

Biden's State of the Union message: Get ready for World War III!

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On Thursday, US President Joe Biden delivered his “State of the Union” speech before the assembled members of the US Senate and House of Representatives. Biden’s remarks, consisting of a string of wild assertions, focused on one overriding priority: The escalation of war with Russia.

Biden’s address was torn by the most glaring contradictions, without any semblance of a rational argument. “Not since President Lincoln and the Civil War,” he said at the beginning, “have freedom and democracy been under assault at home as they are today.” Later, he declared, “Our future is brighter... we can proudly state that the state of our union is strong and getting stronger.”

“My predecessor and some of you here seek to bury the truth about January 6,” he said, referring to Trump and Republican Party congressmen who supported the effort to overturn Biden’s own election just over three years ago. Later, he appealed to what he called his “Republican friends” to join him in passing legislation that would implement the most far-reaching attack on immigrants and the right to asylum in US history.

Biden’s presentation of the social and economic situation in the United States was a fantasy. “Wages keep going up; Inflation keeps coming down,” he said, while millions of people are experiencing the exact opposite. “The pandemic no longer controls our lives,” he declared. Contrary to Biden’s fairy tale, the US just went through its second-worst wave of mass infection with the JN.1 variant, which reinfected over 100 million Americans, killed tens of thousands, and pushed rates of Long COVID to new highs.

But the center of Biden’s speech was a wild-eyed appeal for war. In the first minute of his speech, he launched into a shouting rant against Russian President Vladimir Putin, which could serve no other purpose

than to magnify the danger of an uncontrolled intensification of the war. Far from indicating that he sought a negotiated settlement of the conflict, Biden made it clear that the war will continue and become even bloodier.

In a cynical and grotesquely distorted invocation of the State of the Union Address delivered by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt in January 1941, on the eve of the entry of the United States into World War II, Biden shouted that he wanted to “wake up this Congress,” i.e., force it to allocate another \$60 billion to finance the Ukraine war.

“Overseas, Putin of Russia is on the march,” Biden declared, “invading Ukraine and sowing chaos throughout Europe and beyond.” Tens of billions of dollars in further assistance, he said, “is being blocked by those who want us to walk away from our leadership in the world.” Speaking to Putin directly, Biden shouted, “We will not walk away. We will not bow down. I will not bow down.”

The statement that “Putin of Russia is on the march” throughout Europe and beyond is a fabrication. All the fighting that has taken place has been within 100 miles of the Russian border. Throughout the two-year conflict, the Biden administration has relentlessly escalated the war. In recent weeks, the NATO powers have raised the need for sending their own troops into combat, which would mean all-out war with Russia.

The war against Russia is part of an expanding global war, including the escalating conflict with China (“We’re in a stronger position to win the conflict of the 21st century against China than anyone else”) and the genocide in Gaza.

In the middle of his speech, Biden gave an open defense of Israel’s slaughter, which has only been possible with the active financial, military and political

support of the United States. “Israel has a right to go after Hamas,” he said, and “has an added burden because Hamas hides and operates among the civilian population like cowards, under hospitals, day care centers and all the like.” While shedding crocodile tears for the civilians killed, Biden was giving political justification for the murder of more than 30,000 people.

The essential role being played by the trade union bureaucracy in the defense of capitalism and the war program of the government was revealed when Biden called out United Auto Workers President Shawn Fain, who was invited to the speech and sat near First Lady Jill Biden, as “a great friend, and a great labor leader.” Fain worked closely with Biden last year in smothering the opposition of auto workers and forcing through contracts that paved the way for thousands of job cuts. Fain has made repeated references to the need for the unions to be involved in the “arsenal of democracy,” that is, the subordination of the working class to wartime production.

As the ruling class escalates global war abroad, the Democratic Party is relying on the trade union apparatus to suppress the class struggle. “In time of war or revolution,” Trotsky noted in 1938, “when the bourgeoisie is plunged into exceptional difficulties, trade union leaders usually become bourgeois ministers.”

Fain is supported by the Democratic Socialists of America, a faction of the Democratic Party that represents privileged sections of the upper-middle class. Biden’s speech as a whole, and not just the sections on Fain, was clearly prepared for and written by people close to the DSA. This was *their speech*, from the ferocious anti-Russia hysteria, to the empty populist phrases, to the glorification of the trade union apparatus.

Responding to Biden’s State of the Union address, Socialist Equality Party presidential candidate Joseph Kishore warned:

The real “wake-up” call that must be given is a warning that the two-party system of corporate rule is leading America and the world to disaster. The Democrats and Republicans represent two intersecting paths to barbarism. Trump is running to establish a fascistic

dictatorship. Biden is running to make sure that the war against Russia continues, even to the point of a nuclear confrontation.

Their aims complement each other. Fascist dictatorship prepares the ground for war, and the brutal assault on workers’ living conditions required for war creates the necessity for fascist dictatorship.

Workers and young people must break from the entire reactionary framework of the political system, headed by two parties that represent different factions of the financial-corporate oligarchy. This means the fight to develop within the working class, in the US and throughout the world, a socialist leadership to oppose imperialist war, dictatorship and capitalist exploitation through the methods of class struggle and social revolution.

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