

At site of Churchill's "Iron Curtain" speech

# Sanders declares his allegiance to US imperialism

By Tom Hall  
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Last Thursday, Senator Bernie Sanders delivered a major foreign policy speech at Westminster College in Fulton, Missouri. Portrayed by his supporters in the left-liberal, pro-Democratic Party media as elaborating his "progressive" and "radical" foreign policy vision, it was, in fact, a clear declaration of support for US imperialism.

His choice of venue was significant. Sanders gave the speech at the same university where Winston Churchill delivered his famous "Iron Curtain" speech in 1946, which announced the launching of the Cold War. Sanders made several fawning references to Churchill in the course of his remarks and presented Churchill's Missouri speech as a progressive and democratic manifesto.

"In that speech," Sanders said, "he defined his strategic concept as quote 'nothing less than the safety and welfare, the freedom and progress, of all the homes and families of all the men and women in all the lands.' To give security to these countless homes, he said, 'they must be shielded from the two giant marauders, war and tyranny.'"

In fact, the speech given by Churchill, a hardened reactionary and defender of the British Empire, played a major role in the development of Cold War anti-communist ideology. Under the guise of opposing the spread of Soviet "tyranny," the United States carried out innumerable crimes, from the near-genocidal wars in Korea and Vietnam to multiple regime-change operations (Guatemala, Iran, the Congo, Chile), in which the CIA replaced elected governments with savage military dictatorships.

Subversion and violence abroad were accompanied by political repression and intimidation at home in the form of the McCarthy-era crackdown on socialist and left-wing sentiment in the American working class and the persecution of socialist-minded intellectuals.

By choosing this venue and wrapping himself in the mantle of Churchill, Sanders sought to establish, for the benefit of the ruling class, his anti-communist credentials. This was underscored by his full-throated embrace of the

McCarthyite anti-Russian campaign being spearheaded today by his colleagues in the Democratic Party. As in the 1940s, '50s and '60s, the "liberal" Democratic Party establishment and its media allies such as the *New York Times* are seeking to whip up an anti-Russian hysteria for the dual purpose of preparing for war against nuclear-armed Russia and imposing political censorship within the US, particularly over the Internet, in the name of combating Russian-inspired "fake news."

In Sanders' overview of world politics, the chief source of the "rise in authoritarianism and right wing extremism—both domestic and foreign," is the Russian government. Denouncing "inequality, corruption, oligarchy and authoritarianism," Sanders pointed not to Washington, but to Moscow, declaring that "kleptocrats, like Putin in Russia, use divisiveness and abuse as a tool for enriching themselves and those loyal to them."

Sanders endorsed the Democratic Party's narrative, which lacks any foundation outside of the say-so of American spy agencies, of Russian government interference in the US election. "We saw this anti-democratic effort take place in the 2016 election right here in the United States," he declared, "where we now know that the Russian government was engaged in a massive effort to undermine one of our greatest strengths: The integrity of our elections, and our faith in our own democracy."

In this paean to the "integrity of our elections," Sanders shelved his campaign rhetoric attacking the Supreme Court's "Citizens United" ruling, which effectively removed all restrictions on corporate buying of elections and politicians. He also neglected to mention the Democratic Party emails that exposed the party leadership's machinations to sabotage his own primary challenge to Hillary Clinton.

The sole explicit reference Sanders made to Trump's fascistic speech last Tuesday at the United Nations was a criticism of Trump's failure to directly attack Russia for

undermining “[t]he integrity of our elections and our faith in our own democracy.” He said nothing about Trump’s genocidal threat to “totally destroy” North Korea.

“[O]ur goal is to not only strengthen American democracy,” Sanders said, “but to work in solidarity with supporters of democracy around the globe, *including in Russia*. In the struggle of democracy versus authoritarianism, we intend to win.” [Emphasis added]

Sanders promoted the US-orchestrated civil war in Syria, denouncing “Russian and Iranian support for Bashar al-Assad’s slaughter in Syria,” while criticizing the UN for being “too slow or unwilling to act.” At the same time, he bemoaned US support for the Saudi-led war in Yemen, saying it “empowers authoritarian leaders who insist that our support for those rights and values [which the United States is supposedly upholding in Syria] is not serious.” Precisely!

Sanders defended the Obama administration’s nuclear deal with Iran, which was obtained through punishing sanctions aimed at crippling that country’s economy, and called for similar punitive measures in North Korea. This demonstrates that Sanders, despite criticisms of Trump’s recklessness, has no differences with the administration’s strategic goal of bringing to heel or overthrowing the unstable regime in Pyongyang (a fact Sanders already demonstrated in an interview this April when he said Trump was “on the right track” in North Korea). Sanders merely proposes to do this through an economic blockade, which itself amounts to an act of war.

The Vermont senator sought to obscure the pro-war content of his speech with a heavy dose of “democratic” and “human rights” rhetoric. He made certain criticisms of the CIA-orchestrated coups in Iran and Chile and the Vietnam and Iraq wars. However, he treats these events not as imperialist crimes carried out in the interests of the American ruling elite, but as foreign policy “mistakes” that negatively impacted Washington’s global interests in the long term.

Thus, the Vietnam War was based on a “discredited domino theory” about the spread of communism throughout Southeast Asia. The war in Iraq was “based on a similarly mistaken analysis.”

Sanders’ speech exposes, once again, the fraud of his election campaign claim to be a “socialist.” In any event, the word “socialism” was conveniently absent from his Missouri speech. The term “democracy,” used primarily in reference to the promotion of “democracy” against nations and regimes targeted for destruction by the United States, was used 21 times.

Sanders is a longstanding supporter of American imperialism, a fact he has sought to conceal by avoiding discussion of foreign policy as much as possible. He

endorsed the NATO war in the Balkans in the 1990s and voted for the Authorization for Use of Military Force resolution in 2001, which was used as the basis for the invasion of Afghanistan and has since been cited as the legal basis for military attacks, drone assassinations, torture and other crimes overseas, as well as the use of military commissions, indefinite detention without trial, mass domestic surveillance and other police state measures within the US.

In 2015, when asked whether counterterrorism under a Sanders administration would include Special Forces and drone strikes, Sanders replied, “Well, all of that and more.”

Sanders’ speech has been met with effusive praise from “left” Democratic Party-aligned media outlets. An article in the *Nation* written by John Nichols was headlined “Bernie Sanders Just Gave One of the Finest Speeches of His Career.” It called Sanders’ speech “genuinely internationalist” and a “necessary and valuable counter to Trump.”

The websites of pseudo-left satellites of the Democratic Party that have incessantly promoted Sanders as a genuine socialist (*Socialist Worker*, *Jacobin*, *Socialist Alternative*) have to date elected not to publish anything on his speech. Given their support for American imperialism under the fraudulent banner of “human rights,” their silence can only be taken as consent.

No doubt, the Missouri speech was seen by Sanders and his backers as preparation for his elevation into to the higher ranks of American capitalist politics, including a potential presidential run in 2020. He is being kept by the ruling class as an option, under conditions of growing disgust with and alienation from the Democratic Party and the entire two-party system among broad sections of working people and youth in the US.

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