

Oppose the Putin government's invasion of Ukraine and US-NATO warmongering! For the unity of Russian and Ukrainian workers!

Statement of the International Committee of the Fourth International
24 February 2022

1. The International Committee of the Fourth International and the *World Socialist Web Site* denounce the Russian military intervention in Ukraine. Despite the provocations and threats by the US and NATO powers, Russia's invasion of Ukraine must be opposed by socialists and class-conscious workers. The catastrophe that was set in motion by the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 cannot be averted on the basis of Russian nationalism, a thoroughly reactionary ideology that serves the interests of the capitalist ruling class represented by Vladimir Putin.

2. What is required is not a return to the pre-1917 foreign policy of tsarism, but, rather, a revival, in Russia and throughout the world, of the socialist internationalism that inspired the October Revolution of 1917 and led to the creation of the Soviet Union as a workers state. The invasion of Ukraine, whatever the justifications given by the Putin regime, will serve only to divide the Russian and Ukrainian working class and, moreover, serve the interests of US and European imperialism.

3. In the two major statements that he has made during the past week, Putin has justified his actions by enumerating the provocations and crimes of the United States. There is, no question, much that is factually true in his denunciation of Washington's hypocrisy. But the viciously anti-communist and xenophobic ideology that he invokes and the interests that he claims to be defending are thoroughly reactionary and incapable of appealing to the broad mass of the working class in Russia, let alone in Ukraine and throughout the world. A substantial section of the working class in Russia and Ukraine will be repelled by the cynicism of Putin's glorification of the heroic struggle waged by the Soviet Union against Nazi Germany in World War II while denouncing the October Revolution and the existence of the USSR as a multi-national state.

4. The Biden administration, by refusing to discuss Russia's objections to Ukraine's integration into NATO, used Ukraine as bait. It incited the invasion, which will now be used as a pretext for escalating confrontation with Russia.

5. Biden announced this afternoon a new series of crippling sanctions that he said were aimed at imposing "severe costs on the Russian economy." Putin chose this war, Biden declared, "and now he and his country will bear the consequences."

6. The claim, repeated by Biden, that "our forces are not and will

not be engaged in a conflict with Russia in Ukraine," has no credibility. The US and NATO powers have funneled billions of dollars in military equipment into Ukraine and have armed its fascistic paramilitary forces with the aim of prolonging the conflicts and exacting significant Russian losses. "History has shown time and again," Biden said, "how swift gains in territory eventually give way to grinding occupations, acts of mass civil disobedience and strategic dead-ends."

7. The US and NATO have, moreover, already sent thousands of troops to Eastern Europe, which will be concentrated in the Baltic states of Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia, along with Poland and Romania, all of which are members of NATO. The Pentagon today ordered the deployment of 7,000 additional soldiers to Europe.

8. Mounting external threats, combined with the efforts to strangle Russia's economy, increase the likelihood of expanding the war beyond Ukraine. Biden again declared that in a confrontation involving Russia with any NATO country, the US will use the "full force of American power."

9. This can only mean that not only is nuclear war possible, but the danger is far advanced and greater than at any previous time in history. Biden stated today that relations between the US and Russia have completely broken down, declaring that, amidst the danger of a catastrophic European and global war, he has no plans to call Putin.

10. A breakdown of relations has throughout the 20th century been identified with the outbreak of a shooting war. The rupture of diplomatic relations between the US and the Soviet Union never happened during the Cold War. Even during the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962, US President John F. Kennedy and Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev maintained a line of communication. Biden's angry remark that he is not talking to Putin is profoundly irresponsible. Among the major technical innovations in US-Soviet relations, following the 1962 crisis, was the installation of a "hot line" that linked the White House and the Kremlin. The purpose was to avoid a disaster-producing misinterpretation of the opposing side's intentions.

11. That the US and NATO are prepared to take the world to the brink of nuclear war, with all its horrific consequences, testifies to the staggering level of recklessness and aggressiveness that now prevails in all the centers of world imperialism.

12. How is this to be explained? As always, the US media

projects on to whomever it confronts as an enemy the image of pure evil. This explains nothing. The present confrontation with Russia is the outcome of a geopolitical strategy pursued by the United States since the dissolution of the USSR 30 years ago. Its aim has been US global hegemony, using military power to offset economic decline. This has been the source of the numerous and unending series of wars launched by the US, involving the invasion and/or bombing of Iraq, Somalia, Serbia, Afghanistan, Libya and Syria. Of course, this history of illegal wars goes unmentioned in the media today.

13. These wars have all ended in tactical and strategic defeat, undermining the US's striving for global hegemony. These failures have increased US anxiety over the challenge it faces from larger powers, including Russia—which occupies a vast portion of strategically critical Eurasia coveted by the United States—and, above all, China.

14. But the major impulse for the provocation of this crisis has been the COVID-19 pandemic, which has brought the social and political crisis within the United States to a boiling point. The death toll in the US from the pandemic is approaching 1 million. The Omicron variant has caused the second-highest number of deaths of any surge in the US, with over 2,000 dead every day over the past month.

15. Globally, in just the past two months over 150 million people have been, according to official figures, infected with Omicron and 500,000 have died worldwide, with the US, Russia and Germany among the top five countries in terms of infections. Official figures, however, fail to capture reality. The Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation estimates that there have been at least 2 billion people infected since mid-December, and the *Economist* estimates that there have been at least 2.2 million excess deaths over the same period.

16. The intensified stress placed by the pandemic on a society already torn by extreme social conflict has brought the political system to the point of breakdown, exemplified in the attempted coup of January 6, 2021. The Biden administration, which has publicly expressed its fear that US democracy may not survive the decade, is hoping to manufacture domestic unity and project conflict outward through the medium of war. It wants to change the subject.

17. The American crisis is only the most extreme manifestation of the crisis of world capitalism. Capitalist Russia, along with the imperialist powers of Europe, confront a deepening political crisis and are turning to war as a means to divert internal tensions outward.

18. The danger of a catastrophe can only be averted by the action of the working class, within the US and throughout the world, on the basis of a revolutionary socialist program.

19. A fundamental principle of this program is the rejection of the defense of the “national state,” a historically obsolete political structure, the existence of which is in contradiction to the dominance of world economy and the global interdependence of the productive forces.

20. As Leon Trotsky, the great Russian revolutionary and founder of the Fourth International, explained in 1934, in the crisis-stricken years between World Wars I and II:

The defence of the national state, first of all in Balkanised Europe—the cradle of the national state—is in the full sense of the word a *reactionary task*. The national state with its borders, passports, monetary system, customs and the army for the protection of customs has become a frightful impediment to the economic and cultural development of humanity. The task of the proletariat is not the defence of the national state but its complete and final liquidation.

21. Trotsky added, “Not to bind itself to the national state in time of war, to follow not the war map but the map of the class struggle, is possible only for that party that has already declared irreconcilable war on the national state in time of peace.” To follow “the map of the class struggle” means to root opposition to imperialism in the fight to unify the international working class in opposition to exploitation, inequality and the capitalist system.

22. The ICFI calls for an immediate end to the war. In opposing the invasion of Ukraine, we denounce the policies of US/NATO imperialism, whose claims to be defending democracy and human rights are blood-drenched with hypocrisy.

23. The public mood is not the same as it was in the 1990s. Masses of people have gone through the experience of the past three decades of unending war. The overwhelming sentiment in the working class throughout the world is opposed to war. The criminal policies of the ruling class during the pandemic, which have led to the deaths of nearly 6 million people, along with the massive growth of inequality and surging inflation, are fueling social anger and opposition throughout the world.

24. This opposition, however, must be developed as a conscious political movement for socialism. This means the building of the International Committee of the Fourth International and its affiliated Socialist Equality Parties in every country.

On Saturday, February 26, the World Socialist Web Site is hosting an international online webinar, “Fight COVID and Save Lives! Stop the Drive to World War 3!,” which will be addressed by leading members of the International Committee of the Fourth International. We call on all our readers throughout the world to register and make plans to attend this critical international event.



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