

SEP Summer School 2021 Lecture

From the US presidential election to Trump's coup

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This lecture was delivered with a series of slides and video clips, many of which cannot be reproduced here. These will be briefly summarized where appropriate.

This report will deal with the events from last November 3, 2020 through January 6, 2021, a period of 64 days. The *World Socialist Web Site* wrote 12 perspectives in the first 25 days of posting after the election. I urge you to read these, as I can only cite a few of them.

These events, while they involved a bitter conflict within the US ruling elite, were of urgent concern to the working class. Workers should understand them, have a class political attitude towards them, be able to explain them to their co-workers and take action. These are not issues merely for the intellectuals, the political professionals and pundits.

Our approach is the diametric opposite of the position of the pseudo-left, which to the extent they even acknowledge the existence of the working class reduce it to the most elementary trade union form, which is not only historically outmoded, as we have explained, but excludes any intervention by the working class into the big political questions and conflicts that determine the life of society.

The maps of the Electoral College votes in 2016 and 2020 are familiar. There are five states that shifted from Republican to Democrats—the three Northern industrial states, Wisconsin, Michigan and Pennsylvania, and the two Sunbelt states, Arizona and Georgia.

In the popular vote, Biden won by 7 million. In 2016, Clinton won by 3 million votes. The Democratic vote increased by 15.4 million and the Republican vote by 11.2 million, raising the Democratic margin from 2.9 million to 7.1 million.

The popular vote margin for Biden was, by historical standards, a decisive victory. By comparison, George W. Bush won reelection in 2004 by 3 million votes, and Barack Obama won reelection in 2012 by just under 5 million votes. Bill Clinton won in 1992 by 5.8 million votes. Biden's margin was almost exactly equal to the 7.1 million margin for George H. W. Bush over Michael Dukakis in 1988. It is slightly less than the 8.2 million votes that separated Bill Clinton from Bob Dole in 1996 and the 8.5 million vote margin for Obama over John McCain in 2008.

The most significant change was the huge increase in voter turnout for both parties, but more for the Democrats, which reflected two related processes: mass opposition to the Trump administration and easier access to voting because of adjustments in procedures due to the coronavirus pandemic.

The percentage of the population voting, 66.8 percent, was the largest since 1900, before women and most African Americans could vote. The biggest percentage increases were among youth 18-29, Asian Americans and those with some college education but not a four-year degree. African American turnout increased, reaching 70 percent, above the national average, across eight "battleground states."

The point of reviewing these figures is to demonstrate what was known, certainly within a few days of the election, to Republican and Democratic campaign professionals, elected officials and the corporate media analysts and pundits.

They all knew, based on the national and state-by-state figures and exit polls, that Biden had won and won decisively. There was a colossal increase in turnout, both in percentage terms and in absolute numbers. This was the basic cause of Trump's defeat. It was a popular repudiation of his presidency.

Nothing in these results genuinely surprised the professional analysts with the two campaigns or the media. Trump's own in-house number crunchers had showed him behind for weeks. That was one reason why he had so stridently declared, well before the election, that he would not accept the results.

The state-by-state counts showed no anomalous figures from any of the closely contested "battleground" states. The election was *not* close, and there was no objective basis for the claims of fraud and ballot-rigging.

If Biden's victory was in doubt, so too would be the victories of hundreds of Democratic candidates in the House and Senate and in races for state governors. With only one exception, however, the Republican losers refrained from claiming victory and conceded within days, even hours, in the time-honored fashion. But Trump was not playing by those rules.

Trump's response to the election results

Well before the election, Trump had declared that he would not necessarily accept the results of the vote. You will recall that this goes back to the 2016 campaign, when during a debate with Hillary Clinton he refused to accept in advance the result of the upcoming vote. Even after winning in 2016, he claimed that Clinton's popular vote victory was due to millions of illegal votes by undocumented immigrants.

This became a regular theme of Trump's remarks at campaign rallies during the summer of 2020. He repeatedly cast doubt on mail-in ballots, even though he was using mail ballots himself, his nominees ran the Post Office and Republicans controlled the majority of state governments or legislatures, particularly in battleground states like Pennsylvania, Michigan, Wisconsin, North Carolina, Georgia, Florida and Arizona.

