Russia’s invasion of Ukraine was provoked by the decades-long U.S.-led expansion of NATO and the European Union. After having engineered the capitalist counterrevolution that destroyed the USSR, the imperialist powers have expanded eastward to the very borders of Russia, bringing with them pillage, ethnic strife and humiliation. The Western imperialists now rage against Russia’s “war of aggression” and its violation of Ukraine’s sovereignty. These bandits who plunder the workers of the world couldn’t care less about Ukraine’s national rights. What they are really furious about is that Russia is challenging their exclusive rights to pillage East Europe as well as U.S. hegemony over the region. The never-ending cycle of crisis and war must be stopped at its source, through socialist revolutions in the imperialist centers. *For workers revolution in the U.S.! For the Soviet United States of Europe, united on a voluntary basis!*

There is only one progressive way forward in the war between Ukraine and Russia: to turn this war between two capitalist classes into a civil war where workers overthrow both capitalist classes. We call on the soldiers and workers of Ukraine and Russia: Fraternize! Turn the guns against your exploiters!

This war is fundamentally about whose sphere of influence Ukraine is under, and the victory of either the Russian or Ukrainian armed forces can only lead to more oppression. The Ukrainian government is fighting not to liberate Ukraine but to further enslave it to the NATO/EU imperialist powers, to which it has been bound since the 2014 U.S.-backed coup. Its victory would also increase the oppression of the Russian minority in Ukraine. On the other side, Russia’s invasion of Ukraine seeks only to replace the imperialist boot with a Russian whip. The legitimate national struggle for self-rule in Donetsk and Luhansk has now been hitched to Russia’s broader reactionary war aim. Revolution in Ukraine and Russia would resolve the national question, do away with the oligarchs and inspire workers internationally to rise up against their own exploiters.

A revolutionary outcome to the current war is necessary and possible. In 1917, Russian and Ukrainian working people were also being used as cannon fodder by their rulers. They put an end to this by shooting their officers and joining insurgent workers under the leadership of the Bolsheviks to sweep away their common exploiters—the capitalists and landlords—in the world’s greatest revolution. *For new October Revolutions in Russia and Ukraine!*

The capitalist world has already been ravaged by two years of crisis triggered by the pandemic. Lockdowns, unemployment, speedup, inflation and crumbling health care are the reality for workers around the world. The current war can only accelerate the destruction of workers’ living standards and sharpen class antagonisms. The task of revolutionaries is to convert the raw anger building up at the bottom of capitalist societies into the only solution to war, misery and exploitation: the establishment of international workers rule.

The pandemic clearly laid bare the total bankruptcy of the current leaders of the workers movement. While the working class was being pummeled by both a virus and capitalist attacks, these class traitors—social democrats, Stalinists and trade-union bureaucrats—were entirely on the side of the bosses, demanding more lockdowns and more sacrifices. Now these same misleaders, particularly in the imperialist centers, are rallying workers to the cause of the U.S. and its allies, pledging undying loyalty to NATO and the EU and demanding that Russia be sanctioned into starvation. *Enough betrayal!* Workers must oppose the sanctions and military aid to Ukraine! To struggle against imperialist depredation abroad and attacks on living standards at home, the working class must break with its current leadership. It needs a new, revolutionary leadership to fulfill its
world-historic role as the gravedigger of capitalism. *Refuge the Fourth International!*

### “Socialist” Stooges of Imperialism

The precondition to building a genuine revolutionary opposition to imperialism and war is to ruthlessly struggle against the pseudo-Trotskyists, Stalinists and Maoists who use pacifist and “anti-imperialist” slogans to mask their utter subservience to their own imperialist masters and national bourgeoisies. Just like the opportunists Lenin warned against during the First World War, “By means of patent sophistry, Marxism is stripped of its revolutionary living spirit; everything is recognised in Marxism except the revolutionary methods of struggle, the propaganda and preparation of those methods, and the education of the masses in this direction” (*Socialism and War* [1915]). Here are the main deceptions pushed by today’s opportunists:

- **“No to war in Ukraine.”** This slogan, raised throughout the left, is a pacifist swindle, deceiving the people that there could be a just settlement to the war short of revolutionary struggle. No cease-fire or peace deal between capitalist robbers will address the causes of the war. Any such agreement will necessarily be directed against workers in Russia and Ukraine and prepare the ground for the next bloody conflict. Whoever wants a lasting and democratic peace must fight to transform the current capitalist war into civil wars against the Russian and Ukrainian bourgeoisies and to extend revolution to the imperialist countries.

