

Democrats push anti-Russian campaign at “tax day” protests

Our reporters
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Protests organized by the Democratic Party drew relatively small numbers in Washington, DC, New York City and more than 100 other locations throughout the United States on Saturday. The main demonstration at the US Capitol drew about 10,000 people, with several thousand turning out in Los Angeles, San Francisco, Chicago and New York, and lesser crowds in other locations.

The protests were set for April 15, the day when income tax returns must usually be filed in the US, to highlight the demand that President Trump release his income tax returns, as all previous presidential candidates have done for the past half-century. Trump has refused to do so, giving the spurious pretext that his taxes are under audit by the Internal Revenue Service.

Democratic Party representatives sought to link the tax return issue not to Trump’s status as a billionaire who has taken advantage of various real estate tax dodges to pay little or nothing, but to their bogus allegations that Trump is a Russian stooge.

The suggestion is that Trump is hiding substantial income from Russian investments or debts to Russian investors that would become public knowledge if he released his tax returns. A partial return for 2005, recently leaked to Rachel Maddow of MSNBC, showed no such Russian connection, and Trump’s financial statements filed with the Federal Election Commission have shown no Russian assets or property holdings.

Despite the small size of the rallies, the cable news networks gave them extensive coverage on Saturday, avoiding any mention of the number of participants.

While the demonstrations attracted anti-Trump protesters motivated by other issues, particularly opposition to war and Trump’s attacks on immigrants, the platform at the main rallies was dominated by Democrats who devoted their remarks almost entirely to right-wing denunciations of Trump’s alleged Russian connections.

This was amplified by some of the signs carried by demonstrators, which included openly anti-communist attacks on Trump featuring the hammer and sickle superimposed on his name or face. One sign at the Washington demonstration seemed to demand more bombing of Syria, reading, “1 Airstrike Doesn’t Erase Trump’s Lies and Russia Ties.”

Speakers at the main rally in Washington included such Democrats as Senator Ron Wyden of Oregon and Representative Maxine Waters of California. House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi was the main speaker at the rally in San Francisco, while Representative Jan Schakowsky and Representative Mike Quigley, along with Jesse Jackson, addressed a rally in the Chicago Loop.

None of these speakers made remarks criticizing Trump’s missile strikes on Syria, his authorization of the military to use a huge MOAB super-bomb in Afghanistan, or his threats of preemptive military strikes against North Korea.

Reporters from the *World Socialist Web Site* covered the demonstration in San Francisco, which was attended by a largely upper-middle-class layer, most of middle age or older, and mostly firm supporters of the Democratic Party. There was a great deal of anti-Russian chauvinism and even unstated pro-war sentiment. Many people reacted with visible hostility to the anti-war message of the WSWS, and a few said the bombing of Syria was a good thing.

Nearly every speaker in San Francisco denounced Russia and alleged Russian interference in the 2016 elections. The first speaker, Jane Kim, a member of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors, was a Green Party member turned Democrat. She repeatedly referred to the audience members as “patriots,” contrasting them to Donald Trump because he won’t release his tax returns.

The next speaker was David Cay Johnston, a former tax reporter for the *New York Times* who has written

penetrating exposures of economic inequality, but focused his remarks entirely on Russia-baiting. Referring to Trump, he said, “We have to know whether he’s an agent of a foreign power.”

The main speaker, Nancy Pelosi, argued that the Democrats needed Republican support to force Trump to release his tax returns and asked the audience to contact friends who live in Republican-controlled congressional districts. Sounding the anti-Russian theme, she asked, “What do the Russians have” on Trump? “Why is he opposing sanctions against Russia?”

At one point, a reader of the WSWS who found himself near Pelosi began calling her a war criminal, only to be accused by Pelosi’s followers of being a Trump supporter.

Even in this largely pro-Democratic Party crowd, there were those who were more critical, both of the Democrats and of American capitalism as a whole.

Douglas Estus, a retired computer scientist, spoke to the WSWS about the missile strikes ordered by Trump against Syria. “The arms industry is profiting immensely from these bombing campaigns, as well as from the broader war campaigns,” he said. “The furthering of war is not the answer. We’ve gone from one administration to the next and all we get is more wars. Things are becoming very dangerous and there has to be an end to war.

“The rally happening today is about more than taxes. There’s general anger within the population, and we should expect more demonstrations in the future. Everything has to be re-done from the bottom up. All the politicians are corrupt and only represent a combination of the arms industry, the fossil fuel giants and others who are simply trying to protect their profits.

“Capitalism is on its last legs. I haven’t heard any substantial voice of criticism coming from the top figures in the Democratic Party.”



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