



THE ANVIL



MACG

NEWSLETTER OF THE MELBOURNE ANARCHIST COMMUNIST GROUP

Vol 6, No 2

Sep - Oct 2017

Free

WAR IN SYRIA

In Syria, a many-sided war is occurring with no end in sight. A popular uprising started against Bashar al-Assad's Ba'athist regime in 2011, but Assad saw a way of derailing it. He would turn it into a sectarian war, with Sunni Muslims against the rest. If he could maintain the support, however grudging, of the Alawites and Christians, he would have 20-25% of the population and, together with the State apparatus, a fighting chance of survival.

First of all, Assad deployed massive violence against unarmed protestors, driving the movement to pick up arms in self defence. Then he emptied his gaols of thousands of jihadi Muslim fundamentalists – partly to create prison room for the civilian opposition he was determined to crush, but mainly to allow the jihadis to influence the opposition. A Free Syrian Army formed from defecting troops and opposition volunteers, but had no internal cohesion and little access to arms. It was vulnerable to control by whoever could supply them.

Enter the imperialists and neighbouring powers. Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Qatar

supplied arms and other materiel to their favoured groups, each hostile to the secular and pluralistic goals of the original uprising. As a result, jihadis came to dominate military opposition to the regime. Assad turned to sectarian allies in the form of Iran and Hezbollah and to Russia, a middle-ranking imperialist power which didn't want to lose its only naval base on the Mediterranean. The US also intervened, though with more resources than strategy. Obama was unsure whether he wanted the regime reformed or overthrown and had major trouble finding suitable clients to back. As a result, the US has blown massive sums on jihadis they couldn't influence and puppets who couldn't fight.

In the Kurdish region of Syria, a Kurdish party, the PYD, took advantage of Assad's early difficulties to launch a revolution of its own. Borrowing heavily from the Anarchism of Murray Bookchin, the Kurds developed their own concept, called democratic confederalism, and implemented it partially in the area they call Rojava. They developed a "no war, no peace" relationship with Assad, since both sides had more pressing priorities.

continued page 2

The Anvil 2

The Kurds soon came into conflict with Daesh, the most fanatical of the jihadi groups. Their defence of Kobanê, which deprived Daesh of its appearance of invincibility, brought them to the attention of the world – and an ally in the shape of Uncle Sam. Unwilling to intervene directly with ground troops, the US was desperate for a local ally and the PYD's military forces, the YPG-YPJ, are far and away the best fighters in Syria. The US therefore buried (for now) its concerns with the PYD's politics and its embarrassing relationship with its fellow thinkers in Turkey, the PKK, and expanded the relationship.

As the YPG-YPJ took territory off Daesh (and other Syrian jihadis), more areas populated by Arabs and other non-Kurds came under its control. The PYD followed up by spreading democratic confederalism to these new areas and raising non-Kurdish militia that have joined with the YPG-YPJ to create the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF).

As the PYD's collaboration with the US has increased, however, so has the role of the US Air Force and the US special forces embedded in the SDF – and the increasing role of the US is affecting the character of the war being waged. As this article is being written, the SDF is in the final stages of liberating Raqqa from the clutches of Daesh, but much of the city is in ruins from USAF bombing and civilian casualties have been high.

Meanwhile, Russian intervention on the side of Assad's regime has been decisive in turning the tables against the anti-Assad rebels. Aleppo is now fully under Assad's control, while territory in rebel hands has been substantially reduced.

Assad's enemies abroad are now making their peace with him, with Turkey, Jordan and the Gulf States deciding they have to eat crow. The civilian opposition, sidelined by the jihadi grip on the military resistance, is either underground or amongst the millions of refugees in neighbouring countries or in Europe. It is unlikely to be seen again until the jihadis are off the scene. But Assad now holds power only at the pleasure of his saviours in Tehran and Moscow – and everybody knows it. Although the war might look to be heading towards a close, much blood may yet be spilled.

The Melbourne Anarchist Communist Group opposes all sides in the war in Syria, both the internal military forces and the interventions by regional and imperialist countries. Australia is playing a role in the US bombing of Syria and is one of the imperialist powers to be condemned. In the conflict between Assad's Ba'ath regime and the jihadi-dominated resistance, the working class can take no side. All are utter reactionaries. The MACG calls for all imperialist countries and regional powers to leave Syria and cease intervening in its conflicts. The situation in north-east Syria, however, is more complex.

