

Class Warrior

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Year 7 of the Revolution: Trotskyists and Jacobins in Syria

Jacobin is a prominent US journal of the broad left. Its title is apposite since the Jacobins were the revolutionary leaders of the French bourgeois revolution, so its name signifies the retreat of Western Marxism or the broad left from Bolshevism to a defence of bourgeois democracy. This may be a died-in-the-wool Stalinist 'stageism' (first 'democracy' then 'socialism') or 'crypto' Stalinism, having arrived at stageism via liberal democracy. It is necessary to counter-pose a full-blooded Bolshevik-Leninism, that is Trotskyism, to this jaded Jacobinism.

Jacobins or Trotskyists?

In a [recent article](#) Syrian activist Razan Ghazzawi interviews Ramah Kudaimi on the 6 years of revolution and counter-revolution in Syria. Kudaimi defends the revolution but not in such a way as to advance its victory. It critiques those on the left who support the Assadist regime on the grounds that the rebels are Islamic terrorists and not Syrian revolutionaries. We have critiqued this social imperialist left as orientalist, Islamophobic, or 'RT socialists', since the onset of the Arab Spring. If this were not bad enough, even those who do support the Syrian revolution only give 'conditional' support to the revolution because they do not see the Islamic militias as fighting for 'democracy', but for an Islamic State.

This is a convenient 'catch-22' that dismisses national revolutions unless they fulfill the conditions of being secular and democratic. After all, how can a revolution for bourgeois democracy against the 'dictatorship', fascism and imperialism succeed if led by reactionary, 'fascist' and theocratic state advocates? The revolution is supposed to end with a new democratic regime in place. We call these fakers 'unconscious Assadists' because they all imagine that a bourgeois democratic regime can be installed in Syria without an uninterrupted or Permanent Revolution coming to fruition in the whole of MENA. Worse, even a democratic revolution is impossible in one country (with borders set and re-set by imperialism!) without the defeat of imperialism in the region as a whole.

So, for the social imperialists, the revolution by definition has to come from a secular, democratic base, and it cannot meet these conditions if its agents are calling for theocracy, Sharia Law and an Islamic State. Automatically, the only fighting forces that can militarily defeat imperialism in MENA are disqualified as revolutionaries and labelled 'sectarians', 'reactionaries' and 'terrorists' if not 'fascists'.

This means that the Western left has to fall back on imperialist intervention – a reactionary utopia. Reactionary, because it is imperialism that has created the conditions for Islamic radicalism, utopian, because imperialism is the No 1 terrorist,

and its apologists are aiding and abetting terrorism. It is a contradiction in terms, reflecting the social imperialist ideology of the dominant left currents who have never renounced the hypocrisy of supporting imperialism abroad to pay for socialism at home.

So, the Jacobin article correctly critiques the main US left demand for NFZs since 2011, because of the absurdity of calling on US and Russian imperialism that are already bombing Syria to impose NFZs. Yet the author replaces the NFZ with the demand to 'stop the bombing' which suffers from the same absurdity, that national revolutions can succeed against imperialist states by pressuring those same historic oppressor states to become 'democratic'!

As a result, the 'democratic' social imperialist 'left' has refused to take the necessary steps to arm the rebels because they are not 'democratic' enough. Yet a popular revolution is the only way that NFZs can be imposed. Without SAMS, the US, Putin and Assad can bomb at will. Even the children of Aleppo burning tires to create a smokescreen against the bombers were more effective than 6 years of begging imperialism to stop being imperialism. As we have constantly pointed out in the last 6 years, unless the Western Left arms the revolutionaries with high tech SAMS there can be no stopping the bombing. None of the imperialist 'ceasefires' has stopped the bombing. None results from liberal pressure at home but rather are designed to weaken the revolution.

So, the root of the problem for the Western left is that it is no longer revolutionary, and so rejects the elementary internationalist duty of unconditional military support for any and all the enemies of imperialism. It resorts to calling Jihadists 'fascist' so 'democratic imperialism' becomes the lesser evil. This is much the same as the rejection of unconditional defence of the Soviet Union because the Stalinist regime was 'fascist' and so the war against fascism became the mission of democratic imperialism. To get out of this impasse the left has to return to Bolshevik-Leninism and the struggle to build a revolutionary Marxist party and program.