In the middle of the night, about 3:00 a.m. on the morning of November 4, Trump went on national television to claim victory, based on the same-day voting in many of the battleground states. Millions of mail-in ballots were still being counted, and Trump's own pollsters, as well as those for

the media, were well aware the trend was for Biden. For several days, the media cowardly refused to acknowledge this trend and call Biden's victory, giving a boost to Trump's claims.

As soon as the election was called for Biden, Trump began to set into motion plans to challenge the results. This was an action unprecedented in American history.

Here is the WSWS's first major analysis of the post-election crisis, written by David North and Joseph Kishore and published November 7, 2020, under the headline, "Trump's refusal to concede sets the stage for post-election crisis." It sets out, while votes were still being counted, the basic outlines of the situation. It is particularly notable for its conclusions about Trump. We wrote:

It appears that Democratic Party candidate Joe Biden is on the verge of winning enough states to be elected president of the United States. ... However, what Biden had once described as his "worst nightmare"—that Trump would not accept his defeat at the polls—may, in fact, be unfolding.

In an extraordinary speech at the White House early Wednesday morning, Trump proclaimed himself the winner. "Frankly we did win this election," he said. "So we'll be going to the US Supreme Court. We want all voting to stop." By an end to "voting," Trump means a halt to the continued counting of mail-in ballots that were legally submitted...

Whether or not he succeeds in the short term in staving off defeat—through a combination of legal challenges, right-wing protest demonstrations, threats and actual use of violence—Donald Trump, and the anti-constitutional fascistic movement whose growth he has been sponsoring, is not going to disappear from the political scene.

As the *World Socialist Web Site* has repeatedly warned since his attempted coup d'état last June, Trump's political strategy has never been limited to purely electoral calculations. During the past three months, he has been campaigning more for the role of *Führer* than merely president. That fascistic campaign has not ended.

I will not provide a blow-by-blow account of the legal and political moves that took place during the month that followed the election. The Trump campaign filed more than 60 lawsuits, nearly all of them in the six battleground states won by Biden. In none of these was any significant evidence offered of vote fraud. Campaign lawyers like Giuliani spoke loudly about fraud at press conferences and rallies but were far less forthcoming in court.

This was not simply legal malpractice or the dementia or insanity of certain lawyers. There was a definite political strategy involved. Loud claims of fraud were aimed at enraging and mobilizing Trump supporters and putting political pressure on state legislators to intervene and overturn the popular vote in their states. They were to award Trump their state's electoral votes, following on the notorious theory of Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia, articulated in 2000, that there is no constitutional right to vote for president, and that state legislatures may choose presidential electors on their own, defying the decision of the voters. Trump even summoned state legislative leaders and individual state legislators from Michigan and Pennsylvania to the White House, and he was in contact with legislators in Arizona, Georgia and Wisconsin.

Trump's legal challenges culminated in the lawsuit brought by 18 states with Republican attorneys general, who asked the Supreme Court to overturn vote results in four battleground states, an extraordinary effort to have the court sanction political interference by the Republican-run state

governments into those states they do not control. The court denied the suit by a 9-0 vote.

These efforts ultimately failed, not because the various state-level Republicans like Georgia Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger were intransigent defenders of democracy, to say nothing of the Supreme Court. But there were too many states, and Biden's lead in those states was too wide to make it politically possible to repeat *Bush v. Gore*. Both the state officials and the Supreme Court justices feared that their intervention on the side of Trump, when he had so clearly lost, would touch off mass popular opposition and become a political catastrophe.

Trump purges the Pentagon

On November 9, Trump took his first action in response to his electoral defeat, firing Secretary of Defense Mark Esper, with whom he had clashed during the summer over Esper's reluctance to deploy the military against mass protests over police violence. His replacement, Christopher Miller, was a largely unknown figure, a former Green Beret with a 30-year military record, including in Iraq and Afghanistan, who rose to the level of colonel in the special forces before retiring in 2014. He returned to the government as a Pentagon official under Trump, as director of the National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC).

