

# Trumpism, fascism, and political realities in the United States

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**Donald Trump represents a kind of politics that has powerfully transformed political realities in the United States, a kind of politics labeled by some as *Trumpism*. This useful label helps us understand that regardless of what happens to Donald Trump - whether he finally goes to prison or once again takes command of the U.S. Presidency, whether he lives for another decade or dies tomorrow - Trumpism will be with us for a long time. Before examining Trumpism, let us pause to consider the person with whose name this “ism” is identified.**

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One approach to this task might involve working our way through the alphabet. Beginning with the letter “a” - and setting aside rude and insulting expletives - we come upon the word “arrogant,” which certainly fits, although this quality is, sadly, not unique to Trump.

The qualities of Donald Trump certainly include dynamics reflecting The Three Bs - bigot, bully, and braggart. His bigotry reflects deep currents within the culture, the attitudes, and the psychological make-up of millions of people in the United States. He has shown that, when it suits him, he can assume a bullying stance and tone, whipping many into submission - intimidating some, delighting others. The bragging takes many forms: a “go-getter” who compulsively highlights his achievements but also claims to have gone further and gotten more than is actually the case; an ignorant man who glorifies his ignorance (“I don’t read books!”) while claiming to know far more than he knows; someone who exaggerates the esteem in which people hold him and takes credit for accomplishments that are not his own. One should add a fourth “b” - billionaire, adding luster and resources and authority to all that is involved in the narcissistic self-construction of the person who is Donald Trump.

Starting with the next letter of the alphabet, we can note that Trump is quintessentially, and very proudly, a *capitalist*, and there are thirty-four felony convictions which cause many to label him a *crook*.

## Trump and Trumpism

Jumping ahead to another letter in the alphabet, there are many who insist that he is a *fascist*. Others question whether he is consistent and coherent enough to play the role of a Mussolini or a Hitler, insisting that the term is not useful in defining Trump. Some add that the term “fascist” has largely become a meaningless epithet - a freely-used insult applied to ideas and practices and people

we find oppressive. Trump himself uses it (jumbling it with such words as “Marxists” and “Communists” and “terrorists” and “very bad people”) to denounce enemies lurking in the courtroom, in the mainstream news media, in the government, and in the Democratic Party.

How disciplined and single-minded is Trump as a political leader? He could hardly be compared favorably to a Churchill or a Reagan, let alone to a Mussolini or a Hitler. “By the spring of 2020,” according to *New York Times* chronicler Maggie Haberman, “it had become clear to many of his top advisors that Trump’s impulse to undermine existing systems and bend institutions to suit his purposes was accompanied by erratic behavior and levels of anger requiring others to try to keep him on track nearly every hour of the day.” [1]

It is instructive to consider the experience of Steve Bannon, one of the most focused far-right ideologues serving as a central advisor in the early phase of the Trump administration, as reported by Michael Wolff:

*“Part of Bannon’s authority in the new White House was as keeper of the Trump promises, meticulously logged onto the white board in his office. Some of these promises Trump enthusiastically remembered making, others he had little memory of, but was happy to accept that he had said it. Bannon acted as disciple and promoted Trump to guru - or inscrutable God.”* [2]

Over time, Bannon would become exasperated and disillusioned, realizing that the details of the right-wing “populist” agenda he envisioned “were entirely captive to Trump’s inattention and wild mood swings. Trump, Bannon had long ago learned, ‘doesn’t give a fuck about the agenda - he doesn’t know what the agenda is.’” [3]

