

New Zealand pseudo-lefts double down on support for US-NATO imperialism in Ukraine war

Tom Peters
5 August 2024

The pseudo-left International Socialist Organisation (ISO) in New Zealand published an article on July 23 reasserting its full-throated support for the US-NATO imperialist powers as they escalate the war in Ukraine against Russia. The article, “The invasion of Ukraine” by Serah Allison, calls for an even greater supply of weapons for the Zelensky regime.

This is the first article the ISO has published on the war in more than two years—an extraordinary gap, considering that this is the most devastating European conflict since World War II. The ISO’s previous statement in March 2022 echoed the US propaganda falsely depicting the Russian invasion as unprovoked, glorified the Zelensky regime, and supported the imperialists’ military support for Ukraine.

Since then, the US and NATO have relentlessly escalated the war, opposing any talk of a ceasefire, and sacrificing hundreds of thousands of lives in their effort to severely degrade Russia’s military and destabilise the Putin regime.

Now, the ISO is again providing “left” cover for the imperialist powers as they lurch towards a war involving nuclear-armed powers that will have catastrophic consequences for the entire world. The US and its allies—including Australia and New Zealand—are preparing a further escalation against Russia, and are supporting Israel’s genocide in Gaza and aggression against Lebanon and Iran.

The article by Allison parrots the US and NATO propaganda that they are supporting “self-determination” and “democracy” in Ukraine, and that the Russian regime alone bears “responsibility for the associated death and destruction.” On this basis, the ISO declares that “Ukraine has a right to self-determination even though its struggle is being used to strengthen NATO.”

Allison states that Putin invaded Ukraine to conquer land and resources, to create a buffer against NATO, and “because he feared Ukrainian democracy would serve as a catalyst for similar demands inside Russia itself.” Allison puts these words in quotation marks but does not mention the source: an April 6, 2023 article by the pro-imperialist US think tank, the Atlantic Council.

The fact is that Russia’s invasion, while certainly reactionary and criminal, was directly instigated by the NATO powers. Allison declares that Putin was emboldened to launch his 2022 invasion after he “got away with the annexation of the Crimea and parts of the Ukrainian Donbas” in 2014. She does not mention that these

annexations were provoked by a US-sponsored coup in 2014 in Ukraine, spearheaded by fascists from the Svoboda Party and the Right Sector militia, which replaced a Russian-aligned government with an unelected, pro-NATO regime.

Russia’s annexations in 2014 were seized upon by the US and NATO to pour money into Ukraine’s military and provide training for fascist forces such as the Azov Battalion, while making clear that Ukraine would become a NATO member. The aim was to goad Russia into its invasion, which has played directly into the hands of the imperialist powers.

Washington and the European powers want to reduce Russia to a subservient, semi-colonial status, as an essential step towards war against China, regarded by US imperialism as its main economic and geostrategic rival. Gaza, Yemen, Lebanon and especially Iran represent a third front in a developing world war, aimed at seizing and redividing the world’s resources and markets.

The ISO’s support for imperialism in Ukraine demolishes its pretence of being an anti-war organisation. While it has assisted in organising protests calling for the New Zealand ruling class to cease its support for the US-Israeli genocide in Gaza, the ISO simultaneously supports the US and NATO in their no less predatory and criminal war against Russia.

Allison criticises NATO for failing to escalate the bloodshed fast enough, echoing the Zelensky regime, which has demanded more weapons to launch deeper attacks inside Russia. She writes that the “NATO supply of munitions to Ukraine has been and remains critical in enabling Ukraine to fend off Russia’s military might,” but complains that “military supplies to Ukraine have not been unstinting” and have been “rationed.”

In fact, the NATO powers have provided Ukraine with tanks and long-range attack missiles and are now sending F-16 fighter jets. The recent NATO summit announced the establishment of a NATO office inside Ukraine to directly oversee the war. The entire European continent is militarising, with US missiles to be stationed in Germany, and Britain’s top general Sir Roland Walker calling for the military to “double and then triple our fighting power.”

The ISO’s claims that Ukraine is a “democracy” fighting for “self-determination” are lies. The Kiev regime is entirely dependent on the imperialist powers and has eviscerated democratic rights.

Fearful of growing opposition to the war, Zelensky cancelled the 2024 election. Police have unleashed a reign of terror to enforce conscription, grabbing military-age males off the street to replenish the severely depleted army.

