

# The Star-Ledger

## By Orwell's standards, presidential candidates are 'objectively pro-ISIS'

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One of my favorite writers is George Orwell.

Not the novelist Orwell who wrote "Animal Farm" and "1984." I got past them back in high school.

I'm talking about Orwell the essayist and non-fiction writer. His essays are perhaps the best by any English writer of the 20th century.

I keep one such book of essays next to my computer and I pulled it out Saturday morning after the news of those attacks in Paris that were apparently the work of ISIS.

The title is "My Country Right or Left" and the contents include Orwell's letters and essays from 1940-1943, the years in which Britain entered World War II but before the war turned in the Allies' favor.

I'm thinking particularly of his essay "Pacifism and the War." In it, Orwell made the point that the inevitable effect of being a pacifist in the fight against Germany at that time was to support the Nazis.

Here's the relevant excerpt:

"Pacifism is objectively pro-Fascist. This is elementary common sense. If you hamper the war effort of one side you automatically help that of the other. Nor is there any real way of remaining outside such a war as the present one. In practice, 'he that is not with me is against me!'"

Now let us apply this bit of analysis to the positions of the various candidates for the presidency in 2016.

A large number of them, ranging from Hillary Clinton on the Democratic side to Jeb Bush to John Kasich to Chris Christie to Ben Carson on the Republican side, support imposing a no-fly zone in Syria. (A "spectacularly bad idea" says Ted Galen Carpenter of the free-market Cato Institute.)

Many naive Americans assume the point of such an exercise is to defeat ISIS.

Nope.

ISIS does not have an air force. A no-fly zone would not have a negative effect on ISIS for the obvious reason that there are no ISIS planes to shoot down.

But such a zone would have a positive effect on ISIS for the obvious reason that it would prevent the Syrian and Russian air forces from bombing ISIS forces.

Why would an American president want to do that?

In the case of these candidates, it's because they want to depose Syrian dictator Assad.

They argue he's an evil man and other such nonsense.

I say "nonsense" because Assad is entirely insignificant when compared to the ally Britain had in the fight against Hitler. That was of course Josef Stalin.

The quality of allies is not at issue once a war begins. As Orwell noted, "If you hamper the war effort of one side you automatically help that of the other."

By setting up a no-fly zone to hamper Assad, these candidates automatically help ISIS - at least in the analysis of Orwell and anyone else with any intelligence.

But let us be charitable and grant the chance that the candidates in question simply lack the intelligence - by which I mean the understanding - of the political situation in the Mideast.

There's an excellent chance that many of these candidates are either so dull-witted or so optimistic that they really believe that when Assad fell the so-called "vetted moderate rebels" would take over.

In fact the U.S. seems to have trained five or so of these rebels at a cost of half a billion dollars.

So don't expect them to beat ISIS to Damascus.

Only a neocon (a category that includes Hillary, as Rand Paul rightly observes) could be that stupid.

I would bet the house not a single one would be aware of the insights to be gained from the Orwell writings I cite in this piece on Orwell and the Spanish Civil War.

Americans simply don't understand foreign countries. That's the reason our government never should have set out on the task of liberating Islamic fundamentalists from the rule of secular dictators. But I doubt a single candidate other than Rand Paul understands it.

So let us, out of Christian charity, conclude that all of those calling for a no-fly zone are simply ignorant.

Because if they are smart then you would have to conclude that they are putting America's top priority - getting rid of ISIS - below the priorities of our various "allies" in the region.

I put that in quotes for the obvious reason that the only allies we have against ISIS are quite obviously the Russian government and the Syrian government. Both have the goal of crushing ISIS. At least Donald Trump understands this along with Rand Paul.

Few others seem to, certainly not Christie. But as to where his loyalties lie, that is an unanswered question.

In his big foreign-policy speech last spring, Christie argued that certain unnamed states would actually fight on the side of ISIS if we did not do their bidding.

Here is the relevant passage:

"If we don't have a plan to stop Bashar al-Assad in Syria or in Yemen what's to stop governments lending support to proxy forces like Al Qaeda and ISIS?"

Christie has never explained just who those governments are. But then he's never explained how Assad got into Yemen, which would require him to traverse 1,000 miles of Saudi desert. So let's be charitable and assume he does not have the vaguest idea what he's talking about.

Otherwise we would have to conclude that Christie is putting the interests of those unnamed governments over the U.S. interest. If he knows the names of governments that would lend support to ISIS, he should make that knowledge public so the American public will know just which governments support the people who are shooting up theaters in Paris.

But again let us be charitable and conclude that he, Hillary Clinton and all the others calling for a no-fly zone really don't understand the obvious truth of what Orwell wrote back in 1942 - that doing so would aid ISIS.

The alternative is to think they are selling out America's interests for the campaign contributions of the many Mideast interests who care more about getting rid of Assad than getting rid of ISIS.

But that would be uncharitable. So let's assume they really believe what they're saying - or in other words, that they are indeed "objectively pro-ISIS" but not smart enough to be subjectively pro-ISIS.

In that case, I recommend a strong dose of the writings of Eric Blair.

That's Kentucky Senator Rand Paul, who long ago predicted that Islamic fundamentalists would be strengthened by the effort to depose Syrian leader Bashar al-Assad.

Meanwhile up until this attack, Christie was calling for the U.S. to attack the Islamic State's worst enemy, which of course is Russia.

Imagine if President Obama had taken his advice and shot down every Russian plane in Syria. ISIS would not be able to move freely about in its efforts to capture the rest of Syria.

Yet there was Christie pretending he got it right all along:

"ISIS warned us they would commit unspeakable carnage and now they have," Christie said.

No kidding. That's why Donald Trump has been saying he'd support the Russians in their fight against ISIS, not join in on the side of ISIS as Christie wanted to do.

Then he made this amazing statement:

"Please go home tonight and turn on the television and watch the news. The world is desperate for a strong, secure, smart and tested American president. The hour is too late for people to be trained. We need a president who is ready to serve."

We do indeed. But that's not the guy who wants to fight Russia instead of ISIS.

Here's a real quote from Christie about what he'd do to stop Russia in Syria:

"I'm not prepared to allow Russia to try to bring Communist domination back to the world."

Great idea, Chris. Let's elect a president who doesn't realize the Cold War ended 25 years ago.

Second thought, let's elect someone who understands Russia is our ally against ISIS.

That would be Rand Paul. Here's what he said when Christie's fellow liberal, Democratic Senator Bob Menendez, put forth a bill to arm Syrian rebels:

"This is an important moment. You will be funding, today, the allies of al Qaeda."

Which is exactly what happened - with Christie's full support.