

Why was there no organized resistance to Trump's January 6 coup?

David Walsh
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The current US Congressional hearings into the events of January 6, 2021 have exposed harsh truths about the diseased, precarious state of American democracy.

The hearings have incontrovertibly proven that Donald Trump and his allies led a serious, determined effort to overthrow the constitutional system and establish a fascist presidential dictatorship, that this conspiracy embraced a substantial portion of the Republican Party, the judiciary and no doubt elements within the military, that it came within minutes (or perhaps seconds) and inches of succeeding and that its failure was not the result of any organized resistance whatsoever but rather happenstance, logistics, inexperience and so on.

This last fact needs to be emphasized. The American media is eternally generating “heroes,” and yet even it has not been able to come up with a single political figure identified with resistance to the January 6 insurrection, not one daring or gallant action, no photo opportunity, nothing. Fleeing politicians, people hiding beneath their seats—not an image, a phrase, a gesture associated with opposition, not one act of even symbolic confrontation.

The ongoing hearings have revealed the magnitude of the event. They have brought to light important, even explosive new facts. But the latter only raise more starkly this issue: Why has it taken 18 months to make the public aware of the reality? In any event, there is not the slightest indication that the hearings will become the basis for any action. President Biden continues to refer to members of the Republican Party as “my friends.”

It is clearer than ever that neither before nor during the coup was there any attempt to forestall or obstruct it in any way. Now, the contrast between the scale of the crimes revealed and the meagerness of the reaction is staggering.

Why did this fascist coup come so close to succeeding?

Its preparation was no secret; it was organized in plain sight to a large degree. Trump spelled out his plans again and again in the weeks and months leading up to the 2020 election.

The WSWS at the time pointed repeatedly to the ongoing threat. In September 2020, for example, we commented that “Trump is an out-and-out fascist who is conspiring to erect a presidential dictatorship... If the [presidential] debate made one

thing clear, it is that he will not accept the outcome of the election.” In October, we argued that “Trump has a strategy to steal the election, the Democrats have no strategy to oppose it.” A score of such citations could be presented.

No faction or individual in the political establishment attempted to prevent Trump's criminal operation ahead of time. No one alerted the population to the immense risks it confronted in January 2021. The democratic rights of the American people were left entirely vulnerable for the fascist rabble to trample on.

On January 6 itself, there was no effort to put down the coup d'état while it was in progress. Trump's extreme right supporters came close to murdering leading officials in the US government. Biden issued no statement for hours. Nor did Nancy Pelosi or Charles Schumer. The military and the police-intelligence agencies bided their time, waiting to see who would come out on top.

The coup attempt was not halted, it merely petered out. A grand total of 60 people were detained January 6—on the occasion of a concerted, violent effort to overturn the American government and the Constitution in operation for 232 years—at the US Capitol, in downtown Washington D.C. and along the National Mall, *combined*. Only 10 were arrested on the spot for unlawfully entering the Capitol, where they planned to assassinate leaders of Congress. The coup plotters, for the most part, made their way home and “lived to fight another day.”

Had the coup succeeded, it would have been accepted by the Democrats and the political-media establishment. Their preoccupation would have been to block, demobilize and demoralize popular opposition. Just as the Democrats accepted the theft of the 2000 election, they would have accepted the suppression of what remained of American democracy.

Had the Democrats planned to act against Trump and the fascist coup makers, they would have done so by now. They will do nothing. This is an imperialist party, a party of Wall Street and the oligarchs, propped up by the trade unions and the upper-middle class race and gender fanatics. The Democrats fear arousing the population against the far right, which all the present circumstances render entirely possible, a thousand times more than they fear each and every far-right conspiracy.

The Democrats primarily differed with Trump while he was

in power over his handling of foreign policy, the Ukraine-Russia situation in particular. They wanted him to be more focused and aggressive against the Putin regime—it was this on which they based their impeachment efforts, not the president’s obvious dictatorial tendencies.

