

Australian pseudo-lefts line up behind US war preparations against Russia

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The response of the Australian pseudo-left group Socialist Alternative to the downing of Malaysian Airlines MH17 in Ukraine has underscored its support for the mounting war drive of the US and European imperialist powers.

The crash of MH17, in circumstances yet to be established, was the occasion for an immediate escalation of denunciations against Russia, amid claims that it was either directly responsible or that it supplied the missile system that supposedly brought the plane down.

Despite the fact that the MH17 disaster was a major world event, Socialist Alternative chose not to comment for some five days.

This silence was even more significant given the role played by the Australian government, in particular Prime Minister Tony Abbott.

After initially declaring that one should “not jump to conclusions,” only hours later, following a briefing by the Obama administration and US national security officials, Abbott declared, in the absence of any hard evidence, that “it now seems certain” the plane was shot down by a Russian supplied surface-to-air missile.

This was the start of an aggressive push by Abbott against Russia, leading to the passage of a UN resolution for a Dutch-led investigation of the crash site and moves by the Australian government for the deployment of Australian Federal Police, as well as armed forces.

For months, Socialist Alternative has been engaged in a series of denunciations of Abbott and his Liberal-National government, including the production of “f...ck Abbott” T-shirts, a noisy protest during a Q&A live panel television program, and demonstrations at university campuses where government politicians have appeared.

Following the government’s budget, Socialist Alternative even proposed to have the front cover of its newspaper *RedFlag* feature a poster of Abbott with a razor adjacent to his throat accompanied by the caption

“one cut we’d like to see”—only to withdraw it in response to a media witch-hunt.

But when Abbott stepped forward as the cat’s paw for US threats against Russia, seeking to create the political atmosphere for military action, Socialist Alternative fell silent.

The old maxim holds that silence is consent. So it was in this case. Socialist Alternative kept quiet because it is in basic agreement with the Australian government’s actions.

Resting on layers of the upper middle class, whose material interests are directly bound up with continued US global dominance, Socialist Alternative took its cue from the praise heaped on Abbott for his supposed statesman-like demeanour by the entire political establishment, including Labor, the Greens, and the “left” and liberal media commentators.

When it did finally comment, Socialist Alternative sought to cover its tracks by introducing a “left” twist into the line of the corporate media.

Its first, and so far only comment, was an article by Alex Chklovski on “MH17 and the new world order,” published on July 23. It took the form of a plague on both houses, claiming that the tragedy was a result of the “international jostling of Russia and the West.”

The central thrust of the piece, however, was the same as that of the Abbott government—denunciation of “Russian imperialism.” According to Chklovski: “The conflict in the Ukraine shines a spotlight on changes in global imperialist relations.” The interventions by the US in Afghanistan and Iraq had left it weakened, while Russia, having partially recovered from the economic collapse of the 1990s, “is starting to challenge Western interference in its sphere of influence.”

In other words, the crisis in Ukraine was not the result of interventions by US and German imperialism, but greater assertiveness by Russia.

Chklovski earlier advanced this theme in an article published on May 12. He claimed that the establishment of Russian control of the Crimea showed it had become “more confident to throw its weight around the region.”

“The rise of China and its alliance with Russia has emboldened Putin to put pressure on Eastern Europe,” Chklovski wrote. “While the US is shifting its focus to the Pacific, Russia has attempted to build its own networks of geopolitical influence, primarily through control of gas and oil supply to Europe through the Eastern states, as well as economic trade blocs such as the Moscow-centred Customs Union.”

Chklovski’s assertions follow the same lines as some of the most strident warmongers in the Australian media. On July 22, for example, Peter Hartcher, the international editor of the *Sydney Morning Herald*, pointed to what he called Putin’s project for “the restoration of the Russian empire, his ‘Eurasia.’”

“Together with China’s [President] Xi Jinping, Putin is one of the rising hegemon of the world,” Hartcher wrote. “The two rulers are fundamentally challenging the post-World War Two order, the structure America built.”

Such denunciations of Russia and China for disrupting the “rules-based” world order are a vital component of the propaganda campaign waged by US imperialism as it seeks to militarily dominate the entire Eurasian landmass—a campaign in which Socialist Alternative has enlisted.

In the East, the denunciations provide support for the Obama administration’s anti-China pivot to Asia, by claiming that China is a rising imperialist power, while in the West they likewise stand reality on its head.

The crisis in Ukraine is not the result of Russian “imperialism” but has been provoked by the ever-intensifying war drive from the US, which began in the aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet Union more than two decades ago.

All the assurances given by imperialist leaders that the dissolution of the USSR would not see the extension of NATO have been swept aside in one country after another. Former republics, either of the Soviet Union or part of the Soviet-dominated Eastern Europe, have been brought into the US-led alliance. American missiles and other weaponry have been stationed ever closer to the western borders of Russia.

All the denunciations of Russian imperialism in Ukraine, Chklovski’s included, centre on the Russian annexation of the Crimea. Such claims, however, conveniently ignore the fact that Russia had no previous

plans to “invade” Ukraine. The takeover in Crimea came in response to the February 22 fascist-led coup in Kiev, orchestrated by the US, together with Germany, to install a puppet regime.

Moscow was faced with a situation in which Crimea, home to its Black Sea Fleet at the port of Sevastopol, would come under the control of a US-installed regime, with virulent anti-Russian fascists holding key posts, that was looking to join both the European Union and NATO.

The issue of Ukraine is of existential significance for Russia. Twice in the 20th century it was at the centre of wars of conquest, first under the German Kaiser and then under Hitler, directed against Russia, resulting in the deaths of millions of Soviet troops.

US imperialism has already gobbled up significant portions of the once Soviet-dominated buffer zone in Eastern Europe, but is far from sated. As far back as 1997, Zbigniew Brzezinski, President Carter’s national security advisor, made clear the longer term agenda. The Russian Federation, spanning some 10 time zones, and encompassing vast natural resources, he wrote, should be freed from the “bureaucratic hand” of Moscow, and transformed into a series of loosely confederated republics. In other words, Russia should be reduced to a series of bite-sized semi-colonies.

That agenda was one of the key motivations of the US-backed February 22 coup in Kiev. Now with the downing of MH17, it has been further advanced as the CIA seeks to mobilise the world press to prepare public opinion for a war against Russia, possibly with nuclear consequences.

Socialist Alternative and its denunciations of “Russian imperialism” form a component of this imperialist propaganda machine and should be treated accordingly.



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