Trump rails against “socialism” and doubles down on stolen election lie at Conservative Political Action Conference

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In his first public appearance since leaving office in January, Donald Trump delivered the keynote address to the Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC) in Orlando, Florida on Sunday. His fascistic rant was in keeping with the entire proceedings of the four-day event, which brought together leading Republican officials, far-right extremists and pro-Trump fanatics in a demonstration of the ex-president’s continuing domination of the Republican Party and its increasingly fascistic orientation.

The speakers list featured GOP lawmakers who played central roles in the conspiracy to overturn the results of the 2020 election and establish Trump as a presidential dictator, culminating in the siege of the US Capitol on January 6. These included Senators Josh Hawley and Ted Cruz, who led the effort to block certification of the Electoral College vote on January 6, providing political cover for the far-right groups that spearheaded the attack on Congress at the bidding of Trump.

Others given pride of place included Donald Trump Jr., who devoted much of his speech to attacking Liz Cheney, the right-wing war hawk and third-ranking Republican in the House of Representatives, who was among 10 GOP House members who voted to impeach Trump.

Another was Arkansas Senator Tom Cotton, who published an op-ed piece in the *New York Times* three days after Trump’s June 1 Rose Garden appearance, at which the president threatened to invoke the Insurrection Act and mobilize active-duty troops across the country to suppress mass protests against police killings. In his article, Cotton urged Trump to carry out his threat and impose de facto martial law.

On Friday night, Representative Paul Gosar, one of the House Republicans who voted against certifying the Electoral College vote in the hours following the January 6 attempted coup, spoke at a separate but simultaneous event, the America First Political Action Conference. That conference was organized by the notorious white supremacist and anti-Semite Nick Fuentes.

Gosar was a leading figure in the “Stop the Steal” campaign that culminated in the January 6 insurrection. After Gosar spoke, Fuentes called the January 6 attack “awesome” and demanded protection for America’s “white demographic core.”

Tensions and divisions within the Republican Party were reflected in the decision of former Vice President Mike Pence not to accept an invitation to speak at the conference and the absence of Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell and Trump’s ambassador to the United Nations, Nikki Haley. For the most part, however, the party has rallied behind the organizer of last month’s attempt to overthrow the Constitution.

In his rambling 90-minute speech, Trump wasted little time putting to rest earlier reports that he was considering breaking from the Republican Party and forming his own party. As the crowd barked “USA! USA!” he declared that he intended to assert his leadership over the party and outlined an extension of the far-right agenda he pursued as president, hinting of a possible run for the White House in 2024.

At the top of the list was fighting “the onslaught of radicalism” and “socialism,” which, he said, inevitably led to “communism.” He absurdly attributed this agenda to the Democratic Party and the Biden White House, which, he contended, had recorded the “worst first month of any American administration.”

He then ran through his standard menu of right-wing nostrums: anti-immigrant racism, economic nationalism, anti-China agitation, law-and-order, gun rights, anti-abortion demagogy. In keeping with the title of the CPAC conference, “America Uncanceled,” he called for breaking up the “Big Tech” monopolies, which he accused of censoring the “conservative movement,” and denounced racialist attacks on the Founding Fathers, Lincoln and other US historical figures, not from the standpoint of historical

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truth, but on the basis of rabid American nationalism.

Attempting to exploit broad anti-war sentiment, Trump denounced Biden for preparing to reverse his moves toward diminishing the US military presence in the Middle East and Afghanistan.

He spent a good part of his remarks praising his vaccine production program, claiming that it had saved millions of lives, and then denounced Biden for not moving quickly enough to reopen the schools.

At one point, Trump singled out by name all of the 10 Republican House members who voted to impeach him for inciting the January 6 insurrection and the seven senators who voted to convict him, demanding that the Republican Party prevent them from being reelected.

The biggest part of the speech was devoted to rehashing his lying claims of a "stolen election." This was the central theme used to mobilize far-right forces in his bid to overturn the election, which Biden won by a lopsided margin.

In doubling down on this bogus narrative, Trump echoed the speeches and panel discussions throughout the conference, where the claims of a "rigged election" and an illegitimate Biden administration were pervasive.

As with the other speakers at the event, Trump omitted any mention of the fascist attack on Congress on January 6, thereby giving tacit assent and leaving little doubt that had the mob succeeded in its goal of taking hostages and likely executing lawmakers to prevent Congress from certifying Biden's victory, the Republican Party would have backed the insurgents' demands.

Trump demanded that the Republican Party impose massive restrictions on voting rights, in the name of ensuring "free and fair" elections. He called for the virtual elimination of mail-in ballots, tougher voter ID requirements and proof of citizenship at the polls. Many Republican-controlled states are already in the process of implementing such measures, which target poor and working class voters.

Trump's speech and the CPAC conference as a whole must be taken by the working class as a sharp warning. By pleading for "unity," calling for a "strong Republican Party" and working to cover up the complicity of the GOP as well as forces within the military, the police and the financial oligarchy in the fascist coup attempt, Biden and the Democratic Party leadership have strengthened Trump and his fellow Republican plotters.

Trump's address came barely two weeks after the Democrats capitulated in the Senate impeachment trial, conducting their prosecution case in a manner designed to conceal the role of the GOP, including senators such as Cruz and Hawley who voted to block certification, and Mitch McConnell, who as Senate majority leader gave credence to Trump's lies of election fraud.

On the final day of the Senate trial, February 13, the Democratic House managers, under pressure from the White House, refused to call as a witness Washington State Republican Representative Jaime Herrera Beutler, who had announced her willingness to testify about a phone conversation on the day of the attack proving Trump's support for the insurrectionists. She told the press that she heard House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy plead with Trump to call off the mob and send reinforcements to the Capitol, only to told by the president that the mob was "more upset about the election than you are."

As the *World Socialist Web Site* warned on January 7 :

> Not only *can* a fascist coup happen here. It *has* happened here, on the afternoon of January 6, 2021. Moreover, even if the initial effort has fallen short of its goal, *it will happen again* .

Any reliance on Biden and the Democratic Party to oppose the growth of fascistic forces in and around the Republican Party, and the turn by growing sections of the ruling class toward dictatorship, would be a catastrophic mistake.

The Democratic Party, like the GOP, is a party of Wall Street, the military and the CIA. It is pursuing essentially the same homicidal policy of herd immunity as that carried out by Trump, centered on reopening the schools and forcing workers into unsafe workplaces to produce profits for the corporate elite. It appeals for unity with the Republican Party and downplays its fascistic politics in the interests of forging a common front against the growth of social opposition in the working class.

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