

Stop the war in Ukraine! Build a movement in the working class! Fight for socialism!

**International Youth and Students for Social Equality (US)
28 August 2023**

The following statement was issued by the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (US), the student and youth organization of the Socialist Equality Party, as schools and universities reopen.

In the last days of August and first days of September, millions of children, teenagers and college students in the US are returning to classrooms under the shadow of a spiraling series of crises, including: the escalation of the US-NATO war against Russia over Ukraine, another surge of the COVID-19 pandemic, the developing climate disaster and the rise of fascist forces in the US and internationally.

All are expressions of an underlying crisis, the crisis of the capitalist system. Youth are confronted with the basic fact that, if they are to have a future, they must fight for it. This fight necessarily means a fight against capitalism and for socialism.

The war in Ukraine, now halfway through its second year, has already claimed hundreds of thousands of lives. The Ukrainian “counteroffensive,” directed by the US and NATO powers, has turned into a bloodbath.

The IYSSE has opposed the invasion of Ukraine by Russia, but we have done so from the socialist left, not the imperialist right. The claims in the media that this war was “unprovoked” and that the Biden administration is sending tens of billions worth of weapons to Ukraine to defend “democracy” and “help” the Ukrainian people are lies.

The historical origins of this fratricidal war lie in the 1991 dissolution of the Soviet Union by the Stalinist bureaucracy, which restored capitalism, gave rise to the oligarchic regimes in Ukraine and Russia, and opened up a 30-year period of unending wars launched by US imperialism. Since 1991, NATO has aggressively expanded to Russia’s borders, and in 2014, the US backed a far-right coup in Kiev that brought to power a pro-NATO government which spent the next seven years preparing for war against Russia.

The aim of the imperialist powers in this war is not the “defense of democracy” but the carve-up the entire region, whose vast resources they need to prepare for an even larger conflict with China. This is why generations of Ukrainians are now being sent into the type of mass slaughter unseen in Europe since the end of World War II. From the standpoint of imperialism, their lives are disposable.

The war in Ukraine marks a new stage in the lurch by the imperialist powers towards a new world war and threatens a nuclear catastrophe.

The IYSSE opposes the reckless escalations and provocations of US imperialism, as well as the reactionary nationalism and chauvinism of the oligarchic Putin regime. Along with our comrades in Europe, Russia, Ukraine and throughout the world, we are fighting to end this war by building an antiwar movement of youth and workers, based on the unification of the working class in Russia, Ukraine and internationally.

War abroad means war at home

The war in Ukraine signifies a frontal assault on the social and cultural rights of the working class after three decades of relentless attacks on living standards. Between the proclamation of the “war on terror” in 2001

and the beginning of the war in Ukraine, the US has spent over \$8 trillion on wars. For 2024, the Biden administration is planning a record trillion-dollar war budget.

The money for these wars is being plundered from the working class. In 2020, for the first time, federal funding for the giant weapons manufacturer Lockheed Martin surpassed that for the US Department of Education. While trillions are spent on war, in schools there is a severe shortage of teachers, buildings are dilapidated and students lack elementary learning equipment. In higher education, the arts and humanities are under attack, and large layers of academic workers are being impoverished.

The destruction of the right to education and culture goes hand in hand with the militarization of high schools and universities. At the high school level, working class youth are being lured into the military, which will use them as cannon fodder, or else being driven prematurely into the workforce. At the universities, billions are being poured into research devoted to weapons development and the advancement of US imperialism’s predatory interests.

Young people must fight to stop the war in Ukraine.

- No to nationalism and militarism! For the unity of the Russian, Ukrainian and American working class!

- No money for war! Instead, fund free access to high-quality education and culture for all!

- No to the militarization of high schools and universities!

The US and large portions of the world are now in the midst of a new surge in COVID-19 cases, refuting the lies by capitalist politicians and the media that the pandemic is over. With all COVID-19 mitigation measures dropped, workers and youth are woefully unprepared for the spread of the virus, which continues to evolve into new and dangerous variants.

As schools were opening in the US, over 600,000 people were being infected every day and the hospitalization rate had doubled. Already, school districts in Kentucky and Texas have been forced to shut down schools because of mass infection.

Worldwide, excess death estimates indicate that 24 million people have died from a disease whose spread could have been stopped in early 2020 had world governments launched a globally coordinated program of elimination. Thousands continue to die each day, and hundreds of millions are suffering from Long COVID.

The claim that COVID-19 is not dangerous for children and young people is a lie. In the US alone, it is estimated that at least 2,305 children have died, making the coronavirus one of the leading causes of death among children. The known impact of Long COVID in children is extremely serious, including neurological, psychiatric and cardiovascular complications. With each re-infection, the risk of Long COVID increases.

The fact that an entire generation of young people is being subjected to repeated mass infection with a virus that threatens their immediate and long-term health is a historic crime.

Similarly, no serious measures are undertaken to halt the catastrophic

development of global warming. Biden's response of "no comment" when asked about the thousands of Maui fire victims speaks to the true regard that the capitalist class holds for human life. In all of its policies, its guiding principle is: profits before lives.

What has been a public health disaster for the working class has been a financial bonanza for the rich. According to the 2023 Oxfam report, "Survival of the Richest," since 2020, the richest 1 percent have captured almost two-thirds of all new wealth, nearly twice as much money as the bottom 99 percent of the world's population. Billionaire fortunes are increasing by \$2.7 billion a day.

The pandemic can and must be stopped.

- Public health above private profits!
- For the mass allocation of resources to fund COVID-19 treatment and prevention globally!

Two-and-a-half years after the fascist coup attempt on January 6, 2021, the danger of fascism and dictatorship has only grown. The Republican Party is being transformed into an openly fascist party, and Donald Trump is using the election campaign to develop an extra-parliamentary fascist movement. Across the country, Republican politicians and sections of the state apparatus are waging a campaign of censorship and book banning in public schools, designed to create an atmosphere of fear and intimidation among educators and students.

The danger of fascism is not rooted in the individual Donald Trump. The attack on democratic rights and the rise of fascism is an international phenomenon. The move to authoritarian forms of rule comes not from below but from the top, led by sections of the ruling class and the state apparatus. Like the eruption of imperialist wars, the rise of fascism is rooted in the crisis of the capitalist system. The record levels of social inequality that mark capitalist society in America and throughout the world are incompatible with the maintenance of democratic forms of rule.

Workers and young people must place no confidence in Biden and the Democratic Party. Following January 6, the Biden administration focused on cultivating its alliance with the Republican Party to gut social programs at home and wage war against Russia and China abroad. In Ukraine, the Democratic Party is supporting and arming the fascists of the Azov Battalion. In the US, it has been complicit in the attacks on democratic rights.

To the blatant racism and increasingly fascistic ideology of the Republican Party, the Democrats counterpose the promotion of identity politics and racialist falsifications of American history, as in the *New York Times*' 1619 Project, to disorient and divide the working class.

From the standpoint of the Democratic Party and the American ruling class as a whole, the principal danger is not fascism, but the development of an independent movement by the working class against capitalism.

- Fight against fascism! Defend democratic rights!
- Break with the Democratic Party and capitalist politics!

Turn to the working class and Trotskyism, the Marxism of the 21st century!

Capitalism threatens the future of mankind and the planet itself, but there is a way forward. The IYSSE is fighting for the future by turning to the leading and decisive revolutionary force in the world—the international working class.

The working class is not only an oppressed class, it is also a revolutionary class: It produces all the wealth in society. While the ruling class is increasingly turning toward war, fascism and dictatorship, the international working class is on the move against it. Major struggles of the working class have emerged across the US, Canada, Latin America,

Europe and Asia.

With the dissolution of the Soviet Union by the Stalinist bureaucracy in 1991, an ideologist for the ruling class, Francis Fukuyama, proclaimed the "end of history." By this he meant that all of the insoluble contradictions of capitalism had been resolved, that the questions of fascism and socialism had been settled and that there was no alternative to "liberal capitalism."

At the universities, various forms of anti-Marxism were promoted as "left" or even "Marxist," such as postmodernism and the theories of the Frankfurt School, which reject the scientific study of history and society. Meanwhile, the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) and similar organizations internationally falsely present themselves as "left-wing" or "socialist," while rejecting the revolutionary role of the working class and functioning as nothing more than factions of the capitalist parties and supporters of imperialist war. The objective reality confronting youth today refutes all of these anti-Marxist theories. The international class struggle is surging, and the fundamental questions of the 20th century—imperialist war, fascism and socialist revolution—are again on the agenda in the 21st century. They can only be understood and fought out based on an understanding of the history of the 20th century and, in particular, the history of the Trotskyist movement.

The ruling class celebrations of the final triumph of capitalism were always based on a colossal falsehood: the equation of Stalinism with socialism. In reality, Stalinism represented not socialism and Marxism, but the violent nationalist reaction against the 1917 October Revolution. The Trotskyist movement emerged a century ago in October 1923, when Leon Trotsky formed the Left Opposition in a struggle against Stalinism to defend the internationalist program of the October Revolution.

The International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) is the youth wing of the International Committee of the Fourth International, which was founded 70 years ago, in November 1953. For a protracted historical period, the International Committee defended the program of world socialist revolution and the political independence of the working class against Pabloism and other revisionist tendencies that sought to liquidate the Trotskyist movement and rejected and undermined the struggle for the socialist revolution by the working class. Today, it is the sole representative of Marxism and socialism.

To fight against capitalism and for socialism today means to fight for Trotskyism. We urge all youth at high schools and colleges: Contact us today!

- Take up the study of Trotskyism, the Marxism of the 21st century!
- Turn to the working class!
- Fight for socialism!
- Build the IYSSE!



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact