

‘Washington doubles down on proxy war in Ukraine’

written by Melinda Butterfield
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A market in Donetsk bombed by Ukrainian troops on Sept. 10. Photo: Inside Donetsk

Talk given on behalf of the Socialist Unity Party at the international meeting “200 Days of War: Stop the War of U.S./NATO Imperialism Against Russia! Stop U.S. Preparations of War Against China!” on Sept. 10.

Today the capitalist media is rapturous with news of the advance of the long-anticipated Ukrainian counter-offensive and the withdrawal of Russian troops from the Kharkov region. How significant this will be remains to be seen. Less is said about why and how this counter-offensive was made possible: the massive intervention of the Pentagon and NATO to shore up their faltering proxy war against Russia.

Last week, as the Ukrainian offensive was taking shape, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken made a [“surprise” visit to Kiev](#) to pledge another \$2.8 billion in military aid from Washington. For those keeping track, that brings the total in public U.S. military aid to Ukraine this year to a whopping \$16.5 billion. That’s more than the annual Gross Domestic Product of 98 countries, [according to U.N. figures](#).

This has been described as the [largest single arms transfer in U.S. history](#). It’s also an enormous transfer of wealth to the military-industrial bourgeoisie. But in reality, this is just the tip of a very large iceberg that includes separate Congressional funding, covert U.S. aid and the infusion of weapons, troops and mercenaries from the U.S.-controlled NATO alliance.

Blinken’s visit was not really a surprise. It was the latest in a long line of visits by high-ranking U.S. officials to give marching orders to their puppet regime in Kiev. These visits date back to the very beginning of the war against Donbass in 2014 and 2015, when it was [then-Vice President Joe Biden](#), among others, who delivered the orders.

The continuing infusion of massive amounts of money and weapons to the war zone removes any illusions that the Ukrainian conflict is just a brief episode in the New Cold War against Russia and China. On the contrary, the way Washington has doubled down at a time of growing economic crisis for the masses in the U.S. and Europe shows that the ruling class intends this war to continue for a long time, to break up and dominate the Russian Federation.

But they also feel the urgency to make tangible headway quickly. The ability to seduce large sections of the U.S. population to “stand with Ukraine” has waned sharply with the accumulating crises facing the working class. Inflation is only the most obvious. The Biden administration is spending billions on war and police while funds for public health, pandemic eviction bans, climate crisis, and education are eviscerated. This contradiction cannot be papered over forever.

The situation will sharpen even more quickly among the Western European NATO powers, which face the prospect of winter without access to cheap Russian fuel.

Importance of Donbass struggle

The efforts of the organizations represented here for a genuine anti-imperialist position in the movement is making headway. Here in the U.S., the United National Antiwar Coalition has finally [called for a week of action](#) around U.S. threats to Russia and China in mid-October. There are many factors, but the impact of events like this one, and of [John Parker’s visit to the Donbass front line](#) in May, on the rank and file of the left are significant.

The importance of the Donbass people’s struggle continues to be under-appreciated, if not outright ignored, by most left forces in the West. If the people of Donetsk and Lugansk are considered at all, it is as mere tools of Russia. In fact, the relationship is quite different.

Imagine trying to build an anti-imperialist movement during the Vietnam War while ignoring the struggle of the Vietnamese people! And yet, this is the standard position of the Western left on the conflict in Ukraine and the Donbass republics.

The explosion of resistance in eastern Ukraine after the Maidan coup in 2014, particularly in the Donbass, the most working-class region of Ukraine, was a tremendous breakthrough in reviving anti-fascist consciousness and internationalist

solidarity rooted in the Soviet period. It reverberated through the people of all the former Soviet countries, particularly Russia.

There is a reason why Soviet flags and the Banner of Victory are seen everywhere in the current anti-fascist military operation. It's not that Putin is trying to restore the USSR, as the Western media claim, or put something over on the global left. He and the Russian ruling class would love nothing more than to be rid of those symbols.

But they reflect the genuine consciousness of the most active elements of the Soviet people about the stakes of the war, even three decades after the destruction of the USSR. That includes many anti-fascist Ukrainians.

In 200 days since the launch of the Special Military Operation, the anti-fascist military alliance has succeeded in liberating much of Donetsk and Lugansk from Ukrainian occupation. But as they have advanced, a large group of Ukrainian troops, including some of the most hardened neo-Nazi battalions, has become concentrated in a well-defended area west of the capital of Donetsk. And all summer, this has meant unrelenting, daily, [brutal Ukrainian attacks on the civilian population](#) of the city, including raining thousands of small anti-personnel mines on the streets, where children, seniors and emergency workers have been the main victims.

This heroic population, which has held strong for more than eight years of war, is under the worst siege of the war. The morale of this anti-fascist city is absolutely crucial to the struggle. We must elevate the plight of the people of Donetsk and expose the grotesque war crimes of the U.S. and Ukraine.

Victory to the Donbass republics and Russia! End the U.S./NATO proxy war and sanctions!

