

Socialism and the Fight Against War

Build an International Movement of the Working Class and Youth Against Imperialism!

**Statement of the International Committee of the Fourth International
18 February 2016**

1. Fifteen years after the United States launched the “war on terror,” the entire world is being dragged into an ever-expanding maelstrom of imperialist violence. The invasions and interventions organized by US imperialism have devastated Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya and Syria. NATO is engaged in a massive rearmament program in preparation for war with Russia. Africa is the target of relentless US and European neo-colonial machinations. Border disputes between neighboring states are provoking tensions and outright clashes in Eastern Europe, the Trans Caucasus, the Indian subcontinent and South America. In East Asia, the Obama administration’s “pivot to Asia” is embroiling the entire region in the United States’ confrontation with China.

2. The “war on terror”—riddled with imperialist deceit and limitless hypocrisy—has traumatized, maimed and killed uncounted millions, and triggered the greatest refugee crisis since the end of World War II. Sixty million people have been driven from their countries. The hundreds of thousands who have made it to Europe, after desperate and life-threatening journeys, are being herded into detention centers, compelled to live in appalling conditions, and even stripped of their meager belongings. To undermine working class solidarity, the imperialist governments, the capitalist political parties and the media are promoting national chauvinism and racist bigotry. In the 1930s, the Jews were made the scapegoats of political reaction. Today, in North America, Europe and Australia, it is Muslims who are the victims of media vilification, state-sponsored discrimination and racism, and fascist violence.

3. For 15 years, the “war on terror” has involved crimes for which no government officials or military-intelligence personnel have been held accountable. International law is a dead letter, with the White House leading the way in asserting the “right” to kidnap, imprison, torture and assassinate its victims without legal due process. The pretext of fighting terror has served a critical political function within the imperialist countries. Terrorist acts, often involving individuals who had been under state surveillance, have been exploited to shred democratic rights. The lockdowns in Boston, Ferguson and other cities have amounted to dress rehearsals for martial law. All of France has now been placed under a “state of emergency” following the Paris attacks of November 2015. Intelligence agencies conduct unchecked spying, accumulating vast databases on tens of millions of people. Police brutality and killings are a daily reality in working class areas as the ruling class seeks to contain the explosive tensions produced by social inequality and prepares to answer opposition with permanent police state repression.

4. The world stands on the brink of a catastrophic global conflict. The statements of heads of capitalist governments grow increasingly bellicose. The proxy wars in Ukraine and Syria have drawn NATO and Russia closer to a full-scale confrontation. Turkey, a NATO member, has already fired on Russian warplanes. At the start of 2016, a leading Swedish military commander, Major General Anders Brännström, issued the

following warning to troops under his command: “The global situation we are experiencing ... leads to the conclusion that we could be at war within a few years.” As in the years that preceded the outbreak of World War I in 1914 and World War II in 1939, political leaders and military planners are approaching the conclusion that a war between major powers is not a remote possibility, but, rather, highly probable and, perhaps, even inevitable.

5. At a certain point, such military fatalism becomes a significant contributing factor to the outbreak of war. As a specialist in international relations has recently written: “Once war is assumed to be unavoidable, the calculations of leaders and militaries change. The question is no longer whether there will or should be a war, but when the war can be fought most advantageously. Even those neither eager for nor optimistic about war may opt to fight when operating in the framework of inevitability.” [*The Next Great War: The Roots of World War I and the Risk of U.S.-China Conflict*, edited by Richard N. Rosencrance and Steven E. Miller (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2015), p. xi.]

6. The war drive is a conspiracy of the capitalist elites, orchestrated by the highest levels of government, the military-intelligence apparatus, the corporate-financial oligarchy and a corrupted right-wing media, without even the pretext of democratic debate. Among the masses of working people throughout the world, there is an overwhelming desire for peace. There is, as yet, however, no organized international political movement opposing the reckless policies of the imperialist pyromaniacs.

7. But the drive to World War III must be stopped. A new international movement against war, uniting the great mass of working people and youth in opposition to capitalism and imperialism, must be built. The same capitalist crisis that produces the insanity of war also generates the impulse for social revolution. However, the growing anger and opposition of billions of people around the world—to war, social inequality and the assault on democratic rights—must be guided by a new political perspective and program.

8. With this statement, the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) advances the following principles as the essential political foundations of an anti-war movement:

- The struggle against war must be based on the working class, the great revolutionary force in society, uniting behind it all progressive elements in the population.
- The new anti-war movement must be anti-capitalist and socialist, since there can be no serious struggle against war except in the fight to end the dictatorship of finance capital and the economic system that is the fundamental cause of militarism and war.
- The new anti-war movement must therefore, of necessity, be completely and unequivocally independent of, and hostile to, all political parties and organizations of the capitalist class.
- The new anti-war movement must, above all, be international,

mobilizing the vast power of the working class in a unified global struggle against imperialism. The permanent war of the bourgeoisie must be answered with the perspective of permanent revolution by the working class, the strategic goal of which is the abolition of the nation-state system and the establishment of a world socialist federation. This will make possible the rational, planned development of global resources and, on this basis, the eradication of poverty and the raising of human culture to new heights.

The Contradictions of World Economy and the Nation-State

9. The working class requires a scientific understanding of the objective roots of war if it is not to be misled and confused by chauvinist propaganda. The political perspective of a socialist and internationalist anti-war movement must be based on a precise assessment of the economic and class interests that underlie imperialist strategies and great power conflicts. Only on this basis can the working class develop its independent program of irreconcilable opposition to the “national interests” promoted by the ruling elites of every country as justification for war.

10. The essential cause of militarism and war lies in the deep-seated contradictions of the world capitalist system: 1) between a globally integrated and interdependent economy and its division into antagonistic national states; and 2) between the socialized character of global production and its subordination, through the private ownership of the means of production, to the accumulation of private profit by the ruling capitalist class. Powerful consortia of capitalist banks and corporations utilize “their” state to wage a commercial and ultimately military struggle for control of the raw materials, oil and gas pipelines, trade routes and access to cheap labor and markets that are critical to the accumulation of profit.

11. The drive to war is centered in the efforts of the United States to maintain its position as the global hegemonic power. The dissolution in 1991 of the Soviet Union was seen as an opportunity to assert unrivaled US domination throughout the world. It was glorified by imperialist propagandists as the “end of history,” creating a “unipolar moment” in which the unchallengeable power of the United States would dictate a “New World Order” in the interests of Wall Street. The Soviet Union had encompassed a vast expanse of the globe, stretching from the eastern boundaries of Europe all the way to the Pacific Ocean. Thus, the vast regions of Eurasia, occupied by a debilitated Russia and newly independent Central Asian states, were again “in play,” open for corporate exploitation and plunder. The Stalinist restoration of capitalism in China, its police-state repression of working class resistance in 1989 and the opening up of “free trade zones” to transnational investment made available a vast reservoir of cheap labor.

12. The victory of the US and its allies in the Gulf War of 1991 against Iraq was invoked by the ruling classes internationally to legitimize war as the most effective instrument of foreign policy. The *Wall Street Journal* proclaimed: “Force works!” One year later, the Pentagon adopted a defense strategy document which stated that the objective of the US was to militarily “discourage advanced industrial nations from challenging our leadership or even aspiring to a larger regional or global role.”

13. Twenty-five years of unending war, however, have failed either to counter the decline of American capitalism or create a new stable foundation for global relations. Rather, the United States—riven by intractable internal crises and armed to the teeth—has been transformed into the greatest source of international instability. The drive to create a “New World Order” has succeeded only in fomenting global disorder.

Every war launched by the United States has resulted in unforeseen and disastrous complications.

The Geopolitics of Imperialism

14. The relentless and far-flung operations of US intelligence agencies are the practical expression of the fact that no part of the globe is outside the interest of American capitalism. Every continent and every country is viewed through the prism of US imperialism’s economic and geopolitical interests. The American ruling class is focused on developing a strategy to counter every real and potential challenge.

15. Washington identifies China as the most significant threat to American global hegemony. The very development stimulated by transnational investment and the establishment of vast productive capacity has transformed it into the major trading partner of numerous states in the world and the second largest global economy. As its global weight has grown, Beijing has promoted alternatives to the systems of investment and trade currently dominated by the United States and sought international support, including from the European and Asian allies of Washington. The United States fears that developments such as the formation of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and China’s pursuit of its “Silk Road” initiatives in Eurasia will significantly undermine its position in the world economy.

16. Moreover, American imperialist think tanks are preoccupied with indices demonstrating that the Chinese state is acquiring resources, military capabilities and a global reach, which, if unchecked, could rival the US in several decades. China’s need for stable supplies of energy and raw materials has propelled Beijing into forging political relations that have objectively undermined US influence in Asia, Africa and Latin America. The recent Pentagon-commissioned review of the “pivot” or “rebalance to Asia” by the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) asserts, with unconcealed hostility, that “the balance of military power in the region is shifting against the United States.”

