“We can’t let nuclear war break out”: US workers respond to conflict in Ukraine

Our reporters
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Workers across the United States are responding with growing anxiety and apprehension to the outbreak of war in Ukraine, while voicing skepticism about the hysterical war propaganda being stoked by the Biden administration and the corporate media.

In its statement released Thursday, “Oppose the Putin government’s invasion of Ukraine and US-NATO warmongering! For the unity of Russian and Ukrainian workers!,” the International Committee of the Fourth International, which publishes the *World Socialist Web Site*, wrote, “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.”

This was reflected in discussions that the WSWS held on Thursday with workers, a selection of which we publish below.

BNSF railway worker

“I think we’re headed towards a long drawn-out conflict in Europe. I feel for the people that live there. I think we should have listened more when Putin talked about demanding that Ukraine never join NATO. Other than how I feel about Putin personally, that’s what we should have done diplomatically. I understand that he has legitimate gripes about that.

“Here in the United States, I just think with the attack on the working class and the income divide we have, I don’t want to say it’s past a solution, but with the current governing principles of this country, and the bipartisan attack on the working class, in favor of corporations, I just feel like…in our country, we are some of the least valuable workers in the world because of the wealth and the income gap. As a person that grew up under the ‘Star-Spangled Banner’ and believing that you get out of your country what you put into it, it’s hard to believe that anymore. The idea that hard work makes you rich, that’s BS.”

Clare, an Alabama educator

“I have absolutely no respect or any kind words for Putin, but I can say the same about Biden as well, because he egged this on. He turned his attention against his constituents and his own country to get involved in this.

“Now we have the whole world looking at us, pointing the finger at Putin. Biden says ‘we won’t be sending troops in’ but he has already mobilized troops across Europe, strategically around Russia’s borders. That’s an automatic indication that you are preparing for war. Russia might look at that and say, ‘See? They do want war.’

“The US has no businesses doing this. If Biden cannot take care of his own country, why is he getting involved in this? You can’t just turn your attention away from the 900,000-plus citizens who have died of COVID. How can he tell other countries what to do? The US suddenly has money to mobilize troops, but it doesn’t have money to take care of people during this pandemic?

“Governor Kay Ivey [in Alabama] said, ‘We need to pray for people of Ukraine.’ Well, she needs to pray for people right here, after she turned a blind eye on teachers, students and parents here who got sick and died from the pandemic.

“Workers should continue to stand up for themselves, continue the fight to do whatever it takes to end this pandemic and mobilize against a war. In Russia, the workers are still facing the pandemic, they do not want war. In the US, the government will tell the working class it needs to prepare for war, but we are already treated terribly during non-wartime. If we continue to protest, we’ll be looked at as ‘unpatriotic.’ But there is a war right now at home that needs to be fought against the pandemic. And they are ignoring our voices.”

A trucker in southeast Michigan

“A lot of people are very skeptical of the lies about Russia, which is good, because you should always be skeptical of what

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the ruling class is telling you. You should also always be trying to see what is really going on.

"It's just such a hollow, rickety narrative that they're trying to construct here. You cannot possibly look at it in good faith and think that they are telling you the truth. When they are pressed just the slightest bit and the reporter asks what evidence do you have, they say, 'We have the evidence, and that's all we're going to say, and stop asking questions.' Any sane person can look at that and say, 'Something is not right here.'

"It's common knowledge now that the weapons of mass destruction in Iraq were a lie. Nobody believes this narrative they're trying to tell us. They have to make this thing up from scratch. There is not a lot left from the Cold War propaganda for them to grab onto, but it doesn't stop them from trying. In my generation, we were born around the time that the Soviet Union collapsed. So the communist bogeyman has not been around my whole life.

"The fact that they are willing to commit to this big lie now shows me that they are totally set on what they are going to do and how little they take into consideration the attitude and role of the American people.

"The pandemic made it clear that they don't care what the people want or what they are saying or what's in our best interest. If they want to go to war, then they are going to war. Nothing is going to stop them short of working class revolution.

"As crazy as it sounds, I didn't think anything could surpass the pandemic. But this is threatening to be an even more urgent issue with a nuclear holocaust possibly on the horizon. Nothing could be more important than opposing this war drive. We have seen their recklessness already, especially the United States. Who is the only country to ever use nuclear weapons? It's the United States. At that time Japan was already in the process of surrendering. It was pretty much like a show of force.

"We can't let nuclear war break out. It would be nice to believe that the ruling class is not crazy enough to actually take it that far. We cannot afford that comfort. Frankly, I don't have any faith in that point of view. I think it is a false sense of security to think that they would not provoke a nuclear war. Even if they think they will try to contain it, and it won't have to be a nuclear war, that's just an impossibility."

An auto parts worker from Flint, Michigan

"It's just like with COVID, all they care about is the money. They say we need war. We have to provide guns and ammunition, everything, ships to get them over there, fuel, food for our soldiers. It all costs money. And somebody is making a bundle. Our schools get cut. We get cut. Our taxes go up. All because of war. They provoke these wars so that they can ask Congress to open up the funding.

"When it comes to providing supplies to fight the pandemic, they say they don't have the funding. But when it comes to war, all of a sudden, they have all the money they need. They don't have money to fight hunger, or homelessness.

"These army families get tied up in what the government is saying. That's how they get us every time. Back in the Gulf War, with daddy Bush and little Bush, all the way back to Reagan, they lied to us many times.

"A lot of people are waking up to what's going on. I was speaking to a friend of mine, and I explained that everybody has his breaking point and you haven't got to yours yet. Mine was losing my brother to COVID-19. I can accept some things, and some things I just can't accept.

"The way they are treating teachers and autoworkers, doctors and nurses, anybody that has to go to work, they are not getting a fair shake. Just like my brother, even though he had diabetes and they knew the plant was full of coronavirus. But people have to work because they won't be able to provide for their family if they don't. I can understand where a lot of other people are frustrated, scared, nervous, especially now that there is war time in the middle of the pandemic. It's very stressful.

"When I think about the political parties, I don't believe any of them anymore. They poisoned my daughter in the Flint water crisis. We still don't know the full impact of that."

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 event.*

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