

**DON'T FIGHT
FOR "YOUR" COUNTRY!**



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Everybody hates war. Most of all the people who send other people to die on the battlefield. They claim that they abhor it, but alas, they're forced to it by the other side. The other side, which is encroaching on our traditional hunting grounds. The other side, which is invading a "sovereign" nation. We have no choice! We must defend ourselves... Which "we" are you a part of? Relentless propaganda on both sides pushes everyone to pick a side, to become an active participant or cheerleader in the war. Because the other side is truly horrific. And it always is.

The Russian army is accused of war crimes. 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. If ever there was a difference between the two, it was erased by advances in military technology. Since the early 20th century, the percentage of civilian casualties in wars has grown steadily. In the 19th century American Civil War, military personnel still accounted for more than 90% of total war deaths. In World War I, civilian casualties were 59% of the total. In the second it rose to 63%, and in the Vietnam War to 67%. In the various wars of the 1980s it climbed to 74% and in the 21st century to 90%. Not since World War II have so many people been displaced by war. The difference between combatants and non-combatants, between

military and non-military targets, has largely disappeared in contemporary warfare. The greater destructive force each side deploys, the greater the “collateral damage” to the civilian population. The more the war in Ukraine escalates, the more lives of ordinary Ukrainians are destroyed, the more the country becomes a ruin.

What constitutes a war crime or not then becomes a matter of opinion. Like “terrorism,” which has become a cheap swear word that everyone hurls at the opponent in every conflict, it is an excuse disguised as an accusation. Because “terrorism”, having been defined by mass media and politicians as the greatest of all evils, implies that all means are good to suppress it, and is thus the cut-and-dried excuse for using terror oneself. Likewise, the accusation of ‘war crimes’ justifies the crimes ‘our own’ side commits, which ‘our’ media barely mention, or sometimes not at all. 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 British 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.

Modern war

It has often been observed that in wartime the line between propaganda and reporting becomes difficult to perceive. When the Russian army carries out a (failed) missile attack on the television tower in Kyiv, the Western media call it a war crime. But when NATO (successfully) bombed Belgrade’s radio and TV tower in 1999, it was “a legitimate military target.”

That the Russian army’s “special military operations” are criminal has been abundantly proven in Grozny and Aleppo, to name only the most extreme recent ex-

amples of cities it reduced to rubble. In Ukraine it has not yet gone this far, perhaps because the pretext for the invasion is that the Ukrainians are a brotherly people who must be liberated. But to achieve its military goals, Russia must step up the war and overwhelm that “brother people” with its superior power of destruction. The logic of war drives the Russian invasion toward an escalation of devastation.

Let us not pretend that this is a Russian phenomenon. During the Gulf Wars, the Americans bombed shelters (with bombs designed to crush bunkers) in Baghdad resulting in hundreds of civilian deaths. Many more died when fleeing soldiers were massacred from the air on the “highway of death” in 1991. In the wars the West fought in Iraq and Afghanistan, more than 380,000 civilians died. The countless drone attacks that the U.S. military has carried out since then also show no respect for the difference between combatants and non-combatants. Not to mention what Was-

hington's most loyal vassal Israel has done in Gaza. They are all capable of it. This is modern warfare.

War is the ideal framework for tightening the grip of the state over its citizens. That is abundantly clear now in Russia, where you risk 15 years in prison if you call the war a war, where protests against the war are brutally suppressed, where all media that are not mouthpieces of the Kremlin are silenced. But it points to the weakness of the regime that it needs this naked repression. There is no doubt that this is not the case in Ukraine. There, everyone stands behind Zelensky. That is, as far as we are allowed to know. In the many interviews with Ukrainians on Western media, you never hear someone express opposition or even doubts about the war, although we know, from social media and our own sources, that they do exist. But according to the media, everyone there is willing to die for the nation. Yet Zelensky found it necessary to issue a ban on all men from 18 to 60 years of age from leaving the

country. Everyone must remain available as cannon fodder for the homeland. He also found it necessary to ban opposition parties and force all television news channels to combine in “a single information platform of strategic communication” called “United News.” All in the name of the defense of freedom. Of course, the media that call on Ukrainians to kill as many “Russian cockroaches” as possible can continue to spew their poison. Many western media — even papers like the New York Times — chose not to report Zelensky’s authoritarian measures. The Times’ famous motto says “all the news that’s fit to print,” and this kind of news does not fit the story that this is a war for democracy.

Liars

The Russian and Ukrainian governments both claim the censorship is necessary to protect the population from misinformation. That’s another slippery word. Like “war crime” and “terrorism,” it is “in the eye of the beholder.” Of course, misinformation is teeming in

social and other media. But who decides what it is? In Russia, the state decides who can speak and who must remain silent. In the West, that task is largely outsourced to the private sector, the companies that control the mass media and social media platforms. But they too are being prodded by the government. “We will ban the Kremlin’s media machine in the EU. The state-owned companies Russia Today and Sputnik and their subsidiaries must no longer be allowed to spread their lies that justify Putin’s war. We are developing instruments to ban their toxic and harmful disinformation in Europe,” said EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen. And indeed, loyal Russian news channels and other sources that do not follow the pro-Western line are no longer accessible on Facebook and other major social media outlets. But don’t call it censorship, that’s what the enemy does.

Russians and Westerners each get a very different picture of the war. They are being lied to, especially by

what their media choose to show or not show. For example, the Russian viewer sees time and again images of Ukrainians telling them they were beaten and threatened by ultra-nationalists because they spoke Russian and the Western viewer sees time and again mothers saying goodbye with tears in their eyes to their husbands who say they are willing to die for Ukraine. Both kinds of images are presumably real but each side chooses to show what fits in their propaganda narrative.

In the West, the story is about a gritty underdog bravely defending himself against a vicious bully. Of course we cheer for the brave heroes, of course we help them, of course we wave the yellow blue flag. It's as simple as that.

Russia's story is not very sophisticated, it's a grab-all of accusations in the boorish style of the former USSR. Ukraine is suffering under a corrupt, neo-Nazi, genocidal regime. We are not waging war against Ukraine,

we are just preventing it from becoming an outpost of NATO, a threat to our homeland. We're fighting for a world without Nazis. With the same kind of transparent pretexts, Russian tanks rolled into Budapest and Prague at the time.

As in every propaganda story, there is a grain of truth. The push of NATO is real. There is an ultra-nationalist current in Ukraine. There are fascist groups like Svoboda and the Azov Battalion (now integrated in the Ukrainian army) that attack gays, feminists, Roma and Russian speakers. Of course, Ukraine is far from the only country where the far right is rearing its ugly head. It does not mean that the political system in Ukraine is fascist. Less so than in Russia at least. And genocidal? What the Russian military did in Syria and Chechnya was immeasurably worse.

Those who want to beat a dog will always find a stick. All states lie when their armies go out. The US as well as Russia. Think of Saddam Hussein's non-existent

“weapons of mass destruction” and his non-existent ties to Al Qaeda that were the pretexts for the US invasion of Iraq.

The true story

The true story is called inter-imperialism. For however global the world has become, it is a world based on competition. Commercial competition that becomes military competition, cold and hot war, as circumstances require. Circumstances like loss of power, loss or potential gains of markets, economic crisis. 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, defeating the capitalist system, is the only war that makes sense.

The cold war did not end. At most, there was a pause. The Warsaw Pact disappeared but NATO did not. Yeltsin suggested that Russia should also become a member of it but of course that was not possible: the

NATO's *raison d'être* was to subdue Russia. A fierce discussion ensued about whether NATO was still needed now that Russia had also become a capitalist democratic country. The question was answered affirmatively in practice. NATO advanced to Russia's borders, breaking earlier promises. Fourteen ex-Warsaw pact countries were integrated in the anti-Russian alliance. American missile bases were installed in Poland and Romania. Capturing Ukraine was the latest phase of that offensive. For profit but even more so to contain Russia. Ukraine did not yet become a NATO member but began to cooperate militarily with the West.

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. In order to meet these norms Poland's military spending increased with 60% from 2011 to 2020 and Hungary's with 133% from 2014 to 2020. The cash register was rin-

ging. But the NATO expansion was also driven by the realization that Russia, with its military might and especially its nuclear arsenal, remained a potential threat to the pax americana. It is still the only country against which the US cannot wage war without risking quasi-total destruction itself. Just like during the cold war. Which thus did not end. Washington's strategy has remained the same: containment. To contain Russia and to reduce its sphere of influence, to weaken its power without entering into direct conflict with it. During the Cold War, this conflict was fought out with coup d'états and national liberation movements. Now Ukraine is the eager volunteer to die for the "free west," led by the "sympathetic" actor and millionaire Zelensky who is so bellicose that, like Che Guevara during the Cuban missile crisis, he wants to escalate the conflict to a world war if necessary. That would be the risk if his demand for a "no fly zone" — an air war between NATO and Russia — were granted. Like Che,

he will not get his way. Direct confrontation remains taboo. That is one reason why drawing parallels with pre-nuclear wars can be misleading.

The enemy can no longer be portrayed as the “communist danger” but that does not make Russia an ordinary capitalist country like ours. The rich there are not capitalists like ours but “oligarchs.” Who are they, these oligarchs? Billionaires who became rich thanks to corruption, exploitation and speculation and who like to show off their fortune in ostentatious luxury consumption. In other words, capitalists. The adage “Behind every great fortune there is a great crime” was not invented in Russia. But there “the great crime” is still quite fresh. The new capitalist class in Russia consists in large part of members of the old capitalist class, people who were factory-directors, party-bosses, bureaucrats in the pseudo-communist USSR, and who made out like bandits when state assets were privatized. The privileged class remained the privileged

class, now as private capital owners. But as managers of the state as well. The interests of private capitalists are intertwined with and subject to the state apparatus that Putin seems to have firmly in hand for now.

The disbandment of the old USSR and privatization of the 'central command' state-capitalist economy was the result of a crisis caused in the first place by the crushing cost of maintaining an empire and the unwillingness of the working class to work harder for less. But the desire of members of the ruling class to be not only managers of capital but also private owners of capital, with access to the whole world of capital, was an important factor as well.

They plundered the economy while the average standard of living sank like a stone. Russia's GDP in 1998 was only a little more than a third of what it was in the last year of the USSR. Industrial production had declined 60%. But starting in 1999 the prices of Russia's main export product, oil and gas, began to rise.

This fueled a recovery which improved living conditions. The state consolidated, with the security apparatus at the center of power. With Putin, an ex-KGB colonel, at the helm, Russia began to reassert itself. The army was rebuilt to such an extent that the arms industry (which employs more than 2.5 million Russians) struggled with overproduction. 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. Only the oil and gas sector exceeded pre-privatization production levels. But that year, the oil price began to slide again and so did the Russian economy. GDP fell from \$2.29 trillion in 2013 to \$1.48 trillion in 2020, less than that of Texas.

So the challenge to Russian capital was multifold:

- to defend the market position of its main export industry, oil and gas;

- to reduce its dependency from it: with its wild price swings and uncertain future, it is an unreliable crutch for a crippled economy;
- to either shrink its overproducing military industry or increase the use of its products;
- to hide the fact that it has nothing to offer to the working class, to distract the proletarians from their miserable conditions, by engaging them in a campaign of national pride against a foreign enemy who is to blame for the deteriorating conditions of survival.

It is a recipe for imperialist aggression.

Ukraine is an attractive booty. It has the world's largest iron ore reserves, gas and other mineral resources, excellent farmland, industry, shipbuilding, ports... it also has a modern arms industry, a rival to Russia's, which is one reason why Moscow insists that Ukraine be "demilitarized." And then there are the pipelines that carry the Russian gas and oil through Ukraine to wes-

tern Europe. Of course Russia wants to control them. Russia provides 45% of the European gas imports through those pipelines, but in recent years the US has nibbled at its market. Russia is the third largest natural gas producer in the world. The US is the largest, and its gas industry has known a prodigious growth, thanks to new and ecologically damaging ways of extracting it (fracking). However, lately it has been struggling with overcapacity and aggressively seeking new markets. Since 2018 its export to most EU-countries and the UK has been growing fast. The exception was Germany, the terminus of the new Nordstream 2 pipeline under the Baltic sea that bypasses Ukraine. It's not in use yet, and as things look now, it might never be used at all. It was German capital's hope for a stable cost-effective energy supply and expanding trade relations with Russia in general. Now Germany is back in the fold, investing in new terminals for receiving liquefied gas from the US. Heavily polluting coal-fired power plants

are getting a new lease on life. The EU commission announced a plan to reduce Russian gas imports by two thirds by next winter and end them by 2027. Even though that goal may not be reached entirely, the direction is clear. In as much as the war in Ukraine is a war over the European energy market — and that is clearly part of the picture — the US has already won. The current war does not come out of the blue. The struggle over Ukraine has been going on since 2008. In 2014, that struggle became a war. Since then, Ukrainians and Russians have been inundated with patriotic war propaganda. Ukrainians have the misfortune of living in the country that neither Moscow nor Washington want to cede to each other. It is reminiscent of King Solomon's judgment: two women both claimed motherhood of a baby. Solomon said: then I will chop the baby in two and give you each half. To which the real mother said: no, give him to her intact. But in the case of baby Ukraine both women say: chop it.

NEITHER ZELENSKI NOR PUTIN



NEITHER UKRAINE NOR RUSSIA

Let's Turn Capitalist War & Peace into World Social Revolution

Desert !

Fake news and real news are now so mixed that it is difficult to understand what exactly is happening in Ukraine and Russia. For example, on February 27 we were told that thirteen Ukrainian soldiers on “Snake Island” had chosen to die for the fatherland. “Fuck you,” is how they would have responded to a Russian warship’s demand to surrender. In Ukrainian and all Western media their heroism was praised to the skies. Their statue was already being ordered, so to speak. It was hard to believe. Were those soldiers so intoxicated by propaganda that they embraced a useless death? Like suicide bombers, did they hope to be rewarded in the afterlife? No one benefits from their deaths. They should not be celebrated as heroes but mourned as victims of patriotic insanity.

Fortunately, it turned out pretty quickly that the soldiers had wisely surrendered after all. Whew. Even after they were shown alive and well on Russian TV,

many media outlets in the west failed to report it.

Fighting for the homeland is not in the interest of the vast majority of the population of Ukraine. Whatever the advantages of living in a country integrated into NATO and the EU, they do not outweigh the disadvantages of war. When, in a few weeks, months or years, the guns fall silent and the smoke above the bombed cities dissipates, the Ukrainians will have a poisoned country full of ruins and mass graves. And Western countries will likely be less generous with money for reconstruction than they are now with weapons.

Suppose that Ukraine “wins” the war, what will the people there have gained? The “honor of the nation”? Freedom? After the war ends Zelensky and Ukraine’s own “oligarchs” will still be wealthy, but only deep misery awaits ‘ordinary’ Ukrainians.



**ПРЕДСТАВЬ СЕБЕ:
ПРАВИТЕЛИ
НАЧИНАЮТ ВОЙНУ -
А НА НЕЕ НИКТО НЕ
ИДЕТ!**

“SUPPOSE THEY GIVE A WAR AND NO ONE COMES!”

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.

In both Russia and Ukraine, the gap between rich and poor has increased steeply. In both countries, the "oligarchs" (Putin and Zelensky included) hide fortunes in offshore tax havens and pay little or no taxes. Meanwhile, real average wages in Ukraine have not been raised in twelve years while prices have risen sharply. 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.

A Coincidence?

We don't know how this war will end. Perhaps there will be some kind of compromise that will allow both camps to claim they have won and that in fact is just a breather in anticipation of the next war.

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. At the turn of the century, global debt stood at \$84 trillion. When the 2008 crisis began, the meter stood at 173 trillion. It has since risen 71% to 296 trillion by 2021. That's 353% of the total annual income of all countries combined!