17. There is considerable hyperbole, motivated by imperialist interests, in such assessments of the “rise of China.” The country is wracked by explosive social contradictions, with modern cities and the most advanced industrial complexes existing alongside semi-subsistence peasant agriculture, and with staggering wealth existing alongside Dickensian exploitation and enduring backwardness. US intelligence agencies are well aware of, and seek to exploit, factional and regionalist divisions within China—a country with 55 officially recognized ethnic minorities—that arise from conflicts over wealth and privilege between rival sections of its new capitalist class. Notwithstanding its economic growth, the restoration of capitalism in China has rendered the country more vulnerable to the pressure of American and European imperialism.

18. The “rebalance” is focused on the deployment of US and allied military power to permanently threaten China with devastating air strikes against densely-populated industrial centers on its Pacific Coast, and a blockade of the crucial sea lanes into the South China Sea upon which its economy depends. The military dimensions of the “pivot,” which are codified in the Pentagon’s concept of “AirSea Battle,” are aimed at compelling China to bow to US economic dictates. The terms of the Trans Pacific Partnership and President Obama’s declaration that the US, not China, “should write the rules of 21st century trade” embody the predatory interests of Wall Street banks and corporations.

19. The “pivot to Asia” has militarized and destabilized the entire region and will drain vast resources from the United States. In numerous US strategic circles, however, it is dismissed as inadequate. The Chinese regime has pledged to finance the “One Belt, One Road” transport and

energy networks through the former Soviet Central Asian republics, Russia and Eastern Europe, which would establish land and new maritime links to the resources of the Middle East and markets of Western Europe that are not at the mercy of the US military. While the realization of such ambitions depends upon a host of highly uncertain political, financial and technical factors, they are viewed in Washington as an existential threat.

20. The recent CSIS document speculates on the challenge that would be posed if such economic developments consolidated a military and political alliance between Russia and China that dominated Eurasia and then potentially drew in other powers. The CSIS writes: “Whether the Kremlin ultimately bandwagons with China or seeks to balance against its more powerful neighbor will have far-reaching implications.” The US ruling elite already considers the current administration in Moscow and its possession of the residual military force inherited from the former Soviet Union to be an unacceptable obstacle to the unchecked exercise of American power in Eastern Europe, Central Asia and the Middle East.

21. The writings of British imperialist strategist Halford Mackinder (1861–1948) have gained widespread currency among the strategic and military analysts who formulate US foreign policy. In numerous books and articles published in academic journals over recent years, what Mackinder called the “heartland”—stretching from the eastern borders of Germany to the western border of China—is deemed to be of decisive strategic importance to the United States and its Western European allies.

22. Other concepts, such as the “Intermarium” plan of the right-wing authoritarian leader of pre-World War II Poland, Joseph Piłsudski, are also being resurrected. The aim of the Intermarium (“between the seas”) was to establish an imperialist-sponsored alliance of right-wing states, from the Baltic to the Black Sea (including Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Ukraine), to destabilize the Soviet Union. One contemporary advocate of these theories wrote in 2011: “The West needs to be involved with Eurasia, in particular with the ‘New Eastern European’ states of Ukraine, Belarus, and the Caucasian states, as well as the Central Asian states: together, the ‘small Eurasian states.’ In this way the West will be able to create a bulwark against the major Eurasian powers—between Russia’s soft underbelly and China’s back door.” [Alexandros Petersen, *The World Island: Eurasian Geopolitics and the fate of the West*, (Santa Barbara: Praeger), p. 114]

23. The application of such geostrategic plans is evident in both Europe and Asia. A systematic buildup of American and allied military power is underway in the Indo-Pacific against China, while Russia has been confronted with NATO deployments in Eastern Europe and US pledges of military support to the ultra-nationalist regimes in the Baltic states and Ukraine. The American ruling class has drawn the conclusion that the nuclear-armed states in Beijing and Moscow must be brought to heel, sooner rather than later. Washington’s objective is to reduce China and Russia to the status of semi-colonial client states, control the “heartland,” and rule the world.

