

Against all Wars... except “just” Wars?



*The devastating effects of the lesser evil
and anti-imperialism in anarchist circles*

Content

➤ AGAINST ALL WARS... EXCEPT “JUST” WARS?	1
➤ EXTRACTS OF TEXTS RELATED TO ANARCHIST AND RADICAL POSITIONING ON THE WAR (AND ON THE WAR IN UKRAINE)	19
⇒ Response of the London International Anarchist Group to the Manifesto of the Sixteen	20
⇒ Errico Malatesta’s response to the Manifesto of the Sixteen	20
⇒ Italy: We sabotage the war – Triggering the International	22
⇒ War starts here	22
⇒ Against wars of capitalism, our answer is social war	23
⇒ Don’t fight for “your” country!	25
⇒ War, the nerve of money	27
⇒ Anti-war protests continue in Russia and in the Ukraine	28
⇒ Fragments for an insurgent struggle against militarism and the world that needs it	29
⇒ The Putin’s Curse	31



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When it comes to war – and we are currently seeing this in the Ukraine – the dominant analyses generally focus on the geopolitical causes and consequences as well as on political and military strategies, with, depending on the case, more or less depth or submission to the official narratives. Peace and war are being discussed and their relation, which even some commentators who are in favor of the powers have been able to account for with a certain subtlety, since the “*si vis pacem, para bellum*” (“if you want peace, prepare for war”) of Ancient Rome, which has been brought up to date, through the conception of war as “*a continuation of politics by other means*”, according to General Von Clausewitz.

For the masses, including those who claim to be cultured and intellectual, the binary *storytelling* continues to be industrially produced, depicting Good versus Evil, the just war versus the deceitful and cruel enemy, and the great tragedy of human civilizations. The apocalypse of John describes the horseman bringing the scourge of war who “*was empowered to take peace from the earth, so that people would slaughter one another. And a large sword was given to him.*” And it is with a beautiful binding that these pages were joined centuries ago to those of the books renamed “Old Testament” and which praise *ad nauseam* the military conquests and massacres perpetrated with the help of Yahweh to accompany the glorious destiny of his Chosen People and to punish the sinners and the irreligious.

The geopolitical dimension is obviously worthy of interest, on two conditions: first, to place it in the dynamic of capital – a dynamic of severe crisis in this case – of which the States are only the appendages and the armed wings; second, not to lose sight of the fact that history remains above all the history of the class struggle. However globally totalitarian and omnipotent it may be, the capitalism will only last as long as we are globally willing to endure it. From this point of view, war is the paroxysm of the defeat of the exploited, reduced to the role of cannon fodder, doomed to kill each other with the exploited of the other side, for the profit of their own exploiters. Any capitalist war requires the constitution of sacred unions behind such State or such bourgeois faction, in other words the dissolution of our class in the “people”, united (and submitted) behind the flag.

“War and peace have always been two different words covering a continuity of exploitation and domination. (...) Anarchists are against war, against all wars. But we are also against peace. We are against the peace

of the markets, against the peace of authority, against the peace of apathy and servitude.”¹

Social peace is thus the foundation allowing the State to go to the war, and mobilization must even consolidate it. As for the development of the war and its massacres, they always potentially jeopardize this social harmony, which is either directed towards more national union and warlike fanaticism or is cracked and broken by insubordination, fraternization, class internationalism, revolutionary defeatism². Let’s remember it for later: whether these subversive impulses occur or not, according to the times and places, nothing else will really be able to oppose the war. In other words, the only real obstacle to warlike massacres is not philosophical but active refusal, the resumption of the struggle, the social war, the war of those without homeland against their own States.

In the end, by accepting any national union, it is always the State, the commodity society and their capacity for harm (and repression) that is defended and reinforced, even if it is in the name of a lesser evil or an ideal of emancipation against a greater threat of oppression. To do this, regiments ready to go from the factory to the trenches when the bugle sounds are required, it is necessary that the national flags flutter in the windows of both the exploited and the exploiters. Among the latter, it is enough that some of them, occupying less visible strategic responsibilities, act and organize themselves knowing pertinently that what is really at stake at any moment and in any point of the globe, is the social war, the risk of insurrection, and more fundamentally the confrontation between the capitalist society from which they derive their privileges, their power, and the perspective of its revolutionary overthrow.

As we know, the representation of events is the object of a permanent ideological production in support of the reproduction of existing social relations. While we are invited to hunt down “fake news”, it is in fact any event brought to our attention (to the detriment of others, minimized or even hidden) that is selected, hierarchized, subjected to a lexicon and a specific narrative. When the State needs pure and simple inventions, they are produced according to the same process, on the basis of an

¹ “*Contre la guerre Contre la paix – Éléments de lutte insurrectionnelle contre le militarisme et la répression*” (2015) [*Against War Against Peace – Elements of Insurgent Struggle Against Militarism and Repression*], available in French here: https://cestdejatoutdesuite.noblogs.org/files/2015/04/contrelaguerre_lapaix.pdf

² On this topic, see Louis Mercier Vega, “*La Chevauchée anonyme: une attitude internationaliste devant la guerre (1939-1942)*” [*The Anonymous Ride*], and Pierre Lanneret, “*Third camp internationalists in France during World War II*”: <https://libcom.org/article/1914-1946-third-camp-internationalists-france-during-world-war-ii/>

existing, distorted, falsified social material. This production of marked-up normative stories and counter-stories is an integral part of the war machine against any subversive critique, against any possibility of opening up a desirable horizon beyond the wall of the commodity.

So is it today with the focus on the war in Ukraine (a war that had in fact already begun in 2014) in relation to the global warlike and destructive catastrophe of capitalism. The Western European media abandoned the obsessive “Covid” statistics and immediately rushed into the conflict with a lot of awful daily details about the Russian invasion, which we hear less about when dealing with equally disgusting military exploits of “our good States”, of “friendly” States (those to whom we sell guns) or of coalitions under Western leadership all over the world. As rightly recalled by the text *“Don’t fight for ‘your’ country”* (Internationalist Perspective)³:

“A strange term, ‘war crime.’ A redundant one, really, because war is by definition a crime, the greatest of all crimes. Whatever the goal, the means are always mass murder and destruction. There is no war without atrocious massacres. The term suggests that there are two ways of waging war: a civilized one and a criminal one.”

It is certainly within this framework of “the Law” and of an ideological distinction between civilized war and criminal war that an organization like *Amnesty International* works. Nevertheless, it should be noted that after various publications on the “war crimes” perpetrated by the Russian army in Ukraine, *Amnesty* published on August 4 a report entitled *“Ukraine: Ukrainian fighting tactics endanger civilians”*, underpinned by various records and eyewitness accounts. Here is the introductory statement:

“Ukrainian forces have put civilians in harm’s way by establishing bases and operating weapons systems in populated residential areas, including in schools and hospitals, as they repelled the Russian invasion that began in February.

Such tactics violate international humanitarian law and endanger civilians, as they turn civilian objects into military targets. The ensuing

³ <https://internationalistperspective.org/dont-fight-for-your-country/>

Russian strikes in populated areas have killed civilians and destroyed civilian infrastructure.”⁴

Following this publication, *Amnesty*, despite being the zealous flagship of international humanitarianism, has been the subject of multiple attacks in the Western press, under the accusation of supporting Russia. However, the publication of the report was maintained and preceded by a press release to respond to these accusations, which indicates the current climate of pressure and propaganda, not only from Russia. In Ukraine, as of February 2022, the main media outlets have been consolidated into a single entity called *United news* so that the nation speaks with one voice.

