

Manifesto against the war

Social movement activists, workers, scientists, artists, actors, poets from all over the world!

The unthinkable has happened: War has finally returned as part of our everyday lives in Europe. Currently the large Ukrainian cities are being converted into battlefields. Peaceful people are being torn to shreds by shell fire and rockets or are being buried under the ruins of their dwellings. Those who survive the barbaric attacks sheltering in cellars or tube stations are driven out of the country by hunger, cold, withdrawal of water and darkness. Barbarism is on the rise again.

This inferno has been in the making for more than 20 years: First in Chechnya and Yugoslavia, then in Afghanistan, in Iraq and, more recently, in Yemen, Syria and other places in the Middle East. Now it has reached Europe again and has taken on catastrophic dimensions with the war in Ukraine. The large urban agglomerations inhabited by millions of people have become the most important war zones of both armies.

The increasing brutality of military conflicts has manifold causes. It is an expression of the increasing rivalry of imperialist powers that has been building up behind the façade of economic globalization. Once again, the capitalist world system shows its Janus face. On the one hand it opted for the profitable world peace of globalized supply chains and information systems in order to reorganize the exploitation hierarchy of the working classes driving it into the furthest corners of the planet. On the other hand it unleashed increasingly violent scrambles for geostrategic zones of influence. China's continent-spanning 'Belt and Road initiative' which is coupled with its territorial claim for Taiwan and the South China Sea is a case in point. Just as the USA. In order to secure its worldwide hegemony economically, Washington has converted its East Asian counterparts into extended workbenches of its own productive potential. At the same time the Chinese project 'Belt and Road Initiative' is being boycotted on all levels by Washington which did everything in its power to subvert peaceful economic relations between China, Russia and Europe. Simultaneously, the US administration has put its military system of alliance, NATO, into position against the Russian Federation in a bid to prevent the integration of the successor of the demised Soviet Empire into an enlarged Europe with a stable peace order and mutual security guarantees. The sabotage of North Stream 2 shows that economic pressure plays the same role as in its positioning against China. While the US was successful in this against Russia it proved to be a boomerang in the case of China where it served as a catalyst for China's rise as a competing world power. Finally, Islamic fundamentalism as a deeply regressive variant of anti-imperialism striving for a patriarchal theocracy came into play as a third factor. These developments have become a threat to humanity's existence as all parties involved in these conflicts have access to war material which unites in conventional weapon systems an ever increasing power of destruction resulting from technological boosts of capitalist development.

The war of aggression against Ukraine unleashed by Russia on 24 February can only be understood against this background. This context also explains its history. With the demise of the Soviet Empire the US obtained Russian consent to the inclusion of unified Germany into NATO only through a guarantee to refrain from extending NATO any further towards Eastern Europe. Prospects for a democratization and opening of Russia towards Europe were comparatively favourable then. However, a few years on these opportunities had been lost. First in covert form and finally open, since 1997 NATO expanded towards the East, dragging along the European Union. The Russian power elite and the majority of the population perceived this exclusion as a humiliation. In France and Germany, in particular, countervailing tendencies opting for policies to enhance dialogue and negotiation did also exist; however, they were foiled by the new special alliance between the US and Eastern European states. This hubris created the external conditions for the implementation of a revisionist imperialist strategy, which had been propagated by parts of the power elite since the

demise of the Soviet Union reaching its peak in the Putin era. Even the warning signals emanating from this revisionist course, such as the war in Georgia in 2008 and the annexation of the Crimea in 2014, had been neglected. Instead, the development of NATO infrastructure was pressed ahead even though since 2014 the country suffered from a civil war with indirect participation of Russia. The joint manoeuvres between Ukrainian forces and NATO in September 2021 crossed a red line. For NATO to advance to 1.200 km distance to the Russian Western border was unacceptable for the Russian power and military elite and it decided to execute a war of aggression against Ukraine before it would formally become a member of NATO.

