

2022 Feb 26 Monbiot on the pro-Putin pro-Assad "Left"

A tweet from George Monbiot

<https://twitter.com/GeorgeMonbiot/status/1497511988322258948>

"For years I've been arguing with a faction within the "anti-imperialist" left, that is neither anti-imperialist nor distinguishable in its foreign policy positions from the far right. It is pro-Putin. It recycles Kremlin propaganda and whitewashes atrocities.

Thread/

I've been contesting its justifications of Vladimir Putin's and Bashar al-Assad's atrocities in Syria. Its attempts to justify Putin's attacks on Ukraine are equally shameful.

In the approach to Putin's invasion, this faction has blamed everyone but him. Its excuses for his imperialism happen to be identical to the Kremlin's:

It's all NATO's fault

It's about the Azov battalion

It's about protecting Russians from Ukrainian aggression.

The people who have amplified these excuses are not, as they claim, anti-imperialists. They are rightly opposed to western imperialism, but will bend over backwards to accommodate Russian imperialism. Some are paid stooges. For others it's "my enemy's enemy is my friend."

In Syria, echoing Russian propaganda, they have excused or denied some of the worst contemporary atrocities on Earth: Assad's chemical weapons attacks, barrel bombing of civilians, mass imprisonment, torture and murder of those who resist.

Just as they characterised all Ukrainians who defied Russian imperialism as Nazis, they've characterised all Syrians who defy Assad as "head choppers". They have sought to delegitimise all resistance to Putin and Assad.

In trying to counter this propaganda, I've found myself accused, bizarrely, of being a "warmonger", an "imperialist" and a "US shill". No, it's about trying to apply consistent principles. About opposing the worse examples of inhumanity, regardless of the perpetrator.

(For the record, I was among the very few UK journalists to oppose the invasion of Afghanistan. I also set up the Arrest Blair campaign, to try to hold him to account for his criminal war in Iraq. Never mind, I must be a western shill and warmonger.)

Of course, I was not alone in calling out this appeasement. But we were few in number, while the pro-Putin faction has been noisy, highly visible and brimming with confidence and aggression. None of this has been any fun. But the propaganda had to be contested.

Now that Putin's full-scale invasion has left them stranded, some of these people are mumbling "of course, we condemn all war." But they haven't and they don't. For years they have carried water for Putin and other bloodthirsty tyrants, justifying their colonial aggressions.

True anti-imperialism is not about opposing only the west's imperialism, essential as this is. It's about opposing all imperialism, whether western, Russian, Chinese or other. It's about opposing all aggressive wars, regardless of who's waging them.

I'm sorry to bring all this up again. It's uncomfortable, in fact frankly pretty horrible to engage with. But we do no one — except Putin and his acolytes — any favours by pretending it isn't happening.”