Showing pure opportunism, “on March 15, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine (Parliament) passed a law establishing restrictions on workers’ rights and trade union activities that are unprecedented in the history of independent Ukraine. The law is intended to regulate labor relations in the context of the Russian-led hostilities in Ukraine. The government considers it a necessary measure in wartime conditions and the unions are forced to accept this situation without protest. The unions say that this is an excuse for deregulation, since a few months before the outbreak of the war a bill had already been tabled which envisaged restrictions on labor law... on the advice of the British Foreign Office (source: Serhiy Guz / OpenDemocracy, 18 March 2022). Here we can clearly understand the link between oligarchs, Russian or Ukrainian, ultimately it does not matter, and the British Conservative government.”⁵

As for the politicians, on March 20, 2022, Ukrainian President Zelenski decided, for the period covered by the current martial law, to suspend eleven political parties deemed too close to Russia, three of which sit in the Ukrainian parliament, which is a bit embarrassing for the “liberal democracy to be defended against the Russian autocracy”.

Any military operation is thus preceded and accompanied by an ideological reconfiguration with, on all camps, their censures, rewritings, emphases, reversals and eternal recycling. The media amplification of this fuss does its job and helps to obliterate the true ruptures, still minoritarian, with the murderous course of things. When war drums are

⁴ <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2022/08/ukraine-ukrainian-fighting-tactics-endanger-civilians/>

⁵ “*Guerre du capital et antiennes anti-impérialistes: l’Ukraine*” [War of Capital and Anti-Imperialist Platitudes: Ukraine], *Temps critiques*, March 21, 2022: <http://tempscritiques.free.fr/spip.php?article520>. The cited source can be found here: <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/odr/ukraine-suspends-labour-law-war-russia/>

sounding, the consequent pacifism can merely be courageous because it is repressed, but it retains all the limits of a moral objection, against taking up arms, against war and for peace, for States at peace, for States without armies or armies (and forces of order) “under democratic control”. The consequent antimilitarism, for its part, does radically not want to be on any side except that of the revolution, not taking sides in any war except in the social war, the one that the State wages on us everywhere and all the time, “in times of war” as well as “in times of peace”, if we may refer to this highly questionable distinction. This revolutionary antimilitarism is internationalist in the sense that it has no homeland, and no boss either. It is not in itself against the use of weapons in the struggle, but against their military use, against any military conception of the struggle and of the insurrection, against any separate, specialized military organization.

In the prevailing confusion, rather than criticizing antimilitarism for what it is, namely a class position, it is easier to distort it, to assimilate it to pacifism, to a petition of principle against the use of weapons, and to label it an intellectual luxury for armchair speakers who are not confronted with the reality of war. A postulate which is far from neutral is recycled here: the choices made by people or groups immersed in such and such a situation would have more value than the point of view that we can have on them. By sheer chance, this postulate is never used to support a consistent and determined movement of struggle, against its gravediggers; on the contrary, it is systematically used against any radical critique, to defend the practices of collaboration with the State and the bourgeoisie, fetishizing a kind of absolute free-will of a working class that “in a “real-life” situation” would be always right, at least when it suits the dominant narrative. It is in fact a liberal-democratic postulate in all its splendor, a weapon of division which delimits territories between which it is a question of preventing the comradely, internationalist criticism from circulating. It is also a way of attaching proletarians to “their” enterprise, to “their” national economy, to the history of “their” fatherland, of “their” nation, to the interests of “their” bourgeoisie, rather than to the historical experience of their class, which has no borders.

We discovered, at the time of closing the present publication, the English translation of a text recently published in Czech, “*Anarchist*

*Antimilitarism and Myths about the War in Ukraine*⁶, which presents itself as an “attempt at a critical reflect on contemporary militaristic tendencies in the anarchist movement” and declares from the outset that “it is striking how many people claiming anarchism have embraced bourgeois-democratic propaganda with the outbreak of war in Ukraine and support the war mobilization coordinated by the Ukrainian state”. This text, which we can only encourage you to read, highlights 31 myths conveyed by this propaganda in order to analyze and respond to them from a revolutionary point of view, citing various groups around the world that have taken a stand against the war, against all the State camps.

Among the many issues addressed, the distortion of antimilitarism and the postulate of the primacy of immersion that we have just criticized are declined in 4 points:

“Myth 23: Antimilitarism is important, but it is a problem when it becomes dogma.

(...) Anti-militarism is not an abstract ideological construction detached from reality. On the contrary, it is a living process that emerges from the life and struggles of the working class. From the experiences of real flesh and blood people. When we talk about anti-militarism, we are talking about principles tested by practice, not theoretical treatises falling from the desks of academics. We do not adhere to dogma. On the contrary, we are constantly confronting our positions with reality, which proves to us many times that being an anti-militarist made sense during WW1, just as it does in the case of the current war in Ukraine. (...)

Myth 24: Refusing to take part in the fight on the side of the Ukrainian war resistance is a manifestation of the Western Left’s cultural arrogance. (...)

Myth 25: It is easy to refuse participation in war from people who express their views in a safe place far from the war and do not have to respond to the bombing of their cities. (...)

Myth 26: People who criticize participation in war from a safe distance are unemphatic and condescending because they do not listen to the people on the ground.”

⁶ English translation: <https://www.autistici.org/tridnivalka/antimilitarismus-anarchist-antimilitarism-and-myths-about-the-war-in-ukraine/>

PDF version: <https://www.autistici.org/tridnivalka/wp-content/uploads/antimilitarismus-en.pdf>

On the side of social-democratic organizations and parties throughout the world, it is not surprising that they push for war while talking about peace, as it was already practiced in 1914, not out of “betrayal” towards the proletariat but simply out of loyalty to capitalism. Talking about peace for Ukraine today means advocating at least a partial victory of the Ukrainian army over the Russian army, with lucrative orders for arms (and mainly for the benefit of the US arms industry), as shown by the program with the sweet name of *European Peace Facility*.

“After five months of (Russian) aggression, it is very important to show to Ukraine that we still support it, said the new head of Belgian diplomacy (Hadja Lahbib), while the 27 must give their agreement in principle to the release of a fifth tranche of 500 million euros of the European Peace Facility, to finance the purchase of arms provided to Ukraine” (Le Soir, 18/07/22). It should be noted that the Belgian government had jumped on the context at the beginning of the war to act on a recurrent increase in the defense budget, including 1 billion euros during the current legislature.

In a text entitled « *Des canons par centaines. L’effort de guerre français en période de paix* » [*Cannons by the Hundred. French War Effort in Times of Peace*]⁷, the *Grothendieck Group* analyzes the European and international tendency to increase military spending based on the case of France. The French bill dictated by the DGA, *Direction générale de l’armement* [Directorate General of Armaments], in order to requisition civilian production capacities for military purposes, is itself modelled on the US *Defense priorities and Allocations System Program* (DPAS).⁸

“On April 29, 2021, during the adoption of the multiannual budget 2021-2027, the ‘European Defense Fund’ is enacted, and will provide the defense industry with 8 billion euros per year to be redistributed among groups of arms production, European security and defense agencies, lobbies, consulting groups and R&D centers. Europe clearly assumes its military power and finally adopts a real industrial strategy for the production of weapons and digital security tools. While being under NATO’s thumb regarding military strategy, it is developing its own military-industrial complex, allowing it to be increasingly competitive at the global level.” The adoption of this European budget in 2021 is added “to the

⁷ <https://lundiam.com/Des-canons-par-centaines> [in French], see note 22.

⁸ For more on this topic see “*War Economy*”, in *Storm Warnings. Anarchist Bulletin for the Social War*, #54: <https://avisbabel.noblogs.org/post/2022/07/04/664/>

commitment made by the 28 NATO member states at the 2014 summit in Wales to spend 2% of their GDP by 2024.”

On the substance, the *Grothendieck Group* underlines that “*the use of this bellicose imaginary (‘war effort’, ‘war economy’, ‘threat’, ‘requisition’, etc.) which is heard all day long in the media is not insignificant, and has already been tested as a population management technique during the COVID crisis (2020-2021)”*.

These words are similar to those in “*Letters from Ukraine*” (part 1 – 18.03.2022)⁹:

“The Ukrainian government and the media paint the invasion as a ‘natural’, mythical occurrence. The minister of health easily transitioned from reporting the numbers of people infected and killed by Covid, to reporting the numbers of murdered children. The war and the pandemic are thus divorced from normality, their causes and consequences from the constitution of the state itself and the world at large: these are uncontrollable cataclysms. The mass murder of the Ukrainian civilian population is described as non-political, it originates from an inhuman, genetic and contagious population of Russian ‘orcs’. The Ukrainian state is merely trying to survive here, and it is treason to not throw your body to protect it.”

This is also echoed by this observation from *Temps critiques*:

*“From the world afterwards, which would no longer be like the one before, there remained in the end only the maintenance of a theoretical recurrence around the energy transition; because far from ‘disrupting’ with the health crisis yesterday and the war in Ukraine today, this transition is at the center of a long-term project of ‘sustainable development’. It is the bridgehead of the project: ‘everything must change so that nothing changes’ as Lampedusa said in *The Leopard*.”*¹⁰

The ideological shock wave accompanying the war in Ukraine and the difficulty to maintain a consistent position against the current also affected the circles that claim to be radical critics and in particular anarchists, as we mentioned above with the text “*Anarchist antimilitarism and myths about the war in Ukraine*”¹¹. Since before the Russian invasion at the end of February, the site of the North American group *Crimethinc*

⁹ Originally published in French: <https://tousdehors.net/Lettres-d-Ukraine/>
English translation here: <https://endnotes.org.uk/posts/andrew-letters-from-ukraine-part-1>

¹⁰ “*Guerre du capital et antiennes anti-impérialistes: l’Ukraine*”, op. cit.

¹¹ Op. cit.

(whose collection *“Between Two Fires”* is published as early as March) has been the relay of the tendency, among various groups claiming to be anarchists (in Ukraine, Russia and elsewhere), to consider the war in Ukraine as a “war of aggression” on the part of Russia, justifying in return to join in one way or another the “defensive war” under the Ukrainian flag.¹²

The very fact that it is common to consider Russia as more imperialist in this dispute is a formal, superficial and not a global understanding of imperialism. Capital is imperialist in its totality and in all its parts, both competing and interdependent. The international role and the capacity for harm of the Russian State as gendarme of a part of the globe (in the sense not strictly geopolitical but especially of capacity for suppressing struggles where States would be failing) is certainly not equivalent in terms of power to the role devolved to the Ukrainian State, but from a revolutionary point of view it cannot justify to make this one the victim of that one, let alone a potential ally, even if it is strategic and circumstantial. To accept the State as a fellow traveler is invariably to roll at breakneck speed.

The distinction between the “aggressor” State (country, nation, people...) and the “aggrieved” State is the most common premise of the reasoning that pushes people to abandon any class position and to join a nationalist front. Moreover, we see this distinction wrapping itself in great principles (against war, against choosing one imperialist camp against another...) while at the same time lining up contingent reasons why these intangible principles would not apply in the present case. Others answer them without ambiguity...

*“Their interests, our dead! We do not take a stand for any of the States in conflict, whether one is categorized according to the dominant bourgeois political morality as ‘the aggressor’ and the other as ‘the aggrieved’ or vice versa. Their respective interests at stake are exclusively theirs and in total opposition to those of the exploited class, that is, us proletarians.”*¹³

¹² In terms of “anarchist” support for the “defensive war” in Ukraine, let’s quote the emblematic case of the group RevDia: <https://revdia.org/2022/03/13/navishho-anarhisti-jdut-na-vijnu/>, translated into English by Riot Turtle: <https://enoughisenough14.org/2022/03/13/why-do-anarchists-go-to-war-ukraine/>

¹³ *“Internationalist Manifesto Against Capitalist War and Peace in Ukraine...”*, *Class War*, available (as well as their entire *“No War but Class War”* file, with unpublished translations from various languages) on their blog: <https://autistici.org/tridnivalka/>

We don't have to go back very far in time to find similar controversy, as this 2015 text indicates: *"We are for social revolution, for the violent and profound upheaval of existing social relations, based on exploitation and authority. But these rocks of the anarchist ideal do not always hold up so well in storms. It was not uncommon to hear companions saying that the NATO intervention in Libya was not the most convenient thing to denounce. Just as today few anarchist voices are raised against the military intervention of the international coalition in Syria. It is also not unusual to see anarchists succumbing to the principle of tactical opportunism: 'the enemy of my enemy is my friend'."*¹⁴

We find ourselves in the same pattern today, well described by *Some anti-militarist anarchists*¹⁵ from Italy: *"Some say that there are exceptional situations that impose to derogate from these principles. In reality, it is precisely in 'exceptional' situations – those in which it is more difficult to orientate oneself from a theoretical and practical point of view – that the principles are the most necessary. Revolutionary principles are not abstract constructions but a historical distillation of ideas, values and methods (...)"*, we would even say more a compendium of experience of past struggles, because there are no revolutionary *ideas*, no revolutionary *theory* per se, if it is not the decantation of the human experience of confrontation with class domination, expropriation, exploitation, war. And the comrades continue: *"Given that it is widely known that certain sirens become much more persuasive when the enemy is at the gates, it would be curious to maintain that during a war, it is necessary to put aside one's antimilitarism and internationalism."*

Interviewed by the Moiras Group in Spain, the Russian section of the IWA (KRAS) is very clear on this:

"We consider the participation of anarchists in this war as part of the armed formations operating in Ukraine, a break with the idea and cause of anarchism. These formations are not independent, they are subordinated to the Ukrainian army and carry out the tasks set by the authorities. No programs or social demands are put forward in them. Hopes of carrying out anarchist agitation among them are doubtful. There is no social revolution defended in Ukraine. In other words, those people who call

¹⁴ *"Contre la guerre Contre la paix – Éléments de lutte insurrectionnelle contre le militarisme et la répression"*, op. cit.

¹⁵ *"Idee per la ricreazione?" [Ideas for recreation?]*, published in Italian in March 2022 on the anarchist blog // Rovescio: <https://ilrovescio.info/2022/03/23/8707/>

*themselves anarchists are simply sent to 'defend the fatherland' and the state, playing the role of cannon fodder for Capital and strengthening nationalist and militarist sentiments among the masses."*¹⁶

As if it was not enough confusing already, we are invited to take sides with the "Ukrainian people" and its "right to self-determination". This is an attractive, unifying and all-purpose speech, but talking about "the people" is once again done at the expense of a subversive understanding of reality and class contradiction that underlies it. Wherever "the people" materializes (social peace, national unity, war...), it is precisely where we have been defeated, we must never forget it. If it is paradoxically common to associate people and struggle (or rebellion against the State), it actually participates again in the deliberate confusion between the (class) struggle and its gravediggers of all sides, who are always "friends" or "representatives of the people" and its "interests" (all social classes skillfully mixed), in order to better neutralize the struggle during critical periods and bring us back disarmed into the fold of the State and its jails.

Let us quote once again the text "*Anarchist Antimilitarism and Myths about the War in Ukraine*"¹⁷ in its critique of the myth of self-determination (Myth 27):

"Talk about the right to self-determination very often becomes an argument for overlooking the horrors that someone has chosen. It is also taken by some as a justification for supporting reactionary tendencies that hinder emancipatory movements. This is why we then see some anarchists taking offense at the fact that a State does not respect the sovereignty of another, as if perhaps the job of anarchists should be to fight for the State and its sovereignty. We can also see the same anarchists calling for support for that part of the Ukrainian population that has decided to fight and die for bourgeois democracy. They have chosen this, they say, and we must support them in this so that we are not disrespectful, paternalistic and unscrupulous. In short, this section of the liberal democrats, who for some reason call themselves anarchists, are willing to support even the tendencies most hostile to anarchism on the grounds that we must respect the self-determination and opinions of the people who express these tendencies. (...) We are not organizing to make the whole

¹⁶ English translation: <https://afreeretriever.wordpress.com/2022/03/24/war-in-ukraine-an-internationalist-voice-from-russia/>

¹⁷ Op. cit.

world think we are wonderful, but to make the world a better place to live. To do that, we certainly need links with other people, but not necessarily with everyone and at all costs. We don't succumb to the mania for quantity that says the more people you bring together the more success you achieve. Rather, we look at the content and for what purpose people are associating. Reactionary and counter-revolutionary positions will not have our support even if they are chosen by the vast majority of humanity, because we do not see this as a way to advance towards our emancipation."

*Antimilitarist anarchist comrades from Italy are right in the same sense: "we cannot keep silent about certain fundamental things, knowing – without needing to be reminded – how convenient it is to talk away from the bombs. But precisely because some debates become almost impossible when the war is at home, the questions must be asked clearly where they can still be asked. (...) Our weight as internationalists is so light that it would be a shame to put wrong ideas on the scale. To collaborate with the Ukrainian State against the Russian invasion and to try to carve out – within this collaboration – an autonomy of action is in our opinion a serious mistake. Not only because this will help to the continuation of the war, but also because this means to fight willy-nilly for NATO and Western capitalism."*¹⁸

The characterization of "popular self-determination" thus remains confused in terms of content and project, in this case when it is used to qualify the vast multifaceted movement of solidarity and self-organization of survival that has developed in Ukraine within the scope of the horrors of war. This solidarity has of course a class origin, and is even originated from the struggle particularly when it comes to protecting the escape of deserters. Indeed, it is not the bourgeoisie who serve the soup in the streets, far from it, they are the ones who take advantage of the situation and its opportunities for speculation.

The confusion is nonetheless obvious when all of these actions are converted into the proof that "the Ukrainian people" would henceforth live and organize itself for an important part outside the governmental control. However, unless to be confronted with an insurrectionary situation, which is not the case, the State is always failing where it suits it to be, as long as it does not represent a danger for it and for social order, as long as it does not lose overall control of the population. Moreover,

¹⁸ "Idee per la ricreazione?", op. cit.

this discourse ignores the prerogatives that the Ukrainian State does not hesitate to continue to exercise in terms of national defense, attack on living conditions, recruitment and repression.

As the comrades from the Czech Republic remind us in their text “*Anarchist Antimilitarism and Myths about the War in Ukraine*”¹⁹ (Myth 12):

“If the State was truly destabilized, nothing would prevent people from taking autonomous initiative. Instead, we see the State trying to centrally control activities in the country and suppress expressions of autonomy. The talk of destabilizing the Ukrainian State reflects a wish rather than a reality. The arming of the Ukrainian population is subject to the control of the State, thereby ensuring that the armaments are not used against itself. This brings us back to why the defensive fighting of the Ukrainian troops must be seen as defense and strengthening of the role of the State, and not as mere protection of the bombed population.”

The shift consisting in considering the whole of the actions of solidarity as participating globally in “the resistance of the Ukrainian people”, and this in a “relatively autonomous” way with regard to the State, this shift brings as if by chance water to the mill of the “defensive war”, because it has become “popular” and not purely military and governmental. Resistance to whom? To what? Once again, the confusion is great, and the instrumentalization of the facts is unilaterally oriented, in order to bring back the undecided and potential refuseniks into the army. What is indeed encouraged and valorized by the media, politically, among all the complex and contradictory things that are currently happening in the Ukrainian population, it is not at all *the action to counter the ongoing war* but, strictly speaking, forms of *social action of war*, in this duly marked field where the “popular resistance” shares with the Ukrainian State the only target of the moment: the Russian enemy.

On this point too, the Czech comrades are very lucid (Myth 6)²⁰:

“The Ukrainian State makes sure that the armed forces are under the central command of its authorities and army, to which are submitted even those ‘anarchists’ who have fallen headlong into militaristic tendencies. It can be assumed that even if the Russian army is militarily defeated, the Ukrainian State will seek to disarm the population which it is now arming under the watchful eye of the State authorities. In the past, whenever a

¹⁹ Op. cit.

²⁰ Op. cit.

State allowed anarchists to arm themselves to a greater extent, it later did everything possible to disarm them. Anarchists have more than once played the role of useful idiots who first fought for the interests of the State and the bourgeoisie, which they erroneously defined as the interests of the working class, only to end up, after fighting their battles, in prisons and torture chambers, before the courts and on the execution grounds of the very institutions that supplied them with arms.”

A word now on the position that we will call *eclectic support*. It starts from the principle – mentioned above – that we do not have to judge the choices made on the spot and consists in supporting the groups and persons, selected along previous affinities lines or based on principles, and this whatever these choices are, between desertion, engagement under the Ukrainian flag, networks of help to the victims of the bombardments, to the displaced persons and/or candidates for exile... It may be supposed that this support would have limits, even if unsaid and thus imprecise. In any case, this position must assume contradictions, and not the least, notably between desertion and the army that hunts it down, between support for civilians and the army that exposes them without scruple, between growing misery at the global level and the generalized increase of military budgets, of course “to put an end to wars of aggression”. If we think of the demonstrations of mothers in Khust in Transcarpathia at the end of April 2022 against the sending of young people to the front, and against the corruption that preserves the bourgeois families from it²¹, to give an eclectic support leads to having the ass on both sides of the barricade.

Finally, the argument of an anti-fascist struggle is also used over and again, in this case in both imperialist camps, by Putin as well as in the pro-Ukrainian arguments, with proclaimed “fascists” and “anti-fascists” on both sides of the front. It should be noted that some comrades are forced to a certain tactical flexibility by the integration into the Ukrainian army of the Azov regiment, as part of the takeover following the Maidan movement of 2014.²²

²¹ Source in Russian: “Антивоенные протесты в России и Украине продолжаются” [*Anti-war protests continue in Russia and in the Ukraine*]: <https://www.aitrus.info/node/5963/>

²² See the article “*Gilets jaunes et extrême droite: les leçons de Maidan*” [*Yellow vests and the far right: the lessons of Maidan*] on <https://lundi.am/Maidan-1667/> [in French], without necessarily adopting the “appelist”-style intellectualism and ideology of *Lundi matin*.

The question is, as always, not to be satisfied with denouncing the existing situation and its sinister mercantile calculation, but to be interested in the perspectives of getting out of it by the front door, of subverting it, of acting in order to emancipate oneself from it, in the long run radically and definitively. The fact that various attempts to oppose the Russian military invasion are emerging is one thing, and deserves attention, but it remains to be seen how and to what end. Even the emergence of a maquis outside the Ukrainian army, against both the Russian army and the inevitable attempts at nationalist militarization, would raise the question of its goals, as with any armed resistance. Tristan Léoni's text "*Farewell to Life, Farewell to Love... Ukraine, War and Self-Organisation*"²³ tries to clarify this. The possibility of leading a form of resistance to war, to the State, against any form of national liberation, is still an acute issue, not only because it immediately puts lives at stake, but also for its implications for the struggle in general. Fooling ourselves about it is the worst thing one can do in the name of the struggle against war, in the name of the revolution.

