Resolution of the Ninth Congress of the Socialist Equality Party

The SEP and the struggle against imperialist war

Socialist Equality Party (US)
13 August 2026

We are publishing here "The SEP and the Struggle Against Imperialist War," the first of six resolutions adopted unanimously by the Ninth National Congress of the Socialist Equality Party (US), held from August 2 to 7, 2026. The resolution was introduced by the opening report to the congress, given by David North, national chairman of the SEP.

1. The Ninth National Congress of the Socialist Equality Party convenes under conditions of escalating imperialist war, deepening economic crisis, the turn of the ruling classes to dictatorship, and a mounting assault on the jobs, wages and social rights of the working class. There is no longer a question of the danger of a world war; its initial stages have already begun. Across the world, the ruling elites are turning to fascism and dictatorship. A concentration of wealth without historical precedent is coupled with a global wave of inflation and the accelerating destruction of jobs, devastating the conditions of life of billions. But the same conditions are driving a political radicalization and the resurgence of the class struggle internationally. It is amid the collision of these two tendencies that the SEP must define its tasks.

2. This Congress meets five months into the US-Israeli war of aggression against Iran, launched in the early morning hours of February 28. The assault began while negotiations between American and Iranian representatives were still underway, and its opening salvo included the assassination of Iran's head of state. As the Socialist Equality Party declared in its statement of March 2, "Stop the criminal US-Israeli war against Iran!," the assault is "a criminal act of war waged in flagrant violation of the United States Constitution and international law"—precisely what was described at the Nuremberg trials of Nazi leaders in 1945–46 as a "crime against peace," the "supreme international crime differing only from other war crimes in that it contains within itself the accumulated evil of the whole."

3. Trump's genocidal declaration of April 7 that "A whole civilization will die tonight, never to be brought back again" will live forever in infamy. On July 11, he threatened to "completely decimate and destroy all areas of Iran." These statements are themselves war crimes under international law. The methods of extermination proclaimed openly from the White House express the barbarism into which the capitalist system is dragging humanity.

4. Successive "ceasefires" and memoranda of understanding have collapsed, each breakdown followed by a new round of escalation. Whatever agreements of a temporary character may be reached, the war is driven by the fundamental geostrategic interests of American imperialism: the domination of the Middle East, its natural resources, and the strategic trade routes upon which the world economy depends. Control of these resources—and the power to deny them to rivals—has been the central preoccupation of American policy in the region for more than seven decades. The war against Iran is the culmination of a bipartisan campaign, waged under every administration since the 1979 Revolution deprived Washington of its puppet regime.

5. This Congress endorses the analysis presented in the opening report to the 2026 International May Day Rally: the war against Iran is "not only another episode in a long series of military operations. The repercussions of this war impart to this conflict an explicitly global character, specifically, a global war waged by the imperialist powers against the international working class." The consequences have been catastrophic for workers throughout the world. The naval blockade of Iranian ports has convulsed world trade and energy supplies, feeding a new surge of inflation on every continent and forcing tens of millions into food insecurity or famine globally.

6. The assault on Iran is one front in a general eruption of imperialist violence, aimed at a redivision of the world. Venezuela was invaded on January 3 and its president kidnapped. At least 221 fishermen and workers have been blown apart in the Caribbean and the Eastern Pacific in the Pentagon's illegal strikes. Cuba is being strangled and threatened with invasion. Israel has initiated a new war against Lebanon. And the genocide in Gaza continues into its third year: the murder of tens of thousands of Palestinian children, the deliberate destruction of hospitals, schools, water systems and housing, and the use of starvation as a weapon of war have reduced an entire society to rubble before the eyes of the world.

7. The escalating global imperialist war is directed above all against Russia and China. There are divisions within the American ruling class over which conflict is to be prioritized, but these are tactical differences within a ruling class united on the essential aim. The vast resources of Russia—its energy, minerals, and territory spanning eleven time zones—are to be conquered and opened to imperialist exploitation. And the central conflict of the epoch remains the long-planned war against China, whose economic rise American imperialism regards as an existential threat. Whatever the differences among its factions, the American ruling class will not accept any challenge to its global hegemony. Trump's $1.5 trillion military budget is, in the most direct sense, a budget for world war.

8. American imperialism is the most disruptive force on the planet. In its drive to reverse its decline, it is breaking up all the relationships and institutions of the postwar order that it once constructed. The United States bullies and extorts its nominal allies, wages tariff war against their economies, demands the annexation of Greenland (the territory of a NATO member, Denmark) and threatens to reduce Canada to the "fifty-first state." Trotsky's warning of 1928 assumes staggering relevance and acuity: "In the period of crisis the hegemony of the United States will operate more completely, more openly, and more ruthlessly than in the period of boom. The United States will seek to overcome and extricate herself from her difficulties and maladies primarily at the expense of

© World Socialist Web Site

Europe, regardless of whether this occurs in Asia, Canada, South America, Australia, or Europe itself, or whether this takes place peacefully or through war." Six years later, Trotsky foresaw that history was bringing mankind "face to face with the volcanic eruption of American imperialism."

9. The European imperialist powers are not bystanders but full participants. The NATO powers are engaged in a de facto war against Russia in Ukraine, escalating toward direct confrontation between nuclear-armed states, and are rearming at the fastest pace since the early 1950s, demanding that a new generation be prepared to fight and die as in the two world wars of the last century. German imperialism once again stands at the head of this drive, adopting war laws that create the framework for conscription and the subordination of civilian life to war production, while Finland has repealed its ban on nuclear weapons, opening its 1,300-kilometer border with Russia to NATO nuclear deployment.

10. The eruption of the present war was foreseen by the International Committee of the Fourth International, whose statements over the past 35 years have a prophetic character. In its manifesto of May Day 1991, "Oppose Imperialist War and Colonialism!," issued in the aftermath of the first Gulf War and as the Stalinist bureaucracy completed the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the ICFI warned that the plunder of the former colonial countries was being resumed. Already in August 1990, on the eve of the first war against Iraq, the ICFI had explained: "It marks the beginning of a new imperialist redivision of the world. The end of the postwar era means the end of the postcolonial era… In its brutal assault against Iraq, imperialism is giving notice that it intends to restore the type of unrestrained domination of the backward countries that existed prior to World War II."

11. Everything that has followed—the unending wars in Iraq, Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Libya, Syria, Yemen, and Ukraine—has confirmed this analysis. As David North wrote in the preface to *A Quarter Century of War* (2016): "The last quarter century of US-instigated wars must be studied as a chain of interconnected events. The strategic logic of the US drive for global hegemony extends beyond the neocolonial operations in the Middle East and Africa. The ongoing regional wars are component elements of the rapidly escalating confrontation of the United States with Russia and China."

12. Every one of these wars intensified, rather than resolved, the crisis of American imperialism. As North wrote in March 2003, at the outset of the invasion of Iraq: "American imperialism has a rendezvous with disaster. It cannot conquer the world. It cannot reimpose colonial shackles upon the masses of the Middle East. It will not find through the medium of war a viable solution to its internal maladies. Rather, the unforeseen difficulties and mounting resistance engendered by war will intensify all of the internal contradictions of American society." Iran will prove no different.

13. Thirty-five years of unending war have failed to reverse the economic decline of American capitalism. The US trade deficit stands at record levels—$1.2 trillion in goods in a single year—and total US government debt is approaching $40 trillion, sustained only by the world's continued willingness to hold dollars. The position of the dollar as the world reserve currency, which allows the United States to command the resources of the planet in exchange for paper, has entered into open crisis. But American imperialism will not accept a diminution of its world position. Confronted with the failure of each war, it responds not with retreat but with ever greater escalation, up to and including nuclear war, which would threaten the destruction of human life on the planet.

14. The fight against imperialist war must be rooted in the working class and based on a socialist and internationalist program. This Congress reaffirms the principles established in the ICFI's February 2016 statement, *Socialism and the Fight Against War*: the struggle against war "must be based on the working class, the great revolutionary force in society, uniting behind it all progressive elements in the population"; the new antiwar movement "must be anti-capitalist and socialist," must be "completely and unequivocally independent of, and hostile to, all political parties and organizations of the capitalist class," and "must, above all, be international, mobilizing the vast power of the working class in a unified global struggle against imperialism."

15. At its root, imperialist war is the outcome and expression of the two essential objective contradictions of the capitalist system itself: first, between private ownership of the means of production and the social character of production; and, second, the contradiction between the global character of economic production and the nation-state system within which political power and capital accumulation continue to be organized. The eruption of imperialist war and the eruption of the international class struggle are products of a single crisis, and the war now underway is preparing revolutionary explosions.

16. The SEP opposes every act of imperialist aggression, and it does so independently of and in opposition to the existing states. It upholds the right of the Iranian people and other targets of aggression to defend themselves against the imperialist onslaught. It rejects the designation of Russia and China as imperialist powers—a designation employed by pseudo-left political tendencies to legitimize the foreign policy objectives vis-a-vis the principal targets of US war plans. But the SEP's principled positions have nothing in common with support for, let alone the attribution of a progressive character to, the Moscow and Beijing regimes.

