

An international socialist strategy is needed to oppose war

Statement by the Socialist Equality Party (Britain)

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The following statement of the Socialist Equality Party of Britain is being distributed today at a demonstration in London as part of protests being held world-wide against the continuing US-British war and occupation in Iraq.

Today's demonstration in London testifies to the continued and growing opposition to the US and British occupation of Iraq and the threat of further colonial wars of conquest in the Middle East and internationally.

Everything that opponents of the war waged by Washington and London against Iraq warned against has been confirmed. What took place in Iraq was a crime of historic dimensions for which precedent can only be found in the unprovoked wars of aggression carried out by Nazi Germany.

All efforts to portray this illegal act as a defence of world peace from the threat of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction have been exposed as lies. The leaked report of the 1,400-strong US Iraq Survey Group states that it has not found even a "minute" amount of chemical, biological or nuclear weapons material. And United Nations' chief weapons inspector Hans Blix has been forced to admit that Iraq destroyed its chemical and biological weapons at least a decade ago. Each day there are fresh exposures of the lies employed by the Blair Labour government to drag the country into war.

Ten thousand civilians and an unknown number of Iraqi soldiers were slaughtered in an unequal military contest launched with the aim of seizing control of Iraqi oil and establishing America's global hegemony. According to recent estimates, up to 1,000 Iraqi civilians are dying every week as a direct result of the occupation, either in confrontations with the occupying forces, or as a result of the ongoing societal breakdown.

With troop deaths now far exceeding the lives lost during the war itself, Iraq is becoming a Vietnam-style quagmire that will demand millions of pounds in taxes and the continued sacrifice of hundreds of lives.

President George W. Bush and Prime Minister Tony Blair claimed that war would bring liberation and democracy. Instead a puppet government has been installed answerable directly to Washington and there are reports that the CIA is recruiting former agents of Saddam Hussein's secret police to deal with

popular discontent.

Little or nothing has been done to restore Iraq's social infrastructure, bringing with it a growing threat of disease and malnutrition. Instead, every effort is directed towards opening up Iraq to the predatory designs of the major oil corporations and other transnationals through the imposition of a privatisation programme akin to the disastrous "shock therapy" that devastated the Soviet Union—a prospect made worse for being contemplated in a country already ruined by war and economic sanctions.

The Bush administration has already made clear its intention to move against Iran based on accusations that it is developing a nuclear weapons programme. The doctrine of pre-emptive strike has destabilised international relations and points the way to an eruption of militarism that will not be confined to those countries named as part of the so-called "axis of evil." No nation is safe from the predatory aims of Washington.

This makes it essential that a balance sheet is drawn of the antiwar movement and its failure to stop the bloodshed in Iraq.

The mass protests of February 15 mobilised more than 10 million people in the first-ever worldwide movement against war. Yet despite this powerful expression of international human solidarity, Bush and Blair felt able to ride roughshod over the democratic will of the people and proceed with their military agenda.

Hostility to the government and opposition to the occupation of Iraq is, if anything, greater and more entrenched than it was six months ago. Blair is not only considered a liar over Iraq, but he is not trusted on any other question—whilst in the US the Bush administration continues to suffer a haemorrhaging of support.

But further protest, though vital, will not prevent these governments from committing further crimes. It is not enough to simply argue, as the Stop the War Coalition do, that "our movement nearly stopped the war" and call for a redoubling of efforts "to bring the government to account." What must be confronted is the failure of the political perspective which has thus far guided the antiwar movement.

What does this consist of? Back in February the United Nations and the major European powers of France and

Germany were held up as a possible check on American unilateralism. The self-serving opposition of Schröder and Chirac to the threat of US dominance in the Middle East, and its implications for their own interests in the region, was glorified as a means through which the working class could express its own principled opposition to war. Speakers shouted “Vive La France” and urged the Blair government to abandon its orientation to Washington and uphold the authority of the UN.

Millions have subsequently learned through bitter experience that it is impossible to oppose one imperialist power by lending support to another.

Neither France nor Germany was prepared to clash with the US over Iraq. Instead they have sought an accommodation with Washington in return for their own share of the spoils of war. At the same time they have stepped up their own military drive, with the European powers forming the backbone and military command of UN military interventions in Africa, Afghanistan and the Balkans in order to advance their own global ambitions. The European Union has itself adopted Washington’s doctrine of pre-emptive action. In June the EU formally endorsed a new security strategy that declares, “Pre-emptive engagement can avoid more serious problems in the future.... We need to develop a strategic culture that fosters early, rapid, and when necessary, robust intervention.”

For its part the UN has demonstrated that it is a tool of the imperialist powers by sanctioning the US/UK occupation of Iraq, for which it has earned the enmity of the Iraqi people who regard it as just as much an oppressor as Washington and London.

Secretary General Kofi Annan this week told the UN that “it is not enough to denounce unilateralism” and that the Security Council “may need to begin a discussion on the criteria for an early authorisation of coercive measures.”

The adoption of such a policy not only sanctions whatever wars the US plans in future, but enables the European powers to pursue their own military ambitions without restraint.

The essential result of all appeals to Germany, France and the UN is to subordinate the working class to sections of the ruling elite and to prevent the development of an independent movement against its political representatives such as Blair.

Imperialist aggression cannot be opposed without articulating a programme upon which to oppose the economic and social system that gives rise to it—capitalism. War is rooted in the fundamental contradictions within the profit system—between the globalisation of production and the division of the world into antagonistic nation states based on private ownership of the means of production. It is this that gives rise to the contest between the major powers for control over the world’s major resources and its markets, which under today’s conditions of mounting economic crisis takes on explosive forms.

The drive to war is inseparably bound up with domestic policies aimed at enriching a financial oligarchy at the apex of

society, through constant attacks on the living standards of working people. That is why the Blair government, which acts as the representative of this oligarchy, is deaf to the wishes of the electorate. It will no more heed appeals to halt its war drive than calls to stop the privatisation of health, education and other vital services.

The struggle against militarism is inseparably bound up with the defence of the social position of working people and their democratic rights. It is not a question of changing this or that leader or government, when all the official parties—whatever their formal political coloration—are committed to furtherance of the interests of the super-rich. It requires the construction of a new social order that places the needs of the mass of the population for jobs, decent wages, housing, health care and education at the centre of economic life.

The antiwar movement can not succeed in its aims without turning to the international working class. The allies of workers in Britain are not the European governments or the UN but the working people of Europe, America and the globe. The movement against war must unite workers of all nations against the common enemy.

The movement against war must be politically independent of the pro-capitalist parties, whether Labour, Liberal or Green. A new party must be built on the basis of an international socialist programme through which workers can fight for power.

The Socialist Equality Party is dedicated to the task of unifying the international working class on the basis of such a perspective, as a section of the International Committee of the Fourth International. The *World Socialist Web Site* is the instrument through which this goal can be realised, providing as it does unparalleled daily analysis of world events that helps educate a new layer of socialist minded intellectuals, workers and youth on every continent. We invite all those taking part in today’s demonstration to read the WSWS every day, distribute its statements, join the SEP and participate in building the new international party of socialism.



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