It is indeed more generally about the possibility of acting against what destroys us, a crucial question, directly internationalist, and to be shared more than ever. The danger about Ukraine and beyond is that this discussion itself is denied and scuttled from the very beginning, that a renunciation of the principles succeeds in imposing itself in the name of a supposed principle of reality.

As the text "*Against Peace Against War*" (2015) reminds us:

*"Faced with war and the massacre of insurgents, the anarchist proposal can only be that of internationalist action. It is above all a refusal to rally to one side or another, considered as 'less worse', or to applaud the militaristic interventions of great powers against or in favor of this or that side. In this context, internationalist action consists fundamentally in defending insurrection and social revolution against reaction. It runs along two fundamental axes, that of supporting the revolutionary and anti-authoritarian tendencies within the insurrection itself, and that of attacking the repressive and military effort here."*²⁴

²³ English version: https://ddt21.noblogs.org/?page_id=3460

²⁴ "*Contre la guerre Contre la paix – Éléments de lutte insurrectionnelle contre le militarisme et la répression*", op. cit.

The *anarchist antimilitarist* comrades of Italy draw for their part conclusions of the current situation: “*a coherent internationalist choice in Ukraine implies today positions that are certainly unpopular: denouncing the responsibilities of ‘its own’ State and the Western powers, demanding peace under all conditions (that is to say at the expense of the government and Ukrainian army), opposing the martial law and the forced enlistment, supporting all those who want to flee, using means of struggle and self-defense against the occupying army which escape the logic of war and front, and which can then be adopted as a form of insubordination and resistance against the establishment of a possible puppet government by the Kremlin, satisfying the needs of survival through the expropriation of those who got rich with the appropriation of wealth by Western capital. In a few words: peace with the enemy of the nation to deepen the war against the class enemy (...). With which forces could we implement such defeatism? We do not know. (...) Today we can only say what we are not, what we do not want.*”²⁵

This use of the term “peace” and its claim as an immediate stop of the inter-imperialist war is here neither “pacifist” nor “pro-Russian” but would require a deeper discussion, as it was the case in 1917 in Germany and in Russia as well as in 1918 with the revolutionary opposition to the signature by the Bolsheviks of the Peace Treaty of Brest-Litovsk with Germany. The revolutionary challenge will never be in itself peace or the return to a “pre-war” situation but the transformation of the imperialist war into a class war against the exploiters. In the same way, the question of revolutionary defeatism only makes sense from an internationalist point of view: the need of capital to be permanently *at war* and its capacity to wage them is determined at the world level and not in the sole theater of operations discussed here.

Finally, let us quote the text “*Internationalist Perspectives in Times of War*” from the magazine *Mauvais sang – journal bâtard pour la révolution* (n°2, April 2022)²⁶:

“*Let us circulate our perspectives, our practices and our ideas. Let us translate, write, exchange, in the struggles, for the struggles, with the destruction of all borders, all Nation-States and all fantasies of united peoples as our horizon. It is time to reexamine revolutionary history: in contrast to the national revolutions of the 19th century, the necessity of*

²⁵ “*Idee per la ricreazione?*”, op. cit.

²⁶ <https://mauvaissang.noblogs.org/files/2022/04/Mauvais-Sang-N2.pdf> [in French]

internationalism facing the limits of wars of national independence has long been observed. However, here we are again, having to fight against certain active ideologies of defense of national sovereignty under the pretext of anti-imperialism. In the 21st century and in the midst of a murderous war, let us remember that our radical anti-State perspectives are neither dead nor forgotten and that they make more sense than ever!"

As we will see in the following texts, the theme of autonomy of action towards the State is recurrent, and subject to contortions and controversies. Regularly historical parallels also come back, with the revolutionary positions on the great world slaughter of 1914-1918, the critique of the Manifesto of the Sixteen (published during the war), the revolutionary experience of the Makhnovshchina in the Ukraine of the years 1918-1921 and the international discussions that followed during the period of exile, about the revolutionary war, the revolutionary defeatism, the insurrectional movement, the organization of the struggle.

Some are also referring to Spain 1936, and definitely not always for the right reasons, when the selling-out of libertarian communism carried out with the (governmental) collaboration of the leadership of the CNT is hidden or minimized in favor of the antifascist and republican turn (once again a tactical "lesser evil") or the fateful militarization of the militias, to which the current "anarchist" enlistment under the Ukrainian flag is echoing, even if it concerns only a handful of militants in the mass of the mobilized troops and that the current context is not comparable from the revolutionary point of view. If a historical parallel is never a mechanical argument, reappropriating these high points of the confrontation between revolution and counter-revolution as well as the controversies they have generated among revolutionaries can only help us to shed light on the current situation, to be better equipped and sharper.



**Extracts of texts related
to anarchist and radical
positioning on the war
(and on the war in
Ukraine)**

★ Response of the London International Anarchist Group to the Manifesto of the Sixteen (April 1916)²⁷

“Here they are, denouncing an imperialism that they now discover only in their adversaries. As if they were in the secrecy of ministries, chancelleries and headquarters, they juggle with the figures of indemnities, they evaluate the military forces and redraw, them too, these despisers of the idea of the fatherland, the map of the world on the basis of the *right of peoples* and the *principle of nationalities*. Then, considering it dangerous to speak of peace, as long as the sole Prussian militarism has not been crushed, as the usual expression goes, they prefer to look the danger in its face, far from the bullets. If we consider synthetically, rather, the ideas that their declaration expresses, we notice that there is no difference between the thesis that is supported there and the common theme of the authoritarian parties rallied, in every belligerent nation, to the *Sacred Union*. They too, these repentant anarchists, have entered the *Sacred Union* in defense of the famous *acquired liberties*, and they find nothing better, to safeguard this so-called liberty of the people, which they champion, than to oblige the individual to become a murderer and to be murdered on behalf of and for the benefit of the state. In reality, this declaration is not the work of anarchists.

(...) Producers of social wealth, manual and intellectual proletarians, people of an emancipated mentality, we are in fact and in will people *without a homeland*. Besides, the fatherland is only a poetic name of the state. Because we have nothing to defend, not even *acquired liberties* that the state cannot give us, we reject the hypocritical distinction between offensive and defensive wars. We know only wars fought between governments, between capitalists, at the cost of the lives, pain and suffering of their subjects. The present war is a clear example of this.”

★ Errico Malatesta’s response to the Manifesto of the Sixteen²⁸

“Except the popular Revolution, there is no other way of resisting the menace of a disciplined Army but to try and have a stronger and more disciplined Army; so that the sternest anti-militarists, if they are not

²⁷ Despite this text was issued at the time in London, we didn’t find any English version of it. So, we used the French one found in the booklet “*Les anarchistes contre la guerre – 1914-2022*” available here: <https://quatre.zone/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Anarchistes-contre-la-guerreA5.pdf>.

²⁸ Published in *Freedom* (London), number 324 (April 1916): <https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/errico-malatesta-pro-government-anarchists>

Anarchists, and if they are afraid of the destruction of the State, are inevitably led to become ardent militarists.

In fact, in the problematical hope of crushing Prussian Militarism, they have renounced all the spirit and all the traditions of Liberty; they have Prussianised England and France; they have submitted themselves to Tsarism; they have restored the prestige of the tottering throne of Italy.

Can Anarchists accept this state of things for a single moment without renouncing all right to call themselves Anarchists? To me, even foreign domination suffered by force and leading to revolt, is preferable to domestic oppression meekly, almost gratefully, accepted, in the belief that by this means we are preserved from a greater evil.

It is useless to say that this is a question of an exceptional time, and that after having contributed to the victory of the Entente in "this war," we shall return, each into his own camp, to the struggle for his own ideal.

If it is necessary to-day to work in harmony with the Government and the capitalist to defend ourselves against "the German menace," it will be necessary afterwards, as well as during the war.

(...) The line of conduct for Anarchists is clearly marked out by the very logic of their aspirations.

The war ought to have been prevented by bringing about the Revolution, or at least by making the Government afraid of the Revolution. Either the strength or the skill necessary for this has been lacking.

Peace ought to be imposed by bringing about the Revolution, or at least by threatening to do so. To the present time, the strength or the skill is wanting.

Well! There is only one remedy: to do better in future. More than ever we must avoid compromise; deepen the chasm between capitalists and wage slaves, between rulers and ruled; preach expropriation of private property and the destruction of States as the only means of guaranteeing fraternity between the peoples and Justice and Liberty for all; and we must prepare to accomplish these things.

Meanwhile it seems to me that it is criminal to do anything that tends to prolong the war, that slaughters men, destroys wealth, and hinders all resumption of the struggle for emancipation.

(...) Today, as ever, let this be our slogan: *Down with Capitalists and Governments, all Capitalists and Governments!*

Long live the people, all the peoples!"

★ Italy: We sabotage the war – Triggering the International²⁹

“As internationalists who have been condemned or privileged – it depends on one’s point of view – to live at these latitudes, the task imposed on us is that of sabotaging, derailing, and destroying by all means National Unity and the deadly climate of social peace that it generates. This is the appointment of the coming months that we absolutely cannot miss. In other words, National Unity prepares for internal peace between classes and external war between nations. Our internationalism has always shouted the opposite: no war between peoples and no peace between classes. With Galleani we repeat that we are against war and against peace, but for the social revolution.

However, internationalism is still only a sentiment. Although corrected by the principle that my government is my main enemy, internationalism, like every feeling, contains something ineffable. The courageous step we should take is to move from internationalism to the International. That is, to reason and spread concretely an informal, but real, historical conspiracy of revolutionaries all over the world. An “organization,” however much this term scares us and draws the eyes of repression. But what are the alternatives? Hunger, war and death. The organization of associated human life based on hierarchy and profit has now demonstrated that it cannot govern the complexity it has generated and is dragging us all towards catastrophe – sanitary, ecological and military. Only a world revolution can save us. Let’s get to work.”

From *Bezmotivny*, anno II, number 4, 21 February 2022

★ War starts here³⁰

“When, a century ago, the First World Slaughter claimed millions of lives, dragging almost the entire labor and revolutionary movement into its war logic, a movement which was supposed to uphold that, because of their similar conditions of exploitation, proletarians belong to the same camp whatever their country of origin, internationalist anarchists recalled that: *“The role of anarchists whatever the place or situation in which they find themselves, in the current tragedy, is to continue to proclaim that there is only one war of liberation: the one which, in all countries, is waged by the oppressed against the oppressors, by the exploited against the exploiters. Our*

²⁹ In English on <https://darknights.noblogs.org/post/2022/03/06/italy-we-sabotage-the-war-triggering-the-international/>

³⁰ Published originally in French and available in English in “*War against War – Anarchist and internationalist perspectives*”: https://actforfree.noblogs.org/files/2022/04/war-against-war_a4.cleaned.pdf

role is to call the subjugated to revolt against their masters. Anarchist propaganda and action must be applied with perseverance to weaken and disintegrate the various states, to cultivate the spirit of revolt, and to instill discontent in the people and in the armies.”

[...] The geopolitical analyses and the refined calculations are useless to push back the war, that will be achieved only by breaking the internal front which is erected day after day, by undermining the national unity, by opposing the militarization of society and the language which did not begin today (“war against terrorism”, “war against the virus”...), by affirming loudly and clearly that we do not share the warmongering perspectives of the European Union and NATO countries any more than those of Putin’s Russia, and by openly inciting defection: it is a question of transforming the war between States into a war *against States*.

[...] the production of weapons and war machines, of defense and security systems, of surveillance and control, which are used to wage war, are the same as those which arm the forces of repression *here*.

Peace will remain an empty word as long as we have not destroyed all the States and their borders, as long as the interests thrive of those who get rich on exploitation and on war, those who wanted it, those who study it, those who promote it, those who finance it, those who prepare it, in short, all those who collaborate with it from near or far. Whatever their nationality, they are the ones we recognize as our enemies, because they will always be enemies of freedom.

From *anarchie!* n° 23, March 2022

★ **Against wars of capitalism, our answer is social war**³¹

“Against NATO, against the EU, against Ukraine, against Russia, for the destruction of the State-Capital

The Ukrainian ruling class is so sure of itself that it even hands out weapons among the population without having to worry about them being turned against it, even if the workers there (as well as here) have every reason to do so. The question is not only that the proletariat arms itself, but what the latter does with the weapons. (...) Nothing seems more

³¹ German source: <https://panopticon.blackblogs.org/2022/03/02/gegen-die-kriege-des-kapitalismus-lautet-unsere-antwort-sozialer-krieg/>

English translation: <https://www.autistici.org/tridnivalka/no-war-but-class-war/>

seductive than the call for the flags in defense of the nation, which ultimately is always the defense of the bourgeoisie of a certain territory.

(...) Now nothing seems more urgent than peace, may the military actions come to an end, because, what is also true, people suffer from the massacre of any war. But we must not forget that peace is nothing but the peace of capital's domination and this is a war against humanity, which has to fight every day for its survival, even if the later has the possibility of being employed. (...)

What disconcerts us again, but that does not surprise us, is that so-called anarchists are embedded in this conflict within two opposing bourgeois factions. Under the guise of democracy, national sovereignty, side by side with Nazis and Ukrainian nationalists on the side of the Ukrainian nation and NATO and imperialist interests, their partners and associates; and on the other hand, under the guise of anti-fascism, national sovereignty, side by side with Russian nationalists on the side of the Russian nation, its partners and associates and its imperialist interests.

This could be gleaned, whether true or not, inflated or exaggerated, from various articles published either by *Crimethinc* or on other anarchist news portals. There is talk of a kind of *Union Sacrée*, where everyone fights together against the Russian aggressor, domestic capital is defended against a foreign one. Unabashedly, there is talk of the necessity of preferring to live in a Ukrainian nation rather than one under Russian domination, whether direct or indirect. Which apparently had and has led to calls to join the army or various nationalist and fascist militias. How can anarchists talk about defending their own country, since we have neither country nor fatherland?

Although not with the same scope, this reminds us too much of the *Manifesto of the Sixteen*, a manifesto actually published by fifteen anarchists who in 1916, in the midst of World War I, positioned themselves for war against the German Empire. The best known of the signatories was Piotr Kropotkin, a native to Russia. The open support for the Allies and the Entente on the part of a few led to an uproar within the anarchist movements that would be repeated just ten years later in the debate over platformism.

As we said, the international anarchist movement rejected this *Manifesto*. It should be mentioned that approximately the absolute majority of the movement criticized this *Manifesto* and accused it of a betrayal of the anarchist principles. That it was not a war between German imperialism and the international working-class movement, but a war between capitalist States, which was carried on the shoulders of the working class. Among

the critics of the *Manifesto* were Malatesta, Goldman, Bergman, Faure, Fab-bri, Mühsam, Rocker and many others great renowned militants.

(...) since the Corona pandemic, the defense of the State, as a guarantor of health and welfare, has become widespread and not only within the left of capital, but also in anarchist circles, which have thus lined up with the left of capital. (...)