The inaction of the Democratic Party in response to January 6, despite the hand-wringing and verbal jousting, comes as no surprise. No less passive and no less criminal roles were played by the AFL-CIO and the rest of the labor federations. In the modern era, resistance to far-right dictatorship depends upon the existence of a powerful, politically vigilant working class movement. On January 6, the AFL-CIO was an irrelevancy. Then-President Richard Trumka did nothing to mobilize resistance, issued no call for a general strike or widespread protest. The only intervention along these lines was the spontaneous action of Twitter employees to cut off Trump’s account and halt his fascist provocations.

The rabidly chauvinist, pro-capitalist American union hierarchy would not be especially troubled by the prospect of a dictatorship in the US. After all, it has helped organize enough of them in Latin America, Africa and elsewhere.

The absence of opposition to January 6 extends to the academic world. Is there a single prominent intellectual who has spoken out or offered a way forward in the face of Trump’s coup? Professor Noam Chomsky rightly observed that the January 6 participants “were united in the effort to overthrow an elected government,” but then went on to blame “[white people’s] fear of ‘losing our country’” for many of the difficulties.

Authors Sinclair Lewis, Jack London and Philip Roth, among others, turned the fascist danger in America into convincing fiction. Now that the threat is more actual than at any time in US history, shamefully, the novelists, poets and dramatists have nothing to say.

The upper-middle class pseudo-left refused to take the coup attempt seriously. Historian Bryan Palmer, for example, claimed that the events of January 6 were not an insurrection and derided those who warned about their significance: “Hyperbole flowed as the trail of tears grew to a tidal wave.” *Jacobin* magazine lulled its readers to sleep, arguing that the “defeat” of the January 6 attempt and its “quick repudiation by the political and economic elite made plain that there is currently little base in the state or among big capital for a Trumpist coup.” *Jacobin* issued this immortal pronouncement: “Capital, it seems, is still committed to liberal democracy.”

What’s left of academic “radicalism” has been fatally infected by the race and gender obsession. For such people, class has been abolished as a gauge in politics. While Trump was putting together his plans for authoritarian rule, the identity politics forces in Hollywood, on campuses and in the media were maniacally focused on the persecution and prosecution of individuals over allegations of sexual abuse. To them, Harvey Weinstein, Woody Allen and Kevin Spacey represented a far

graver danger than the fascist mobs.

The refusal of these elements to resist the extreme right’s attempt to seize the US government has been mirrored in their attitude toward the murderous COVID-19 pandemic and the US-NATO proxy war with Russia, which threatens a new world war.

A vast flood of cash has corrupted the media, academic life and artistic circles. Following stock market and real estate values and pursuing one’s career have largely replaced a serious concern for social issues and the fate of the broad masses.

Frederick Engels, in 1886, observed that insofar as the German intelligentsia had “set up its temple in the Stock Exchange,” it had “lost... the aptitude for purely scientific investigation, irrespective of whether the result obtained was practically applicable or not, whether likely to offend the police authorities or not.” The “old fearless zeal for theory” had been replaced by “an anxious concern for career and income, descending to the most vulgar job-hunting.” That process has metastasized in our day.

Only one movement was correct in its analysis and warnings on a daily basis of the Trump plot—the WSWS, the Socialist Equality Party and the International Committee of the Fourth International.

The WSWS is the expression of the objective, revolutionary role of the working class, and it consciously articulates the organic resistance of workers to capitalism. As this resistance becomes more pronounced, as militancy and open struggle re-emerge, the correlation between the WSWS and the struggles of the working class will become more evident and powerfully intersect.

The January 6 coup and the response of the entire political establishment to it demonstrates that opposition to dictatorship can only come from a movement that is based on the working class and fights for the overthrow of capitalism. The WSWS does not have to suppress the truth because the program of revolutionary socialism corresponds to the logic of objective developments. The exposure of capitalism is critical to the development of a movement for socialism.

Those who recognize the necessity of this struggle must make the decision to join the SEP.



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