Anti-war and socialist organisations are suppressed and persecuted. Twenty-five-year-old Bogdan Syrotiuk, a leader of the Young Guard of Bolshevik Leninists, which calls on workers across the former Soviet Union to unite against the war, has been jailed for publishing articles on the *World Socialist Web Site* (WSWS). The Ukrainian regime has blocked access to the WSWS.

The ISO is silent on these developments. The pseudo-left organisation has ignored emails from the Socialist Equality Group in New Zealand calling on it to publicly oppose the arrest of Syrotiuk as part of the international campaign for his release.

Allison dismisses as Russian propaganda the abundant evidence of fascists in Ukraine's military leadership and the state apparatus. Her article declares that "the significance of Nazi symbols and ideology appears to have been greatly overstated." To back up this assertion she quotes Alexander Ritzmann from the Counter Extremism Project (CEP), who says Ukraine "is not a cesspit for Nazi sympathizers."

The CEP is another pro-imperialist think tank based in the US, Germany and the UK. Its president Mike Wallace was a senior US State Department official and supporter of Republican President George W. Bush. As well as producing propaganda for the war against Russia, the CEP has issued many statements endorsing Israel's genocide in Gaza. It denounced the decision by International Criminal Court prosecutors to seek arrest warrants for Israeli war criminals Netanyahu and Yoav Gallant as "morally abhorrent." The fact that the ISO relies on such sources underlines its reactionary, pro-imperialist orientation.

The level of fascist influence in Ukraine is obvious for anyone with eyes. Since 2014 streets have been renamed and monuments built to glorify Stepan Bandera and other Ukrainian nationalists who collaborated with the Nazis. Monuments to the Soviet Red Army, which defeated the Nazis, have been demolished.

Fascists are increasingly calling the shots in the military. Zelensky recently replaced the commander of Ukraine's Joint Forces, Lt. General Yuriy Sodol, after the head of the neo-Nazi Azov Battalion, Bohdan Krotevych, demanded his removal.

The ISO's crude propaganda on behalf of the US and NATO reflects definite class interests. Like pseudo-left organisations in the US and internationally, it represents well-off layers of the middle class, in and around the trade unions and the establishment parties, which oppose any real struggle against war because it would threaten their privileged position. Over the past 40 years these organisations have transformed into open apologists for imperialism, supporting the US-led interventions against Yugoslavia, Syria, Libya and Russia.

To the extent that pseudo-left tendencies lead the protests against the Gaza genocide, they are striving to limit them to making futile appeals to capitalist governments and to the trade union bureaucracy which is ensuring the continued supply of weapons for Israel.

The ISO's fraudulent claim that the imperialist powers are engaged in a progressive war against Russia serves to disarm anti-

genocide protesters by fostering the illusion that Washington and its allies can be pressured to support freedom and "self-determination" for Palestinians. This perspective has led the protests into a dead-end, as the ruling classes have flatly ignored all calls for a ceasefire in Gaza.

In reality, Ukraine and the Middle East are different fronts in the same US-led drive for global domination. The same factories producing missiles, artillery and other weapons for Ukraine—which the ISO supports—are also making weapons to be used against the oppressed people of Gaza, Lebanon, Yemen and throughout the Middle East.

In New Zealand, the ISO supports the Labour Party and its ally the Greens, which are committed to strengthening New Zealand's alliance with US imperialism. The previous Labour Party-led government sent NZ troops to Britain to help train Ukrainians to serve as cannon fodder against Russia. The current National Party-led government has continued to back the war against Russia, while also sending troops to the Middle East to assist in the bombing of Yemen. At the same time, both Labour and National support increased military spending and closer ties with the US in the Pacific in preparation for war with China.

The Socialist Equality Group, the New Zealand supporters of the International Committee of the Fourth International, calls on workers and young people who want to fight against war to reject the pro-imperialist politics of the ISO and other pseudo-left groups.

Workers in Russia and Ukraine have no interest in slaughtering each other to uphold the oligarchic regimes in Moscow or Kiev, or to expand the profits of the imperialist powers.

A genuine anti-war movement can only be built by uniting workers internationally against their own national ruling classes. Such a movement must be consciously directed against the root cause of war: the capitalist system. This in turn requires the building of a socialist leadership, to break the working class from every capitalist party and organisation, including the pseudo-lefts.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact