

Stop the state-led censorship of opponents of the US/NATO war against Russia! Defend the IYSSE's Toronto June 4 meeting!

Socialist Equality Party (Canada)
2 June 2023

Take a stand against the state-led censorship of opponents of the US/NATO war against Russia! Click here to sign the petition opposing the far-right campaign to cancel the IYSSE's antiwar meeting in Toronto. All of our readers and supporters in the Greater Toronto Area should also show their support by attending the meeting this Sunday, June 4, at 2:30 p.m. EDT at the Toronto Public Library - Lillian H. Smith Branch, 239 College St Auditorium (basement level), Toronto, M5T 1R5.

Workers and young people around the world must rally to the defence of the International Youth and Students for Social Equality's right to organize a meeting in Toronto, Canada opposing the US-NATO war on Russia. The event, entitled "The war in Ukraine and how to stop it," scheduled to take place on Sunday, June 4, has come under a vicious censorship campaign spearheaded by the far-right Ukrainian Canadian Congress (UCC) and supported by the Ontario Progressive Conservative government.

We urge all readers to sign the IYSSE petition calling on the Toronto Public Library to stand by its stated commitment to allow the meeting to proceed at its Lilian H. Smith branch, and send statements of support to the *World Socialist Web Site*.

UCC members and supporters have contacted the public library and launched a concerted social media campaign smearing the IYSSE as supporters of the reactionary nationalist Putin regime, "anti-Ukrainian," and accomplices in a purported genocide. They have also threatened violence against meeting organizers, including Socialist Equality Party (Canada) National Secretary Keith Jones, who will be the main speaker. One of the most explicit threats was made by the grandson of Stepan Bandera, who led the fascist Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) during World War II. The OUN collaborated with the Nazis during the war of annihilation against the Soviet Union and was complicit in the Holocaust.

The most significant support from the political establishment to date for censoring the meeting came from Ontario Labour Minister Monte McNaughton. He denounced the IYSSE as seeking to "justify Putin's war of aggression" and "whitewash war crimes." Brad Bradford, a candidate in the upcoming Toronto mayoral election who enjoys semi-official backing from the Progressive Conservative provincial government, also called for the meeting to be cancelled.

McNaughton's lies are exposed by the very leaflet that he cites in making this slander. It includes an explicit denunciation of the "reactionary and reckless" invasion of Ukraine, "launched to defend the interests of the Russian oligarchy." However, it states that the war was "instigated by the US and NATO powers with the aim of pursuing longstanding aims."

The open intervention of a government minister in the campaign to shut down an antiwar meeting organized by the IYSSE marks a new stage in the efforts of ruling elites around the world to censor opponents of imperialist war. It follows an unsuccessful attempt by the UCC in March to block an IYSSE meeting at the University of Waterloo, also in Ontario, and efforts by far-right Ukrainian nationalists and their supporters in Australia, New Zealand, Germany and the United States to disrupt IYSSE meetings held to lay the basis for the building of an international antiwar movement led by the working class.

Throughout May, the German media was full of vitriolic denunciations of Roger Waters as the Pink Floyd co-founder took his antiwar "This Is Not a Drill" tour to tens of thousands of fans in Berlin, Hamburg, Munich and Frankfurt. Due to his principled antiwar stance, Waters was targeted for a police investigation in Berlin on spurious charges of antisemitism and relativizing the crimes of the Nazis.

As they carry through a reckless escalation of the war with Russia, bringing the world ever closer to the precipice of a catastrophic nuclear conflagration, the ruling class in the US and its NATO allies feel compelled to ditch any semblance of democratic rights at home. The intensified clampdown against opponents of the war coincides with the imperialist powers' endorsement of provocative strikes by the far-right Ukrainian regime on targets within Russia. Moreover, the deepening crisis of the Kiev regime on the battlefield is increasing the likelihood that NATO troops will be deployed to take part in the fighting, setting the stage for a direct clash between nuclear-armed powers.

The relentless logic of the war's intensification is putting paid to all of the lying propaganda used by the imperialists and their Ukrainian nationalist lackeys to justify it. The very same far-right nationalists who rail against the IYSSE for being "anti-Ukrainian" champion the continuation of a war that has already claimed the lives of 200,000 Ukrainians and forced millions to flee their homes.

The determination of the UCC and the Ontario government to ban the antiwar meeting in Toronto makes a mockery of the incessant blather in the media about the war being necessary to defend “democracy” in Ukraine, where political parties that oppose the war are banned and the fascist Stepan Bandera is hailed as a national hero. The reality is that this is an imperialist war, waged by the US, Canada and their European allies to subjugate Russia to the status of a semi-colony and plunder its natural resources.

It should come as no surprise that Canada takes a leading role in the campaign to censor voices hostile to the war in Ukraine. For over 75 years, the Canadian state has systematically cultivated ties with Ukrainian fascists. In the immediate post-war period, thousands of Nazi collaborators and war criminals were granted the right to settle in Canada. The Canadian historian Irving Abella once aptly remarked that an SS tattoo on one’s arm acted much like a passport when entering Canada in those years.

In the decades that followed, successive Canadian governments funded and promoted the UCC both as an ideological pillar of its anti-communist Cold War policy and to shift politics sharply to the right within the large Ukrainian and Eastern European diaspora populations within Canada, which had traditionally been strongholds for left-wing and socialist ideas. (See: “Canadian imperialism’s fascist friends”)

The historical roots and contemporary importance of the relationship between Canadian imperialism and far-right Ukrainian nationalism is embodied in the person of Deputy Prime Minister Chrystia Freeland. Freeland’s maternal grandfather, Michael Chomiak, was a leading Nazi collaborator and the editor of the only Ukrainian-language newspaper permitted to publish under Nazi occupation, *Krikivski Visti*. Her mother was involved in the writing of the post-Soviet Ukrainian constitution, being just one of many ardent nationalists who were redeployed by Ottawa to Ukraine after the dissolution of the Soviet Union to inject a virulent anti-Russian nationalism into the country.

The UCC enjoys extensive ties to the Liberal government. In addition to Freeland, a former chief executive of the UCC was recently appointed as the chief of staff to Defence Minister Anita Anand. In a March press release demanding that the federal government crack down on antiwar activity, the UCC leadership boasted about extensive consultations with Public Safety Minister Marco Mendicino about censoring “pro-Russian” events and messaging on university campuses.

In a statement on Twitter denouncing the attempt to censor the meeting, SEP (Canada) National Secretary Jones pointed to the close ties between the UCC and the state, noting, “If the UCC can act so brazenly in demanding political censorship and in smearing opponents of the war as ‘apologists’ for Russia, it is because it has intimate ties to the Trudeau government and the entire political establishment. The pro-war establishment claim the US and NATO are defending ‘democracy’ in Ukraine. Yet they cannot tolerate a debate about the war’s historical roots for it would quickly reveal their narrative about an ‘unprovoked war’ for which Putin is solely responsible to be a pack of lies.”

The imperialist war in Ukraine and the ever deepening systemic crisis of global capitalism from which it has arisen are compelling

ruling elites in every country to attack what remains of workers’ democratic and social rights:

- In France, President Emmanuel Macron relied on brutal police repression in the face of mass protests to ram through a savage attack on pensions, which was deemed indispensable in order to pay for hundreds of billions of euros in additional military spending.

- In Britain, the government has illegally imprisoned WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange for over four years in a maximum security prison for exposing the war crimes of the imperialist powers. Strikes in large swaths of the economy, including health care and transportation, have been effectively banned under newly introduced draconian legislation.

- In Germany, the Socialist Equality Party has come under attack for its principled opposition to the war and German rearmament, including when Facebook banned a video exposing the historical origins of the Ukraine war in March 2022 and an unsuccessful effort to cancel an IYSSE antiwar meeting at Goethe University in Frankfurt last month.

The ever more open resort to censorship and dictatorial forms of rule by the ruling elites in every country expresses their weakness and isolation rather than their strength. Confronted with the irresolvable contradictions of the global capitalist system—between the global character of production and the nation state, and between the private ownership of the means of production and their social character—the rival ruling classes of the imperialist powers have no other option but to seek additional markets, resources and profits through a redivision of the world. This leads inexorably towards world war.

But these same contradictions are propelling millions of workers around the world into revolutionary struggles, which create the possibility for a progressive resolution of the crisis. The mass working class struggles developing over the rising cost of living, for decent-paying, secure jobs, and access to desperately needed public services must be connected with the fight to put an end to imperialist war and the capitalist profit system that gives rise to it.

A precondition for the construction of such an international antiwar movement in the working class is the defence of democratic rights against the attacks of the ruling elite and their far-right accomplices, who are determined to violently crush popular opposition. This is why the campaign to defend the IYSSE’s antiwar meeting in Toronto must be seen as an urgent task for workers and young people everywhere.

We urge all readers to sign the IYSSE petition in support of the SEP’s youth movement’s right to hold its antiwar meeting this Sunday.



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