

Speech to the December 10 IYSSE anti-war rally

The COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, and the right to a future

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The following are the remarks by Evan Blake to the December 10 rally, “For a Mass Movement of Students and Youth to Stop the War in Ukraine!” organized by the International Youth and Students for Social Equality.

Blake is the Coordinator of the Global Workers' Inquest into the COVID-19 Pandemic and a leading member of the Socialist Equality Party in the US. For more information on joining the IYSSE, visit iysse.com.

In early 2020, the *World Socialist Web Site* identified the pandemic as a “trigger event” in world history. It would deepen the global crisis and contradictions of capitalism and accelerate the drive to imperialist war and socialist revolution.

The war in Ukraine had long been planned by American imperialism, but the pandemic heightened geopolitical tensions and set the stage for the outbreak of the war.

Over the past three years, the pandemic has exposed the capitalist ruling elites' staggering indifference to mass death.

It has proven that the bourgeoisie today is no less ruthless and criminal than the bourgeoisie that plunged mankind into World Wars I and II. They have once again shown themselves to be willing to sacrifice tens of millions of lives in pursuit of profits.

The pandemic amounts to another war that's been waged, a war of each ruling class against its population. While the capitalists have amassed trillions of dollars during the pandemic, for workers and young people throughout the world the past three years have been catastrophic.

According to *The Economist*, there have now been over 20 million excess deaths attributable to COVID-19. The first two years of the pandemic saw life expectancy decline globally for the first time since World War II.

Over 10 million children throughout the world have experienced the death of a parent or primary caregiver to COVID. The level of trauma and suffering inflicted on these

youths by the loss of their loved ones is unfathomable.

Despite all the lies that COVID doesn't affect children, the reality is that tens of thousands have died globally, and it is now one of the leading causes of pediatric deaths.

In addition, the immense toll of Long COVID, which can impact nearly every organ in the body, is deepening each day. The pandemic has been aptly described as a “mass disabling event.”

In the US alone, 20 million people are now suffering from Long COVID, including 4 million who are so profoundly disabled that they can no longer work at all. Hundreds of millions more worldwide are suffering from this affliction.

We are now entering the third winter of the pandemic, and contrary to the lies of Joe Biden and other politicians, it is nowhere near over. Throughout the Northern Hemisphere, cases and hospitalizations are surging once again.

Today's rally is being held as cases are spiraling out of control in China just one month after the Chinese Communist Party began to lift their Zero-COVID policy on November 11th.

For over two years, China suppressed viral transmission through mass testing, contact tracing, temporary lockdowns, mask mandates and the use of other public health measures.

Their per capita death rate is by far the lowest of any major country in the world, just 0.1 percent that of the United States, where over 1.1 million people have been killed by COVID.

Throughout the pandemic, the imperialist powers and their pliant media have continuously propagandized against Zero-COVID in China. They have done so for two central reasons.

First, they seek to fully restore capitalist production in China and reopen the country's borders to put an end to the supply chain crisis, which has impinged on their profits.

Second, the Western powers seek to provide political cover for their own criminal policies. The ending of Zero-COVID in China, which they know could kill millions of

people, enables the US and European powers to claim that the needless deaths of millions in their countries were inevitable.

Early in the pandemic, it was demonstrated by China, New Zealand and other countries that the coronavirus could be eliminated. After lifting Zero-COVID, each country has met with disaster.

The central lesson from this experience is that the pandemic could have been stopped and still can be stopped, but that it requires a globally coordinated strategy. In the long term, Zero-COVID in one country is impossible.

Last month, humanity passed the threshold of eight billion people alive in the world today. We live in a deeply interconnected global society, and the pandemic is just one problem we face under capitalism.

On the social front, industrial development under capitalist private ownership leads to ever-deepening social inequality.

On the geopolitical front, the capitalist division of the world into rival nation states leads to the outbreak of war and imperialist plunder.

In mankind's interaction with nature and the extraction of resources necessary for our survival, capitalist development has given rise to climate change and the threat of pandemics, which are deeply interconnected.

Climate change is among the greatest dangers confronting this generation. In this century alone, tens of millions of people have already been displaced due to the effects of global warming.

If the status quo continues, in the coming decades hundreds of millions more will be displaced as coastal areas throughout the world become uninhabitable.

Tens of millions could die from flooding, wildfires, drought, storms, heat waves and the collapse of critical ecosystems.

A major study published in April found that climate change will dramatically increase the potential for viruses that already exist among animal populations to spillover to humans, as took place with COVID-19, HIV, Ebola, and other diseases.

The experience of the past year, in which the ongoing dangers of COVID-19 have been covered up through relentless propaganda, shows that the next pandemic will be met with total indifference.

As the climate crisis deepens each year, millions more young people are learning about these dangers and looking for a means to stop the growing catastrophe. 2019 saw the largest protests against climate change in history, with over 6 million people demonstrating at 4,500 locations in 150 countries.

These powerful demonstrations were met with empty promises from the powers-that-be. The capitalists have done

and will continue to do nothing to stop climate change. All appeals to them will fall on deaf ears.

Throughout the pandemic, capitalist governments have proven themselves incapable of organizing a rational scientific response to the greatest public health crisis in a century. To believe that they will change course and address climate change or prepare for future pandemics would be delusional.

Rather, young people must turn to the international working class, the great revolutionary force in capitalist society. None of the problems we face can be resolved without a global movement of the workers and youth against the capitalist system.

The IYSSE is the only youth movement in the world which upholds science and draws the necessary political conclusions from the objective reality that we confront. Throughout the pandemic, we have called for a globally coordinated Zero-COVID strategy to deploy every public health measure necessary to stop viral transmission throughout the world.

A global socialist public health program could eliminate not only COVID, but also numerous other diseases that kill millions each year.

In response to climate change, there must be a thorough reworking of energy, transportation and agricultural infrastructure internationally to sharply reduce greenhouse gases. To achieve this, we demand the internationalization of the major corporations and banks, and the reallocation of the gargantuan military budgets to invest in education, research and technology, and fund wind and solar energy, carbon capture, and more.

We stand for internationalism against nationalism. In opposition to the imperialist war planning, we propose a war to end inequality, the threat of fascism, the pandemic, climate change, and poverty in every country. Join us in this fight, the fight for socialism.



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