

Was that a Coup before us? Or was it an insurrection? Or – none of those?
What's the difference between an 'insurrection and a choreographed test run?

Hari Kumar, January 2021



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*Goethe: "Die ich rief, die Geister / Werd' ich nun nicht los." ["Those I called - the ghosts / I won't get rid of them now."]*¹

Having called up Trump, both many capitalists and sections of the Republican Party wish to be rid of him, but his 'spirit' or 'ghost' will remain. We dissect the events of January 6th on the steps of the Capitol – the nerve center enacting the ruling class edicts in the USA. Not merely a 'riot' – yet I doubt that it can be called an 'insurrection'.

1. The 'Event' of January 6 2020 in Washington DC

Within the first week of 2021 - on January 6th - came the Trumpite riot in the center of the USA government. The rioters stormed the Capitol Building that houses the US Senate and the Congress. They had been urged onwards by Trump himself, under the false pretext of preventing 'the theft of the elections'. Trump having lost the elections, has been falsely accusing the Democratic party of theft, and already lost dozens of lawsuits to prove his case. Having been rebuffed by the courts – even those that Trump had stacked with pro-Republican judges – he has been nursing a wounded ambition and pride.

¹ Goethe 'Der Zuaberlehring'; 1815; in 'Johan W. Goethe Samtichle Gedichte'; Frankfurt 2007; p. 121.

This event took place as the Congress was being presided over by Trump's Vice-President Mike Pence. The Vice-President was in a purely formal role, doing the final tally of the votes in front of Congress - that would finally declare Joe Biden as the in-coming President elect for the term starting on January 20th 2020. The event stopped the tally, and members of Congress were taken into safe hiding places and it was only safe to resume by 800 pm that night – when they re-convened. This is what happened:

“On Wednesday afternoon, a thin line of U.S. Capitol Police, with only a few riot shields between them and a knot of angry protesters, engaged in hand-to-hand combat with rioters on the steps of the West Front. They struggled with a flimsy set of barricades as a mob in helmets and bulletproof vests pushed its way toward the Capitol entrance. Videos showed officers stepping aside, and sometimes taking selfies, as if to usher Trump's supporters into the building they were supposed to guard.”²

This was an extraordinary event. What was it though? Was it an ‘insurrection’ – as many of the national and international press have labeled it?

2. What should we call this storming of the ‘Capitol’?

To me the word insurrection implies a force of mass organisation and coherence. According to Frederick Engels it is an ‘art’ with certain ‘rules’, one element of which is ‘surprise:

“Insurrection is an art quite as much as war or any other, and subject to certain rules of proceeding... never play with insurrection unless you are fully prepared to face the consequences of your play. Insurrection is a calculus with very indefinite magnitudes, the value of which may change every day; the forces opposed to you have all the advantage of organization, discipline, and habitual authority: unless you bring strong odds against them you are defeated and ruined. Secondly, the insurrectionary career once entered upon, act with the greatest determination, and on the offensive. The defensive is the death of every armed rising; it is lost before it measures itself with its enemies. Surprise your antagonists...”³

Instead of an insurrection, what we saw was far more like a ‘playing with insurrection’. There are some very strange elements to it. Most obviously, it is extremely difficult to believe that anyone could have been ‘surprised’ by this ‘event’. It had been announced quite loudly ahead of events in the social media of the most extreme Trumpites:

² Logan Jaffe, Lydia DePillis, Isaac Arnsdorf and J. David McSwane, ‘Capitol Rioters Planned for Weeks in Plain Sight. The Police Weren’t Ready. Insurrectionists made no effort to hide their intentions, but law enforcement protecting Congress was caught flat-footed’; Jan. 7; Publico; <https://www.propublica.org/article/capitol-rioters-planned-for-weeks-in-plain-sight-the-police-werent-ready>

³ Friedrich Engels, ‘Revolution and Counter- Revolution in Germany’; XVII. Insurrection, September 18, 1852. MECW Volume 11, p. 3-91; <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/pdf/revolution-counterrevolution-germany.pdf>

“The invasion of the U.S. Capitol on Wednesday was stoked in plain sight. For weeks, the far-right supporters of President Donald Trump railed on social media that the election had been stolen. They openly discussed the idea of violent protest on the day Congress met to certify the result.