These considerations in no way intend to provide a justifying apologetics. Under no circumstance can the war of aggression against Ukraine be legitimized. It needs to be clarified, however, that acts of imperialist aggression triggering in Putin's Russia a geostrategic logic common to all imperialist power elites were also committed by the West before this catastrophic war of aggression. Just imagine, the Russian Federation would have signed military pacts with Cuba and Mexico and would build a military infrastructure in the Caribbean and the Southern US border directed against it!

This comparison shows that we cannot take sides in this catastrophic poker game of the imperialist powers. We condemn the Russian aggression in the strongest terms. However, we also categorically refuse to accept the power elites of the West. Instead of acknowledging the defeat of their excessive expansionist goals they continue to escalate and campaign for a comprehensive economic war as well as far-reaching military actions and aid.

We are perfectly aware, that by positioning ourselves against any direct or indirect party or participant in the war in Ukraine, we currently represent only a tiny minority. However, we must not relinquish our identity, our political position in line with the social and emancipatory struggles for equality and self-determination to the logic of imperialist war and the cynicism of warmongers on all sides. It is our responsibility to put an immediate end to the military slaughter, the killing of civilians, the bombardments, the starving and the mass expulsion of the Ukrainian population. We must not allow NATO and the West to defend Ukraine up till the last Ukrainian fit for military service and the Russian general staff to accept the death of thousands of soldiers, mostly conscripts. We don't want to be asked by our children and grandchildren why we haven't done anything against the escalation of the conflict in Ukraine to a European large-scale war or even to a nuclear Armageddon. This menace has constantly grown because of US and NATO military support on the one hand and comprehensive economic sanctions on the other. We are no passive bystanders. If the escalation is increased further, we might be faced with the horrors of war in the next few weeks just as the Ukrainian civilian population is now.

Our demands are:

- (1) An immediate armistice and the withdrawal of all armed forces from all urban agglomerations.
- (2) A withdrawal of Russian troops from Ukraine. The disarmament of all paramilitary units on Ukrainian territory.
- (3) An immediate end to all arms supplies and to the covert participation of NATO in this war.
- (4) An immediate end to sanctions and to the participation in the economic war.
- (5) Start of peace negotiations between Russia and Ukraine supervised by the OSCE. Providing guarantees for indefinite Ukrainian neutrality and dismantlement of NATO infrastructure in

Ukraine in return for comprehensive and internationally secured Russian security guarantees.

- (6) To establish Ukraine as an independent state between NATO/EU and Russia under the roof of the OSCE. Bilateral reconstruction and economic treaties between Ukraine and EU and the post-Soviet Eurasian Economic Union.

We are perfectly aware, that these demands will remain in a limbo as long as they're not being enforced in an internationally coordinated effort by social movements, the working classes and critical sections of intellectual workers.

It is therefore high time to start mobilizing for a broad anti-militarist resistance that is being comprehensively integrated in transnational social struggles. This approach is not without chances as the integration of the resistance against the war in Vietnam into the global social revolt of the late 1960s has shown.

Thus, we propose as first steps to mobilize the resistance:

- (1) An end to all arms supplies into Ukraine and the other war zones worldwide by way of boycott actions.
- (2) Start of a campaign to resist military service in all armies which are directly or indirectly involved in the war in Ukraine: disregard of conscription orders, insubordination, desertion from Russian, Ukrainian and NATO troops and supply units. Development of a broad solidarity movement for war resisters.
- (3) To participate in support activities for refugees from Ukraine and other war and civil war zones independently from their nationality.
- (4) It is high time to take position against the disorientation of the peace and protest movement. Mass demonstrations all over the world and the interests of the working classes are directed against all imperialist powers and must not take sides unilaterally. Their aim was and is the overcoming of exploitation, racism, nationalism, environmental destruction and the implementation of individual and social human rights. To this, the struggle against a revived barbarism has now been added again.

It is high time for the war opponents of all countries to unite before its is too late. The use of nuclear weapons is a real menace. We must do everything in our power to prevent that from happening. This is our responsibility to our children and grandchildren!

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