

Democratic New York City mayor uses Memorial Day speech to rail against socialism and communism

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New York City mayor Eric Adams, in language reminiscent of the notorious red-baiting Senator Joe McCarthy of 75 years ago, used a Memorial Day speech to denounce “the hot rays of socialism and communism and destruction that’s playing out across the globe.”

Adams was also echoing, much closer to the present day, the Memorial Day message of Donald Trump. The former president, running for a second term in next year’s election, posted a message on his social media platform to warn about those, including “Marxists and Communists,” who are trying “to destroy our once great country” from within.

In his speech last Monday at the military-themed Intrepid Air and Space Museum in Manhattan, Adams went on to bemoan the lack of patriotism of Americans, especially the youth. He pointed to a 2022 poll that registered only 38 percent of the US population as “extremely proud” of their country. The mayor proudly declared himself “part of the 38 percenters.”

An American reader of these words could not help but think of the fascistic “Three Percenters” militia. This indirect appeal to the ultra-right also found expression in Adams’ reference to a famous quotation from President Thomas Jefferson: “the tree of liberty must be refreshed from time to time with the blood of patriots and of tyrants.”

Fascists and the extreme right have turned Jefferson’s revolutionary sentiment from the Age of Enlightenment into its opposite, a call for counterrevolution. Adams could not have been unaware of this current trope when he declared, “You water the tree of freedom with your blood. We sit under the shade of that tree of freedom protected from the hot rays of socialism and

communism...”

Amidst his ringing calls for freedom and against socialism, the mayor did not say one word about the danger of fascism, white supremacy and antisemitism, and he was also silent about the attempt by then-president Donald Trump, two-and-a-half years ago, aided by gangs of fascists, to overthrow the results of the 2020 presidential election.

Adams’ calculated appeal to the extreme right, in the supposed bastion of liberalism, the financial, media and cultural capital of the US, reflects the fears of the financial oligarchy which he represents. These ruling class layers, instrumental in building up and bankrolling Adams’ candidacy several years ago, fear a social explosion in the country’s largest city, with education, health care and transportation workers joining the growing international movement against austerity and inequality. Their only answer is the preparation of brutal police repression. Adams, a former police detective, seeks to lay the basis for this by his histrionic warnings about socialism.

A report issued only weeks ago spelled out the reality: fully one-half of the city’s population is unable to afford the present cost of living. In the face of this reality, Adams seeks to double down on his law-and-order rhetoric. The whole aim is to magnify and exploit the concerns over the social crisis, and turn them in the most reactionary direction, using them to divide the working class. Adams never misses an opportunity to defend those he calls “my police.” In the face of the influx of thousands of refugees from Central America and elsewhere, the mayor plans to loosen the regulations requiring the city to house the homeless.

Adams’ record over the past 18 months speaks for

itself: budget cuts for education, libraries and health care, the involuntary commitment of the homeless mentally ill, and denunciations of crime and the homeless that set the stage for the chokehold murder of Jordan Neely on a subway train just a few weeks ago. Adams was silent on this killing for days, even as video evidence showed that Daniel Penny, the vigilante later charged with manslaughter, held Neely in a chokehold for four minutes and ignored warnings that his actions risked killing the homeless man.

Adams is a prime example of the drastic shift of capitalist politics to the right. In the face of the deepening crisis and the movement of the working class, the Republicans are leading the way with fascistic rhetoric and policies. Trump, running for another term in next year's election, has "normalized" extreme right-wing and fascistic demagoguery.

As Adams shows, however, the Democrats have no fundamental differences with the fascistic Republicans. When he was first elected, Adams—an ex-cop and an ex-Republican—boasted that he was the "new face of the Democratic Party." The "new face" is competing with Trump and the Republicans on the grounds of chauvinism, super-patriotism and anti-communism.

When faced with the choice, the Democrats are no more wedded to the current system of capitalist democracy than their Republican rivals. If the defense of capitalism requires the destruction of democratic forms of rule, they will not hesitate.

Indeed, the record of the Democrats, including in the 2016 presidential campaign and throughout Trump's four years in office, proves this without doubt. While trying to tap the hatred of Trump and the Republicans for their own electoral benefit, the Democrats have advanced their own program of austerity, war and attacks on democratic rights.

The first impeachment of Trump was carried out on the basis of the charge that he was a stooge of Vladimir Putin. The majority of the Democratic caucus in the House voted for a resolution earlier this year denouncing socialism, and the Democrats also attack Trump from the right in their frenzied support for the proxy war against Russia in Ukraine.

Adams has often denounced figures like Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Democratic Party office-holders backed by the Democratic Socialists of America. He uses the DSA as a convenient foil, in much the way the

Republicans denounce the alleged "Marxism" of the Democratic Party as a whole. The DSA has nothing to do with socialism. It is an integral part of the Democratic Party. Adams' main target is the working class. The latest declamations of Mayor Adams underscore the need for the working class to break with the Democrats and fight for a genuine socialist program.



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