

# Democratic Party deploys Russian meddling smear against Sanders

Patrick Martin  
24 February 2020

The victory of Bernie Sanders in the Nevada caucuses has escalated the anti-Sanders hysteria of the Democratic Party establishment and Democratic-aligned media outlets such as the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, CNN and MSNBC. This has taken the form of fabricated allegations of Russian intervention into the 2020 elections to support Sanders' candidacy.

This fable is elaborated on the front page of Sunday's *New York Times* in a lengthy article by David Sanger, the newspaper's most reliable stenographer for whatever story the military-intelligence apparatus wants floated in the newspaper. Under the headline, "Seeking Chaos, Moscow Places Its Bets in US," Sanger smears Sanders as the beneficiary of supposed Russian support in the 2020 elections.

Sanger has a long record of fraudulent "analyses." Stories that appear under his byline are generally based on unnamed intelligence sources whose allegations are presented as unimpeachable. The hallmark of a typical Sanger analysis is that it lacks any identifiable factual basis. He is less a reporter than a frustrated writer of third-rate spy stories with poorly constructed plots.

In this latest thriller, Sanger does not produce a single fact in support of the contention that Russian President Vladimir Putin backs Sanders or has done anything to assist his campaign.

Besides numerous unnamed "outside experts" and "intelligence analysts," Sanger quotes three current and former intelligence officials by name, including Angela Stent, national intelligence officer for Russia, now a professor at Georgetown University and author of *Putin's World: Russia Against the West and With the Rest*, who actually says nothing about Sanders.

Victoria Nuland is also cited. Nuland is certainly an expert on foreign subversion of elections, having played, as she boasted, a central role in 2014 in the \$5 billion US effort to destabilize and oust the democratically elected government of Viktor Yanukovich in Ukraine.

Nuland does not present any evidence to support Sanger's

storyline, beyond asserting, "Any figures that radicalize politics and do harm to center views and unity in the United States are good for Putin's Russia." In other words, Sanders is functioning as a Putin stooge because his policies are to the left of the Democratic Party candidates favored by the CIA.

Sanger finds the hand of Putin in Sanders' support for "a drastic expansion of taxes and government programs like Medicare," claiming that this divides American society in a way favorable to Moscow.

Also named by Sanger is Christopher Krebs, head of the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency in the Department of Homeland Security. Sanger cites his role in "documenting how Russian operatives are becoming stealthier, learning from the mistakes they made in 2016." These Russki agents are so devilishly clever that they successfully conceal all traces of their insidious manipulation of American elections.

In Sanger's make-believe world, the very absence of evidence of Russian interference is proof of their subversion. His story line is a modern-day version of Senator Joseph McCarthy's anticommunist invocations of a "conspiracy so vast."

No American is safe from Putin's tentacles. Sanger claims that Russia is "feeding disinformation to unsuspecting Americans on Facebook and other social media." He continues: "By seeding conspiracy theories and baseless claims on the platforms, Russians hope everyday Americans will retransmit those falsehoods from their own accounts."

He concludes, with apparent regret over the existence of freedom of speech, "It is much harder to ban the words of real Americans, who may be parroting a Russian story line, even unintentionally."

The anti-Russia narrative has the most ominous implications for the democratic rights of the American people. The *New York Times* implies that any expression of social discontent in the United States, and, above all, the growing anger over mounting social inequality, can be delegitimized as "parroting a Russian story line" and

outlawed.

The claims by the intelligence agencies that Sanders is the beneficiary of Russian support have been taken up by leading figures in the Democratic Party establishment. Appearing on the ABC News Sunday interview program “This Week,” former Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel, who served as chief of staff in the Obama White House, said that Sanders’ rise in the Democratic presidential contest was a case of Putin and Trump picking the weakest possible opponent in order to ensure Trump’s reelection.

These reactions are not merely the expression of the virulent hatred of socialism on the part of the Democratic leadership, even in the watered-down and entirely passive version that Sanders advances under the label “democratic socialism.” A Sanders campaign, with its emphasis on economic inequality and appeals to popular hostility to billionaires and corporate America, would cut across the political agenda of the Democratic leadership.

The Democratic Party establishment has long wanted to conduct the 2020 election campaign against Trump as a continuation of the anti-Russia campaign that produced the Mueller Report and then the impeachment of Trump for delaying military aid to Ukraine for its war with Russia, which ended in his acquittal in the Senate. As House Speaker Nancy Pelosi never tires of repeating, “All roads lead to Russia.”

The Democratic Party wants to center the 2020 presidential campaign on the claim that Trump is an agent or stooge of Russian President Vladimir Putin and to present the Democrats as the defenders of “our” intelligence agencies and “our” diplomats and generals against the interference of Moscow in American politics.

In the event that such a campaign succeeded in ousting Trump, the result would be portrayed as a popular mandate for military escalation against Russia, as well as China, threatening the prospect of open warfare between the world’s main nuclear powers. Regardless of the outcome, however, a campaign focused on anti-Russian hysteria would serve to suppress the mounting social tensions in America and block any political expression of the seething anger in the working class.

The reaction of the party establishment to the rise of Sanders only underscores the central political reality that the Democratic Party is controlled by the intelligence agencies and the financial elites, not the millions who vote in primaries and caucuses. The Democratic Party is a capitalist party, the oldest in America, an institution the ruling class will fight to retain control of, using all the methods at its disposal, from media propaganda and dirty tricks to outright violence.

The response of the Democratic Party establishment

demonstrates the bankruptcy of Sanders’ political strategy. The party Sanders identifies as a vehicle for social change is actually a political straitjacket, notorious for smothering and destroying every popular challenge from below.

As is his invariable practice, Sanders has responded to the onslaught of Russia-baiting against him by validating the baseless allegation that Russia has actually engaged in significant interference in US politics. At the same time, he is responding to his new “front-runner” status by seeking to reassure the Democratic Party establishment.

In his interview Sunday night on the CBS program “60 Minutes,” he dismissed with a mocking tone the identification of his campaign with calls for “revolution,” saying he did not want to focus on that slogan.

He went on to tell his interviewer, Anderson Cooper, that he would “absolutely” be willing to use military force if he were elected president, and boasted that “we have the best military in the world.”

Sanders is already making the concessions and adjustments that will frustrate his many supporters, who view him as an apostle of radical political change. This is the inevitable outcome of his efforts to keep popular opposition within the framework of the Democratic Party. While claiming to change the Democratic Party, the Democratic Party is rapidly changing him.

The real answer to the conspiracies of the Democratic Party is the fight to mobilize the working class in opposition to both parties and the entire capitalist system. In its election campaign, the Socialist Equality Party and its candidates, Joseph Kishore and Norissa Santa Cruz, are spearheading the fight to build a socialist leadership in the working class and youth.

*Tonight, the SEP will livestream online a meeting at Ann Arbor, Michigan, featuring Joseph Kishore and SEP National Chairman David North. For more information, visit [socialism2020.org/townhall](http://socialism2020.org/townhall).*



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](http://wsws.org/contact)**