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The Democratic Party and the fascist “enemy within”

At a remarkable press conference Thursday morning, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said that Democratic members of Congress were in physical fear for their lives, afraid that the mob attack of January 6 would be the precursor to violent assaults against them by Republican representatives. She said there would have to be additional funding “for more security for members, when the enemy is within the House of Representatives, a threat that members are concerned about in addition to what is happening outside.”

When a reporter asked, “What did you mean when you said the enemy is within?” Pelosi replied, “It means we have members of Congress that want to bring guns on the floor and have threatened violence on other members of Congress.” Or, as Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez pointed out in an interview Wednesday night on MSNBC, there is now an outright white supremacist faction among the Republicans in the House, who have repeatedly threatened violence against Democrats.

These fascists include several Republican representatives, among them Andy Harris of Maryland and Lauren Boebert of Colorado, who are known to carry weapons inside the Capitol, and who have reportedly violated the prohibition against bringing those weapons onto the floor of the House of Representatives. Boebert may well have been in contact with the attackers during the events of January 6. She tweeted that morning that “today is 1776,” and put details of Pelosi’s own movements on social media while the attackers were rampaging through the building threatening violence against Pelosi, Vice President Pence and others.

Pelosi spoke at some length about Representative Marjorie Taylor Greene of Georgia, who ran campaign ads last year in which she aimed an assault rifle at photos of Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Ilhan Omar and Rashida Tlaib, members of the “squad” of left-liberal Democratic representatives.

Prior to launching her congressional campaign in 2019, Greene, a multimillionaire businesswoman, made social media comments endorsing the assassination of Pelosi and the execution of Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton, all for alleged “treason” against President Trump. After Greene, an open supporter of the fascistic QAnon conspiracy theory, won a contested primary for a heavily Republican seat, her Democratic opponent responded to death threats by quitting the race and leaving the state.

The Democratic leader declared, “What I’m worried about is the Republican leadership in the House of Representatives, who is willing to overlook, ignore those statements.” She noted that Republican leader Kevin McCarthy assigned Greene to the powerful Education and

Labor Committee, although Greene is notorious for declaring that the mass shootings of school children at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Connecticut and of students at Stoneman Douglas High School in Florida were faked by supporters of gun control.

Pelosi gave no hint of support for calls by some Democrats for Greene to be expelled from Congress, and when a reporter sought to raise the issue at the end of the press conference, she made her exit without responding.

This press conference paints an extraordinary picture of the political crisis in the capital of the United States, nine days after the inauguration of Biden and Harris. Only a few weeks ago, the Democrats were proclaiming the earth-shattering importance of the Georgia Senate runoffs.

As a result of that victory, the Democratic Party now controls the White House, the Senate and the House of Representatives. In terms of the parliamentary arithmetic, it exercises near-total power. Yet its leading personnel conduct themselves in fear and trembling, terrified by the threat of fascist violence and unwilling to take any serious action against it.

This deepening crisis exposes the vacuousness and absurdity of Biden's inaugural address, which was devoted to a banal plea for unity addressed to the Republican Party. Biden makes a pathetic appeal to the Republicans; their response is to declare any trial of Trump unconstitutional, while redoubling their efforts to provoke fascist violence against the Democrats and sustain Trump's lies about a "stolen election."

In just the past week, state Republican parties have passed resolutions declaring the January 6 coup attempt a "false flag" operation by the left and condemning the handful of House Republicans who voted for impeachment, while Republican state legislators have introduced more than 100 bills to restrict voting rights, particularly voting by mail.

There were other indications of rising political tensions in America. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) issued a bulletin Wednesday making its first official warning of the growing threat of "violent domestic extremists." While naming no groups, it cited anger over "the presidential transition, as well as other perceived grievances fueled by false narratives," including those related to lockdowns and mask mandates imposed in connection with the COVID-19 pandemic.

Both the DHS itself and the *New York Times*—in a prominent article on the agency bulletin—sought to smear the mass left-wing protests against police violence that erupted last summer after the murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis by equating them with the fascist attack on Congress on January 6.

While Pelosi was complaining of Republican death threats in Washington, her Republican counterpart was making his obeisance to Trump, visiting the would-be dictator at his residence in exile, Mar-a-Lago, Florida. House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy came to apologize for mildly critical statements he had made about Trump's conduct on January 6 in an effort to secure Trump's support for his continuing as House leader.

McCarthy then issued a statement denouncing impeachment, declaring, "the radical Democrat agenda must be stopped," and hailing Trump's commitment to "helping elect Republicans in the House and Senate in 2022."

In other words, the Republican Party is now fully committed to the defense of a fascistic president who sought to retain power, even after a sizeable electoral defeat—seven million votes—through methods of violence and provocation. As for their Democratic "colleagues," the Republicans oscillate between threatening to kill them and extracting political concessions in the name of bipartisanship.

Two questions are left unanswered by the Democratic Party: First, how has it become possible for the fascistic right to acquire such influence and power within the US that even within Congress the Democrats fear for their lives? Second, following from the first, what are the social interests driving the growth of fascism?

The answers to these questions explain the response of the Democratic Party. Any serious examination of the rise of fascism in America would expose its connections to the politics of the ruling class. Whatever their tactical differences with the Republicans, the Democrats represent this same social class.

Three weeks ago, even as the blood and filth were still being scraped from the walls of the US Capitol, the *World Socialist Web Site* [wrote](#) that the attempted fascist coup was “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’ 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.

Moreover, even if the initial effort has fallen short of its goal, *it will happen again*.

This warning was both timely and prescient. It has taken only three weeks for the official pronouncements of shock and horror to dissipate and for the capitalist politicians of both parties to resume their course ever further to the right. The unwillingness and incapacity of the Democratic Party to defend democratic principles, even when the physical survival of its own representatives is directly threatened, is a warning to the working class.

The defense of democratic rights cannot be entrusted to any section of the American ruling class, its twin parties or its state institutions. The only social force whose existence is entirely bound up with the defense of democratic rights is the working class—the vast majority of the population, but one which is entirely unrepresented in the existing political system.

The working class must mobilize its class strength as an independent political force, taking up demands for a full investigation into the January 6 coup, the arrest and prosecution of all those involved, inside as well as outside Congress, and the public exposure of every aspect of the coup before the American people.

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