

“It is up to us to decide whether the future will be one of peace and equality, or of military holocaust”

Remarks of IYSSE National Secretary Andre Damon at Detroit rally against war

Andre Damon
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The following remarks were delivered by Andre Damon, the National Secretary of the International Youth and Students for Social Equality at a demonstration against the drive to war in Syria called by the Wayne State University chapter of the IYSSE. (See, “SEP and IYSSE hold demonstration in Detroit against war in Syria”)

Next year marks the hundredth anniversary of the outbreak of World War I. That conflict originated in a far corner of Europe in June of 1914 with the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria, which set in motion the deadliest war in human history to that point. Over ten million people were killed in that horrific slaughter, which achieved nothing besides setting the stage for World War II, which led to over 60 million more deaths.

A hundred years later, the world watches in horror as the United States mobilizes for an illegal, unjustified and criminal attack on Syria. No one should hold any illusion that this will be a “limited” war, as claimed by the US government. An attack on Syria will be aimed at destroying its military, reversing the course of the civil war, and paving the way for war against Iran, Russia and China, with consequences that are potentially too horrible to contemplate.

What casus belli has the United States provided? US government intelligence agencies are funding a proxy force, dominated by Al Qaeda, that has carried out ethnic massacres, used chemical weapons and enjoys no popular support among the Syrian people. The US government claims that the Syrian military used chemical weapons without providing a shred of

evidence.

This weekend, White House Chief of Staff McDonough told NBC’s “Meet the Press” that while the United States does not have specific evidence that the Syrian government used chemical weapons “beyond a reasonable doubt,” nevertheless “the common sense test” dictates that the Assad government is responsible.

The entire justification for US military action is based on unsubstantiated claims. This is an expression of political, legal and moral bankruptcy. From the standpoint of international law, the US government does not have a leg to stand on.

Everything was prepared for a long-planned military assault on Syria: the White House was ready, the military was ready, the media was ready, but the people were not ready. After a dozen years of uninterrupted war, the American population has had enough. The “war on terror” has been the justification for a decade of dirty wars, the suppression of political liberties in the US, yet now Al Qaeda has turned out to be an ally of the United States against the people of Syria.

The strength of popular anti-war feeling has taken the government aback. Scrambling to present some semblance of popular legitimacy, Obama has called a vote in Congress to authorize war, which his administration has made clear it will disregard if the vote does not go its way.

The drive to war in Syria comes ten years after the largest global protests in history, directed against the Iraq war. But the groups leading those demonstrations moved to channel popular opposition behind the

Democratic Party, first in the election of 2004, then in 2006, and finally in the election of Obama in 2008. Yet after every vote, there was an even further escalation of war.

Despite his rhetoric about “change,” Obama has vastly expanded the scope of US military action throughout the globe and imposed the most sweeping attacks on democratic rights of any president in history. We now know that all phone and email correspondence in the US is recorded and read, while the government maintains the right to kill American citizens without trial.

The revelations of Edward Snowden have shown the Obama administration for what it really is: nothing but an agent for the military/intelligence apparatus and the banks, dedicated to the expansion of the power of the state and the destruction of democratic rights.

Workers and young people must draw the lessons of this experience. The Democratic Party is not anti-war; it is pro-war. No confidence can be put in Congress or any section of the Democratic or Republican Parties. The entire political establishment, along with the media, speaks for the financial oligarchy that dominates all aspects of official politics.

Who benefits from war? Is it the Syrian people, two million of whom have been displaced by a civil war stoked by the United States, who are now threatened with a massive bombing campaign? Is it the people of the Middle East, who are threatened with regional war? Is it the working people of America, for whom social services and education are being slashed to finance the war drive?

No! The only people who benefit are the handful of billionaires who run society. Not content to plunder the working people in the United States, the financial oligarchs are seeking to conquer, loot and pillage the world.

We stand at the threshold of a new era. It is up to workers and young people to decide whether the future will be one of peace and equality, or of military holocaust. The task is not to convince people merely to oppose war; what is necessary is a political perspective and strategy.

The real social basis on which the struggle against war must be built is the working class. Students seeking to build the fight against war must turn out to the workers. We must send delegations to all the major

factories and workplaces. The fight against war must be connected to the fight to defend the social rights of the working class!

In Detroit, the struggle against war must be linked with the fight against the bankruptcy and the dictates of the big banks, personified by Emergency Manager Kevyn Orr, who are demanding that the pensions and benefits of Detroit city workers be wiped out, supposedly because there is no money to pay for them.

Even as the United States prepares to rain cruise missiles on the irreplaceable historic buildings and monuments of Syria, the financial barbarians are making a raid on the Detroit Institute of Arts, trying to steal anything they can carry off.

Workers and young people must take a stand: for the defense of civilization, culture, and peace, against the cabal of intelligence agencies and financial swindlers seeking to drag the United States and the world into another war.

The root cause of the drive to war is the capitalist system, which subordinates all of society to the enrichment of the financial oligarchy that runs society. This system must be overturned, and society must be reorganized to satisfy social needs, not private profit.

The money spent on war must be used for a vast expansion of public education, the creation of free public higher education, and the abrogation of all student debts. Free, universal health care is a social right, as is a decent retirement. And most of all, a good job at a decent wage is the right of every person.

We call on all young people to join the International Youth and Students for Social Equality to fight for these demands and this program.



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