Kash Patel was appointed as Miller's chief of staff. He was a former military lawyer embedded with special forces units. He joined the staff of Devin Nunes, the top Republican on the House Intelligence Committee, and went from there to the White House. It was later learned that Trump intended to appoint him deputy director of the CIA and then fire Director Gina Haspel.

Ezra Cohen-Watnick, also appointed to a high-level position in the Defense department, was a former civilian Defense Intelligence Agency official who later worked for the CIA, the Pentagon again, and the National Security Council under Trump, where he was named senior director for intelligence programs by Michael Flynn. Cohen-Watnick reportedly leaked information about CIA surveillance of Trump to House Intelligence Committee leader Devin Nunes.

Anthony Tata was a retired career military officer, a former brigadier general, posted to Haiti, Panama, Kosovo and Afghanistan. He had described Barack Obama as a Muslim and a "terrorist leader" and was so right-wing that his nomination to the Pentagon post had been blocked by Senate Republicans. Trump now installed him as deputy acting undersecretary and, with a vacancy at undersecretary, he began exercising the powers of that office.

The WSWS published a statement on November 11, 2020 headlined "Stop Trump's conspiracy to nullify the 2020 elections," which began as follows:

President Donald Trump is refusing to accept his electoral loss and is actively engaged in a coup to nullify the results of the 2020 elections and establish a personalist dictatorship.

The situation could not be clearer: Trump is now doing what he announced he would do prior to the elections. He is denying the legitimacy of an election that Biden won decisively, seeking to create a lying narrative that the election was "stolen," and conspiring to throw out the votes of millions of people.

This conspiracy has been joined by the Republican Party, which is acquiring more and more the character of a fascistic and criminal syndicate. Republican leaders at the federal and state levels have backed Trump's lies and refused to recognize Biden's

victory. In a speech on the Senate floor Monday, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell declared that Trump was “100 percent within his rights to look into allegations of irregularities and weigh his legal options.”

Trump’s pseudo-legal maneuvers are backed by the incitement of violence by far-right and fascistic forces, supported by sections of the police and state apparatus. Demonstrations are planned this weekend in Washington D.C. to mobilize Trump supporters under the banner of “Stop the Steal.”

On Monday, Trump fired Defense Secretary Mark Esper, who had earlier criticized Trump’s plans to deploy troops against peaceful protesters. The new “acting” Pentagon chief will be Christopher Miller, a 30-year Special Forces operative and retired colonel. In contrast to the ruthlessness with which Trump is proceeding, the Democratic Party is acting with its usual combination of fecklessness and unseriousness. On Tuesday, Biden dismissed Trump’s actions as an “embarrassment.” Biden added, “The fact that they’re not willing to acknowledge we won at this point is not of much consequence in our planning.”

This statement identifies all the major features of the political situation: the unprecedented actions by Trump, the support for it by the Republican Party, the incitement of violence, the purging of the Pentagon and the utter complacency of the Democratic Party. This is only four days after Biden was declared the winner of the election.

Trump’s fascist co-conspirators

The book *I Alone Can Fix It* is for the most part a rehash of journalistic reports on the Trump administration, but it does give some vivid insights into the period from November 3 to January 6. It describes a phone call to Milley from an unnamed friend, probably Mattis, Gates or another very high-level former official. I quote:

The friend was very concerned about the right-wing acolytes who had just been elevated and enjoyed special access to Trump, warning they were part of a larger cabal willing to cross every line to hold power. “What they’re trying to do here is overturn the government,” Milley’s friend told him. ... “You are one of the few guys who are standing between us and some really bad stuff.”

The friend began by describing Michael Ledeen ... Ledeen had deep connections to Flynn, Cohen-Watnick, Patel, Steve Bannon and Erik Prince, founder of the private military company Blackwater USA [and brother of Trump’s Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos] ... [Ledeen] was a neoconservative who had studied Italian far-right leader Benito Mussolini and the rise of fascism. Ledeen had long espoused that Iran was the epicenter of evil and needed to be destroyed. His wife, Barbara Ledeen, a longtime Senate staffer, served as a den mother of sorts for neocon planning sessions at Bannon’s home ... where Patel and Cohen-Watnick were frequent guests. The friend reminded Milley of Bannon’s mantra: Burn down the institutions. Milley was shaken. Was there actually a coup plan afoot?

Ledeen is well known to the WSWS, and the *Bulletin* before it, going back nearly 40 years to Reagan and the Iran-Contra affair.

I Alone Can Fix It concludes with this statement: Milley which is perhaps the most widely quoted revelation in the book. After citing Milley’s concerns that Trump, following his removal of Esper as Secretary of Defense, might seek to replace Gina Haspel as CIA director and Christopher Wray as FBI director, the book quotes Milley on the prospects for a pro-Trump coup.

“They may try, but they’re not going to fucking succeed,” he told them. “You can’t do this without the military. You can’t do this without the CIA and the FBI. We’re the guys with the guns.”

If the “men with guns” decide to save American democracy from Trump, then American democracy is in the hands of the “men with guns.” They decide, not the people. And that is not democracy.

Later the book relates that Milley felt that there was a possibility that Trump would seek to remove him as chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, although he had only been appointed in 2019 and his statutory term ran until 2023, unless removed for cause. To forestall that or another Trump action the generals opposed, like an immediate pullout from Afghanistan, Milley and the Joint Chiefs discussed a plan for sequential resignations. If Milley resigned or was fired, each member of the Joint Chiefs would in turn refuse to do whatever it was that Milley had refused to do and then resign publicly. In other words, there would be a full-scale officers’ rebellion, hardly a characteristic of democracy.

In many ways, the pro-Trump demonstrations held in Washington in November and December were the most important preparations for the January 6 coup, because they brought together many of the individuals and all of the organizations and front-line leaders, what might be considered the NCOs and lieutenants of the coup attempt, to the place where they would be conducting their operations.

On November 14, 2020 there was the first pro-Trump rally after the election, which was billed as the “Million MAGA March,” drawing about 15,000 people to Washington. White supremacist signs and hand gestures were common. Speakers included Alex Jones of the conspiracy website Infowars and newly elected Representative Marjorie Taylor Greene of Georgia. Trump drove by the rally and saluted it. Milley, according to *I Alone Can Fix It*, told aides these were the equivalent of “brownshirts in the streets.”

On December 12, 2020, on the eve of the casting of Electoral College votes in the 50 states and the District of Columbia, a second march was held, under the banner of “Stop the Steal.” It was significantly smaller, perhaps less than 10,000, a reflection of the demoralization among ordinary, non-fascist Trump supporters after the Supreme Court rebuffed his last legal avenue the day before. Speakers included fascist Nick Fuentes, Michael Flynn, the former National Security adviser just pardoned by Trump, and MyPillow CEO Mike Lindell. Trump buzzed the crowd in his helicopter Marine One in a show of support. At night, there were violent clashes with counterdemonstrators, and several people were stabbed and seriously wounded.

As Trump was appealing openly to these fascistic forces, we wrote a perspective on December 3, 2020, headlined “Donald Trump’s *Mein Kampf*.” This commentary replied to Trump’s semi-deranged speech of December 2, which the networks refused to broadcast, even Fox News. It appeared only on social media.

The speech by Donald Trump posted on his personal Facebook page Wednesday afternoon was a declaration of war on American democracy. It was a scarcely veiled call for a right-wing insurrection to overthrow the election results and maintain in the White House a president who has been repudiated by the American people...

The main purpose of the speech, which brands the Democratic Party and most state election officials as criminals, was to incite

Trump's most fervent followers to stage violent attacks against anyone targeted by the would-be führer in the White House. Denouncing those who "desire to hurt the president of the United States," Trump demanded that "something should happen."

We go on to focus on the response of the Democrats:

The Democratic Party and the pro-Democratic sections of the media have responded with silence to Trump's open declaration that he won the election and would continue in office. As of this writing, the Biden campaign had issued no statement, nor had leading congressional Democrats like House Speaker Nancy Pelosi or senators Chuck Schumer, Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren ...

The Democrats fear not Trump's threats of violence and dictatorship, but the mass popular revolt that would be touched off if Trump actually attempts to carry out his long-threatened election coup. The Democrats know very well that America is a social powder keg, deeply divided between the fabulously wealthy financial aristocracy, which both Democrats and Republicans serve, and the vast majority of the population, struggling to survive.

The last days before January 6

There followed a series of events that demonstrate the increasingly fascist turn in the White House and among those closest to Trump, and his deliberate overtures to fascist elements on the streets—he tweeted that January 6 "will be wild"—and in the military and paramilitary forces, as with his pardoning of the Blackwater murderers. The clearest proof that Trump was targeting January 6 came in his phone conversation with acting Attorney General Jeffrey Rosen, which we wrote about, based on handwritten notes recently made public. One of the notes records that Rosen told Trump that the Justice Department "can't + won't snap its fingers + change the outcome of the election." Trump then replied that he understood Rosen's position but wanted him to "just say the election was corrupt + leave the rest to me and the R. Congressmen."

Trump even mentioned the names of several of the congressmen who would later oppose the certification of electoral votes for Biden.

Trump apparently discussed firing Rosen, but as in the Pentagon, all the officials immediately under Rosen said they would resign *en masse* rather than fill his place, forcing the president to back off.

There were many advance warnings in the days leading up to January 6, 2021. I can only refer to a few of them.

The social media site Parler referred threats of violence to the FBI more than 50 times in the weeks leading up to the attack. One message, which Parler had sent to an FBI liaison on January 2, was from a poster who warned, "Don't be surprised if we take the Capitol building," and "Trump needs us to cause chaos to enact the Insurrection Act."

On January 3, a Capitol Police threat assessment said: "Unlike previous postelection protests, the targets of the pro-Trump supporters are not necessarily the counterprotesters as they were previously, but rather Congress itself is the target on the 6th ... Stop the Steal's propensity to attract white supremacists, militia members and others who actively promote violence may lead to a significantly dangerous situation for law enforcement and the general public alike."

On January 5, the Department of Homeland Security warned the Capitol

Police that it had found a map of the Capitol complex's tunnel system posted on pro-Trump message boards. Also on January 5, the FBI's Norfolk field office relayed concerns about threats of violence, citing ultra-right message boards.

According to the *New York Times* account published July 13, the FBI warned the Capitol Police and the District of Columbia Metropolitan Police that extremist groups would be attending the January 6 protests and "planned to use specific radio frequencies for their communication."

The emergency communications office of the Metropolitan Police then programmed some hand-held radios to those frequencies and gave them to the Capitol Police and the Metropolitan Police Department to use for monitoring.

The artificial intelligence company Dataminr told security officials on January 5 that it had uncovered several disturbing posts, including appeals to "go to Washington on Jan 6 and help storm the Capital." One post continued: "We will storm government buildings, kill cops, kill security guards, kill federal employees and agents."

Valerie Hasberry, chief security officer for the Architect of the Capitol, said in an email: "There is now chatter on Parler about storming the Capitol, please let me know if there are any updates to credible threats."

A duty officer at the Capitol Police security center responded to Hasberry, saying: "There is no talk about any credible threats or storming the Capitol."

Dataminr is one of the sites that Mark Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said he was personally monitoring before January 6.

The events of January 6

Much has been written about the disorganization of the Capitol Police, their failure to deploy anti-riot equipment, and the flimsiness of the barricades, which resembled bike racks. But the most important aspect of the stand-down was sheer insufficiency in numbers. A crowd of thousands was assembling outside the Capitol, but there were fewer than 50 officers deployed to guard the entire exterior of the building.

Let's go through a timeline of the day's most important events:

The initial fighting takes place while Trump is still speaking to the crowd outside the White House. There is already a crowd at the Capitol of sufficient size to push through the initial police skirmish line on the west side of the building at 12:50 p.m., and the officers call for reinforcements, both Capitol and Metropolitan D.C. police.

Trump's co-conspirators are at work inside the Capitol as well as outside, although at the last minute, at 1:00 p.m., Vice President Pence releases a letter confirming that he does not have authority to intervene in the process of certifying electoral votes, that his presiding over the joint session is purely ceremonial. He then gavels the joint session of Congress into order and begins to call all the states in alphabetical order.

