

A close-up, black and white photograph of a soldier in full combat gear, including a helmet with a night vision device and a rifle. The soldier is looking through the sights of the rifle, which is pointed towards the viewer. The background is blurred, showing other soldiers and a desert-like environment.

**the drive to
war against
russia and china**

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The Drive to War Against Russia and China
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The drive to war against Russia and China

*Why do the US and British ruling classes seem so set on a war with both Russia and China, and what can the working class do to prevent such a cataclysm?*¹

It cannot have failed to attract the notice of our readers that we are witnessing an increasing drive to war against both Russia and China by our own and other imperialist ruling classes. The first question we have to ask ourselves is: *why?*

I. WHY WAR?

1. The worst-ever economic crisis of capitalism

If one looks at the world situation – the crisis of imperialism and the desperation of the billionaire rulers of the capitalist world to save their failing system – this question of why the imperialists are so desperate to bring Russia and China down becomes easier to

answer.

A century ago now, Lenin pointed out that *imperialism strives for domination*. It strives for control over resources, control over markets and control over opportunities for profit-taking. It strives to extract *maximum* profit – no matter what the human or environmental cost – and each imperialist power strives to keep profits, markets and resources away from both its imperialist rivals and from the great mass of non-imperialist countries.*

At a time of deep economic crisis, when markets are saturated and profitable opportunities are becoming ever fewer, this drive becomes desperate and cutthroat. If capitalists cannot make profits, they go under. If they cannot make *maximum* profits, they lose the war of competition to more efficient or ruthless rivals and go under. If they cannot control the flow of resources – and not least of energy resources, without which no modern economy can function – they go under.

In this situation of the deepening crisis of overproduction, any area of economic activity that is not *already* producing maximum profit for imperialism becomes a target – as does anything that stands in the way of that goal. Whether it's cuts to workers' benefits (a social tax that reduces profits), the privatisation of health and education services (service provisions that are not creating profits) or war against independent countries like Syria and Libya (countries that had refused to allow full imperialist control of their resources and markets), the driver is the same: the imperialists' desperate quest to profitably invest all the capital that is sloshing around the globe.

Looked at with this understanding, it becomes clear that, just by existing as large, independent states, Russia and China are the two biggest obstacles to imperialist hegemony in the world – and to US imperialist hegemony in particular.

As a recent *Proletarian* article pointed out:

* See VI Lenin, *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, 1916

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Since shortly after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the strongest countries resisting US expansionism have become China and Russia. Many decades of socialist construction enabled both countries to establish strong and independent industrial, scientific and military foundations, on the basis of which the encroachments of western imperialism can be effectively resisted. Russia may have abandoned socialism, but its socialist legacy is still a boon.*

2. Russia's role in the world today

Russia covers a huge and diverse territory. Even after the collapse of the USSR, it remains the world's largest country by land size. It has huge mineral resources, powerful industrial and agricultural spheres, advanced scientific capability and a strong intelligentsia. Moreover, its nuclear military capability is second only to that of the United States. It is therefore able to a large extent to resist imperialist pressure to fall in line and to protect its territory and its people from the most aggressive forms of imperialist plunder and control.

The presently dominant group within the Russian ruling class has, to a considerable extent, turned its back on the immediate post-Soviet era, when gangster capitalists looted the wealth and resources of the once-proud USSR and turned many of them over to British, German and US imperialists for a song. The Russian national bourgeoisie has taken back the control of the most important levers of the country's economy and is determined to *retain* control in its national interest. It quite clearly does not wish to become merely a facilitator for imperialist plunder and superexploitation.

As a strong military power, Russia is also able to offer military, as well as (to a certain extent) economic, support to less powerful

* 'US imperialism's military aggression is the major factor behind South China Sea disputes', *Proletarian*, August 2016

allies that are seeking to break or remain free of the imperialist stranglehold. Syria is a perfect example of this.

On 30 September 2015, Russia launched an air campaign in support of the Syrian government and people's fight against the west-backed invasion of jihadi death squads that had then been terrorising the country for four and a half years.

This timely intervention proved that Russia's existence as an independent force not only curtails the imperialist bloodsuckers' ability to expand their tentacles into all the places they might otherwise reach, but even poses a threat to *present* avenues of superexploitation.

After all, if Syria can resist the mighty US imperialism with Russian help, who is to say that other hard-pressed states might not follow suit?

Just a week after Russia launched its campaign in Syria, the chairman of the parliamentary defence committee in neighbouring Iraq, where the government is *supposed* to be a stooge regime facilitating US plunder of the region, declared the country's interest in gaining Russian assistance against the Islamic State murder battalions that have been running rampant there ever since the US and its allies started funding them.

'We are seeking to see Russia having a bigger role in Iraq . . . Yes, definitely a bigger role than the Americans,' said Hakim al-Zamili. This was reinforced by a statement from Iraqi prime minister Haider al-Abadi, who told TV channel France 24 that his government would welcome Russian war planes in Iraq.*

Clearly such an invitation would be extremely difficult for Iraq to make at present, given the continued US military presence in the country (presently consisting of twelve US bases housing a massive arsenal along with four and a half thousand official troops and unknown numbers of mercenaries). Nevertheless, calls to officially

* See "'We are seeking bigger role for Russia than Americans" – Iraq defence committee chairman', RT, 7 October 2015

delegitimise the US occupation force in order to eject its troops and invite the Russians in have been gathering pace in the country.*

Unsurprisingly, the US, in return, is using the excuse of the 'fight against IS' to boost the numbers of 'military advisors' in Iraq, and the Pentagon declared back in October that it was officially 'in combat' there.†

Still, whether or not the Iraqis can find a quick way out of their present dilemma, the fact remains that just a single week of Russia's *real, fraternal and highly effective assistance* to Syria provided a stark contrast to the devastation wreaked by more than a decade of allegedly 'humanitarian' war and 'friendly' occupation by the US and its genocidal partners in crime in Iraq.

To add to imperialism's nightmare, a joint information centre was quickly established by Russia, Iran, Iraq and Syria to help coordinate efforts against IS and other terror groups. After decades of stirring up fratricidal tensions between Iran and Iraq in an effort to fan the flames of sectarianism and keep the people of the middle east divided, US imperialism's wars have ultimately led to a situation where Iraq, the country it has supposedly subjugated, is not only showing worrying signs of a renewed independence but is developing ever-closer relations with neighbouring Iran, the country whose independence the imperialists most desperately want to destroy.‡

Indeed, the whole point of the war against Syria, besides the desire to be rid of an independent, secular, anti-imperialist government, is that *independent Syria's destruction is the first vital step in destroying independent, anti-imperialist Iran* – and Iran is the key lynchpin of anti-imperialism in the vitally important oil-rich middle

* See 'Iraq seeks to cancel security agreement with US, will invite Russia to fight IS' by Tyler Durden, *Zero Hedge*, 9 December 2015

† See 'Pentagon: "We're in combat" in Iraq' by Jeremy Diamond, CNN, 30 October 2015

‡ See 'Russia, Iran, Iraq and Syria setting up "joint information centre" to coordinate anti-IS operations', RT, 26 September 2015

east.*

This explains why the Syrian people have been backed in their battle for survival by almost all those forces in the middle east that are opposed to imperialist domination, from the Lebanese resistance forces of Hezbollah to the Iranian Revolutionary Guard, which has moved from providing strategic back-up to active battlefield participation.†

In August 2016, much to the chagrin of the imperialists, and in recognition of the dire consequences that would follow for the entire region if Syria were to fall, Iran took the unprecedented step of allowing Russian planes not only to stop and refuel but also to launch airstrikes against terrorist positions in Syria. The planes took off from the northwest Iranian airbase of Shahid Nojeh, fifty kilometers north of the ancient city of Hamedan – the first time the country's territory has been used by a foreign military force since the islamic revolution of 1979.‡

Moreover, in recognition of the danger that is posed by imperialist hegemony to its own people, Russia has become part of the drive to create a multipolar world. It is a key part of the movement of non-imperialist countries to band together to defend themselves and develop their economies as they see fit – outside of the standard neo-colonial arrangement of IMF loans backed up by Nato guns.

The Brics grouping of large, populous, non-imperialist states comprising Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa is a prime example of this type of anti-imperialist independence and solidarity. *Like the proverbial playground bullies, the imperialists are both angered and terrified by the success of such good examples.*

* See *Which Path To Persia? Options for a new American strategy toward Iran*, Brookings Institute analysis paper, 20 June 2009

† See 'Iran has more volunteers for the Syrian war than it knows what to do with' by Kristin Dailey, *Foreign Policy*, 12 May 2016

‡ See 'Iran acknowledges Russia using its airbase to strike Syria', AP, 18 August 2016 and 'Russia's middle east breakthrough . . . no wonder Washington's grouchy' by Finian Cunningham, RT, 19 August 2016

3. China's role in the world today

Like Russia, China covers a large and diverse territory, being the third largest country in the world by territory, the largest by population (1.38 billion people) and the second largest as ranked by the size of its economy (accounting for fifteen percent of the world gross national product).*

It, too, has huge mineral resources, powerful industrial and agricultural spheres, a steadily advancing scientific capability and a growing military capability, both conventional and nuclear. As with Russia, China's military strength enables it to a large extent to resist imperialist pressure to fall in line and to protect its territory and its people from imperialist plunder and control.

Although several decades of market socialism have weakened the state sector and reintroduced the anarchy of commodity production into China's economy, the country is still run by a people's government that is able to exercise control over the levers of what remains of the state sector in the interests of the Chinese people, enabling it to carry out considerably longer-term planning than any of the crisis-ridden imperialist states can manage. Hence China's world-leading progress in the development of alternative energy sources, for example, which have put the largely tokenistic and market-dependent efforts of the imperialist powers to shame.†

China is able to use this growing economic and technological strength to help other developing countries break free of the stranglehold of imperialist domination in several ways. For decades it has followed a policy of helping poor countries to develop their infrastructure, building vital roads, railways, power stations etc and

* See 'GDP (nominal) ranking 2016', *Statistics Times*

† See, for example, 'China surges further ahead in solar power production' by Lucas Mearian, *Computerworld*, 25 July 2016

making loans at fraternal rather than extortionate rates.*

China also works to raise the technological level in oppressed countries by transferring knowledge, equipment and skills to the countries it works with, rather than simply using the people of those countries as cheap labour as the imperialists do.†

All of this has, of course, earned China the ire of the US, British and other imperialist powers, who are finding themselves squeezed out of what they consider to be their 'rightful' place as the sole owners of modern technology and denied their 'god-given' right to superexploit every one of the world's workers. This explains why imperialist media and politicians never fail to heap calumnies on China's cooperation with other countries and its contribution towards creating a sustainable development model. Sadly, the lies of the imperialists are all too often backed up by many calling themselves socialist and communist in the imperialist countries, who are all too ready to deride China's motives and characterise its efforts to help lift other countries out of the IMF poverty debt trap as the 'new imperialism'.

China's fraternal efforts in the world date back to the roots of its socialist revolution, but they also make sense for the country even if it continues to take the road of market socialism. If China wishes to retain its independence from imperialist control, then, whatever economic system its people live under, it will need to maintain a strong hold over its own economy, which in turn can only be done by maintaining a strong industrial, agricultural, technological and military base. Experience shows that any weakness in these vital areas will be mercilessly exploited by the imperialists, who are desperate to open China up to complete control by their corporations and who feel daily more outraged at the profit-taking opportunities that are being denied to them by China's activities, both domestic and

* See, for example, 'Ten mega infrastructure projects in Africa funded by China' by Lillian Mutiso, *AFK Insider*, 17 March 2016

† See, for example, 'China-Africa technology transfer: a matter of technology readiness' by Yejoo Kim, South African Centre for Chinese Studies, 17 February 2014

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international – and this despite the fact that many imperialist corporations have been making huge profits at the country's expense through the export of capital to China and the superexploitation of Chinese workers.

II. THE DRIVE TO WAR

1. Russia and China's attitude to imperialist war

The rulers of Russia and China understand perfectly well that the imperialists view their strength and independence with hostility. During recent decades – the post-Mao 'opening up' era in China and the years of national development in post-Yeltsin Russia – the leaders of both countries have done everything possible to stay out of direct conflict with the USA.

The idea that Russia under the leadership of President Vladimir Putin or China under any of its communist party leaders since Deng Xiaoping have been in any way aggressive or have courted conflict (as is so often asserted by western media pundits) is laughable. If anything, they have bent over backwards in their efforts to *avoid* conflict.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union and European people's democracies, the US grew accustomed to thinking that it and its Nato allies could act with complete impunity on the world stage. The green light was given to the US's plans for world domination when Gorbachev's crumbling USSR abandoned its former ally and shamefully acquiesced in the first brutal war against Iraq – as did China.

In the wake of the imperialist victory in that war, it was reported in the *New York Times* that a Pentagon report had asserted that 'America's political and military mission in the post-cold-war era will be to ensure that no rival superpower is allowed to emerge in western Europe, Asia or the territory of the former Soviet Union'. The classified document made the case for 'a world dominated by one superpower whose position can be perpetuated by constructive

behaviour (sic) and sufficient military might to deter any nation or group of nations from challenging American primacy’.*

By 2003, both China and Putin’s emerging nationalist Russia refused to support the resolution that paved the way for the second war against Iraq, but neither country did anything to actually *impe*de that war’s inception. However, the last time that both countries turned a blind eye to a supposedly ‘humanitarian’ resolution at the United Nations cloaking the drive to a new imperialist war was in relation to Libya in 2011.

Whether or not the Russians and Chinese understood what they were doing when they allowed the lie to pass that the Libyan government was a ruthless dictatorship engaged in killing its own people and that there was a popular uprising in Benghazi that needed protection from the forces of Colonel Gaddafi is a moot point. Both countries took what *appeared* to be the path of least resistance and failed to veto the UN security council resolution that approved the imposition of a ‘no-fly zone’ for the ‘protection of Libyan civilians’.[†]

This was immediately interpreted by the imperialists as a *carte blanche* for a Nato blitzkrieg that wiped out forty years of independent, secular, people-centred development in Libya and led directly to today’s tragic situation.[‡]

The destruction of Libya didn’t *only* lead to the brutal murder of the anti-imperialist leader Muammar Gaddafi. It didn’t *only* destroy the country’s water and electricity infrastructure, roads, housing, healthcare provision and education system. It didn’t *only* lead to the destruction of the means of life for six and a half million Libyans.

It didn’t *only* lead to the massacres of tens of thousands of black Libyans in racist pogroms unleashed by west-backed death squads.

* ‘US strategy plan calls for ensuring no rivals develop’ by Patrick E Tyler, *New York Times*, 8 March 1992

† See ‘Hands off Libya: victory to Gaddafi! (updated)’, CPGB-ML statement, May 2011

‡ See ‘The true face of “humanitarian intervention” in Libya’ and ‘Nato’s war crimes in Libya’, *Proletarian*, June and August 2011

It didn't *only* lead to the slaughter of unknown thousands of civilians and resistance fighters and the poisoning of the air, ground and water with chemical and uranium-tipped weapons in centres of resistance like Sirte.*

It didn't *only* lead to the overnight appropriation of an entire people's wealth by imperialist banksters and oil profiteers. It didn't *only* lead to the destruction of the most prosperous country in Africa.† It didn't *only* lead to a flood of desperate refugees, prepared to exchange all their worldly goods for a chance to escape their war-torn and devastated homeland.‡

It *also* led to the further economic and military destabilisation of the entire region, cutting short plans for wider African economic development, cooperation and independence. It *also* removed vital Libyan support from many progressive governments around the world. And it *also* unleashed a tsunami of heavily-armed mercenaries, ready and willing to do imperialism's bidding across Africa and the middle east – and even in Europe.§

This is what the brutal destruction of an anti-imperialist country means for us, no matter where it is in the world. This unjust, aggressive, illegal war wasn't *only* a succession of heinous war crimes against Libyans; it was also *a disaster for the peoples of the entire world.*

The imperialists may not have achieved their aim of stabilising Libya under a proxy government in order to efficiently control the country's resources and extract maximum superprofits, but it *did* achieve its aim of forced regime change; of ridding itself of a government that had stood for anti-imperialist independence for more

* See 'Ethnic cleansing in Nato's "new" Libya', *Proletarian*, December 2011

† See 'Libya: The latest victim of imperialist predatory war', *Lalkar*, May 2011

‡ See 'Who is to blame for the refugee crisis?', *Proletarian*, October 2015

§ See, for example, 'Chaos and reaction in post-Gaddafi Libya', *Lalkar*, July 2012 and 'In Amenas attack: Algeria finishes what imperialism started', *Proletarian*, February 2013

than four decades.* *Our own struggle to end the rule of the profiteers at home suffered a major blow as a result.*

Russia and China, for all their diplomatic talk about 'partnership', and for all their desire *not* to antagonise the imperialists and invite the devastation of an aggressive imperialist war onto the heads of their own peoples, are actually the principal cornerstones of today's axis of anti-imperialist resistance. The spread of imperialist-backed terrorism around the globe affects them both directly (as in the case of Chechnya and Xinjiang) and indirectly (by undermining many of their key allies such as Syria, Iran, etc).

Libya serves as a powerful warning as to the dangers of appeasement. Imperialism in crisis is like a rabid dog; you cannot reason with it, and you cannot expect it to be satisfied with anything less than total hegemony. For its own long-term survival, Russia has had to draw a line in the sand and say 'no further'.

As Stalin pointed out in 1951, no amount of working or wishing for peace, no amount of dexterous diplomacy, can stave off war for more than a short while in a world where rapacious, crisis-ridden, profit-hungry imperialism exists, because,

For all the successes of the peace movement, imperialism will remain, continue in force – and, consequently, the inevitability of wars will also continue in force. To eliminate the inevitability of war, it is necessary to abolish imperialism.†

In this context, where it is a question of defending the world's people from the kind of brutal all-out wars that have devastated Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Somalia, Libya, Iraq, and now Syria and Yemen, progressive people should be truly thankful that both China and Russia have been working hard to raise their level of military preparedness and to catch up with and even overtake the US in

* See 'Gaddafi tribute in London', Proletarian TV, 28 October 2011

† JV Stalin, *Economic Problems of Socialism in the USSR*, 1951

terms of their technological capabilities.

For so long as they remain as independent economic powers, Russia and China will find themselves the target of imperialist hostility – no matter how reasonably they behave and no matter what the character of their governments. Their best protection lies not in pacification but in preparation: in building up their network of allies, in strengthening their defences, and in mobilising their people to defend their countries and their allies from attack.

Imperialism ultimately respects only one thing: force of arms. As even tiny socialist Korea, with a very small stock of nuclear weapons, has clearly demonstrated over the last twenty years, the best deterrent against an all-out war between Russia and/or China and the US is if they can convince the imperialists that the price would simply be too high.

2. The demonisation of Russia and China

It is in the light of all this that we must understand the increasingly rabid tone of US and British media, academia and politicians in relation to both Russia and China. The obstacle that both countries present to free imperialist plunder of significant parts of the globe is the *sole motivator* of the bucketfuls of bile that are poured over President Putin, General Secretary Xi Jinping and their colleagues and compatriots on a daily basis in the pages of the democracy-loving 'free' press of Murdoch and co, as well as spewing from the mouths of BBC pundits and government spokespeople.

Essentially, British and US workers are being prepared to either actively participate in, or at the very least passively accept, imperialist wars against Russia and China through this deluge of propaganda, which include lies about military aggression, trade war and environmental recklessness and allegations that range from homophobia, corruption and sports fixing to the suppression of workers'

rights and the harbouring of imperialist ambitions.

And this is all happening alongside a phenomenal military expansion by the US and other imperialist powers. As John Pilger pointed out in a March 2016 article:

In the last eighteen months, the greatest build-up of military forces since World War Two – led by the United States – is taking place along Russia's western frontier. Not since Hitler invaded the Soviet Union have foreign troops presented such a demonstrable threat to Russia.

Ukraine – once part of the Soviet Union – has become a CIA theme park. Having orchestrated a coup in Kiev, Washington effectively controls a regime that is next door and hostile to Russia: a regime rotten with Nazis, literally. Prominent parliamentary figures in Ukraine are the political descendants of the notorious OUN and UPA fascists. They openly praise Hitler and call for the persecution and expulsion of the Russian-speaking minority.

This is seldom news in the west, or it is inverted to suppress the truth.

In Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia – next door to Russia – the US military is deploying combat troops, tanks, heavy weapons. This extreme provocation of the world's second nuclear power is met with silence in the west.

What makes the prospect of nuclear war even more dangerous is a parallel campaign against China.

Seldom a day passes when China is not elevated to the status of a 'threat'. According to Admiral Harry Harris, the US Pacific commander, China is 'building a great wall of sand in the South China Sea'.

What he is referring to is China building airstrips in the Spratly Islands, which are the subject of a dispute with the Philippines – a

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dispute without priority until Washington pressured and bribed the government in Manila and the Pentagon launched a propaganda campaign called 'freedom of navigation'.

What does this really mean? It means freedom for American warships to patrol and dominate the coastal waters of China. Try to imagine the American reaction if Chinese warships did the same off the coast of California.

I made a film called *The War You Don't See*, in which I interviewed distinguished journalists in America and Britain: reporters such as Dan Rather of CBS, Rageh Omar of the BBC, David Rose of the *Observer*.

All of them said that had journalists and broadcasters done their job and questioned the propaganda that Saddam Hussein possessed weapons of mass destruction; had the lies of George W Bush and Tony Blair not been amplified and echoed by journalists, the 2003 invasion of Iraq might not have happened, and hundreds of thousands of men, women and children would be alive today. [Not to mention the victims of all the wars that have followed that criminal invasion. Moreover, the millions of refugees and those suffering as a result of destroyed infrastructure and the loss of their livelihoods not only in Iraq but also in Syria, Libya and Yemen might also have been spared, and the people of the region might also have been spared the onslaught of imperialism's armies of jihadi death squads.]

The propaganda laying the ground for a war against Russia and/or China is no different in principle. To my knowledge, no journalist in the western 'mainstream' . . . asks why China is building airstrips in the South China Sea.

The answer ought to be glaringly obvious. The United States is encircling China with a network of bases, with ballistic missiles, battle groups, nuclear-armed bombers.

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This lethal arc extends from Australia to the islands of the Pacific, the Marianas and the Marshalls and Guam, to the Philippines, Thailand, Okinawa, Korea and across Eurasia to Afghanistan and India. America has hung a noose around the neck of China. This is not news. Silence by media; war by media.

In 2015, in high secrecy, the US and Australia staged the biggest single air-sea military exercise in recent history, known as Talisman Sabre. Its aim was to rehearse an air-sea battle plan, blocking sea lanes, such as the straits of Malacca and the Lombok straits, that cut off China's access to oil, gas and other vital raw materials from the middle east and Africa.*

The hypocrisy of presstitutes and politicians who hide these truths from the public, and who attack the leaders of Russia and China whilst defending the most ruthless and bloodthirsty rulers humanity has ever seen is staggering to those who know the truth, but nevertheless understandable – it is, after all, their job to try to convince workers to support (or at least not actively to oppose) British imperialism and its aggressive wars.

What is entirely *unforgiveable* in this context is that so many prominent leaders of what passes for the British *left*, whether they be the reformists of 'left' Labour or allegedly 'revolutionary' Trotskyites – all of whom claim to speak for and in the interests of the working class – are busy echoing the same lies about Russia and China as are emanating from the directly-employed servants of British capital.

* 'A world war has begun. Break the silence' by John Pilger, *johnpilger.com*, 20 March 2016

3. The 'left-wing' imperialist double-act against Russia

The position of the oh-so r-r-revolutionary Trotskyites is particularly noteworthy, and sets the tone for all the rest of the criticism of Russia and China 'from the left' in which our movement is drowning.

While they were happy in 1991 to applaud the collapse of the world's first, most extensive and most successful socialist state and of the people's democracies of eastern Europe as a 'great step forward' and to greet with glee the seizure of the country's wealth by a handful of mafiosi (the liberators of the people, no less!); they characterise the nationalist anti-imperialist bourgeoisie of today's Russia as 'gangster capitalists' and describe any attempt by Russia to come to the defence of its allies and neighbours as 'imperialism'.

In each case, while posing as friends of the Russian people and pretending to be great progressives, they objectively manage to come down firmly on the side of British imperialism.

A typical example of apparently 'left' form masking essentially imperialist content can be seen in an article published by the inappropriately-named Socialist Party in August 2014:

We cannot and should not support, even critically, Putin's Russian regime and its alleged approach that it was fighting a 'fascist' government in Kiev. It was pursuing a policy primarily determined by the interests of the Russian state and those it represents, *the oligarchic gangster capitalists*.

Initially, *there were big elements of independent movements of the working class in the creation of their own militias and independent councils* but this was obscured by the presence of Svoboda, the Right Sector and fascists in Ukraine . . .

We support self-determination for Crimea but 'foreign liberation' can ultimately undermine this. Only a democratic constituent as-

sembly, convened by a united movement or a democratically-controlled referendum can guarantee this in Crimea and southeastern Ukraine.

Neither do we support the Kiev regime but seek an independent working-class axis, and critical support of the socialist forces, even though they might be weak.* (Our emphasis)

As usual, this typical Trotskyite position combines pious wishes for a 'pure' (and purely imaginary) 'working-class, democratic' force with a virulent hatred for the actual, living forces that are really expressing the will of the people of the Donbass by fighting the imperialist-backed coup regime and its fascist paramilitary henchmen.

This expression of the British ruling class's endemic antipathy towards Russia explains the hostility of much of the left to the anti-fascist resistance in the Ukraine, some of whom have gone so far as to describe the resistance as 'red-brown fascists' in their attempts to undermine sympathy for their cause amongst British workers.[†]

It also explains why so many of these self-styled 'revolutionaries' joined the imperialist outcry against the Crimean people's firm decision to secede from a state that had been taken over by fascists and return to being part of Russia (as Crimea historically was).[‡]

Alex Callinicos, theoretical guru (don't laugh) of the SWP drew typically inverted conclusions in his analysis of the Crimean referendum, describing the west-backed 'euromaidan' movement against Viktor Yanukovich's ever-so-slightly Russian-leaning government as a 'genuinely popular' one. He dismissed the role of the fascist forces in Ukraine as merely unfortunate and characterised the perfectly correct description of an IMF-backed fascist coup as 'Moscow

* 'Capitalist crisis continues', *The Socialist*, 6 August 2014

† See 'Warning to anti-fascists invited to meeting at Soas' by Gerry Gable, *Searchlight*, 1 June 2014

‡ See 'Crimea goes home', *Proletarian*, April 2014

propaganda’.

Most importantly, he said, the conflict in Ukraine is an expression of ‘inter-imperialist rivalry between Russia and the west’. In case we should still be inclined to view our own imperialists as the principal aggressors, Callinicos went on to assert (without a shred of supporting evidence) that ‘Ukraine matters much more to Russia than it does to the United States or the EU’.*

4. Owen Jones vs the truth

A classic example of the same kind of disinformation ‘from the left’ was written by Owen Jones in January 2016 and published in the *Guardian*, from where it was immediately disseminated across Facebook, the twittersphere and a host of other social media networks.

Jones’s career-enhancing attack on Russia took the now standard form of a virulent personal attack on President Vladimir Putin, asserting in its ‘bold’ (or should that be ‘sycophantic?’) headline: ‘Putin is a human rights abusing oligarch. The British left must speak out.’†

The many spurious assertions in this article have been ably rebutted on the *Off Guardian* website in an article well worth reading in full. We reproduce a few salient highlights below.

Refuting the claim that President Putin is an oligarch, the author points out:

Mr Jones doesn’t know what ‘oligarch’ means. (Hint, it doesn’t mean ‘nasty man’, Owen.) The definition is very simple, and none of it applies to Putin, who is not a business magnate and has never worked

* ‘Putin raises the stakes in imperialist Crimea crisis’ by Alex Callinicos, *Socialist Worker*, 3 March 2014

† ‘Putin is a human rights abusing oligarch. The British left must speak out’ by Owen Jones, *The Guardian*, 26 January 2016

in anything but government.

An oligarchy is 'a form of power structure in which power effectively rests with a small number of people. These people might be distinguished by royalty, wealth, family ties, education, corporate, religious or military control. Such states are often controlled by a few prominent families who typically pass their influence from one generation to the next . . .^{*}

Russia is actually a democracy, though you'd be forgiven for not realising this if you only ever read the *Guardian*, and Putin is an elected head of state – and a popular one at that. Not an autocrat. Not an oligarch. You can't force a lie to become true simply through repetition.

Interestingly enough, according to researchers at Princeton (that well-known den of pro-Kremlin spies), the USA actually *is* an oligarchy.[†]

Replying to baseless assertions about President Putin's 'right-wing' agenda, the article says:

Economically speaking, Putin would actually be considered rather left-wing in Britain or the US. When was the last time a British government renationalised an industry? Russia has a far more socialist economy than we do.

Is he right-wing racially? No. There's no racial discrimination in Russian government. Russia has dozens of ethnic minorities, all protected under law, unlike – and I'm just pulling a random example out of the air here – ethnic Russians in Ukraine . . .

Putin is 'in bed' with rapacious oligarchs? The Russian govern-

* Oligarchy definition taken from *Wikipedia*

† See 'The US is an oligarchy, study concludes' by Zachary Davies Boren, *The Telegraph*, 16 April 2014

ment, under Putin, does business with all sorts of oligarchs. Like Berezovsky, who moved to London after Putin was elected. Or Mikhail Khodorkovsky, who was stripped of his assets and arrested for fraud. Or Sergei Pugachev, who is currently on the run after being prosecuted for embezzling.

When Putin stripped the oil-based oligarchs' control of Russia's energy reserves, who was he in bed with then? When he renationalised those industries and poured the money into rebuilding Russian infrastructure . . . at which oligarch's behest was that?

We live in a country where Google, Vodafone, Amazon et al regularly dodge billions of pounds' worth of taxes, with no repercussions; can we really afford to start throwing stones about government corruption? Is there any chance at all that [British prime minister David] Cameron would permit the arrest of a British bankster?

Regarding Jones's hysterical repetition of the ruling class's latest anti-Russia propaganda attacks, the author points out:

Yes, with the recent (farcical) Litvinenko ruling, Russia-bashing is back in vogue. Well done Owen, it seems your moral outrage has peaked at the time most likely to get you thousands of shares on Facebook. Lucky you.

There's a common thread in all of [Jones's] accusations – there's no evidence to back up any of them. In the case of Litvinenko, the court actually ignored evidence he was poisoned *before* 1 November in order to make its narrative fit together, and as for the BBC's ludicrous Panorama episode, well, let's just say it's getting its own article.

Jones' portrayal of the second Chechen war as 'Putin's war', and his later use of the phrase 'Putin's savage war in Chechnya', are both quite interesting. Firstly, it suggests an ignorance of military history on Owen's part . . .

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In response to an invasion by islamic insurgents, Russia sent in the army – I'm not sure if Owen considers this savage, or not – and pushed the invaders back into the neighbouring republic, Chechnya. The constant, low-level insurgency in Chechnya then spilled over into all-out war.

The Russian and Chechen authorities on the one side, and Chechen rebels, Islamic International Brigade (IIB) and mujahideen on the other. Yes, *that* mujahideen. The 'islamic extremists are fine as long as they are killing Russians' model, so successfully set up in Afghanistan in 1979 and deployed in Syria last year was used in Chechnya too.

Is war bad? Obviously. Did the people of Chechnya suffer? Immeasurably. But to lay that at the Kremlin's door, as if Chechnya were a vanity project of the Russian leadership, is so terribly dishonest that you wonder how Jones can sleep at night.

To then compare Chechnya and Crimea, as Jones does . . . is to step sideways into madness. Putting aside the pathetic parroting of the 'annexation' meme, I'm curious to know how much outrage defending your country from islamic insurgents should merit, and – indeed – what course of action Owen would recommend in place of 'savage' self-defence.

I suppose the western press is just of the opinion that, if an army turn up at your border, you don't ask who they are or why they are blowing up your buildings, and you certainly don't shoot back, you just let them in and apologise for the mess.

Jones concluded his noxious article by calling on British workers to express solidarity with Russia's 'embattled democrats and leftists', but, as the *Off Guardian* article correctly explained, the truth is that

Russia's 'democrats' *are* in charge. They were democratically elected, and they are very popular.

I know western definitions of democracy are shifting at the moment, but there's nothing intrinsically more fair about being ruled by a government nobody voted for; it doesn't mean the system works.

And Russia's 'leftists'? The communist party is the second biggest presence in the Duma. They are the majority of Putin's opposition – a role usually attributed to political no-names likes Nemstov or Navalny in a British press that increasingly has little to no interest in physical realities.*

Those who wish to fight imperialism must learn to ignore the prevailing bourgeois mythology and instead follow the Marxist, dialectical-materialist method, which was summed up by Chairman Mao as 'seeking truth from facts'.[†] This means making efforts to understand the world as it *really is*, and not as we might wish it to be; examining every phenomenon in its context and as it changes, and not as something static or isolated.[‡]

Following this strategy, we find that the true facts of the matter paint a very different picture from that presented by Jones and his fellow 'left'-wing prettifiers of imperialism. The truth is that Ukraine, in common with many of the other former Soviet states, has gone through more than one change in direction since the collapse of socialism. Outside imperialist powers have several times facilitated a changing of the guard in the country, when any government looked like it might be becoming too independent.

The 'Orange revolution' was one such example of a somewhat less pro-imperialist, slightly more Russia-oriented government being forcibly deposed and replaced with a regime that could be better relied upon to facilitate US and EU looting of the country's extensive

* 'Owen Jones: tough on meanness, tough on the causes of meanness' by Kit, *Off Guardian*, 28 January 2016

† See Mao Zedong, *On New Democracy*, January 1940

‡ See JV Stalin, *Dialectical and Historical Materialism*, 1938

riches. This was naturally described in the British media as a 'peaceful', 'democratic' and 'popular' movement to replace a government that was a 'vassal of Russia' with one that wanted to bring 'democracy' and 'western values', and which (quite coincidentally, of course) wished to join the eurozone.*

Similarly, the coup of February 2014 was carried out when Ukraine's elected President Yanukovych† backed off from signing a deal with the EU that would have meant the decimation of Ukrainian industry and would have cost the Ukrainian people between sixteen and twenty billion dollars a year for the following eight years as a condition of loans being granted to the cash-strapped Ukrainian government.

Enraged at this last-minute change of heart, the imperialists of the US and the EU decided to get their way by force, once more dressing up a violent and anti-popular coup as a peaceful and popular movement for democracy.‡ Those Ukrainians who have stood in the way of the success of this scheme have been branded as terrorists and attacked with all the forces the new regime could muster.§

In their attempts to crush all resistance, the coup-leaders have bolstered Ukraine's standing army with western armaments and training, and have supplemented their wavering conscript forces with large numbers of ideologically-driven fascist militia, who are the direct inheritors of the Nazi collaborators of the second world war.

These blackshirts are essentially Nato's bully boys – the enforcers of IMF austerity on the people of the Ukraine, who are seeing wages, pensions and public services decimated and their once-proud country brought to its knees.

* See 'Ukraine's election farce', *Lalkar*, January 2015

† See 'Ukraine: Orange revolution in reverse', *Lalkar*, May 2007

‡ See 'Ukrainian putsch jumps the gun' and 'Ukraine: fascist coup', *Lalkar*, January and March 2014

§ See 'Ukraine referenda: the people speak', *Proletarian*, June 2014 and many more articles in the same paper

All this has also to be placed in the wider context of the imperialist campaign to destroy Russia as an independent state. Not only do the imperialists want free access to Ukraine's vast agricultural sector, its industrial resources, scientific and intellectual capability and its considerable mineral wealth; not only do they want to be able to freely exploit the workers of Ukraine with minimal expense for such trifles as social welfare, workers' rights, pensions and environmental protections, but the US in particular wishes to turn the country into yet another base for Nato weapons and for surrounding Russia.

At the time of the collapse of the Warsaw Treaty Organisation, US President George Bush Sr gave firm assurances to the Soviet Union's Mikhail Gorbachev regarding the peaceful intentions of Nato towards the former Soviet states, essentially promising that Nato would never try to expand into or even further towards their territories. The intervening twenty years have shown us just how much these promises were worth (and, of course, it is now everywhere denied that any such assurances were ever given).*

Two decades after the collapse of socialism in Europe, *Nato bases and missiles now surround Russia in an aggressive ring* that has nothing to do with defence and everything to do with US plans for the domination of Eurasia and the destruction of Russia's independence.[†]

5. Criticising China 'from the left'

The same picture of lies in the corporate media backed up by vitriolic abuse from the 'left'-wing movement can be seen in relation to China. Let us take just one example: that of the disputes that are at

* See 'Put it in writing: how the west broke its promise to Moscow' by Joshua R Itzkowitz Shiffrin, *Foreign Affairs*, 29 October 2014

† See illustrations for 'The US and Nato have been trying to encircle Russia militarily since 1991', *The Fourth Media*, 14 May 2014

present being stoked up in the South China Sea.

The imperialist media of course supports and propagates the lies of imperialist politicians, who claim to be acting in the interests of 'peace' to oppose 'Chinese aggression' while in fact doing everything in their power to maintain US imperialist hegemony in the region. The US's agents have been working overtime for years to interfere in and impede relations between the countries that actually border the sea and arrogating to themselves the right to arbitrate in all the disputes they have thus manufactured.

This is all part of the US imperialists' aggressive 'pivot to Asia', announced by President Barack Obama (that warmongering recipient of the Nobel peace prize) in 2011 – a strategy which might more aptly be renamed 'bring down independent China'. The massive build-up of US military troops and hardware in the Pacific has already been referred to, and includes nuclear submarines, surveillance aircraft, long-range and stealth bombers, electromagnetic rail-guns, lasers, technologies for the domination of space and cyberspace – all in the name of 'demilitarisation', naturally.*

Most left-wing parties in Britain have remained deadly silent on the huge increase in imperialist military hardware in the Pacific. Rather, they are focusing their attacks on China around a question that is troubling many British workers at present: the decline of the British steel industry.

Instead of explaining clearly that it is capitalism and the capitalist crisis of overproduction that are to blame for this decline (which will also result in the loss of two million steel jobs in China), many of the organisations calling themselves socialist or communist back the Labour party's racist 'British jobs for British workers' slogan and reinforce the imperialist media's constant assertions that what remains of the British steel industry is being destroyed by 'Chinese dumping' (a hostile term for what is more usually known and cel-

* See 'US imperialism's military aggression is the major factor behind South China Sea disputes', *Proletarian*, August 2016

ebred in the capitalist world as *free trade*).

This message has been repeated by everyone from social democrats like Labour's new 'left-wing' leader Jeremy Corbyn and Unite the Union boss Len McClusky (who represents many of the steel workers whose jobs are under threat) to the revisionists of the *Morning Star* newspaper.*

The truth is that there is a crisis of overproduction that is devastating the steel industry worldwide – not least in China, which is a far larger producer than Britain. As the crisis deepens, the imperialists are keen to put up barriers to their own markets in order to protect at least one source of their profits, and, in order to justify this trade war, they are accusing China of dumping.

By reinforcing this narrative, the leaders of the labour movement are sending a clear message to British workers that China is their enemy, while British and European imperialists have their best interests at heart.

As was pointed out in a 2015 *Proletarian* article:

The wilful destruction of a once-thriving steel industry by a parasitic imperialist ruling class occurred long before China, or any other developing country, was a significant steel exporter. When the likes of Jeremy Corbyn attempt to outflank the Tories from the right, demanding that the government 'stand up to China' on the steel issue, they not only fuel reactionary and social-chauvinist attacks on a developing socialist country that was once the plaything of British imperialism; they also prevent the class struggle of the British working class from even getting off the ground by presenting friends (the socialist countries and workers in other countries generally) as enemies and enemies (the British ruling class, the EU

* See 'Jeremy Corbyn: I'd go to Beijing to stop China dumping steel' by Helen Pidd, *The Guardian*, 29 October 2015; 'Government urged to back European plans to tackle cheap Chinese steel dumping', Unite the Union, 16 March 2016 and 'Clash of steel' by Conrad Landin, *Morning Star*, 16 February 2016

and imperialism generally) as friends.*

Whilst failing to report on the significance of the South China Sea disputes, left-wing organisations routinely refer to China's leaders as 'Stalinist dictators' and to China as a 'secretive' and 'repressive regime' with a 'terrible human rights record'. (For a perfect example of this type of 'left-wing' abuse, see comedian and former SWP member Mark Steel's 2015 opinion piece for the *Independent*.†)

These oft-repeated but unfounded smears are all ways of reinforcing the message that China's socialist government and people should be viewed as the enemy by British workers.

Meanwhile, regarding the unceasing provocations and military threats against the tiny socialist state of the DPRK, which are aimed as much at China as they are at north Korea, these same lovers of truth, democracy and freedom remain silent on the threats to global peace that such imperialist war games represent, while joining in unreservedly with the hysterical outpourings of the imperialist media against the allegedly 'bellicose' north Korea.

The recent agreement by the south Korean government to push ahead with the US stationing of its Thaad (Terminal High Altitude Area Defence) missile system and spying equipment in the south of the country represents a major threat not only to the DPRK but also to China and Russia, whose cities could be hit by missiles launched from the projected base and whose people and military installations could be spied upon by its powerful radar.

As pointed out by Chinese commentator Luo Jun:

The decision to deploy the anti-missile system will bring catastrophe to the Korean peninsula and destroy the hard-won political mutual trust and economic ties between Seoul and its neighbours in

* 'Steel industry in terminal decline', *Proletarian*, December 2015

† 'If trade helps improve human rights, it's about time we let north Korea and Isis run some of our industries' by Mark Steel, *Independent*, 22 October 2015

northeast Asia.

Trying to defend an unpopular decision to install the Thaad system in Seongju county, southeast of Seoul, a south Korean government spokesman on Sunday called China's criticism unreasonable and shifted the blame to the 'nuclear and missile threats' from the DPRK.

However, Pyongyang's proposals for a halt of military and nuclear activities on both sides have repeatedly met cold rejection from Washington and Seoul, which have stuck to frequent military exercises and flown nuclear-capable B-52 bombers over the Korean peninsula, in a clear show of hostility against Pyongyang.

Such measures were against the DPRK only. Now with the decision to deploy Thaad, which can snoop on vast territories in China and Russia, the United States and south Korea have alienated China and Russia with severe threats to their national security.

It is unmistakably a strategic misjudgement for Seoul to violate the core interests of its two strong neighbours, at the cost of its own security, and only in the interests of American hegemony.

The Thaad deployment is based on shaky grounds, as it is incapable of intercepting Pyongyang's short-range missiles. Nor can it shield south Korea's most populated city, Seoul, which is far away from Seongju county.

However, the Thaad radar system's strong spying capability means that its location will be among the first targets to be wiped out in case of conflict.

By allowing the United States to deploy Thaad on its soil, the south Korean government has brought more danger than security to its people, and shut the door to peace and reconciliation on the Korean peninsula.

Now facing a common threat to their national security imposed by

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Washington and Seoul, China and Russia, along with other regional countries, will have little choice but to come closely together to address the issue.

Some analysts have pointed out that the only beneficiary of turmoil in northeast Asia is the United States, as it relies on the 'necessity' of its military presence in the region to remain a hegemonic global power.

If Seoul and Pyongyang gradually eased tension, Washington's military presence in south Korea would be hard to justify. That is why Washington has often discouraged Seoul from talks with Pyongyang and insisted on war drills.

South Korea needs to draw lessons from the disastrous results of conflicts in the middle east and correct its strategic mistake of inviting Thaad, before it makes itself a powder keg in northeast Asia.

The future of the Korean peninsula lies in the constructive exchanges and common development of regional countries, with a goal of gradual reconciliation between Seoul and Pyongyang. Deploying Thaad is clearly a move toward the opposite direction.*

No reference to Thaad has been made by a single prominent left-wing commentator or Trotskyist newspaper, all of whom routinely demonise the government of the DPRK and spread lies about Korean socialism. Nor when this article was written was there any mention of it on Stop the War's website, which contained just four mentions in passing to the South China Sea, one of which was overtly hostile to China and none of which explained anything about what is happening there.²

* 'Seoul invites strategic catastrophe as Thaad threatens more than Pyongyang' by Luo Jun, Xinhua, 8 August 2016

III. RESISTING WAR

1. The anti-war movement in Britain today

How should all this inform the workers' movement against imperialist war and for socialism in Britain?

In the article cited earlier, John Pilger asked:

How many people are aware that a world war has begun? At present, it is a war of propaganda, of lies and distraction, but this can change instantaneously with the first mistaken order, the first missile.

He went on to point out:

In 2009, President Obama stood before an adoring crowd in the centre of Prague, in the heart of Europe. He pledged himself to make 'the world free from nuclear weapons'. People cheered and some cried. A torrent of platitudes flowed from the media. Obama was subsequently awarded the Nobel peace prize.

It was all fake. He was lying.

The Obama administration has built more nuclear weapons, more nuclear warheads, more nuclear delivery systems, more nuclear factories. Nuclear warhead spending alone rose higher under Obama than under any American president. The cost over thirty years is more than one trillion dollars.

A mini nuclear bomb is planned. It is known as the B61 model 12. There has never been anything like it. General James Cartwright,

a former vice chairman of the joint chiefs of staff, has said: 'Going smaller [makes using this nuclear] weapon more thinkable'.

An anti-war movement that ignores all the facts laid out in this article and merely echoes in a disconnected way the imperialist media's lies about Russia and China being 'aggressive' and 'imperialist' is worse than useless – *it is an impediment to the cause of human progress and an obstacle in the path of peace.*

When they repeat the lies about 'Russian imperialism', 'Chinese steel dumping', 'human rights abuses' etc, our anti-war leaders – whether they mean to or not – turn themselves into tools of British imperialism in the working-class movement. They strengthen the imperialist case for war by helping to create an atmosphere where the lies put out by the *Sun*, the *Guardian* and the BBC are much more readily accepted as fact. This in turn undermines any call for opposition to the British war machine and transforms the struggle for a just peace into mere liberal pacifist hand-wringing.

In effect, all the justifications given by the imperialists for their criminal, aggressive, imperialist wars are being endorsed by these traitors to the working class, and all that is 'objected' to (and in the politest possible way) is the *method* of bringing about what is presented as being a wholly desirable aim: deposing Saddam, or Ahmadinejad, or Gaddafi, or Assad, or Putin, or Xi . . . or whoever else happens to head a government that is prepared to stand up for its people.

This was taken to its logical extreme in the case of Libya, when the imperialist drive to war was *reinforced* by 'Stop the War', who called for a picket *outside the Libyan embassy* to protest against the 'crimes of Gaddafi' just at the moment when imperialist propaganda against Libya was reaching its height. The clear message of this action was that workers should not feel concerned about the war plans of British imperialism, and Stop the War in this way became directly complicit in all the death and destruction that followed in Libya. For pointing out the disgusting treachery of this action by Britain's so-

called 'anti-war' leaders, our party was summarily expelled from the coalition.

This acceptance and propagation of imperialist propaganda against our rulers' chosen targets is how we end up with a meaningless slogan like 'Don't bomb Syria' (which is handily applicable to Russian fraternal support for the Syrian people as well as to British imperialist aggression against them). This slogan is not backed up by a *thorough exposure of imperialism's lies* and an explanation of why a blow against anti-imperialist Syria is a blow against workers everywhere, but is instead *undermined* by endless diatribes against the 'evil dictator Assad', 'Russian imperialism' and the need to support a 'democratic opposition' in Syria.

And this line is, of course, perfectly acceptable to British imperialism, since a 'democratic opposition' is precisely what it claims to be supporting through its bombing campaign against Syria's infrastructure and armed forces.

The only 'anti-war' *action* that we are asked to undertake by Stop the War is to write an email to our MP, or possibly (if we're really feeling energetic) to turn up to a parliamentary lobby or to a stroll around our local town centre on a Saturday afternoon.

This is not anti-war work, it is conscience-salving. It is allowing the ruling class to continue with its crimes unopposed while giving a few of the more conscientious among us the illusion that we have 'tried' to avert the impending crime and that we therefore need feel no guilt for the blood that is being shed.

Any attempt to sharpen the movement so it can do *real damage* to the British imperialist war machine would drive away the 'support' Stop the War receives from 'left' Labour MPs and trade-union bureaucrats, who would immediately disaffiliate their unions. What an indictment of the British left that it succumbs to the blackmail of these defenders of imperialist interests!

Only this explains why the *real power of workers, as the people who actually have to do the fighting, produce the weapons, trans-*

port the materiel and transmit the war propaganda – whether it be in Ukraine, Syria, Palestine or elsewhere – is not just *overlooked* by our anti-war movement, but *actively suppressed*.

The prospect of a militant working class getting off its knees to deliver a real blow against our own rulers' interests, and some real solidarity to our brothers and sisters who are being massacred abroad, by organising a mass movement of non-cooperation with the imperialist war effort chills our oh-so-respectable anti-war leaders to the bone. No leader of such a movement would be given airtime on Radio 4 or column inches in the back pages and opinion blogs of the *Guardian* or *Independent*.

2. Telling workers the truth

It is our firm view that British workers need and deserve better. We need an anti-war movement that is prepared to *strongly and unashamedly counter* the imperialists' war propaganda and to tell workers the truth.

The truth about Syria today, for example, is that Russia's timely and fraternal assistance to the Syrian people is helping them to beat imperialism's violent regime-change plans for the third time in five and a half years.

The original attempt at an allegedly 'peaceful' (though secretly armed) phony 'Arab spring' was defeated as soon as it surfaced in Daraa.*

The US-created 'Free Syria Army' (a pretended 'secular opposition force' that was conjured into existence *after* the failure of the 'colour revolution' scheme of 2011) had also been defeated and its last positions were in the process of being routed, when, as if by magic, the latest version of US imperialism's 'useful mujahideen' surfaced in

* See 'Syria: how the violence began, in Daraa' by Tim Anderson, *Op Ed News*, 13 May 2013

the form of Islamic State in Iraq and surged across the border with the help of financial, logistical, medical, armament and propaganda assistance from the US's regional proxies – Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Israel and Qatar.*

China's recent decision to provide humanitarian aid and closer military cooperation with the Syrian government is also much to be welcomed.†

Today, the imperialists are caught between a rock and a hard place. In their quest to counter the independent, anti-imperialist axis of resistance in the middle east, they have nurtured reactionary stooge regimes such as Israel, Saudi Arabia and Turkey and the various gulf feudal autocracies.

But pressure from the forces of anti-imperialist resistance is causing these stooge regimes to become increasingly unstable and rabid. And the very desperation of imperialism's henchmen is diminishing their reliability as dependable allies, for the brutal measures needed to maintain their power are weakening their stability and thereby undermining the strength of their imperialist masters.

This can be seen in the crazed actions of Turkey in shooting across the Syrian border at Russian and Syrian forces and calling on Nato to back it up.‡

It can also be seen in the crazed actions of Saudi Arabia in executing a leader of peaceful opposition forces as a 'terrorist', cutting off diplomatic relations with Iran and sending troops to Turkey while calling for a ground invasion of Syria.§

* See 'Isis: imperialism gets tangled up in its own traps', *Proletarian*, August 2014

† See 'China "to provide aid, enhance military training" in Syria – top army official', RT, 16 August 2016

‡ See 'Nato vows military support if Turkey goes to war with Russia' by Jason Ditz, 12 October 2015, *Antiwar.com*; 'Putin calls jet's downing "stab in the back"; Turkey says warning ignored' by Don Melvin, Michael Martinez and Zeynep Bilginsoy, CNN, 25 November 2015 and 'Turkey artillery shelling Syrian army forces across border, backing al-Qaeda withdrawal by GPD', *Veterans Today*, 30 January 2016

§ See 'Syria: imperialism on the back foot', *Lalkar*, March 2016

So far, although it has plenty of official and unofficial 'advisers' and mercenaries doing its dirty work on the ground, the US has hesitated to make a full-scale military invasion, but it may well yet decide that an all-out war against Russia in Syria is its last chance of success in toppling the popular government of President Bashar al-Assad – a government that has proved unexpectedly resilient up until this point.

As the *Proletarian* article on the South China Sea disputes cited earlier pointed out:

To US, Japanese and European imperialism, resistance to their domination is an unacceptable and outrageous obstacle to their desperate need for economic expansion – a need that is inexorably propelling them to war. Unlike their unceasing wars against weaker nations – Korea, Vietnam, Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Syria, etc – which are almost entirely contained within the areas under attack (although even there victory for imperialism is elusive), war waged against Russia and/or China would inevitably involve the imperialist countries themselves as theatres of war. London, Paris, Berlin, Tokyo, Los Angeles and New York could easily find themselves the targets of the kind of bombing that western imperialism thinks nothing of inflicting on others.

Despite this, imperialist desperation is such that it is being driven to war regardless, for which purpose it is making frantic preparations. This can be demonstrated by the enormous increase in 'defence' (read 'offence') spending, as well as by the ever more adventurous 'war games' being carried out by the imperialists. These practice runs include the Anaconda exercises conducted recently in eastern Europe with the intention of intimidating Russia, and the largest-ever provocative military exercises this spring around the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), simulating a nuclear attack on that country, which are also intended as an intimidation of China.

The drive to war also explains the planned deployment of the Thaad

missile system in south Korea, whose purpose cannot possibly be defence – since China does not have ambitions to take over the United States – but, on the contrary, is to facilitate US military attacks on China by blocking the effects of any Chinese retaliation.*

3. What would a real movement against imperialist war look like?

In this context of the drive towards an all-out war between the neo-nazi Nato imperialists and Russia or China or both, we need an anti-war movement that is prepared to *robustly refute* the lies of imperialist media and politicians, to *vigorously defend* the enemies of imperialism to the hilt and to *determinedly organise* acts of *real* solidarity that make it impossible for the British war and war-propaganda machines to function effectively.

