

Britain's pseudo-left promotes Kurdish YPG militia volunteer Brace Belden as University of Glasgow Rector

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Recently concluded elections for the position of Rector at the University of Glasgow saw a broad coalition of ostensibly left organisations backing the candidacy of Brace Belden, an American volunteer with the Kurdish YPG (People's Protection Units).

The YPG militias are backed by the imperialist powers in the brutal US-instigated war for regime change in Syria. They function as the principal proxy force in attempts to seize control of Raqqa, the Syrian stronghold of the Islamic State (ISIS). The YGP is armed and funded by the Pentagon and accompanied into battle by US Special Forces units.

The Glasgow Marxists, a student branch of Socialist Appeal, the British section of the International Marxist Tendency (IMT), and the right-wing dominated Glasgow University Labour Club both publicly endorsed Belden.

Left Unity, the Communist Party of Britain (CPB), the Scottish Socialist Party and the Socialist Party, all joined in attesting to the supposedly revolutionary credentials of the YPG and invoke Belden and other YPG volunteers as a modern day version of the International Brigades, which fought in the Spanish civil war of the 1930s against fascism.

The International Brigades, notwithstanding their counter-revolutionary Stalinist leadership, reflected the genuine strivings of workers and intellectuals to oppose fascism. Fully 35,000 courageous volunteers travelled to Spain from 53 countries—many of them committed socialists and internationalists—to fight the menace posed by General Franco.

These volunteers were cruelly used by the Stalinist forces in Spain. The Stalinist bureaucracy opposed a struggle for socialism and confined the revolution, politically and through brutal repression, to the perspective of maintaining a bourgeois republic—thus ensuring defeat for the working class and victory for Franco.

Three years ago, Glasgow students elected Edward Snowden, the former US National Security Agency whistleblower, in a powerful display of opposition to the dragnet

surveillance of the world's population.

Now the pseudo-left are attempting to channel democratic and left-wing sentiment in a pro-war direction by building up the YPG and portraying Rojava—the YPG-dominated autonomous region carved out in the Kurdish-majority areas of northern Syria with the help of US and Saudi air strikes—as the centre of revolutionary struggle for a “democratic and egalitarian society.”

An October 2016 commentary by Alan Woods, the leading theoretician of the IMT, is typical of how support for the YPG provides an avenue for tacit support of Washington's war drive.

While making a show of opposing direct military intervention in Syria and the broader region, Woods accused the then Obama administration in the United States of “dithering” for too long on the issue of arming the Kurds. Woods complains that “Kurdish fighters will receive some small arms and ammunition, but not the kind of heavy equipment like anti-tank or anti-aircraft weapons that would make them a formidable fighting force.”

Facilitating the pseudo-left in their overtures to the imperialist powers for military aid is their political use of the YPG's embrace of gender politics and the fact that around half of its forces comprise of Women's Brigades.

In a September 2016 petition addressed to British Prime Minister Theresa May, the “Campaign for a political solution of the Kurdish Question” called on the Conservative government to condemn Turkey for its collusion with ISIS and its Syrian military intervention aimed at undermining Rojava.

The principal charge of the petition against ISIS is over its “brutal catalogue of sexual violence.” It applauds the role of the US-led coalition and its sponsorship of the Kurds in “a region often lagging behind in progressive gender policies.”

It asked only that May continue to back the YPG/YPJ, which it refers to as the “most effective force on the ground in the battle against ISIS.”

Patrons and signatories of the campaign include Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn, representatives of the Irish and Welsh nationalists, Sinn Fein and Plaid Cymru, numerous trade union leaders, various pseudo-left tendencies, US academic Noam Chomsky and other professors, together with feminist activists and about a dozen peers.

Belden is neither a socialist nor a democrat, but a highly disoriented petty-bourgeois radical.

