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www.afgazad.com

afgazad@gmail.com

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Joseph Kishore

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“Rage Against the War Machine” rally promotes alliance between the “left” and the extreme right

February 24 will mark one year since the beginning of the war in Ukraine. In the weeks leading up to the anniversary, the US and the European powers have been relentlessly escalating the conflict, including the sending of battle tanks and plans to send fighter jets to Ukraine to prosecute what is now clearly a war of NATO against Russia. Behind the scenes, the Biden administration and the governments of Europe are discussing plans for the deployment of troops. The risk that the logic of escalation will lead to an exchange of nuclear weapons is extreme.

The evolution of the war makes urgent the building of an anti-war movement. The essence of such a movement, and indeed of a movement against all the catastrophic conditions produced by capitalism, is the political education and independent mobilization of the international working class. Socialists base the fight against imperialism on an understanding that the same contradictions that produce war also produce the impulse for revolution.

In 2016, analyzing the far-advanced tendencies toward a third world war, the International Committee of the Fourth International, in its statement “Socialism and the Fight Against War,” summarized the fundamental programmatic basis of a new anti-war movement. It wrote:

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.
2. The new anti-war movement 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 militarism and war.

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3. The new anti-war movement must therefore, of necessity, be completely and unequivocally independent of, and hostile to, all political parties and organizations of the capitalist class.

4. The new anti-war movement must, above all, be international, mobilizing the vast power of the working class in a unified global struggle against imperialism.

The development of a movement of the working class against imperialist war is not a utopian dream. Its emergence is foreshadowed today in the growth of the class struggle throughout the world, including demonstrations of millions of workers in France against pension cuts, strikes by hundreds of thousands in the UK against austerity and ongoing demonstrations of hundreds of thousands in Israel against Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his coalition, which includes far-right and fascistic forces.

In the United States, there is growing popular opposition to inflation and the rising cost of living, which has found only limited expression in the significant increase in strikes in the face of concerted efforts by the trade union apparatus to smother the class struggle. American society is in deep and profound social and political crisis, and a significant factor in the war drive itself is an effort to direct tensions outward and preempt a revolutionary movement against capitalism.

It is in the politically-conscious opposition to war that the global struggle of the American and international working class against capitalism and imperialism finds its most concentrated and advanced expression.

Moreover, the fight against inequality and exploitation is inseparable from the fight against the massive diversion of social resources to the ruling class's preparations for World War III.

All claims and proposals to oppose war that conceal its basis in the capitalist system are as false as they are hypocritical.

The demonstration being held in Washington D.C. on February 19, under the headline "Rage Against the War Machine," is opposed to a socialist and genuinely anti-war perspective. Based on the most shortsighted, pragmatic and opportunistic calculations, this event promotes an alliance and collaboration with the political right and even openly fascistic forces.

The primary organizers of the rally are the Libertarian Party, led by Angela McArdle, and the "People's Party," led by Nick Brana.

The platform of the right-wing Libertarian Party is the demand for the full and unrestrained right of the capitalists to exploit the working class. It is virulently opposed

not only to socialism, but to all social reforms. One of the main speakers at the rally is the former Libertarian Party candidate for president, Ron Paul, who has advocated the elimination of income taxes, minimum wage laws, unemployment insurance and Social Security.

Angela McArdle is a member of the “Mises Caucus” of the Libertarian Party. Named after the fanatically anti-socialist economist Ludwig von Mises, this faction virulently upholds the absolute right of private property.

Under the direction of McArdle and the “Mises Caucus”, the Libertarians have made a more direct orientation to the fascist right and the anti-Semitic groups involved in the 2017 “Unite the Right” rally in Charlottesville, Virginia. In early 2021, McArdle defended the invitation of an anti-Semitic provocateur to the Mises Caucus convention in California, writing that a “truth-seeker” who asks “the question about whether or not Jews run Hollywood” is not an anti-Semite.

The “People’s Party” originated in the “Movement for a People’s Party” (MPP), which held its inaugural convention in August 2020. Its purpose, indicated in its name, is to oppose the organization of the working class as an independent political force. The specific social identity and interests of the working class are dissolved into the amorphous category of “the people.” The program of the “People’s Party” is nationalistic and anti-socialist. The WSWS called attention at the time to the MPP’s orientation to the far right, which has in the intervening two-and-a-half years exploded to the surface.

The Libertarians and the People’s Party have, for their own purposes, assembled an assortment of “left” speakers to participate in the rally. They includes comedian Jimmy Dore and the editor-in-chief of The Grayzone, Max Blumenthal. Both Dore and Blumenthal have previously promoted an alliance with the far right forces that oppose all critical health measures to stop the COVID-19 pandemic. They have downplayed the significance of the January 6 coup. Dore’s response to the coup was to promote an alliance with the fascistic Boogaloo Boys militia.

While oriented to the far right, the rally also draws upon many of the conceptions of the Stalinist Popular Front and the subordination of political opposition to the Democratic Party. This is represented by figures such as former Democratic Party presidential candidate Dennis Kucinich and Green Party politicians Jill Stein and Cynthia McKinney. Also speaking is former Democratic Party Congresswoman Tulsi Gabbard, who is currently an active lieutenant colonel in the US Army.

The most putrid element of the rally is the direct involvement of fascists. Among the featured speakers is Jackson Hinkle, a supporter of Trump and promoter of “MAGA Communism,” who has said it is his aim to “finish the job of Donald Trump” by “uprooting liberalism from America and getting rid of the globalists out of the MAGA movement.” Another participant is Jordan Page, a libertarian who in 2015 wrote the fascist “Oath Keeper” anthem, entitled “Arm Yourselves.”

Given the far-right element at the rally, several groups refused to participate, including Veterans for Peace and Code Pink.

Pacifist columnist and author Chris Hedges, who will also be speaking at the rally, attempts to legitimize and defend his own participation in a statement published on his Substack this week, “There Are No Permanent Allies, Only Permanent Power.”

Hedges is known as a radical critic of American imperialism. Heavily influenced by Noam Chomsky and substituting middle-class moralizing for scientific political analysis, Hedges rejects Marxism and is implacably hostile to the “Trotskyites,” an element of his politics that has become ever more explicit. His writings are characterized by a demoralized, even obsessive, pessimism, and explicit opposition to the organization of the working class as an independent political force. He is not necessarily opposed to working class participation in a popular movement, but only in a subordinate political role. This has now led him to calling for and legitimizing a completely unprincipled and reactionary alliance with the far right.

According to Hedges, “We will not topple corporate power and the war machine alone. There has to be a left-right coalition, which will include people whose opinions are not only unpalatable but even repugnant, or we will remain marginalized and ineffectual.” Not only is it politically permissible to forge an alliance with the extreme right, Hedges insists, it is a necessity, a “fact of political life.”

Hedges argues that it is possible to build a movement against war in alliance with the far right in isolation from any other social or political issue.

“The rally on February 19 is not about eliminating Social Security and Medicare or abolishing the minimum wage, which many libertarians propose,” he writes. “It is not a rally to denounce the rights of the LGBTQ community, which have been attacked by at least one of the speakers. It is a rally to end permanent war. Should these right-wing participants organize around other issues, I will be on the other side of the barricades.”

How does one begin to unpack all this political nonsense?

Hedges' assertion that legitimizing the claim of these far-right forces to be opposed to war in no way aids their anti-democratic and anti-working class social and political agenda is a political absurdity. Of course it helps the political right. The presence of Hedges and others claiming to be on the left assists the right-wing organizers in disorienting and deceiving workers and young people and provides a false "progressive" cover for their reactionary politics. Whatever his private intentions, Hedges' public message is that the right wing Libertarians and the fascists are really not so bad, they have their good sides, and one can find common ground with them.

Hedges' claim that he would be "on the other side of the barricades" should his far-right collaborators "organize around other issues" is theatrical demagoguery and pure sophistry. When his present right-wing friends combine their criticism of Ukraine with American nationalism, anti-Semitism, rejection of even marginal social reforms, promotion of anti-vaccination madness, and other utterly reactionary policies, what are they doing if not "organizing around other issues"?

Moreover, Hedges contradicts his previous assertion that a "left-right coalition" is a necessary "fact of political life," not only for opposing the "war machine," but also for "toppling corporate power."

Finally, the claim by Hedges that the political forces with which he is aligning are opponents of the "war machine" is an exercise in political subterfuge. Their differences with the Biden administration's war policy are, in the final analysis, entirely tactical in character. There is a long history in the United States of anti-war posturing by the "American Firsters" of the political right. The most notorious example of this tendency, in advance of World War II, was the political movement led by Charles Lindbergh, a staunch admirer of Adolf Hitler.

In the final analysis, the right-wing pseudo-opposition to war represents a dispute within the ruling class over certain aspects of foreign policy. One can find on the Internet no shortage of ex-military personnel, entirely fascistic in their outlook, who believe that the present war in Ukraine is a distraction from other pressing issues confronting the American ruling class, such as the merciless removal of undocumented immigrants from the United States and preparations for a future war with China.

The role of the "Rage Against the War Machine" rally is not to develop a movement against imperialist war, but to confuse and disorient young people. The open support for the US-NATO war against Russia by the Democratic Socialists of America and other

pseudo-left groups has facilitated the ability of the right wing to fraudulently present itself as an opponent of war, with the assistance of Hedges and company.

And for all the groveling before the extreme right and their demagogic call to “rage against the war machine,” the organizers of the February 19 rally end up with a perspective of absolute prostration. The conclusion of the rally is to be a march on the White House to deliver demands to none other than President Joe Biden, who is spearheading the war against Russia.

A way forward will not be found on this basis. The task confronting the working class and young people is not to “rage against the war” alongside fascists, but to build a mass international anti-war movement based on a socialist program. This was advanced at the December 10 rally of the International Youth and Students for Social Equality, which initiated a campaign for a global movement oriented to the working class and based on a socialist and revolutionary program.

In its statement calling for the rally, the IYSSE wrote: “Just as it was the Russian Revolution, the greatest intervention of the working class in world history, that brought an end to the first global carnage of World War I, it will be the intervention of the international working class that will today stop the escalation toward World War III.”

It is this massive social force, already entering into struggle, that can sweep away the warmongers in Washington and the capitals of the NATO countries, oppose imperialist war on the basis of the international unity of the working class and put an end to the capitalist profit system, which is the root cause of war.

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