



Speak Out Now

August 7, 2023

mail@speakoutsocialists.org

speakoutsocialists.org

(510) 343-9105

Nuclear War: A Hair Trigger Away?

In the past few weeks, the film *Oppenheimer* has been widely discussed in the media, and many people have seen it in theaters. The film focuses on the life and work of J. Robert Oppenheimer, the scientist who led the U.S. military's effort to develop the first nuclear weapon during World War II.

After successfully detonating the first nuclear weapon at their test site in New Mexico in July of 1945, the U.S. government decided to use these weapons a month later on the civilian population in Japan.

August 6th was the 77th anniversary of the U.S. nuclear bombing of Hiroshima, Japan and August 9th will be the 77th anniversary of the U.S. nuclear bombing of Nagasaki, Japan. These destructive events were the only times in history that nuclear weapons have been used.

Tens of thousands of people were immediately killed by the bombings. And in the months and years that followed, tens of thousands of additional people died from their injuries and suffered from the horrible effects of radiation exposure – developing leukemia, thyroid, breast cancer, and many other cancers.

While attention is rightly focused on the effects of the bombings on the people of Japan, many people living in the Pacific Islands and New Mexico also suffered similar health problems as a result of the fallout from nuclear bomb tests conducted by the U.S. government.

The bombings of Japan were carried out in the closing days of World War II. At that point, the Germans and their allies in Europe had already been defeated. Prior to the U.S. decision to launch a nuclear attack on Japan, they knew the Japanese Emperor was trying to end the war and surrender. But this was ignored. In destroying Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the U.S.'s real goal was to show the world, in particular the Soviet Union, that the U.S. military was willing to use the most destructive weapons in history.

Today the threat of nuclear war has intensified. Many countries now have nuclear weapons and are threatening to use them. After invading Ukraine, Vladimir Putin, the ruler of Russia, threatened to use

nuclear weapons against any country which challenged his brutal invasion.

Kim Jong Un, the ruler of North Korea, continues his threats to use nuclear weapons against South Korea. In response to his latest threat, the U.S. recently sent a nuclear-armed submarine to South Korea as a show of force against North Korea, but also as a warning to China.

U.S. global dominance has begun to be challenged, in particular by China. And Putin has also tried to reassert Russian power on Russia's borders. New economic and geopolitical alliances are forming, and they are bringing the increased threat of conflict that could lead to war – and that includes nuclear war.

This is taking place in a world that is armed to the teeth. The United States and Russia both have over five thousand nuclear warheads, while France, China, Pakistan, India, Israel, North Korea, and the United Kingdom have about 1,500 nuclear weapons - the capability to blow up the world many times over.

We face both the prospect of nuclear annihilation and climate disaster in our future. Both are the result of a capitalist system whose main goal is the profits of the few at the expense of the majority.

Instead of focusing resources on improving the lives of ordinary people, the politicians who run the world continue to spend billions of dollars on developing weapons of mass destruction. And as they compete for control of land, resources, and profits, the threat of a potential nuclear conflict becomes increasingly dangerous.

And at the same time there is the threat of a potential climate catastrophe. The politicians and the corporations continue their use of fossil fuels despite all the scientific warnings. They ignore all the evidence of climate disasters around the world - heat domes, melting ice and sea rise, floods, droughts, monster storms.

We can't leave our future in the hands of the people who rule the world today. Our lives and the lives of future generations are at stake. If anything is going to change, it will be up to us! And the timetable is urgent.