

Britain's Stop the War Coalition: 10 years of lies and excuses

"The Stop the War Coalition and Ukraine" by Dale Street. 2024 - 60 pages ISBN 9781234567897

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For the past ten years Britain's Stop the War Coalition's coverage of Ukraine has been a succession of political and factual inaccuracies. We print below the introduction to a new pamphlet by Dale Street that explores this tawdry of internationalism.

The STW Coalition dismissed the mass popular uprising of the Maidan as a fascist coup engineered by western imperialism. It excused and justified Russia's subsequent seizure of Crimea. And then it denied the reality of direct Russian military intervention in the south-east of Ukraine. In the run-up to Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, the Coalition consistently substituted 'anti-imperialist' fantasies for an engagement with reality. The historical and contemporary role of Russian imperialism disappeared from view, overwhelmed by tedious historical excursions into the post-Cold-War expansion of NATO.

Since February 2022 the Coalition has distinguished itself by its failure to provide a platform for Ukrainian socialists, feminists and trade unionists, and by its failure to provide them with even a penny of financial or material support. As a result, it has functioned as a recycling centre for Kremlin disinformation, combined more recently with its role as the British outpost of US foreign policy realism.

This pamphlet puts the record straight - contrasting the reality of events in Ukraine over the past decade with the Stop the War Coalition's shameless record of misrepresentation and falsification.

The coverage of events in Ukraine over the past decade by the Stop the War Coalition (STW) has been a succession of political and factual inaccuracies.

This has not been the achievement of any one individual. It has been the product of a collective effort made possible by contributions from: politically biodegraded ex-members of the British Socialist Workers Party (Lindsey German and Chris Nineham), lifelong Stalinists (Seamus Milne and Andrew Murray), one-time investigative journalists who lost the plot somewhere along the way (John Pilger and Robert Parry), US foreign policy realists (James Carden and Ted Galen Carpenter), past and present office-bearers of the American Committee for US- Russian Accord (Stephen Cohen and Katrina vanden Heuvel), former Stasi informers (Victor Grossman), cheerleaders for Slobodan Milosevic (Neil Clark), deniers of genocide (Edward Herman), and advocates of genocide (Dmitry Orlov).

Additional support has regularly been provided by a clutch of US academics and contributors to US-based websites who, as one writer described some of them, gleefully imbibe each other's putrid bath

water in order to fortify themselves in their belief that America bears the blame for every ill on earth.

In that context it would be remiss not to single out for particular mention Medea Benjamin and Nicolas Davies of the American Code Pink organisation and Vijay Prashad of the Tricontinental Institute for Social Research, two organisations fortunate enough to enjoy the financial patronage of the Shanghai-based American multi-millionaire Neville Roy Singham. STW cannot argue that its website simply provides a platform for a broad range of views, and that only articles authored by its office-bearers bear the imprimatur of STW itself.

There is no breadth of opinion in the articles about Ukraine which it has posted on its website over the past decade. The articles have been subject to a process of selection. They have been selected to create and buttress a false Manichean narrative which counterposes NATO aggression to legitimate Russian security concerns.

In any case, the articles written by STW office-bearers themselves have regularly constituted the most toxic output of STW, albeit closely rivalled by the delirious outpourings of the luminaries of Code Pink. (There is simply no evidence that the Right Sector is a creation of the CIA.)

STW has also silenced the voices of Ukraine, especially those of Ukrainian socialists and trade unionists. With the exception of one article in 2014 and a further article in 2023, no articles by Ukrainians have been posted on the STW website over the last ten years. Ukraine and its people have been written out of the STW narrative. That fact alone suffices to refute any claim that STW provides a platform for a broad range of views.

Nor can STW excuse its warped and delusional coverage of Ukraine by taking refuge behind its frequent citations of the early-twentieth-century German revolutionary Karl Liebknecht: "The main enemy is in the home camp."

Liebknecht's slogan was not a licence to abandon criticism of the enemy in the other camp. Even less so was it a licence to rewrite history, in the manner of STW, in order to manufacture excuses for acts of imperialist aggression by the enemy in the other camp.

Nor was it a licence for relativising and whataboutery. But that is something in which STW has excelled. It has successfully transformed the word "but" from a humble conjunction into a method of political argument: "Who is the aggressor? The obvious answer seems to be that it is Russia, but ...", "this doesn't mean that Russia has any moral or political 'right' to the Crimea, but ...", "we oppose all foreign military intervention, but...", "Vladimir Putin may run a vicious regime, but ...", "the Soviets were hardly paragons of virtue, but ...", "Putin's authoritarian conservatism may offer little for Russia's future, but ...", "there certainly has been Russian military expansionism, but ..." "that doesn't justify less extreme Russian violations of international law, but ...", "far be it from me to present Vladimir Putin as a paragon of democracy, but ...", "there's no doubt that Russia breached the 1994 Budapest Memorandum, but ...", "Putin may be an authoritarian jerk, but ...", "none of this justifies Putin's attack on Ukraine, but ...", "Putin bears primary responsibility for this latest development, but ...", "the war was sparked by the Russian invasion, but ...", "we should all condemn Putin's strikes on civilians and infrastructure, but ..." And so on, and so forth.

Liebknecht's slogan was a call for international working-class mobilisation. In the hands of STW it was transformed into vacuous appeals for peace to be engineered by the governments of the imperialist powers - and a denial of class solidarity with Ukrainian workers. The overarching characteristic of the ten years of articles about Ukraine posted on the STW website is that their authors knew nothing about Ukraine and even less about Russia. (Or possibly vice versa.)

But this was of no concern to STW. Unlike lesser mortals who were concerned with mundane matters such as factual accuracy, STW prided itself on being the master analyst of geopolitical thinking.

Except that its knowledge of geography was such that it thought that Moldova borders Russia, Latvia is adjacent to Ukraine, Novoazovsk is next door to the Crimea, and Poznan and Redzikowo are the same place.

Its knowledge of politics was such that it could not distinguish between a mass popular protest and a coup, anti-imperialism and US foreign policy realism, political pluralism and authoritarianism, a line of contact and an international border, nor a war of imperialist aggression and a proxy war.

Despite its pretensions to anti-imperialism, in its coverage of events in Ukraine over the past decade STW has simultaneously operated as the British outpost of US foreign policy realism and as a recycling centre for Kremlin disinformation.

Ten years have passed since the Maidan protests of the Revolution of Dignity, Russia's annexation of Crimea, and the beginnings of the conflict in the south-east of Ukraine. The opening sections of this pamphlet therefore provide a summary of those events by way of context. This is a necessity in the light of the fact that nothing published by STW is of any assistance in understanding those events - nor anything else.

P.S.

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