

THE SWP'S RUSSO-PHOBIA MISLEADS THE PEACE MOVEMENT YET AGAIN.

The British Socialist Workers Party (SWP) needs to be viewed with contemptible contempt. It has failed the working class over all the major strategic questions of our age. In 1989 it characterized the fall of the Berlin Wall as a win for workers instead of seeing it as a symbol of the generational defeat of the working class. In 2003 it defended its refusal to engage in more militant working class tactics to stop the war in Iraq because it claimed that maintaining the popular front anti-war movement was the main priority, and they were frightened of militancy driving away middle class support. The SWP supported LEXIT in 2016 deceiving workers by claiming it would destabilize British Capitalism (and despite prominent Brexiters calling them the *fools* of the movement). Now it puts an equal sign between Washington and Moscow over the war in the Ukraine. The two indisputable facts about the SWP are these; strategically they are consistently wrong and they never own up to their mistakes, indicative of an ossified organisation.

This rotten tradition is carried on in an April article in *International Socialism: Death rides out: [NATO, Russia and the war in Ukraine](#)* authored by its online editor Tomáš Tengely-Evans.

The first two paragraphs reveals the authors emotional standing. He spends most of it attacking Russia for causing the war. He begins the article with the sentence: “*One year after the brutal invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022, those who have opposed Russia and NATO stand vindicated.*” This SWP hack is oblivious to the fact that he is simply repeating the narrative of the Western Imperialists. No the war did not start in 2022 but in 2014 when the USA, Britain and Germany overthrew an elected government in Kyiv in 2014. In turn this led to a civil war waged against Russian speaking Ukrainians in the Donbass resulting in the documented deaths of 14,000 civilians, itself a war crime. And it was made inevitable by the advance of NATO to the borders of Russia.

In paragraph 2 he continues to paraphrase the Western Imperialist line: *Vladimir Putin’s regime continues to unleash death and destruction on Ukraine.* There is no pretense to be even handed, to even hint at the atrocities committed by the Kyiv regime particularly by its fascist elements. What about the ongoing constant vindictive shelling of civilians in Donetsk City, not a mention. No, the hatred of Putin shines through and through for it is only in Paragraph 3 that Biden gets a mention. And then this hack steps in his own mess. He gives the reason for the war from a Washington perspective: “*There’s going to be a new world order out there, and we’ve got to lead it.*” “*The US sees the war in Ukraine as an opportunity to weaken Russia—and send a signal to China—*” Seems this is not a war to defend the right of nations to self-determination, but a war to assert the United States’ continued domination of a uni-polar world.

The author acknowledges that the US sees Ukraine as an “opportunity” to foster regime change in Moscow and intimidate Beijing. So all the United States is guilty of is “opportunism”. This hegemonic power, this home of reaction, this country which has triggered hundreds of coups since WW2 and which has invaded dozens of countries, which has over 600 military bases spread over every continent, whose CIA agents have infiltrated everywhere, and lest we forget, blatantly uses its drones to assassinate opponents, is only guilty of “opportunism”.

Is it such a stretch of the imagination to assume that the USA did not so much seize an opportunity as create the opportunity. We do not need ex-chancellor Angela Merkel to admit that whereas Russia entered the *Minsk Agreement Talks* in good faith, the West entered it in bad faith seeing it merely as a “*ruse*” to buy time in order to rebuild the Ukrainian army and prepare the Donbass battle field for the war that was to come. We do not need [Jacques Baud](#), a retired colonel in the Swiss intelligence service, and a major

participant in NATO training operations in Ukraine to spell out in exquisite detail how Zelensky baited Russia in the period leading up to the war making the war inevitable. How as Baud reminds us, *“we have to go back to March 24, 2021. On that day, Volodymyr Zelensky issued a decree for the recapture of the Crimea, and began to deploy his forces to the south of the country.”* That was a year before the Russian attack, and, how in the days leading up to the invasion in 2022, the Ukrainian army dramatically escalated its shelling of the Donbass according to the daily reports from OSCE observers on the ground, with the sole intention of preventing Putin walking away from the fight. I urge readers to read Baud’s analysis linked above.

