

The Sessions hearing: Another anti-Russian diversion while the social counterrevolution in America deepens

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14 June 2017

The three-hour appearance by Attorney General Jeff Sessions before the Senate Intelligence Committee was perhaps the most flagrant example of the efforts of official Washington and the corporate media to divert the attention of the American people from the frontal assault by the Trump administration on the democratic rights and social conditions of working people.

With the administration arresting and deporting thousands of immigrants, many of them facing imminent death in the Middle East and Central America, and the US Senate in the final stages of dismantling health coverage for tens of millions of people, the entire focus of the Democratic Party and the media is on escalating tensions between the United States and Russia and seeking to whip up an anti-Russian war fever.

Sessions was “grilled,” in the parlance of breathless media commentators, on a non-subject: his alleged contacts with Russian government officials last year in the context of his role as a top adviser to the Trump presidential campaign. In the course of that campaign, Sessions crossed paths with Russian Ambassador Sergey Kislyak exactly three times, including one actual face-to-face meeting and two occasions when he and Kislyak were in the same room as part of a Trump campaign event.

The former senator from Alabama came of age in the Deep South of the 1960s, where he was taught that the civil rights movement was a “communist conspiracy” directed by Moscow to promote “race-mixing.” The notion that this diehard reactionary has been seduced by the blandishments of Vladimir Putin would be laughable if it were not being promoted for such filthy political ends.

Democrat after Democrat sought to pin the Putin label on Sessions or his boss, President Trump, seeking to make Tuesday’s hearing the next step, following last week’s testimony by fired FBI Director James Comey, in a Watergate-style exposure of the Trump White House.

Unlike Watergate, however, there is no issue of democratic rights involved in the anti-Russia campaign. Two reactionary factions of big-business politicians and “deep state” operatives are fighting out issues of imperialist foreign policy—whether the US should continue the anti-Russian line adopted during Obama’s second term, confronting Russia over Syria, Ukraine, the Baltics and other issues, or whether the immediate focus of US military-diplomatic aggression should be China and its ally North Korea.

No less importantly, the anti-Russian campaign serves as a political diversion, directing the attention of the American public to an entirely bogus, concocted issue—did Russia intervene in the US presidential election to help Trump win?—while the noisy conflict in official Washington covers over the systematic attacks by the Trump administration on working people.

One need only consider the questions Democratic senators did NOT ask the attorney general to recognize that yesterday’s congressional circus was a prime example of this diversionary process. Sessions is responsible for some of the most vicious antidemocratic policies of the Trump administration. But no Democrat asked him to justify the anti-Muslim travel bans his Justice Department drafted, which have been twice thrown out as unconstitutional by the federal courts.

Sessions is a leading advocate of savage anti-immigrant measures, and the Justice Department is the

lead agency in seeking to penalize cities and counties that have sought to protect immigrants from federal harassment by refusing to cooperate with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). These “sanctuary cities” have been targeted by Sessions for a cutoff of federal funds, another antidemocratic action that has been temporarily blocked by the courts.

No Democrat asked Sessions about the weekend raids by ICE agents in Michigan and Tennessee in which hundreds of Iraqi immigrants, the majority of them Chaldean Catholics, were rounded up and shipped to federal detention facilities for deportation to Iraq, where they will be in imminent danger of death at the hands of ISIS or Shi’ite militias. So much for the claims of the Trump administration (and the Democrats) to oppose ISIS and defend the interests of Christians!

In recent weeks, Sessions has been in the headlines for his extreme law-and-order views. He has rescinded even the largely cosmetic measures against police violence adopted under the Obama administration, while demanding that maximum prison sentences be imposed on all drug offenders, no matter how minor their infractions. No Democrat chose to question the attorney general about such issues at Tuesday’s hearing.

This is part a larger pattern in which the Democratic Party has used a single-minded focus on the anti-Russian campaign to subvert opposition to Trump on any other issue. As the Perspective statement published yesterday by the *World Socialist Web Site* observed, “The Democrats are not calling for hearings on the assault on health care, the attack on immigrant workers, the elevation of far-right nationalist forces within the administration, or war plans against North Korea, Iran and China.”

The *New York Times* commented, in an editorial published Tuesday, that Senate Republicans were drafting a health care plan that will cut 23 million people off of health insurance, with the intention of passing it by July 4 without a single hearing or any public debate about the law’s provisions. The issues being debated behind closed doors within the Republican leadership are limited to such questions as whether Medicaid benefits for 10 million people should be phased out over three years or seven years: in other words, how to package the destruction of health care so

as to confuse the public about the bill’s real impact.

A column in the same issue of the *Times* noted the comparative silence of groups opposed both to the bill that passed the House earlier this year and the companion bill being drafted now by the Senate, including among these organizations “almost every major health care interest group: the lobbying groups for doctors, nurses and hospitals as well as advocates for patients with cancer, diabetes, lung disease, heart disease or birth defects.”

The most important silence, however, is that of the Democratic Party, the supposed opposition within the political establishment to Trump and the Republicans. The Democrats will likely vote against the repeal of Obamacare and issue many protestations. But they are doing nothing to actually oppose the destruction of health coverage for tens of millions of people.

Instead, the Democrats are redoubling their efforts to push the Trump administration even further to the right on foreign policy, toward a more confrontational anti-Russian stance that brings with it the real danger of a war with nuclear weapons.



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