24. South Asia and the Indian Ocean are critical components of US imperialism’s strategy for controlling Eurasia and the globe. Since the beginning of the century, the US has moved relentlessly to expand its military-strategic presence across the Indian subcontinent, including through the now 15-year-long occupation of Afghanistan; the development of a “global strategic partnership” with India, involving ever-expanding military ties; and the orchestration of regime change in Sri Lanka in January 2015 to install a government even more subservient to Washington. US plans to use maritime choke points to impose an economic blockade on China in the event of a war or war-crisis are dependent on dominance over the Indian Ocean. So, too, is the projection of US military power into East Africa and the Middle East. Last but not least, control of the Indian Ocean is viewed as pivotal because it provides Washington a vice-like grip over the sea lanes that connect East Asia, the Middle East, Africa and Europe, or, to use the words of US strategist R.D.

Kaplan, over the “world’s preeminent energy and trade interstate seaway.”

25. The US campaign to bind India and all of South Asia to its predatory strategic ambitions is inflaming a region already seething with explosive geopolitical, national-ethnic and communal conflicts. Most ominously, it has toppled the balance of power between India and Pakistan, both armed with nuclear weapons, triggering a South Asian arms race. A 2013 report issued by the CSIS exemplified Washington’s indifference to the incendiary impact of its aggressive actions in South Asia. The report stated that a nuclear war between India and Pakistan, in which tens, if not hundreds of millions, died, would “not necessarily have serious grand strategic consequences” for the US and “might well have benefits.”

26. American imperialism is the cockpit of global war planning, but it is only the most concentrated expression of the intractable crisis of capitalism as a world system. European and Japanese imperialism, facing the same internal and external contradictions, are pursuing the no less predatory and reactionary interests of their own ruling classes. All are attempting to exploit American overreach to secure their stakes in what has degenerated into a ferocious battle for the global redivision of world economic and political power. Will Germany remain an ally of the United States or once again emerge as its major enemy on the European continent? Will the always-strained “special relationship” between the United States and Britain fall by the wayside? In the unfolding global conflict, it is impossible to predict with certainty the future alignment of imperialist governments. As Lenin explained during World War I, the imperialist powers “are enmeshed in a net of *secret treaties* with each other, with their allies, and *against* their allies.”

27. Seventy years after the fall of Hitler’s Third Reich, the German ruling class is once again demanding that its state assert itself as the unquestioned overlord of Europe and as a world power. In the face of deeply felt anti-war sentiments within the German population, Berlin is deploying military force to assert its interests in the Middle East and Africa. It is pouring money into rearmament, while apologetics for the crimes of the Nazi regime are being advanced across the political establishment, media and academia, with the aim of justifying the revival of German imperialist ambitions.

28. British imperialism, for its part, sees in the US decline an opportunity to expand the still significant global operations of the banks and finance houses based in the City of London. France is striving to regain its grip over its former colonial dominions in North and West Africa. Italy has plans to reestablish its influence in Libya. Led by Britain, the ostensible “special” US ally, all the major European powers last year signaled their defiance of Washington by joining with China to establish the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. At the same time, growing antagonisms among the European powers—in particular, hostility in Britain and France toward the growing assertiveness of Germany—are fracturing the European Union. The delusion that the continent could be unified on the basis of capitalist relations has been shattered. A referendum later this year on a British exit could set in motion the complete collapse of the EU and the resurgence to the center of European politics of all the unresolved national antagonisms that led to two world wars.

29. While Japan vows unending allegiance to a world order dominated by the United States, the country’s ruling elite is repudiating the post-war restraints on its independent imperialist role and building up its military for the violent assertion of its own ambitions. In 1941, the question of which power would control Asia ultimately drove US and Japanese imperialism to war. The support for US militarism by lesser imperialist powers, such as Canada, Australia and New Zealand, flows from their mercenary decision that, at present, it remains the best means of preserving their economic and strategic interests. US imperialism has also to take into account the positions and military assets of states that barely appeared in its calculations at the end of World War II, such as India,

Imperialism and the Breakdown of Capitalism

30. The tensions and conflicts between rival nation-states are being fueled by the global breakdown of the capitalist system. The ICFI alone made the assessment that the dissolution of the Soviet Union by Stalinism did not mark the triumph of capitalism, but rather the collapse of the critical political mechanism that had facilitated its post-World War II stabilization. The dissolution of the USSR in 1991 coincided with the economic decline of the United States and the inevitable end of Washington's ability to peacefully suppress the inherent contradictions that had given rise to two world wars between the major capitalist powers.

31. Contrary to the claims of the final triumph of the "free market" that followed the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the past 25 years have seen an unending series of crises. The Asian economic crisis of 1997–1998 was followed by the Russian default and the bankruptcy of Long Term Capital Management in 1998 and the bursting of the dot-com bubble in 2001, culminating in the subprime mortgage collapse in the United States and worldwide financial meltdown in late 2008.

32. Over the last seven years, the world's central banks, led by the US Federal Reserve, have funneled more than \$12 trillion into shoring up the position of banks and finance houses. While share values and the nominal wealth of the super-rich have soared, productive activity has continued to stagnate, even as global debt increased by some \$57 trillion. Growth in China, maintained by debt-fueled stimulus policies, is now slowing sharply, driving the collapse of commodity prices. Countries dependent on commodity exports such as Saudi Arabia, Russia, South Africa, Brazil and Venezuela, and even Canada and Australia, are sliding toward economic depression.

33. A more devastating global financial meltdown looms. The *New York Times* noted: "Bad debts have been a drag on economic activity ever since the financial crisis of 2008." Within China, it warned, "troubled credit could exceed \$5 trillion, a staggering number that is equivalent to half the size of the country's annual economic output." The *Times* proceeded to warn that "non-performing loans" in China, the main engine of what global economic growth has taken place since 2008, could lead to \$4.4 trillion in financial losses. Other analysts are issuing dire warnings about the exposure of world finance to the trillions of dollars in credit provided to failing energy corporations.

34. Just as the Wall Street crash of 1929 set into motion the geopolitical tensions that erupted a decade later in World War II, the crash of 2008 has fueled imperialist militarism. The past seven years have witnessed an ever-escalating and increasingly bitter struggle over declining market share and profits among rival transnational conglomerates. A recent report by McKinsey Global Institute, a US-based consultancy firm, expresses American fears over the end of the "golden age" of corporate profitability, due to the combination of global slump, intensifying competition and demands for higher wages from the working class. While profits grew from 7.6 percent of world GDP to 10 percent between 1980 and 2013, McKinsey stresses that conditions will radically alter during the next decade. Established corporations face increasing challenges from companies based in "emerging markets," especially in China. The growth of resistance in the working class is impacting the decades-long decline in labor costs. The McKinsey report concludes: "Governments all over the world will face new questions about what it means to develop a comparative advantage that can last in this fast-changing environment." The ruling class sees military force as one means by which to gain "comparative advantage."

Imperialism, Monopoly and the Financial Oligarchy

35. The year 2016 marks the 100th anniversary of Vladimir Lenin's greatest writings on imperialism, written in the midst of the carnage of the First World War. Imperialism, Lenin explained, was not simply a policy, but a specific stage in the development of world capitalism. "Imperialism is monopoly capitalism; parasitic, or decaying capitalism; moribund capitalism." It is characterized, Lenin stressed, by the "supplanting of free competition by monopoly" and the domination over the economy by giant syndicates and banks, "which command the *entire* world market and divide it 'amicably' among themselves—until war *redivides* it." Imperialism, Lenin wrote, is the dictatorship of finance capital, "which strives for domination not freedom."

36. Lenin's works were written at an early stage of a process that has developed exponentially over the past century. With the globalization of capitalist production, transnational corporations have come to dominate the entire planet, erecting vast production networks and supply chains that exploit the labor of workers all over the world. The dictatorship of finance capital has reached immense dimensions. A study undertaken in 2011 by researchers at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology found that of 43,060 major transnational companies, just 1,318 collectively owned the majority of the world's large manufacturing firms, representing 60 percent of global revenues. Of these, just 147 companies—overwhelmingly the giant banks and investment funds headquartered in the United States, Western Europe and Japan—controlled 40 percent of the total wealth in the network.

37. The process of corporate concentration has only intensified since the 2008 economic crisis. Companies have engaged in a wave of mergers and acquisitions. The year 2015 was a record for such consolidations, reaching a combined value of \$4.9 trillion, surpassing the previous record in 2007 of \$4.6 trillion.

38. Under imperialism, Lenin wrote, "the supremacy of finance capital over all forms of capital means the predominance of the rentier and of the financial oligarchy; it means that a small number of 'powerful' states stand out among all the rest." The tendency toward financialization, and the domination of the "rentier" speculator over all aspects of social and economic life, has assumed vast proportions, nowhere more so than in the United States. While in 1980, only 6 percent of US corporate profits flowed to the finance industry, today it is over 40 percent.

39. The amount of wealth possessed by a tiny handful of the world's population defies comprehension. The richest 62 individuals now own more than the bottom 50 percent of society, or 3.7 billion people. In the United States, the "economic recovery" has benefited only the capitalist class, with the share of wealth possessed by the top 0.1 percent rising from 17 percent in 2007 to 22 percent in 2012, while the income of a typical household has fallen by 12 percent over the same period. This year, it is projected that the top 1 percent of the world's population will control more wealth than the bottom 99 percent.

