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Only peace benefits the peoples

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During these days, thousands of Ukrainians and Russians are losing their lives, not for the sake of their own freedom but for the interests of others. They are being sacrificed in an imperialist war fought between unequal competitors.

On February 24th, the first day of the war, Danish Communist Party sent a proclamation to all members of the party. Among other things, it read:

"A new and very serious situation arose last night with Russia's aggression against Ukraine. Communist Party condemns the Russian aggression against Ukraine and calls for an end to all acts of war right now.

We all know that the year-long expansion of NATO and the United States towards East is the underlying reason for why it has now come to this point, with acts of war happening in Europe. However, the Russian government initiated acts of war and this fact can only be condemned."

During the first weeks of the war, it has proven to be quite difficult to have your voice heard in case you attempt to insist on bringing the finer perspectives and nuances into the debate, let alone if you try to pursue the underlying causes of the war. Nonetheless, these tracks of reflection are crucial, if one is to have any hopes of understanding the kind of a war we are currently witnessing, and the nature of this war.

Each war has its own story

Amongst communists and on the left, numerous questions have been asked and many statements about the war have been put forth. Many questions are at play:

Is Ukraine fighting a war purely for national defense against a foreign despotic power? Is Russia doing something that can be equated to a national defense-struggle for defending itself against the West/NATO intruding Russia's spheres of influence? Is this a war between two equal imperialist centers of power – NATO/the West versus Russia – fighting for new markets and spheres of influence with Ukraine serving as the battlefield?

And, the underlying question: What type of regime is the present day Russian regime? and what kind of society is Russian society 30 years after the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the fall of socialism in Europe?

In order for us to better understand the kind of war that is currently unfolding in Europe, it will not suffice to simply limit our attention to who triggered the war and how. As Marxists, we believe that looking at the good or bad intentions or personality of individuals does not suffice. Even though, these factors do play a role, inevitably.

Basically, as the Prussian officer and philosopher Carl von Clausewitz said in the 19th century, *"War is the continuation of politics by other means."*

Thus, each war must be viewed in the light of the political context, development, and history it emerged from. A War is not just a random assault that breaks the peace and, then, the broken peace can be restored afterwards as if the war had solved all problems. Wars stem from class relations and economic interests.

The cardinal questions we need to ask ourselves are why this war is being waged? and, which classes have prepared and directed it? We must look closer at the fundamental societal conditions of our time, the objective economic processes that pervade our lives under the conditions of present day.

The backdrop of the war

So, let's peel back a few layers of the war.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine on February 24 cannot be defended, it must be condemned. However, it would be erroneous to label it as unprovoked. The invasion erupted on a backdrop of decades of expansion towards East by NATO and the United States. It must be viewed in the context of the history of the former Soviet Union, the processes to eliminate socialism and restoring capitalism, and the capital offensive that followed the fall of socialism in Europe. And, also, it must

be seen in the light of the myriad of issues of nationality that exist within this gigantic region.

Importantly, the invasion and the ensuing war must be viewed first and foremost in the context of a new geopolitical situation emerging in recent years:

For decades following World War II, the world was plagued by a kind of bipolar disorder. During those times, only two global superpowers existed – the United States and the Soviet Union – and their relations were crucial to all international relations. After the disintegration of the Soviet Union in the early 1990'ies, the United States stood alone as the one superpower in a unipolar world. The neoliberal offensive became an expression of this.

Upheavals in the centers of power

This unipolar world is presently facing decline. The monopoly of the United States is diminishing and is being challenged in the process of a new multipolar world order emerging with several influential powers. The centers of power are shifting and the battle for economic spheres of interest is intensifying.

These are not conditions conducive for peace. On the contrary, these conditions are likely to foster disturbances, frictions, and conflict. In fact, our Communist Party has long warned of the risk of a new Cold War that could potentially turn hot. And this is exactly what happened. The power upheaval that the world is currently amidst, has taken a bloody turn.

Viewed from that perspective, the war is not just about Ukraine. From that perspective, thousands of Ukrainians and Russians are not laying down their lives these days for their own freedom, they're losing their lives for the sake of the interests of others. Seen in that light, the war is an expression of a global battle between the old empire centered on the United States versus the emerging multipolar world centered on Eurasia (Asia and the eastern parts of Europe).

An unequal imperialist war

The war in Ukraine is an imperialist war with all of the characteristics of 2022.

It is an imperialist war because neither party is fighting the cause of the working class or oppressed nations. However, it is not an imperialist war between robbers and thieves where two equal powers or coalitions stand against each other – not referring to the “parties” of Ukraine and Russia. In actuality, it is the West (NATO/USA) that is confronting Russia. Ukraine has become the battlefield for the waging of this war, with the West battling by proxy so far, equipped, armed, and armored.

These crucial points considering, it is an asymmetric war; a fight between unequal opponents.

On the one side stands a regional capitalist superpower that failed to rise to a central position in the imperialist world system. Quite contrary, economically the country is located in the periphery of the imperialist world system. Its leading circles advocate Great Russian chauvinism and nourish imperialist dreams which they have failed to deliver so far.

On the other side stands a coalition of the strongest imperialist powers in the world. Obviously, being a capitalist superpower, Russia seeks to enforce its right to exist and avert the isolation, containment, and the risk of Balkanization as well as a potential regime change caused by NATO's expansion towards East.

A regional superpower with limited economic weight

Although not an exhaustive list, here are a few key facts about Russia's economic position – serving to illuminate the aforementioned point that Russia is a regional superpower in the periphery of the imperialist world system:

Out of the top one hundred companies in the world, only two are Russian (numbers 51 and 99 in the ranking). Out of the top one thousand companies, 13 are Russian. These include five of the six largest raw material sellers in oil, gas, and nickel – a structure typically seen in developing countries. (Source: Forbes 2000 list, based on a weighted average of four parameters: sales, profit, holdings, and market value of shares).

For comparison: Little Denmark has seven on the list of the top one thousand companies. The heavily debated Russian oligarchs – in the West, similar people are just called “rich” – possess only a small fraction of the private wealth in the world. Russian private individuals account for only 0.73 percent of the world's total property, according to Credit Suisse. The US accounts for 30.2 percent, and Denmark 0.41 percent.

Russian capital exports have fallen drastically since 2013, when – according to World Bank figures – \$ 86.5 billion were invested abroad. By 2020, this number had dropped to \$ 5.9 billion.

With regards to Ukraine, Russia lost its market there during recent years. Today, the EU is Ukraine's largest trading partner instead of Russia. Russia comes in second but China is on the verge of overtaking. Fact is that these days, Ukraine survives only on the support of the West.

Uncertain alliances and coalitions

Currently, a little more than one month into the war, it is too soon to draw any firm conclusions. We do not yet know how

the war will end. What we do know, though, is that peace is the continuation of the war by other means, and, hence, a resolution of peace is going to reflect the positions of the forces of the war.

Much seems to indicate that the war did not initially come as an inconvenience to the United States, struggling to maintain its position and its grip on Europe. Even though US imperialism is strategically dwindling, the US remains the world's largest military power, and, so far, during the first weeks of the war in Ukraine, they have successfully managed to unite NATO and the EU. Whether this will last, depends on countless factors.

War can create and strengthen coalitions but, also, in contrast, war can break alliances up. An urgent question is going to be the future relationship between Russia and China, considering the fact that China is taking a neutral stance towards the war in Ukraine. Surely, the United States and NATO prefer to see Russia and China divided.

Full-scale economic war

From an economic perspective, the war has already had enormous consequences for the world economy, an economy already marked by signs of crisis even before the Russian invasion.

The economic sanctions against Russia – which are, in fact, full-scale economic warfare – have devastating consequences for peoples around of the world. They tear and peel on the world economy. And yet, such conditions could also potentially prove to create the possibilities for new alliances and, ultimately, push countries and economies towards Asia instead of the West.

It is worth remembering that the ongoing sanctions were not implemented by the world community but, rather, by the United States, the European Union, the United Kingdom, and a few other so-called Western countries. Not a single African country has imposed sanctions against Russia, not India, and China either. In fact, neither Asia nor Latin America (with very few countries as exceptions to the rule) has adopted sanctions.

We must side with the peoples

The awful truth is that Europeans are being forced into an imperialist war that serves neither the interests of the Ukrainian people, the Russian people, nor the European peoples.

For all of these reasons (and more), there is no other approach than to insist on ending the war right now and implement a ceasefire immediately. All weapons assistance and other military assistance – also from Denmark – only prolong

the sufferings of the war. Instead, impartial humanitarian aid is urgently needed for all areas of Ukraine, including Luhansk and Donetsk.

Likewise, it is in the interest of the working class and the peoples of the world that all foreign military forces, mercenaries included, to be withdrawn from Ukraine and the economic war to be stopped. All parties involved must be included in negotiations aiming to find a more permanent solution that recognizes Ukraine's neutrality.

The world has become much more uncertain in recent weeks. If the war were to reach the point of a direct NATO-Russia confrontation, the risk of a major war also involving Denmark directly would be imminent.

Truly, we are gambling with world peace.

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