17. The Putin regime is the political instrument of the capitalist oligarchy that arose out of the Stalinist bureaucracy's dissolution of the USSR and its plunder of state property—the bureaucracy that, as the 2026 May Day opening report stated, "having begun as the gravediggers of the October Revolution, ended as the most venal and rapacious faction of the new Russian oligarchy, led today by Putin." It combines military escalation with appeals for accommodation with the imperialist powers, while its Great Russian nationalism divides the Russian from the Ukrainian working class. The Beijing regime, for its part, presides in the name of "socialism" over the restoration of capitalism and the exploitation of the largest working class in the world, which it fears far more than it fears imperialism.

18. The SEP likewise rejects the theory of "multipolarity" advanced by academic and pseudo-left theorists, according to which the "unipolar" hegemony of American imperialism can be replaced by a consortium of capitalist states presiding harmoniously over a more peaceful division of global resources. The contradiction between the global economy and the capitalist nation-state system leads not to a negotiated equilibrium but to war. Underlying the theory of "multipolarity" is opposition to a struggle against capitalism, the attempt to balance between conflicting capitalist states rather than to mobilize the working class against them all.

19. The fight against imperialist war must therefore be bound up with an international and class strategy. As Trotsky wrote in *War and the Fourth International*, we "follow not the war map but the map of the class struggle." From this standpoint, the most important consequence of the war is the intensification of social tensions within the United States and every imperialist country. As the party foresaw in 2003, the war is intensifying all the internal contradictions of American society—and it is out of these contradictions that the force capable of stopping the war is emerging.

20. Imperialist war is, at the same time, a war against the working class. The resources demanded by world war cannot be extracted from society without the virtual enslavement of its population: the destruction of social programs, the driving down of wages, the militarization of labor and the erection of dictatorship to suppress the resistance these measures provoke. War is the foreign policy of the oligarchy, and the oligarchy makes the working class pay for it—in declining living standards, in the evisceration of democratic rights, and in blood. The fight against dictatorship and the

© World Socialist Web Site

fight against war is one fight, against one enemy.

21. The Socialist Equality Party does not advance an “antiwar policy” as something separate and apart from the fight against the capitalist system. Its strategy has nothing in common with the protest movements that appeal to the conscience of imperialist governments, or with popular fronts that subordinate the working class to one or another faction of the bourgeoisie. The fight against war is a fight for the political independence of the working class. It is the most concentrated expression of the struggle of the party to build a revolutionary movement of the working class.

22. There is no peace to be negotiated within the imperialist system, and no faction of the ruling class—Democratic or Republican, European or American—to which an appeal against war can be directed. The war will be ended not by the diplomats of imperialism but by the international working class, the only social force with the power and the objective interest to stop it.

23. The SEP demands the immediate and unconditional cessation of all US and Israeli military operations against Iran and the lifting of the naval blockade; the end of the genocide in Gaza; the withdrawal of all US forces from the Middle East and Latin America and the release of Nicolás Maduro; the end of the blockade of Cuba; the ending of the war against Russia; and the dismantling of the machinery of world war being assembled against China. It opposes all moves to reintroduce the draft, institute automatic registration for the Selective Service, and dragoon American youth to kill and be killed in the wars of American imperialism.

24. The Socialist Equality Party also renews its demand for the immediate and unconditional release of Bogdan Syrotiuk in Ukraine. Seized by the Ukrainian secret service in April 2024, he faces charges of “treason” for his socialist and antiwar activity, which could bring between fifteen years and life. The Zelensky regime has refused to release him even after a forensic report by a leading Ukrainian criminologist exposed the case as a political frame-up. His persecution lays bare the real character of the regime: not a defender of democracy, as the imperialist powers proclaim, but a police state that outlaws all socialist and internationalist opposition to the war.

25. Not one of these demands can be realized through appeals to the existing governments. They constitute a program of struggle, the fight for which leads the working class into direct conflict with the capitalist state and poses the question of power.

26. This Congress resolves to fight for the unity of the workers of all countries against imperialism; to connect the fight against war with the developing strike movement of the international working class and the fight for its political independence; and to build the international antiwar movement of the working class on the program of world socialist revolution. More than a century ago, amid the slaughter of the First World War, Rosa Luxemburg warned that humanity confronted the alternative: socialism or barbarism. Barbarism is no longer a warning but a present reality. Whether it consumes civilization, or is overthrown by the international working class, will be decided by the resolution of the crisis of revolutionary leadership. This Congress therefore resolves, above all, to build the Socialist Equality Party and the International Committee of the Fourth International as the revolutionary leadership of the working class—the party through which the fight against imperialist war becomes the world socialist revolution.

To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact

© World Socialist Web Site