

Trump threatens dictatorship, but “Genocide Joe” is no alternative

Patrick Martin
8 December 2023

Ex-president Donald Trump publicly declared Tuesday that he would act as a “dictator” if he regained the White House in next year’s presidential election.

Speaking before a hand-picked audience of his supporters at a “town hall” broadcast over Fox News, Trump was invited by his host, Sean Hannity, to dispel claims, widely publicized this week in the corporate media, that he would rule by dictatorial methods if he returned to power.

“You are promising America tonight, you would never abuse power as retribution against anybody?” Hannity asked. Trump said he would not act as a dictator “except on day one,” by closing the US-Mexico border and ending all restrictions on the fossil fuel industry.

This remark contains a serious threat. Trump is aware that if he returns to power, it will be because he has significant support within the capitalist state, particularly the military and agencies like the Border Patrol, to exercise a personalist dictatorship that will carry out ruthless repression of the mass opposition to his administration that will inevitably explode.

The Biden campaign seized on Trump’s comments about dictatorship, sending out fundraising emails and texts within minutes of the Fox News town hall, one of them headlined, “Donald Trump: Day One Dictator.” As a headline in *The Hill* put it, “Trump’s ‘dictator’ remark puts 2024 campaign right where Biden wants it.”

Biden himself told a Boston fundraising dinner that he’s “running against an election-denier-in-chief,” who is “determined to destroy American democracy.” Along with the commentaries by his supporters in the corporate media, Biden’s statements are aimed at diverting public opposition to Trump back into the channels of the Democratic Party.

Such appeals have nothing to do with defending democratic rights. This is apparent in the witch-hunt against student protests opposing the Gaza genocide,

vilified as “antisemitism” by congressional Democrats and the White House. The constitutional right to peaceful protest is to be abolished when those protests are directed against Israeli war crimes backed and enabled by the US government.

How is it possible that an ex-president who attempted to remain in power by violence on January 6, 2021, in violation of the Constitution, after losing the 2020 election by seven million votes, is now leading in the polls against Biden?

It is because the Democratic Party has aided and abetted the revival of the Republican Party, and of Trump in particular, by ignoring the social problems of working people that prevailed when Biden took office. Instead, those problems have gotten worse under the impact of inflation, continued mass death from COVID-19 (the vast majority of victims of the pandemic have died under Biden, not Trump), and corporate destruction of jobs, wages and working conditions.

Biden abandoned his campaign promises to maintain economic support for the victims of the pandemic, oversee the raising of living standards for workers, curb police violence against working people, and alleviate the increasingly onerous debt burden on college students and graduates.

Instead of addressing these social needs, the Biden administration has pursued a single-minded focus on war and militarism, provoking and then intervening in the war in Ukraine against Russia, and now sanctioning and enabling the Israeli genocide in Gaza. Meanwhile, there is a steady military build-up in the Asia-Pacific region in preparation for an even more terrible war, this time against China, which, like Russia, is a nuclear-armed power.

This brazen indifference to the needs of working people has led to the collapse in political support for Biden, even in the passive form registered by opinion polls. Biden’s

approval rating is now below 40 percent, and he trails Trump by significant margins in all the critical “battleground” states which the Democrats won narrowly in 2020.

The most recent plunge in Biden’s political standing is the direct result of his embrace of genocide in Gaza, which has alienated young people and students, one of the social layers most hostile to Trump. The Biden administration has refused to make the slightest concession to the mass protests which have mobilized hundreds of thousands against the war crimes being committed by the state of Israel, using US-supplied bombs, missiles and warplanes.

Biden is incapable of making a genuine appeal to the working class and youth. Instead, he appeals to privileged layers of the upper-middle class, including the trade union bureaucracy. He has joined forces with them to impose sellout contracts on workers and to ban strikes, as with the railroad workers one year ago, when an open conflict with the employers threatened to break out of the control of the unions.

The Republicans profit from the mass alienation from the Biden administration, but their program of chauvinist attacks on immigrants, the slashing of social benefits and elevation of religious bigotry at the expense of democratic rights is profoundly reactionary and anti-working class.

Trump is the overwhelming favorite to win the presidential nomination of the Republican Party. That has objective significance in itself, confirming the transformation of the Republican Party into an outright instrument of authoritarian rule, a fascist party in all but name. This is a manifestation of the extreme weakness and crisis of the capitalist political system in America.

Even today, however, the Democrats refuse to acknowledge this transformation, and Biden and congressional Democratic leaders continue their years-long effort to engineer bipartisan deals in both domestic and foreign policy. Their main conflict with the Republicans is that House Republicans are blocking passage of another \$60 billion in US weaponry for the right-wing government in Ukraine, whose summer offensive against Russia has turned into a debacle.

Trump may personify the threat of authoritarian rule, but there is a deeper process that is driving capitalist politics as a whole in the direction of fascism. The Democrats make a few criticisms of Trump, but they are aligned with neo-Nazi forces in Ukraine and genocidal Zionists in the war of extermination against the Palestinians in Gaza.

Moreover, this is a trend that has an international character. In country after country, the capitalist class is turning towards dictatorial forms of rule and bringing fascistic parties into power—Italy, the Netherlands, Finland, Sweden and Argentina are the most recent examples, but there is a growing threat in Germany, France, Spain and throughout Eastern Europe.

The bourgeoisie is terrified of the upsurge of the international working class in strikes that have swept entire industries and countries, and in mass political protests against austerity measures and attacks on democratic rights. This escalation of the class struggle is in response to the deepening attacks on living standards, jobs and social benefits. But the ruling class has no answer to this movement except repression and war.

In the United States, the 2024 elections will unfold in an atmosphere of mounting social and political tension. Biden is not the lesser evil compared to Trump. It is politically futile to attempt to calculate which is the greater evil. Both the Democratic and the Republican parties represent the capitalist ruling elite and defend the global domination of American imperialism. Their differences are purely tactical: what methods to use at home to suppress the working class, and which countries overseas to target first for military violence.

The movement of the working class to fight in defense of jobs, living standards and democratic and social rights is diametrically opposed to the policies of both capitalist parties. It is necessary to wage a struggle to arm this movement with a political understanding and program that correspond to this objective reality of bitter class conflict. This means bringing into the workers’ movement a socialist and revolutionary perspective, and in that struggle, building the Socialist Equality Party.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact