

The Fight Against War and the Political Tasks of the Socialist Equality Party

Resolution of the SEP (US) Third National Congress

25 August 2014

The Third National Congress of the Socialist Equality Party of the United States unanimously adopted this resolution on August 5. The Congress also passed the resolutions “Oppose the Israeli assault on Gaza!” and “Defend the rights of immigrant workers! Unite the working class of North, Central and South America!”

1. The Socialist Equality Party endorses the International Committee of the Fourth International Plenum’s resolution “Socialism and the Fight Against Imperialist War.” The resolution of this Congress incorporates and elaborates on the IC resolution, applying it to the work of the SEP in the United States.

2. The statement’s call for the IC to become “the international center of revolutionary opposition to the resurgence of imperialist violence and militarism” could not be more timely. One hundred years after the outbreak of World War I and 75 years after the start of World War II, the imperialist powers, led by the United States, are once again leading mankind to a catastrophe.

3. Not since 1939 and 1914 has there been a summer as tense as 2014. On the eve of the Congress, the American political establishment and the media have seized on the shooting down of a passenger jet in eastern Ukraine to whip up anti-Russian fervor. With extraordinary recklessness, the US is setting in motion a diplomatic crisis that could quickly lead to all-out war. Meanwhile, Israel, with the support of the United States, has taken the opportunity to launch an all-out offensive in Gaza after a prolonged bombing campaign that has already killed hundreds of Palestinians. The intensity of the international crisis can be measured by the pace of events. In the past year alone, the United States has fomented civil war in Syria, threatened Iran, organized a right-wing coup in Ukraine, sent military forces back into Iraq, and escalated a “pivot to Asia” aimed at encircling and isolating China. Open conflicts between the major imperialist powers have begun to emerge, particularly between the United States and Germany.

4. Rather than an exception, war has become the primary means through which imperialism advances its interests and seeks to resolve its problems. The struggle against war must, as the resolution states, be placed at the center of the work of the international movement. Because the United States is the center of world imperialism, the cockpit of international war planning and counterrevolution, opposition to war on a world scale cannot be mobilized without the emergence of a powerful antiwar movement in this country. The American working class must take its place in a struggle of the international working class to abolish imperialism and the capitalist nation-state system.

5. This imposes immense political responsibilities on the SEP and all of its members. While there is enormous latent opposition to war, this opposition lacks a program, perspective and leadership. There is no other movement, outside of the ICFI and the SEP, that seeks to or is capable of

leading the working class in a revolutionary struggle against war, which requires the development in the working class and its vanguard of an understanding of the inextricable connection between war abroad and exploitation at home—between imperialism and capitalism.

Imperialism and the Historic Crisis of American Capitalism

6. In the first half of the twentieth century, geopolitical tensions and inter-imperialist conflicts erupted in two major wars, which between them killed close to 100 million people. These wars arose out of the conflicts between the major powers over access to markets, raw materials, sources of labor and spheres of influence. Along with the economic crises that repeatedly shook world capitalism throughout this period, these conflicts were an expression of the basic contradictions embedded in the capitalist system—between the global character of production and the nation-state system, and between socialized production and private ownership of the means of production.

7. A century later, these contradictions are more intense than ever. The globalization of economic life—the worldwide integration of production, the emergence of transnational corporations, the rise of an international financial system in which trillions of dollars are exchanged on world markets on a daily basis—has not diminished, but rather intensified the danger of imperialist war. On the one hand, the objective logic of economic development is toward the integration of the entire world on the basis of a unified and rationally worked out plan. On the other hand, the private ownership of production and the division of the world into rival nation-states increasingly engenders disruption and conflict.

8. The contradictions of world capitalism find their most dangerous and concentrated expression in the United States. The American ruling class has set before itself the goal of subordinating every part of the world economy and all of world politics to its interests. There is no country, regardless of the continent, whose government it does not seek to bend to its will; no region it does not seek to control—Europe and Asia, the Middle East, Latin America and Africa, the Arctic, cyberspace and outer space.

9. The United States has been engaged in virtually continuous and escalating warfare for a quarter century. The dissolution of the USSR in December 1991 marked a significant turning point. Notwithstanding the deep internal maladies that had found expression over the preceding decades, the American ruling class interpreted the end of the USSR as the “end of history” and the final triumph of capitalism. Most ominously, the ruling class saw the dissolution of its most significant geopolitical opponent as an opportunity to use its military dominance to counteract its longterm economic decline—a decline that was at the center of the crisis of

the post-war order. Despite the betrayals of Stalinism and its policy of “peaceful coexistence” with imperialism, the existence of the Soviet Union had served as a check on the military operations of the United States. This check no longer existed. The fall of the Soviet Union was said to mark the beginning of a “unipolar moment” characterized by unrivaled American power.

10. In 1991, as the Stalinist bureaucracy began the transition to capitalism and the liquidation of nationalized property relations in the USSR, the first President Bush declared a “new world order” based on unconstrained US military dominance. The character of the new order was revealed in the decision to launch the Gulf War against Iraq, by means of which the United States staked its claim to the oil-rich regions of the Middle East. The war was deliberately planned and provoked in order to demonstrate the power of the American military and Washington’s willingness to use it. The crude ideology that came to dominate the thinking of the strategists of American imperialism was summed up by the *Wall Street Journal* in the midst of the invasion: “Force is a legitimate tool of policy,” the newspaper wrote, “it works. For the elites themselves, the message is: America can lead, stop whining, think more boldly. Starting now.”

11. One year later, in 1992, the Pentagon put forward a new strategy document that outlined an “American grand strategy” to “discourage advanced industrial nations from challenging our leadership or even aspiring to a larger regional or global role.” This strategy committed the United States to an unceasing and relentless use of military power. Political developments in every part of the world were seen in relation to how they impacted American dominance. Asserting itself as the supreme arbiter of world events, the American ruling class was compelled to intervene even where it might not have direct and immediate economic interests. Any step back, let alone defeat, would be seen as a sign of weakness, with global consequences.

12. The global character of US interests was explained by political strategists of the ruling class, including former US national security advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski, who had helped orchestrate the proxy war against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan in the 1980s. In the *Grand Chessboard*, published in 1997, Brzezinski explained the imperative to control Eurasia, the vast land mass that stretches from Western Europe to China and includes the Middle East, Central Asia, Russia and the Indian subcontinent. “America’s global primacy is directly dependent on how long and how effectively its preponderance on the Eurasian continent is sustained,” he wrote. [1]

13. In line with this strategy, the United States launched a series of military actions. The Gulf War was preceded by the US invasion of Panama (1989) and followed by interventions in Somalia (1992-93), Haiti (1993-96) and the Kosovo War in 1999. The latter war, launched by the Clinton administration in the name of “human rights,” was the culmination of a decade-long campaign to break up Yugoslavia and advance US power in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. Like the Gulf War, it was to be a demonstration of American power and a practical test of the theory that military technology—in this case, the development of precision-guided munitions—would allow the United States to wage war without ground troops. In the course of a two-month bombardment of Serbia, the American military wreaked destruction on the social infrastructure and killed hundreds of people, without a single US casualty.

The “War on Terror” and American Imperialism

14. The strategy of global domination posed several problems for the ruling class. First, the plan for global empire, entailing incredible human,

economic and social costs, ran up against public opposition. None of the wars that the United States launched after the fall of the USSR were popular. The ruling class was plagued by what it referred to as the “Vietnam War syndrome”—namely, the deep skepticism of the American people toward military intervention abroad. Even as he outlined a program for controlling Eurasia to control the world, Brzezinski wrote ominously that the United States is “too democratic at home to be autocratic abroad.” This limited “the use of America’s power, especially its capacity for military intimidation... [T]he pursuit of power is not a goal that commands popular passion, except in conditions of a sudden threat or challenge to the public’s sense of domestic well-being.” [2]

