



## The Ascendancy of Radical Socialism

If you find seven years of President Obama's leftist rule upsetting, wait until you see what's coming as radical socialists and outright communists are finding seats of power in U.S. politics. Some American voters, especially the young, are electing ultra-leftists to office, even when these candidates proclaim themselves as revolutionaries. These voters don't seem to mind that the 74-year-old Democratic Party presidential candidate and U.S. Senator from Vermont, Bernie Sanders, calls for a "political revolution" in order to redistribute wealth from the rich to the poor. The collapse of the Soviet Union, Mao's regime in China, and the failure of socialism in Cuba, Venezuela and North Korea are ignored by these new revolutionaries. The failure of social democracy throughout Western Europe—the bankruptcy of the entitlement/welfare state—is equally ignored. History is dismissed in favor of some vague projection of the future, which is more rhetorical than well-conceived.

### Feel the Bern, Even if We Actually Burn

On the campaign trail Sanders presents a friendly authenticity by "saying it like it is," while gently stoking the flames of class warfare. It's not surprising that he virtually tied rival Hillary Clinton in the Feb. 1 Iowa primary, where 40 percent of Democratic caucus goers declare themselves socialists. Behind his affable demeanor stands a radical whose past shows a much more revolutionary intention than even his rhetoric against Wall Street and the Washington establishment suggest.

Truth be told, Sanders might be considered a softy compared to some of the revolutionary socialists and self-proclaimed communists who have won elections in New York City and Seattle. Whatever one thinks of old-time liberals such as Franklin Roosevelt or Lyndon Baines Johnson, they were not Marxist-Leninists. Franklin Roosevelt was not even willing to endorse socialist Upton Sinclair when he won the Democratic Party's nomination for governor of California in 1934; Harry Truman denounced his 1948 challenger Henry Wallace as a radical; and Lyndon Johnson despised New Left activists in the 1960s.

Sanders has attracted widespread media attention for his challenge to Hillary Clinton, whom he trounced in the Feb. 9 New Hampshire primary. His campaign for drastically higher taxes on the rich, trade protectionism, a single-payer health care system (completely socialized medicine) and "free" tuition for college students has pushed Hillary Clinton further to the left. At heart, Hillary Clinton might be an ideological radical feminist and a vague European-style social democrat, but above all else she is a woman who wants power for its own sake. Her first step toward ultimate power, the presidency, is to win the Democratic Party's presidential nomination by persuading primary voters that she is a true progressive who (wink, wink) is not that far ideologically from Sanders. She has called for a debate on ideas, but what are her ideas, really? She has turned to protectionism, free tuition for college students, taxing the rich—Sanders's ideas.

### A Flaming Socialist

Until this year, Sanders was not well known to most American voters. For those who followed politics, he was the quirky U.S. Senator from Vermont who was elected as a socialist but caucused with the Democrats. He was seen by most as a political flake who could only have won election in Vermont. Sanders might still be a flake, but he should be taken seriously.

He was born in Brooklyn, New York to Polish immigrants in 1941. He attended Brooklyn College and then transferred to the University of Chicago, where he joined the Young Peoples Socialist League, the youth wing of the Socialist Party. The so-called golden age of socialism at the turn of the 20th century had long since passed when Sanders joined the Socialist Party. The Old Left was replaced by New Left radicalism and the resurgence of communists in old and new varieties: Stalinists, Maoists, Trotskyites, Fidelistas, even admirers of Kim Il Jung in North Korea.

After graduation, Sanders became a community organizer (the new path toward the presidency?). He worked for the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, which became a black nationalist organization, and the communist-dominated

United Packinghouse Workers Union—not much of a resume for success. He tried living on an Israeli kibbutz for a year, and then failed as a carpenter, filmmaker, writer and researcher. In short, he never had a real paying job and was living in a hovel when he ran unsuccessfully for the anti-war Liberty Union Party for the U.S. Senate in 1972 and 1974. (Notice the clever party name that employed the word liberty, combined with union). His campaign called for nationalization of the U.S. banks, public ownership of all utilities and the establishment of a worker-controlled federal government (whatever that meant). He demanded the “public takeover of all privately-owned companies in Vermont.”<sup>1</sup>

In 1985 Sanders traveled to Nicaragua to celebrate the sixth anniversary of the communist-controlled government of Daniel Ortega, where he would denounce the anti-communist Reagan policies. Sanders lambasted the Reagan administration as under the control of corporations. In the 1980s, he traveled to Fidel Castro’s Cuba. In an interview on Vermont public access television, Sanders declared that Castro and Ortega enjoyed the support of their people because they had done so much good. He described Ortega as an “impressive guy,” adding that the Sandinista government, “in my view, has more support among the Nicaraguan people [than Reagan], substantially more support than Ronald Reagan has among the American people.”