By now, any Marxist who has analysed the history of US imperialism since the war knows the US is never the innocent party, it is never the victim of history, it never sits back allowing events to unfold. You don’t become a hegemonic power doing that and you certainly do not hold on to your hegemony by being passive. Rather it is the USA who makes history, that prepares the initiative and provokes events. This was not an opportunity waiting to fall into the lap of US imperialism but a carefully scripted ‘bait and trap’ tactic by the US executed by Zelensky to draw Russia into a war, a tactic the US had used effectively before, notably against Saddam Hussein which led to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait creating the pretext for the first Gulf War.

The author shows he has no grasp of military strategy and no understanding of the nature of the conflict. In the month that Bakhmut effectively fell, the same month this article was published, April, this is what this Sun Tzu wannabee had to say: *“However, in the process, it has sunk Russia further into a military disaster that threatens the very opposite of Putin’s war aims.” “Its military prowess has been humiliated. Its economy—though surviving Western sanctions—lacks the industrial and technological base to sustain offensive war.”* Where does he get his military information from, from rags like the *Daily Telegraph* and the *Express* or perhaps he served some time as an aide to the late Senator John McCain who labelled Russia a *glorified gas station*.

At the beginning of the war, the feint towards Kyiv and Kharkiv had two goals, the first military and the second political. In terms of its military goal it sought to draw Ukrainian troops away from being concentrated in the Donbass. It failed and in fact this feint was ill-advised as it played into the hands of the West by obscuring the limited aim of the invasion which was to secure the Donbass. Politically it almost succeeded by opening negotiations between Kyiv and Moscow, only for these negotiations to be thwarted by the arrival of Boris Johnson who scuppered the talks as the author acknowledges. *“The active role of the West came out again in an episode involving former British prime minister Boris Johnson.” “One piece in Foreign Affairs suggests the West scuppered peace negotiations in April: According to multiple former senior US officials we spoke with, in April 2022, Russian and Ukrainian negotiators appeared to have tentatively agreed on the outlines of a negotiated interim settlement. Russia would withdraw to its position on 23 February, when it controlled part of the Donbas region and all of Crimea, and, in exchange, Ukraine would promise not to seek NATO membership.” “However, the Ukrainska Pravda news outlet revealed Johnson blew a hole in peace negotiations because the West saw an opportunity to further “press” Putin”*

After the failure of the negotiations Russia prepared for the long haul knowing that only a decisive military victory would secure its objectives. Yes, progress is slow but that is by design and by prepared terrain. The purpose of the Russian army is to minimise the loss of its soldiers by first pulverising the Ukrainian redoubts seven years in the making, thereby maximising Ukrainian casualties as well as the destruction of equipment (it is called shaping the battlefield). This conservation of Russian troops tends to be confirmed

by the fact that whenever Russia loses a substantial number of troops in a specific battle, it is always followed by calls for the commanding officers responsible to be sacked. This would not be happening if these losses were not exceptional.

On the other hand, Colonel Douglas McGregor a former advisor to the Pentagon who seems to have retained some military contacts, reported a few weeks ago that when the Ukrainian Commander in Chief met his counterpart, the chairman of the US Joint Chief of Staff in Washington, he admitted that the Ukrainian military had already lost 257,000 dead and 83,000 missing in action. Those figures are corroborated by Scott Ritter's estimates, who you will recall was the US Weapons' Inspector who stood against the tide when he debunked the claim that Saddam Hussein had *weapons of mass destruction*. (Scaled up to the population of the USA that would amount to a loss of 3.5 million which just happens to be equal to the entire number of personnel in the US army, navy, air force and space force, meaning it would be equal to the loss of the entire US military.)

Nor is the quality of Russian arms and equipment lacking. Despite the best of the west other than aircraft, Russian force of arms has prevailed. Now that the Russian army is fully manned and equipped it has been making steady progress towards the borders of the Donbass. It has won the decisive battles of Soledar and Bakhmut, with victory in the latter town presenting a direct political challenge to the standing of the Zelensky government who had pledged to hold Bakhmut at any cost, resulting in the sacrifice of 50,000 dead and seriously wounded Ukrainian soldiers, many of them needlessly from a military standpoint.

In fact it is worth elaborating on the battle for Bakhmut because it is likely to be the decisive battle of the war. Here the Russians played on Zelensky's weakness. Once Zelensky went public that Bakhmut would not fall, he could not back down despite pleas from the Pentagon and the White House. For this very reason the Russian military kept the jaws of the trap around Bakhmut open allowing Zelensky to send in waves of reinforcements. Now that Zelensky has exhausted his reserves the Russians have closed the jaws trapping the remaining Ukrainian soldiers in a cauldron. No doubt, in the years to come, the Battle of Bakhmut will be included in the text books studied in military academies under the heading *The Danger of Putting Politics in Charge of Military Considerations*.