15. The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the circumstances of which have never been subjected to an independent investigation, were seized on as a “sudden threat or challenge.” Whatever the degree of involvement of sections of the state apparatus, the attacks were used to justify policies that served critical strategic objectives. The second Bush administration declared an unending “war on terror”—a “war” that from the beginning was nothing more than a pretext, a gigantic lie, used to justify military operations abroad and the destruction of democracy within the United States. As the WSWS wrote on September 14, “The attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon have been seized on as an opportunity to implement a far-reaching political agenda for which the most right-wing elements in the ruling elite have been clamoring for years.” [3]

16. Despite the fact that most of the 9/11 hijackers were from Saudi Arabia and had been financed by the Saudi monarchy, the attacks were utilized to immediately invade Afghanistan, a critical geo-strategic center for operations in both the energy-rich Caspian Sea region and in South Asia. Four months after the attack, Bush extended war threats to Iran, Iraq and North Korea, which he labeled an “axis of evil.” This was followed by the 2002 National Security Strategy document claiming the right to wage “pre-emptive” war against any country the US deemed to be a potential threat. The basic framework of international law established after the Second World War—that war was justified only in self-defense—was repudiated. The new strategy was a license for waging aggressive war, the principal war crime for which Nazi leaders were charged at the Nuremberg tribunals.

17. This “pre-emptive” war doctrine was implemented in the 2003 invasion of Iraq, launched on the basis of lies about “weapons of mass destruction” and nonexistent ties between the Saddam Hussein government and Al Qaeda. The real aim of the war was to secure control over the oil-rich regions of the Middle East, while countering the influence of other powers. The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq were accompanied by the introduction of torture into American policy, along with the establishment of the Guantanamo Bay detention center and secret CIA “black site” prisons all over the world.

18. The second basic problem posed by the strategy of world domination was that by its very nature it could not resolve the contradictions that underlay the crisis of American capitalism. In 1999, in the aftermath of the Balkans War, the SEP explained that the “cult of precision-guided munitions” ignored the more basic tendencies of economic development. “Neither this advantage [in the arms industry] nor the products of this industry can guarantee world domination,” we wrote. “Despite the sophistication of its weaponry, the financial-industrial foundation of the United States’ preeminent role in the affairs of world capitalism is far less substantial than it was 50 years ago.” [4] In 2003, at the onset of the US invasion of Iraq, the WSWS anticipated:

Whatever the outcome of the initial stages of the conflict that has begun, American imperialism has a rendezvous with disaster. It cannot conquer the world. It cannot reimpose colonial shackles

upon the masses of the Middle East. It will not find through the medium of war a viable solution to its internal maladies. Rather, the unforeseen difficulties and mounting resistance engendered by war will intensify all of the internal contradictions of American society. [5]

19. This prognosis has been entirely confirmed. The outcome of all its military actions, as foreseen by the International Committee, has been disastrous. Nowhere is this truer than in Iraq, where, even from the standpoint of the strategic aims of the ruling class, the United States has failed to achieve any of its objectives. More than a decade after the Bush administration's illegal war of aggression toppled the government of Saddam Hussein, and following the deaths of more than a million Iraqis, the country is dissolving into civil war. The sectarian conflicts stoked up by Washington's divide-and-rule strategy threaten to create an even greater disaster, while pulling the entire Middle East into a regional war.

20. Militarist violence abroad has failed to resolve the contradictions that underlie the crisis of American and world capitalism. The past two decades have seen a series of expanding financial storms: the Asian economic crisis of 1997, the collapse of Long Term Capital Management and Russian default of 1998, the bursting of the dot.com bubble in 2001, the meltdown of the subprime mortgage market and worldwide financial crisis of 2008. The economic foundations of American capitalism have continued to deteriorate; its world position has continued to decline. In the midst of these economic crises, the 2005 Hurricane Katrina disaster exposed to the world the collapse of infrastructure in the United States and the enormous levels of poverty and social inequality.

