

Don't bomb Syria - No support for Assad

Sunday 15 April 2018 (Date first published: 13 April 2018).



Photo: Steve Eason

A decade ago, a time when Boris Johnson was able to present documentaries on the BBC about the glories of Roman imperialism [1], visitors to the main market in Damascus could still see the bullet holes in the roof from 1945 when the French tried to suppress an anti-colonial rising in the city, writes Andy Stowe. So, when you hear journalists telling you that the French have an historical interest in Syria, they really mean that Macron, neo-liberalism's aspiring De Gaulle, wants to retain that element of imperialist control over Syria's destiny.

Exactly a year ago, the concern was that Trump was willing to launch a nuclear attack on North Korea [2]. He failed to build the coalition necessary to do that. He's having more luck with his threatened attacks on Syrian forces. As Jeremy Corbyn has pointed out [3], Theresa May seems to be waiting on instructions from him. A big advantage from May's point of view is that a significant group of Labour MPs seem willing to vote for virtually any imperialist attack anywhere. They have apparently learned nothing from the bloodbaths in Iraq and Afghanistan but appear willing to sacrifice other people's lives to weaken Corbyn's position.

The new element in the picture is Emmanuel Macron. He is trying to force through a set of austerity measures and is in open battle with much of the French working class. He wants to both present France as a resurgent new imperialist power and to develop the political persona of a tough leader. Limited military intervention in Syria is a way to do that.

The workings of Trump's mind are almost as unknowable as the proceeding of the North Korean politbureau. We know he's an Islamophobic racist, so his claim to be outraged by the suffering of Syrian civilians can be disregarded. He's also the man who ordered the dropping of the largest non-nuclear bomb in his arsenal on an Afghan mountain [4] on little more than a whim and describes the weapons he'll use against Russian forces in Syria as "nice and new and "smart!"(sic).

As Joseph Daher points out: The butcher Assad's regime is "a despotic, capitalist and patrimonial state ruling through violent repression and using various policies such as sectarianism, tribalism, conservatism, and racism to dominate society" [5]. No socialist can support it.

But neither can socialists support imperialist intervention against it. A US led coalition could only bring the regime down by sending in large numbers of troops, a move that would condemn the country to a worse hell than that inflicted on Iraq, in a regional and political situation which is even more volatile. The regrettable fact is that the secular and democratic forces which tried to bring down Assad have been seriously weakened, benefiting the Islamic fundamentalist and jihadist forces

on the ground. A settlement based on aggression by the French, Americans, British and their regional supporters will do nothing but create a worse sectarian and ethnic bloodbath.

Jeremy Corbyn is right to say that: "More bombing, more killing, more war will not save life. It will just take more lives and spawn the war elsewhere." It seems certain that the Assad dictatorship is responsible for the gas attack on Douma which killed at least seventy civilians and injured many others [6]. Chemical weapons are abhorrent and we support their banning by international law.

But one of Macron's, May's or Trump's missiles could kill many times more than that and, should they decide to attack, they will most likely launch dozens or hundreds.

And they will not force Assad out of power. Indeed it is not clear that the imperialist powers want to see an end to this barbarous regime and certainly they are opposed to self-determination for the people of Syria.

The entire Labour Party must back Corbyn in his opposition to more bombing and war and we should make sure that party banners are highly visible at demonstrations opposing military intervention. We need to be demanding an end to the war and all foreign interventions, including those on behalf of Assad from Russia, Iran and Hezbollah. We must continue to offer political and material support to the secular and democratic opponents of the dictatorship and Labour must call on European governments to offer sanctuary to Syrian refugees.

Socialist Resistance

P.S.

* April 13, 2018:

<http://socialistresistance.org/dont-bomb-syria-no-support-for-assad/12040>

Footnotes

[1] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IcjjZnfsMw8>

[2] <http://socialistresistance.org/no-to-war-trump-and-kim/9959>

[3] <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-43751440>

[4] <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/13/world/asia/moab-mother-of-all-bombs-afghanistan.html>

[5] ESSF (article 43970), ["Our Destinies are Linked": On the Syrian Revolution, the Middle East and the Solidarity.](#)

[6] <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/11/world/middleeast/syria-chemical-attack.html>