

Speech to the December 10 IYSSE anti-war rally

To fight for the future we must fight for socialism!

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The following are the introductory remarks by Gregor Link 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. Link is a member of the IYSSE in Germany. For more information on joining the IYSSE, visit iysse.com.

Welcome to the international online rally, “For a mass movement of youth and students to stop the war in Ukraine,” hosted by the International Youth and Students for Social Equality.

My name is Gregor Link, and I’m a member of the IYSSE in Germany. The IYSSE is the youth movement of the International Committee of the Fourth International, the Trotskyist party of world socialist revolution.

This rally aims to unite youth and working people across the world against the war in Ukraine, which threatens to escalate into World War III. The interaction between the imperialist militarism of NATO, recklessly pursuing its global geopolitical agenda whatever the consequences, and the increasing desperation of Russia’s oligarchic capitalist regime, threatens to escalate into a nuclear conflagration. This week’s drone attacks on two Russian airbases mark another ominous escalation.

The US-NATO proxy war in Ukraine must be stopped immediately, before it results in a global catastrophe that would end human civilization.

The well-known saying that “truth is the first casualty of war” is being vindicated. Every aspect of this war, as it is justified by the NATO powers and the media they control, is based on lies. There is no examination of the historical origins of the war, let alone the geopolitical and economic interests of the governments that are waging it. The news accounts consist of nothing but propaganda.

Our rally will explain how the war in Ukraine was planned and how it was launched. Leading members of the IYSSE internationally will lay bare the roots of the evolving conflict. They will uncover the social forces responsible for it and the political and economic motives underlying its ongoing escalation. Speakers from throughout the world will elaborate a unified socialist perspective for youth and workers to fight against war, drawing on the lessons of history and the entire heritage of revolutionary internationalism.

The standpoint of this rally is unconditional opposition to all the governments waging this war. The IYSSE’s exposure of the instigation of this war by American imperialism does not lessen our opposition to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, which is being waged by the Putin government not in defense of the Russian working class, but in the interests of the country’s oligarchs.

We condemn the wanton killing of Ukrainian civilians, who are not responsible for the criminal policies of the Kiev government and its NATO sponsors. We reject the Putin regime’s appeal to Russian nationalism, which revives a reactionary ideology that was repudiated by the working class when it overthrew capitalism in the socialist revolution

of October 1917.

The IYSSE thus opposes the Russian invasion of Ukraine from the socialist left, not the imperialist right.

The aim of this rally is to provide you with the understanding necessary to build a movement against the war, stop the killing, and prevent the escalation of the conflict into a nuclear third world war. What is at stake is the continued existence of the planet and the future of the young generation.

The central theme of this rally is that the war cannot be stopped by appealing to the capitalist ruling classes. NATO does not want “peace.” It wants war. Having deliberately provoked the conflict through decades of NATO expansion toward Russia’s borders and the massive arming of its corrupt satellite regime in Kiev, the imperialist powers are determined to exploit the Kremlin’s miscalculated, politically reactionary and disastrous invasion of Ukraine to the hilt.

The propaganda that the war is being waged for liberty and human rights—repeated endlessly by a compliant capitalist media—is a pack of lies. The US and NATO do not care one iota for the lives of workers and youth in Ukraine and regard them as mere pawns in their murderous proxy war against the Kremlin.

The aims of American imperialism are to dismantle and subjugate Russia, gain unrestricted access to the country’s vast supply of strategic resources, and thus obtain decisive control over the Eurasian landmass. After 30 years of US-led wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya and Syria—wars that killed millions and displaced tens of millions—the target of Wall Street and the Pentagon is increasingly turning towards America’s strategic rivals. In the eyes of Washington’s war planners, the slaughter in Ukraine is merely a prelude to war against China and “great power conflict.”

The European powers are aggressively pursuing their own imperialist agendas. Just as the US and Canada, they have sabotaged all negotiations between Russia and Ukraine, rejected any ceasefire and are actively escalating the war. Planning to bring Ukraine under EU and NATO influence, they have shown total callousness toward the fate of the Ukrainian people. The German government seized on the war to launch the largest rearmament campaign since Hitler—which was long in the making—and aims to become Europe’s largest military power. Eighty years after the Nazi war of annihilation against the Soviet Union, German imperialism is again sending tanks into Ukraine against Russia.

The German ruling class invaded Ukraine twice in the 20th century and murdered millions of its citizens. In total, the genocidal campaign of the fascist armies of Nazi Germany brought death to 27 million citizens of the Soviet Union and more than six million Jewish people. The current war campaign stands in this tradition—the fighting today even occurs in many of the same places. Together with its American, Canadian and British allies, Berlin is arming the political heirs to the Nazi Wehrmacht’s

collaborators in Ukraine, combined with a breathtaking campaign of trivializing the Nazi crimes.

The European ruling classes are determined to expand their territories, markets and global influence, intensifying tensions among the NATO powers themselves. From the Baltic Sea to the eastern Mediterranean, the inter-imperialist rivalries that gave rise to two world wars are breaking up again—in Europe, but also around the world.

In our statement, we called attention to the fact that the capitalist oligarchs have twice in the 20th century made clear that they were willing to sacrifice millions of people in pursuit of their profits. People on broad swathes of the world's surface witnessed barbarism on a scale never before seen in history. We wrote:

World War I, which erupted in 1914, resulted in the death of more than 20 million people. Imperialism introduced the world to the horrors of trench warfare and poison gas and the murderous technical innovations of aerial bombardments, submarines armed with torpedoes, and tanks.

But the horrors of that global conflict proved merely a prelude to the barbarism of World War II, which began in 1939, only 21 years after the end of the First World War. The Second World War witnessed, as a matter of official and deliberate policy, the mass extermination of civilian populations. This included the industrialized genocide of the Holocaust and the fire-bombing of major cities (...), and culminated in the dropping of atomic bombs by the United States on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The scale of death virtually defied comprehension.

A third World War—which is developing rapidly—would be waged with advanced nuclear weapons and would not cost millions, but billions of lives. It would directly escalate every existing conflict and involve all countries on earth. Mega-cities like Shanghai, New York, Berlin and Moscow would be wiped out in minutes. In our statement, we warned:

Anyone who believes that the ruling class is not prepared to sacrifice tens of millions of lives in the pursuit of its geopolitical interests need only consider the experience of the past two and a half years. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the corporate and financial oligarchy rejected the most basic public health measures required to contain the spread of the virus because they impinged on profits. More than 20 million people died as a result.

This capitalist policy of mass murder, which fueled the pandemic, is now taken to an almost unimaginable level. Having declared it necessary to “live with a virus” that is killing millions, the NATO powers and their allies now insist that they will not be “intimidated” by the prospect of a nuclear war that would kill billions.

Leading NATO figures like retired US general Ben Hodges openly declare that the further escalation of the war is set to lead to the “total collapse of the Russian federation”—that is, the violent break-up of the country with the world's largest nuclear weapons arsenal.

To spell out this danger, however, does not in any way constitute an accommodation to the Putin regime. As I have already stated, we unequivocally oppose the Russian military's intervention, which further escalates the war and has no progressive character whatsoever. The military invasion of the Kremlin benefits the capitalist oligarchy in Russia. A comrade from Russia will speak to this question in more detail.

Reviewing the lessons of the monumental betrayals of the Second and

Third Internationals, which facilitated the imperialist descent into World Wars I and II, the great revolutionary socialist Leon Trotsky concluded in 1934, “To enable the peoples to live, the structure of the national state must be razed to its foundations.” He went on:

A “socialist” who preaches national defense is a petty-bourgeois reactionary at the service of decaying capitalism. 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. Only by realizing fully the objectively reactionary role of the imperialist state can the proletarian vanguard become invulnerable to all types of social patriotism. This means that a real break with the ideology and policy of “national defence” is possible only from the standpoint of the international proletarian revolution.

This is the internationalist, socialist perspective of the IYSSE and the ICFI that must now be fought for. The Socialist Equality Party in Germany will put this fight at the heart of its upcoming election campaign in Berlin, the world capital of imperialist crimes. We base ourselves on the tradition of revolutionary socialist internationalism, that of Luxemburg and Liebknecht, of Lenin and Trotsky.

The only force that can stop World War III is the international working class, the broad mass of people on this planet which is increasingly entering into struggle. Apart from the independent intervention of this most powerful social force, this war will go on and escalate. It will not be ended by the ruling class—they have made their decision. We must bring an end to it because the future of all of humanity is at stake. In our statement we write:

Four hundred years ago, Shakespeare's Hamlet posed the fundamental existential question: “To be or not to be?” In the present-day world, this question is raised not as a matter of philosophical speculation, but rather as the supreme political challenge confronting mankind. In addition to the danger of nuclear war, climate change and future pandemics threaten the lives of hundreds of millions of people in the coming decades. The working class must put an end to capitalism before capitalism puts an end to the world.

These are the fundamental questions that our generation faces. The IYSSE calls on youth in all countries to turn to the working class and build this international anti-war movement, in all factories, workplaces, schools and universities.



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