Sanders’s love affair with communists continued. In 1988, the newly married Sanders honeymooned in the Soviet city Yaroslavl, where he told the Russian people that they had “significantly better” housing and health care than the American people.<sup>2</sup> In November 1989 he addressed the Communist Party USA front organization, the U.S. Peace Council, on “how to end the Cold War.” In 1990 Sanders became a leading member of Jesse Jackson’s Rainbow Coalition, and he won election to the single congressional seat in Vermont. As a congressman, he formed the Congressional Progressive Caucus with Ron Dellums and Maxine Waters. He frequently attended the Socialist Scholars Conference held annually in New York. After winning the U.S. Senate seat in 2006, Sanders pushed legislation to restrict the number of radio stations any one firm could own and to reinstate the “Fairness Doctrine” to diminish influence of conservative talk radio. (The left’s commitment to “free speech” is never universal.) As a senator and presidential candidate, he calls for a 90 percent marginal tax rate so wealth can be redistributed for socialized medicine, “free” college tuition, and workers.<sup>3</sup>

### And de Blasio Is Worse

**B**ill de Blasio, mayor of New York City, offers an example of even deeper radicalism within the Democratic Party. He continued to praise the Nicaraguan Marxist Sandinistas even when they lost power. He subscribed to the Sandinista party’s newspaper, *Barricada*, and honeymooned

in Cuba in violation of the U.S. travel ban. He ran for mayor as a “progressive,” but in 1990 he described himself as an advocate of democratic socialism.<sup>4</sup> Before he declared himself a Democrat, he served as executive director of the New York branch of the New Party, a radical left party, of which Obama also was a member until he became a Democrat. The New York branch of the New Party had close relations with the radical community organization ACORN. Former New Party staffer and Obama White House Political Director Patrick Gaspard (one of de Blasio’s closest friends) played a critical role in de Blasio’s successful mayoral campaign in 2013.

De Blasio brought to the mayor’s office a long and deep radical past. At the age of 26, de Blasio traveled to Sandinista-controlled Nicaragua to distribute food and medicine. As a student at Columbia University, de Blasio became an admirer of Latin American revolutionaries. He described the influence of the Sandinista movement as deeply affecting his world outlook: “They were in their own humble way, in this small country, trying to figure out what would work better.” He came to Nicaragua as a field operative of Quizote Center, a Catholic social justice organization based in Maryland. While in Nicaragua, he had a political epiphany about how government could achieve an egalitarian society: “There was something I took away from that—how hands-on government has to be, how proactive, how connected to the people it must be.”<sup>5</sup>

### A Dedicated Sandinista

**D**e Blasio returned to New York to work for a another nonprofit organization focused on improving health care in Central America and then joined the mayoral campaign of David N. Dinkins. He volunteered at the same time to work for the Nicaragua Solidarity Network of Greater New York. The group advertised parties to celebrate the Cuban revolution and hawk subscriptions to the international edition of *Barricada*. In an interview with the *New York Times* in 1990 following the defeat of the Sandinista government, de Blasio declared, “They built a democracy that was striving to be economic and political that pervaded all levels of society.” He continued to defend the ruthless Marxist Sandinista government even as he ran for mayor. Throughout the 1990s he worked as a low-level aide to Dinkins by day and a Nicaraguan activist by night. In 1992, he finally left the Nicaragua solidarity movement, but he remained a committed radical. He made, as he announced in his race to become mayor in 2013, “Fighting for equality” his life’s work.<sup>6</sup> As mayor he swiftly undermined highly successful New York City policing tactics.

De Blasio married Chirlane McCray, an African-American poet, left-wing activist, and once self-described lesbian. They met while working in Dinkins’s office and shared radical political beliefs. She jokes with the press that she and her husband call one another “comrade” at home, but given their radical past

the joke rings true. De Blasio touts his wife as a co-mayor and already many are speaking of her becoming his successor. The de Blasio staff have crafted a careful image of McCray as the first African-American first lady who briefly gained national attention for her 1979 article “I am a Lesbian,” published in *Essence*, a magazine with a largely black audience. The essay expressed the trauma of being a black lesbian in a white homophobic society. She had become aware of her “otherness” while attending the elite Wellesley College. There she had joined the militant feminist lesbian collective Combahee River Collective. As New York City’s first lady and a mother of two, she has told the press she no longer is a lesbian. Her left-wing activism, however, continues.<sup>7</sup>

### City Council Radicals

De Blasio finds natural allies on the New York City Council, which is filled with radical loonies—indeed, too many to name. They include Margaret Chin, a founder of Asian-Americans for Equality, a front for the Communist Workers Party. As a council member she pushed city identification cards for all residents, regardless of immigration status. She is joined by Daniel Dromm and Letitia James, who have attacked charter schools as segregationist and racist. They are members of the so-called Progressive Caucus on the council. Some of the council don’t find the Progressive Caucus left enough. For example, Inez Brown is not a member of the caucus, because it’s not radical enough. She assumed her seat on the council from her husband, Charles Barron, a former Black Panther, who was elected to the state assembly. Brown marked the anniversary of the black youth Trayvon Martin’s shooting death in Florida by having the city council members snap their fingers while she read:

We’re an African people, we’re related you and I  
African heritage beneath God’s sky . . . .  
We built the pyramids and yes we made the Sphinx  
We sailed the ocean wide and with Mexico we linked . . . .  
The Greeks came to African universities  
We taught them how to diagnose and do brain surgery  
We taught them math, geometry, and then  
we taught them trig,  
Physics and astronomy, oh yes, oh yes, we did.<sup>8</sup>

The problem is not bad poetry on the council, but the radical agenda that has been pushed by de Blasio and allies. A new city policy dictates that all new apartment developments have a quota of low-income rentals. The council has enacted bills ending any cooperation between the city and federal immigration authorities and requiring chain retail and fast food stores to have a \$15 minimum wage. Legislation has been introduced outlawing credit checks as part of the hiring process, making the city a safe haven for Central American migrants, and many, many other “progressive” measures.

