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“Left” propagandists for escalation of imperialist war

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With the US political establishment roiled by an increasingly acrimonious debate over how to escalate the US military intervention in Iraq and Syria, and with one Western European power after another joining in the assault, the overwhelming sentiment of broad masses of people both in Europe and America remains decidedly hostile to war.

Despite the frantic efforts of the political establishments in the US, Britain, France, Germany and elsewhere, along with the campaign of the media to whip up fear and hatred in response to recent terrorist attacks, millions of working people are conscious that, once again, they are being lied to about a military intervention in the Middle East.

Amid the dizzying array of pretexts put forward for this war, from combating terrorism by bombing the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS), to supporting “human rights” by financing and arming similar Salafist jihadi militias in a war for regime-change, there remains the well-founded popular suspicion that the real aims have to do with the drive by US imperialism and its allies to secure hegemony over the Middle East and its vast oil reserves.

It is under these conditions that a collection of pseudo-left organizations from Europe, the US and beyond have joined in issuing a statement that serves as propaganda for a dramatic widening of the imperialist campaign.

The signatories of the statement include the French New Anti-capitalist Party (NPA), the British Socialist Workers Party, Socialist Alternative of Australia, the Nava Sama Samaja Party (NSSP) of Sri Lanka, and the International Socialist Organization (ISO) of the US. All of them have long and shameful records of providing “left” justifications for imperialist interventions and dressing up US-orchestrated wars for regime-change as “revolutions.”

The French NPA was at the forefront of those supposedly “left” organizations that cheered on the imperialist war for regime-change in Libya. Its leading spokesman on the Middle East and North Africa, Gilbert Achcar, hailed the US-NATO intervention that toppled and murdered Muammar Gaddafi, while killing at least 30,000 Libyans and leaving the country in a state of permanent civil war.

At the outset of the war, Achcar penned the infamous lines: “Every general rule admits of exceptions. This includes the general rule that UN-authorized military interventions by imperialist powers are purely reactionary ones, and can never achieve a humanitarian or positive purpose.”

He and the NPA went on to lend support to the US-orchestrated war to topple Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, going so far as to meet with the collection of Western intelligence assets who formed the Syrian National Council to advise them on how best to bring about direct imperialist intervention.

Similarly, Australia’s Socialist Alternative denounced any warnings about Western intervention in Syria, declaring that the “left” had to reject “knee-jerk anti-imperialism.”

For its part, the International Socialist Organization defended the “right” of “Syrian revolutionaries” to receive arms and aid from the CIA as well as to seek direct US military intervention.

The transformation of these organizations, all of which came out of the predominantly middle class protest movements against war in the 1960s and early 1970s, into open supporters of imperialist war is part of a protracted process. Its material roots are to be found in the increasing affluence of sections of the middle class that have become a new constituency for imperialism.

After enthusiastically supporting the “Syrian revolution” in 2012 and 2013, most of these organizations fell largely silent as it became increasingly obvious that the so-called “revolutionaries” consisted of sectarian Sunni Islamist militias funded and armed by the reactionary Arab regimes in Saudi Arabia and the Arab Gulf states, along with the Islamist government in Turkey—all of them working with the CIA.

They have now re-launched their campaign in tandem with the imperialist drive for escalation begun under the pretext of responding to the apparently ISIS-inspired attacks in Paris and California.

The thrust of their intervention is made clear in the second paragraph of the statement: “In Syria, the first form taken by the counterrevolution is support for the Assad regime. Russia’s deadly

raids and the intervention of Iran, Hezbollah and sectarian Iraqi militias champion this profoundly reactionary, anti-democratic project. Assad is fuelled, too, by the mistrust Western powers routinely demonstrate toward democratic and revolutionary forces in Syria...”

There is not a word in the statement about the decades of US imperialist war that have shattered the entire region, leading to over a million deaths and the destruction of entire societies. The problem, from the standpoint of these organizations, is Russian aggression, Iranian intervention and “sectarian Iraqi militias”—that and the failure of the US and its allies to provide sufficient “trust” and support to the so-called “democratic and revolutionary forces in Syria.”

This last phrase is employed in much the same way as Western governments use the term “moderate rebels.” In both cases, the democrats, revolutionaries and moderates go unnamed. That is because the real forces fighting the Assad regime consist of Al Qaeda-linked Sunni sectarian militias, including ISIS, the Al-Nusra Front and Ahrar al-Sham.

The position of these organizations is made even more explicit by the International Socialist Organization of the US in an article posted on its web site December 9 denouncing Russia—much in the same manner as the US State Department—for bombing not ISIS, but “non-ISIS opposition groups,” which again, for obvious reasons, are left unnamed.

The article states: “Even though official US policy calls for the removal of Assad, Russia’s intervention bolstered the regime’s position, creating a new set of calculations about Syria’s future that was almost immediately embraced by a significant current of the US foreign policy establishment.

It continues: “In practical terms, the US military has already made its peace with Assad. Its opposition to Russian air strikes on ground forces backed by the US has been rhetorical at most...”

The thrust of the ISO’s argument is directed at the ongoing debate within the US political establishment and the military and intelligence complex over policy toward Syria. This supposedly left organization is weighing in to support the most bellicose factions within the ruling elite and the Pentagon, demanding that Washington continue to prosecute the war for regime-change by confronting Russia.

Turning the world inside out, all of these organizations present Russia as an imperialist power and the principal aggressor in the Middle East, while portraying US imperialism as a hapless and increasingly spent force.

While the intervention launched by the government of Vladimir Putin in Syria lacks any progressive content, carried out in defense of the interests of the criminal oligarchs who rule Russia, it is of a defensive character, designed to save Russia’s last ally in the Middle East and its sole military base outside of the former Soviet Union from being seized in yet another aggressive intervention by US imperialism, which itself has over 800 overseas military bases, not to mention a gross national income that is 39 times that of Russia’s.

The peculiar fixation of the pseudo-left on the fiction of “Russian imperialism” has ominous significance. Having promoted and defended imperialist interventions in Libya and Syria under the false flag of “human rights,” they are now lending their efforts to promoting far bloodier conflicts, including a potential war between the US and Russia, the world’s two largest nuclear powers.

The forging of a genuine mass antiwar movement can take place only through an unrelenting struggle to unmask these pseudo-left organizations and root out their political influence, as part of the fight to mobilize the international working class in the struggle to put an end to militarism and its source, the capitalist system.