

WSWS international conference: Resolutions condemn war in Iraq, call for international unity of working class

2 April 2003

The World Socialist Web Site and Socialist Equality Party held an international conference on March 29-30 in Ann Arbor, Michigan titled “Socialism and the Struggle against Imperialism and War: The Strategy and Program of a New International Working Class Movement”. On April 1 the WSWS published a summary account of the conference [See “World Socialist Web Site holds international conference on socialism and the struggle against war”] and the opening report by David North, chairman of the WSWS International Editorial Board and national secretary of the Socialist Equality Party in the US. [See “Into the maelstrom: the crisis of American imperialism and the war against Iraq”]

Today we are posting the first two of six resolutions unanimously adopted by the conference delegates. In the coming days we will publish the remaining resolutions.

Conference resolution: Stop the war with Iraq! US, Britain out of the Middle East!

This conference denounces the US-British war against Iraq as an act of international gangsterism. It is an imperialist war in the classic sense—a war of plunder, aimed at establishing a colonial-type regime in Baghdad, gaining control of Iraq’s vast oil resources, and seizing a strategic position for dominating the Middle East and launching further wars of conquest.

All the justifications given by the Bush administration and its accomplices in London are based on half-truths, falsifications and outright lies. Iraq is not responsible for the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 and it represents no military threat to the United States. It is an impoverished country devastated by war and a 12-year US-backed economic blockade that has deprived the Iraqi people of food, medicine and other vital necessities, causing more than a million deaths.

Bush administration claims to be waging war to “liberate” the Iraqi people from the dictatorship of Saddam Hussein are utterly cynical. They have been exposed as lies by the opening days of the war, which have witnessed heroic popular resistance by the Iraqi people against the invaders.

The US government has sponsored brutal dictatorships all over the world, from Chile to Indonesia. The American CIA was an early sponsor of Saddam Hussein, backing his repression of working class parties and national minorities

within Iraq, and the Carter and Reagan administrations supported his war against Iran from 1980 to 1988.

Even after the Persian Gulf War of 1990-91, the first Bush administration decided that it preferred the rule of Saddam Hussein to the prospect of uprisings by oppressed Kurds and Shiites that might destabilize other US-backed regimes in the region. Now the second Bush administration has gone to war, not to establish democracy, but to impose a US military dictatorship over the Iraqi people.

The brutal methods being employed in the war—cruise missiles, cluster bombs, depleted uranium weapons, napalm—reveal its real political purpose. Faced with increasing resistance and the prospect of house-to-house combat in every urban center, the US and Britain are moving inexorably toward a war of extermination, not only against the Iraqi military, most of them young conscripts, but against the population as a whole.

What is now unfolding is a terrible and unequal contest that will claim tens, if not hundreds of thousands of innocent lives. People in every part of the world are repulsed by the spectacle of an unrestrained military power pulverizing a small and defenseless country. The vast majority of the world’s people correctly see that the real threat to international peace and security comes from Washington, not Baghdad.

This conference rejects all attempts of politicians to justify their support for the war under the pretence of “support for our troops.” The large majority of American and British young men and women who have been thrown into this conflict on the basis of demagoguery and lies are also victims of the war cabal in Washington. They are being forced to kill or be killed in the pursuit of a hidden agenda that serves the interests, not of the American or British people, but of the ruling elites.

The Bush administration’s decision to defy the UN Security Council and go to war unilaterally is a declaration to the world that it will not be bound by any legal or diplomatic restraints in its pursuit of global hegemony. All of the propaganda of the American media cannot conceal one basic fact: the government of the United States planned and initiated an aggressive war, invading an independent country without provocation and in flagrant violation of international law.

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. The very action carried out by Bush, Cheney, Rumsfeld & Co., 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.

All those responsible for launching the US war against Iraq—the top officials of the Bush administration, the Republican and Democratic leaders in Congress, the military commanders, and the heads of the media monopolies—are guilty of war crimes and should be brought to judgment before an international tribunal.

This conference calls on working people in the United States and internationally to demand an immediate halt to the war against Iraq, the withdrawal of all US and British military forces from Iraq, the Middle East and Central Asia, the lifting of all sanctions against Iraq, and an emergency program of humanitarian and economic aid for its people.

Conference resolution: For the international unity of the working class

This conference extends its warmest greetings to the millions of people worldwide who are opposing the US-led assault on Iraq.

From the weekend of February 15-16, massive demonstrations throughout the United States and Europe have combined with protests in cities, towns and villages on every continent, exceeding in size and scope anything that has gone before.

This global opposition to war has immense historical significance. It marks the initial entry into political struggle of a new generation of working people and youth. It represents, in embryonic form, the emergence of an international social movement against imperialism.

The global integration of capitalist production over the past 25 years, spearheaded by transnational corporations, has strengthened the objective unity of the international working class. It has rendered all national programs for workers in different countries, based on protected and state-regulated markets and appeals to their "own" governments, entirely obsolete. At the same time, it has intensified exploitation and social inequality in every part of the world, confronting working people from the advanced countries to the "Third World" with increasingly uniform conditions. In this way, the foundation has been laid for the global coordination of great social struggles that will increasingly assume an anti-capitalist character. More and more, the working class will define itself in international, rather than national, terms.

Just as the first era of global integration at the end of the nineteenth century gave rise to bitter conflicts between the major imperialist powers, culminating in three decades of war, Depression and fascism between 1914 and 1945, so the further

development of globalized production has unleashed a renewed and ferocious struggle for markets, natural resources and sources of cheap labor. Once again, the fundamental contradictions of capitalism—between world economy and the nation-state system, and between the development of socialized production and the private appropriation of wealth—have exploded to the surface, threatening humanity with catastrophe.

The only genuine mass base for the struggle against imperialism and war is the American and international working class. This struggle requires a conscious international orientation and perspective. It cannot be developed from above—through the auspices of one or another of the imperialist powers, national governments, or institutions such as the United Nations. France and Germany, no less than Britain and the United States, are motivated by their own imperialist interests and foreign policy requirements. None of the bourgeois governments represent the aspirations of ordinary people for peace. That is why protest, which, no matter how militant and broadly-based, is aimed at pressuring the powers-that-be, cannot halt the drive to war.

Only by building a movement from below—among the broad masses of working people—and imbuing it with an international socialist strategy aimed at the complete transformation of society, can the struggle against war go forward.

This conference opposes all attempts to divide workers on national, ethnic, racial, sexual or religious grounds. The purpose of such identity politics of all varieties is to undermine and weaken the unity of the working class by falsely elevating secondary, and ultimately politically insignificant, characteristics above objective class interests. Socialist internationalism, on the contrary, corresponds to the most progressive and revolutionary historical tendencies and embodies the, as yet, not fully conscious strivings of workers of all countries to unify their struggles on the basis of a common world perspective for peace, social equality and justice.

This conference recognizes the political responsibilities posed by the massive international mobilization against imperialist war. The outpouring of antiwar sentiment in virtually every corner of the globe is a harbinger of what is to come. Already millions are drawing strength from the global character of the demonstrations. The central task at hand is to encourage the development of the political class consciousness of this new movement, and assist it in understanding the essential link between the struggle against imperialist war and the fight for international socialism.



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