40. The turn to militarism has greatly widened social inequality and heightened class tensions. Unending increases in military outlays are financed at the direct expense of workers' social rights. Global military spending has already surged to more than \$1.7 trillion, with more than \$600 billion of this squandered by the American state alone.

The Working Class and the Fight Against Imperialism

41. The crisis of the capitalist nation-state system gives rise to two irreconcilable perspectives. Imperialism strives to overcome the clash of economic and geostrategic interests inherent in the capitalist nation-state system through the victory of one world hegemonic power over all its rivals. This is the aim of imperialist geostrategic calculations, and its inevitable outcome is global war.

42. Opposing the geopolitics of the capitalist class, the international working class is the social force that objectively constitutes the mass base for world socialist revolution, which signifies an end to the nation-state system as a whole and the establishment of a global economy based on equality and scientific planning. Imperialism seeks to save the capitalist order through war. The working class seeks to resolve the global crisis through social revolution. The strategy of the revolutionary party develops as the negation of imperialist nation-state geopolitics. The revolutionary party, as Trotsky explained, follows “not the war map but the map of the class struggle.”

43. Capitalism, as Marxism explains, creates its gravedigger. The globalization of production, which has intensified the crisis of capitalism, has led to an enormous increase in the size of the international working class. From 1980 to 2010, the world’s workforce grew by 1.2 billion, to approximately 2.9 billion people, including 500 million new workers in China and India alone. The growth of the working class includes not only the hundreds of millions of new workers in Asia, Latin America and Africa, but also broad sections of the population in the imperialist countries that have been proletarianized. The entire globe is increasingly divided between a tiny layer who own and control the means of production and the vast majority who are forced to sell their labor power on the market.

44. The working class is being thrust into struggles that will inevitably assume revolutionary dimensions. The ruling classes everywhere are impelled to defend their positions by extracting unending “sacrifice” from workers in their “home” national state, in the form of mass unemployment, austerity and the destruction of living standards. An entire generation of youth is being denied a future. Vast resources are being squandered on military expenditures while essential social infrastructure decays, poverty grows, and complex environmental problems are left unanswered.

45. There are clear signs that social tensions, which have built up over the course of decades, are erupting to the surface. The mass movement of workers and youth in Egypt in 2011 signaled the beginning of a new era of revolutionary struggle by the international working class. It has been followed by powerful demonstrations of working class opposition to inequality and corporate exploitation in country after country, from the anti-austerity protests in Europe, to the growth of strikes in China, Russia and South Africa, to the emergence of rebellious sentiments among autoworkers and other sections of workers in the United States.

The Pseudo-Left Agencies of Imperialism

46. There is deep opposition to war among workers and youth internationally. In 2003, as the Bush administration prepared to invade Iraq based on lies, there were mass demonstrations involving millions of people all over the world. That sentiment has not disappeared. What accounts, then, for the fact that over the past decade all forms of protest against war have been suppressed?

47. The answer lies in the pro-capitalist and pro-imperialist politics of what fraudulently poses as the “left.” The anti-war movement of the Vietnam War period was based largely on radicalized sections of the middle class. Over the past four decades, these layers have undergone a

profound social and political transformation. The vast rise in share values—facilitated by the continuous imposition of wage and benefit concessions on workers, the intensification of the rate of exploitation, and the extraction of an ever-greater mass of surplus value from the working class—has given a privileged section of the middle class access to a degree of wealth they could not have imagined at the outset of their careers. The protracted stock market boom enabled imperialism to recruit from among sections of the upper-middle class a new and devoted constituency. These forces—and the political organizations that give expression to their interests—have done everything in their power to not only suppress opposition to war, but also to justify the predatory operations of imperialism.

48. The particular political function of the pseudo-left organizations and their associates is to cover up for the lies of the United States and its allies—whether to justify intervention in the Balkans, Libya or Syria—with the fraudulent arguments of “human rights.” Leaders of the pseudo-left denounce “knee-jerk anti-imperialism” for getting in the way of one or another “Responsibility-to-Protect” (“R2P”) operation planned by the Pentagon. Prominent leaders of the pseudo-left, such as Gilbert Achcar, go so far as to participate in imperialist strategy sessions. Self-promoting Professor Juan Cole publicly offered his services as a soldier for imperialism in Libya. There is nothing new in the cynical invocation of moral and ethical high-mindedness by petty-bourgeois academics, religious leaders and sundry stooges of imperialism to justify the criminal operations of their governments. As far back as the turn of the 20th century, the liberal critic of imperialism, John A. Hobson, scathingly called attention to the role played by the “lie of the soul” in covering for invasions and annexations. As a consequence of such lies, Hobson wrote, “the moral currency of the nation is debased.”

