery.”

Barack Obama seems to have forgotten that Trump’s rise to political prominence was bound up with his promotion of the racist theory that Obama was not a US citizen and, therefore, an illegitimate president. Obama released a tweet, reminding everyone that “we’re all Americans.”

Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders, who has been relentlessly red baited by Trump with menacing threats, has added his voice to the chorus of Democrats wishing “the President and First Lady a full and speedy recovery.”

Vice President Biden, who in the debate held earlier in the week had stated that Trump was indifferent to the lives of Americans and the worst president in history, announced that he is stopping all election advertisements criticizing Trump—an act that Trump and the Republicans, of course, have not reciprocated. Biden piously explained that he “did not want to be attacking the president and the first lady now,” adding that he was praying for their quick recovery. Biden followed this with an appeal for national unity along the lines of Obama: “Before we’re Democrats or Republicans or Independents—we’re all Americans. We can’t forget that.”

It was actually the *New York Times* that set the tone for the Democratic Party’s response to the news of Trump’s illness. Its lead editorial, published Saturday, was headlined: “Get Well, Mr. President.” The editorial declared: “May President Trump and the first lady recover swiftly after testing positive for the coronavirus. For their sake—and the sake of the nation.”

For the sake of the nation? In the days before he fell ill, the *Times*’ coverage of the Trump administration was focused on 1) his refusal to disavow fascists at the presidential debate and his call for the neo-Nazi Proud Boys organization to “stand back and stand by”; 2) Trump’s statements that he would not accept the results of the presidential elections if they go against him; 3) the president’s efforts to ram through the nomination of Amy Coney Barrett to the Supreme Court so that she can hear any cases brought by Trump to challenge ballots; and 4) a massive exposure of Trump’s tax returns, showing years of financial corruption and manipulation.

In its own editorial on the debate with Biden, the *Times* wrote of Trump’s claims that the election will not be legitimate unless he wins: “This threat to the democratic process is no less real because it is a threat made in public.” Only last Tuesday, *Times’* Thomas Friedman published a column warning that Trump’s efforts to delegitimize the election posed an existential threat to democracy, more serious than the Civil War or

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the Cuban missile crisis.

The reasons given by the *Times* for its anxiety over Trump's illness expose the real concerns of the Democratic Party. The editorial warned that his infirmity "will throw the highest levels of government into disarray. Even if he does not become seriously ill, the president will be unable to perform many of his duties until the threat of contagion has passed."

Given what he has been up to since becoming president, and especially during the last nine months, the prospect of Trump being "unable to perform many of his duties" should be cause for widespread relief and public celebration.

The Trump administration has spearheaded a policy aimed at blocking any coordinated response to the pandemic. Trump deliberately downplayed the danger to the American people in February, as revealed in the taped interviews with Bob Woodward. He has worked tirelessly to turn the rejection of even the most minimal measures to prevent the spread of the virus, such as the wearing of masks, into a symbol of neo-fascist politics.

Decades have passed since bourgeois politics and the establishment media have been able to produce anyone capable of saying or writing anything honest. If anyone like H.L. Mencken were still around, his column on the present situation would begin by stating, as an undeniable fact, that if there was anyone in America who deserved to be infected by the COVID-19 virus, it was Donald Trump. A present-day Mencken might have added, for good measure, that Trump's falling ill to a virus the danger of which he had belittled for so long seemed to be the type of divine retribution that might lead even a hard-core atheist to admit the possibility that the universe is ruled by a just God.

There is not a word of truth to be heard or read in the corrupt and cowardly establishment media. No one makes the obvious point that any feeling of sympathy for Trump—or for the newly-infected Republican dignitaries who moronically crowded into the Rose Garden last Saturday, without masks, to celebrate the nomination of Barrett—is inevitably overwhelmed by the fact that the president is politically and personally responsible for a COVID-19 death toll that now stands at 210,000.

Ensconced in the White House, Trump enjoyed a level of personal protection unknown to all except the richest Americans. He could have avoided infection, not to mention placing others at risk. That includes the many thousands of his deluded followers who have come to Trump's rallies. But as a result of his refusal to observe appropriate precautions, a recklessness dictated by his efforts to project the sort of persona required to build an authoritarian and neo-Nazi movement, Trump is in the hospital. With a huge retinue of doctors attending to his health and needs in a massive suite at Walter Reed Medical Centers, countless millions of taxpayers' dollars are being spent on his care.

The massive scale of the hypocrisy and deceit evoked by Trump's illness can only be understood as an expression of class interests. The principal concern of the *Times* and the Democratic Party is not and has never been the policies that the Trump administration is implementing or its threats to overturn the Constitution. Their main fear is that the growth of social opposition in the working class threatens the interests of Wall Street and the geopolitical imperatives of American imperialism. Whenever crisis strikes, the instinctual response of the ruling class is to close ranks against the enemy they fear the most: the working class.

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