Based in San Francisco directly prior to volunteering with the YPG, the 27-year-old sang with a punk band that “ironically” utilized Nazi symbolism and free-lanced as a writer for the *Williamette Week*, a local “alternative weekly” published in Portland, Oregon. He distinguished himself by petitioning the Obama administration to hang public radio host Garrison Keillor, creator of *A Prairie Home Companion*, from the Empire State Building.

A cursory review of Belden’s Twitter activity, where he posts under the handle LENIN_LOVER69 (@PissPigGranddad), reveals a deeply unhinged persona. One of his recent tweets reads: “I not only think North Korea should have nukes, I think they should nuke South Korea.”

During the Rectorial elections, Belden tweeted, “FUTURE GLASGOW RECTOR SUPPORTS SENDING STUDENTS TO WORK IN THE FIELDS,” a cynical reference to the policies associated with Mao’s “Cultural Revolution”—a policy that found genocidal expression in Cambodia under Pol Pot’s Khmer Rouge dictatorship.

Belden is a self-professed admirer of Mao, who bitterly denounces Trotskyism. Yet he has been fraudulently presented to students as an anti-fascist partisan “risking his life for his internationalist and socialist ideals” and for the defence of refugees. However, like the YPG and its sister organization, the bourgeois nationalist Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK), his utilisation of Maoist rhetoric only highlights his anti-working class politics.

The campaign posters in support of Belden at the university featured him in the pose of Che Guevara—in military fatigues, sporting an AK-47 assault rifle and smoking a large cigar. The Cuban petty-bourgeois nationalist leader notoriously befriended and gave refuge to Ramón Mercader, the Stalinist assassin who murdered Leon Trotsky, the co-leader of the Russian revolution.

One of the poster’s slogans read, “ONLY ONE CANDIDATE SHOOTS ISIS—BELDEN FOR RECTOR”. Based on this criterion, Belden’s supporters could have nominated one of the many CIA assets, mercenaries, Christian fundamentalists and other psychopathic adventurers that fight within and alongside the YPG.

At no point have the pseudo-left ever attempted to reconcile their claims of the progressive character of the

likes of Belden with the YPG’s alliance with US imperialism or the several hundred special operations troops from America, Britain, France and Germany embedded within its ranks.

In fact, Belden has been very candid about the swamp-like character of Rojava and the YPG. Speaking to *The Syrian Intifada* blog last month, he said, “Technically they call it libertarian socialism, but it’s pretty much a Stalinist state, which is fucking tight,” (i.e. very good).

Belden describes the first wave of international volunteers, mostly military veterans and former private defence contractors, as “psychopaths that wanted to come kill people.” He recalled “one guy named Tim the Cannibal” who consumed body parts and drank the blood of deceased ISIS fighters. “In his defence,” Belden *quipped*, “we don’t get a lot of protein.” He assured readers that the YPG is now made up of at least “75% Left-wing people,” since a policy of weeding out the psychopaths has been introduced.

A recent investigative report by Seth Harp published by *Rolling Stone* is quite revealing regarding the supposed leftists who have survived the weeding-out process.

Harp describes a typical volunteer, “Zederst,” a young German who hails from a milieu of “bourgeois bohemians, rich hipsters, and professional-class liberals.”

Another dubious medic/fighter is profiled, “who was vague about his background, but wore a Mao pin, owned a fortune in Bitcoin and spoke seven languages, including Arabic and Kurmanji.”

As for Belden, he freely admits: “Technically, I did a war crime, because I peed on a dead person.”

During the rector elections the pseudo-left and the bourgeois press engaged in a great deal of mutual handwringing over two of Belden’s rivals for the position of rector: Milo Yiannopoulos, a fascistic provocateur and Donald Trump devotee who formerly served as an editor for *Breitbart News*, and Canadian Professor Jordan Peterson, a self-proclaimed opponent of “political correctness” who refuses to use “gender neutral pronouns.”

In the election, the University of Glasgow students roundly rejected Belden in favour of human rights lawyer Amar Anwar, a Scottish National Party supporter. The contrasting embrace of Belden by sections of the pseudo-left underscores their role as apologists for imperialist operations in the Middle East and throughout the world.



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