

FOR A EUROPEAN MOVEMENT AGAINST WAR!

*"Wars are made by people
who kill each other without knowing each other
for the interests
of people who know each other
but who do not kill each other."*

Pablo Neruda

Thirty years ago as the Berlin Wall came down, we were told a new age of freedom, prosperity and peace was dawning. (Neo)liberalism stood triumphant as 'the end of history' was declared. Yet at a distance of three decades such promises have revealed themselves to be entirely hollow. Instead, we see today more than ever a world dominated by poverty, pandemics, hunger and war.

One month ago the latest outbreak of war took place in Ukraine, after the Russian government decided to invade the country by military force. Thousands of people have already been killed or injured and millions of people have been displaced by this brutal and criminal war of aggression.

The Russian invasion took many observers by surprise. Too many had believed a full-scale outbreak of war in Europe to be impossible scenario. Yet their shock belies a (racist) omission: it was in Europe that some of the most atrocious massacres of the last 30 years played out, as the former Yugoslavia was torn apart by the resurgence of nationalism, fomented by the Western powers and by a NATO-led 'humanitarian war'.

Today we are faced with a military conflict between two world powers with very specific interests: on the one hand, the so-called West, headed by the United States, which for years has been expanding its sphere of political, military and economic influence in Eastern Europe; on the other, Putin's Russia, an exponent of a bureaucratic and business power bloc that for the last twenty years has been attacking its own people first and foremost. This war will have terrible consequences not only for the Ukrainians but also for the Russian working classes, who will be forced to finance the military effort and who are already suffering a further contraction of Russia's democratic spaces.

On top of this the conflict risks even graver consequences. Any escalation involving a more direct intervention of NATO or any of its member states would essentially mean the start of a third world war, fought by nuclear powers.

With the clouds of war moving in from the East, a climate of tension has also enveloped our own societies in Western Europe. War imposes binary thinking, where everything must be seen as black or white. Anyone who dares to attempt contextualisation, to remind us of complexity of the situation – pointing, for example, to the destabilising effect of NATO's progressive expansion eastwards – is accused of being a Putin ally.

And while self-professed liberals rightly condemn the censorship imposed on the Russian people – who now face 15-year prison sentences simply for mentioning the

word 'war' – they also invoke censorship of anyone in their own societies offering a cautious word against their enthusiasm for escalation.

Yet in spite of the media pressure, there is still strong opposition to the war in Europe. A significant proportion of the populations of the European states is both in favour of peace and against the sending of arms to Ukraine, and would not be ready to accept European troops on Ukrainian soil.

This rejection of war and its possible intensification is the necessary basis for the emergence of a much-needed organised peace movement. There have been demonstrations in several European cities, in some cases attended by hundreds of thousands of people. However, we need to build a pan-European anti-war movement that goes beyond individual demonstrations and is capable of preventing our governments from involving us in what could become a third world war. We need to speak out against Orwellian governments who tell us that 'war is peace'.

We need a European anti-war movement that stands for the following:

AGAINST SANCTIONS AGAINST THE RUSSIAN PEOPLE

Sanctions are an act of war that affect the Russian people more than the 'oligarchs'. If we really wanted to target the oligarchs, we would have to go beyond token gestures such as the seizure of yachts and get to the heart of their wealth. In so doing, however, we would discover that the oligarchs' capital is deeply intertwined with that of our own capitalist class, with large parts hidden in tax havens. The sanctions imposed by the West leave the oligarchs largely unscathed, because attacking them would mean attacking the very foundations of Western capitalism and our own corrupt political system. Moreover, the hypocrisy of many Western governments is evident in the fact that gas and oil exchanges have continued, allowing Russia to pocket about a billion dollars a day, money that is also used to continue the war against Ukraine.

AGAINST SENDING ARMS TO UKRAINE

Sending weapons to Ukraine is also an act of war, which only serves to prolong a proxy war by sacrificing the Ukrainian people. The only way to really change the military relationship on the ground, as most military analysts have pointed out, would be the full-scale intervention of a US-NATO-led international coalition. This would mean a world conflict, potentially a nuclear war that could lead to the extinction of mankind. Our rulers are leading us straight into this terrible scenario.

AGAINST RISING COSTS OF LIVING

We are already beginning to feel the first side effects of the preparations for war. Rising gas, fuel and bread prices are the most immediate consequences; for years we were told that there was no money for education, public health, transport, pensions; today all our governments are allocating billions upon billions to increase military spending – often without any intention to deviate from the existing budget, meaning there will be new cuts, starting with social services.

FOR THE WELCOMING OF ALL REFUGEES

The solidarity initiatives that are being organised across Europe to support Ukrainians fleeing the war is the only light in all this darkness. It is proof that it is possible to welcome refugees in a dignified manner. Unfortunately, right-wing media and even our governments continue to use a shameful 'double standard' whereby those fleeing from the war in Ukraine are rightly called 'refugees', while those fleeing from wars in Afghanistan, Eritrea, Yemen, Syria, etc., are often called 'illegal immigrants', 'terrorists' or even 'invaders'. For those coming from Ukraine the doors of 'temporary protection for refugees' are opened; for all the others only those of the mass detention camps, inside and outside the EU borders. Moreover, mainstream discourse is reinforcing nationalism and a 'Russophobia' taken to a ridiculous extreme, with universities cancelling courses on Dostoyevsky, an author who was the very antithesis of all Putin stands for.

FOR THE DENUCLEARISATION AND DEMILITARISATION OF OUR COUNTRIES

The war is predictably producing a new arms race. Germany's commitment to spend as much as 100 billion on its armed forces and to use 2% of its GDP on military spending is the most striking example in this respect, but all countries are planning to invest more in war. In this they align themselves with the decision taken in NATO (in 2006 and then at the meeting in Wales in 2014), relaunched at the summit of the 27 EU countries in Versailles in mid-March. What our people need is exactly the opposite. We need our governments to sign the Nuclear Weapons Prohibition Treaty and rid our lands of the presence of nuclear weapons. A process of reduction of military spending, demilitarisation and reconversion of the weapons industry.

FOR A NEW INTERNATIONAL SECURITY ARCHITECTURE

The war has highlighted the need for a new European and international security architecture no longer based on NATO, which is part of the problem and certainly not the solution, and which should be consigned to the history books. True international security and peace require a return to the drawing board and the courage to reset the international balance of powers by working to banish the return of institutionalised violence.

Faced with the enormity of this historic transition, it is normal to feel disoriented and powerless. But it is precisely in these times, when the atrocity of war tears our lives apart and sets brothers and sisters against each other, that international solidarity is most needed. In this, our national and local communities have a vital role to play. Yet to further this agenda, we cannot limit ourselves to our respective national stages, but must have the courage to think and build an international anti-war movement.

For this reason we are launching an **international assembly in Rome on Sunday April 3, 2022, starting at 10 a.m.**, with the participation of representatives from political forces from across Europe fighting to prevent an escalation in the conflict.

Solidarity with the Ukrainian people! Solidarity with the Russian people!