One is struck by reports from Trump’s so-called press conference of May 31, 2024, after his felony convictions. Far from a defiant right-wing or fascist clarion call, “the thing was kind of a slog,” according to A.O. Scott of the *New York Times*. Scott adds: “Mr. Trump has never been an orderly orator or a methodical builder of arguments; he riffs and extemporizes, free-associates and repeats himself, straying from whatever script may be at hand.” Scott reports that “his manner was subdued” and “curiously flat: a rehash of the trial, with a few gestures toward the larger political stakes.” Rex Huppke of *USA Today* was less charitable, describing it as “[a rambling, incoherent mess](#),” with Trump claiming that witnesses in his trial were “[literally crucified](#),” that President Joe Biden wants to “[stop you from having cars](#),” and that the judge who will sentence him on July 11 is “[really a devil](#).” Hafiz Rashid of the *New Republic* commented: “At times, his words were hard to follow, as the first convicted felon former president went off on tangents with sentences with no clear end.” [4]

But what can be termed *Trumpism* transcends the personal limitations and dysfunctionality of this aging individual. Three essential elements hold together this broad entity that we are labelling Trumpism.

One element is armed and dangerous - the forces that came together to storm the Capitol on January 6 2021, which included the Proud Boys, the Oath Keepers, some of the more militant components of the Tea Party movement, latter-day partisans of the old Southern Confederacy, various Nazi and white supremacist groups. U.S. General Mark Milley, then Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, listed the groups in a January 2021 notebook, with the comment, “Big Threat: domestic terrorism.” According to the *Washington Post*’s Bob Woodward and Robert Costa: “Some were the new Brown Shirts, a U.S. version, Milley concluded, of the paramilitary wing of the Nazi Party that supported Hitler. It was a planned revolution. Steve Bannon’s vision coming to life. Bring it all down, blow it up, burn it, and emerge with power.” These once-marginalized elements had come into the political mainstream, and had grown substantially, with the active encouragement of

Donald Trump and others around him. But this cunning, avaricious, profoundly limited individual and his acolytes were hardly capable of controlling them. [5]

A second element essential to Trumpism's make-up can be found in a quite different cluster of conservative entities and individuals drawn together in The Heritage Foundation's Project 2025 -The Presidential Transition Project. Founded in the 1970s, the Heritage Foundation has served as a center for conservative academics, intellectuals, and policy-makers since the Presidency of Ronald Reagan. Its newest effort is a volume of 900 pages, *Mandate for Leadership: The Conservative Promise*, meant to serve as a policy-making guide for a second Trump administration. "This book is the product of more than 400 scholars and policy experts from across the conservative movement and around the country. Contributors include former elected officials, world-renowned economists, and from four presidential Administrations. This is an agenda prepared by and for conservatives who will be ready on Day One of the next Administration to save our country from the brink of disaster." It is worth noting that Trump is by no means the centerpiece of this document - rather, reference is made to "the next conservative President." Trump is mentioned frequently and very respectfully, but the Heritage Foundation, its collaborators, and its program are framed as entities transcending this individual. [6]

(Also worth noting are *a few odd wrinkles* in this "Conservative Promise," including a seeming overestimation of "the Left," combined with an apparent borrowing of left-wing ideas - to be discussed in the final section of this analysis.)

The third essential element in Trumpism is today's Republican Party. Leading figures and staffers of that party - as was the case with the conservative mainstream as a whole - did not begin as Trump supporters. One knowledgeable Republican operative, Tim Miller, describes what happened this way:

*"When the Trump Troubles began there wasn't a single one in our ranks who would ever have said they were in his corner. To a person we found him gauche, repellent, and beneath the dignity of the public service we bestowed with bumptious regard. We didn't take him seriously. ... And you wouldn't have caught us dead in one of those gaudy red baseball caps."*

But, at first gradually and then suddenly, nearly all of us decided to go along. The same people who roasted Donald Trump as an incompetent menace in private served his rancid baloney in public when convenient. They continued to do so even after the mob he summoned stained the party and our ideals and the halls of the Capitol with their shit. [7]