Inflation is skyrocketing and there is no plan, no prospect of climbing out of the hole by any "normal" means. Increase or reduce taxes, stimulate or rein in spending, reduce or expand the money supply, not-

hing works against the crisis of the system which is dependent on growth, on the accumulation of value, yet increasingly incapable to accomplish it. The restoration of favorable conditions for value accumulation requires a devaluation of existing capital, an elimination of “dead wood” on a massive scale.

Is it a coincidence that in the same period of growing economic insecurity and hopeless crisis, global military spending has increased year after year and the number of military conflicts has increased sharply?

Wars are raging and tensions are rising in just about every continent. The US and China accelerated their armament efforts with each other as justification. Global arms spending has increased by 9.3% (in constant dollars) over the past decade and is now topping \$2 trillion annually. The biggest spender by far is the US (778 billion in 2020, an annual increase of 4.4%) dwarfing all others, including Russia (61 billion in 2020, an increase of 2.5%). Total military spending in Europe

in 2020 was 16% higher than in 2011. Even the pandemic-triggered recession did not put a brake on the trend. In 2020, while global GDP shrank by 4.4%, global arms spending increased by 3.9% and in 2021 by 3.4%. The war in Ukraine is accelerating the process. Business will boom for arms producers in the coming years.

Europe is once again the locus of a possible world conflagration. But there are important differences from comparable moments in the history of the last century. First: The nuclear factor is putting a brake on escalation. Second difference: the economy is more global than ever. The interests are intertwined. You cannot punish your enemy economically without cutting into your own flesh. Russia is only the eleventh largest economy and its main export, oil and gas, was largely spared from sanctions for now. While Europe sends weapons en masse to Ukraine to fight Russia, Russian oil and gas continue to flow to Europe through Ukrai-

ne. The mutual dependence limits escalation.

But both these brakes on escalation are no ironclad guarantee. The red line which the military powers are supposed not to cross may become a matter of interpretation, especially for the losing side. Russia made public in 2020 a new Presidential directive on nuclear deterrence lowering the nuclear threshold “to avoid the escalation of military actions and the termination of such actions on conditions that are unacceptable to Russia and its allies.” The threshold may be lowered by the use of “dirty bombs” (that combine conventional explosives with radioactive material), chemical or biological weapons. From there an escalation to tactical nuclear weapons may not seem such a big step. And so on. To trust in the sanity of the ruling class to avoid such a course would be foolish.

The intertwining of economic interests is no guarantee either. This is what the present moment makes clear. The war is disastrous for the economies of both Russia

and Ukraine. The capitalist class in both countries will make less profit as a result. The world economy as a whole will suffer as well. Especially from the economic sanctions, which have been surprising in their severity. It's all bad for profit and yet the hunt for profit is what sets it in motion. 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.

The hardening of the sanctions regime after the war would signify a preparation for future conflict. It would mean that, in the current dynamic of capitalism, profits are sacrificed for the sake of winning the war. Being protectionist, the sanctions go against the globalizing tendency of profit-seeking. Trade relations are broken, logistical ties are cut. But in the war economy they would be reorganized. The targets of the sanctions — Russia, Iran, North Korea and in the future

possibly China — may band together against the common enemy. The geostrategic implications of the war will be the subject of another article. The point here is that we cannot trust in globalization to protect us from global war.

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 milita-

ry 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.

Don't let them format you. As Karl Liebknecht concluded his appeal for revolutionary defeatism in 1915:

*“Enough and more than enough slaughter!
Down with the war instigators here and abroad!
An end to genocide!”*

Sanderr

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Sources of military data: Sipri, IISS, Ruth Leger Sivard.
Economic data: IMF, World Bank, Bloomberg News,
Macrotrends.

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





НЕТ ВОЙНЕ! စစ်ဆန့်ကျင်ရေး
GEGEN KRIEG

NO WAR!!

CONTRE LA GUERRE

ضد الحرب

ПРОТИ ВІЙНИ

CONTRA LA GUERRA

전쟁 반대!!

反戰 反对
 對爭 对
 戰反 战
 爭对 争



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