

Build an international working class movement against imperialist war

The Editorial Board
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The following statement of the World Socialist Web Site Editorial Board is being distributed at antiwar protests in the US, Europe and Australia over the coming weekend. It is crucial that it reaches as broad an audience as possible. We urge all our readers to download the statement, which is available in PDF format, and distribute copies at rallies and demonstrations.

The World Socialist Web Site and Socialist Equality Party unequivocally condemn the criminal war being waged by the United States and its military allies, Britain and Australia, against Iraq.

The opening salvos of this unprovoked war against a defenceless people have provoked revulsion, shock and horror all over the world. Within hours of the first strikes, hundreds of thousands of protestors took to the streets around the world to express their outrage and demand an end to the assault on Iraq.

What is now unfolding is a terrible and unequal contest that will claim tens, if not hundreds of thousands, of innocent lives. The vast majority of the world's people correctly see that the real threat to international peace and security comes from Washington, not Baghdad. All of the justifications for war—Iraq's alleged weapons of mass destruction, links to Al Qaeda terrorists and breaches of UN resolutions—have been exposed as lies and cynical pretexts for an act of aggression decided upon long ago.

The war against Iraq marks an irrevocable turning point in world history. Washington has embarked on an imperialist war of plunder aimed at seizing control of Iraq and its vast oil reserves as part of its broader ambitions in the Middle East and beyond. Even among bourgeois political commentators, it is widely recognised that the Bush administration's decision to defy the UN and go to war has shattered the entire structure of international relations established after World War II. The US has declared to the world that it will not be bound by any legal or diplomatic restraints in its pursuit of global hegemony.

The conquest of Iraq is just the first step in asserting US dominance. Washington is already targeting Iran and North Korea and has a long list of other countries—Syria, Libya, China—marked for subjugation. The Bush administration's reckless pursuit of its global ambitions is already cutting across those of its imperialist rivals and poisoning international relations. The recourse to unabashed chauvinism by the US and Britain against France and Germany foreshadows a new eruption of war between the imperialist powers themselves.

Not since fascist Italy's invasions of Ethiopia and Albania and

the Nazi seizure of Czechoslovakia and invasion of Poland have militaristic governments so nakedly pursued the interests of their financial and corporate elites without regard to international law. Washington's military tactics—"Shock and Awe"—recall the Nazi policy of blitzkrieg that was designed to inspire terror in the civilian population.

The Bush administration's doctrine of preventive war revives the militarist policy of aggressive war for which German imperialism became infamous in the last century. It should be recalled that planning and executing a war of aggression was the first charge leveled against the Nazi leaders at the Nuremberg trial, for which they were prosecuted and hung. It was defined then, and remains, a war crime.

The governments of the US, Britain and Australia are prosecuting war against Iraq in the face of opposition by the majority of people in virtually every country of the world, including their own. The political leaders and their accomplices in the media are seeking to whip up the most backward and reactionary layers and appeal to the basest instincts of the population—chauvinism, fear and prejudice.

For the masses of working people and youth to halt the drive to war and prevent another global conflagration—one more terrible than its predecessors—what is above all required is an understanding of the objective historical roots of the present crisis, and, on that basis, the elaboration of a coherent and thoroughly worked out political strategy.

For decades after World War II, the received wisdom propagated by political leaders, the media and academia was that the economic crises, war and barbarism of the first half of the 20th century were things of the past. The lessons had been learnt and, through enlightened policies, respect for national sovereignty and the mediation of the United Nations, peace would prevail. Now all this has been torn asunder.

The present war is the culmination of a protracted and deep-rooted crisis that has been maturing and gathering force for decades and finds its most concentrated expression in the United States, the centre of world imperialism. Its causes are to be found in the fundamental contradictions within the capitalist system—between the globalisation of production and the division of the world into antagonistic nation states and the shackling of economic life by the private ownership of the means of production and the profit motive.

Protests by themselves will not halt imperialist war. What is

needed is a strategy that tackles the root cause of militarism and war—the capitalist order itself. That requires the independent mobilisation of the working class to take political power and transform society along socialist lines, to meet the social needs of the majority rather than the profits of the wealthy few.

The Bush administration is the political embodiment of those layers of the US ruling elite that came to the fore during the speculative financial bubble of the last two decades, and particularly the 1990s. They made their personal fortunes on the basis of fraud, theft and illegal activities and at the direct expense of millions of working people who have lost their jobs, benefits and working conditions through corporate restructuring and downsizing. The result is an immense and growing social gulf between a wealthy and grasping financial oligarchy and the vast majority of the population.

The bursting of the speculative bubble and the protracted slide in share prices on Wall Street have thrown world capitalism, particularly in the United States, into a deep crisis, for which no section of the ruling elite has any solution. Confronted with intensifying social contradictions, the Bush administration has set out on an international campaign of theft and plunder in a desperate attempt to offset the economic impasse and divert public attention from mounting social problems at home.

Foreign and domestic policy are inextricably linked. The military subjugation of countries abroad is indissolubly bound up with a domestic agenda of dismantling the jobs, social services, living standards and democratic rights of working people at home. Not only in the US but in every country governments, regardless of their formal political coloration, are seeking to claw back the social gains made by working people in the interests of the same parasitic layer of the super-rich.

Millions of people have protested against this war, but it is being conducted by governments who no longer consider themselves in any way answerable to the democratic will of the people. The Bush administration, Tony Blair's Labour government and John Howard's Liberal regime are the political representatives of corrupt, wealthy elites and act under their instructions alone.

The struggle against militarism is inseparably bound up with the defence of democratic rights and the social position of working people. It is not a matter of changing this or that leader or government. The war has produced a complete collapse of liberalism and social democracy. In the United States, the Democratic Party has demonstrated that, despite an outpouring of antiwar sentiment, it is completely incapable of mounting any serious opposition to the Bush administration.

Moreover it would be fatal to hold out illusions in either the UN or the European powers, led by France and Germany, to act as a bulwark against US militarism. To the extent that France and Germany find themselves in conflict with the US, they will rearm to assert their vital interests through military might and deepen their assaults on the social position of the working class to pay for their war preparations and bolster their economic competitiveness.

Those launching the war can barely comprehend the level of opposition and resistance it will unleash throughout the world. Millions have already been brought into political life—often for the first time—in a movement that is directed, in large part, against the

parties to which ordinary working people once owed their allegiance.

The *World Socialist Web Site* is the political organ of the International Committee of the Fourth International and its affiliated sections, the Socialist Equality Parties. Its central mission is to foster and cultivate a political understanding of the revolutionary internationalist tasks that the working class confronts.

The fight against war must be bound up with opposition to the monopoly of wealth by a tiny and unaccountable elite on the basis of socialist policies that can guarantee the right to a job, a living wage, education, health care and housing, and preserve and extend democratic rights that are now under systematic attack.

There is only one social force that has the capacity to put an end to imperialist war—that is the international working class. The outpouring of antiwar protests and demonstrations in virtually every corner of the globe is a harbinger of what is to come and testifies to the necessity of working people unifying around a program that meets their pressing needs and historic interests.

The essential prerequisite in harnessing the great potential strength of the working class is its political independence from all the parties and political agencies of big business. These include the Democratic Party in the United States and the official Labour and Social Democratic parties that have proven completely worthless in halting war and defending the rights of working people. The working class must build its own political party and fight for power

We invite all those opposed to war and the growth of militarism and social inequality to participate in the building of a new international socialist movement of the working class. We urge you to contact the *World Socialist Web Site*, to contribute articles and reports, and to join the Socialist Equality Party and participate in building the new international party of socialism.



To contact the WSWs and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact