

Trump steps up fascistic appeals at Arizona rally

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Ex-President Donald Trump brought his “big lie” tour to Arizona Saturday afternoon, with a fascistic address to a crowd of 5,000 people at the Arizona Federal Theatre in downtown Phoenix. The event was called the “Protect Our Elections Rally,” an Orwellian turn of phrase for a speech in which Trump spent the bulk of an hour and three-quarters denouncing the 2020 election and seeking to overturn it.

The appearance, the latest in a series of such events over the summer, was notable for an escalation of the anti-communist hysteria from the former president. At least half a dozen times, Trump denounced both the Democratic Party and President Joe Biden—right-wing representatives of Wall Street and American imperialism—as “communists.”

“The radical left Democrat communist party rigged and sold the election,” he claimed. On immigration: “the socialist Democrats and communists are trying to include amnesty in their reconciliation.” On the media: “We are beyond socialism. When you have no press that you can talk to, that’s how a communist country begins. They have no press.” On the future course of development: “What’s happening to our country has sadly happened to so many others. We are at the beginning of a communist system. Radicals are seizing power and destroying everything we hold dear as Americans, and it’s happening.”

One passage is worth extensive citation, only because it provides an insight into the type of appeal Trump is making and the type of political movement he is seeking to build:

“Our movement is driven by a love for America and an ironclad faith in the American people. I have that faith, and you have that faith. We are not fighting for socialism, communism. We’re not fighting for servitude. We’re fighting for God, for country, and

we’re fighting for freedom.

“We know in our veins that our American inheritance was passed down to us by generations of patriots who gave everything they had, their sweat, their blood, and even their very lives to build America into the most powerful nation in the history of the world. And we are not going to let it be taken away from us by a small group of radical left, Marxist maniacs.”

Such language is not merely vomiting up the worst type of redbaiting, reminiscent of the McCarthy witch-hunt of the 1950s. There is a new quality here. Trump is seeking to combine religious fundamentalism, patriotic flag-waving, xenophobia and anti-communism, with out-and-out hatred of democracy, elections, a free press, civil rights and any form of social equality.

It is the language of an American form of fascism, and Trump is carrying out a campaign, not simply to restore himself to power, but to build a fascist movement that would become the vehicle for him to establish a right-wing dictatorship in America.

For now, this effort is focused on transforming the Republican Party into his personal instrument. The bulk of the day-long political rally was to boost Republican candidates in the 2022 elections for governor, other statewide offices in Arizona, the US Senate and House of Representatives. Those Republicans deemed insufficiently loyal to Trump, including Governor Doug Ducey and state Attorney General Mark Brnovich, who upheld the results of the 2020 vote, in which Biden narrowly carried the state, were excluded from the rally and in some cases denounced.

He is openly inciting violence against his political opponents. His Phoenix diatribe was arguably even more inflammatory than the hour-long speech he gave to a crowd outside the White House on January 6,

2021, before directing them towards the Capitol, where they broke in and blocked, for a time, the congressional certification of Biden's victory in the Electoral College.

While the bulk of Trump's speech was a rehash, of even greater length than usual, of past claims about alleged incidents of vote fraud and ballot-rigging in the 2020 elections, it was clear that Trump was seeking to rebut allegations that his attack on the 2020 election was an attack on democracy.

"I am not the one trying to undermine American democracy," he claimed. "I'm the one trying to save American democracy. I'm trying to save it. Our country is being destroyed by people who have no right to destroy it. People that won an election illegally. People that should not have been elected. They lost in a landslide. Joe Biden and the radical Democrats are wrecking our nation."

Like the "big lie," claiming that your critics are doing what you yourself are plotting is a well-known tactic of Hitler. Thus Trump, the man who was thrown out of office by the largest vote ever recorded in US history, presents himself as the savior of American democracy.

Trump also told his followers that while preparing for the next election in 2022, "We don't have the luxury to sit back and to wait until the next election. We don't." He urged support for the effort sponsored by the Republican-dominated Arizona Senate to carry out a supposed "forensic audit" of the votes cast in Maricopa County, the county which includes Phoenix, and where two-thirds of Arizona's population lives.

The audit has been opposed by the Republican-controlled Maricopa County board and by Republican Governor Ducey and has been repeatedly exposed in the local media as an amateurish shambles that has already gone on for four months without any results. Last week the former Arizona secretary of state who was acting as "director" of the audit was barred from the premises by Republican officials because he released figures that undermined their claims of vote-rigging.

Trump hailed the audit and claimed it had inspired similar efforts in Michigan, Pennsylvania, Georgia and Texas, where the Republican-controlled state legislature is moving to approve an audit limited to large urban districts, of which 10 out of 13 voted for Biden last year.

The former president also used his platform to attack Senate Republican Leader Mitch McConnell, and his own former vice president, Mike Pence, as well as the handful of other congressional Republicans who have held him responsible for the January 6 attack on Congress.

It was noticeable, however, that Trump avoided the subject of the attempted coup altogether. He made no reference to the hearings, set to begin tomorrow, of the House Select Committee appointed to investigate the January 6 attack. Nor did he mention House Republican Leader Kevin McCarthy, who sought to blow up the committee by appointing diehard Trump partisans like Representative Jim Jordan, only to have the appointments blocked by House Speaker Nancy Pelosi.

He also said nothing about Ashli Babbitt, the Trump supporter from Arizona who was shot to death on January 6 by a Capitol Police officer as she led a group of rioters trying to break through into the chamber of the House of Representatives and attack the members of Congress huddled there.

This omission was doubly noticeable because Babbitt's mother was at the rally, as the invited guest of Representative Paul Gosar, the ultra-right Republican and all-out defender of police violence under other circumstances, who has denounced the shooting of Babbitt as an "execution." Gosar put a spotlight on his guest, but Trump did not refer to Babbitt, after holding her up as a martyr at previous rallies.



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