Permanent Revolution and Military Support

Those of us who claim to be Trotskyists have had plenty of practice rehearsing Trotsky's arguments about anti-imperialist military blocs in the period since 9/11. Trotsky fought to keep alive the programmatic advances of the first four Congresses of the 3rd Communist International, in particular Permanent Revolution and, as part of that, the tactic of the anti-imperialist united front or AUF. Based on the concept of the united front, communists have a duty to strike together against the class enemy, but at the same time, to march separately to maintain their

political independence and raise the communist program to win reformist workers and petty bourgeois elements to revolution. The AUF developed out of the Bolshevik Revolution which for the first time proved that the bourgeois revolution (or the national democratic revolution) cannot be advanced as a united front with the 'democratic' bourgeoisie against imperialism, feudalism or fascism, but must be led by the revolutionary proletariat to become 'permanent' as the socialist revolution.

In the epoch of imperialism, the national bourgeoisie is no longer a revolutionary class but the agent of imperialism against the workers and poor peasants. The Bolshevik Revolution succeeded only because the revolutionary proletariat took the leadership of the national democratic revolution and was prepared to overthrow the national bourgeoisie to stop it joining the counter-revolutionary bloc with the Tsarists and imperialist powers (i.e. the failed Kornilov Coup in August 1917). To succeed, the anti-imperialist struggle had to be led by the revolutionary proletariat, allied to the poor peasantry, against both the imperialists and their national class allies, the national bourgeoisie.

Trotsky developed the AUF to distinguish political support from military support. Like all united fronts, revolutionary workers' bloc with other oppressed class forces fighting imperialism militarily without making political ultimatums about socialist revolution. Yet at the same time, they argue for the class independence of the proletariat as the only class capable of completing the bourgeois revolution as the socialist revolution.

The theory/program of Permanent Revolution tested by the Bolsheviks in Russia was confirmed negatively in Germany (1919-1923) and China (1925-1927) where revolutionaries prostrated themselves to reformist illusions in bourgeois democracy. The betrayal of the Chinese Revolution in 1927 resulted from Stalin's political bloc with the Kuomintang which subordinated the Communist Party leadership to Chiang Kai Shek and led to its extermination. So even where a military bloc with fascist national leaders (like Chiang Kai Shek, Haile Selassie, or the Argentinian Generals in the Malvinas War) against imperialism were necessary, the proletariat kept its armed independence at all costs in preparation for the overthrow of the national bourgeoisie.

As we have argued before, applying the AUF to Syria is a test of Bolshevism against Menshevism. It comes more than a decade after 9/11 and the US invasion of Afghanistan during which period revolutionaries formed military blocs with the national bourgeois factions that were fighting imperialism. We gave military support to the Taliban, to Gaddafi, to the Iraqi resistance, and today, to the Islamic militias in Syria, while they fight imperialism and its local bourgeois agents AND DO NOT serve imperialism in attacking the revolution.

But at all times we keep our political independence and do not subordinate our military independence to any of these bourgeois military leaderships. So long as we form a military bloc alongside those fighting the main enemy, imperialism, we must raise the communist program for permanent revolution. In this way, the objective situation can be transformed by our military intervention as the political consciousness of the revolutionaries is advanced to fight for the Permanent Revolution.

From Al Qaeda to Hayat Tahrir al Sham

[Six years of civil war in Syria vindicates the Bolshevik program.](#) We give military support to Daesh but in the certain knowledge that Daesh fights imperialism only to do a deal with it against the Syrian and Iraqi revolution. So, in practice, we cannot enter into a AUF with Daesh without betraying the revolution. Similarly, we gave military support to the former al Nusra before it dissociated with al Qaeda and became JFS (Jabhat Fatah al Sham). We do not put political conditions on this military bloc i.e. demanding that JFS renounce the Islamic State. But in the process, we expect that Trotskyist militias like the Leon Sedov Brigade can be in the position to raise their program for socialist revolution and influence jihadists to reject the Islamic state for a socialist republic.