The social transformation in North-East Syria, not least the improvement in the position of women, holds great promise for the working class and the oppressed masses of West Asia. The extension of democratic confederalism to non-Kurdish areas of Syria is immensely significant. While it is unclear how deep the Rojava Revolution has gone (we are, for instance, sceptical of the ability of a Stalinist party like the PKK to transform itself structurally), the political program

continued page 4

CAPITALISM IS KILLING OUR WORLD

The single biggest environmental challenge now facing humanity is climate change, but the capitalist system is proving unequal to the task. To be safe, global mean temperature can rise no more than 1.5 degrees Celsius. Pledges made at the Paris COP21 Conference in 2015 are vastly inadequate. Meanwhile, Donald Trump has pulled the US out of the Paris Agreement and, here in Australia, the Government is proposing action which will fall a long way short of the pathetically insufficient promises it made in Paris.

At the rate things are going, actions to mitigate climate change will be too little, too late, leading to dangerous climate change. Triggering of feedback cycles concerning the permafrost and other large carbon sinks could cause catastrophic levels of damage – even jeopardising the survival of civilisation. Capitalist governments, even when faced with evidence of oncoming disaster, take the least action they can get away with. They are part of the problem, not the solution.

The science exists to decarbonise the activities of the human race, but capitalism is in the road. We need a massive working class movement to

save the environment on which we depend for survival and institute an emergency program of transition to 100% renewable energy, sustainable transport systems, sustainable agriculture and decarbonised industry. To get there, we need that working class movement to get rid of capitalism.

In building our movement, we will face obstacles. Opposition from the fossil fuel corporations and their political representatives in the capitalist parties is a given. We will also, though, face opposition from within the labour movement. Union officials, especially those controlling unions that cover workers in unsustainable industries, will attempt to mobilise their members to support bosses in their industry in the name of “defending jobs”. This short-sighted strategy is a road to disaster.

The way out of the trap of defending unsustainable jobs is to start from the principle of a Just Transition. Our movement needs to demand that all jobs be sustainable and that no community gets discarded by capitalism. In the course of the struggle for our demands, it will become obvious to all that the entire capitalist system is unsustainable and that the only Just Transition is a workers’ revolution.

THERE ARE NO JOBS
ON A DEAD PLANET

of democratic confederalism is worth defending and extending. The weakness in Bookchin’s Anarchism (his abandonment of a class analysis) has not been an obstacle so far in Rojava, where the working class is tiny and the main capitalist force (the Ba’athist State) has largely withdrawn. Spreading democratic confederalism into major population centres, however, requires class struggle that establishes workers’ power in production.

The MACG recognises the right of groups struggling for national liberation to acquire arms from wherever they are to be had and to be judged on what they do with them. However, the collaboration of the SDF with the USAF, and allowing US special forces to be embedded within them, is politically disastrous and must be condemned as a betrayal and a strategic blunder of the first order. The US is justly hated across West Asia for its non-stop record of crimes. To ally with it is to drive a massive wedge between the Kurds and the non-Kurdish people who surround them. The PYD cannot ally with both the United States and the oppressed masses of West Asia. It must choose, because the program of democratic confederalism is incompatible with US imperialism. Either democratic confederalism is spread to Turkey and other US allies, thus earning US wrath, or the US alliance will isolate the Kurds from non-Kurdish potential allies.

We support the civil achievements of the Rojava Revolution. Being implacably opposed to US imperialism, though, we cannot support the SDF until it breaks off its alliance with the United States.



What is Anarchism?

Anarchism is a social philosophy based upon the principles of liberty, equality and solidarity. It is the political dimension of a free society.

What is Communism?

Communism is the principle of “from each according to their ability, to each according to their need”. It is the economic dimension of a free society.

What is the Melbourne Anarchist Communist Group?

The MACG is an organisation of class struggle revolutionary anarchists who share political positions, articulated in theory, strategy and tactics.

We aim to encourage struggle by the working class for its own interests and, within that struggle, we aim to advance Anarchist ideas as its necessary philosophical basis.

Melbourne Anarchist Communist Group
PO Box 5108, Brunswick North VIC 3056
<http://melbacg.wordpress.com/>
macg1984@yahoo.com.au