It is ironic how much time and effort, the author goes into totting up the military aid given to the Ukraine by the West. According to his figures it amounted to \$91.4 trillion. This compares to the total spending by Russia on its military of \$75 billion in 2022 rising to \$84 billion in 2023, not all of which was and is spent on arms. Clearly the Russians are getting a bigger and better bang for their buck than is NATO. But contained in the detail the author provides is the hint that perhaps he understands the logic of the war in a manner he is not willing to admit to.

Where the author is correct, is that NATO is undertaking a balancing act in Ukraine. The strategy remains intact, which is to use the Ukraine to bleed Russia to the point where Russia becomes politically unstable. Not to use the Ukraine as a base to attack Russia directly. NATO does not want a direct conflict with a nuclear armed and hypersonic capable adversary. This has mediated the weapons given to the Ukraine, to the annoyance of the Ukrainians who would like nothing more than missiles which can strike deep into Russia. They know such weapons could shift the war from a proxy war in the Ukraine into a Europe wide war, saving them from defeat. As the Ukraine increasingly stares defeat in the face it has everything to gain from such an expansion of the war despite the nuclear risks. We are now entering the most dangerous part of the war.

Here lies the problem.

I will not comment on the historical analogies trawled up by this article in support of the SWP's opposition to Russia and its designation of Russia as an imperialist power. It's just empty sophistry, showing once again why it is dangerous to indulge in analogies, when concretely the political landscape in Europe today is incomparable to the situation which prevailed a century ago.

However, I will introduce something which is omitted in the article. Putin is a homophobic Great Russian Chauvinist. To win the support of the Russian Orthodox Church, Putin has championed traditional or what is the same thing, backward personal relations. Washington on the other hand supports the extension of personal rights and celebrates diversity. If regime change was on the cards, in other words if the CIA was organising a coup in Moscow, it would do so under the cover of promoting democracy, diversity and "our values".

There can be no question that Putin's personal politics has alienated many European peace activists and driven them towards the Imperialists banner. The thought of defending this "monster" in Moscow from the claws of NATO after his prosecution of lesbian and gay Russians is too much for them. However, to these comrades we must say firmly, this war is not about personal rights but is about naked economic ambitions, to lay hands on the riches of the biggest country in the world and to outflank China.

Were NATO to succeed in a country covering over a tenth of the planet's dry land and extending over 11 time zones. Russia would be turned into a giant Afghanistan or Iraq. The consequences would be more dire than the collapse of the USSR over 30 years ago. Under these conditions personal rights and liberties would be trampled underfoot. Civilisation would not progress but be hurled backwards. Just look at what occurred in the Ukraine after the CIA coup in 2014 styled the *Revolution of Dignity*. The fascists were emboldened and Russian speaking Ukrainians persecuted. Yet another example of how fascism deals with diversity. Instead of a society healing it became more fractured. In the end it set off a chain of events which has now killed the Ukraine.

The United States is an empire in decline which will do anything and everything to reverse its decline. There is nothing progressive about such a state. The fascists in the Ukraine, no friend of the gay man, did not fall from the sky, but were cultivated and financed by this Empire in order to shore up a weak state for the tasks that lay ahead - the baiting and trapping of Russia into an 'unwinnable war'.

The enemy within.

Nothing exposes the opportunism and careerism of left reformism more clearly than a war. With a few notable exceptions, when the war drums sound, they obediently bolt over to the flag to display their patriotism. They join in the chorus of denunciations of their enemy while vilifying all those opposing the war as being in the pay of, and/or simply a stooge of the enemy.

What is tragic about the European and US anti-war movement, including Stop the War here in Britain, is they are immobilised by this imperialist propaganda. They buy the argument that Putin provoked the war. They take point C as their starting point rather than point A which began in 2014, then point B which saw the persecution and extensive killing of Russian speaking Ukrainians in the Donbass. They have fallen for the oldest playground ruse, the *bully's trick*, you know the one where the bully pretends to be the victim, *it was him sir, not me, I would never do something like that just ask around*.