As we predicted, the Syrian revolution is the critical test for the theory/program of Permanent Revolution. Those militias that are led by bourgeois warlords have sold out to imperialism and its local agents, Assad, Turkey or Jordan. For example, elements of the FSA and Ahrar al Sham joined Turkey to fight Daesh and the Kurd PRG abandoning the defence of Aleppo. They have betrayed the Syrian revolution to scramble for the crumbs of power and territory as the imperialists carve up Syria.

On the other hand, those militias like JFS (now HTS - Hayat Tahrir al Sham) that remain true to the anti-imperialist cause are advancing their political program away from the isolation of jihad towards Permanent Revolution. JFS (while al Nusra) met with popular opposition to its program and practices and transformed itself to the point where it has now won mass support to become the strongest and most consistent force of the revolution. Moreover, after the fall of Aleppo, JFS liquidated itself into the HTS merging its forces and leadership to form the [most effective fighting force](#) for the revolution.

For Jacobins, the Syrian revolution is going nowhere because the 'rebels' are not 'democratic' and have to wait until oppressor states can transmit 'democracy' to the oppressed states. As we know for imperialists the only democracy they can transmit is from warplanes or drones. For Trotskyists, what began as an isolated Syrian franchisee of al Qaeda is now fighting for basic democratic rights (tolerance of political and religious differences in the military bloc) which creates an opening for the revolutionary program which states that the Syrian revolution cannot win short of an Arab socialist federation.

Against the Jacobin (and Menshevik, Stalinist and fake Trotskyist) social imperialism, this transformation vindicates the Bolshevik program of the AUF which creates military blocs to advance political agreement to the point where national, religious, gender, and other differences become resolved into a single class war against the imperialists and their dictatorships.

For a military block with real anti-imperialists against fake anti-imperialists!

Victory to the Syrian Revolution!

Forward to the socialist federation of MENA!

Defense of the Syrian Revolution: Comments for the Peace and Freedom Party Forum of 4/1/17

Rick Sterling's [CounterPunch](#) article of 9/06/16 attacks the left and socialists who "demonize Assad," attacking [Ashley Smith's](#) 8/26/16 [CounterPunch](#) article for his claim that Assad killed 400,000 Syrians. Sterling points out that Smith lumped 100-150,000 Syrian troops in with the 400,000. Far from exonerating Assad for killing his own people, in essence Sterling is saying Assad is not so bad because he only killed between 250,000 and 300,000 of his own civilians.

Sterling then relies on the Seymour Hersh articles to "prove" Assad innocent of the Sarin gassing. But a careful reading of Hersh finds that his article does not prove anything of the sort, it is designed to cast doubt on the US State Department claims and like a good defense attorney in a murder trial Hersh attempts to draw an Erdogan/al Nusra connection as an alternate "fact". But take the time to listen to his interview on [Democracy Now](#), throughout which he refers to al Assad as Bashir, as if he is on a first name basis with him. Notice he refers to all other political leaders by their last name. Twisted as this is, even more interesting is that he states right up front he **does not know who launched the Sarin attack**.

Hersh makes a number of arguments on the Sarin gas use. He claims there are sensors in the Assad chemical laboratories, presumably placed by his contacts in the Mossad and the NSA/CIA and states they did not alarm in the period prior to the August, 2012 gas attack. Secondly, Hersh claims that the UK's Porton Down labs analysed the Sarin delivered to it by the Russians and compared it to the known batches of Sarin Assad had (what did he have it for if he was a democratic socialist?) and 'we' can compare it because Assad gave us (the US) a list of what he had! How credible is this? Trust Assad to give a good list? Trust Russia to pass a good sample? And trust Mossad and NSA sensors to tell us what is going on in all of Syria's laboratories?! Wow! And what of the fact that [Sarin](#) has a short shelf life? And must be put together just prior to use. How then can you compare an old list produced by Assad to product just off the shelf and put into missiles? A veteran-free left doesn't ask. But not a few workers could well ask.