49. Straining to endow their alliance with Pentagon strategists with some form of theoretical and political legitimacy, a broad swathe of pseudo-left organizations has proclaimed Russia and China to be “imperialist” powers. This definition has been plucked from midair, with barely any attempt to explain the historical process through which Russia and China, within the space of just 25 years, changed from bureaucratically degenerated and deformed workers’ states into imperialist powers.

50. Were it merely a matter of expressing political opposition to the regimes in Beijing and Moscow it would not be necessary to employ the epithet “imperialist.” The International Committee of the Fourth International calls for the overthrow of the capitalist states in Russia and China by the working class as an essential component of the world socialist revolution. It has explained that both states are the product of Stalinism’s betrayal of the socialist revolutions of the 20th century and its ultimate restoration of capitalism. The Russian government is the representative of the oligarchs who emerged from the Stalinist bureaucracy after it dismantled the Soviet state and abolished nationalized property relations. Its promotion of “Great Russian” nationalism is the extreme outcome of Stalinism itself, which was a violent and counterrevolutionary repudiation of the internationalist program of Marxism. The Chinese Communist Party regime represents the capitalist elite and police-state bureaucracy that developed from the 1980s and enriched itself by serving as enabler of the corporate exploitation of the Chinese masses.

51. What political purpose, it must be asked, is served by adding the word “imperialist” to descriptions of China and Russia? In practical political terms, it serves very definite functions. First, it relativizes, and therefore diminishes, the central and decisive global counterrevolutionary role of American, European and Japanese imperialism. This facilitates the pseudo-left’s active collaboration with the United States in regime-change operations such as in Syria, where the Assad regime has been backed by Russia. Second, and even more significantly, the designation of China and

Russia as imperialist—and thus, by implication, as colonial powers suppressing ethnic, national, linguistic and religious minorities—sanctions the pseudo-left’s support for imperialist-backed “national liberation” uprisings and “color revolutions” within the boundaries of the existing states.

52. Support for imperialism abroad corresponds to support for the dictates of the financial aristocracy at home. The coming to power in Greece of Syriza (“The Coalition of the Radical Left”) in 2015, and the extraordinary speed with which it adopted the very policies of austerity it claimed to oppose, exposed the nature and role of the pseudo-left internationally. The same function is played by groups such as the Left Party in Germany, the New Anti-capitalist Party in France, the Socialist Workers Party in the UK and the International Socialist Organization and Socialist Alternative in the US. Whether by promoting the Labour Party campaign of Jeremy Corbyn in Britain or the Democratic Party campaign of Bernie Sanders in the US, the aim of these organizations is to block the independent political mobilization of the working class. Their incessant promotion of the identity politics of race, gender and sexual orientation has been the means through which they have gained access to privileged positions and high incomes in academia, the professions, the trade unions and the state bureaucracy. They are linked by a thousand threads to the coattails of the financial aristocracy and are deeply hostile to the working class.

Build the International Committee of the Fourth International!

53. We are approaching the centenary of the 1917 October Revolution. This epochal event in world history—the first socialist revolution and establishment of a workers’ state—was prepared by Marxist internationalists, led by Lenin and Trotsky, who had intransigently opposed the first imperialist world war. The subsequent betrayal of the internationalist program and principles of the October Revolution by the Stalinist bureaucracy led, ultimately, to the dissolution of the Soviet Union. But, despite the tragic fate of the USSR, three ineradicable historical facts remain. First, the 1917 October Revolution vindicated the Marxist assessment of the revolutionary role of the working class and the necessity for the conscious perspective and leadership provided by the revolutionary party. Second, the struggle waged by the Trotskyist movement—both within and outside the Soviet Union—demonstrated that there existed, on the basis of a socialist and internationalist program, a revolutionary alternative to the bureaucratic degeneration of the Stalinist regime. The dissolution of the Soviet Union was not inevitable. Third, the fundamental economic, social, and geopolitical contradictions of capitalism that gave rise to the 1914 world war and the 1917 socialist revolution have not been overcome.

54. The past century has not been lived in vain. The consciousness of workers and young people all over the world has been profoundly affected by decades of unending war and economic crisis. There is a rising tide of struggle against declining living standards, attacks on benefits, widening social inequality and the destruction of democratic rights under the guise of the “war on terror.” The critical task is to bring into these struggles an understanding of the crisis of capitalism as a whole, which finds its most dangerous expression in the imperialist war drive. It is necessary to develop a political leadership in the working class that can unify separate struggles and lay the foundation for the overthrow of the entire socioeconomic system through socialist revolution.

55. World economy and world politics have entered a new stage. The period of capitalist triumphalism that opened up with the restoration of capitalism in Eastern Europe and reached fever pitch with the Stalinist

dissolution of the USSR is over. The speculative house of cards that has underwritten the parasitic wealth of the ruling class is collapsing. The fall of stock market valuations is not only deflating the size of portfolios, but shattering the reputations and credibility of pro-capitalist theorists and political leaders.

56. To the bewilderment and fear of the ruling elite, the developing political radicalization of youth and workers is quickly acquiring a socialist orientation. It would be entirely wrong to equate this initial instinctive impulse toward socialism with a politically developed revolutionary consciousness. But the process of political development—from the initial manifestations of popular anger against capitalist injustice to the understanding of the necessity for the overthrow of capitalism and its replacement with world socialism—is underway.

57. Those parties and personalities that emerge as the initial beneficiaries of political discontent will be overwhelmed by the massive social forces set into motion by the global crisis. The fate of Syriza and its leader Tsipras—universally acclaimed in January 2015 and despised in July—will befall many other political charlatans and misleaders. But it is not sufficient to wait passively and allow events to expose the traitors. It is necessary to undertake the building of the genuine revolutionary party equal to the tasks confronting the working class.

58. This is the political mission of the International Committee of the Fourth International. All our political enemies denounce the International Committee as “sectarian.” For many decades, this epithet has been employed against Marxists by petty-bourgeois opportunists and political scoundrels of all stripes (i.e., liberals, social democratic and laborite careerists, trade union functionaries, pseudo-lefts, reformists scared of their shadows, etc.). By “sectarian” they really mean having a commitment to socialist principles, refusing to enter into political alliances with the ruling class, and being intransigent in the fight for the political independence of the international working class. Trotsky was familiar with such denunciations. He wrote:

The Fourth International, already today, is deservedly hated by the Stalinists, Social Democrats, bourgeois liberals and fascists... It uncompromisingly gives battle to all political groupings tied to the apron-strings of the bourgeoisie. Its task—the abolition of capitalism’s domination. Its aim—socialism. Its method—the proletarian revolution. [*The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International*, (The Transitional Program)]

59. The International Committee of the Fourth International calls for the widest discussion of the analysis presented in this statement. We call on the tens of thousands of readers of the *World Socialist Web Site* to study it and to fight for its widest circulation. We urge that the principles presented in this statement serve as the foundation of the building of a new international anti-war movement. These principles, we reiterate, are:

- The struggle against war must be based on the working class, the great revolutionary force in society, uniting behind it all progressive elements in the population.
- The new anti-war movement must be anti-capitalist and socialist, since there can be no serious struggle against war except in the fight to end the dictatorship of finance capital and put an end to the economic system that is the fundamental cause of militarism and war.
- The new anti-war movement must therefore, of necessity, be completely and unequivocally independent of, and hostile to, all political parties and organizations of the capitalist class.
- The new anti-war movement must, above all, be international, mobilizing the vast power of the working class in a unified global struggle against imperialism.

60. The great historical questions arising from the present world situation can be formulated as follows: How will the crisis of the world capitalist system be resolved? Will the contradictions wracking the system end in world war or world socialist revolution? Will the future lead to fascism, nuclear war and an irrevocable descent into barbarism? Or will the international working class take the path of revolution, overthrow the capitalist system, and then reconstruct the world on socialist foundations? These are the real alternatives confronting humanity.

61. The International Committee of the Fourth International and its sections welcome fraternal discussion, on the basis of the principles advanced in this statement, with political tendencies and individuals around the world who recognize the urgent need for the building of an international mass movement against war.

- *For the unity of the international working class!*
- *Defend democratic rights!*
- *For equality and socialism!*
- *Stop the drive toward imperialist world war with the program of*

World Socialist Revolution!

- *Expand the readership of the World Socialist Web Site!*
- *Educate a new generation of workers and youth in the principles of revolutionary socialist internationalism!*
- *Build new sections of the International Committee of the Fourth International!*



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