A real anti-war movement would be doing everything in its power to convince workers of the need to *actively and collectively* oppose the British imperialist war machine. It would call on and support them in using their existing trade unions (where possible) or in forming new ones (where necessary) in order that they could *collectively refuse* to make or transport weapons or other war materiel; could *collectively refuse* to serve in the armies of aggression or to provide any logistical support or service to those armies; could *collectively refuse* to write, print or broadcast any propaganda lies in support of imperialist war . . . in short, the work of a real anti-war movement is to persuade workers *to refuse en masse to carry out any task that has any connection whatever to any aggressive imperialist war for domination*.

Examples of such action exist in our movement's history, but are

* 'US imperialism's military aggression is the major factor behind South China Sea disputes', *Proletarian*, August 2016

rarely cited and never emulated by the self-appointed misleaders of today's anti-war movement.*

By carrying out such concrete acts of solidarity with the victims of our ruling class's aggression, not only will we be able to frustrate the ability of the British government to wage illegal and aggressive wars abroad, we will also help the working class to learn to use its power and to organise itself for the revolutionary class war at home. As individuals we may be weak, but once united in action there is nothing we cannot achieve. This is a lesson the ruling class is desperate to keep workers from learning.

Moreover, if Britain and the US do indeed start a war against Russia or China, it is the CPGB-ML's view that true anti-imperialists and socialists will *support the defence of those countries and work for the defeat of their own ruling class.*

The slogans of a truly anti-imperialist anti-war movement in such a case must be: Victory to Russia and China; Defeat for British imperialism; No cooperation with British imperialist wars!

Such slogans, and the analysis that must be presented along with them, would make it clear to British workers, suffering under the dual burdens of austerity and war, that the destruction of independent Russia or China would give a new lease of life to the failing imperialist system and thus put back the movement to overthrow the senile rule of British capital by decades.³

The defeat of British and US imperialism in such a war, on the other hand, can only hasten the collapse of imperialism and thus advance the cause of socialism.

In the meantime, progressive people must do everything in their power to wake up the British people to the threat that hangs over their heads. It is far preferable that we should avert the next war by overthrowing the ruling class and establishing a socialist state in Britain than that we should be forced to learn our lesson of the need

* See, for example, 'Downton Abbey, the Jolly George and Stop the War', *Proletarian*, December 2011

THE DRIVE TO WAR AGAINST RUSSIA AND CHINA

for a socialist revolution through the devastating school of a third world war.

Joti Brar

Bristol, November 2016

Appendix: Non-cooperation resolutions

The following resolution, proposed by the CPGB-ML, was passed overwhelmingly by the delegates to Stop the War's national conference in April 2009. As yet, StW's leaders have made no move to implement its provisions.*

No cooperation with war crimes

This conference condemns Britain's continued involvement in the occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan and calls for the immediate recall of all British troops from both these countries.

While the City of London's *financial elite* sought to benefit by joining arms with the US to seize Iraq's oil wealth and manipulate her domestic and foreign policy to their advantage, this conference affirms that the entire bloody debacle has always been contrary to the interests of the vast majority of British workers, who have consistently demonstrated their opposition to this modern-day Anglo-American colonial crusade.

Since 2004, more than one and a half million wholly innocent Iraqi men, women and children have been slaughtered as a result of the

* 'Anti-war movement calls for non-cooperation with war crimes', *Proletarian*, June 2009

illegal invasion and occupation of their country. This can only be termed genocide. In addition, more than four million Iraqis have been displaced from their homes as internal and external refugees, and the resultant dislocation of Iraq's cultural, political and economic life is near total.

In Afghanistan, tens of thousands of people have been murdered, and the country's infrastructure smashed to pieces, as a result of the Anglo-American oil monopolies' quest to control the routes of projected pipelines.

This conference notes with shame the fact that 'our own' British imperialist Labour government has been a key player in planning and perpetrating these heinous war crimes against the Iraqi and Afghan peoples.

Conference notes that many British workers were browbeaten, by a compliant political and media establishment, into accepting these wars on entirely false premises (Afghan responsibility for the 11 September attacks, Blair's '45 minute' claim about Iraqi WMD, etc) that sought to paint Afghanistan and Iraq, rather than Anglo-American imperialism, as the aggressors. Thus the necessary ground was laid to send British and US soldiers (*workers in uniform*) to do the bankers', oil magnates' and armament manufacturers' dirty work.

This conference believes that war fought to enforce subjection and servitude upon another nation is morally abhorrent; to fight and die in such a cause is demoralising, corrupting and meaningless.

This conference realises that, although individually powerless, collectively, British workers do have the power to stop the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, since the government and corporations cannot fight them without us.

This conference therefore resolves that the coalition will do all in its power to promote a movement of industrial, political and military non-cooperation with all of imperialism's aggressive war preparations and activities among British working people.

Union mobilisation remains key to the success of such a policy, and this conference instructs the incoming Stop the War steering committee to campaign vigorously among trade unions to encourage them to adopt a practical policy encouraging their members to do everything not to support illegal wars or occupations, directly or indirectly; and to render every support to members victimised for taking this principled stand.

This conference welcomes the magnificent examples set by such signal actions as:

- 2002/3: FBU strike action immediately preceding the invasion of Iraq, which threatened the entire enterprise.
- Jan 2003: Fifteen Aslef train drivers refused to move arms from Glasgow factories to Glen Douglas base on Scotland's west coast (which remains Nato's largest European arsenal, and from where they were bound for the Gulf).
- 9 Aug 2006: Protesters occupied the Derry offices of Raytheon when Israel invaded Lebanon, to 'prevent the commissioning of war crimes by the Israeli armed forces using weapons supplied by Raytheon'.
- May Day 2008: tens of thousands of US west-coast dockers defied court injunctions to strike in protest against US wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, despite the decision of the International Longshore & Warehouse Union (ILWU) leadership to withhold official sponsorship for the strike.
- Dec 2008: Smash EDO demonstrators occupied and disabled production at Brighton-based missile-delivery system manufacturer EDO (recently acquired by Armament Giant ITT) during Israel's massacre of Gazans.
- Feb 2009: Norwegian train drivers staged a national stoppage to protest the Israeli massacre in Gaza.
- Resolutions asking Bectu media workers to resist the transmission of imperialist war propaganda will be considered at the union's forthcoming congress.

The following resolution was proposed by the BBC Radio and Music branch at the Bectu annual conference in 2004. The resolution was defeated but remains an example of media workers attempting to do their internationalist duty and organise collective resistance to British imperialism.

War crimes and the media

This annual conference recognises:

1. That the US and British governments' war against, and occupation of, Iraq constitute an illegal, unprovoked aggression, condemned at the Nuremberg trials as the "supreme international crime";
2. That the Nuremberg verdict laid out the principle that those who help prepare such a war through their propaganda efforts are as culpable as those who draw up the battle plans or manufacture the munitions;
3. That British television coverage of the war devoted a tiny proportion of air time to anti-war sentiments and relied heavily on government and military sources for information to such an extent that the BBC's own study concluded that embedded reporters "sanitised" the war and were "a disservice to democracy".

This conference believes:

1. That the war in Iraq could not have been fought and the occupation could not continue without the cooperation of the British and American people, who have been prepared for war by propaganda that seeks to dehumanise the Iraqi people and to sanitise, normalise and justify the crimes of the British and US governments;
2. That the unions representing media workers have a particular responsibility to do everything in their power to prevent such crimes against humanity being committed and to protect their members from involvement in war crimes.

APPENDIX: NON-COOPERATION RESOLUTIONS

This conference therefore resolves that Bectu members shall refuse to engage in any propaganda work that helps the criminal war effort, and that all members refusing to engage in such work shall have the full backing of the union.

NOTES

1. This pamphlet began its life as a speech on the drive to war against Russia, which was given at a public meeting hosted by Bristol Ukraine Anti-Fascist Solidarity (BUAFS) in October 2015. A longer version of that speech was written for a CPGB-ML meeting in Glasgow in March 2016 and printed in *Lalkar* in September 2016. The article was later extended to include information on the drive to war against China, and a summary was presented at the eighth World Socialism Forum in Beijing in October 2016. The full text is presented here for the first time.
2. An article on this topic, written by Jenny Clegg for the *Morning Star*, has since been reposted on Stop the War's website, but nothing has been done to spread any awareness of the article's presence or of the analysis it contains regarding Britain's role in the drive to war against China. (See 'Britain's dangerous post-imperial fantasies' by Jenny Clegg, *Morning Star*, 3 November 2016, posted on Stop the War website 7 November 2016.)

Stop the War's email bulletins to its members continue to focus on such issues as the 'danger of Trump', the 'JC4PM' campaign (Jeremy Corbyn for Prime Minister) and the campaign to 'Stop bombing Syria', which is directed as much against Russia's assistance to the Syrian patriotic forces as it is against the crimes of the imperialist invaders.

3. For proof of this assertion, one has only to look at the shot in the arm that was given to the imperialist system in general and to US imperialism in particular by the collapse of the Soviet Union and the east European people's democracies. A huge territory whose labour and resources had previously been off limits to the world's superexploiters suddenly fell into their laps, and the result was that the post-WW2 overproduction crisis that had already taken a firm hold on the world economy was temporarily offset by the opening up of vast new markets and by huge opportunities for looting and exploiting, which were eagerly pounced on.