But let's not get bogged down in war crimes --even the 'venerable' Mao Tse Tung said you have to break a few eggs to make an omelet-- and today the collateral damage (dead babies and civilians) are the result not only of Bashir's oft documented barrel bombs and cluster bombs, the not so smart bombs dropped by Putin's air force, but likewise by Trump's and Nato's air raids as well as Isis crimes against civilians.

The real issue is that the Stalinists, neo-Stalinists, Stalinophiles and today's Russophiles have retreated from support of social revolution, the permanent revolution spoken of in the Communist Manifesto and developed theoretically by Leon Trotsky, and instead have embraced semi-colonial capitalist dictators hailing them as "anti-imperialists" instead of seeing them in their true role alongside the Stalinists as appeasers of imperialism and opponents of social revolution.

Some on the left claim that they do not defend Bashir, as Sy Hersh calls him, but either say the Syrians have the right to

decide their own future or make arguments to allow themselves to side with him over western imperialism. While this retreat to the 'self-determination of nations' is laudable **it is bogus** and a ruse, for one thing, and ignores the emergence of Russian and Chinese imperialism in a frighteningly multi-polar, inter-imperialist struggle over control of the crossroads that are Syria and the coastlines and oil fields of the region.

Rightly aiming propagandistic and anti-imperialist fire at the world hegemon U.S. imperialism does not necessitate or justify remaining silent on the dynastic crimes against the world revolution committed by the al Assad family which go back decades. So taking a cue from the likes of Rick Sterling, the left provides cover for 'Bashir' while he attempts to crush the legitimate uprising of the masses.

Sterling claims that Syria is a 'semi-socialist state' and that Assad was democratically elected by a popular majority of Syrians. One should not have to quote Marx or Lenin on the farce of elections in a capitalist state to today's crowd (Peace and Freedom Party's 4/01/17 Berkeley Forum), but of course now we have Sterling up here declaring Syria to be semi-socialist on the bases of the popular vote (99% for Assad-- in Assad-controlled territory only, of course) and 50% nationalized property.

Actually you could say the same about Nazi Germany right after the 1936 elections, where the nationalized properties did not come to 50% either. Here we see exposed Sterling's peculiar "semi-socialism." We declare it to be semi-fascist! This is why there are five million refugees. This was a police state before 2011 and the "left" turns amnesiac!

"During the 12 years of the Third Reich, government ownership expanded greatly into formerly private sectors of strategic industries.... The capital assets of state-owned industry doubled during this same period, whereby the nationalization caused state-ownership of companies to increase to over 500 businesses.^[35] Further, government finances for state-owned enterprises quadrupled from 1933 to 1943.^[36]

In other cases, where the Nazi administration wanted additional industrial capacity, they would first nationalize and then establish a new state-owned-and-operated company. In 1937 Hermann Göring targeted companies producing iron ore, "taking control of all privately owned steelworks and setting up a new company, known as the Hermann Göring Works."^[37] - Wikipedia, "Economy of Nazi Germany", (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Economy_of_Nazi_Germany)

Then our 'pro-socialist' Sterling attacks those who "romanticize" the opposition. The story is oft repeated, the masses came out into the streets in 2011 and following the uprisings in Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Bahrain, and Yemen the people of Syria thought it was finally their turn and in their tens and hundreds of thousands filled the streets. Hardly a CIA plot,

the masses had a bone to pick with the al Assad dictatorship which has long been supported by the Syrian Communist Party, the former Soviet Union and now Putin.

But for Sterling the repression that befell the masses was their own damn fault because “...*there was a violent faction from the start. In the first few protests seven police were killed....* No shit Sherlock! But our journalist friend does not mention that this followed the arrest of 20 for spray painting anti Assad graffiti and that four protesters were killed for it, sparking mass demonstrations at their funerals. Sterling shows not one trace of [Assad's sponsorship of Daesh](#), emptying his jails to swell their ranks. Likewise, Sterling does not mention that Assad's Alawite militia turned out during the early phase of the uprising and plastered the walls with their slogan “**Assad Or We Burn the Country!**” a promise his thugs intended to keep.