Miller offers an insider's view of a terrible cynicism permeating the Republican Party leadership, which contributed to Trump's triumph within its ranks. Seeing the political arena as "a big game" through which - by winning - they "awarded themselves the status of public service, the Republican ruling class dismissed the plight of those we were manipulating, growing increasingly comfortable using tactics that inflamed them, turning them against their fellow man." Miller and other operatives "advanced arguments that none of us believed" and "made people feel aggrieved about issues we had no intent or ability to solve." He confesses that a quiet and unacknowledged racism was often employed. And "these tactics became not just unchecked but supercharged by a right-wing media ecosystem that we were in bed with and that had its own nefarious incentives, sucking in clicks and views through rage hustling without any intention of delivering something that might bring value to ordinary people's lives." Miller concludes:

Should it have come as a surprise that a charlatan who had spent decades duping the masses into joining his pyramid schemes and buying his shitty products would excel in such an environment? Someone who had a media platform of his own and a reptilian instinct for manipulation? Someone

who didn't hesitate to say the quiet part aloud? [8]

"Donald Trump cannot succeed alone," mused Liz Cheney. "He depends upon enablers and collaborators." Cheney, a lifelong conservative Republican and former Congressperson from Wyoming who resisted - more doggedly than most - Trump's efforts to bully the Republican Party into supporting him, ended up lamenting that "we have now learned that most Republicans currently in Congress will do what Donald Trump asks, no matter what it is. ... I am very sad to say that America can no longer count on a body of elected Republicans to protect our Republic." [9]

Tim Miller identifies psychological reasons for this in discussing one of his friends. "Caroline has been sucked in by the cult," he concludes. "She is obsessed with Trump and adores him, as incommensurate as that may seem." He sees a very dark dimension in this: "She's the masochistic follower who feels a compulsion to be tested, abused and forced to prove they are deserving of the leader's love over and over and over again." [10]

Adam Kinzinger, former Republican Congressman from Illinois, reflects on the psychology of some of his colleagues, commenting: "More than they fear death, they fear being kicked out of a tribe, and they fear losing an identity." The tribe is the Republican Party, and as for the identity: "You're going to lose your identity as a member of Congress." [11] According to Liz Cheney: "So strong is the love of power that men and women who had once seemed reasonable and responsible were suddenly willing to violate their oath to the Constitution out of political expediency and loyalty to Donald Trump." [12]

Of course, the Republican Party has a long and complex history. Just as in the case of the other essential elements of Trumpism, it did not begin with Trump and will not end with him. He can be credited with playing the important role of helping to bring these elements together - but regardless of what happens to Trump, the larger phenomenon of "Trumpism" will be with us for some time to come.

## **Fascism of the Past ... and Fascism in the Making**

One thing more. We are dealing with a global phenomenon noted by many different observers - involving powerful movements and, sometimes, governments in a diverse range of countries (Argentina, Brazil, France, Greece, Hungary, India, Italy, Russia, Turkey, the United States, and more). A combination of terms describes what is happening - right-wing populism, authoritarian xenophobic ultra-nationalism, etc. - indicating its complex content. Sometimes the word "fascism" is applied, but the term *quasi-fascism* seems more apt. The prefix *quasi-* means "resembling" and "having some, but not all of the features of." The term *quasi-fascism*, in the present moment, can be understood as "fascism in the making."

Fascism has been much analyzed and debated - among scholars as well as among left-wing theorists and activists. Here we will restrict ourselves to touching, first, on one of the earliest explorations in 1923 by Clara Zetkin (a close comrade of Rosa Luxemburg and a pioneer of German Communism), followed by 1940 comments of Leon Trotsky.

The global quality of this development was captured in the opening sentence of Zetkin's 1923 analysis: "Fascism is the concentrated expression of the general offensive undertaken by the world bourgeoisie against the proletariat." [13] It should be recalled that this particular "concentrated expression" was not embraced by the *entire* capitalist class - larger sections of the British bourgeoisie preferred support to Neville Chamberlain or Winston Churchill rather than Oswald Mosley, for example, and in the United States some elements from the capitalist class helped craft

the New Deal program advanced by Franklin D. Roosevelt. But we cannot understand the realities of that time, and of our own, unless we engage with the global dimension stressed by Zetkin.

This global dimension is inseparable from another aspect of the reality that Zetkin identifies as a primary root of the fascist development, “the disintegration and decay of capitalist economy, and the symptom of the dissolution of the bourgeois State.” She adds that “symptoms of this decay of capitalism were observed even before the [First World] War.” But the catastrophic war “shattered capitalist economy to its foundation.” The result was “not only ... the colossal impoverishment of the proletariat, but also ... deep misery for the petty bourgeoisie, the small peasantry and the intellectuals.” As Zetkin notes, “all these elements had been promised that the war would bring about an amelioration of their material conditions. But the very opposite has happened,” with not only the devastation of war, but also a sudden, massive proletarianization, combined with mass unemployment, among “the former middle classes.” She observes: “It was among these elements that Fascism recruited quite a considerable contingent.” [14]

According to Zetkin, “the second root of Fascism lies in the retarding of the world revolution by the treacherous attitude of the reformist leaders.” She is referring here to the massive Social Democratic parties and unions. It is worth considering at length what she describes:

Large numbers of the petty bourgeoisie, including even the middle classes, had discarded their war-time psychology for a certain sympathy with reformist socialism, hoping that the latter would bring about a reformation of society along democratic lines. They were disappointed in their hopes. They can now see that the reformist leaders are in benevolent accord with the bourgeoisie, and the worst of it is that these masses have now lost their faith not only in the reformist leaders, but in socialism as a whole. These masses of disappointed socialist sympathisers are joined by large circles of the proletariat, of workers who have given up their faith not only in socialism, but also in their own class. Fascism has become a sort of refuge for the politically shelterless. [15]

This provides the analytical framework for Zetkin’s understanding of fascism. She makes a major point of distinguishing fascism from authoritarian right-wing violence such as that employed by forces around the reactionary military leader Miklós Horthy, savagely repressing Socialist and Communist workers in Hungary in 1919, replacing an abortive workers’ government with a right-wing dictatorship.

Zetkin insisted that this was not fascism: “Although the methods of both are similar, in essence they are different.” She explained: “The Horthy Terror was established after the victorious, although short-lived, revolution of the proletariat had been suppressed, and was the expression of vengeance of the bourgeoisie. The ringleaders of the White Terror were a quite small clique of former officers.” In contrast, fascism “is not the revenge of the bourgeoisie in retaliation for proletarian aggression against the bourgeoisie, but it is a punishment of the proletariat for failing to carry on the [socialist] revolution begun in Russia. The Fascist leaders are not a small and exclusive caste; they extend deeply into wide elements of the population.” [16]

Zetkin offers a complex and expansive understanding of fascism’s meaning:

The bourgeoisie wants to reconstruct capitalist economy. Under the present circumstances reconstruction of bourgeois class domination can be brought about only at the cost of increased exploitation of the proletariat by the bourgeoisie. The bourgeoisie is quite aware that the soft-speaking reformist socialists are fast losing their hold on the proletariat, and that there will be nothing for the bourgeoisie but to resort to violence against the proletariat. But the means of violence of the bourgeois States are beginning to fail. They therefore need a new organisation of violence, and this is offered to them by the hodge-podge conglomeration of Fascism. For this reason

the bourgeoisie offers all the force at its command in the service of Fascism. Fascism has diverse characteristics in different countries. Nevertheless it has two distinguishing features in all countries, namely, the pretence of a revolutionary programme, which is cleverly adapted to the interests and demands of the large masses, and, on the other hand, the application of the most brutal violence. [17]

Zetkin's analysis became influential within the early Communist International, although it was gradually adulterated, dogmatized, and diluted in the years stretching from 1923 to the Comintern's 1943 dissolution. But it is clearly evident in Leon Trotsky's end-of-life effort to summarize the essentials in his 1940 discussion of political perspectives in the United States. The bottom-line for revolutionaries - which constituted a headline of this section of the document - adds up to eight words: "Fascism Will Come Only If We Fail." But, of course, Trotsky has much more to say. Two excerpts, however, will be sufficient. Here is the first:

*"In all the countries where fascism became victorious, we had before the growth of fascism and its victory, a wave of radicalism of the masses; of the workers and the poorer peasants and farmers, and of the petty bourgeois class. In Italy, after the war and before 1922, we had a revolutionary wave of tremendous dimensions; the state was paralyzed, the police did not exist, the trade unions could do anything they wanted - but there was no party capable of taking the power; as a reaction came fascism."* [18]

Here is the second excerpt:

*"We must not identify war dictatorship - the dictatorship of the military machine, of the staff, of finance capital - with fascist dictatorship. For the latter there is first necessary a feeling of desperation of large masses of the people. When the revolutionary parties betray them, when the vanguard of workers shows its incapacity to lead the people to victory, then the farmers, the small businessmen, the unemployed, the soldiers, etc. become capable of supporting a fascist movement, but only then."* [19]

The fascism described by Zetkin and Trotsky has not crystallized in the United States, but a plausible argument could be made that the converging elements of Trumpism represent fascism in the making.

## **The Power, Failure, and Future of the U.S. Left**

There are riddles to be solved. One involves precisely how the perspectives of Zetkin and Trotsky apply to the realities of the United States. Another involves the earlier mentioned "few odd wrinkles" in the Heritage Foundation's "Conservative Promise" document of 2025. In solving these riddles, we will - hopefully - get a better sense of political realities in the United States, as well as the power, the failure, and the possible future of the U.S. Left.

We have already noted the global dimensions - no less the case now than was true in the time of Zetkin and Trotsky - of the issue we are dealing with. More than this, we are also seeing, in our time as in theirs, a decades-long crisis of capitalism which has generated capitalist policies detrimental to the living standards and to the quality of life for the laboring millions in multiple countries, including our own - the decades' long restructuring of the economy associated with "globalization." Catastrophic impacts of global environmental degradation, as well as imperialist violence on multiple fronts, are also in evidence.

On the other hand, at least superficially, the organized Left (whether headed by socialist or

communist parties, militant trade unions, or whatever) is far from posing any revolutionary threat or even maintaining a credible presence - at least in Donald Trump's homeland, the United States of America. This makes the Heritage Foundation's "Conservative Promise" document seem an absurd, scare-mongering, slanderous exercise when (in the same breath as its complaints about the Democratic Party) it raises a hullabaloo about "the Left" and "the Marxists."

Trotsky's apparent promise was that we on the Left will have a shot at making a revolution before the threat of fascism becomes serious. This is how many of us understood the bald assertion that "Fascism Will Come Only If We Fail." The possibility of Trumpism morphing into fascism would thereby be precluded. But this involves a serious misunderstanding of our history, which in a unique way does correspond to the development described by Zetkin and Trotsky. In an important sense, the scare-mongering conservatives of the Heritage Foundation have a point.

Over the past century, the organized Left has had powerful impact, influencing politics, laws, consciousness and culture within the United States. The labor movement, the waves of feminism, the anti-racist and civil rights movements, the struggles against the Vietnam war, the various student movements, and more - instrumental in bringing about far-reaching changes on the American scene over many decades - would not have been nearly as effective (and might not have come into existence) without the essential organizing efforts of left-wing activists.

This was accompanied by another development, however. Although a significant element among the left-wing activists insisted on the need for political independence from the pro-capitalist political parties, this was largely overpowered by a deep adaptationist trend. In the Red Decade of the 1930s, convergence between socialist-minded forces and a somewhat expansive social liberalism was especially accelerated, as the Democratic Party under Franklin D. Roosevelt (FDR) "stole" many reform components of the socialist program. This was done, as FDR insisted, to save capitalism during the angry Depression years - but also to ensure the continuing popularity and election of FDR. More than this, the bulk of the organized Left was absorbed into the New Deal coalition. [20]