“We came up with the idea to occupy just outside the CAPITOL on Jan 6th,” leaders of the Stop the Steal movement wrote on Dec. 23. They called their Wednesday demonstration the Wild Protest, a name taken from a tweet by Trump that encouraged his supporters to take their grievances to the streets of Washington. “Will be wild,” the president tweeted.”²

On Dec. 12, a poster on the website MyMilitia.com urged violence if senators made official the victory of President-elect Joe Biden. “If this does not change, then I advocate, Revolution and adherence to the rules of war,” wrote someone identifying themselves as I3DI. “I say, take the hill or die trying.” Wrote another person: “It’s already apparent that literally millions of Americans are on the verge of activating their Second Amendment duty to defeat tyranny and save the republic.” The easily overpowered police force guarding the Capitol on Wednesday posed a stark contrast to the tactics deployed by local police during this summer’s Black Lives Matter protests. Then, the city felt besieged by law enforcement.”²

Many more citations that confirm prior announcements of the ‘event’ could be referenced. But perhaps the most thorough examination is by ‘*Bellingcat*’. The journalist Robert Evans took on the mental distress of going through the social media feeds of the near fascist elements in Trump’s background mob.⁴ The neo-Nazism and forward-planning poured out in a torrent on social media.

3. How does the ruling class normally protect itself from dissent?

So not an insurrection then. Let us call it a mob-riot.

Is there anything beyond that however? What about the deliberate neglect, and lack of preparation consistent with prior patterns of police, National Guard or armed force behavior? I think anyone watching the reactions of the state to the Black Lives Matter (BLM) protests and street actors will instantly see the difference. For BLM activists nothing but almost a speedy carefully organised, violent put-down. In those circumstances the police seem exceptionally well organised, for example:

“Black activists noted that when they have planned protests, the police have rarely seemed ill prepared. This week, for instance, National Guard troops descended on Kenosha, Wis., and metal barricades were erected around that city’s courthouse the day before a prosecutor announced that no charges would be filed against an officer who shot a man, Jacob Blake, multiple times in the back last summer.”⁵

⁴ Robert Evans, ‘How the Insurgent and MAGA Right are Being Welded Together on the Streets of Washington D.C.’; January 5, 2021; at: <https://www.bellingcat.com/news/americas/2021/01/05/how-the-insurgent-and-maga-right-are-being-welded-together-on-the-streets-of-washington-d-c/>

⁵ John Eligon, ‘Racial Double Standard of Capitol Police Draws Outcry

Yesterday the pictures of a nonchalant police were an astounding contrast. Leave aside the above-mentioned posing for selfies, barriers at points were actually opened for the mob. There were about 3,000 people swarming all over the capitol after the police enabled their access to the Capital steps. Even when there are not crowds like this, that area is usually firmly locked down. The activists of the community have not been slow to point this out. Hear the activist Rev. Lennox Yearwood Jr. (“who heads the Hip Hop Caucus, a civil and human rights group”), who:

“Called the sight of the rioters being led out of the Capitol seemingly without repercussions “heartbreaking.” Mr. Yearwood has a long history of protest on a range of issues and has been arrested, and even beaten, as a result. “We know we’re going to go through that punishment” as part of fighting for cleaner energy, for environmental justice, for a better world, he said. “Up until yesterday, I thought, ‘This is how it’s done. You stop business, you’re going to be arrested, you’re going to be treated this way,’” he said. “Yesterday changed all that,” he said. Some rioters carried weapons, injured police and committed acts of vandalism, and “certain police allowed them to walk away.”⁶

Yearwood points out that the lessons that some (hopefully that includes perceptive leftists) that the approach of those like Martin Luther King - of a ‘peace stuff’ – won’t cut it:

“The comparatively lenient response to the overwhelmingly white protesters on Wednesday, he said, “was the epitome of white supremacy,” and a dangerous precedent for the future of protest in the United States. He said he feared that in the future, young activists would tell him when he advised a nonviolent path that “all the peace stuff you talk about, Rev and Bill, that doesn’t work.” “And that leads to destruction,” he said.”⁵

It should be acknowledged that the President elect of the USA – Joe Biden - had to agree:

“President-elect Joseph R. Biden Jr. made a similar observation on Thursday. “No one can tell me that if it had been a group of Black Lives Matter protesting yesterday, they wouldn’t have been treated very, very differently than the mob of thugs that stormed the Capitol,” he said. “We all know that’s true, and it is unacceptable. Totally unacceptable.”⁵

It took over 3 hours before there was any significant police force on the steps of the Capitol, and before the National Guard were involved. Why?

New York Times, Jan. 7, 2021

⁶ John Schwartz, ‘Capitol Rioters Walked Away. Climate Protesters Saw a Double Standard’; *New York Times* January 7, 2021,

4. *What has been the reaction of the powers to be?*

Even as the events were unfolded, the actions of President Trump was to amplify them – even saying mildly “go home”, and emphasising that “we love you” and “I understand you” and again reiterating that “the election was stolen”. Since he was the instigator-in-chief of the riot none of this is a surprise. But what about the real power brokers? The most important in my view are the industrialists. What did they have to say?

As the event was unfolding, The National Association of Manufacturers Associations weighed in with a condemnation very quickly., They called for Pence to invoke the 25th Amendment – which dis-empowers the President and effectively removes him from office.⁷ That association represents over 14,00 companies including some big ones like Toyota and Exxon.⁸ But after having played footsie with the Trump government, even after the Charlottesville racist riot, they are hypocritical. Even the New York Times has to note their position is ‘hollow’:

“The National Association of Manufacturers called on Vice President Mike Pence to consider invoking the 25th Amendment of the Constitution and remove Mr. Trump from office. Many executives — including Mr. Cook of Apple, Mr. Dimon of JPMorgan and Mr. Schwarzman — denounced the violence, lamented the state of the country and called for accountability. But after four years of much talk but little action, their words rang hollow.”⁹

Yet what about the republican Party? They are still riven – even after the events, a significant section of the party still voted in the Pence tally proceedings of Congress, to uphold objections to the vote in Pennsylvania:

“Many Republicans joined him in trying to reject the will of the voters — almost two-thirds of House Republicans voted against accepting Pennsylvania’s electors *after* the Trumpist riot.”¹⁰

Yet other various significant personages of the Republican Party - including ex-President Bush, Mitt Romney (Senator for Utah and ex-Republican candidate for the Presidency) – have until very recently, called to accept the election finally. Even (for goodness sake) Lindsey Graham (Republican Senator for South Carolina), who has served as a mouthpiece for Trump. As also applies to the Majority leader of the Senate from Kentucky for the Republicans Mitch McConnell. At least the leader, until the new Democrats from Georgia are seated in the Congress –

⁷ <https://www.nam.org/manufacturers-call-on-armed-thugs-to-cease-violence-at-capitol-11628/>;

⁸ Yves Smith , ‘MAGA Cosplayers Seize Capitol While Cops Flounder’; January 7, 2021
<https://www.nakedcapitalism.com/2021/01/maga-cosplayers-seize-capitol-while-cops-flounder.html>

⁹ David Gelles, *After Riot, Business Leaders Reckon With Their Support for Trump* New York Times, Jan. 7, 2021;
<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/07/business/corporate-america-trump-capitol-mob.html>

¹⁰ Paul Krugman, ‘Opinion: Appeasement Got Us Where We Are. It’s time to stand up to the fascists among us’, January 7th New York Times; <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/07/opinion/donald-trump-fascism.html>

5. How can we explain this non-preparation – this ever-so kind police behaviour?

There would seem to be at least a couple of very uncomfortable questions to ask. Surely it must be asked: '*How can there have been such an extraordinary lapse before there was any significant police-military presence?*' And this naturally will lead to the query: '*Does it all seem pretty choreographed?*' These may be considered very cynical and no doubt will be labelled as 'conspiracist' – but I do not think they can be so easily discounted.

I have addressed the split in the ruling class between the big oil and finance sections before.¹¹ Many sources will agree that the ruling class had brought forward the Trump-ites.¹² However, he has now done what he brought in for: he has performed some of his key preset tasks by ramming through laws enabling the environmental destruction to continue, and cutting taxes for the ruling class.

But all this comes at a potential cost. The cost of Trump to the ruling class, is the currency he has given to moving to an open fascism, has already provoked a mass reaction against him. For example, from the Black Lives Matter movement. It is all just too risky for the ruling class to warrant an open class conflagration – if it can be avoided right now.

There is enough 'room' in the Democratic party still - even now - to play to act as a façade for the ruling class. This may seem astonishing in the light of its repeated betrayals of the working class, but this remains true. The time for open fascism has not yet come. It may still – but it is not quite there yet.

We have just seen what could happen. It is a forcible reminder of the gap between the 1923 Munich 'Beer Hall' putsch and the later rise of Hitler. Left forces of both Communists and Social Democrats, were smashed in premature revolutions in Berlin and Hamburg.¹³ The peak of a background chronic unemployment by 1923 however led to an intensified class struggle.

By November 1923, the Bavarian government was in control of German reaction who appointed Herr von Kahr as a monarchist leader. He introduced a state of emergency, but was in conflict with the central Reich government led by Gustav Stresemann. But Stresemann was himself originally a monarchist who had 'adjusted' towards a republican Germany after the First World War. Having formed the German Workers Party in 1920, he had not opposed the Kapp Putsch of 1920. Now in 1923, he sent the federal Reichswehr troops not against von Kahr in Bavaria – instead he suppressed the Social Democratic and Communist coalition governments in Saxony and Thuringia. In the ensuing uncertainty, the National Socialists led by Adolf Hitler and General Ludendorff staged an abortive coup. It was not defeated – but in the words of Evelyn Anderson:

¹¹ Hari Kumar, 'More Signs of Establishment Moves against Trump'; Berlin Blog; Oct 16, 2020; at: <https://www.theleftberlin.com/post/more-signs-of-establishment-moves-against-trump>