With Sterling's logic the Cointelpro repression of the black community was justified because a few Black Panthers and AIM members took up the gun and a few cops here and there got killed during police attacks. Likewise if this logic were applied to the Texas shooting of a few cops last year state apologists would justify an all out crushing of the Black Lives Matter peaceful demonstrations. And, if we are socialists and revolutionaries in this gathering, when did we make a fetish of peaceful demonstrations? Bolsheviks have long pointed to the Tsar shooting down the demonstration led by Father Gapon as not only the righteous trigger of revolution but as a condemnation of the moralistic strategy of pacifism. **Rich it is coming from an Assad apologist claiming that the masses have no right to turn on the police in Syria in 2011!** As for the pseudo- and ex-Trotskyists who may have read [The Russian Revolution](#) by Leon Trotsky, there is a famous passage wherein Trotsky explains how in order for the masses to win the soldiers to the revolution they have to turn on the police. “The way to the soldier's rifle leads through the revolver taken from the Pharaoh.” But Sterling, like the Syrian Communist Party, the Stalinists, Stalinophiles and Russophiles has no interest in social revolution, especially in the semi-colonial world.

They long ago abandoned the working class to the bureaucracy of the Stalinist state and to tin pot dictators parading as anti-imperialists in the semi-colonies. When Marxists fight imperialism in the semi-colonies and in the degenerated and deformed workers states it is not by abject prostration before the self-serving autocrats but in a fight for the revolutionary internationalist program and party of the working class.

Revolutions do not unfold as we may want, rather they are a consequence of the material forces at play and the consciousness of the subjective factor, the working class, which this left long ago abandoned. Instead of fighting for the leadership of the working class, instead of fighting for the program of the first four congresses of the Third International, the Transitional program, the method of Marx and Engels, today's supporters of Assad use the same method that failed in China in 1927 when the Communists subordinated themselves to the Kuomintang. This method was later codified by Dimitrov in his article on the [United Front](#) oft called the Popular front, the very method that condemned the Spanish Revolution to defeat and a method characteristic of both Menshevism and Stalinism in its historic

betrayals and incarnations of today.

While claiming not to support Assad and instead supporting the right of self-determination and the ‘right of Assad to defend his government,’ Sterling goes after Ashley Smith for criticizing Jill Stein (recently seen in a photograph at a 2016 dinner with Mike Flynn and Putin) for ignoring Assad's atrocities. Of course this *CounterPunch* article Sterling wrote was penned prior to the revelation by Amnesty International that some 13,000 persons were hung in Assad's prisons. While Amnesty demands freedom for Mumia and Leonard Peltier, we won't be surprised to hear some in this gathering denounce Amnesty and Human Rights Watch as imperialist tools when they expose Assad's crimes against humanity.

Speaking of imperialist fronts, there is the issue of the White Helmets and where they get their funding, who they rescue and if they are partisan or not. The condemnation of the White Helmets has been fast and furious from the Assad Supporters. Following their logic we should denounce the NYFD who raced into the World Trade Center because they are imperialist first responders! Indeed what these critics are saying to the people who are being bombed by Assad, Putin and Trump is to leave your fucking children to die under the rubble, “one less Jihadi,” etc. It is sickening to repeat the argument that White Helmets are not legitimate first responders. What are people supposed to do? Wait for Assad's fire department to rush into the areas the Syrian military just bombed? Come off it. (Think Fahrenheit 451.)

Finally we respond to the charge that there are 1200 ‘CIA directed’ militias united by nothing but Jihad. This idea is preposterous on the face of it, since 1200 militias would not last a week against a unified command supported by all the imperialist powers, never mind nearly defeat Assad more than once and still field credible forces after 6 years of revolutionary war. This is an intellectually dishonest charge like the rest. We support 1200 Local Coordinating Committees and see them as the masses' own revolutionary organs. **Victory to the Syrian revolution!**

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