



NATO/EU Aggression Provokes War in Ukraine

**Ukrainian, Russian Workers:
Turn the Guns Against Your Rulers!**

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: Fraternalize! 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

Down With the EU and NATO!

world-historic role as the gravedigger of capitalism. *Reforge 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)

SPARTACIST Supplement April 2021

Down With the Lockdowns!

The Working Class Must Defend Itself

Misable health care, deceitful housing, production for profit, imperialist domination: the very nature of capitalist class rule fuels the economic and health crisis that has ravaged the world since the outbreak of Covid-19. The parasitic bourgeoisies have responded to the pandemic with the means that best serve their interests, forcibly locking up their entire populations at home, pending vaccination. The bourgeoisies’ lockdowns are a *reactionary* public health measure. Workers must oppose them! Lockdowns may well temporarily slow the spread of infections, but they *weaken* the fighting ability of the working class. By shutting down whole branches of industry and services, they have caused an economic crisis and thrown masses of people into unemployment. Closures of schools and childcare facilities have increased the oppressive burden of the family. State repression has been severely increased as democratic and working-class rights have been gutted. Gatherings, protests, travel, strikes, union organizing: all have been restricted or banned. Lockdowns aim to prevent working-class struggle; the only way workers can genuinely protect their health and combat the social causes of the crisis.

Invoicing “shared sacrifice”, the capitalists have launched a blitzkrieg against the working class. Union-busting, massive layoffs, wage cuts and speedups are the “new normal.” Faced with the combined threats of a deadly virus and the capitalist onslaught, the working class stands disarmed.

Around the world, the pro-capitalist leaders of both trade unions and workers parties have loyally collaborated with the ruling class in its offensive. In the name of national unity and fighting the virus, they are betraying the working class.

From the British and Australian Labor parties to the German Social Democratic Party and Die Linke, the French Socialist and Communist parties and the South African Communist Party, the labor misleaders play a key role in enforcing the lockdowns, locally and nationally, and showing them down the throats of workers and the oppressed. From the American AFL-CIO to the Mexican and Italian trade unions to the Japanese Rengo, Zentreen and Zenkyo federations, union leaders urge their members to support the bourgeoisies’ measures, stay home and get screwed!

The urgent need to defend the health and livelihoods of the working class directly poses the task of forging a new leadership of the workers movement. Unions need to fight *against* the capitalist state shutting down industries and for safe working conditions. The decrepit health care and housing infrastructure needs to be rebuilt and expanded *now*. The expropriation of the capitalists’ best real estate combined with massive public works programs is necessary to provide decent living conditions for working people.

At every step, the basic interests of the workers and oppressed run up against the pillars of capitalist class rule.

Break with the Labor Traitors—
Reforge the Fourth International!

Statement of the ICL International Executive Committee
(19 April 2021) Available in Arabic, Catalan, English,
French, German, Greek, Italian, Japanese, Spanish,
Tagalog, Turkish. Read online at icl-fi.org.

International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist)

For contact and subscription information:
ICL, Box 7429 GPO, New York, NY 10116, USA
spartacist@spartacist.org • icl-fi.org