21. With the deepening of the crisis of world capitalism, the reliance of American imperialism on military force has only increased. As Trotsky noted in 1928, "In the period of crisis, the hegemony of the United States will operate more completely, more openly, and more ruthlessly than in the period of boom." War has become a permanent feature of American policy. Under the Obama administration, the US has escalated the war in Afghanistan and extended it into Pakistan, waged war against Libya, and is now reintroducing troops into Iraq. An ever expanding number of countries has been targeted for military intervention, missile and drone attacks or covert operations aimed at regime-change, including Sudan, Yemen, Pakistan, Iran, Syria and Ukraine. Early in his administration, in a speech accepting the Nobel Peace Prize, Obama asserted that the right of unilateral military action by the US "extends beyond self-defense or the defense of one nation against an aggressor." Going even further than his predecessors, Obama has asserted the right of the United States to intervene militarily wherever its "core interests" are at stake.

22. The logic of its aims compels the United States to turn its attention increasingly to its major competitors, a shift that becomes all the more necessary the more America's economic position is eroded. This shift underlies the Obama administration's "Pivot to Asia," involving a string of military alliances and agreements aimed at encircling China. The strategists of American imperialism have noted projections that the size of the Chinese economy will soon overtake that of the United States, a tendency they are determined to counter. China's rise is seen as a threat to US influence not only in Asia, but throughout the entire world. At the same time, even after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Russia is seen as an obstacle to the ability of the US to dictate policy in Eastern Europe and the Middle East—a concern that was confirmed by the humiliating retreat of the Obama administration from its plans to bomb Syria in the summer of 2013. To counter Russia, in February of this year the United States and Germany promoted and helped organize protests in Ukraine, led by fascistic forces, to overthrow a pro-Russian government and establish a regime beholden to Washington.

23. The insatiable ambitions of American imperialism are inevitably

engendering conflicts not only with Russia and China—countries that the United States seeks to reduce to neo-colonial status—but also with the major imperialist powers in Europe and Asia. American imperialism does not operate within a geopolitical vacuum. The catastrophe in Iraq is provoking other imperialist powers to reevaluate their own strategy and assert their own independent interests. Whatever temporary alliances the imperialist powers have, there is, as the IC resolution states, no permanent coincidence of interests among them.

24. It is these considerations that are behind the sudden emergence of divisions between Germany and the United States, sparked by a scandal over US spies in Berlin. German imperialism sees the US as a strategic competitor in Eastern Europe and the increasingly significant Black Sea region, as well as in Russia and China. The strategists of the German ruling class are increasingly anxious about subordinating their own interests to what they perceive as the reckless and failed operations of the United States. The weaker American imperialism appears, the more the other imperialist powers stake out an independent policy. In Asia, Japan, with the support of the United States, is remilitarizing, having effectively abolished the pacifist clause in its constitution. But Japan too has independent interests. The basic imperialist conflicts that erupted in two world wars in the first half of the twentieth century have not gone away, they have simply taken on new forms.

Finance Capital, Imperialism and Social Counterrevolution

25. The decline of American capitalism is related to another social transformation within the United States that is directly tied to imperialist violence: the increasing domination of finance capital. In its efforts to reverse all of the past gains of the working class, the American ruling class, increasingly driven by the imperatives of Wall Street and the equity markets, launched a frenzy of job-cuts and corporate mergers. As production was transferred outside of the United States, within the country the accumulation of wealth was increasingly divorced from any connection to productive investment and the so-called real economy. In 1980, only 6 percent of corporate profits were realized in the finance industry. Today, the figure is over 40 percent.

26. "Imperialism, or the domination of finance capital," Lenin wrote, "is that highest stage of capitalism in which this separation [of money capital from productive capital] reaches vast proportions. The supremacy of finance capital over all other forms of capital means the predominance of the rentier and of the financial oligarchy; it means that a small number of financially 'powerful' states stand out among all the rest." [6] This analysis, made in relation to the origins and character of World War I, applies all the more to the present state of global capitalism, with the center of world finance located in the United States.

