

Trump intensifies fascist agitation at CPAC conference

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The closing address by former President Donald Trump at the Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC) in Florida marks a further stage in the elevation of an outright fascist tendency in American politics.

The ex-president railed against what he called “the onslaught of radicalism and socialism, and, indeed, it all leads to communism,” which he said it was necessary to “fight... once and for all.” He associated this, absurdly, with the policies of the incoming Biden administration, which he denounced for rolling back his immigration policies and other measures.

A central focus of Trump’s speech, however, was on the need to purge any opposition from the Republican Party. In the course of his speech, he named every Republican member of Congress who had voted in the House of Representatives to impeach him, or in the Senate to convict him, on charges arising from the January 6 attack on Congress by fascist Trump supporters.

The ex-president declared, “Get rid of them all,” and hailed several former aides or Trump loyalists who have announced they will challenge these “traitors” in Republican primaries next year.

When Trump repeated his lies about the stolen 2020 election, the CPAC audience responded with chants, “You won.” It is now clear that adherence to the false claim that the 2020 election was stolen from Trump is to be a litmus test for Republican candidates and office-holders going forward. It is a key element in the effort to transform the Republican Party into the party of Trump, a personalist, authoritarian organization, symbolized by the golden statue of the defeated president put on display at the conference.

Trump began his speech by dismissing suggestions that he might build a third party, indicating that

dominating the Republican Party was his preferred course of action. There was little attempt to disguise the fascist stamp Trump would impart: the stage at CPAC was built in the shape of the Othala Rune, a symbol adopted by two units of the Waffen SS, a key instrument in Hitler’s extermination of the Jews.

When the issue was raised with CPAC’s organizers, they denied any connection to the symbol’s use by neo-Nazi and white supremacist groups in the United States, including those that marched in the 2017 “Unite the Right” rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, where an anti-Nazi protester was murdered by a fascist.

There were undoubtedly members of fascist groups in the CPAC audience who appreciated the symbolism, and one prominent neo-Nazi, Enrique Tarrio, leader of the Proud Boys, was seen by reporters mingling with the crowd and taking photos with his fans.

Trump’s CPAC speech was his first major public statement since his January 6 diatribe to a crowd outside the White House, which then marched down Pennsylvania Avenue and forced its way into the Capitol, temporarily shutting down the formal counting of the electoral votes that validated Biden’s election win and Trump’s defeat. Trump reiterated both the themes and the tone of January 6 to an equally rabid audience.

The Republican Party establishment that he now reviles played a critical role in legitimizing Trump’s false claims of a stolen election. Mitch McConnell, then the Senate majority leader, sustained the pretense that Trump had not suffered a devastating defeat on November 3, arguing that Trump was merely exercising his legal rights by filing dozens of baseless lawsuits against the counting and certifying of votes in key battleground states.

McConnell, joined by the overwhelming majority of

Republicans in both the House and Senate, refused to acknowledge Biden as president-elect until after the Electoral College vote in December. In the House, a majority of Republicans continued to challenge the electoral votes for Biden even after the mob attack of January 6.

The elevation of an increasingly fascistic tendency in American politics is rooted in the reality of capitalism. The staggering levels of inequality are incompatible with democratic forms of rule. Over the past year, the response of the ruling class to the pandemic has led to the death of more than half a million people, with fascistic gangs mobilized to enforce the demand of the financial oligarchy that there be no restraints on the spread of the virus.

The role of the Democratic Party, a party of Wall Street and the military, is to suppress opposition in the working class, covering up at every point the extreme danger to democratic rights. The militarist and right-wing politics of the Biden administration, along with the promotion of the politics of racial and gender identity, provide Trump and the Republicans with the opportunity to exploit social grievances for reactionary purposes.

Biden announced his desire for “a strong Republican Party, a strong opposition” throughout the transition. Even after a majority of congressional Republicans sided with the fascist attackers on January 6 and voted to overturn the electoral votes in Georgia and Pennsylvania won by Biden, the Democratic Party refrained from any political retaliation. It limited itself to the cosmetic removal of a single Republican, QAnon conspiracy theory supporter Marjorie Taylor Greene, from her committee assignments.

The impeachment and Senate trial of Trump were deliberately managed by the Democrats to exclude any charges that would implicate congressional Republicans. After voting to open the trial to testimony from one House Republican prepared to confirm Trump’s support for the January 6 coup attempt, the Democrats reversed themselves and decided to shut down the trial without hearing a single witness.

The legislative agenda of the Biden administration has likewise been predicated on an effort to achieve “bipartisanship,” i.e., to win Republican votes, an all-purpose excuse for such reactionary steps as dropping the \$15-an-hour minimum wage from the coronavirus

economic recovery bill.

The CPAC spectacle is a warning to the working class. The forces that were on display on January 6, which culminated in a frontal attack on American democracy, continue to be whipped and mobilized by Trump. Thanks to the complicity of the political establishment as a whole, Democratic and Republican, they are being given a central role in American politics.

The effort of a faction of the ruling class to develop a fascistic movement arises not out of strength, but weakness. The financial elite is working to deploy all the forces at its disposal against the working class, using both of its political parties.

The American ruling class is terrified of the mass radicalization of the working class that is being generated by a year of the pandemic, ongoing economic dislocation and increasing social inequality. The fight against the resurgence of fascism and the turn to authoritarianism and dictatorship requires the transformation of this objective movement into a conscious, organized and revolutionary movement for socialism.



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