Over half a century, six decisive pivots have made absorption of the organized Left into the Democratic Party almost complete. (1) The trade union movement of the 1930s - particularly the dynamically left-leaning new Congress of Industrial Organizations - formed a firm alliance with FDR's New Deal Democrats. (2) A 1935 decision by the Communist International under Joseph Stalin to form a "People's Front" alliance with liberal capitalists such as FDR, brought the dynamic U.S. Communists into the Democratic Party coalition. (3) At the start of the Cold War, the bulk of the organized labor movement (along with most moderate socialists) embraced the Democratic Party's anti-Communist and liberal capitalist agenda, leading to a broad liberal capitalist "social compact" and consensus, from the late 1940s through the 1950s. (4) The civil rights coalition of the early 1960s became intimately entwined with the party of John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson. (5) Through the 1970s and 1980s, much of the 1960s "new left" would commit to the reform wing of the Democratic Party. (6) As the twenty-first century began to unfold, new waves of young activists joined with older layers - amid radical-sounding promises and soaring hopes - to put Barak Obama in the White House.

From the early twentieth century, the organized Left had been a dynamic force of considerable significance in the United States. Among workers and the oppressed, it had mobilized effective struggles that won genuine victories. It inspired hopes for further effective struggles that would advance human rights, improve the lives of the working-class majority, and bring to birth a better world. Among the wealthy and powerful, of course, it inspired fear and rage.

By the end of the century, through the process we have traced, the organized Left had largely evaporated. Some of its rhetoric, many of its values, and much of its reform agenda (often in diluted

form) could be found in the Democratic Party. Yet a sincere and practical commitment to replace the economic dictatorship of capitalism with the economic democracy of socialism was no longer on the table. Nonetheless, among the wealthy and powerful there were those who still felt fear and rage, and also a deep determination to recover lost ground. [21]

The analyses of Zetkin and Trotsky can be adapted to this quite different context. “Soft-speaking reformist socialists are fast losing their hold on the proletariat,” according to Zetkin in the 1920s, particularly because “the reformist leaders are in benevolent accord with the bourgeoisie.” A hundred years later, in the United States, a highly compromised “working-class vanguard” in the trade unions (AFL-CIO) and in the “progressive” wing of the Democratic Party had, arguably, shown “its incapacity to lead the people to victory,” particularly as the global capitalist economy entered an extended period of crisis. The reformists’ capitalist partners – initially so generous – felt compelled to restructure the economy at the expense of the working class, and the reformists felt able to do little more than adapt. As “too big to fail” corporations crashed the economy in 2008-2009, the newly elected radical-reformer, Barak Obama, hurried to bail out the corporate elite at the expense of the working-class majority. In such a situation – as security, stability, and the quality of life give way to social and economic catastrophe – masses of people who were disillusioned with this variant of the so-called “Left” were inclined, inevitably, to look for alternatives among right-wing demagogues.

The demagogues can be as crude as Trump, but they can be as polished as the Heritage Foundation. This brings us to another odd wrinkle in the “Conservative Promise” document. We have seen the logic of its “overestimation” of the Left. But more than once, it sounds a seemingly left-wing note, as in this radically flourished description of the American Revolution:

*“The American Republic was founded on principles prioritizing and maximizing individuals’ rights to live their best life or to enjoy what the Framers called “the Blessings of Liberty.” It’s this radical equality—liberty for all—not just of rights but of authority—that the rich and powerful have hated about democracy in America since 1776. They resent Americans’ audacity in insisting that we don’t need them to tell us how to live. It’s this inalienable right of self-direction—of each person’s opportunity to direct himself or herself, and his or her community, to the good— that the ruling class disdains.”* [22]

The seemingly left-wing note is sounded again and again. “Ruling elites slash and tear at restrictions and accountability placed on them,” we are told. “They centralize power up and away from the American people.” *The Conservative Promise* adopts the tone of many a left-wing agitator:

