

Bernie Sanders embraces the anti-Russia campaign

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23 July 2018

Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders appeared on the CBS interview program “Face the Nation” Sunday and fully embraced the anti-Russia campaign of the US military-intelligence apparatus, backed by the Democratic Party and much of the media.

In response to a question from CBS host Margaret Brennan, Sanders unleashed a torrent of denunciations of Trump’s meeting and press conference in Helsinki with Russian President Vladimir Putin. A preliminary transcript reads:

SANDERS: “I will tell you that I was absolutely outraged by his behavior in Helsinki, where he really sold the American people out. And it makes me think that either Trump doesn’t understand what Russia has done, not only to our elections, but through cyber attacks against all parts of our infrastructure, either he doesn’t understand it, or perhaps he is being blackmailed by Russia, because they may have compromising information about him.

“Or perhaps also you have a president who really does have strong authoritarian tendencies. And maybe he admires the kind of government that Putin is running in Russia. And I think all of that is a disgrace and a disservice to the American people. And we have got to make sure that Russia does not interfere, not only in our elections, but in other aspects of our lives.”

These comments, which echo remarks he gave at a rally in Kansas late last week, signal Sanders’ full embrace of the right-wing campaign launched by the Democrats and backed by dominant sections of the military-intelligence apparatus. Their opposition to Trump is centered on issues of foreign policy, based on the concern that Trump, due to his own “America First” brand of imperialist strategy, has run afoul of geostrategic imperatives that are considered inviolable—in particular, the conflict with Russia.

Sanders did not use his time on a national television program to condemn Trump’s persecution of immigrants and the separation of children from their parents, or to denounce his naming of ultra-right jurist Brett Kavanaugh to the Supreme Court, or to attack the White House declaration last week that the “war on poverty” had ended victoriously—in order to justify the destruction of social programs for impoverished working people. Nor did he seek to advance his supposedly left-wing program on domestic issues like health care, jobs and education.

Sanders’ embrace of the anti-Russia campaign is not surprising, but it is instructive. This is, after all, an individual who presented himself as “left-wing,” even a “socialist.” During the 2016 election campaign, he won the support of millions of people attracted to his call for a “political revolution” against the “billionaire class.” For Sanders, who has a long history of opportunist and pro-imperialist politics in the orbit of the Democratic Party, the aim of the campaign was always to direct social discontent into establishment channels, culminating in his endorsement of the campaign of Hillary Clinton.

Sanders’s support for the anti-Russia and anti-Wikileaks campaign is all the more telling because he was himself the victim of efforts by the Clinton campaign and the Democratic Party leadership to block his 2016 campaign. In June and July 2016, Wikileaks published internal Democratic emails in which officials ridiculed the Sanders campaign, forcing the DNC to issue a public apology: “On behalf of everyone at the DNC, we want to offer a deep and sincere apology to Senator Sanders, his supporters, and the entire Democratic Party for the inexcusable remarks made over email.”

In the aftermath of his election campaign, Sanders

was elevated into a top-level position in the Democratic Party caucus in the US Senate. His first response to the inauguration of Trump was to declare his willingness to “work with” the president, closely tracking remarks of Obama that the election of Trump was part of an “intramural scrimmage” in which all sides were on the same team. As the campaign of the military-intelligence agencies intensifies, however, Sanders is toeing the line.

The experience is instructive not only in relation to Sanders, but to an entire social milieu and the political perspective with which it is associated. This is what it means to work within the Democratic Party. The Sanders campaign did not push the Democrats to the left, but rather the state apparatus of the ruling class brought Sanders in to give a “left” veneer to a thoroughly right-wing party.

New political figures, many associated with the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) are being brought in for the same purpose. As Sanders gave his anti-Russia rant, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez sat next to him nodding her agreement. The 28-year-old member of the DSA last month won the Democratic nomination in New York’s 14th Congressional District, unseating the Democratic incumbent, Joseph Crowley, the fourth-ranking member of the Democratic leadership in the House of Representatives.

Since then, Ocasio-Cortez has been given massive and largely uncritical publicity by the corporate media, summed up in an editorial puff piece by the *New York Times* that described her as “a bright light in the Democratic Party who has brought desperately needed energy back to New York politics...”

Ocasio-Cortez and Sanders were jointly interviewed from Kansas, where the two appeared Friday at a campaign rally for James Thompson, who is seeking the Democratic nomination for the US House of Representatives from the Fourth Congressional District, based in Wichita, in an August 7 primary election.

Thompson might appear to be an unusual ally for the “socialist” Sanders and the DSA member Ocasio-Cortez. His campaign celebrates his role as an Army veteran, and his website opens under the slogan “Join the Thompson Army,” followed by pledges that the candidate will “Fight for America.” In an interview with the Associated Press, Thompson indicated that despite his support for Sanders’ call for “Medicare for

all,” and his own endorsement by the DSA, he was wary of any association with socialism. “I don’t like the term socialist, because people do associate that with bad things in history,” he said.

Such anticommunism fits right in with the anti-Russian campaign, which is the principal theme of the Democratic Party in the 2018 elections. As the *World Socialist Web Site* has pointed out for many months, the real thrust of the Democratic Party campaign is demonstrated by its recruitment as congressional candidates of dozens of former CIA and military intelligence agents, combat commanders from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and war planners from the Pentagon, State Department and White House.

There is no contradiction between the influx of military-intelligence candidates into the Democratic Party and the Democrats’ making use of the services of Sanders and Ocasio-Cortez to give the party a “left” cover. Both the CIA Democrats and their pseudo-left “comrades” agree on the most important questions: the defense of the global interests of American imperialism and a more aggressive intervention in the Syrian civil war and other areas where Washington and Moscow are in conflict.



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