

Speech to the December 10 IYSSE anti-war rally

# The pro-imperialist pseudo-left backs US-NATO war against Russia

Tom Scripps  
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*The following are the remarks by Tom Scripps to the December 10 rally, “For a Mass Movement of Students and Youth to Stop the War in Ukraine!” organized by the International Youth and Students for Social Equality.*

*Scripps is the assistant national secretary of the Socialist Equality Party in the UK. For more information on joining the IYSSE, visit [iysse.com](http://iysse.com).*

Wars force into the open the real class interests that political tendencies represent.

With the outbreak of the First World War in 1914, social democratic parties around the world organised in the Second International lined up behind their own national war efforts. The vote of the German Social Democratic Party, the largest in the world, for war credits was an epochal betrayal of the socialist movement.

Only a small group of revolutionary internationalists, led by Vladimir Lenin, stood against the tide and fought for a united struggle of the international working class against their national ruling classes, under German socialist Karl Liebknecht’s immortal phrase, “The main enemy is at home!”

It was this political fight which prepared the Russian Revolution of 1917, whose seismic impact brought an end to the bloody slaughter.

In 1914, Lenin wrote “The War and Russian Social Democracy,” denouncing the French social democrats who claimed to be waging a defensive war against German aggression and the German social democrats who claimed to be fighting Russian despotism.

He explained, “It is primarily on Social-Democracy that the duty rests of revealing the true meaning of the war, and of ruthlessly exposing the falsehood, sophistry and ‘patriotic’ phrasemongering spread by the ruling classes, the landowners and the bourgeoisie, in defence of the war.”

What is the “true meaning” of the war in Ukraine, which has been buried under a mountain of lies?

In 2014, American and European imperialism helped to

bring to power an anti-Russian regime in Ukraine, resting on armed groups of fascists. The geopolitical strategists and military planners in Washington intended to use Ukraine as a proxy against Russia, threatening its geostrategic vital access to the Black Sea.

Vast resources were poured into Ukraine’s military. Support was given to its ambitions against Russia in Crimea, and discussions were held on NATO membership. With the war now underway, these shipments have massively increased, while NATO has expanded further eastward in Scandinavia.

The United States is taking vast strides in its pursuit of global hegemony through the subjugation of Russia, and ultimately, China.

None of this is changed by the fact that Russia invaded Ukraine on February 24, 2022. Yet this is what the myriad pseudo-left tendencies equating Russia and the NATO imperialist powers would have workers and young people believe.

Resting on the facile argument that Russia fired the first shot, these organisations echo NATO’s propaganda with denunciations of “Russian imperialism,” identifying the Kremlin rather than Washington as the state with designs on Eastern Europe and Eurasia.

The characterization of Russia and of China as “imperialist” serves to legitimize a policy of breaking these countries up into a series of puppet regimes, with their vast oil, gas and mineral resources to be controlled by the US and NATO imperialist powers. That is why these tendencies never place the war in the context of the three decades since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, in which the US has waged an uninterrupted series of wars to open up the entire world to its predatory ambitions.

Were it simply a matter of denouncing the Russian invasion, then, as we explain in our statement, there are ample grounds to do so “without capitulating to the reactionary and deceitful narrative concocted by NATO and

the Western corporate media.” But in the name of supporting Ukraine’s supposed war for self-determination against Russian “imperialism,” the pseudo-left groups lend support to the US and European powers’ proxy war against Russia waged by far-right Ukrainian forces.

Lenin and his co-leader of the Russian Revolution, Leon Trotsky, wrote scathingly of those who argued this way during the First and Second World Wars.

In a 1915 resolution on World War I, Lenin wrote, “The question of which group dealt the first military blow or first declared war is immaterial in any determination of the tactics of socialists. Both sides’ phrases on the defence of the fatherland, resistance to enemy invasion, a war of defence, etc., are nothing but deception of the people.”

In “War and the Fourth International,” written in 1934, Trotsky denounced as a delusion “the concept of national defence, especially when it coincides with the idea of the defence of democracy.”

He explained, “The character of war is determined not by the initial episode taken by itself (‘violation of neutrality,’ ‘enemy invasion,’ etc.) but by the main moving forces of war, by its whole development and by the consequences to which it finally leads.”

Lenin’s great insight was to connect the social chauvinist betrayal of the Second International to its socioeconomic origins: the pressure on the revolutionary vanguard of a privileged strata of the petty bourgeoisie, including a labour aristocracy, grown accustomed to the standard of life afforded by the plundered wealth of their national state.

Today, the pseudo-left’s response to the war in Ukraine expresses even more directly the interests of the affluent middle class—a social layer which has travelled far to the right in recent decades. They are viciously hostile to socialism, hooked on rising stock markets which depend on the suppression of the class struggle, and increasingly aligned with the capitalist state.

This is the yawning class divide separating the Trotskyists of the ICFI and the IYSSE from every other political tendency, which all act to tie the working class to this reactionary milieu.

In the UK, this found consummate expression in recent years in the support of every pseudo-left tendency for Jeremy Corbyn, whose leadership of the Labour Party was meant to mark a socialist revival.

Instead, Corbyn and his supporters surrendered to the right wing on every question of principle, above all in their abandonment of opposition to NATO and the Trident nuclear weapons system.

The Labour Party is now firmly in the hands of the warmonger Sir Keir Starmer, who declares its “unshakeable support” for NATO. Corbyn is no longer permitted even to

sit as one of its MPs.

Today’s rump of 11 Corbynite MPs have prostrated themselves before Starmer’s warmongering, withdrawing their support from a Stop the War Coalition open letter criticising NATO within an hour of him telling them to do so.

In 2003, prior to the Iraq War, the Stop the War Coalition led a protest of more than a million people. Today, having crumbled under the first salvo from the Labour Party and the bourgeois press, it barely functions.

Corbyn himself makes an occasional personal call for a negotiated end to the war, while reassuring the CIA’s own Radio Free Europe that Labour under his leadership would still be “supporting Ukraine’s right to defend itself” and declaring that he did not “blame NATO for the fact Russia has invaded Ukraine.”

The International Committee of the Fourth International bases its response to the NATO-Russia conflict on the understanding that the same conditions which give rise to war give rise to social revolution, bringing the international working class onto the field of battle.

In its 2016 statement “Socialism and the Fight Against War,” the ICFI set out the principles on which a new socialist mass anti-war movement would have to be built. Above all, we insisted, “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.”

Right now in the UK, hundreds of thousands of workers are engaged in national strike action on a scale not seen for generations—millions have balloted for action. This is part of an international upsurge of the class struggle driven by a collapse in living standards intimately connected to the imperialist war.

The International Youth and Students for Social Equality is determined to politically prepare the developing struggle of the working class against the imperialist warmongers. Make the decision today to join this fight for genuine socialism.



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