27. In addition to the pursuit of its geostrategic interests, the American ruling class' unending war policy is driven, to an extraordinary degree, by fears of the implications of the social and economic crisis within the United States. Recourse to militarism and war is seen as a means of diverting social tensions outward. The financial aristocracy is standing atop a social powder keg. Social inequality has returned to levels not seen since before the Great Depression. According to a report published in April by Emmanuel Saez and Gabriel Zucman, the wealth share of the top 0.5 percent in the US increased from about 17 percent in 1978 to just under 35 percent today. The top 0.1 percent monopolizes a shocking 20 percent of all wealth. [7] The bulk of the country's wealth is monopolized by banks, speculators and Wall Street traders.

28. In the largest economy in the world, the conditions of life for a large majority of the population are disastrous. The United States is plagued by

economic stagnation, mass unemployment and poverty. In the drive to channel all resources into the hands of Wall Street, every social gain won by the working class in an earlier period is being destroyed. The Obama administration's health care program is the spearhead for the elimination of employer-paid benefits as well as Medicare and Medicaid. The institution of public education is being replaced by for-profit operations. Detroit, once the center of US and world auto manufacturing, with the highest per capita income in the country, has been thrown into bankruptcy. It is presided over by an unelected, all-powerful financial manager who is dictating the destruction of pensions and health benefits, the sale of city assets, and the cutting off of thousands of people from the most basic necessity of life—water. Throughout the country, the conditions of young people are disastrous. An entire generation faces the prospect of perpetual debt and economic insecurity, with no hope of securing a decent job.

29. All the institutions of the state are deeply discredited. A recent Gallup poll found that public confidence in the presidency as an institution has fallen to 29 percent, while the Supreme Court stands at 30 percent. Confidence in Congress is even lower, at 7 percent, the lowest level in history. A separate poll conducted in July found that among 18-29 year olds, a plurality said they trust neither party on almost every significant political question. The American ruling class no longer possesses its traditional means for mediating class tensions. It has been 50 years since any significant social reform program was implemented. The New Deal and Great Society programs belong to a previous period, and whatever remains of them is being torn apart. The trade unions have long since ceased to be working class organizations, functioning today as auxiliary agencies of the corporations and the state whose main role is to impose the demands of the ruling class on workers. To suppress social tensions, the ruling class has turned more and more to the police and the prisons, putting behind bars some two million people, maintaining and expanding the barbaric practice of the death penalty, and transforming local police departments into paramilitary forces.

30. Imperialist aggression and plunder abroad is the mode of operation of finance capital in foreign policy. In domestic policy, it is social counterrevolution and dictatorship. "Finance capital strives for domination, not freedom," noted Lenin, quoting Rudolf Hilferding. "Political reaction *all along* the line is a characteristic feature of imperialism." Lenin continued. "Corruption, bribery on a huge scale and all kinds of fraud." [8]

31. The presidency, Congress, the courts and the media—all are controlled by the financial aristocracy, and are increasingly seen as such by broad sections of the population. All of economic life is subordinated to the dictates of Wall Street and the stock market, a situation that has only intensified in the wake of the 2008 crisis. The financial oligarchy that bankrupted the economy has utilized the crisis it created to organize a historically unprecedented transfer of wealth into its own hands. Abetted by trillions of dollars in free money from the Obama administration and the Federal Reserve, corporate profits are higher than ever, and Wall Street has returned to the type of frenzied speculation that led to the financial meltdown.

32. Under these conditions, the ruling class sees war as a mechanism both for establishing an ideological foundation for the state and justifying the criminalization of dissent. The socially toxic combination of militarist violence and extreme social inequality is expressed in the breakdown of democratic forms within the United States. Over the past year, NSA whistleblower Edward Snowden has helped to expose an illegal spying apparatus that collects virtually all electronic communications in order to monitor the political and social connections and activities of the entire population. President Obama asserts the right to assassinate US citizens without any judicial process, and acknowledges having done so.

33. A massive and unaccountable military-intelligence-police apparatus operates as a law unto itself, sucking up a vast share of the country's

productive capacity. The size of the war industry is much greater today than it was 53 years ago, when President Eisenhower warned of the power of the "military-industrial complex." The United States spends approximately \$1 trillion to finance the military-intelligence apparatus, or nearly 7 percent of its entire gross domestic product. These resources, devoted to funding the means of destruction, come at the expense of the pressing needs of the working class within the United States.

The Rise of "Human Rights" Imperialism

34. The American ruling class saw the "war on terror" as an ideological pretext that would generate popular support for war abroad. Yet, despite ceaseless pro-war propaganda, every poll shows that war is deeply unpopular. The election in 2008 of Obama, who was marketed as the candidate of "change," was largely the result of popular hostility to the war policies of the Bush administration. However, the past six years have conclusively demonstrated that within the framework of the existing political structures, there exists no mechanism for the people to change anything. The Democrats and Republicans are equally committed to the imperialist policy of the financial aristocracy. Within the media, the lies of the political establishment are never questioned or exposed.

35. A critical role in legitimizing war and containing opposition is played by a host of pseudo-left organizations, many of which trace their roots to the antiwar movement of the 1960s. Their specific contribution is to package and market naked aggression as the defense of "human rights," presenting American imperialism as a progressive humanitarian force. Eleven years ago, on the eve of the Iraq invasion, tens of millions of people participated in coordinated global protests in major cities throughout the world, including within the United States. The past decade has seen an enormous escalation of militarism. However, the middle class organizations that largely led the protests in February 2003 have worked systematically to smother antiwar sentiment and direct it back into the political establishment.

36. The movement of these political tendencies into the camp of imperialism is an expression of changes in political realignments that are bound up with basic class issues. As it emerged in the 1960s, the antiwar movement was dominated by sections of the radical middle class. The ending of the military draft in 1973 was part of a broader strategy of the ruling class to separate out a section of the middle class and integrate it into the political establishment, in order to demobilize protests and facilitate a more direct assault on the working class. The cultivation of identity politics played a central role in this process. Over the ensuing decades, the social layers that had led the middle-class antiwar movement moved sharply to the right—tracking the rightward trajectory of the ruling class in relation to both foreign and domestic policy.

37. Beyond the corporate and financial aristocracy that dominates the political establishment, significant sections of the privileged middle class—the top 5 or 10 percent—saw their wealth, tied to the stock market and real estate, grow substantially during this period. The strength of US equity markets, however, is based on the dominant global position of American capitalism and an intensification of the exploitation of the working class at home. Thus, a new constituency for imperialism was cultivated. A major turning point was the Balkan wars of the 1990s, which were promoted by the Clinton administration as wars for "human rights." As the WSWS wrote at the time:

The objective *modus operandi* and social implications of the protracted stock market boom have enabled imperialism to recruit

from among sections of the upper-middle class a new and devoted constituency. The reactionary, conformist and cynical intellectual climate that prevails in the United States and Europe—promoted by the media and adapted to by a largely servile and corrupted academic community—reflects the social outlook of a highly privileged stratum of the population that is not in the least interested in encouraging a critical examination of the economic and political bases of its newly-acquired riches. [9]

38. Through the mechanism of the Obama administration and identity politics, sections of the upper-middle class and academia, along with pseudo-left state capitalist and Pabloite organizations, have not only reconciled themselves to imperialism, but have become the most fervent advocates of “human rights” imperialism.

39. Over the past six years, these organizations have played an ever more direct role in the operations of the American military and intelligence agencies. In Egypt, they helped derail a mass revolutionary movement, first encouraging illusions in the “democratic” role of the military, then directing the movement behind the Muslim Brotherhood, and finally behind a coup that has brought the military directly back into political power. In Libya, they championed NATO intervention to overthrow the government of Muammar Gaddafi, presenting this as a necessary measure to defend civilian lives. In Syria, they helped cloak a CIA-backed civil war, spearheaded by Al Qaeda and other Islamic fundamentalist organizations, as a revolutionary movement for democracy. One prominent leader of a pseudo-left organization in Australia, expressing a sentiment more broadly felt in these layers, condemned “knee-jerk anti-imperialism” as part of a justification for supporting the imperialist operation in Syria.