“America’s corporate and political elites do not believe in the ideals to which our nation is dedicated – self-governance, the rule of law, and ordered liberty. They certainly do not trust the American people, and they disdain the Constitution’s restrictions on their ambitions.” Taking advantage of the fact that so much of the so-called “Left” has unified with the Democratic Party elite’s pro-capitalist liberalism, the document announces that “socialists ... are almost always well-to-do,” insisting that “the Left does not believe that all men are created equal – *they* think they are special,” adding: “Every hour the Left directs federal policy and elite institutions, our sovereignty, our Constitution, our families, and our freedom are a step closer to disappearing.” [23]

Despite the radical-democratic flourishes of *The Conservative Promise*, however, the bottom line is a defense of unrestrained capitalism. The primary goal of the President of the United States, we are told, should be to unleash “the dynamic genius of free enterprise,” because in countries where there is “a high degree of economic freedom, elites are not in charge because *everyone* is in charge.” According to *The Conservative Promise*, the elitism, corruption, greed, and contempt for ordinary people prevalent in the political sphere is miraculously absent in the economic sphere. Capitalist “free enterprise” is very wonderful indeed: “People work, build, invest, save, and create according to their own interests and in service to the common good of their fellow citizens.” [24]



From certain things *The Conservative Promise* says, and from what it fails to say, one can only assume that the document's authors would welcome whatever support can be rendered to the realization of this glowing vision by forces that mobilized on January 6, 2021 to keep Donald Trump in office - Proud Boys, Oath Keepers, right-wing militias, white nationalist contingents, etc.

There is definitely a fascist potential in the current situation - some of the elements appear to have been crystallizing before our eyes. Whether or not this crystallization is completed, it seems clear that a different pathway is required for the Left than that of being trapped in an accommodation with capitalism, especially in this extended period of capitalist crisis and catastrophe.

Revolutionaries will do what they can to rebuild and renew an orientation, a set of struggles, a movement and organization, consistent with the insights of Clara Zetkin and Rosa Luxemburg, of Leon Trotsky and Vladimir Lenin, and of the many others who recognized that we face the fateful choice of genuine socialism or horrific barbarism.

Underlying crises, deep-felt oppressions, and repressed rage have periodically resulted in amazing activist explosions - such as the Occupy Wall Street movement and the Black Lives Matter upsurges, tilting political realities qualitatively leftward. This energizes and expands the numbers of those on the activist Left. Of course, such developments inevitably also deepen the fear and increase the determination of those on the Right - there's no stopping that. Partisans of Trumpism will always use such things for their own purposes.

The problem is that the mass leftward rage and energies - which cannot be sustained indefinitely - presently have nowhere to go, once the dust settles, except in one of two directions: either apathetic quiescence or reformist channels. Those channels are compromised by corporate liberalism and have proved incapable of transcending the economic system that generates the crises, oppressions, and rage. The creation of something better and more effective than that appears to be on the agenda. [25]

**Paul LeBlanc**

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## Footnotes

[1] Maggie Haberman, *Confidence Man: The Making of Donald Trump and the Breaking of America* (New York: Penguin Books, 2022), p. 429.

[2] Michael Wolff, *Fire and Fury: Inside the Trump White House* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 2018), pp. 115-116.

[3] Michael Wolff, *Siege: Trump Under Fire* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 2019), p. 29.

[4] A.O. Scott, "What Donald Trump Didn't Say After His Trial," *New York Times*, June 1, 2014, <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/06/01/books/review/donald-trump-speech-verdict.html>; Rex Huppke, "Guilty Trump's Press Conference Was a Disaster," *USA Today*, May 31, 2024, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/opinion/columnist/2024/05/31/trump-verdict-press-conference-republicans-replacement-election/73923859007/>; Hafiz Rashid, "Trump Loses It Like Never Before in Wildly Incoherent Press Conference," *The New Republic*, May 31, 2024, <https://newrepublic.com/post/182142/trump-incoherent-post-guilty-verdict-meltdown-press-conference>. For the full press conference, see: "Former President Trump Conference Following Guilty

