The pseudo-left's silent complicity in the drive to war against Syria and Russia

Tom Hall
10 April 2018

In evaluating political tendencies, one must take into account not only what they say, but also what they do not say. If an organization responds to such significant geopolitical developments as the drive by US and European imperialism for war against Russia, or the imminent escalation of US intervention in Syria, by choosing to say nothing, this silence, as the old saying goes, denotes consent.

Such is the case with the press of the various organizations that comprise the pseudo-left—tendencies representing better-off layers of the upper middle class who mask their pro-capitalist and pro-imperialist politics with populist and radical-sounding phrases.

Four of the most prominent pseudo-left websites—*Jacobin* magazine, which is closely connected to the Democratic Socialists of America; *Socialist Worker*, the online newspaper of the International Socialist Organization; the website of Socialist Alternative; and *International Viewpoint*, the magazine of the Pabloite, ex-Trotskyist United Secretariat, have written next to nothing about the growing danger of a major world war. What little they have written only underscores their support for American and world imperialism.

Jacobin has written nothing on the Skripal affair—that is, the effort of the UK and US to promote unsubstantiated charges that Russia was behind the alleged poisoning of the double agent Sergei Skripal, which have been used to justify war provocations against Russia. As the official narrative of the Skripal poisoning has broken down, the media and imperialist governments have shifted to the CIA-organized provocation over Syria's alleged use of chemical weapons to demand war.

As of April 9, the words "Skripal," "Russia," and "Syria" do not appear on the front page of *Jacobin*'s website. Moreover, a search of Jacobinmag.com for "skripal" returns *zero results*. That is, for the last month, during which the media in the US and UK engaged in an unrelenting propaganda offensive, *Jacobin* wrote nothing.

Another topic about which Jacobin has written *zero articles* is the decision by the Ecuadorean government, acting at the behest of the imperialist powers, to cut off Internet access for Julian Assange, the founder of WikiLeaks. Its silence on imperialist war preparations is paralleled by its silence on the antidemocratic measures taken to suppress opposition.

Matters are no different if one turns to *Socialist Worker*. Again, a search for "skripal" returns *zero results*. The ISO's publication has produced only one article on foreign policy issues over the last two weeks, in keeping with that publication's nationalist orientation.

International Viewpoint has also written nothing on the campaigns on Skripal or Assange. It did, however, publish a recent statement on Syria, denouncing the defeat of US-led proxy forces in Ghouta as a "major defeat for those fighting racism and capitalist authoritarianism globally."

Socialist Alternative has written nothing on Julian Assange. It is, however, the only one of the four, as far as this author could tell, to publish an article on the Skripal affair. The statement, written by Socialist Alternative's affiliate in Britain, the Socialist Party, casts aspersions on the campaign to defend Jeremy Corbyn from attacks by the Tories and the Labour right for his mild criticisms of the international rush to judgment that Russia was responsible for the alleged attack.

However, the authors do their best to conceal the dangerous implications of the campaign over the

© World Socialist Web Site

Skripal poisoning, writing that the prospect of a world war is “ruled out” and that the ultimate outcome of the campaign “will amount to merely trimming the fingernails of the oligarchs in London and Europe but little else.”

Given the issues at stake, any genuinely progressive, let alone socialist, organization would subject the campaign for war against Russia and Syria to intensive criticism and analysis, in order to educate the working class and inure it against war propaganda.

Jacobin, *Socialist Worker*, etc., however, are not left-wing publications. They are right-wing, pro-imperialist and pro-capitalist. In the US, they function as political auxiliary organizations of the Democratic Party, which is spearheading the offensive against Russia, the campaign against Assange, and the drive to censor the Internet.

All these groups have long supported and agitated for confrontation with Russia. They are particularly incensed by what they see as Russia’s interference in US imperialism’s proxy war in Syria, which they have falsely hailed as a “revolution.” They have agitated for a greater US presence in Syria, criticizing the Obama and Trump administrations for not providing their proxies with more heavy weaponry and air support.

In April 2017, when allegations of a chemical weapons attack were used to justify airstrikes against Syria by the Trump administration, the pseudo-left responded first with silence (during the propaganda campaign) and then, following the bombing, with statements promoting the lies of the imperialist powers as good coin and criticizing the Trump administration for not really seeking regime change. *Socialist Worker’s* Ashley Smith bemoaned that “The U.S. only attacked the one base and didn’t even blow up its runway” and complained that it is “hard to take Trump’s humanitarian pretenses seriously” because until recently “Trump supported some kind of rapprochement with Assad and Russia.”

These tendencies articulate the interests of a narrow layer of privileged upper-middle-class academics, professionals and trade union functionaries whose rising incomes over the past thirty years, even as the working class has seen its living standards collapse, have led it into direct support for American imperialism. Since the NATO bombing of the Balkans in the 1990s, the pseudo-left has supported a whole series of “humanitarian” imperialist interventions and imperialist-backed separatist and nationalist movements.

These layers are organically hostile to the emergence of a mass, antiwar and socialist movement within the working class that would threaten their inflated incomes and privileges. Within the framework of bourgeois politics, their function is to disorient and demobilize growing social opposition and prevent it from breaking free from the political stranglehold of the bourgeoisie.

To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact

© World Socialist Web Site