

As the threat of World War 3 grows— where is the Australian anti-war movement?

In 2003, I marched with hundreds of thousands of Australians and millions around the world to stand against the invasion of Iraq. That was a war based on WMD lies. Fast forward 15 years and we stand on the precipice of another war based on WMD lies. This time it is a war that risks open conflict between nuclear armed Russia and the United States and yet the streets are empty of anti-war banners and chants.



Melbourne, February 12, 2003. (AAP Image/Julian Smith)

What has happened in between? Did the majority of people stop being anti-war? Do the Australian working class support a war in Syria that could have incalculable consequences for humanity? Perhaps the war in Iraq, that resulted in the deaths of over one million people is now seen as justified?

Of course, none of this is true. The majority of the working class remains as repulsed by war as they were in 2003. What has changed however is the politics of the groups that organised the anti-Iraq War rallies. This was the ALP and Trade Unions, the Greens, Churches, Peace groups and the

pseudo-left such as the Socialist Alternative, Solidarity, Socialist Alliance, Socialist Party and some Anarchist groups.

I was struck by this change recently when I read a Facebook post on Syria from a longtime peace activist I have campaigned with in the past. The post was promoting a rally outside the U.S. consulate, organised by Kurdish nationalists. This protest was demanding the U.S. "take action" to defend the Kurds in Syria from Turkey. In other words a "peace activist" was promoting an event which called for the U.S. to declare war on a fellow NATO nation in what would inevitably spark a major regional war! What has happened to so many groups and individuals who acted against the Iraq War who now either openly support "humanatarian imperialism" or remain silent?

As the World Socialist Website has explained in many articles, the pseudo-lefts and the upper middle class has a whole, has since 2003, openly moved into the camp of Imperialism.

A recent [WSWS article](#) explained why this has occurred.

"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."

An example in Melbourne of a pseudo-left group at work is the Socialist Party's "Revolutionary Ideas" Day School to be held on April 14th at the union run Trades Hall Council. Topics missing from the day include any mention of the growing chance of World War 3, Imperialism and even the United States and President Trump! However half the day is taken up with two "revolutionary" topics which any of the ruling class press or security sessions would approve of. The first covers the reactionary #Metoo witchhunt and a second plays into the hands of the anti-China campaign entitled "Combating repression in China and Hong Kong".



U.S. missiles being launched against Syria in April 2017

These "classes" are occurring in a week which has seen the United States, Britain and France openly threaten strikes on Syria based on manufactured claims of use of chemical weapons by Assad. In response Russia has threatened to retaliate against any strikes that threaten its forces including hitting the ships, submarines or planes that launch these attacks. Israel has already bombed Iranian targets in Syria this week. In such a week, the Socialist Party cannot mention the growing risk of war! As Corey Oakley from Socialist Alternative infamously stated in 2012, the time for "knee jerk anti-imperialism" has passed as far as the pseudoleft is concerned.

The growing international crisis and increasingly reckless actions of the United States are driven ultimately by its

attempts to offset its economic decline through use of military might. This has been the calculus behind 25 years of war by the U.S. that has laid waste to country after country. This is the calculus that is now driving the U.S. to attempt to subjugate the ruling classes of both China and Russia to prevent the rise any rivals and to open up both of their countries to unchallenged exploitation by U.S. interests.

This vacuum cannot last though. Working class resistance to war must and will emerge on a mass scale. Unlike in 2003, the working class must not allow itself to be led by any section of the bourgeois, including the pseudo-lefts. These groups must be confronted and exposed for the pro-imperialist position they are taking.

Before I become committed to international socialism and revolutionary politics, I spent decades involved in the middle class protest movement. In campaign after campaign including refugee rights, environmental protests, workers struggles and attacks on students I saw the pseudo-left groups play the same role. Utilising populist and leftist sounding rhetoric these groups worked to channel protests down the dead end of electoral politics behind the ALP and the Greens. They continually fostered illusions in the unions as potential allies in these struggles despite the unions long ago ceasing to be anything other than an extension of the industrial arm of the capitalist state. If these tactics were failing the pseudo lefts could be relied on to commit acts of political sabotage or simply work to exhaust campaigns behind never ending rallies that appealed to one section or another of the ruling class.

In contrast to 2003, today as the working class moves into struggle against the growing threat of World War, it must organise itself independent of all bourgeois forces including the pseudo-lefts. Instead we must build a working class movement across international boundaries and linked to the fight against the ultimate cause of war, the profit system

itself.

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[A new "left" appeal for imperialist intervention in Syria](#)

[Australian pseudo-lefts feature at pro-imperialist #SaveGhouta rallies](#)

[Note: Youtube clip of the footage of the ALP, Greens, ALP and Union speakers who dominated the speaking list at the 2003 anti-Iraq War Melbourne Rally](#)