

International petty-bourgeois “left” backs imperialist war in Syria

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A series of petty-bourgeois “left” parties and personalities from Spain, Tunisia, Latin America, and beyond recently issued a Spanish-language manifesto on Syria on the web site *Rebellion*, titled “To the People of Syria who are Fighting Tyranny”.

These signatories include leading members the Anti-capitalist Left (IA) in Spain, the Worker Communist Party of Tunisia (PCOT), Brazil’s Socialism and Freedom Party (PSOL), Argentina’s Socialist Left (IS), and similar forces in Mexico, Chile, Turkey, and other countries. (See <http://www.rebellion.org/noticia.php?id=143778> for the full list of signatories.)

The statement exposes the organizations and individuals issuing this statement as tools of imperialism. Their statement gives total support to US-backed “opposition” groups now involved in an armed civil war and destabilization campaign in Syria, which it tries to treat as representing the entire Syrian people—even though it is well known that large sections of the Syrian population are hostile to the US-backed insurgency. Their goal is to give a “left” cover to plans by the US, the European powers, and the Arab League regimes for military intervention to topple Syrian President Bashar al-Assad.

The statement begins, “Ten months ago, you, the people of Syria, rose up against the brutal dictatorship led by Bashar Al-Assad, resulting in countless martyrs, prisoners and refugees. We want you to know that we are by your side ... We are also aware that the rich, powerful nations have ignored you by turning a blind eye while the killings by the regime continue, but keep in mind that there are many of us all over the world who are with you and reject the policy of collaboration that those imperial powers and their governments provide to the Bashar regime.”

This version of events stands reality on its head. The imperialist powers and their Arab proxies are not supporting the Assad regime; they have reportedly brought resolutions denouncing Assad and pressing for

foreign intervention in Syria at the United Nations and the Arab League. They are widely reported to be providing arms and training to Syrian armed “opposition” groups, who are carrying out attacks and bombings against the Syrian government.

Turkey has provided a base near the border for training Syrian insurgents and is discussing with its NATO allies the possibility of imposing a no-fly zone over Syrian territory. The Western media has widely reported that Turkey and France are providing arms and aid to these forces, resulting in more bloodshed and stoking up a civil war (See: “France’s New Anti-Capitalist Party backs imperialist intervention in Syria”).

They are using the same strategy as in last year’s NATO war against Libya. There the overthrow of Gaddafi by NATO was accomplished with the help of Libyan proxy forces on the ground, the National Transitional Council of Libya, dominated by Islamist fighters and funded and armed by US regional allies. The NATO war cost at least 80,000 casualties, by the NTC’s own estimates.

The Syrian version of the NTC is the Syrian National Council (SNC) and the Free Syrian Army, which are backed by Turkey, Qatar and Saudi Arabia, and supported by the London-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.

The statement’s initial remark only begs the question: if the signatories of the manifesto are criticizing the imperialist powers for not acting aggressively enough against Assad, what more do they want? What else can they be advocating except an open and direct military intervention by the US and its allies to support its Syrian proxies, along the lines of the war in Libya?

The signatories of this manifesto are aware of the consequences of imperialist intervention. Indeed, many of them openly embraced imperialist intervention in Libya, sometimes making cynical and ineffectual attempts to

present NATO's overthrow and murder of Gaddafi in Libya as a defeat for imperialism.

In a press statement last August, Liliana Olivero (deputy for Córdoba), Angélica Lagunas, Jose Castillo and Juan Carlos Giordano of *Izquierda Socialista* (Socialist Left) in Argentina stated that "the imminent fall of the dictatorship of Gaddafi is a victory for the Libyan people ... it is not a triumph of NATO as attributed by itself by Obama and European imperialism. They only made limited bombings to try to prevent a victory by the militia and seek a negotiated solution that would allow them to defend their oil business."

Exactly one year ago, Esther Vivas and Josep Maria Antentas of Spain's IA openly advocated "the political and economic international isolation of the [Libyan] regime, and the unconditional supply of weapons to the rebels."

Pedro Fuentes, the secretary of foreign relations of PSOL, declared last May in the Mexican daily *La Jornada*: "What the rebels want and need are weapons and humanitarian aid ... The supposed neutrality of the Brazilian government ends up being a totally ambiguous and hypocritical policy of *laissez-faire* for Gaddafi and the imperialist countries. The only correct alternative would be to recognize the rebel government as a belligerent force and support them in every way possible and responding positively to what they ask. Meanwhile, the position socialists and anti-imperialists have to defend is, while recognizing and denouncing the goals of imperialist intervention, is by all means continue to support the overthrow Gaddafi."

That is to say, that pro-imperialist politicians like Fuentes had to support NATO's campaign to conquer Libya, while issuing empty criticisms of imperialism in order to deceitfully hide their role as unabashed defenders of imperialist war.

These scoundrels are repeating the same arguments now with Syria, even though the reactionary consequences of imperialist intervention in Libya are clear for all to see. The war led to whole cities being bombed to the ground, tens of thousands of casualties, racist pogroms against dark skinned people, and large-scale use of torture; Western oil companies now control Libyan oil fields and an Islamist proxy regime rules Libya.

The manifesto goes on to attack a "sector of the anti-imperialist left," whom it accuses of "turning its back on the revolution against the dictatorship of Bashar." This is nothing more than a preemptive strike against anyone who criticizes the imperialist intervention, by branding

them as a defender of Assad.

The manifesto goes on to cynically cite the Assad regime's reactionary role in repressing the "Palestinians in the refugee camp massacres of Tal Zaatar in 1976" and cooperating "with Israel in securing its borders." That is, it is citing the Syrian bourgeoisie's dealings with imperialism and Zionism to suppress the Palestinian people, in order to stimulate hostility to the Assad regime, now that Assad himself is the target of the imperialists.

This remark is deeply misleading and reactionary. Its aim is not to oppose imperialist and Zionist oppression of the Palestinians, but to support imperialist war against Assad.

The manifesto continues: "Western powers only stand to gain in this situation and nothing good will come out of the American Empire and Western governments ... do not trust them, the only thing they want is to rob the wealth taking it from the workers, the peoples of America, Africa and Asia, in the same way they did with their bombings in Iraq and in Libya and how they are doing now in Egypt, supporting the criminal military junta."

The logical question to then ask is: if the signatories of the manifesto don't trust the imperialists, why did they support the Libyan NTC, and why are they now supporting the imperialist-backed SFA to defeat Assad? Why are they treating the SNC as the legitimate representatives of the Syrian working class, instead of warning the Syrian workers of the role of the SFA and demanding a struggle of the working class against both the pro-imperialist forces and Assad?

The manifesto does not and cannot address this question, because it leads to only one conclusion: the manifesto's authors are pro-imperialist forces, whose "left" verbiage is only a political fig leaf to hide their right-wing politics.

The WSWS insists that Assad must be overthrown, but this task belongs only to the Syrian working class as part of a struggle of the entire Arab and international working class, directed first and foremost against imperialism. In that struggle, the working class will find that the signatories of the manifesto published in *Rebellion* are its bitter enemies.



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