A letter on John Edwards, the Democratic Party and American imperialism

17 May 2006

The following letter was sent to the World Socialist Web Site *in response to the article,* "Cheney's speech will deepen divisions in Europe over energy"

I appreciated your article on Cheney very much ("Cheney's speech will deepen divisions in Europe over energy") but it might have been even better if you had mentioned Democrat John Edwards' speech at Brussels, which largely echoed McCain's (the two chaired a prestigious Council on Foreign Relations report on Russia). Edwards followed McCain's lead and threatened Russia's sovereignty, and besides that took a position to the right of Bush on Iran (conflating Iran and "nuclear terrorism"). He wants to make Israel a member of NATO so it can 'help out' an interventionist Middle East policy, loves all the 'progress' the US and EU have made in Afghanistan, and thinks the Western empire can still be 'successful' in Iraq with a little more European help. You can find the speech here: http://oneamericacommittee.com/news/speeches/brussels20060430/

Since the focus of your report was Russia, here's Edwards on that nation: "The G8 meeting this summer in St. Petersburg is a huge test for Russia, for the United States, and for Europe. There's a lot of controversy about whether Russia should be the chair of the G8, and whether there should even be a meeting at all. John McCain and I agree that this summit threatens to undermine the G8. We disagree about other things to do with Russia and their membership in the G8, but this summit is 11 weeks away and is going to happen. We can't paper over the differences we have with President Putin. Leaders should not lead without raising concerns about Russia's de-democratization, its behavior toward its neighbors, its cooperation in the war on terror, or its use of energy as a weapon.

"If our leaders don't stand up for what we believe, then we need to consider seriously whether we should continue to even have a G8. I don't think that'd be good for us, but a future of meaningless G8 summits would be even worse. Russia's entering a critical political phase. The parliament, parliamentary elections next year and presidential election in 2008. America and the EU should be working now to make clear what the criteria are for legitimate transition. We should communicate this publicly and privately. If today's reality of Russian politics continues with opposition candidates kept off the ballot arbitrarily, unable to access the media or to raise funds, with opposition parties unable to form because of technicalities, or with independent domestic monitoring organizations kept out."

The demand for "legitimate transition" to be defined by the US and the EU, is to me a particular affront to Russian sovereignty. From what we can gather, the Russian people don't want to transition away from their current government or their current leadership. Is that what is being demanded of Russia? Obviously Edwards is obscure on exactly what the corporate globalization 'community' wants, but could it be—let's see, let me guess—penetration by international corporations into Russia's oil and gas sector? That's usually the bottom line.

Here's an article on a similar recent speech by this probable mainstream Democratic candidate for president: "Edwards said he supports keeping Russia in the G-8, a group of leading industrialized democratic countries that is scheduled to meet in St. Petersburg this summer. But he added that the G-7—the group minus Russia—might meet in advance to discuss how to deal with critical issues Russia does not want to confront. At the forefront, he said, is the unfolding crisis of Iran's nuclear ambitions. 'So far, [Russia] has been all over the place. It doesn't want to do or say anything,'

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Edwards said. ‘This is a real litmus-test issue for both America’s relationship with Russia and Europe’s relationship with Russia. It’s such an explosive and dangerous situation.’

“According to Edwards, Russia cares about the success of the G-8 meeting because it wants to view itself as a great, influential power. The G-7 may be able to use that leverage to show Russia that it is in its own interest to support the common global interests of its democratic partners. ‘Is it better to have them on the outside or is it better to have them on the inside?’ Edwards asked.

“‘For now, the judgment of the task force is, let’s keep them on the inside.’ At the same time, Russia must demonstrate a serious and legitimate transition of power is possible in 2008.” http://oneamericacommittee.com/news/headlines/stanfordrep20060503/

Thank you for keeping the public informed on what’s really going on among the imperial powers.

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