The CPAC conference and the fascist transformation of Trump's Republican Party

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In the aftermath of the Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC) held last weekend in Dallas, Texas, a clear warning must be made: Donald Trump is consolidating power over the Republican Party, transforming it from a conservative bourgeois party into a fascist party with a personalist leader and a paramilitary wing.

Trump's keynote speech copied Hitler and the Nazis. Trump is not engaged in bluster, as the Democrats and corporate media insist. He is following a distinct political strategy. When Trump and his fascist advisers confront a political problem, their first step is to ask, "What would Hitler do?"

Trump began his speech by laying out his stab-in-the-back myths regarding the 2020 election and the coronavirus pandemic, modeling himself on Goebbels' theory of the Big Lie.

"We were doing really well until the rigged election came along," Trump said, calling the Biden administration illegitimate, asserting it usurped power through "election fraud" and "ballot stuffing." He presented his own supporters as victims of "political violence that was encouraged and legitimized by the left." He repeated his claims about the "China plague," scapegoating China for the death of over 600,000 people in the US.

Trump told his supporters they are under siege from an internal enemy that is responsible for economic hardship, unemployment and crime. Immigrants have "killed and maimed many," he said, and they are currently overrunning the country. "They are coming out of the prisons in these countries, flooding our country, murderers, drug dealers, human traffickers."

He made his most explicit denunciation of socialism and Marxism yet, presenting his movement as a mailed fist, prepared to crush social opposition amid a worsening economic and social crisis.

Socialists, he said, have "stolen our American heritage." The "radical left and the failed political establishment hate our movement" because "we took on the corrupt special interests," he said. "Like socialist and communist movements throughout history, today's leftists do not believe in freedom, they do not believe in fairness, and they do not believe in democracy. They believe in Marxist morality—anything is justified as long as it hurts their political opponents and advances the radical agenda of their party."

Earlier on Sunday during an interview with Fox News, Trump gave his movement a martyr, praising January 6 rioter Ashli Babbitt, who was killed by Capitol security, as an "innocent, wonderful young woman." This, too, is copied from Hitler, who promoted stormtrooper Horst Wessel as a martyr after his death in 1930. Trump hinted that he would blame Democratic leadership for Babbitt's death, saying for the first time that he "had information" showing she was shot by the head of security "for a certain high official" in the Democratic Party.

Trump's speech came at the conclusion of a CPAC meeting geared entirely to promoting Trump as the personalist leader of the Republican Party.

Prime speaking slots were given to individuals who helped lead the coup plot of January 6. Lauren Boebert, who tweeted live updates of the whereabouts of congressional Democrats during the putsch, was a featured speaker, as was Mo Brooks, who spoke alongside Trump on the morning of January 6 and encouraged the crowd to "fight." A slew of far-right podcasters who have promoted Trump's claims of election fraud also spoke, as did Trump's son Donald Jr., several Trump cabinet members and Trump's former White House adviser Stephen Miller.

Trump and his advisers are incorporating fascist groups like the Proud Boys, Three Percenters and Oath Keepers into the Republican Party as its paramilitary stormtroopers. Delegations from each of these groups were present at CPAC and were welcomed by the conference organizers with open arms. Oath Keeper leader Stewart Rhodes, who personally organized the paramilitary rapid response squads that were prepared to deploy to the US Capitol on January 6, was a credentialed guest.

Conference participants engaged in a celebration of death,

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cheering a panelist who praised the US's low vaccination rate. Congresswoman Boebert opposed any further vaccination efforts: "Don't come knocking on my door with your Fauci ouchie." Speakers praised Trump's reaction to the coronavirus, which entailed sacrificing hundreds of thousands of people for profit.

The most explicitly fascist speech was given by Miller, the only top Trump aide who remained in the White House for the entirety of his term in office.

Miller, a longtime student of Hitler, boasted that Trump has succeeded in carrying out a takeover of the Republican Party, in forging "a new conservative populism" based on "defending this nation's heritage, its culture, its values" through ruthless attacks on immigrant workers who want to defile American culture. "As of this time, the Republican Party must file for divorce from big business and never look back. Walk away from the oligarchs, the multinational corporations and all the other massive business conglomerates that have no loyalty to this country. We have a disloyal elite in this country. The wealthiest, most privileged, most powerful people are trying to destroy this country."

He concluded his speech by proclaiming that with Trump leading their resurgent movement, "We will triumph!" This was an almost word-for-word repetition of the Nazi propaganda slogan "Wir werden siegen, weil uns Adolf Hitler führt." ("We will triumph, because Adolf Hitler is leading us.")

Trump and his fascist advisers now advance the theory that he can be "reinstated" as rightful president. The theory was reportedly developed among fascist circles earlier this summer, with Trump supporters Michael Flynn, My Pillow CEO Mike Lindell and Trump's former election lawyer Sidney Powell advocating a "reinstatement" putsch, according to *Vanity Fair*. In May, Lindell appeared on Steve Bannon's "War Room" podcast and declared, "Donald Trump, I believe, will be back in by the end of August." A Politico/Morning Consult poll from June shows that 29 percent of Republican voters believe Trump will be reinstated as president by the end of the year.

The fascist transformation of the Republican Party exposes the bankruptcy of the corporate media and Democratic Party's efforts to downplay the danger. The Democrats engage in endless appeals to "bipartisanship" that take on a demented and grotesque character. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and the "socialists" in Congress call Republicans their "colleagues." Upon taking office, Biden declared, "We need a Republican Party. We need an opposition that's principled and strong."

The Democrats are pursuing a political strategy that plays right into Trump's hands. They implement economic policies that enrich the aristocracy and lead to social immiseration among workers and the middle class. They obsessively promote racial and gender politics and embolden the extreme right. Trump singled out the *New York Times*' 1619 Project in his CPAC speech, saying, "That's all they talk about. Race. The whole show. Race, race." As Bannon said in 2017, "The Democrats—the longer they talk about identity politics, I got 'em. I want them to talk about racism every day. If the left is focused on race and identity, and we go with economic nationalism, we can crush the Democrats."

Six months have passed since the coup attempt of January 6, and the Democratic establishment is papering over what took place. No facts from the Biden Justice Department's investigation have been released to the public. A congressional inquiry has been delayed as Democrats insist that Republican conspirators be invited to participate. Though some of the streetfighters have been arrested, none of the architects have been so much as forced to testify.

The response of the Democrats, the corporate media and the complacent middle class is dictated by a fear of the working class. The Democratic Party is no less a defender of capitalist property relations than Trump, and it is desperate to avoid alerting the working class to the danger in the present situation for fear of triggering mass protests and strikes. This fear is the basis of Trump's appeal to the entire ruling class: only he can stop this growing movement of the working class from challenging their wealth.

Strikes are taking place across the United States among autoworkers, nurses, public sector workers, coal miners and more. The fight against fascism means imbuing the class struggle with a political and socialist perspective independent of the Democratic Party. This requires building the Socialist Equality Party, which fights to unite the international working class across races and nationalities in a common struggle against the source of fascism: the capitalist system.

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