- **“Russian troops out of Ukraine”** (raised, for example, by the Committee for a Workers’ International). This is NATO’s slogan and can only mean victory for the Ukrainian government. Those who raise this slogan from the U.S., Britain, France or Germany are calling not for the freedom of Ukrainian workers but freedom for their own imperialist rulers to plunder Ukraine.

- **“Down with NATO!”** This is a necessary slogan, but raised without opposition to NATO’s economic adjunct, the EU, it only builds illusions in the possibility of imperialism without militarism. It is the “peaceful” economic plunder of finance capital which prepares the ground for war. The EU and euro are tools for this plunder. It is nothing but crass social-chauvinism to present the German/French-led EU as benign and separate from the “militaristic” American-led NATO. Lutte Ouvrière, for example, denounces NATO while lamenting that Ukraine was denied EU membership and “the few advantages it could have gained from it” (22 February). Grotesque capitulation to French imperialism! Ask the workers of Europe: The EU brings nothing but economic asphyxiation and national subjugation.

- **“Against Russian imperialism”** (the position of the Marxistisch-Leninistische Partei Deutschlands, among many others). Grandstanding against “Russian imperialism” serves to cover the crimes of their imperialist masters, deceiving workers as to who the main enemy truly is. The world is ruled from the centers of finance capital in New York, Frankfurt, Paris, London and Tokyo, not Moscow. While plenty reactionary, the Russian ruling class is not imperialist. It oppresses its own working class and is a regional power. In contrast, the imperialists suck the lifeblood of workers on the entire planet.

- **“No to imperialist war in Ukraine”** (Communist Party of Greece & Co.). Pacifist garbage with an added “anti-imperialist” twist. To present the war as imperialist is to throw sand in the eyes of the workers. Should NATO or any imperialist power directly enter this war, it would be an obligation for any revolutionary to side militarily with Russia for the defeat of the imperialists, the main bulwark of capitalist reaction internationally. This is precisely the task which is rejected by those who agitate about “Russian imperialism.”

- **“Should workers side with Russia?”** Some on the left believe that since Russia is challenging the imperialists it should be supported in its war. This is a capitulation to Great Russian chauvinism. Russia is not at war with the imperialists but with the Ukrainian government. The proletarian strategy to fight imperialism in Ukraine and Russia lies in common revolutionary struggle of Ukrainian and Russian workers, not in supporting the designs of the Kremlin. The subjugation of the Ukrainian nation to Russia would further inflame national antagonisms, erecting a tremendous obstacle to this perspective.

All the pseudo-Marxists howled in outrage when the Great Russian chauvinist Putin denounced Lenin’s revolutionary policy against national oppression. That was very noble of them. But to really defend Lenin in the current war means exposing the social-chauvinist traitors who while using “socialist” rhetoric are in fact lackeys of the imperialists. On this count Lenin can defend himself:

> “That’s the very thing the bourgeoisie wants; it wants the workers diverted from the revolutionary struggle in war-time by means of hypocritical, idle and non-committal phrases about peace; it wants them lulled and soothed by hopes of ‘peace without annexations’, a democratic peace, etc., etc… The first and fundamental point of a socialist peace programme must be to unmask the hypocrisy of the Kautskyist peace programme, which strengthens bourgeois influence on the proletariat.”

—“The Peace Programme” (1916)

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**Down With the Lockdowns!**

The Working Class Must Defend Itself

While many health care workers, truck drivers, restaurant workers, supermarket clerks, and other workers are essential to keep the economy running, so too are many essential public health workers. Their labor is necessary to stop the pandemic, feed the masses, and provide the health care workers and the military with food and medical supplies. The working class cannot workers achieve their own freedom. The working class must insist on their right to work and insist on the right to workers’ health care. They must also insist that capitalists cannot be allowed to make work more dangerous.

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