

Republicans double down on defending January 6 coup attempt

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Wednesday's events in the US capital underscore the deepening crisis of American democracy. They must serve as a further warning of the growing danger of fascism and dictatorship.

Republican House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy withdrew all five of his nominees to the committee investigating the January 6 attack on the US Capitol, when far-right Trump supporters, incited by the then-president, sought to block congressional certification of the results of the 2020 election, which showed Trump losing to Democrat Joe Biden by a sizeable margin.

On Monday, McCarthy named the five Republicans, including three who sought to block the certification of Biden's election, among them Jim Jordan, one of Trump's closest co-conspirators within Congress.

Jordan immediately made clear that he would use this position on the committee to claim that the insurrection was a response to "violence" by left-wing protesters, declaring, "I think it's important to point out that Democrats created this environment, sort of normalizing rioting, normalizing looting, normalizing anarchy in the summer of 2020, and I think that's an important piece of information to look into."

In response, Democratic House Speaker Nancy Pelosi vetoed the nominations of Jordan and Representative Jim Banks of Indiana, another defender of Trump's "big lie" of a stolen election.

The appointment of Jordan and the subsequent withdrawal of the Republican nominees make clear the extent to which the Republican Party has embraced the January 6 coup attempt as part of its transformation into a fascist party.

These actions came after a tumultuous week dominated by revelations in a series of newly published books about the Trump administration that included inside accounts from top aides of Trump's sympathy for Nazism, their fears that he would try to call off the 2020 elections, and concern among top military leaders after Trump's election defeat that the then-president would seek to stay in power through a military coup backed by fascist militia groups.

According to one book, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of

Staff, Gen. Mark Milley, told his colleagues that Trump viewed January 6 as his "Reichstag moment," referring to the incident used by Hitler to seize dictatorial power in Germany.

Only 11 days ago, in his speech to the Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC) in Dallas, Trump delivered what amounted to a full-on embrace of the January 6 coup attempt. He reiterated his lies about election fraud in 2020, while redoubling his invective against socialists who have "stolen our American heritage" and demanding that anyone in the Republican Party who questioned his leadership be driven out, particularly those who held him responsible for the attack on the Capitol.

Trump openly defended those who participated in the January 6 attack, bemoaning the death of Ashli Babbitt, shot to death as she led a group of rioters into the chamber of the House of Representatives. The CPAC meeting welcomed participants from the Proud Boys, Oath Keepers and Three Percenters, the fascist militia groups that spearheaded the attack on the Capitol.

As the WSWs warned, the CPAC speech signified that "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."

Wednesday's events marked a further step in this process, in which the Republican Party operates more and more as the direct extension of the ex-president. McCarthy nominated the five Republican representatives to the select committee on Monday, after visiting Trump at his Bedminster, New Jersey estate in order to clear the decision with his Führer.

McCarthy and Trump worked out the best method to undermine the investigation. Rather than an open boycott from the start, they would pretend to engage, then nominate Republicans like Jordan and Banks who would use the committee as a platform to defend Trump and attack left-wing protesters.

Initially, it appeared that Pelosi was prepared to accept

McCarthy's appointments. After noting that three of McCarthy's nominees, including Jordan and Banks, had voted to block Biden's election hours after the rioters had been cleared from the Capitol, she said, "Let me be clear, how people voted on affirming the election of Joe Biden is not a criterion for service. That doesn't matter."

But on Tuesday night, the *Washington Post*, a longtime bastion of support for "bipartisanship," published an editorial urging Pelosi to reject Banks and Jordan and calling their nominations "Kevin McCarthy's cynical gambit to spoil the Jan. 6 investigation."

Finally, on Wednesday, Pelosi issued a brief statement rejecting the nominations of Banks and Jordan. There was no press conference by the Democrats and no attempt to give a detailed explanation to the public of the provocative character of the Republican action.

McCarthy and the five Republicans immediately called a press conference and made it clear they opposed any investigation into the circumstances and causes of the unprecedented attack on the US seat of government. The only issue to be investigated, in their view, was why Capitol Police were so unprepared for the attack, a failure which they chalked up entirely to the Democratic House speaker.

These developments provide a further demonstration of the fecklessness of the Democratic Party and the Biden administration, as they seek to cover up the real meaning of January 6.

In relation to the investigation into the attack on the Capitol, Pelosi has made one retreat after another in an effort to accommodate the Republicans. In keeping with the Biden administration's mantra of "bipartisanship" and "unity" with "our Republican colleagues," the Democrats crippled their own impeachment drive following the January 6 attack, refusing to call any witnesses in the Senate impeachment trial of the still sitting coup plotter Trump.

Then, in pursuit of a "911-style" independent commission, she gave in to Minority Leader McCarthy's demand for a 50-50 split in the membership, and to a demand that each party have the same rights to subpoena witnesses.

It was only when McCarthy added a demand that the commission's scope be widened to include the protests against police violence that took place last year—a transparent effort to shift the focus away from January 6 entirely—that Pelosi finally balked, putting through a bill to establish a commission, which House Republicans opposed, and Senate Republicans ultimately killed with a filibuster.

The Democratic Party, which controls both houses of Congress as well as the White House, has refused to prosecute Trump and his Republican co-conspirators, and covered up revelations of complicity in the coup on the part of the FBI, the police and the Pentagon revealed in the

scattered congressional hearings it has held in the more than six months since the attempted coup.

The White House responded to Pelosi's action on Wednesday with a perfunctory statement of its confidence in her, omitting any reference to the obvious attempt by the Republicans to sabotage the investigation. Biden is engaged in his own search for "bipartisanship," in the effort to win Republican support for an infrastructure spending bill. A Republican filibuster Wednesday blocked the Senate from beginning debate on this legislation.

There are profound class reasons for the desperate pleas for bipartisanship and the refusal to call the Republican Party what it is: a party of fascist authoritarianism. The Democrats, like the Republicans, are a political instrument of the ruling financial aristocracy. The capitalist class has long maintained its rule through the alternation of the Democrats and Republicans in office, with the "other" party always available when popular discontent with the party in power rises to a dangerous level.

Today the ruling class is well aware of the mounting hostility among working people to both of its political parties. There is mass alienation over falling living standards, staggering levels of social inequality, attacks on democratic rights, and the nightmare of the pandemic, prolonged indefinitely by the policy of prioritizing corporate profits over human lives.

One faction of the ruling class, personified by Trump, reaches for the club of dictatorship. The other faction, fearful of the outcome of such a conflict, seeks to suppress mass opposition by relying on the trade unions and the middle-class practitioners of identity politics, while the military-intelligence apparatus is held in reserve.

The working class can give no support to either faction of the ruling elite. The threat of fascism cannot be fought by relying on those sections of big business that are not yet in the camp of dictatorship but will join it as soon as they consider it necessary. The defense of democratic rights requires the building of a mass revolutionary movement of the working class based on a socialist and antiwar program. This means joining and building the Socialist Equality Party, the only party that fights for this program.



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