

On Chris Hedges' unprincipled alliance with the political right

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16 February 2023

This was originally posted as a thread on Twitter.

The apologetic justification provided by Chris Lynn Hedges for sharing a platform with the right, and even fascists, in the fraudulent February 19 “Rage Against the War Machine” rally, is hard to equal as an example of political disorientation, outright ignorance and self-deluding demagoguery.

To excuse his collaboration with the reactionaries, Hedges offers political amnesty for his new allies. “The rally on February 19 is not about eliminating Social Security and Medicare or abolishing the minimum wage, which many libertarians propose,” he writes.

Hedges continues: “It is not a rally to denounce the rights of the LGBTQ community, which have been attacked by at least one of the speakers. It is a rally to end permanent war.”

And then comes Hedges' melodramatic punchline: “Should these right-wing participants organize around other issues, I will be on the other side of the barricades.”

Using the word “Should” implies that there is some question about the intentions and policies of Hedges' right-wing allies. In fact, the rally is being used by the political right to advance its reactionary agenda, and Hedges, despite his apologies, is serving their interests.

Moreover, it is entirely unclear when and under what political circumstances Hedges will decide to end the amnesty, break with the fascists and move to “the other side of the barricades.” The amnesty has no apparent expiration date.

Hedges writes: “We will not topple corporate power and the war machine alone. There has to be a left-right coalition, which will include people whose opinions are not only unpalatable but even repugnant, or we will remain marginalized and ineffectual. This is a fact of political life.”

What Hedges is clearly advocating is not a short-term tactic (which would be bad enough) but a long-term strategic alliance with the fascists. He explicitly declares that it is not possible to “topple corporate power and the war machine” without a “left-right coalition.”

Hedges fails to explain how the Libertarian faction of the ruling class—fanatically committed to the absolute defense of individual property rights and opposed to any restraint on the pursuit of profit and personal wealth—can be an ally in the fight against corporate power.

There is a history to the promotion of such reactionary alliances with the extreme right. The most notorious example was the German Stalinists' promotion, in the years prior to Hitler's accession to power, of a “Red-Brown” coalition against the Weimar regime.

The catastrophic outcome of the bankrupt policies of the Third Period are well known. The Nazis came to power, and repaid their debt to the German Communist Party by placing its leaders and members in concentration camps.

And what does Hedges attempt to achieve by sharing a platform with the right wing? In pursuit of what bold action plan is Hedges justifying collaboration with these reactionary forces?

He quotes from an email he received from another disoriented liberal endorsing the rally: “Because we urgently need as many voices as possible, from a broad variety of perspectives, to speak out so we can be much more effective at pressuring Congress and the White House to move this conflict from the bloody battlefield to the negotiating table.”

As is always the case, the most grotesque opportunism is employed in the service of the most pathetic and cowardly reformism. The “toppling of corporate power” will be achieved by begging the White House to see the error of its ways.

Hedges’ politics is uninformed by scientific method (Marxism), which he associates with a “sectarian” defense of principles. His writings exemplify the theoretical shallowness of the semi-radical liberalism of impotent American middle-class leftists described by Trotsky:

“Their philosophy reflects their own world. By their social nature they are intellectual semi-bourgeois. They feed upon half-thoughts and half-feelings. They wish to cure society by half-measures.

“Regarding the historical process as too unstable a phenomenon, they refuse to engage themselves more than fifty percent.

“Thus, these people, living by half-truths—that is to say, the worst form of falsehood—have become a genuine brake upon truly progressive, i.e., revolutionary thought.”

One final point: When Twitter in 2020 suspended the account of the International Youth and Students for Social Equality—the youth movement of the International Committee of the Fourth International—Hedges flatly refused to protest and call for a reversal of this action.

Notwithstanding the well-known and unequivocal opposition of the IYSSE and WSWS to imperialist war and its consistent defense of Julian Assange, Hedges claimed to be too busy to devote a few minutes to post a condemnation of the censorship on his Twitter

account.

For Hedges, a long-term alliance with fascists is permissible, with conflict postponed to the distant future. But when it comes to the Trotskyists, Hedges refuses collaboration even in defense of democratic rights.



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