One would have to reach back to 1914 to see a peace movement as disorientated as the one protesting the war in the Ukraine. This is a double tragedy for this war has not only imperilled Ukrainians, it has unleashed a *cost-of-living* crisis in Europe and the US and a *cost-of existence* crisis in poorer countries. Imagine if the peace movement had directed the resulting anger of the masses towards the actual villains, the US, Canadian, German and British imperialists who caused this war. Seldom has the slogan, *the enemy is within*, been more accurate and appropriate.. But the prejudices and immaturity of the leadership of the peace movements has prevented them from amplifying and focusing the anger of the masses.

And they will pay a high price for their misleadership. You see, the gift of rewriting history only goes to the victor. The losers find that history unwrites them by exposing their lies. The recent Pentagon Pictures were not an aberration, but typical of a side which is in disarray because the tide is going against them, and consequently where disaffection is spreading over the growing gap between the official version of events and what is really going on. By degrees all the lies are coming out and ultimately the causes of the war will be laid bare. This will not only provoke a political crisis for the government, for the media, but also for the peace movements who were so easily duped.

Will the SWP own up?

Clearly not. As this article shows, already they cannot adapt to the fact that Russia is winning. They would rather falsify the facts. And if they cannot own up to the actual progress of the war, how can they own up to its causes. It's part of their rotten political culture.

They have never owned up to the consequences of the collapse of the USSR, claiming it was merely a change in the form of capitalism. The fact that poll after poll in Eastern Europe, with the exception of Poland and the Czech Republic, in the two decades after the Wall fell, found that the majority of the population felt much was lost and little gained, is of no concern to them. The fact that it represented a historical defeat for workers passes them by.

They continue to brag about their success in 2003 and have never conducted a post-mortem why the movement failed to stop the war and collapsed so quickly.

And of course it would be interesting to see them in a room full of workers who now realise they were duped by the Brexiteers, that leaving Europe did not reverse the decline of this Kingdom but hastened its decline. That it was one big lie. That the neo-liberal European Central Bank was no more ruthless than the neo-liberal Bank of England, which incidentally, had engineered the *Sterling Crisis of 1976* to begin the break-up of the post-war social democratic consensus in Britain. Engaging in a beauty pageant between capitalist governments to see which one is worse is ugly politics and stupid, especially when the British government was the biggest promoter of right-wing neo-liberal policies in Brussel when Britain was still a member of the EU. The simple rule of thumb for anyone with half a brain is that break ups always lead to reaction, because they are always led by those whose hidden interests are antithetical to those of society.

In conclusion.

War weariness is spreading in the West. Even the Republican wing in the US Houses of Congress have written to Biden requesting he stop all further military aid to the Ukraine in support of an unwinnable war which is only adding to the suffering of the Ukrainian people. In the Czech Republic, despite their history with Russia. the masses are taking to the streets and connecting their cost of living crisis to the war in the Ukraine. Their demands for the halting of all military aid, for an end to NATO membership, for more honest

and accurate coverage of the war, and for the government to resign for failing to address poverty, are all supportable proposals even if they are tinged with nationalism. It is our duty everywhere to link the war to the cost of living crisis, and we are also obliged to show they arise from the same cause, our own imperialists who have no regard for the people of Ukraine as well as for the workers in their own country.

Finally this. *“The political tradition associated with this journal stands with ordinary Ukrainians and demands the immediate withdrawal of all Russian troops.”* But who are these ordinary Ukrainians? Are they the ordinary Ukrainians who have been bombarding or allowing the bombardment of other ordinary Ukrainians in the Donbass. And how will the immediate withdrawal of Russian troops stop this ongoing pogrom? Was the presence of Russian troops the cause of the pogrom or the result of the pogrom? And if the Russian troops were the result of the pogrom, how will their immediate withdrawal end the pogrom?

Would Russia like to withdraw from the Ukraine? Yes, they have stated so repeatedly, but only if Kyiv agrees not to join NATO and enters into a mutually agreed regional security arrangement, if it recognises the autonomy of the Donbass and disbands its organised fascist brigades. Should Russia unilaterally withdraw from the Ukraine today what would happen; Kyiv would join NATO and unleash an expanded pogrom in the Donbass to subdue Russian speakers there.

The SWP claims to uphold rights and to stand in the name of justice. But there are rights and rights which means they all have to be treated concretely by taking every factor into account in a multi-sided way. This is the only way to achieve political independence and a break with the bourgeoisie. Alas, the infantile SWP is incapable of achieving such heights, which means their pretend leadership actually risks the movement, as it has done for over 30 years.

Brian Green, 22nd March 2023.