

Socialist Alternative defends Sanders' support for imperialist war

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An article published January 28 by Socialist Alternative, entitled “Sanders’ Foreign Policy Falls Short: Socialism Means Internationalism,” is an attempt to provide an anti-imperialist coloration to the organization’s campaign in support of Bernie Sanders’ bid for the Democratic nomination and the presidency. What Socialist Alternative produces, however, is a crude apologia for Sanders’ pro-war policies and for American imperialism itself.

Socialist Alternative has hitched itself to the bandwagon of the long-time congressman and senator from Vermont, who calls himself a “democratic socialist” and has focused his campaign on the issues of social inequality and Wall Street criminality. Socialist Alternative, which already works closely with the Democratic Party in Seattle, where its member, Kshama Sawant, sits on the City Council, is doing its best to fully integrate itself into Sanders’ campaign for president.

In recent weeks, it has held rallies, fundraisers and meetings on Sanders’ behalf through its “Movement4Bernie” campaign. The pseudo-left organization makes little attempt to square its support for a capitalist politician who has for decades caucused with the Democrats in Congress, supported every Democratic presidential candidate and every Democratic administration, and is running as a Democrat, with its professed goal of building a mass political movement outside of the two-party system.

The January 28 article begins by praising Sanders’ call for a “political revolution against the billionaire class.” It does so completely uncritically, without examining the actual content of Sanders’ supposed “revolution.” Sanders himself has made clear that his bid for the Democratic presidential nomination is an effort to channel social opposition and disaffection with

the two-party system back behind the Democratic Party.

“But,” the article continues, “inevitably, the Democratic debates have also featured extensive discussion on foreign policy. Socialist Alternative has frequently pointed out that we have some serious disagreements with Sanders on foreign policy, but the sharpening of the political debate makes it necessary for us to comment on this at greater length.”

The authors of the article barely conceal their frustration over having to discuss Sanders’ foreign policy, a political inconvenience for those who seek to paint the pro-war, pro-imperialist senator in “revolutionary” colors. They immediately seek to downplay the importance of Sanders’ support for US imperialism, writing, “However, in doing this it must also be acknowledged that, to date, most progressive workers and youth see not so much Sanders’ deficiencies in foreign policy as the contrast with Hillary Clinton’s record.”

Sanders fully backs the Obama administration’s war policies in Afghanistan and the Middle East, which are responsible for the devastation of Afghanistan, parts of Pakistan, Iraq, Syria, Libya and Yemen, resulting in the deaths of hundreds of thousands of people and the reduction of millions more to the status of stateless refugees. They also consume hundreds of billions of dollars, in the midst of relentless cuts in social welfare programs, and are responsible for the death and permanent physical and psychological maiming of thousands of American youth.

For Socialist Alternative, Sanders’ defense of US war crimes merely “reveals his political limitations.” Such a trivial issue, the authors insist, “does not negate the enormously progressive aspects of his campaign as it politicizes millions of workers and young people.”

Really? Please explain, Socialist Alternative, how it is possible for a politician to be opposing the interests of the corporate-financial elite at home when he is supporting the policies carried out to advance the interests of the very same ruling elite abroad! In reality, Sanders' open support for US imperialism overseas exposes as fraudulent his supposed opposition to Wall Street within the borders of the United States.

The ruling class' wars abroad are an extension of its class-war policies toward the American working class. In both cases, the ruling class is motivated by the drive for corporate profit, which requires cheap labor both within the US and internationally, along with access to natural resources and markets in opposition to the claims of American capitalism's international competitors. When Sanders repeatedly votes to fund the Pentagon and its operations around the world, he is not making a "mistake." He is making a deliberate decision to advance the interests of the American ruling class abroad.

The January 28 article is aimed at those sections of workers and youth who are deeply opposed to the permanent state of war and skeptical of Sanders' support for it. It underscores the fact that Socialist Alternative and similar pseudo-left organizations represent not the working class, but privileged sections of the upper-middle class, who are primarily concerned with expanding their access to privilege, positions and wealth, in this case through the promotion of the Sanders campaign.

Socialist Alternative's campaign for Sanders epitomizes the pseudo-left's role as a political transmission belt to disarm leftward moving workers and youth in order to prevent them from breaking with the Democratic Party. The organization's apologetics for Sanders' pro-war and pro-imperialist policies make clear that it itself is a pro-war organization, whose class interests align with those of American imperialism.

Its conclusion that the over 1 million dead in 25 years of imperialist war in the Middle East are "negated" by a mild social reform program, which Sanders will abandon with brutal rapidity should he get elected, not only has nothing to do with socialism, it defines Socialist Alternative itself as a right-wing organization, which, its radical-sounding rhetoric notwithstanding, defends capitalism and imperialism.



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