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Can Anti-Interventionism Survive the Trump Era?

By Justin Raimondo

March 2, 2017

It used to be that the American left, or at least substantial portions of it, were reliable allies in the war against the warmongers

No more.

What we are witnessing today is a complete turnaround of the American left's historic foreign policy stance. The glory days of the 1950s and Sixties, when liberals and leftists stood together in the fight against the cold war hysteria that led to government persecution of alleged "Communists" and "fellow travelers" are long gone.

Today we are subjected to the spectacle of "liberal" Democratic party politicians and their media amen corner demanding an "investigation" of the President of the United States and his associates on the grounds that they are Russian agents and "useful idiots." And anyone who questions this nonsense is smeared, as Rep. Adam Schiff's reply to Tucker Carlson's relentless on air questioning made all too clear. Asked to provide evidence that the Russians determined the results of the 2016 election, Schiff said: "You're carrying water for the Kremlin, you're going to have to move your show over to Russia Today."

The smarmy Schiff, ranking Democrat on the House Intelligence Committee, is leading the charge, along with Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, calling for a show trial of Trump appointees (and Trump himself) disguised as an "investigation" into an alleged Russian plot to

subvert democracy. He's also a big fan of the Saudis: he brazenly cheers on the bombing of women and children in Yemen by his friends in Riyadh. But since there are no leaks by the "intelligence community" exposing Saudi ties to lawmakers – it'll *never* happen, folks! – no one talks about this.

The latest chapter in this sorry story is the sudden "revelation" that Attorney General Jeff Sessions spoke with the Russian ambassador – twice! – in his capacity as a US Senator, and while he was an informal advisor to the Trump campaign. The chorus of demands that he recuse himself from the investigation – some are even calling for his resignation as Attorney General – has now reached a crescendo (as I write this, Sessions had now recused himself). Even Glenn Greenwald, who has written eloquently about the dangers of the current anti-Russian hysteria, called on Sessions to recuse himself and support the appointment of a ~~Grand Inquisitor~~ special prosecutor.

But why is that? After all, plenty of media outlets have accused Greenwald of being a "Kremlin tool." Does that mean we should investigate the charge, and perhaps even haul him up before a revived House Committee on Un-American Activities, where he will be subjected to a merciless grilling about his alleged "Russian ties"?

Yet Greenwald, and those few on the left who have so far resisted the anti-Russian tide, couldn't bring themselves to defend Sessions against this kind of attack. To do so would alienate them from their liberal followers: they just can't afford to be so isolated. Yet they are making a colossal mistake, one they'll come to regret in due course.

Sessions – a hard-line "law and order" type and is from Alabama (and we know what *that* means) – is now being portrayed as just another "Kremlin tool." The campaign to lynch him — the perfect marriage of political correctness, Trump Derangement Syndrome, and Russophobia — represents the consolidation of what used to be the "left" around hostility to Russia as a foundational "principle."

This turn toward Russophobia is partly the result of the left's rage over the election of Donald Trump, but, as I pointed out in my last column, that's only part of the story. The inherent tendency of the left to want to remake the world – which, as the libertarian theorist Murray Rothbard pointed out, is essentially a religious impulse – is the real story here. Embarked on a crusade to remake this country in the name of political correctness, their millenarian obsession logically extends to the rest of the globe. And Russia is the leading example of "reactionary" cultural attitudes, one that must be opposed – by force, if necessary.

I've likened this wave of anti-Russian hysteria to McCarthyism, and several of my readers have objected. They point out that there were plenty of Communists in the federal government under Franklin Roosevelt, as the Venona intercepts and the KGB archives reveal. All quite true, but this misses my point: the important thing to remember about Joe McCarthy and his effect on our politics is that anti-Russian hysteria led directly to our cold war foreign policy – a policy that on several occasions had us ready to jump into the abyss of a nuclear conflagration. McCarthy and his followers – many of them conservative "isolationists" who had opposed US entry into World War II – started out by positing that the danger to the country was internal subversion by a

“communist conspiracy.” They ended up as fanatical cold warriors who advocated confronting the Soviet Union militarily on every front abroad because there was no way to contain their militant anti-Communism within our borders.

The same process is transforming the America left into the worst warmongers on the block – with the added impetus of liberal universalism, which fuels and speeds up this grotesque transformation.

Just as Woodrow Wilson’s crusade to “make the world safe for democracy” impelled us to enter a war that destroyed European civilization, so the same messianic impulse is driving American liberals (and their “leftist” fellow travelers) into the War Party’s camp. There is now a great gaping hole in our political spectrum, for the anti-interventionist left is no more.

Alex Cockburn was the last principled leftist of any prominence: when he died, principled anti-interventionism on the left died with him.

As President Trump seeks rapprochement with Russia, the “left” will move to block this welcome development. Their domestic political agenda dictates a hard-line foreign policy stance.

This is very bad news for us here at Antiwar.com. A considerable part of our audience has always been on the left, including many of our longtime supporters. As the left dissolves into a Russophobic frenzy, the danger is that we’ll lose many of these people. It’s a sad demonstration of a point I’ve often made in this space: that there’s no real wall of separation between domestic politics and foreign policy. Indeed, the former determines the latter.

Of course, we’ve been through this before. The presidency of Bill Clinton saw the defection of the “liberals” from the anti-interventionist camp in droves: that’s when “humanitarian interventionism” became all the rage in liberal-left circles. And the Obama years saw the complete evisceration of the organized antiwar movement, which had largely been a leftist project, as a liberal Democratic administration overthrew the government of Libya, initiated regime-change in Syria, and prosecuted our endless “war on terrorism.” Now they’re not only going AWOL, they’re signing up as the most militant members of the War Party — and it isn’t pretty.

Antiwar.com isn’t caving in to this ugly trend: far from it. Even as some alleged “libertarians” are swept up in this wave of crazed Russophobia, we are standing almost alone against the tide. Subject neither to Russophobia nor to Trump Derangement Syndrome, we are holding high the banner of anti-interventionism – but we can’t hold it up without your support.

These perilous and confusing times have disoriented too many people, who are torn between their quite justifiable suspicions about the Trump administration and their anti-interventionist convictions. The political storm over the administration’s alleged “Russian ties,” as exemplified by the brouhaha over the distinctly un-libertarian Jeff Sessions, doesn’t help.

We are now coming into the final – and most crucial – phase of our current fundraising campaign, and this is turning into a test of whether a principled anti-interventionist movement

can survive the Trump era. At a time when Antiwar.com is needed most, we're being buffeted by political storms on both the right and the left. I would venture to say that among our supporters who voted for Trump, there are not a few who would forget their anti-interventionist views if the President should call out the troops tomorrow. And, conversely, and as I've shown above, some on the left side of the political spectrum have *already* thrown their previous views overboard in the service of their anti-Trump monomania.

Yet we are more determined than ever to steer a principled course that *makes no concessions to either side*. Period.

I'm appealing to you, our readers and supporters, to help us navigate these turbulent waters. The way you can do that is by supporting this web site with your tax-deductible donation – and if you've been holding back, then now is the time to contribute. That's because a group of our most generous (and well-heeled!) supporters have gotten together to donate matching funds, a grand total of \$31,000 – but there's a catch. We don't get the money until we can match it with smaller donations.

Our current fundraising campaign is a test, the results of which will answer the question "Can a principled anti-interventionist movement survive the Trump era?" I pray that the answer is a resounding "Yes!" – but we'll see.