These are not just “New York values.” On the West Coast, Seattle has elected councilmember Kshama Sawant, a part-time community college economics professor and member of Socialist Alternative, a political party formed in 1986 and active in 20 major struggles. The party played a big role in the Occupy Wall Street movement. Sawant has pushed for raising the minimum wage and has urged Boeing workers to seize the plants and run the company if management decides to leave the city. She calls for workers’ control of machines, factories, oil production and so forth. She asserts, “But at the end of the day, it’s not possible to have socialism in one country—if resources are organized globally along capitalist lines, it’s just not possible to provide that really high standard of living that some people have to have. . . .”

We should not be sanguine that “it can’t happen here”—a socialist or fascist takeover in America—although it seems unlikely that Americans will elect an avowed socialist for president in the near future. In recent years radical socialists have made political gains and have been involved in violent mass protest movements not seen since the 1960s. More worrisome is that large numbers of American youth are declaring themselves socialists and anti-capitalists. American youth has been bombarded by radical propaganda and demagoguery from left-wing politicians, as well as a popular culture that denounces capitalism at every turn. One need not defend Wall Street greed to understand that American capitalism has produced the wealthiest society in human history. Not everyone is going to get rich in this system, but economic opportunity and social advancement are available to everyone, dependent on ability, work ethic and good fortune.

### Speak Up for Capitalism

Today, pro-American values are denounced as the propaganda of big business, as though anti-capitalist identity grievances and demands for economic and social equality through redistribution of wealth were not propaganda. Few of our political leaders talk enough about why capitalism promotes political liberty. The Chamber of Commerce appears to have become more of a special-interest lobbying group. Classroom educators from kindergarten through university level tell their students more about what’s wrong with America than what’s right; more about historical travesties than progress; more about identity politics than common cultural values. We need to insist that our political and business leaders, classroom instructors and mass media promote the values of liberty and economic freedom. Spread the word on kooks like Bernie Sanders by giving out copies of this *Mindszenty Report* and speaking up in public meetings and call-in radio shows. Let’s have a real debate on socialism/communism versus capitalism.

- 1 "Bernie Sanders," discovertheworks.org (2016).
- 2 John Fund, "Bernie Sanders's Soviet Honeymoon," *National Review*, June 24, 2015.
- 3 Hunter Walker, "Bernie Sanders' Radical Past: How the Vermont Firebrand Started Wearing a Suit," <https://www.yahoo.com/politics/bernie-sanders>; Paul Lewis, "Inside the Mind of Bernie Sanders: Unbowed and Unafraid of a Good Fight," *The Guardian*, June 19, 2015; and Taylor Rushing, "Bernie Sanders Praised Fidel Castro in 1985," *Daily Mail*, January 20, 2016.
- 4 Stanley Kurtz, "The Radicalism of Bill de Blasio," *National Review*, September 23, 2013.
- 5 Javier C. Hernandez, "A Mayoral Hopeful Now, de Blasio Was Once a Young Leftist," *New York Times*, September 22, 2013.
- 6 Jennifer Fermino, "Republican Mayoral Candidate Joe Lhota Blasts Bill de Blasio's work in Nicaragua, Cuban Honeymoon," *New York Daily News*, September 24, 2013.
- 7 Lisa Miller, "Chirlane McCray's City," *New Yorker*, May 10, 2014.
- 8 Seth Barros, "Council of Crackpots," *City Journal* (Winter 2015).

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## 2016 Chicago Conference

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#### **Juliana Taimoorazy**

Founder and past president  
 of the Iraqi Christian Relief Council and  
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#### **Clarke Forsythe**

Senior Counsel, Americans United for Life  
 and author of *Abuse of Discretion*  
 on the history of abortion decisions

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## The Most Important Person on Earth is a Mother

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Cardinal Mindszenty's respect for mothers was deep. Below is the Cardinal's quote, available on a 5 1/2" x 3" card in color.



The Most Important Person on earth is a mother. She cannot claim the honor of having built Notre Dame Cathedral. She need not. She has built something more magnificent than any cathedral—a dwelling for an immortal soul, the tiny perfection of her baby's body ... The angels have not been blessed with such a grace. They cannot share in God's creative miracle to bring new saints to Heaven. Only a human mother can. Mothers are closer to God the Creator than any other creature; God joins forces

with mothers in performing this act of creation ... What on God's good earth is more glorious than this: to be a mother?

— *Joseph Cardinal Mindszenty*

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