At 1:10 p.m., Trump ends his speech to the rally outside the White House, urging his supporters to march on the Capitol, where a full-scale attack on the police is already under way, and certainly known to the White House. He is throwing gasoline on the fire, sending thousands more toward the building where at least a thousand have begun a frontal assault.

Two minutes later, Arizona Representative Paul Gosar and Senator Ted Cruz rise to object to the certification of Arizona's electoral votes for Biden. This happens after rioters have already overwhelmed the first police line outside the Capitol. The joint session separates into the two chambers to debate the question.

There are multiple video accounts of the mob attack on the center of the Capitol, during the hour when they would breach the defenses. The video presentation prepared by the *New York Times* gives a very good account

of what was taking place inside and around the Capitol, although it says nothing about what was taking place at the White House or the Pentagon. Here are a few excerpts from the timeline:

· 2:10 p.m.: On the west side of the Capitol, Proud Boys lead an attack up the stairs within scaffolding erected for the upcoming inauguration of Biden, and the crowd overwhelms lightly defended police lines and reaches the actual Capitol Building.

· 2:11 p.m.: Proud Boy Dominic Pezzola breaks a window on the west side of the Capitol using a police shield.

· 2:13 p.m.: First rioter, Proud Boy Michael Sparks of Kentucky, enters the west side of the Capitol through the broken window. More sections of the crowd start to breach the Capitol, pushing through windows and doors, with Proud Boys and Oath Keepers in the lead.

· 2:15 p.m.: Secret Service removes Vice President Pence from the Senate chamber and down a flight of stairs to a secure location.

· 2:14 p.m.: Rioters pursue Capitol policeman Eugene Goodman up a flight of stairs away from the Senate chamber while senators escape. Officers remove Nancy Pelosi from the House chamber.

· 2:15 p.m.: Oathkeeper leader Stuart Rhodes forwards a message by an unidentified person in charge of Oathkeeper security to an encrypted Signal message group called “DC Ops 1” that included regional leaders later arrested for the attack. They “have taken ground at the Capitol. We need to regroup any members who are not on mission.”

· 2:20 p.m.: The House and Senate adjourn, and members begin to flee the Capitol or go into specially prepared secure facilities.

· 2:24 p.m.: Trump tweets, “Mike Pence didn’t have the courage to do what should have been done to protect our Country and our Constitution, giving States a chance to certify a corrected set of facts, not the fraudulent or inaccurate ones which they were asked to previously certify. USA demands the truth!”

· 2:25 p.m.: Rioters breach the east doors into the Capitol, after half an hour of pushing and shoving, when rioters from the west side reach the east doors and open them. An active duty Marine Corps officer, Christopher Warnagiris, holds open the doors for the mob.

We have all seen the video and audio of House Speaker Nancy Pelosi’s staff barricading themselves inside a meeting room, tweeting desperate appeals for help, and the mob trying to break down the doors.

Then follows the shooting of Ashli Babbitt, the only rioter actually killed by police in the course of the day. The rioters arrive outside the front door of the House chamber, which they find barricaded by armed police. The representatives are being moved towards a rear door, through which they will be taken to safety.

Several attackers, including Babbitt, break off from the crowd and go around to the back entrance, where they see the representatives escaping and attack the door. A Capitol Police officer draws his gun. As Ashli Babbitt begins to climb through a smashed window, in the technique the rioters have used to force their way through many doors into and inside the Capitol, the police officer opens fire. Babbitt falls back with a fatal wound.

At the same time, a group of heavily armed police arrive outside the back door, and the rioters pull back.

The right-wing campaign to demand the public identification of the officer is motivated in part by the fact that he is believed to be an African American, Lt. Michael Byrd, the senior officer assigned to the House chamber. There is a racist subtext to Trump’s incessant praise of Babbitt as a beautiful, wonderful woman.

What did the military do?