Moreover, the US found itself in the much longed-for position of being the

world's only superpower, and lost no time in doing what it could to extend its hegemony to every corner of the globe. The first Iraq war was launched even as the Soviet Union tottered, and was followed by a bloody progression of direct invasions and indirect wars by proxy all over the world.

Backed up by their new-found economic and military strength, the bourgeoisie triumphantly proclaimed the 'end of history' and crowed that, after all, capitalism and not communism was mankind's final destination, as the working-class and nation-liberation movements retreated in disarray. Already ideologically disarmed by decades of Khrushchevite revisionism and dwindling in numbers and determination as a result, most simply did not have the strength to mount a serious opposition to the bourgeoisie's apparent victory on all fronts. Hence the notorious decision of Britain's once-proud (but by that time totally degenerate) communist party (CPGB) to dissolve itself in 1991, having proclaimed the October Revolution of 1917 to have been a 'mistake of historic proportions'!

The 25 years that have passed since these events unfolded have proved the capitalists' assertions to be utterly false, but, in the meantime, the working class and oppressed peoples of the world have suffered immeasurably. The world has been quite literally drenched in blood and flooded with desperate refugees as a result of the rampant warmongering that was let loose in 1991, with casualties in unnumbered millions globally and with many millions more lives destroyed in the wake of sanctions, bombings and other such means of introducing what the imperialists like to call 'political and economic freedoms'.

In this context, the countries and movements around the world that still held on to an anti-imperialist or socialist orientation were forced to adjust their tactics to the new reality. These were the conditions that gave rise to the 'truth and reconciliation' process in South Africa (as opposed to trials for the criminals who had run the Apartheid system and routinely repressed and massacred the country's black population) and in which the ANC felt impelled to step back from the demands of its own freedom charter for nationalisation of the land and of the country's major industries. This was the situation in which Libya felt impelled to 'accept responsibility' for the Lockerbie bombing, and in which the Good Friday Agreement in Ireland was signed. These were the conditions in which tiny Cuba was forced to open its doors to western tourism and in which the Democratic People's Republic of Korea decided to set up special economic areas – in both cases aimed at bringing in hard currency to pay for imports that their peoples desperately needed following the loss of their Soviet trading partner.

The masses of ordinary workers in the former socialist countries suffered the loss of their previously secure and socially necessary occupations, alongside the disappearance of their much-prized high-quality housing and healthcare, the collapse of their education systems and social services, the destruction of their cultural provision and the precipitous decline in their living standards as a whole, not to mention the cohesion of their communities and the loss of the dignity and self-respect that living and working in freedom from exploitation

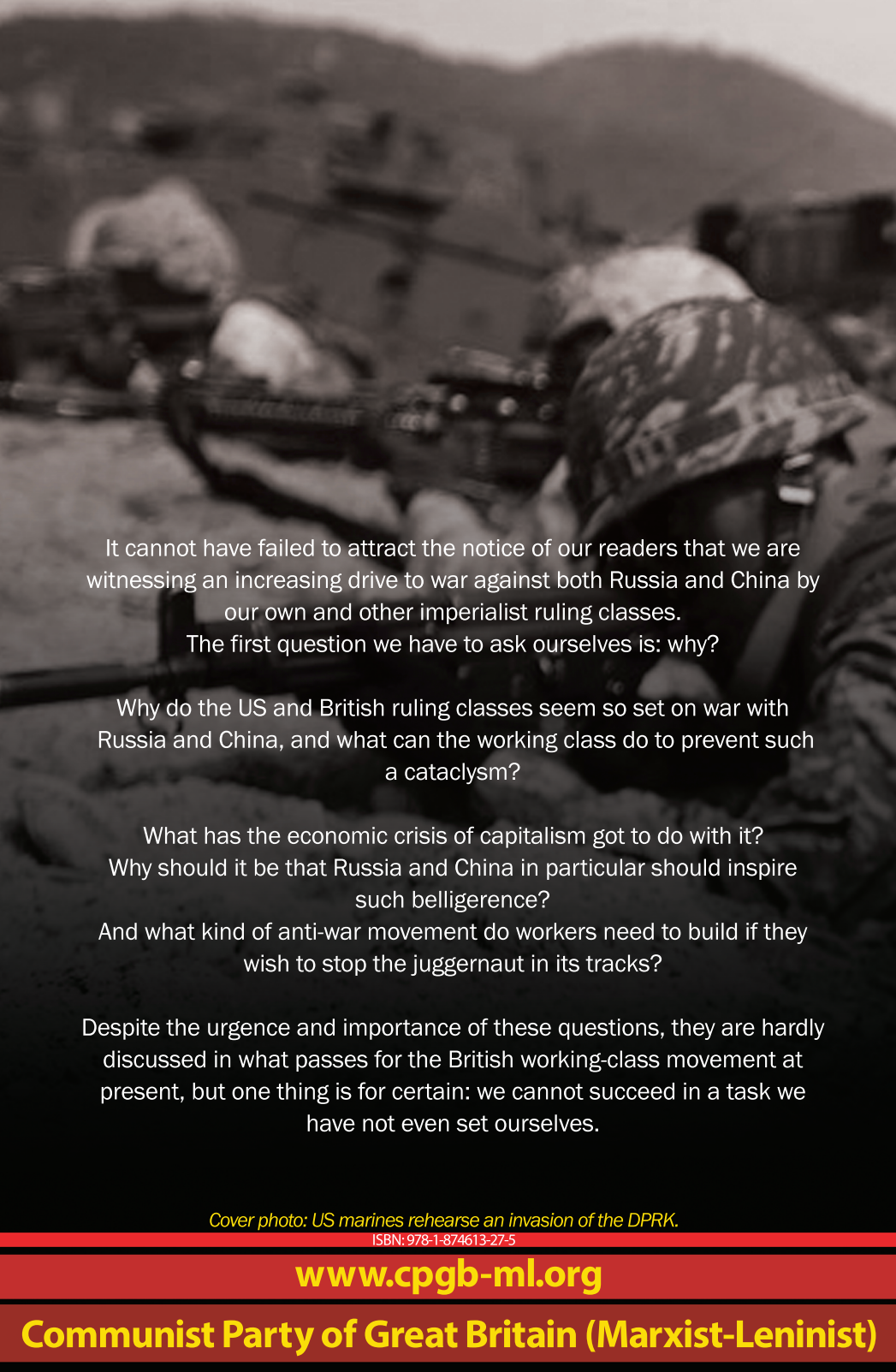
had brought to them. Plummeting birth rates and life expectancies, alongside astronomical rises in the rates of alcoholism, drug abuse, prostitution and gangsterism – not to mention the rise of national chauvinism and internecine warfare between peoples who coexisted perfectly happily under socialism – are eloquent testimony to the joys that have been brought to the once proud peoples of the USSR and its socialist allies by the restoration of the unfettered capitalist market.

In the capitalist countries, the slow demoralisation of working-class forces that had been set in train by Khrushchev's attack on Stalin and his leadership of socialist construction became a full-scale rout. Many workers in Britain stopped believing they could even win a local skirmish over pay and conditions, never mind the battle for socialism itself, and the trade unions in the main gave up trying to mount anything like a serious opposition to the continued assaults of the employers. As the ruling class continued to tighten the screws – whether by exporting capital (and thus jobs) to where it could be more profitably employed or by slashing pay and conditions at home in the name of making British workers more 'competitive' – its vicious assault on working-class living standards was virtually unopposed. Millions of British workers now live in dire poverty, with no hope of escape for themselves or their children. A return to the free-market capitalism of the Dickensian era ('Victorian values') is well underway, with the poorest in society dependent on food banks and charitable hand-outs to eke out the barest existence in dirty, overcrowded, insecure accommodation, while the gap between rich and poor widens at an ever-accelerating pace.

And yet, despite all its best efforts, no amount of austerity, privatisation or warmongering has succeeded in stabilising the world capitalist system. Quite the reverse. It is well known in bourgeois circles that another crash, even bigger than that triggered by the collapse of Lehman Brothers in 2008, is imminent, and that nothing can be done to stop it arriving. Nor does the ruling class have any reliable or coherent plan for what to do when that calamity lands, as it surely must in the very near future, beyond a bail-in (appropriating savings to pay the banks' bad debts) and more wars of plunder.

All this has provided anyone who cares to look with ample proof that capitalism is incapable of solving its own contradictions and that workers have no choice but to carry through the struggle for socialism, but this lesson has been most dearly bought. The best tribute we can pay to the hundreds of millions who have suffered in the process of furnishing the proof is to lose no delay in organising ourselves to act upon it.

Contact the CPGB-ML for further copies and a list of publications.
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It cannot have failed to attract the notice of our readers that we are witnessing an increasing drive to war against both Russia and China by our own and other imperialist ruling classes.

The first question we have to ask ourselves is: why?

Why do the US and British ruling classes seem so set on war with Russia and China, and what can the working class do to prevent such a cataclysm?

What has the economic crisis of capitalism got to do with it? Why should it be that Russia and China in particular should inspire such belligerence?

And what kind of anti-war movement do workers need to build if they wish to stop the juggernaut in its tracks?

Despite the urgency and importance of these questions, they are hardly discussed in what passes for the British working-class movement at present, but one thing is for certain: we cannot succeed in a task we have not even set ourselves.

Cover photo: US marines rehearse an invasion of the DPRK.

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