

When is a hearing not a hearing?

The Democrats' long-awaited *hearing* on the 'insurrection' of January 6, 2021 began today, and as was expected, it was a tightly orchestrated opening to an event that was designed to reinforce one central theme. That is that Donald Trump and all of his supporters (who are White Supremacists, domestic terrorists and enemies of the Republic) were responsible for the "worst assault on Democracy since the Civil War." It was a production complete with buckets full of political chum for the sharks on the Left - high drama that helped fill the void left by Donald Trump's departure from office AND that is laser-focused on mobilizing and bringing straying Democrats together before the crucial 2022 mid-term elections - to crush the remaining Republican infidels.

At this point it's necessary to underscore that Conservatives, which normally go out of their way to protect the Constitution, do not condone violence by twisting it to suit their needs. Violence towards Capitol Police or towards any ordinary Washington D.C. citizen or resident of any town in America for that matter is not something we support. What we also do not support is a kangaroo court proceeding whose only reason for existence is tarring and feathering the opposition. Had these hearings been a court of law, the hearsay, extreme characterizations, generalities and conjecture as to the participants' motives would have been the subject of numerous objections by defense attorneys. But, it wasn't a courtroom, so no advocate for unbiased first-person testimony could file objections.

CNN carried the proceedings (not C-Span strangely enough) as four Capitol Police officers testified to the 'atrocities' they faced while trying to protect the Congressional Representatives in the House Building(s). After hearing their testimony, I have no doubt that they were closely vetted by the Speaker to tell *their truth* and emotionally spell-bind the crowd AND open the door of doubt as to who was actually behind the mass trespass operation. Democrat interrogators heaped praise on their heroic efforts and bestowed the mantle of 'heroes of the Republic' on them for their courage in the face of overwhelming odds. (Judging by the Representatives' performance art I now know which statues will replace those taken down in Statuary Hall.) While the whole Jan. 6th event must have been frightening I doubt it compares to the terror of a real battlefield where the enemy is armed to the teeth with rocket launchers, machine guns and IEDs.

The trespassers were wrong to illegally enter the Capitol. They were wrong to assault any member of the Capitol Police and they were wrong to say they represented the rest of us Conservatives or Republicans. But, they were not Al Qaeda or the Taliban or the Red Brigade or the Baader Meinhof group, and to make those comparisons even by implication is irresponsible. While some did carry what could be construed as 'weapons' (normal everyday items except when used in unusual circumstances) none of them was armed with handguns or rifles. Their numbers were not in the thousands as was stated by one of the officers, though the entire outside protest was that large. Did the officers fear for their lives? Yes, and they should be congratulated for showing restraint in using their firearms.

After every battle in wartime, a report is written. The *who did what and when* of a firefight is documented, objectively, and for the record - not to politically defend actions, but to analyze what went wrong and to take steps to correct it in the next battle. What we saw today was not a battle report; it was a political interview designed to bolster what will follow. And what will follow? We all know that the whole proceedings will be used to win the next election AND to pound another nail into the coffin of Donald Trump and anyone that dares to support him. However, I fear that the Democrats have made a serious tactical error by holding this hearing without Republican-named Republicans to serve on it. Nancy Pelosi has overestimated her support for restricting Congressmen like Jim Jordan from participating. And by allowing RINOs like Liz Cheney and Adam Kinzinger to participate she has all but insured that the Committees' findings and recommendations will be viewed by the American public to be a whitewash of her own responsibility for overseeing Capitol security.

What it WILL be is Trump Impeachment III - a made-for-TV serialized movie like Rocky or Star Wars that will shed no light on the truth about who was actually behind the 'mass trespass' of January 6th, but will only serve to keep the franchise going.

What we will have learned from this hearing is that we should never hold single-party dominated hearings about ANYTHING, let alone something as important as the illegal entry into our nation's Capitol Building.

The second thing is that we all become victims when hearings like this are held like this without benefit of objectivity or serious cross-examination of witnesses. Whether you are a Democrat or Republican, right of center or left of it, you should not condone what the Speaker of the House is doing to our Democracy. Hers is the real crime and should be prosecuted. She must be made to realize that she is not like her constituents in San Francisco who boldly shoplift hundreds of dollars of merchandise from high-end stores and then simply walk out into the sunlight without a challenge from law enforcement.

Stephan Helgesen is a retired career U.S. diplomat who lived and worked in 30 countries for 25 years during the Reagan, G.H.W. Bush, Clinton, and G.W. Bush Administrations. He is the author of eleven books, four of which are on American politics. He operates a political news story aggregator website, www.projectpushback.com and can be reached at: stephan@stephanhelgesen.com