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<https://www.c-span.org/video/?536064-1/president-trump-press-conference-guilty-verdict>

[5] Bob Woodward and Robert Costa, *Peril* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2021), pp. 273-274; Matt Prince, "What is President Trump's Relationship with Far-Right and White Supremacist Groups?," *Los Angeles Times*, Sept. 30, 2020, <https://www.latimes.com/politics/story/2020-09-30/la-na-pol-2020-trump-white-supremacy>; Aram Roston, "The Proud Boys Are Back: How the Far-Right is Rebuilding to Rally Behind Trump," *Reuters*, June 3, 2024, <https://www.reuters.com/investigates/special-report/usa-election-proudboys/>.

[6] Spencer Chretien, "Project 2025," *The Heritage Foundation*, Jan. 31, 2023, ><https://www.heritage.org/conservatism/commentary/project-2025>

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[7] Tim Miller, *Why We Did It: A Travelogue from the Republican Road to Hell* (New York: Harper, 2022), p. xii.

[8] Miller, p. xx.

[9] Liz Cheney, *Oath and Honor: A Memoir and a Warning* (New York: Little Brown and Co., 2023), pp. 2, 366.

[10] Miller, p. 245.

[11] "Former Rep. Kinzinger Reflects on GOP and Future of Democracy in 'Renegade,'" (interview with Geoff Bennett), *PBS News Hour*, Nov. 1, 2023, <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/former-rep-kinzinger-reflects-on-gop-and-future-of-democracy-in-renegade>

[12] Cheney, p. 2.

[13] Clara Zetkin, "Fascism (August 1923)," *Marxist Internet Archive*, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/zetkin/1923/08/fascism.htm>

[14] Zetkin, "Fascism."

[15] Zetkin, "Fascism."

[16] Zetkin, "Fascism."

[17] Zetkin, "Fascism."

[18] Leon Trotsky, "American Problems" (August 7, 1940), *Writings of Leon Trotsky, 1939-1940* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1973), p. 337.

[19] Trotsky, "American Problems," p. 338.

[20] Details and documentation on the Red Decade can be found in Paul Le Blanc, *Marx, Lenin, and the Revolutionary Experience: Studies of Communism and Radicalism in the Age of Globalization* (New York: Routledge, 2006), pp. 153-198, with aspects of subsequent years touched on in pp. 221-258.

[21] This is traced in Kim Phillips-Fein, *Invisible Hands: The Making of the Conservative Movement from the New Deal to Reagan* (New York: W.W. Norton 2009), summarized in Paul Le Blanc, "The Triumphant Arc of US Conservatism," *Left Americana: The Radical Heart of US History* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2017), pp. 179-186.

[22] *Mandate for Leadership: The Conservative Promise*, p. 14.

[23] *Mandate for Leadership: The Conservative Promise*, pp. 8, 10, 15, 16

[24] *Mandate for Leadership: The Conservative Promise*, pp. 14, 15

[25] For efforts to define possibilities, see: Paul Le Blanc, "The Third American Revolution: How Socialism Can Come to the United States," in Frances Goldin, Debby Smith, and Michael Steven Smith, eds., *Imagine: Living in a Socialist USA* (New York: HarperCollins, 2014), pp. 249-261; Paul Le Blanc, "Pathways for Building a Revolutionary Party," *International Socialism*, issue 164, 17 October 2019, <https://isj.org.uk/pathways-for-building-a-revolutionary-party/>; Paul Le Blanc, "Bernie Sanders, US Politics, and Socialism Today," *Links: International Journal of Socialist Renewal*, August 13, 2019, <https://links.org.au/paul-le-blanc-bernie-sanders-us-politics-socialism-today>; Paul Le Blanc, "The Rise, Fall, and Aftermath of the Sander Challenge," *Irish Marxist Review*, Volume 9, Number 27, 2020; Paul Le Blanc, *Lenin: Responding to Catastrophe, Forging Revolution* (London: Pluto Press, 2023), pp. 177-186.