

Stop the war in Ukraine! Mobilize the international working class against imperialism!

International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE)
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The following statement was issued by the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) in advance of demonstrations called for March 18 to oppose the war in Ukraine.

The International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE), the student and youth movement of the International Committee of the Fourth International, gives critical support to the demonstrations called for March 18 to oppose the war in Ukraine.

We encourage the broadest participation of students, youth and workers in these protests, which are being held in Washington D.C. and other cities throughout the country.

The March 18 demonstration, which coincides with the 20th anniversary of the US invasion of Iraq, has been called by a wide array of progressive and reformist organizations, including the Answer Coalition, Code Pink and The People's Forum. The demonstration's demands include the call for the abolition of NATO, opposition to war with China, and support for the allocation of resources to meet social needs at home. These demands are directed toward the Democratic Party, with the aim of pressuring this imperialist organization of the ruling class to negotiate an end to the war that it instigated. The IYSSE opposes this orientation. Nevertheless, the IYSSE views the demonstration, despite its political limitations, as a positive expression of the expanding and growing movement against the escalating US-NATO war against Russia.

There is a fundamental difference between this demonstration and the reactionary "Rage Against the War Machine" rally held last month, which was organized on the basis of an alliance with the extreme right and openly neo-Nazi forces. The IYSSE denounced and opposed that event. The claim that an anti-war movement can be built with anti-Semites and fascists is as absurd as it is politically reactionary and dangerous. The main effect of the February 19 rally was to disorient and pollute public consciousness and obscure the fundamental political, social and class chasm separating left-wing opposition from the extreme right.

In endorsing and participating in the demonstration on March 18, the IYSSE seeks to advance a revolutionary socialist strategy that directs the anti-war movement toward an open struggle against capitalism, based on the political mobilization of the working class.

The war being waged by the United States and its NATO allies in Ukraine against Russia is, in its economic and geopolitical essence, imperialist. Like World War I and World War II, the fundamental purpose of the war is to reorganize the globe and redistribute its resources among the imperialist powers.

Already, the war in Ukraine is the bloodiest conflict in Europe since the end of World War II. As of early February, US military officials estimated that Ukraine had suffered well over 100,000 casualties, no doubt a significant underestimate.

The entire presentation of the war in the media is based on lies. The

United States and NATO could not care less about democracy in Ukraine or the fate of the Ukrainian people, who are being used as cannon fodder.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022 was reactionary, but it was not unprovoked. It was instigated by the imperialist powers, who over the past three decades have expanded NATO up to Russia's borders and, in 2014, orchestrated a regime change operation in Ukraine spearheaded by far-right and fascistic organizations.

As part of the campaign against Russia, the imperialist powers have continued to promote and arm these fascist forces in Ukraine, who have now been thoroughly integrated into the military and state apparatus. They are deployed not only against the Russian army but also against domestic opponents of the war and the Ukrainian regime.

The war threatens to escalate into a full-scale nuclear cataclysm. Having funneled tens of billions of dollars in military equipment to Ukraine, the US and NATO have staked their entire credibility on the military defeat of Russia. Behind the scenes, there are discussions about the need for another massive escalation, up to and including the direct deployment of NATO troops.

Even as they escalate the war against Russia, the US and European powers are preparing for an even larger conflict with China. The defeat and carve-up of Russia is seen by imperialist strategists as the essential precondition for war with China. The fundamental aim is to secure dominance over the strategically crucial Eurasian landmass and its vast natural and human resources.

Last week, the Biden administration revealed plans for its 2024 budget, with \$1 trillion for war, the largest ever spending on the military. Germany, which invaded Ukraine and Russia twice in the 20th century and murdered 27 million Soviet citizens in the Second World War, has tripled its military budget and is reviving its imperialist ambitions. The UK and France are also engaged in a massive campaign of military rearmament.

The US-NATO war in Ukraine is the continuation and escalation to a new and more dangerous level of the wars waged by the United States since the 1991 Stalinist dissolution of the Soviet Union. This includes the first war against Iraq in 1990-91; the dismantling of Yugoslavia, culminating in the war against Serbia in 1999; the invasion of Afghanistan in 2001; the second war against Iraq in 2003; and the bombing of Libya and the beginning of the US-backed civil war in Syria in 2011.

Seeking to reverse American capitalism's long-term economic decline and suppress mounting internal tensions, the US ruling class views war and the desperate pursuit of global hegemony as the only solution to its problems.

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 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 21 million people died as a result, including more than 1 million in the United States alone.

Opposition to the imperialist powers in this war does not imply any support for the national chauvinism and the military actions of the Putin government. In the final analysis, the war is the disastrous consequence of the Stalinist betrayal of the socialist revolution of October 1917, which culminated in the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, the restoration of capitalism, and the creation of an oligarchic regime of corrupt ex-bureaucrats who enriched themselves by stealing assets previously owned by the Soviet state. Putin is the representative of this reactionary capitalist mafia. The invasion of Ukraine was a desperate effort by the Putin regime to pressure the United States to make concessions to the “security interests” of Russia—that is, to the right of the oligarchs to plunder the vast resources of the country without excessive interference by the imperialist powers.

Those who are demonstrating want to stop the war. But to stop the war requires the building of a political movement targeting its root causes. It is not a matter of appealing to the ruling class and its political representatives, as the organizers of the demonstrations assert in their main slogan—for “negotiations, not escalation.”

The IYSSE advances the following program for a mass movement against war:

Oppose the Democrats and Republicans, the parties of the ruling class!

In the US, the war has the support of both the Democrats and Republicans. For the Democratic Party, it is a continuation of the hysterical anti-Russian policy that it has promoted for more than a decade. The principal basis for the Democrats’ opposition to Trump was over foreign policy, and in particular the demand for a more aggressive confrontation with Russia. This is why the Democrats deliberately focused the first impeachment trial of Trump on Trump’s delay in providing military assistance to Ukraine.

To the extent that there are differences within the ruling class, it is over tactical questions of the primary targets and timing of imperialist aggression. Those who advocate for an alliance with the Republican right and fascists in this conflict in the name of opposing war will have in the end both fascism and war.

A critical role in supporting the US-NATO war against Russia has been played by pseudo-left groups like the Democratic Socialists of America, whose representatives in Congress, including Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and the “Squad,” have voted repeatedly to finance the war.

The DSA and its pseudo-left affiliates and co-thinkers internationally are repeating all the lies used by NATO to promote the war. At the same time, the DSA representatives voted to legalize strike action by railroad workers—confirming that support for imperialism abroad requires the suppression of the class struggle at home. The DSA is not a socialist organization, but a faction of the Democratic Party.

Mobilize the working class against imperialist war!

War will not be stopped by appeals to the ruling class and its governments to “negotiate” an end to the conflict, which is a central demand of the March 18 protests. Any negotiations would be nothing more than a pause or transition to an even more explosive conflict.

The only viable social basis for opposition to imperialist war is the international working class, whose exploitation is the source of all profit and all wealth in society. It is workers, and particularly young workers, who will serve as the cannon fodder in a new world war. Moreover, the war has already produced a massive decline in the living standards of workers, which has spurred the eruption of mass strikes and demonstrations internationally.

Over the past month, millions of workers and youth in France have

protested against the efforts of the government of Emmanuel Macron to pay for increasing military spending by raising the retirement age. In the UK, hundreds of thousands of workers have engaged in strike action over inflation and attacks on the right to strike. In Sri Lanka, tens of thousands have taken to the streets against austerity measures, one year after the eruption of mass protests that drove out the hated government of Gotabhaya Rajapakse.

The United States, the center of world imperialism, is a social powder keg. The Biden administration proposes to spend \$1 trillion in the next budget to escalate the war against Russia and prepare for war against China. At the same time, social infrastructure is starved of resources, producing disasters like the train derailment in East Palestine, Ohio.

Autoworkers, railroad workers, logistics workers, teachers, health care workers and other sections of the working class are seeking to break through the stranglehold of the corporatist trade union apparatus and fight against record social inequality and the massive decline in real wages that is a deliberate policy of the ruling class.

Down with capitalism! For equality and socialism!

Imperialist war abroad and the war on the working class at home both arise out of the nature of the capitalist system, based on the subordination of all of society to the interests of the rich. There can be no serious struggle against war except through a fight to end the dictatorship of finance capital and the economic system that is the fundamental cause of militarism and war.

The war itself arises not out of the strength of American capitalism, but its deep-going crisis. This crisis has been enormously intensified by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has profoundly destabilized capitalist society in the US and throughout the world. While the entire political establishment and media claim that the pandemic is over, every week nearly 3,000 people die from COVID in the US alone.

For all its pretenses of spreading “freedom” and “democracy” throughout the world, only two years ago the United States witnessed a fascist coup attempt, spearheaded by Trump, aimed at overturning the presidential election and establishing a dictatorship. The revival of fascist and far-right movements throughout the world is a component part of the ruling class policy of war and austerity, which cannot be implemented without the most violent forms of political repression.

For the international unity of the working class!

Workers and youth must reject all justifications for war based on the obsolete concept of “national defense.” This applies to both Russia and Ukraine. The drive of imperialism to a Third World War will not be stopped through the support for any capitalist nation-state. This is because imperialist war arises out of the fundamental conflict between a global economy and the capitalist nation-state system itself.

The IYSSE fights for the unity of workers throughout the world, including in Russia and Ukraine, in a common revolutionary movement for socialism. 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 development of the war raises great dangers for young people and for all of mankind. However, the IYSSE bases its program not on despair, but on revolutionary optimism that derives from the understanding that the same contradictions of capitalism that produce imperialist war also produce the growth of the international working class struggle, the basis for social revolution.

The great challenge is to connect this growing objective movement of the working class with the fight against war, to combine opposition to imperialism to opposition to inequality, exploitation, environmental degradation, dictatorship and the capitalist system that is the root of all the crises confronting mankind.

The IYSSE is currently holding meetings in the US and throughout the world to discuss a socialist and internationalist strategy for opposing the

Ukraine war. We urge those participating in the March 18 demonstrations to contact the IYSSE and the Socialist Equality Party.

Join the International Youth and Students for Social Equality! Stop the reckless drive toward nuclear war! Take up the fight for a socialist future without poverty, exploitation, war and all forms of oppression!



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

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