

Attend the International May Day Online Rally!

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On Sunday, May 4, the International Committee of the Fourth International and the *World Socialist Web Site* are holding an International May Day Online Rally. We call on all of our readers to register today and make plans to attend.

The significance of the online rally is underscored by the events that have transpired in the weeks leading up to it. One hundred years after the beginning of World War I and 75 years after the beginning of World War II, the danger of global war once again looms over humanity.

Having organized a right-wing coup in Ukraine, the US and Germany are utilizing the crisis to systematically stoke up tensions with Russia. They are adopting the methods that were employed in the earlier cataclysmic periods of world history—endless media propaganda and lies, diplomatic provocations, the utilization of fascistic forces.

This week, US Vice President Joseph Biden is visiting Washington's puppet regime in Kiev to denounce Russia for alleged violations of a diplomatic pact signed in Geneva. More economic sanctions are threatened. The NATO military coalition has announced plans to bolster air, sea and ground forces in the Baltic states that lie on Russia's border. US ground troops are set to depart for Poland.

American and European imperialism are turning Eastern Europe into a powder keg. What had previously been declared impossible—direct war with nuclear-armed Russia—is now openly discussed in ruling class political circles. The massive opposition to war among the people is seen merely as an obstacle to be overcome by means of fear-mongering, lies and repression.

British intelligence has warned that Western military action in Ukraine could lead to “all-out war with Russia.” Earlier this month, Paul Saunders, a former

top official in the Bush administration and the executive director of the Center for the National Interest, penned a column under the headline, “No War with Russia? Don't Be So Sure.” Saunders said notions that such a conflict is impossible “rest upon a series of dangerously false assumptions.”

The dangers that confront mankind are immense. A war waged by the United States and the European powers against Russia would be the first direct conflict between nuclear-armed powers in world history. How many tens or hundreds of millions of people would die in such a conflict? That the ruling class is now heading down this path is definitive proof of its historical bankruptcy.

Russia is not the only target. As Biden heads to Kiev, Obama is heading in the opposite direction—a visit to reaffirm the “pivot to Asia” against China. Meanwhile, in pursuit of its hegemonic aims in the Middle East, the Obama administration fired three drone missiles on Yemen over the weekend, killing some 55 people.

The precise form and timing of an outbreak of world war cannot be determined. But this is the logic of imperialist policy.

The ruling class is proceeding with such recklessness because it sees no other way out of the crisis of its social order—capitalism. Foreign policy and domestic policy are inextricably linked. Imperialism, Lenin noted, is reaction all down the line. The war of plunder abroad is accompanied by plunder at home.

It is now five-and-a-half years since the 2008 financial crisis that began in the US and spread across the world. In the intervening years, the political representatives of the corporations and banks have seized the opportunity to carry out an enormous redistribution of wealth from the bottom to the top, providing endless streams of cash to the financial

aristocracy while imposing brutal austerity on the working class.

As a consequence, global social inequality is at record highs. The richest 85 individuals now have a combined net worth greater than that of the poorest 3.5 billion people—half the world's population, who live on less than \$2.50 a day. In the United States, the center of world capitalism, hunger, poverty and unemployment are mass phenomena. As reported by the *World Socialist Web Site*, one in six Americans did not have enough to eat at some point in 2012. In Europe, under the dictates of European Union-International Monetary Fund austerity programs, unemployment has soared, with over a quarter of the population officially jobless in Greece and Spain.

These measures have resolved nothing. The world economy remains mired in slump and stagnation. Massive debts have been accumulated that cannot be repaid. New speculative bubbles have been inflated that are even bigger than those which collapsed in 2008.

A principal function of endless wars and war scares is to divert social tensions, to focus attention on the alleged enemy abroad, rather than the enemy at home. War also serves as a pretext for ever greater attacks on democratic rights. Already, the ruling class, led by the United States, has erected the framework of a global police state—an international spying apparatus whose target is any and all opposition to the policies of war and social counterrevolution.

The only social force that is capable of forging a way forward is the international working class. To do so, however, it is necessary, in the words of Trotsky, to “follow not the war map but the map of the class struggle”—that is, to oppose imperialism through international socialist revolution.

Capitalism has failed. It is not by appealing to the representatives of the corporations and banks, but by building an independent political leadership and organization, based on a socialist and internationalist program, that the working class can fight back.

The May Day Online Rally is an important step in this struggle. At its center is the conception that the working class of every country can fight capitalism only by building an integrated, global movement. The rally is an unprecedented opportunity, utilizing the technology of the Internet, for workers and youth of every nationality, race and ethnicity to participate in a

common forum and a common discussion.

It is necessary to reclaim the revolutionary socialist and internationalist traditions of May Day! Join us on May 4 for this truly historic event. Register today at internationalmayday.org.



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