We now turn to what was happening at the Pentagon. The main events here are non-events, in the sense of inaction. At 1:49 p.m., General William Walker, commander of the D.C. National Guard, calls Army Secretary Ryan McCarthy for permission to deploy his troops to the Capitol. He has soldiers already on buses, expecting a quick approval. Instead, he waits for hours.

At 2:26 p.m., there is the first of many conference calls and other appeals, with Washington Mayor Muriel Bowser, Metropolitan Police Chief Robert Contee, and Capitol Police Chief Steve Sund, appealing to a group of generals. One of them, General Walter Piatt, says that “we don’t like the optics” of the National Guard at the Capitol, and he would recommend not sending them. Gen. Charles Flynn, brother of Michael Flynn, is on this call, although the Army initially denied this.

At 3:00 p.m., Defense Secretary Miller says he approved the order to activate the D.C. National Guard, although they were already activated and ready to go. He does not give the order to actually deploy until 4:32 p.m., and even that is held up in communication to General Walker. The order to deploy came 15 minutes after Trump tweeted that his supporters should go home.

At 3:46 p.m. and 3:55 p.m., two incidents take place which offer further proof of the military collaboration with the rioters. General Daniel Hokanson, Chief of the National Guard Bureau, calls the Virginia commander, Maj. Gen. Timothy P. Williams, to verify no Virginia military forces would move without prior permission from the Pentagon. Nine minutes later, he calls the commander of the Maryland National Guard with a similar request: Do not move without permission from the Pentagon.

At 5:08 p.m., General Walker finally receives permission to send his troops to the Capitol. Finally, at 5:22 p.m., the first National Guard troops arrive at the Capitol.

Two incidents in *I Alone Can Fix It*, one vastly publicized, the other not, touch on the question of the attitude of the Pentagon towards the Trump coup.

Before the attack, Milley expressed fears that Trump was inciting violence in order to stay in power. “This is a Reichstag moment,” Milley told aides. “The gospel of the Fuhrer.”

On January 3, top military officers and National Security Council aides met with Trump at the White House to discuss Iran. At the end of the meeting, Trump asked Miller, “You’ve got enough guys, and you’re all set for the sixth of January?” “Oh yes, Mr. President,” Miller replied. “We’ve got a plan.”

Given all that transpired on January 6, the claims that the Pentagon was unprepared and Miller’s order on January 2 that no National Guard units should deploy to the District of Columbia without his express permission, this conversation has no innocent explanation. It is a major issue that has not been investigated. Miller has not been asked about it at any congressional hearing, so far as I know.

The WSWS analyzed the role of the military in a perspective published more than a month after January 6, when these details came out in testimony before Congress, in a commentary headlined “One hundred and ninety-nine minutes in January.”

We explain that the headline is a play on the famous book and movie, *Seven Days in May*, about a fictional, but entirely realistic military coup attempt against a US president. With the difference, of course, that this was a coup by a US president. We review the testimony of National Guard Commander William Walker that he asked the Pentagon for permission to deploy troops to the Capitol at 1:49 p.m., that is, as we have seen, while the rioters had not yet breached the building’s defenses, but was denied permission until 5:08 p.m., three hours and 19 minutes later.

We explain and reject the various pretexts offered by Miller, McCarthy and others in the high command for why they waited as the violent storming of the Capitol played out on their television screens as they

watched from the Pentagon, the nerve center of the most powerful military force on the planet.

[A] decision was made not to act as a definite political strategy was implemented. For more than three hours, the fascist groups had virtual free rein over the Capitol building. The militarily trained elements within the rioters knew that they were being given time to seek out hostages among the Senators and Representatives. Trump, meanwhile, was prepared to declare a state of emergency, which would have been used to shut down Congress. This would have delayed indefinitely the formal certification of the electoral victory of Joe Biden, a delay that had the support of Trump's co-conspirators in the Republican Party.

Discussions would have ensued with the Democrats over a "compromise," perhaps involving sending back disputed state election tallies to Republican-controlled legislatures, resulting in the continuation of Trump's presidency. The Democrats made a "compromise" of this sort in 2000, when they accepted the theft of the election through the intervention of the Supreme Court.

In the end, the military only intervened on January 6 when it became clear that the operation had failed to achieve its objectives ...

The *New York Times* video gives a panoramic overview of the entire assault on the Capitol, showing the location of each of the eight separate breaches. Most of them were made by columns of right-wing paramilitaries, such as the Oathkeepers, in military garb, who were organized and directed by their "officers."

The police eventually cleared the Capitol. I want to just underscore that the Capitol Police, the Metropolitan Police of Washington D.C., local Virginia police from Arlington and Fairfax, and Virginia and Maryland state police did all the work of clearing the building, taking control by about 4:00 p.m.

Only a handful of federal agents were deployed to the building. No National Guard troops arrived until more than an hour after the building had been cleared. If it had been left to federal government forces alone, the rioters would have remained in control of the Capitol for many more hours and might well have located congressmen and senators, who were sheltering only a few hundred feet away.

There is another historical parallel, besides the analogies to Hitler, which is critically important to consider. It is from the same historical period: France in 1934. On February 6, 1934, an armed demonstration by several thousand fascists threatened parliament in Paris, but police dispersed it, killing 15. The government was not overthrown but fell one day later

The Wikipedia entry on this coup attempt reads, in one of its first paragraphs, that according to historian Joel Colton, "The consensus among scholars is that there was no concerted or unified design to seize power and that the leagues lacked the coherence, unity, or leadership to accomplish such an end." That very much echoes the conventional and pseudo-left dismissal of January 6 as an actual coup attempt.

One day later, on February 7, French Prime Minister Eduard Daladier, from the bourgeois-left Radical Party, resigned and was succeeded by Gustave Doumergue, a representative of the political right in parliament. Wikipedia states: "This was the first time during the tenure of the Third Republic a government fell because of pressures from the street."

An incomparably greater analyst of French politics than Professor Colton, Leon Trotsky, had this to say: "The French people for a long time thought that Fascism had nothing whatever to do with them. They had a republic in which all questions were dealt with by the sovereign people

through the exercise of universal suffrage. But on February 6, 1934, several thousand Fascists and Royalists, armed with revolvers, clubs and razors, imposed upon the country the reactionary government of Doumergue, under whose protection the Fascist bands continue to grow and arm themselves."

The WSWS responded to the attack on the Capitol with a perspective written that night, as the Congress has just resumed meeting, and posted even before Congress had completed voting on certification of the presidential election. It was written by David North and headlined, "The fascist coup of January 6."

The fascist insurrection in Washington D.C.—which resulted in the storming of the US Congress, the panicked dispersal of terrified senators and members of the House, the delay of the official validation of Joseph Biden's Electoral College majority, and even the occupation of the office of House Speaker Nancy Pelosi—is a turning point in the political history of the United States.

The hoary glorifications of the invincibility and timelessness of American democracy have been totally exposed and discredited as a hollow political myth. The popular phrase "It Can't Happen Here," taken from the title of Sinclair Lewis's justly famous fictional account of the rise of American fascism, has been decisively overtaken by events. Not only *can* a fascist coup happen here. It *has* happened here, on the afternoon of January 6, 2021.

I would like to draw attention especially to what was said about the response of the Democrats:

As for the president-elect, Biden waited hours before finally appearing before the public. After describing the attack on the Capitol as sedition, Biden made this extraordinary appeal to the leader of the conspiracy: "I call on President Trump to go on national television now, to fulfill his oath and defend the Constitution and demand an end to this siege."

Normally, when confronted with an attempt to overthrow the constitutional regime, the political leader threatened by the conspiracy must immediately seek to deprive the traitors of all access to the mass media and a nationwide audience. But Biden, instead, called on Trump to appear on national television—to call off the insurrection he himself had organized!

Biden concluded his remarks with the following clarion call. "So, President Trump, step up." This bankrupt appeal to the would-be fascist dictator will go down in history as Biden's "Hitler, do the right thing" speech...

The events of January 6, 2021 must be taken as a warning. The working class must elaborate a political strategy and plan of action to defeat future efforts to impose a dictatorship.

This analysis has been completely vindicated by the actions of the Democrats over the ensuing seven months.



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