40. In the imperialist-backed regime-change operation in Ukraine, pro-war academics and pseudo-left organizations have lent their services to the effort to cloak a fascist putsch, supported from the beginning by the US and Germany, as a “mass revolt for democracy” (in the words of the French New Anti-Capitalist Party) and a “mass uprising that overthrew the Yanukovich regime” (according to the International Socialist Organization in the US). In supporting this operation, these forces aligned themselves directly with fascist groups, including the Right Sector and Svoboda, which glorify the Ukrainian nationalist forces that worked with the Nazis and participated in the Holocaust. Ilya Budraitskis, a leading figure in the Russian Socialist Movement, explicitly justified working with fascists, declaring that without them, “there would never have been any barricades on Hrushevskovo or occupied ministries turned into ‘headquarters of the revolution.’”

41. One mechanism through which pseudo-left forces are seeking to legitimize US and European aggression is through the false characterization of Russia and China as “imperialist” countries. This characterization, which tears both Russia and China out of all historical context, is aimed at conditioning public opinion to accept ever more dangerous provocations by the imperialist powers in both Asia and Eastern Europe. It is bound up with the theory that the Soviet Union and China after the 1949 revolution were “state capitalist,” and that the immense transformations that took place with the restoration of capitalism did not represent a change in the social foundations of the regimes. The destruction of nationalized property relations in both countries was connected to the efforts by finance capital to reduce them to colonial status, not with their rise as new centers of imperialist power.

42. Leon Trotsky, writing in 1929, anticipated with great prescience the socio-economic consequences of the restoration of capitalism in the USSR. Far from becoming “imperialist,” he noted, “A capitalist Russia could not now occupy even the third-rate position to which czarist Russia was predestined by the course of the World War. Russian capitalism today

would be a dependent, semi-colonial capitalism without any prospects.”

[10] The Socialist Equality Party is implacably opposed to the bourgeois regimes in both China and Russia. Representing the interests of a tiny layer of capitalists and oligarchs, they have no genuine independence from imperialism and are incapable of principled opposition to the machinations of the US and Europe. Our opposition to these regimes, however, is rooted in the fight to mobilize the working class as an independent political force, on the basis of a socialist program.

43. Only by establishing its own political independence in opposition to all bourgeois and petty-bourgeois political forces, through a ruthless critique of all agencies of the ruling class, can the working class win over to its side all those seeking a way to oppose imperialist war. The political independence of the working class requires, in the United States, a ruthless struggle against the Democratic and Republican Parties (the two principal parties of big business) and all organizations that operate in the orbit of these parties and seek to maintain their political domination.

Build the Socialist Equality Party!

44. The same contradictions that give rise to imperialist war produce an immense intensification of the class struggle. Imperialism is a predatory solution to the intractable crisis of world capitalism, the solution of the financial aristocracy as it strives to unify the world economy under a single hegemon. This is the path of war. Socialist revolution is the progressive solution to the same crisis, the solution of the working class. The question is: which will develop more quickly, the tendency toward war or the tendency toward social revolution? The barbarism of the ruling class and its social system, or the independent political mobilization of the working class? The answer to this question will be determined in the realm of politics. As Trotsky wrote on the eve of World War II, the crisis of mankind is reduced to the crisis of revolutionary leadership. The resolution of this crisis depends on the actions and decisions of the party.

45. The Socialist Equality Party insists that the fight against imperialism must be rooted in the working class, theoretically, politically and organizationally. It is the working class that suffers the consequences of both the economic crisis and the war policies of the ruling class. It is the working class whose interests drive it into opposition to the capitalist system. Moreover, only the working class is an international class, whose interests transcend all national boundaries. “The working men have no country,” Marx and Engels explained more than 150 years ago.

46. The SEP must strive through persistent political work to educate and raise the consciousness of the most advanced sections of the working class. In doing so, it must combat the endless stream of falsifications and propaganda emanating from the media and the mouthpieces of the ruling class. It must seek to inoculate the workers against all forms of nationalism and chauvinism, encouraging solidarity with the struggles of all workers in every country. The defeat of imperialism is possible only through an international movement, but the building of an international party means the fight in *every country* to win the working class to an international program and perspective.

47. The fight to build a movement in the working class requires the systematic exposure of the pseudo-left and, in the words of the IC resolution, the “innumerable former pacifists, liberals, Greens and anarchists” who have lined up behind war. The working class must be educated as to the way in which “human rights” and identity politics have become the new justifications for imperialist aggression. The fight against imperialism has always required the sharpest political differentiation. “The fight against imperialism is a sham and humbug,” Lenin wrote in 1916, “unless it is inseparably bound up with the fight against

opportunism.” In Lenin’s day, it was a question of exposing and breaking with all those supposed “socialists” who supported the World War, as well as all those who covered for them. Today, it is a fight against all those who support imperialism, particularly the auxiliary organizations of the Democratic Party—from the trade unions, to the *Nation* magazine, to the International Socialist Organization, Socialist Alternative and the array of organizations that speak on behalf of privileged layers of the upper-middle class.

48. The struggle against war is not separate from, but rather an integral part of, all the elements of the party’s work. In a 1939 resolution adopted on the eve of World War II, the Socialist Workers Party of the United States asserted: “The character of the present period dictates unequivocally the main task of the party: the struggle against the war... What is required is not a temporary or episodic campaign, but a sustained, deliberate and enduring policy.” So it must be today. The struggle against war must be connected to the party’s fight to mobilize the working class in defense of all of its social and political rights.

49. The fight against imperialism is a fight against capitalism. All the basic issues involved in opposing war—the demand for the abolition of the standing army, the call for the immediate withdrawal of all US troops from overseas, the demand for the dismantling of the military-intelligence apparatus—raise the necessity for the independent political and revolutionary mobilization of the working class to take political power and reorganize the world economy on the basis of a socialist program, i.e., the rational and democratic planning of production to meet social need, not private profit.

50. The strength of the International Committee of the Fourth International and the Socialist Equality Party arises from the fact that its program corresponds to the logic of world economic development and articulates the interests of the working class. The growth of the party is the conscious expression of an objective process. However, this growth does not happen automatically. The revolutionary program must be fought for. It is the task of every member, working within the framework of the party, to build the SEP’s base in the most important factories, workplaces, schools and universities in order to develop the nucleus and leadership for the coming struggles of the working class. As the IC resolution concludes: “The building of the Fourth International, under the leadership of the International Committee, is *the* central strategic question.” In the United States, this means building the Socialist Equality Party.

Footnotes:

[1] Zbigniew Brzezinski, *The Grand Chessboard*, 1997, p. 30.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 35.

[3] “Why the Bush administration wants war,” *World Socialist Web Site*, WSWS Editorial Board, September 14, 2001.

[4] “After the Slaughter: Political Lessons of the Balkans War,” David North, June 14, 1999.

[5] “The crisis of American capitalism and the war against Iraq,” *World Socialist Web Site*, David North, March 21, 2003.

[6] *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, V.I. Lenin, *Collected Works Vol. 22*.

[7] Emmanuel Saez and Gabriel Zucman, “The Distribution of US Wealth, Capital Income and Returns since 1913,” March 2014.

[8] “*Imperialism and the Split in Socialism*,” V.I. Lenin, *Collected Works, Vol. 23*.

[9] “After the Slaughter: Political Lessons of the Balkan War,” David North, op.cit.

[10] “Is Parliamentary Democracy Likely to Replace the Soviets?” *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1929)*, p. 55.



To contact the WSWs and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact