

Australian pseudo-lefts complicit in US war drive against Syria

Patrick O'Connor
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The threatened US-led military attack on Syria has further exposed the pro-imperialist politics of the entire pseudo-left milieu in Australia. These organisations, most notably the misnamed Socialist Alternative and Socialist Alliance, are complicit in the Labor government's diplomatic agitation for war and its preparations to lend Australian military-intelligence support to the illegal US military operation.

A statement issued by Socialist Alliance on August 29, "No to US-led war on Syria, socialists say", is a desperate attempt to cover this organisation's tracks. Nevertheless, while nominally opposing a US bombing campaign, Socialist Alliance maintains its enthusiastic support for the drive by Washington, backed by Canberra, to install a pliant puppet regime in Damascus. The statement declares: "The Socialist Alliance supports the Syrian people's democratic uprising against the tyranny of the Bashar al-Assad regime but we reject the interventions of the US and its allies in Syria."

Socialist Alliance's reference to a "people's democratic uprising" is a hoax—the so-called uprising is a US imperialist regime-change operation. Neither Socialist Alliance nor any of the other pseudo-left organisations have attempted to explain why the entire leadership of the so-called Syrian revolution has spent the past two years agitating for a full-scale US military intervention, so that they can take power in the same way as their Libyan "rebel" counterparts in 2011. Syrian opposition forces are now providing intelligence to the US military on targets for Tomahawk cruise missile strikes.

Socialist Alliance claims that Washington is yet to intervene in Syria. In reality, the US has stationed 1,000 troops in Jordan, including special operations commandos, to help train "rebel" fighters who have been crossing the border into Syria to join the violent sectarian mayhem being inflicted on the country. An unknown number of CIA operatives are running a command-and-control centre in Adana, Turkey, 95 kilometres from Syria's northern border, to coordinate the influx of arms, foreign fighters, money and supplies to the anti-Assad forces. Similar training and arming operations are being carried out by Washington's close NATO ally, Turkey, while other US partners in the region, including Saudi Arabia and Qatar, have devoted substantial resources to the regime-change operation.

Socialist Alliance's statement continues: "We call on the Australian government to reject this latest imperial aggression, to extract itself from its military alliance with the US and end its

involvement in all aggressive multinational military operations."

This appeal, directed to the same Labor government that has invited a widely expanded US military presence in Australia and has, at every step, backed Obama's provocations against Syria, is aimed at subordinating the emerging anti-war movement to the dead-end perspective of pressuring the parliamentary apparatus. Promoting one or another faction within the political establishment, in particular, the Greens, Socialist Alliance aims above all to block the emergence of an independent anti-war movement of the working class directed against the Labor government and the capitalist system itself.

For its part, Socialist Alternative has maintained a deafening silence on the US war drive. It is yet to issue a single word of its own on the Obama administration's assertions that the Assad regime was responsible for an August 21 chemical weapons attack, on Washington's ongoing preparations for war, or on the Labor government's bellicose tub-thumping against Syria. Yesterday, it republished a joint statement, "Yes to revolution, no to intervention!", issued by its co-thinkers in the Revolutionary Socialists (Egypt), Revolutionary Left Current (Syria), Union of Communists (Iraq), Al-Mounadil-a (Morocco), and Socialist Forum (Lebanon). In the guise of nominal opposition to a US bombing operation, the statement was a lengthy complaint that Washington had failed to follow the lead of Saudi Arabia and Qatar, or funnel sufficient weaponry to the Syrian "rebels," to trigger the downfall of the Assad government.

In Australia, Socialist Alternative has consciously worked to establish the political conditions for the stepped up imperialist offensive now underway.

In August last year, senior Socialist Alternative member Corey Oakley published a statement declaring that the time for "knee-jerk anti-imperialism" had "now passed"—because "the world has changed." He insisted that any emphasis on the "imperialist threat" to Syria was "profoundly mistaken." Moreover, Oakley continued, while it was true that "the imperialist powers are intervening in Syria" and that "there are deeply reactionary elements present among the rebel forces", nevertheless the opposition militia forces were entirely correct to work with the CIA and other intelligence agencies of the imperialist powers active in the region in order to receive weapons and money. Socialist Alternative, presenting the Islamist and Al Qaeda-dominated opposition fighters as "revolutionaries", has openly aligned itself with Washington's violent regime-change campaign.

(See “Australian pseudo-left backs imperialist intervention in Syria”).

Oakley’s statement marked a definitive repudiation of Socialist Alternative’s former nominal opposition to imperialism. It was widely reprinted among the pro-war “left” around the world, while within Australia it was immediately followed by the opening of formal discussions between the leaderships of Socialist Alternative and Socialist Alliance focussed on merging their organisations.

The forces that now comprise Socialist Alliance have a long and filthy record of lending their “left” credentials to Australian imperialist operations, most notably in 1999, when they organised “troops in” demonstrations to assist the Howard government’s intervention into oil-rich East Timor. Now the two pseudo-left organisations are of one mind on such interventions and freely republish each other’s material on Syria.

Socialist Alternative’s most recent article on the situation in Syria, “Assad’s backers on the left are ignoring reality,” published four months ago on May 5, was, for example, written by Socialist Alliance member Michael Karadjis.

The main purpose of Karadjis’s article was to blind its readers to the Obama administration’s preparations for war, and to cover over the reactionary character of the regime-change campaign. Blatantly denying well-established facts, such as the dominant role of Al Qaeda-connected sectarian militias among the so-called rebel fighters, and the active role of the CIA along the Syrian-Turkish border in coordinating the flow of weapons, money, and foreign Islamist fighters into Syria, Karadjis denounced all those who were “convinced that the US is hell-bent on backing the Syrian rebellion against the regime of Bashar Assad, who claim the US is backing these ‘Islamist’ forces, or even that the whole Syrian rebellion is a ‘US war on Syria’.”

The article ridiculed the prospects of a US military intervention based on a chemical weapons pretext. “[W]ith all the hoo-ha about the Syrian military allegedly using chemical weapons, and leftist claims that this was the parallel of the ‘WMD’ excuse to invade Iraq, one might have expected the US to order some kind of ‘strong’ action,” Karadjis wrote. “In sharp contrast to the lies about Iraqi WMD peddled in order to justify an invasion, in this case Obama has reacted to allegations of use of chemical weapons by stressing that the evidence ‘was still preliminary’ and thus he was in no rush to intervene... Most analysis concludes the US is very unlikely to change course.”

Karadjis has a long record of providing right-wing, nationalist US proxy forces in different conflicts with a “left” gloss, under the cover of promoting “self-determination” and “democracy.” For example, on May 12, 1999, as the US-NATO bombardment of Serbia was underway, and on the eve of the army intervention into Kosovo, Karadjis wrote an article for *Green Left Weekly* entitled, “Chossudovsky’s frame-up of the KLA,” declaring that the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) was a “genuine liberation movement representing the aspirations of the oppressed Albanian majority.” He defended the heroin trafficking operations that funded the KLA, and absurdly claimed that Washington aimed to destroy the KLA and was opposed to an independent Kosovo. These bald faced lies were quickly exposed by the subsequent US-led ground intervention into Kosovo and recognition of the

territory’s “independence” under the domination of the former KLA forces.

Karadjis is now recycling the same reactionary politics on behalf of the US proxy forces in Syria. On July 9, 2013, the Socialist Alliance publication *Links* featured a lengthy article by him, “Issues in the current stage of Syrian revolution”, that angrily dismissed any concerns about the role played by Al Qaeda among the so-called Syrian “revolutionaries.” Karadjis insisted that “there have been remarkably few open sectarian attacks, let alone massacres, on Alawi or Christian minorities by radical Sunni elements of the opposition”—an extraordinary remark in the context of a brutal sectarian war that has seen tens of thousands of Christians and other minorities purged from “rebel”-held cities and towns. Karadjis went on to issue an equally extraordinary apologia for outright barbarism—insisting that videotaped footage of an opposition commander extracting and eating the organs of a corpse constituted mere “minor cannibalism.” This was not, he insisted, “an attack on an innocent person or ordinary soldier, still less a sectarian attack on an Alawite as some claimed.”

Karadjis’s political depravity sums up the evolution of the entire pseudo-left. His positions have served a definite purpose: to coverup for the drive by US imperialism to carry out regime change in Syria. Declaring that a “full-scale imperialist intervention” into Syria “has never been an option”, he added: “if the US or other imperialist states did decide for their own reasons to provide some arms, we should also *not* protest against it, robotic style.”

In the same manner as Corey Oakley’s denunciations of “knee jerk anti-imperialism”, Karadjis’s positions further expose the August 29 Socialist Alliance statement and its claims to “reject the interventions of the US and its allies in Syria.”

Leon Trotsky once noted that the class orientation of any political organisation is most clearly established by its international orientation. The pro-imperialist character of both Socialist Alternative and Socialist Alliance has been definitively established in their support for US-led gangsterism in the Middle East. These outfits, representing affluent layers of the middle class, function as a tendency within bourgeois politics. For workers and young people seeking to halt the war drive and oppose Australian imperialism, there is only one party fighting to develop an independent movement of the working class against war, social inequality and the drive to dictatorship. That is the Socialist Equality Party, based on the socialist and internationalist program of the International Committee of the Fourth International, the world party of socialist revolution.



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