What are our proposals? Well, those that millions before us have de-fended and tried to put into practice. That it makes no sense to take a stand in this capitalist war on any side of the warring parties. We are not cannon fodder, neither for NATO, the EU, Russia or whoever, no matter how pro-gressive and human-friendly this or that faction of capital looks like. Our goal is to free humanity from the yoke of wage slavery and the State, and we must follow this path and only this path. That all the efforts of the an-archist movement must be to advance an insurrection that results in social revolution. Social war and class war everywhere and without rest. That our efforts against capitalist war must always be for war against the ruling class, that only the exploited masses can put an end to this and any slaugh-ter, that we share more with our so-called enemies – concealed by the mas-querade of nationalism – because we are all exploited under the same domination of capital.

DOWN WITH CAPITALIST WAR AND CAPITALIST PEACE!

UPRISING, REVOLT, SOCIAL REVOLUTION!

FOR THE CLASSLESS AND STATELESS FREE COMMUNITY!

FOR ANARCHY!"

★ **Don't fight for "your" country!**³²

"Think of Yemen for example, where the Saudi forces have bombed and starved civilians much worse than the Russian army so far has done in Ukraine. The Saudi air force would hardly have lasted a week without Brit-ish and American military/technical support and supply of weapons. Is that too "a war for democracy"? This atrocity is ongoing, outside the media spotlights. Move along, nothing to see. No war crimes here.

(...) We live in a system that brutally clashes with the needs of humanity. A system at war with the planet, at war with life itself. Fighting back, de-feating the capitalist system, is the only war that makes sense.

³² <https://internationalistperspective.org/dont-fight-for-your-country/>

(...) The expansion of NATO meant a huge market expansion for the American (and other Western) arms industry because new members are required to make their arsenals conform to NATO standards.

(...) That army bloodily restored “order” in the interior (Chechnya) in border states (Georgia, Kazakhstan) and outside (Syria).

But in 2015 industrial production was still below the 1990 level. (...)

The best news we’ve heard about the war is that some Russian soldiers are sabotaging their own equipment and are deserting. How many is unclear. We can only hope that the desertion will become massive. On both sides. That Russian and Ukrainian soldiers fraternize and turn their weapons against their leaders who sent them to their death. That Russian and Ukrainian workers strike against the war. Peace demonstrations alone cannot stop the war if the population continues to endure the war and all its consequences. It becomes possible only when the great mass, the working class, turns against the war. World War I was stopped by the working class’s revolt against war, first in Russia in 1917 and a year later in Germany. But that was some time ago. Today there is no atmosphere of mass rebellion in Russia but the disastrous consequences of the war may awaken a sleeping giant.

(...) Social spending has been cut by successive Ukrainian governments from 20% of the budget in 2014 to 13% today. The vast majority of the Ukrainian population was already poor and will be much poorer after the war. Its interests and those of the ruling class are not the same. Just like in Russia. In Ukraine, Russian and Ukrainian soldiers are killing each other for interests that are antagonistic to their own.

(...) Since the “Great Recession” of 2008, the global economy has been in deep crisis. World profitability fell to near all-time lows. The collapse was only avoided by creating gigantic amounts of money and borrowing heavily from the future.

(...) nothing works against the crisis of the system which is dependent on growth, on the accumulation of value, yet increasingly incapable to accomplish it.

(...) the economy is more global than ever. The interests are intertwined. You cannot punish your enemy economically without cutting into your own flesh.

(...) The war and the sanctions will accelerate and deepen the coming recession which was becoming inevitable anyway. Now the war can be

blamed for it. Biden will call it “Putin’s recession”. Putin will blame the West’s economic war on Russia.

(...) But there is a third, crucial difference with pre-world war moments of the past. It is about consciousness. What any ruling class needs to submit its own population to an all out war effort, is the destruction of class consciousness, the atomization of individuals and their unification in the phony community of the nation. Putin isn’t there yet. He does not have the Russian people in his pocket like Hitler had the Germans. It’s true that despite the numerous protests in Russia against the war, resistance against it remained limited for now. But patriotic manifestations of support for Putin were nowhere to be seen, aside from one mass meeting in which many were pressured by the state to participate. Putin, aside from his military capabilities, cannot escalate the war as Hitler could because his ideological control is too weak. On the other hand, that is why he must escalate: without a victory, he risks falling off his pedestal like the Argentine junta after the Falklands defeat.

Similarly, in most other countries with a tradition of social struggle, ideological control is too weak to drag the population into a large-scale war. But it is being worked on. We are being molded. We are learning to revere soldiers as heroes again, we are learning to cheer for victories on the battlefield again, we are learning to accept that we must make sacrifices for the war effort. And while there are no national solutions to any of our problems — economic crisis, climate disruption, pandemics, impoverishment, etc. — we are learning that there is nothing more beautiful than fighting for borders, dying for the homeland.”

★ War, the nerve of money

By Kasimir – Distro-Lapinothèque broadcast on Radio Air Libre (Brussels) on March 31, 2022:

“War is not a defect, an excess, a capitalist monstrosity, but the very pattern of this mode of production, interwoven with the warp that binds us to it, at all times and in all parts of the globe. In this sense, war is above all a continuation... of war. Borders are filtering barriers drawn on a continuum of interdependent world production, world market and planetary flows of goods and value. It is not so much money that is the nerve of war but war that is the nerve of money, and a fortiori of Capital.

(...) This giant domino game, this beautiful world of transactions and speculation will always need the mud and blood of the battlefields to consolidate the positions of competing capitals, behind the con game (the

swindle) of national flags and their cacophony of funeral marches. Yet, their only enemy is potentially us, as a social class that has never had anything to win from the capitalist catastrophe, not even in the crumbs it gathers and its toxic trickle-down.

(...) The health of an army can always be threatened by the emergence of social contradiction within it and a weakening of the national unity that supports it on the Homefront (a question that becomes more acute for the State if the conflict gets bogged down and the death toll increases), but also by what happens socially in the country in which it ventures, which in turn is linked to what happens in the rest of the world, since our class has no homeland, it must be remembered. This is what distinguishes class internationalism from pacifism, which does not want to be on any side in the name of an abstract principle. In an invaded zone, this crucial issue is at stake: if a dynamic of self-defense is set in motion, we have to consider how and according to what logic, method and perspectives? What autonomy will it be able to develop and above all maintain, socially and operationally, in the face of the always powerful State dynamic of militarization, of absorption into national defense, national unity, national liberation, “people’s war” ... in other words, in the reinforcement of our own oppressors of yesterday and tomorrow? In the Ukraine, while calling for “resistance”, the State continues to hunt down mobilizable adult males, to arm them without losing control on them. Behind the sacrosanct “people in arms” there is still for the State the specter of the class to disarm.”

★ **Anti-war protests continue in Russia and in the Ukraine**³³

“The Ukraine. The main method for the Ukrainian population of resisting the war is to refuse to participate in it. Many Ukrainian male citizens, who previously left the country to work, are in no hurry to return, fearing mobilization.

In April, the draft law No. 7265 was submitted to the Ukrainian Parliament. It provides that in the event of the introduction of martial law – on all or part of the territory of Ukraine – persons who, according to the law, are subject to conscription during mobilization, are required to return to the Ukraine within 15 days. In case of non-compliance with this law, it is planned to introduce criminal liability of up to 10 years of imprisonment. The measure could affect millions of people.

³³ Source in Russian: “*Антивоенные протесты в России и Украине продолжаются*”, op.cit. English translation while taking into account the French version.

(...) Meanwhile, in the city of Khust, in Transcarpathia (far west of the country, far from the front line), a real anti-war riot broke out, organized by women who protested against the mobilization of their husbands and sons.

On April 30, about 50 women demonstrated in front of the local military recruitment center, demanding to know why their men, who had been mobilized in “territorial defense” units, were sent to the war zone of Donbass.

