

Democrats, media fall in line as Trump begins administration of “shock and awe”

Joseph Kishore
22 January 2025

As the Trump administration initiates its torrent of reactionary and dictatorial measures, the Democratic Party and its aligned media are quickly falling in line.

At some point, in the not too distant future, as the dimensions of the political disaster ensuing from Trump’s return to the White House become clear, the Democratic Party and media will attempt to hold themselves blameless in the collapse of American democracy. It is, therefore, all the more necessary to record and preserve for posterity what they have done and written.

This applies first of all to the inauguration itself. It is not surprising, but nevertheless extraordinary, that during Trump’s fascistic tirade Monday, which included a vicious, personal attack on the assembled Democratic congressmen and former presidents, none of them issued a single word of protest, let alone stood up and walked out.

Both prior to and after the inauguration, leading Democrats declared their determination to “work with” Trump. This includes Biden (who said in his farewell address that he wished the “incoming administration success”); New York Governor Kathy Hochul (who congratulated Trump on his victory in a call “focused on collaboration”); Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders (who wrote last week that he “looks forward to working with President Trump when he stands with the working families of this country”); and many others.

On Monday, California Governor Gavin Newsom—a particular target of Trump’s personal attacks—declared that there is “critical need for partnership, a shared commitment to facts, and mutual respect.” Newsom added that he looks forward to an expected visit on Friday by Trump to Los Angeles, still reeling from the disastrous wildfires that have killed dozens and displaced thousands.

It does not seem to occur to the Democrats that they have a responsibility to speak for the 70 million people who voted against Trump, let alone defend the rights of those who are under attack. They behave, as always, like sniveling cowards.

As for the corporate media, both print and television, they are following a predefined script. Excised is any reference to “dictator,” “fascism,” and the threat to democratic rights—which were briefly raised in the final weeks of the election campaign. The general presentation is of Trump as a political colossus, with an unchallengeable political mandate to carry out the most sweeping aims of his presidency.

Most significant, and representing the general tone, was the lead editorial Tuesday morning from the *Washington Post*, which is owned by Amazon boss and oligarch Jeff Bezos, who attended Trump’s inauguration the day before.

Under the headline, “Listening to President Trump,” the *Post* refers to Trump’s statements about creating a new “golden age for America,” in which the country will “flourish and be respected again.” The *Post* replied: “Americans can easily agree with such goals. Over the next four years, we want to move past our differences, build a more perfect country and improve life for everyone. To the extent that Trump can help pull in this direction, he will have widespread support.”

On the new administration’s agenda, the *Post* advised that Trump “has a responsibility to make sure that his policies do not endanger [the economy] through tariffs and poorly conceived deportations of undocumented immigrants.” Mass roundups and deportations can proceed, but they should not be “poorly conceived”—that is, they should not be done in a way that undermines corporate profits.

Politico, a major online publication covering the US

capital, owned since 2021 by the right-wing German media monopoly Axel Springer, takes the prize for genuflection, however. It carried a lead article on Tuesday morning, written by editor-in-chief John Harris, headlined, “Time to Admit It: Trump Is a Great President. He’s Still Trying To Be a Good One.” With his second inauguration, Harris wrote, Trump “is holding power under circumstances in which reasonable people cannot deny a basic fact: He is the greatest American figure of his era.”

This of a convicted criminal, pathological liar and con-man who had just delivered a hate-filled diatribe against the outgoing administration, his political opponents, immigrants, and broad swaths of the population in the United States and throughout the world.

In relation to the policies that the new Trump administration is implementing, *Politico* stated only that Trump appears “ready to use his second term, and second chance, to divide the nation” on a number of issues, but it concluded with the hope of a new political era arising out of Trump’s second term.

“What he didn’t show in his first term, or on his improbable pathway to a second, was an ability to bring these conflicts to resolution, to unite the country on a new level of understanding,” Harris concluded. “This would require Trump revealing a new understanding about himself and how to use the next four years.”

Particularly notable is the media’s treatment of the Nazi salute delivered twice at Capital One Arena by Elon Musk, Trump’s primary backer in the oligarchy, on live television Monday afternoon. For the most part, the American media has buried the story, which has exploded on social media, or they have published articles downplaying or questioning its significance.

“Elon Musk Ignites Online Speculation Over the Meaning of a Hand Gesture,” the *New York Times* headlined its perfunctory article. Musk “ignited speculation and chatter online,” the *Times* wrote, intentionally belittling as mere “chatter” the public outrage over Musk’s unmistakable tribute to his fascist models. The *Times* quoted the Zionist and pro-genocide Anti-Defamation League calling Musk’s salute, which has drawn open praise from Holocaust deniers and Neo-Nazis, merely “an awkward gesture in a moment of enthusiasm.”

The response of the Democratic Party and the

corporate media to Trump’s return to power underscores a basic fact: the entire political establishment serves the same oligarchic interests that Trump represents. Whatever tactical differences exist between the Democrats and Republicans—largely over foreign policy and the best methods of defending corporate profits—these factions are united in their subservience to the financial elite.

The Democratic Party is particularly terrified of doing anything that could spark a movement from below or encourage popular opposition, not only to Trump’s administration but the entire framework of capitalist rule. As in the response to the January 6 coup, the real significance of Trump’s actions must be covered up.

Trump’s government will end in a disaster of an unprecedented scale, for which both capitalist parties and the corporate media will bear full responsibility. They have enabled Trump’s rise and paved the way for the authoritarian measures he is now implementing.

The task of resisting this administration does not fall to the discredited political elite but to the working class, in the United States and throughout the world.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact