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Patrick Martin
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Trump escalates coup plotting with swearing-in of Supreme Court Justice Amy Coney Barrett

One week before the US presidential election, there is an expanding political conspiracy spearheaded by President Trump to hijack the election and maintain his grip on power regardless of the outcome of the vote.

This effort reached a new stage Monday night with the swearing-in of the newest Supreme Court Justice, Amy Coney Barrett, whom Trump nominated in an effort to insure a Republican-dominated court that will rubber stamp his actions on and after Election Day.

The installation of Barrett, staged before a floodlit White House and broadcast on cable television, was the latest in a series of fascistic spectacles intended to convey Trump's determination to dominate the American political scene in defiance of the will of the people and the text of the Constitution.



Supreme Court nominee Judge Amy Coney Barrett speaks during her Senate Judiciary Committee confirmation hearing on Capitol Hill in Washington, Monday, Oct. 12, 2020. (Demetrius Freeman/The Washington Post via AP, Pool)

First came his speech accepting the Republican Party's nomination for a second term as president, staged on the White House lawn and using the executive mansion as the backdrop for a partisan spectacle. Then came his return from Walter Reed Medical Center after his

treatment for coronavirus, with the helicopter landing and Trump climbing the stairs to greet supporters from the White House balcony, a virtually scene-for-scene restaging of the Hitlerite documentary *Triumph of the Will*.

Last night, Trump rushed to hold the swearing-in of Barrett before a hand-picked audience on the White House lawn only hours after the Senate confirmed her nomination by a 52-48 vote. In a blatantly partisan affair, the most right-wing justice on the court, Clarence Thomas, administered the oath of office. Thomas is also the last survivor on the court of the majority who stole the 2000 presidential election with the 5-4 *Bush v. Gore* decision.

Trump's remarks were a scripted tribute to the US Constitution as "the ultimate defense of American liberty." The real sentiments of this would-be dictator were expressed earlier in the day in Pennsylvania, where he roared threats of violent retribution against the state's Democratic governor if he should dare to interfere with the efforts of Trump's fascistic supporters to intimidate voters.

Referring to Democrat Tom Wolf, Trump said, "The governor counts the ballots, and we are watching you, governor, very closely in Philadelphia. A lot of bad things happen there with the counting of the votes. We are watching you, Governor Wolf, very closely. We're watching you." Later in his speech, Trump referred to his opponents as "globalists"—a frequent synonym for "Jews" in fascist discourse. Speaking like a mafia boss about his thugs, he said, "We have very nice people, they don't want to do anything *before the election*. Very nice, very nice people."

Trump told the crowd he is working with police across the country to monitor vote-counting: "All we can say is law enforcement is watching Nevada, it is watching Philadelphia and Pennsylvania because they had a lot of strange things. And we are watching the Democrat governor who has got his state shut down, great state, North Carolina. We're watching North Carolina, we're watching Michigan."

Crowd members began shouting, "Lock him up" at the mention of Governor Wolf's name, echoing chants against Whitmer at last week's rally in Muskegon, Michigan. It is less than three weeks since federal and state police arrested 13 pro-Trump gunmen, who were in the final stages of preparing to kidnap and murder Whitmer, who has clashed with Trump over the state's policy in enforcing the coronavirus lockdown.

The president is giving a green light to every fascist in America. When state officials in Michigan, after the breakup of the plot against Whitmer, issued orders barring the open display of weapons at polling places, statewide organizations representing police chiefs and sheriffs announced they would not enforce the order.

If Trump cannot use violence and intimidation to win a majority at the polls—an effort that looks increasingly unlikely as tens of millions turn out in early voting or cast mail ballots, which are currently estimated running 2-1 against him—he will seek to halt the counting of mail ballots in key battleground states through lawsuits in which the US Supreme Court will serve as the final arbiter.

In the face of this developing political coup, the Democratic Party presents a picture of utter spinelessness. With only a narrow 53-47 Republican majority in the Senate, the Democrats nonetheless claimed they could do nothing to stop the speedy confirmation of Barrett, only five weeks after the death of Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg created a vacancy.

These claims are so ridiculous they barely require a refutation. The Senate is well known for its innumerable arcane procedures that allow a determined minority to delay and even defeat actions if they are willing to fight. If the circumstances had been reversed, there is not the slightest possibility that a Democratic president with a narrow Democratic majority in the Senate could push through a Supreme Court nomination on the eve of a presidential election. The Democrats would not even try.

Instead of calling out this conspiracy and warning the American people, the Democratic Party chooses to cover it up. Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden made no reference to the Barrett nomination or the threatened election coup during his final debate with Trump. Senator Kamala Harris, his running mate, sits on the Judiciary Committee which considered the Barrett nomination, but she did not raise the question of Trump's threats to democracy. Senate Minority Leader Charles Schumer did not even refer to the impact on the 2020 elections in his final speech opposing Barrett's confirmation.

If this is how the Democratic Party "fights" an unprecedented effort to cement ultraright control of the Supreme Court, what resistance will they put up to Trump's ever more open threats of violence and defiance of the Constitution in the 2020 election?

The Democratic Party leadership is certainly aware of Trump's planned coup and is taking definite actions in response, but these consist entirely of behind-the-scenes discussion with top leaders in the military-intelligence apparatus to seek their assistance in compelling Trump to accept the outcome of the election.

This is confirmed by the remarkable interview given Monday by Representative Elissa Slotkin, a former CIA agent and Pentagon official before she won a House seat as one of the CIA Democrats in 2018. Speaking to *Politico*, she revealed that the Biden campaign was actively discussing what to do in the event that Trump refused to accept the results of the election or to leave office. Slotkin herself has sent letters to both the civilian and military leaders in the Pentagon seeking a profession of neutrality in any post-election crisis.

At the same time, Slotkin confirmed that in Michigan, her home state, Democratic officials had no idea whether they could get the support of the police to prevent right-wing militia gunmen from intimidating voters. In response to a question on a conference call of election officers, "What do we do if someone shows up carrying an AK-47 into the polls? Who do we call?" police remained noncommittal.

These statements only confirm the warnings which the WSWS has been making since Trump first attempted to mobilize the military against the mass protests over police violence that followed the May 25 police murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis. Trump is seeking to build a fascist movement in the United States, whether he is in or out of the White House next January 20. The defense of democratic rights cannot be entrusted to the Democratic Party or any institution or instrument of the capitalist ruling class in America. It must be taken up by the working class, through the building of a mass political movement based on a socialist program.

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