The peaceful meeting quickly turned into a riot when the head of the center, military commissar Zubatov, refused to go to the people to explain the decision. In response, the participants began throwing stones at the windows and breaking into the building.

(...) In addition, the head of the military registration and enlistment office, Zubatov, was accused of corruption because of the issuance of certificates of military unfitness to some without obvious justification. Meanwhile he had declared the general mobilization of all male workers, regardless of whether they were disabled, parents of three children, or without total lack of military experience.

The protesters resent the fact that while their loved ones are forced to fight, and even without proper equipment, the rich and their children continue to live in luxury and enjoy life.”

★ Fragments for an insurgent struggle against militarism and the world that needs it³⁴

“False Allies in the Fight Against Militarism. *“One does not have to go back to the Manifesto of the Sixteen – in which well-known anarchists called for joining one of two opposing camps, that of the French revolutionary tradition and potential against the imperial absolutism of the German Kaiser – to find examples of the complete loss of orientation and sense of the interests involved on the part of anarchists in the face of war and the interests at play. Most of today’s “anti-fascist” discourse reproduces the same errors in miniature, reflecting the ideas of “anti-imperialism” prevalent in the 1970s: democrats vs. fascists here, Third World states vs. Western states there. More recently, supporters of the fight against the “fascism” of the jihadists in Syria even accept U.S. Air Force troops in their own camp, a position that was already present during that war that led to the disintegration of the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s. Similarly, many defend with wrinkled noses the*

³⁴ Published in German on *Zundlumpen*, No. 83, May 2021 and available in English in “*War against War – Anarchist and internationalist perspectives*”, op. cit.

international interventions to contain the atrocities committed during the “civil wars” in many African countries (preferably the interventions of the Blue Helmets, which provoke less rejection than those of the French Foreign Legion or those of a NATO coalition). Nowadays, it almost seems that Western armies use volunteer recruits rather than mass recruitment to do their dirty work, this being the only factor that spares us from seeing libertarians join the armies to fight the “bad guys” who are even more counter-revolutionary than the supporters of commercial democracy.” From Break Ranks. Against War, Against Peace, For Social Revolution

One would think it need not be noted that a state could never be an ally in the struggle against militarism. And yet, past and recent positions of anti-militarists seem to be in urgent need of such clarification. And when I say state in this context, I also mean any militarist effort with the intention of establishing a state or otherwise taking over state functions. What seems at least illogical from an anti-militarist perspective, as I understand it, is totally irreconcilable from an anarchist perspective. In the past, what could be observed in solidarity movements with the Bolshevik regime, Fatah and Hamas, or in the Cuba solidarity movement, finds expression these days, for example, in those who literally wave the flags of YPG and YPJ. They are beautiful anarchists and anti-militarists who carry the banners of military units, who carry out arrests, run prisons and camps, and demand from their mercenaries the militaristic discipline of killing on command.

It is less interesting to note this fact, but far more interesting to ask, why? How is it that blatantly militaristic and authoritarian organizations end up being defended by who are in fact their opponents as a “lesser evil” – which is still the most honest way of looking at it – or even as a “necessity” in the war against imperialist militarism. That antimilitarism used here as a mobilization strategy for militarism may seem like a cruel irony, but I assume that these recuperations of antimilitarism try to reinterpret the goal of antimilitarism as the absence of war, the order of social peace and the repressive control over any tendencies disturbing this order. This may perhaps be the goal of a humanist, communist, or democratic antimilitarism, but as the goal of an anarchist antimilitarism it seems to me to be quite inadequate. What I find interesting in the current example of Rojava solidarity, which even among anarchists, if not uncritically adopted, remains largely uncommented upon, is how a certain manner of argumentation is reproduced, which conversely is rightly criticized as a statist, capitalist or nationalist legitimization of and propaganda for militarism. It is the narrative of a national defense against an enemy on the march – even if this national motive may be veiled and partly hidden behind identity-politics with more appealing terms like “women’s revolution” (yes, the

goal to fill 40% of the posts with women and the targeted presentation of female military personnel by the propaganda seems to be sufficient today) or “ecological revolution”.

(...) what could an insurgent perspective look like that not only attacks the militarism of the Turkish regime, that of NATO and that of IS, but that precisely also opposes the militarism of YPG and YPJ and their social-democratic to Leninist parties, the PYD and the PKK, as well as against any rule in general. Even against that of what is called democratic federalism, which in any case can only be considered anarchist in the eyes of a Trotskyist who has declared himself an anarchist without further ado?”

★ **The Putin’s Curse (Mirasol, March-April 2022)**³⁵

“The Russian offensive against the Ukraine would therefore be, from the point of view of this State, a police operation aimed at closing what on the part of the Russian authorities is a “Maidan parenthesis”, which stood in the wake of the Orange Revolution of 2004.

This sequence of policing is the logical continuation of the repression of the Belarusian uprising of 2020, to which the Russian State responded with a quasi-annexation of the country, as well as that of the uprising in Kazakhstan in January 2022, which was also the first intervention of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), an alliance that includes several countries of the former USSR... but not the Ukraine. And now it is a matter of repairing this situation.

(...) “For the new Ukrainian government, this war was certainly difficult, but it was also an unexpected opportunity to solidify its base. The energy that was born in Maidan was quickly channeled into voluntary assistance to the Ukrainian army. This weak and half-ruined army was clearly unable to cope with the Russian army. Thus appeared the volunteer battalions, which absorbed some elements of the Maidan self-defense forces. From then on, defending the “Revolution of Dignity” no longer meant being on the barricades in Kiev, but on the front lines. And suddenly the movement died out completely: you don’t protest when the country is at war.”³⁶

As this text describes it, this uprising had a much greater perspective... and it was defeated. The tendencies that carried an overcoming of the

³⁵ Available in French at camaraderevolution.org/index.php/2022/04/07/la-malediction-de-poutine/

³⁶ From “*Gilets jaunes et extrême droite: les leçons de Maidan*”, op. cit.

nationalist and pro-democratic bourgeois character of the uprising were robbed, defeated.

(...) The Ukrainian State is sometimes portrayed as the lesser evil. This kind of reasoning is not ours. States, as well as interclass nationalist coalitions, always end up betraying and often massacring revolutionary elements, as the balance sheet of anti-colonial liberation struggles shows. However, taking refuge in a global condemnation of any attempt at resistance seems to be a position of principle without any practical implementation...

To tell the truth, no position convinces us at the moment. We see the repression of looting, the effort shown in the defense of private property to the detriment of the interests and needs of the population. We therefore reject both any theorization of supporting (even critically) the Ukrainian State... but also condemning in principle the comrades who take up arms. We can only note that for the moment the horizon is blocked, suspended in a wider perspective and notably in the situation in Russia.

(...) We can only note that in this capitalist catastrophe, as it is the rule, the States and their supporters will always defend the continuity of capital first and foremost and will use the populations as pawns, even if it means sacrificing them in confrontations, to put pressure, for the sake of image, etc. Therefore, only self-organization and revolutionary struggle could be a way out of this tragedy...

(...) As the three uprisings in Belarus, Kazakhstan and the Ukraine have shown (with all their specificity) – and we can add here Kyrgyzstan, Syria, Iran, Iraq, Lebanon... etc., – the revolutionary extension is possible in this region of the world, only if the Russian State is neutralized. The explosion of this lock would have immense, worldwide consequences. Who knows how far such a revolutionary contagion could go?"



*There are those who speak for peace,
but I speak for war. For this war
which does not throw men to the bor-
ders, but which raises them against
the oppressor of every day, of every
country.*

*Albert Libertad
(1876-1908)*

