Pabloite political charlatans hail US-Israeli-Turkish onslaught against Syria

Alex Lantier
11 December 2024

The conquest of Syria by the Al Qaeda-linked Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) militia has triggered rapturous celebrations by an international milieu of corrupt middle class Pabloite parties. These organizations, descending from or allied to the tendency led by Michel Pablo and Ernest Mandel that broke with Trotskyism in 1953, function as mouthpieces of imperialism. They are continuing their promotion of the nearly 14-year US-NATO war in Syria as a democratic revolution.

What is unfolding in Syria is not a revolution but a reactionary, imperialist-led carve-up of the country. The Syrian state, which has been under relentless assault for more than a decade, has ceased to exist. The United States, Israel and Turkey are ruthlessly pursuing their interests on its territory. Washington and the Israeli military have launched a massive bombing campaign to destroy Syrian military bases. Sunni Islamist HTS death squads are posting videos of their sectarian killings of minority Shia Alawites.

But as Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu surveys the Gaza genocide and the carve-up of Syria and boasts, “We are changing the face of the Middle East,” the pseudo-left and Pabloite parties are overjoyed.

“The end of the Assad dynasty must allow for the rights of peoples and minorities of Syria, democracy and social justice,” wrote France’s Pabloite New Anti-capitalist Party (NPA), adding: “We rejoice in the end of his reign.”

Latin America’s Morenoite International Workers League-Fourth International (LIT-CI) tendency stated, “The Syrian revolution has defeated the dictatorship after 13 years of struggle.” Its rival International Unity of Workers-Fourth International (UIT-CI) declared, “We support and declare our solidarity with the Syrian people and with this first revolutionary triumph.”

Corey Oakley of Australia’s Socialist Alternative (SAlt) party said, “Overnight, Syria has gone from being the most despotic state in the Middle East to the freest. HTS broke from Al Qaeda and then re-formed under its current name in 2017. For many years, and especially in the course of this uprising, it has emphasised tolerance of other religious groups and minorities ...”

Parties and individuals issuing such statements, as videos of HTS killings of Alawites spread across the Internet, are in a de facto alliance with Al Qaeda, Israel and US imperialism.

US warplanes carried out 75 airstrikes and Israeli warplanes over 400, aiming to destroy Syria’s military infrastructure and leave it ripe to be divided between US allies. The Turkish-backed Free Syrian Army (FSA) is assaulting Kurdish-nationalist forces in the north, aiming to seize territory and block the formation of a Kurdish state in the region. Israel has seized the entire Golan Heights and pledged to set up a “sterile” buffer zone between Israeli-held Syrian territory and Syria’s capital, Damascus.

What is happening in Syria today is the bitter fruit of more than a decade of lies by pro-imperialist, pseudo-left parties. For nearly 14 years since working-class uprisings toppled the Egyptian and Tunisian regimes in 2011, they have supported reactionary, imperialist-backed Sunni Islamist terrorist militias in a war for regime change in Syria, under the fraudulent pretext that it was a democratic revolution.

“The 2011 Syrian revolution was the most far-reaching of all the Arab revolts,” Oakley claims, but “Bashar al-Assad’s vicious strategy to maintain his rule—slaughtering half a million people, flattening cities, imprisoning and torturing tens of thousands, forcing millions into exile—came to embody the smashing of all the dreams of democracy and freedom that animated the Arab revolution in its first months.”

Oakley, who, in 2011, championed the term “knee-jerk anti-imperialism” to denounce left-wing opposition to the imperialist intervention in Syria, blames the war in Syria on Washington’s refusal to sufficiently arm the Islamists:

> The US refused to provide the weaponry the rebels were pleading for, which would have allowed them to defeat the regime. It also blocked other states from providing those weapons. This betrayal didn’t save the Syrian revolution from being slandered by many so-called anti-imperialists on the Western left, who shamefully dismissed Syrian aspirations for freedom from dictatorship as little more than a CIA/Mossad plot. …
>
> Yet despite everything, and seemingly against all hope, Assad is suddenly gone. In less than two weeks, a rebel offensive that began in the northern city of Aleppo transformed into an extraordinary nationwide uprising that routed the regime.

If Assad is “suddenly” and “against all hope” toppled by HTS, it is because in reality SAlt and its allies knew the Syrian rebellion had a very limited popular base. They were themselves taken aback when, after a two-week HTS offensive in northern Syria, the Assad regime collapsed and suddenly handed power to it. The picture they painted of Assad as having mobilized the army, air force and chemical weapons to massacre a revolution by millions of people was a political fairy tale.

Working-class uprisings had erupted in Egypt and Tunisia in 2011. Escalating strikes and protests, mobilizing workers of all ethnic and religious backgrounds, led to bloody clashes with riot police. Workers did not think to ask US imperialism for weapons, because Washington was arming the Egyptian and Tunisian regimes against them. The regimes fell, however, when the army would not obey orders to fire on the people and that the economy was grinding to a halt as millions of workers went on strike.

The Syrian “rebellion,” organized on the heels of a NATO war for regime change in Libya using Islamist proxy forces, had a very different character. Led first by sectarian Islamist militias, and later also by Kurdish-nationalist militias, it used hit-and-run attacks, terror bombings, and ultimately invasions from bases in neighboring US-allied states, like

© World Socialist Web Site

Turkey or Jordan.

The filthy task of promoting this as a "revolution" fell to the Pabloite and pseudo-left milieu. As they jumped on the bandwagon of the Syrian "rebels," the Pabloites as always falsified or ignored the question of what class forces were involved and what the political program and leadership of the movement were. Over the course of the Syrian war, the Pabloites were thoroughly integrated into the milieu of imperialist foreign policy-making.

