

Socialism vs. Capitalism and War

The SEP and IYSSE schedule November 5 antiwar conference in Detroit

15 September 2016

On November 5, the Socialist Equality Party and the International Youth and Students for Social Equality will hold a conference at Wayne State University in Detroit, Michigan, “Socialism vs. Capitalism & War.” The purpose of this conference is to politically mobilize workers and young people throughout the country and internationally against the war policies of US and world imperialism, which threaten to escalate into a nuclear Third World War.

The greatest danger facing the international working class is that decisions with potentially catastrophic consequences are being made entirely behind their backs, with the extent of war preparations far exceeding the level of popular consciousness. This only facilitates the conspiracies of the capitalist elites.

Just over one hundred years ago, the population of the world was thrown into the First World War as a result of the conspiratorial decision of ministers, monarchs and business leaders to risk everything on military victory. The end of WWI in 1918 was followed a mere twenty-one years later by the eruption of the Second World War, accompanied by the horrors of fascism and the Holocaust. Together, these two world conflagrations took the lives of 100 million people and destroyed vast portions of the globe.

Today, the danger of world war is greater than at any point since the summer of 1939. In Washington, Berlin, London and other world capitals, politicians and generals are actively considering the “unthinkable,” including war waged with nuclear weapons.

Twenty-five years after the dissolution of the Soviet Union and 15 years after the beginning of the “war on terror,” the unending conflicts launched by the United States in the Middle East and Central Asia are metastasizing into a global confrontation with the larger competitors of American imperialism, particularly Russia and China, both armed with nuclear weapons.

In this situation, the November 5th Conference—Socialism vs. Capitalism and War—is a critically important political event. It is taking place in the closing days of a national election in which the candidates of the two major capitalist parties, Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump, are both ruthless advocates of the interests of American imperialism.

Regardless of which of these candidates wins the presidential election, there will be a dramatic escalation of military operations in the months ahead. But the issue of war has been all but excluded from the campaign. With the connivance of the media, Trump and Clinton are saying as little as possible about plans for military operations.

The November 5 conference of the Socialist Equality Party and the International Youth and Students for Social Equality in Detroit is the only meeting where the danger of world war and the present reality of expanding conflict will be discussed and opposed. It is being organized on the basis of the program of the International Committee of the Fourth International, which in its statement of February 18 elaborated the necessary political foundation for a movement against war:

1) 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 same capitalist crisis that produces war also produces the basis for ending war, in the form of growing struggles against inequality, poverty and the attack on wages, jobs, health care, education and all the social rights of the working class.

The cost of war is itself a significant factor in the deterioration in the living conditions of the vast majority of the population. A report released by Brown University last week estimated that the costs of the wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya and Syria since 2001 is nearly \$5 trillion, which does not include the \$6.8 trillion spent on the Pentagon’s base budget. Combined, this is equivalent to \$37,000 for every man, woman and child in the United States.

Schools are unfunded, social infrastructure is in a state of advanced decay, and there are endless claims that there is no money for health care, pensions and decent wages for all. However, unlimited funds are made available to finance the military, including a \$1 trillion nuclear weapons “modernization” program initiated by the Obama administration.

2) The fight against war must be anti-capitalist and socialist, since there can be no serious struggle against war except in the fight to end the dictatorship of finance capital and the economic system that is the fundamental cause of

war

Imperialism arises out of the growth and contradictions of the world capitalist system. The systemic crisis of world capitalism fuels the drive to war, as the rival corporate interests that control national governments seek to force their competitors to bear the burden of the crisis by seizing control of key markets and sources of raw materials. The response of the ruling class to the contradiction embedded in the capitalist system, between the world economy and the nation-state system, is imperialist war and plunder.

The ruling class that is conspiring to wage war is the same financial oligarchy that has amassed vast wealth through fraud and speculation. In the aftermath of the 2008 crash, the Obama administration funneled trillions of dollars to the banks in the form of bailouts and “quantitative easing.” New speculative bubbles threaten at any moment to deflate, sending the world economy into an even greater slump.

3) The struggle against war must be completely and unequivocally independent of and hostile to all political parties and organizations of the capitalist class

The 2016 US elections demonstrate that it is impossible to fight against war without a complete break from all the capitalist parties.

Trump’s program of “Fortress America” combines virulent nationalism and anti-immigrant chauvinism with the demand for a vast increase in the size of the military and a removal of all restraints on military spending. The Democratic Party campaign of Hillary Clinton, meanwhile, is criticizing Trump from the right, as an agent of Russian President Vladimir Putin who is insufficiently committed to the strategic interests of American imperialism. Clinton is seeking to transform anti-Trump sentiment into a pseudo-mandate for aggression against Russia once the election is over.

In the Democratic Party primaries, millions of workers and youth backed the campaign of Bernie Sanders due to his rhetorical denunciations of the “billionaire class.” Yet the clearest proof of the fraud of Sanders’ “socialism” was his support for the war policies of the Obama administration. He has now endorsed Clinton, hailing her right-wing and militarist campaign as the continuation of the “political revolution.”

As for the middle-class organizations that orbit around the Democratic Party, they have gone from criticizing the war policies of the Bush administration to full support for imperialist intervention in the Middle East and against Russia and China. Under the banner of “human rights,” they are prepared to support the most heinous crimes.

4) Above all, the fight against war must be international, mobilizing the vast power of the working class in a unified global struggle against imperialism

The danger of world war arises out of the contradictions of the world capitalist system. A new global conflagration can only be averted through the mobilization of the global working class. There is no part of the world that will not be impacted by

a new world war, and there is no section of the working class that has an interest in the war planning of the capitalist elites.

While the United States is the cockpit of imperialist intrigue, it is not alone. Germany, which fought against the US in both world wars of the 20th century, is reviving its imperialist ambitions, with politicians and media personalities declaring an end to the “unipolar world.” Japan is remilitarizing, seeking to abolish its post-World War II constitutional restraints on armament. The ruling classes in Britain, France, Canada and Australia are all calculating how best to defend their interests in a global conflict.

Out of the capitalist crisis, two paths are possible: the path of imperialist war, dictatorship and barbarism; or the path of socialist revolution. The danger of world war is not a future threat, but a present reality. Already, over a million people have been killed and entire societies destroyed by the imperialist wars in the Middle East and Central Asia. Millions, even billions more lives will be sacrificed in a third world war.

An international, socialist political leadership must be built, and there is no time to lose. The Socialist Equality Party and the International Committee of the Fourth International are building this leadership. We call on all of our readers to take up this fight as your own.

The November 5 conference in Detroit is a critical stage in this struggle. Speakers at the conference will include Jerry White and Niles Niemuth, the SEP’s candidates for US president and vice president; David North, chairman of the WSWs International Editorial Board and national chairman of the SEP; Joseph Kishore, national secretary of the SEP; Andre Damon, national secretary of the IYSSE; and Naomi Spencer, SEP candidate for West Virginia House of Delegates. Other speakers will include leading representatives from the SEP’s sister parties in the International Committee of the Fourth International.

Make plans to attend and register today at sep2016.com/conference.

- *For a socialist strategy against imperialist war!*
- *Unite the international working class!*
- *Fund schools, jobs and healthcare, not the Pentagon and the CIA!*
- *Withdraw all US forces from the Middle East and Central Asia!*
- *Stop the confrontation with Russia and China! No to World War III!*

The Socialist Equality Party

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