Stand Firm ILWU with Ukraine

October 25, 2022

Back in March, the International Longshore and Warehouse Union took a fine position on Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Its Coast Committee called the attack "an act of aggression that endangers a population of more than 40 million people." In a press release, the union stated that "Effective immediately, the International Longshore and Warehouse Union, with some 20,000 workers strong in 29 ports up and down the United States West Coast, will refuse to load or unload any Russian vessels or Russian cargo coming into or going out of all West Coast ports from Bellingham, Washington, to San Diego, California."

In taking this action, the ILWU continued its tradition of standing up for justice. In the past, it shut down ports to oppose the U.S. wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. It took action against the government of apartheid-era South Africa and in support of Palestinian rights. It wouldn't load military cargo to the forces that overthrew the elected government of Chile.

But now a number of ILWU members want to overturn their union's stand against aggression and punish the victims, the Ukrainian people. In a statement published on October 3rd on the site *Counterpunch* they called for port actions "to refuse to handle military cargo by dockworkers around the world." This is plainly designed to stop the ability of Ukrainians to defend themselves against a Russian military which has an almost unlimited supply of weapons.

The reasoning behind this call is based on a completely skewed history of what has been going on in Eastern Europe. Russia signed a treaty in 1994 to respect Ukraine's borders, yet it has invaded Ukraine with the intent of ending the country's independence and the Ukrainian identity. The signers of the October 3 statement, however, claim the war was "provoked by U.S./NATO aggression". We have many positions about NATO, some quite negative, but we have to note that the alliance's last significant expansion was in 2004.

Likewise, the supposed list of facts about a "U.S.-driven Maidan coup" that burned down a union headquarters or about "two newly-founded republics" or a brigade that killed 15,000 people in Ukraine's Donbas are misleading, distorted or completely false.

Working people in Ukraine are solidly behind defense of their country. Their unions spoke out the day after Putin's February invasion. They asked for "solidarity" the fight against "Russian Federation

aggression.” In April the Confederation of Free Trade Unions of Ukraine wrote a letter to union supporters in the UK. After thanking them for support the Confederation explained, “Our brave medical workers save lives of civilians and soldiers. Our railway and transport workers evacuate people from battle zones and carry cargo despite the shelling.” It also wrote, “Ukraine needs assistance, primarily military, financial and humanitarian aid.”

We current, retired or former union members, encourage the ILWU to reject this attempt to repeal its correct and powerful stand on Ukraine.
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(**union name and locals are for identification only***)**

To add your name to this letter send an email to: StandFirmForUkraine@gmail.com Make sure to include your current or past union affiliation