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European Languages

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By Niles Niemuth
24.11.2019

Bernie Sanders dispenses with his “political revolution” at fifth Democratic presidential debate

Wednesday night’s Democratic Party presidential debate in Atlanta, Georgia was largely unremarkable save for the degree to which the candidates sought to submit themselves to President Barack Obama’s declaration last week that the party must distance itself from “revolutionary” proposals if it hopes to defeat Trump in the 2020 elections.

The word has been sent down for the candidates to knock off the funny stuff about Medicare for All and other pie in the sky reforms and to get down to business.

Senator Bernie Sanders led the way Wednesday night with regards to political cravenness, walking back his own rhetoric about waging “political revolution” and declaring that he agreed with Obama that it wasn’t necessary to “tear down the system and remake it.”



Bernie Sanders

Sanders responded to a question from moderator Kristin Welker about his oft repeated and popular slogan for a “political revolution” by solidarizing himself with the president who oversaw the greatest transfer of wealth from the poor to the rich in American history, deported millions of immigrants and waged war abroad for two full terms.

“President Obama explicitly said the country is, quote, ‘less revolutionary than it is interested in improvement. The average American doesn’t think we have to completely tear down the system and remake it,’ end quote. Is President Obama wrong?” Welker demanded.

“No, he’s right,” Sanders replied. “We don’t have to tear down the system, but we do have to do what the American people want.” Sanders’ “revolution” stands exposed.

The purpose of Sanders’ campaign, in 2016 and again in 2020, is not to challenge the Democratic Party but to support it. His talk about reining in the billionaires is just that. His aim is to promote illusions among the millions of young people and workers who are hostile to capitalism and sympathetic to socialism that this party of Wall Street and war can be a vehicle for progressive change.

Sanders does not challenge the basic framework of the Democratic Party’s foreign policy and he supports the reactionary basis upon which they are seeking to impeach Trump. For his services up to this point, he has become a leading figure within the Democratic Party establishment.

In 2016 he campaigned for Hillary Clinton after it was exposed by WikiLeaks that the primary was rigged against him. In 2020 likewise, if he does not win the nomination Sanders will campaign for the eventual nominee, no matter how right-wing and militaristic. And in the unlikely event he does win the nomination and secure the presidency, once in office he will immediately bend the knee to the dictates of Wall Street and the “billionaire class.”

Obama’s remarks last week before a conference of large Democratic Party donors, his first foray into the 2020 campaign, were part of a barely disguised effort to undercut Sanders and Senator Elizabeth Warren, who have postured as the most left-wing and progressive candidates by proposing health care reforms and increased taxes on billionaires.

In fact, Warren has already begun to **backpedal** on her proposed Medicare for All health care reforms, releasing a “Plan B” proposal on the same day Obama made his remarks, under which there would be no significant health care legislation until the end of her hypothetical first term, if ever.

In contrast to previous debates where mild criticisms of Obama's immigration policy were made as a means of attacking Vice President Joe Biden on the issue, on Wednesday night the candidates had only favorable remarks for Obama

Senator Kamala Harris declared that she was the only candidate who could rebuild the "Obama coalition" to win the election, while Biden reminded viewers that he was himself part of the Obama coalition.

Harris went even further, attacking Representative Tulsi Gabbard for allegedly voicing criticisms of Obama "full-time" on the right-wing Fox News during his administration.

For her part, Gabbard, who has gained notoriety for criticizing America's wars in the Middle East, avoided any criticism of Obama's foreign policy Wednesday night, instead referring to the "Bush-Clinton-Trump" doctrine of "regime-change wars, overthrowing dictators in other countries, needlessly sending my brothers and sisters in uniform into harm's way to fight in wars that actually undermine our national security and have cost us thousands of American lives." All of the above descriptions apply to the wars waged by Obama, but even mentioning his name in this regard is a bridge too far for the Democratic presidential contenders.

22 November 2019