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USA - Debate

We Cannot Let Yesterday's Farce Become Tomorrow's Tragedy

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I.

This was a “coup” as social media spectacle. In their pseudo-Viking gear and Confederate patches, the far-right rebels were a distinctly unappealing lot. And their rebellion utterly lacked a coherent plan beyond smashed windows and selfies. It could not think beyond its loyalty to the liar in chief. Yet, for all that, it was a sharp warning to the left and all progressive forces. If we do not rise to the occasion and stop the growth of this movement, next time (or the one after that) could be dangerously serious.

II.

The stunt had been orchestrated for weeks. And on the day itself, Trump incited a mob led by far right goons to sack the capitol building in DC. The numbers were far from overwhelming—perhaps 15,000 in the nation’s capital—alongside hundreds in coordinated actions in several state capitals. But for all that, it signals a new stage in the emergence of a fascist right in the country.

III.

Rather than a coup, it was a pathetic right-wing putsch attempt and was put down remarkably swiftly. It was given the green-light by Trump and his inner circle. But it was overwhelmingly condemned by the spokespeople of the capitalist class: the National Association of Manufacturers, the Chamber of Commerce, the CEOs of most major corporations, as well as Twitter and Facebook, which shut down Trump’s accounts. Both bourgeois political parties, the leadership of the military and police, and the bulk of the establishment media denounced it. Soon thereafter Congress reconvened to confirm Biden. Unsurprisingly, stock markets throughout the world rallied in hopes that a new administration will restore business as usual.

IV.

For all that, there can be no doubt that the sacking of the Capitol happened with the collusion of the administration and police. Compare the police’s muted response to the violence of the far right with their paramilitary response to BLM protests across the country. We all know the horrifying police violence that would have been unleashed had BLM supporters marched on the Capitol building. While the extent of coordinated police collusion remains unclear, there is no surprise that the police used kid gloves with the fascists. Pro-Trump sentiment is highly concentrated among the police and ICE. When confronted by the right in DC, the cops took selfies and shook hands with the fascists—just as they did with Kyle Rittenhouse in Kenosha last summer before he murdered two anti-racists.

V.

The state only mobilized some of its forces to quell the protests once it became clear that they posed a threat to the political establishment. Leaders of both parties, the DC Mayor, and the business establishment made sure of that. In particular, the National Guard was called out from Maryland and Virginia. Alongside the DC police, they carried out “low value” arrests of dozens, usually for curfew violations. Order was restored, and Biden’s election was confirmed as Trumpites like Lindsey Graham (South Carolina) and Kelly Loeffler (Georgia) rallied to confirm the election results.

VI.

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The immediate fallout will be contradictory, simultaneously damaging Trump and boosting the movement around him. He will suffer widespread repudiation by big business, the political establishment, and the security/military/police apparatus. All of the above will back Biden's moves to restore business as usual at home and imperial credibility abroad. There will be talk of invoking the 25th amendment, and legal prosecution before he leaves the White House—and threats of further action after he leaves office. All of this will be meant to affirm the bourgeois integrity of the city on the hill.

VII.

The ruling class and its political representatives will call for increased powers for its military and police to surveil, arrest, and detain "extremists." They will do so nominally to contain and prosecute the fascists. But the left ought to refuse any support for the law and order campaign. We seek to weaken powers of state repression. And we know that in a racist, capitalist society the main targets will be Black people, immigrants, Muslims, leftists, and union members.

VIII.

None of these actions will stop Trumpism and its fascist current from growing. They emerged from Wednesday's actions emboldened. Not only do they believe they are protecting their rights against an illegitimate government, but they have laid foundations for even greater growth. The right has a media infrastructure, organizations like the Proud Boys, and networks throughout the country capable of coordinating actions. That said, they are still small and vastly outnumbered by our side when it is mobilized. Remember, 26 million people marched this summer in BLM protests. Only some 15,000 marched across the country yesterday. But left unopposed, their ranks will swell. The conditions that generated their rise—a crisis in the lives of the petty bourgeoisie caused by the failures of neoliberalism, pandemic shutdowns of small businesses, and those businesses' failures amidst the recession—will only grow more acute in the coming months and years. The right will comprise a clear, present, and dangerous threat to workers and all oppressed people.

IX.

Trump's inner circle and his GOP minions cast their lot with the far right and fascists yesterday. When it came to the choice between capitalizing on his presidency to make money or positioning himself as the aspiring Führer of a new fascist movement, Trump chose the latter. Some in the GOP will follow him, most will not. But Trump retains support of about 40 percent of the electorate and has the basis to remain a huge force within the GOP, or to build an alternative if the leaders of the latter disown him. A split in the GOP is distinctly possible, and with it the formation of a new far right party. Ironically, Trump could be the unintentional vehicle for a very dirty break from the Republican Party.

X.

Meanwhile, Biden will move rightward to embrace the GOP leaders who rallied to his confirmation—all in the name of "uniting the country and restoring order." He will seek to overcome the pandemic, restore capitalist functioning, and rehabilitate US imperialism to better compete with China. But he will face unrelenting opposition from Trump and the far right, which will regard his government as illegitimate. The claim for illegitimacy looms as the foundational myth of a neo-fascist movement.

XI.

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Liberals will outdo themselves in a rush to rally behind bipartisan capitalist unity and state repression to deal with the fascist threat. They will lend credibility to the law and order consensus articulated by both parties on Wednesday by police authorities and the media, particularly CNN, which rooted for police suppression of the right. Liberal forces are magnetically attracted to the law and order regime because they see the state, not mass anti-fascist action, as the key to dealing with the right.

XII.

The socialist left requires a radically different course. We can give no support to the bourgeois establishment, the new Biden administration, or their state repression at home and imperial reassertion abroad. Instead, we must rally our forces to build anti-fascist united fronts everywhere to confront the right in large numbers and drive them off the streets, out of workplaces and social organizations. And crucially, we must redouble our efforts to build an activist socialist alternative that fights independently of the Democrats for demands that will address the multiple crises of the capitalist system: real pandemic relief; a Green New Deal; rent relief and a moratorium on evictions; Medicare for All; the \$15 minimum wage and union rights; defunding of the police; abolition of ICE; and massive cuts to the war budget.

XIII.

All of this requires aggressively working to reorient the socialist left, especially the Democratic Socialists of America, from its overwhelmingly electoral focus toward organizing struggle from below, especially anti-racist and workplace struggles. We are in the midst of the deepest crises (yes, plural) of the capitalist system since the 1930s. These will continue to stoke profound polarization within countries, waves of class and social mobilization, and greater conflict between capitalist states. Out of this a new socialist left can grow and take organizational form. We must do everything in our power to arm it with revolutionary socialist ideas, strategies, and tactics. We must be prepared for the next time.

Source [Spectre Journal](#).

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