

Beppe Grillo's M5S promotes European imperialism

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In the last month, comedian Beppe Grillo's blog has published a few commentaries that reveal the class interests behind his Movement 5 Star (M5S) organization. The articles evince an open support for imperialism in the Middle East, on the basis of protecting "national interest first."

In a column titled "ISIS: what is to be done?," M5S congressman Alessandro Di Battista, a frequent writer for Grillo's blog, delineates an ominous orientation, based on a mixture of half-truths, conspiracy theories and outright lies.

Utilizing a mash-up of partial historical events to ostensibly expose the role of American imperialism in the Middle East, he builds the case that "the North American leadership must be questioned. The US has made every mistake in the Middle East."

There is no question about the violent and criminal record of US imperialism in the Middle East. Washington's policies, especially in the last decade, have indeed destroyed entire countries and created conditions in which fundamentalist elements fester. The Islamic State of Syria and Iraq (ISIS), in this context, is a product of the sectarian warfare created by the United States in the region.

However, Di Battista's column presumes that the reader knows nothing about European imperialism. He utilizes the undeniable crimes of American capitalism to depict its European partners and rivals as a "peaceful" alternative.

Oddly enough, Di Battista starts his historic mock-up mentioning the Treaty of Sèvres, in which Great Britain, France and Italy carved up Syria, Iraq, Palestine and Transjordan. The reconfiguration of the Middle East was the result of the imperialist powers redrawing the world map in a hopeless attempt to bury the contradictions of international capitalism that led to the Great War of 1914.

While Di Battista acknowledges the role of Great Britain and later Nazi Germany, he quickly turns the page

to the US and its role in Iraq, drawing a parallel with other countries, such as Guatemala and the Congo, where US intervention to control those countries' governments was motivated by imperialist ambitions. His conclusion is that the US alone is responsible for the world's problems, and that a solution must come from European imperialism.

Di Battista states that: "Italy should push the European Union to promote a world peace conference on the Middle East to which the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America [ALBA], the Arab League, Iran and Russia should participate." In other words, the United Nations, the operational center of world imperialism, led by European leaders with a diminished role for the US, should oversee the redrawing of the Middle East.

The logic of this orientation stems from the class interests M5S is defending. The recent sanctions against Russia by the US and the EU over the question of Ukraine have deeply affected a considerable layer of the Italian (and European) bourgeoisie, which identifies the US as responsible for the "economic crisis of those agribusinesses squeezed by the economic crisis" surviving thanks to "exports to Russia," as the M5S Foreign Affairs Congressional Commission explains.

An elaboration comes directly from Di Battista when, in the process of attacking US policy, he juxtaposes to it the policies of Enrico Mattei, ENI's founder and president from 1953 until his death in 1962. ENI is a major Italian oil and gas corporation with operations in 79 countries. The largest Italian industrial conglomerate, it recorded revenues of \$166 billion in 2012, the year after the invasion of Libya.

Mattei, representative of the industrial bourgeoisie with close ties to the Stalinist Communist Party (PCI) and the Soviet Union (he was a close friend of PCI Secretary Luigi Longo, who mediated important commercial negotiations with the Kremlin), built a firm which continues to play a crucial role in the foreign policy of the

Italian bourgeoisie as a whole. Relations with Russia remain of crucial importance to this corporate giant.

In 2011, when the US, the UK and France attacked Libya, ENI's investments were at stake and Italy, pursuing its own imperialist ambitions, contributed military equipment and personnel in the invasion. Now, Di Battista takes ENI's founder as the example of how to defend Italian national interests, that is, the interests of the capitalist class.

Moreover, while France has in recent years led military interventions in Mali, Central African Republic, Chad and Ivory Coast, Germany is undergoing a process of militarization and has indicated it will in the future intervene in crisis areas and global hot spots more strongly and independently than before, including by military means.

The February 22 putsch in Ukraine was made possible precisely by the crucial support that Germany, together with the US, provided to the fascist Svoboda and Pravy Sektor. M5S's claim that the European warmongers should be in charge of world peace reveals its role as a spokesman and representative of European imperialism.

A recurring theme in Di Battista's perspective is the promotion of a veiled form of Islamophobia, as when he describes the actions of ISIS as aimed at "threatening thousands of Christians." In this sense, he follows the logic of right-wing commentators who seek to justify Western aggression in the name of religious freedom against Islamic barbarism.

The hypocrisy of this process was on display last month when the US and the EU agreed on a "humanitarian" intervention for Yazidi refugees threatened by ISIS. That and the beheadings of journalists were used as pretexts to escalate war preparations.

Perhaps most significant is M5S's suggestion to "treat terrorism like cancer." Di Battista explains this as follows: "For his nature as a subject who responds to a violent action inflicted upon him, you can't defeat the terrorist sending more drones, rather, we must elevate him to an interlocutor." While it is true that imperialism is responsible for the creation of the conditions that produce terrorism, groups like ISIS or Al-Qaeda are not politically neutral. They represent the interests of disaffected bourgeois layers in the Arab and Muslim world. They use sectarian divisions as a means of advancing their own class agenda, and in no way advance the struggle of oppressed masses for liberation from imperialist oppression. Di Battista's suggestion that these forces must be engaged in negotiations is another indication of

growing tensions with the US.

Moreover, M5S advances the demand, under the guise of defense of the right of self-determination, that countries like Iraq, the product of imperialist geostrategic calculations, should be redrawn to correct the mistakes of the past.

"The birth process of new ethnic-based realities is unstoppable in the Middle East and in Europe," says Di Battista. This is an argument for a renewed wave of balkanization, aimed not at settling historic contradictions, but at boosting the influence of Italian interests in resource-rich regions. Yugoslavia underwent such a process in the 1990s at the hands of US and German interests.

Di Battista seeks to blame the political establishment for having acceded to US imperialist pressure, suggesting M5S would not. "The pressures [Italian Foreign Minister Federica Mogherini] suffered in the last weeks and the desire to occupy her post as EU's Foreign Policy Chief pushed her to endorse Obama and the US," he writes.

This is sheer deception. The logic of imperialism cannot be controlled by the willpower of bourgeois politicians, or individual "good" intentions. As Lenin noted in his seminal 1916 work, *Imperialism*: "[T]he monopolies, which have grown out of free competition, do not eliminate the latter, but exist above it and alongside it, and thereby give rise to a number of very acute, intense antagonisms, frictions and conflicts." The only solution that arises out of the logic of capitalism itself, is war.

Only the working class can end the struggle for resources and endless wars through a revolutionary socialist reorganization of the world on the basis of a scientific program aimed at satisfying human needs, not profit.



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