This integration finds consummate expression in the NPA's Gilbert Achcar. In 2011, he boasted of meeting with leaders of the CIA-backed Syrian National Council to advise them on war strategy. Now serving as a paid adviser of the British military, Achcar is hailing the carve-up of Syria while warning of the danger that popular opposition could erupt on HTS forces, as well.

"While observing the amazing historical events that unfolded since last Friday, the first thing that came to mind was relief and joy," Achcar wrote on December 11, though he added: "[T]he residents of the Idlib region themselves demonstrated only eight months ago against HTS's tyranny, demanding the overthrow of al-Julani, the dissolution of his repressive apparatuses, and the release of detainees in his prisons."

In reality, the Pabloites served throughout the war as cheerleaders of reactionary forces, falsely promoting them as revolutionaries. They denied the pro-imperialist politics of the "rebels," presented the Free Syrian Army (FSA) as a secular force and claimed workers were building revolutionary Local Coordination Committees (LCCs). In reality, the Syrian "rebels" were funded by the Persian Gulf oil sheikdoms and the CIA, through programs that later became public, such as Operation Timber Sycamore.

The victory of the Syrian "rebellion" today definitively refutes their propaganda lies about it. There were no mass strikes. LCCs were nowhere to be seen. The FSA allied with the Islamist regime of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan to wage ethnic war on the Kurds. And the toppling of Assad was led by Al Qaeda, in alliance with Washington and Israel's genocidal regime. On this basis, the Pabloites are embracing it.

The carve-up of Syria is a searing confirmation of the warnings the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) made of the Syrian war and the role of the Pabloite parties, which represent pro-imperialist layers of the affluent middle class who use democratic phrases to advance the material interests of forces in the top 10 percent of society.

In 2013, the *World Socialist Web Site* examined an international pro-Syrian war petition drafted by the now-dissolved International Socialist Organization (ISO) at the World Social Forum in Tunis and signed by its academic supporters. This venue, we noted, "offered middle class pseudo-left parties the opportunity to rub shoulders, share drinks, and discuss interests and strategies with scores of state intelligence operatives and established bourgeois politicians."

Responding to the petition's pledge to "remind the world" that the war in Syria was "a people's revolution for freedom and dignity," we wrote:

> If the world needs to be "reminded," it is because the bloody carnage carried out in Syria by the imperialist-backed mercenaries for the last two years bears no resemblance to a "people's revolution" let alone one for "freedom and dignity." …
>
> The US government itself has reported that, by last December, Al Nusra [HTS's previous name] had carried out nearly 600 terror bombings killing thousands of Syrian civilians. Opposition forces have themselves told major media that they loot and destroy factories, such as pharmaceutical plants and granaries around Aleppo. They are responsible for sectarian massacres, such as that in Houla one year ago …
>
> There is no great and unfathomable mystery about what is going on in the eastern Mediterranean and the Levant. The Syrian war is the latest chapter in US imperialism's efforts—with the support of its ultra-reactionary Gulf State clients—to violently carry out a restructuring of Middle East and Central Asian politics.

Assad's handover of power to Al Qaeda forces also vindicates the ICFI's irreconcilable opposition to bourgeois nationalism and Stalinism. It exposes the treachery of the Syrian nationalist Baathist regime and the bankruptcy of the Russian and Iranian regimes, who for a time militarily supported Assad's forces against the onslaught of Islamist militias backed by the NATO powers and the Persian Gulf states. They were well aware of Assad's negotiations with the Arab League and Syrian opposition officials that prepared the surrender of Syria to Al Qaeda.

Both the Russian and the Iranian working classes have a revolutionary past, in the 1917 Russian and 1979 Iranian revolutions, to which both regimes are profoundly hostile. The slogan of Russian President Vladimir Putin, sitting atop the capitalist kleptocracy that emerged from the Stalinist bureaucracy's dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, is: "God forbid, we have had enough revolution in the 20th century!"

However indubitably reactionary Assad's regime was, the ICFI assigned the task of his overthrow to the Syrian working class, not reactionary regional capitalist regimes allied to imperialism.

The Pabloite forces hailing the carve-up of Syria, on the other hand, are contemptible propagandists for imperialism. Even when they briefly admit the reactionary role of the Al Qaeda forces they are supporting, aiming to provide a thin political cover for their alignment with US imperialism, they proceed to support these forces anyway.

Oakley admits that Syria is "deeply scarred and controlled by militias" and faces "enormous issues to be worked through and obstacles to be overcome." One of these, Oakley suddenly admits, is the reactionary and repressive character of the Sunni Islamist forces he is promoting: "HTS has for years controlled Idlib in the north-west. During that time, it repressed protests, but nothing remotely on the scale of what either the Assad regime or ISIS have been guilty of."

A movement can be built unifying workers of different ethnic and religious backgrounds in Syria against imperialism and capitalist reaction. The immense power of the international working class, seen in the Egyptian and Tunisian uprisings of 2011, can and must be mobilized to stop the descent into world war and genocide.

This requires, however, a political reckoning with the Pabloite charlatans who demoralize protests against the Gaza genocide and now hail the carve-up of Syria. They posture as opponents of the genocide but back the Israeli army as it fires the same missiles and shells at Syria's defenseless population. Workers and youth can only stop imperialist war by mobilizing independently in struggle, on the basis of a socialist, internationalist and revolutionary perspective.

To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact

© World Socialist Web Site