

The CIA proxy war in Syria and the pro-imperialist “left”

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Reports that US intelligence is giving covert assistance to “rebel” militias in Syria mark the latest stage in an escalating US campaign for an out-and-out takeover of the country.

Yesterday, as videos emerged showing Syrian “rebels” carrying out mass executions of soldiers captured in Aleppo, it was reported that US President Barack Obama had signed an order earlier this year authorizing US intelligence to aid anti-Assad forces. Washington is also helping to distribute weapons and money donated by its right-wing Middle East allies Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Qatar.

These powers are not waging a struggle for democracy as part of the “Arab Spring”—the wave of revolutionary working class uprisings that toppled US-backed dictators in Tunisia and Egypt last year and terrified Washington and its Middle East allies. They are fighting a reactionary war to oust Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and install a pro-US puppet regime in Damascus.

Washington has set up a “nerve center” for the Syrian insurgency in Adana, Turkey, the site of Incirlik Air Base, a major US military and intelligence installation only 60 miles north of the Syrian border. This region of southern Turkey is now a key transit point for weapons and pro-US foreign fighters traveling to fight in Syria.

The Syrian “rebels” largely act on operational instructions from Washington. US forces communicate regularly through their allies with “rebel” forces inside Syria, providing them with reports on Syrian troop movements to guide them on the ground.

Islamist fighters are pouring in to join the fighting in Syria from around the Middle East, including US-occupied Afghanistan and Iraq and the Islamist US puppet regime in Libya, as well as Algeria, Chechnya and Pakistan. Former US Special Operations officials told the press that many arrive with help from Al Qaeda in Syria, which relies on the services of “traffickers—some

ideologically aligned, some motivated by the money.”

In the Orwellian world of the American media, no attempt is made to reconcile Washington’s claims that it is occupying Afghanistan simply to wage a “war on terror” against Al Qaeda with its de facto alliance with Al Qaeda in Syria.

Obama’s reassurance that the US is providing only “non-lethal assistance” to anti-Assad forces is a cynical lie. The US is waging a brutal civil war by proxy that has already cost tens of thousands of lives and displaced hundreds of thousands of people.

Its goal is to install a US puppet regime in Damascus to isolate and prepare for war against Iran, remove a potential enemy of Israel, and advance a broader agenda of complete dominance of the Middle East by US imperialism. This agenda—pursued in the course of a decade of US wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and intensified after last year’s mass uprisings in North Africa with wars in Libya and Syria—is deeply unpopular in the working class in the United States and internationally.

Washington’s covert backing for the Syrian “rebels” lays bare the role of pro-imperialist pseudo-left groups—like the International Socialist Organization (ISO) in the US, the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) in Britain and the New Anti-capitalist Party (NPA) in France—which have promoted the war in Syria. Their “leftism” amounts to nothing more than giving “left” justifications for the crimes of American and European imperialism.

The ISO openly declares its support for intervention. In an article by Yusuf Khalil and Lee Sustar in its *Socialist Worker* publication, it writes: “The increasing role of the armed struggle raises the question whether to accept arms and support from the West ... While many in the Syrian revolutionary movement are opposed to US and Western intervention, they will take whatever help they can get.”

Such arguments, which never analyze the forces referred to as “revolutionary,” are stunningly cynical.

When did the CIA, Islamic fundamentalism and the Turkish army brass become forces for liberation? In writing this way, the ISO makes clear that it speaks for the pro-imperialist faction of the “left” petty-bourgeoisie.

Its attempts to posture as a left-wing organization descend into absurdity. The main concern it raises about US intervention in Syria is that “US support will be aimed at promoting their people and marginalizing others, even if it means fragmenting the revolutionary forces.”

What “revolutionary forces” is Sustar talking about? They are a collection of militias including the CIA’s “people,” as he calls them, various Al Qaeda operatives, and the flotsam and jetsam of Syrian society that these forces have attracted to themselves. In seeking to conceal the reactionary character of these forces under the mantle of revolution, Sustar functions simply as one of the State Department’s more left-talking operatives.

Sustar goes on to praise the ISO as “principled anti-imperialists who have managed to walk and chew gum at the same time—to support the revolutions in Libya and Syria against dictatorial regimes, while at the same time opposing intervention by the US and its imperialist allies.”

This foul comment goes to the heart of the politics of the ISO and the entire petty-bourgeois pseudo-left. For Sustar, the ISO can “walk and chew gum” because it knows how to support imperialist wars while at the same time posturing as “left.”

The class orientation of an organization always finds its clearest expression in its international policy. In Syria, the ISO and its international co-thinkers are nothing less than political agencies of imperialism.

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