¹² What is Behind Trump – Is There Method Behind His Madness? Finance Capital and Industrial Capital – An Evolutionary History, August 18, 2019; at: <http://ml-today.com/2019/08/18/trump-finance-capital/>

¹³ W.B.Bland, Revisionism in Germany Part One to 1922'; for the Communist League January 1977; at: <http://ml-review.ca/aml/CommunistLeague/RevinGermany-pt1.htm>

“The Hitler putsch had .. was not defeated as Kapp had been defeated by a powerful movement of democratic resistance. It broke down simply for lack of support. Ten years later the Army backed Hitler to the hilt. But in 1923, the generals still believed that they could achieve their aims more safely by their own methods”.¹⁴

In the USA in the meantime, the Republican Party has become riven down to the base. The problem for both the Republicans and the manufacturers was that articulated in the words of Goethe above. They had raised the spirit of Trump – and now could not easily get rid of him. They could not get rid of him..... without some form of public means allowing them an open denial of him. The Republican party is split – but it still cowers from confronting Trump and his base. Trump may not have exactly created that base – but certainly he fed and nourished it. To repudiate Trump, they would need some spur.

The most charitable observers will simply say that the events were simply the result of ‘poor preparation’ and ‘incompetence’.

But I think that I am in fact even more charitable to the ruling class! In that, I think that they are far from incompetent, and that they have a lot more brains than given credit for. They are very cunning and know how to choreograph a thing or two. At the very least, there were probably a set of ‘stand-down’ commands from high echelons. They knew the Trump forces would discredit themselves. This would help them re-build the Republican Party to a more ‘respectable’ front for oil, gas and related industrialists.

The January 6th events have been able to ‘unmask’ the reality of the Trumpite threat, strip away any remaining ‘credibility’, and offer a wedge between the extreme right Trump-ites and the rest of the Republican party.

The Trump threat was of course a threat that Trump’s enablers in the Republican Party had themselves fostered throughout. We need only to think in particular of Senator Mitch McConnell and Lindsey Graham. Scenes from the Ronald Reagan Airport emerged tonight as Lindsey Graham left Washington. He of course is another upstanding citizen of Trumpland, but he had publicly recanted. In the post-riot session of Congress he finally called to recognise Biden’s electoral victory on the floor of the Senate. He was attacked at the airport by Trumpites screaming ‘traitor!’ – i.e. a traitor to the Trump movement. These Trumpites are hardly being unfair in their charge – he did finally become a traitor to their cause!¹⁵

Despite the vehemence of the extreme pro-Trump faction, it seems likely that already one significant goal of this event has been achieved. It appears that a significant fraction of the population has been disgusted by Trump’s incitements. A Reuters-Ipsos Poll released on the 8th January shows this:

“These are some of the findings of an Ipsos poll conducted between January 7-8, 2021 on behalf of Thomson Reuters. For this survey, a sample of 1,005 Americans age 18+ from the continental U.S., Alaska and Hawaii were interviewed online in English. The sample includes 490 Democrats, 363

¹⁴ Evelyn Anderson, *‘Hammer or Anvil -The story of the German working class movement;’* London 1945; p. 105.

¹⁵ Breaking News CNN. <https://www.cnn.com/videos/politics/2021/01/08/lindsey-graham-airport-trump-supporters-vpx.cnn>

Republicans, and 100 independents. Weighting was then employed to balance demographics to ensure that the sample's composition reflects that of the adult population according to Census data and to provide results intended to approximate the sample universe. The precision of Ipsos online polls is measured using a credibility interval. In this case, the poll is accurate to within ± 3.5 percentage points, 19 times out of 20, had all Americans been polled. The credibility interval will be wider among subsets of the population. All sample surveys and polls may be subject to other sources of error, including, but not limited to coverage error, and measurement error. The poll also has a credibility interval ± 5.0 percentage points for Democrats, ± 5.9 percentage points for Republicans, and ± 11.2 percentage points for independents. ¹⁶

A Conclusion for now

At the time of writing, events are unfolding fast towards a possible attempt at impeaching Trump again. We may not know the real story of the riot until much later in history – but it has unleashed a chain of events. We shall follow. But until there is a real mass movement – organised – in the USA of the working peoples – we will see more choreography. Nonetheless the working classes should recall the gap between the failed Hitler Munich putsch of 1923, and the later success of Hitler's more mature fascism. The working class needs to urgently organise itself. One key part of this is the formation of a united Marxist-Leninist party.

¹⁶ See: <https://tinyurl.com/reuters010621>

Link from: Brett Wilkins, 'Survey Finds Majority of Americans Want Trump Removed From Office'; January 08, 2021 Common Dreams; at: <https://www.commondreams.org/news/2021/01/08/survey-finds-majority-americans-want-trump-removed-office>;