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War in Ukraine

# Support Ukrainian Resistance and Disempower Fossil Capital

- Debate - 2022 - Ukraine -

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**On 9 June Heino Berg, Thies Gleiss, Jakob Schäfer, Matthias Schindler, Winfried Wolf published a detailed statement in Junge Welt in which they advocated an "anti-militarist defeatism" and the abandonment of Ukraine's military resistance to the Russian war of occupation. [1]** We take their article as an opportunity for a fundamental response about a necessary anti-imperialist ecosocialist perspective committed to global solidarity.

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We are appalled at the way they bend the reality of war in this article and ultimately argue in favor of Putin's oligarch regime. Paternalistically, they recommend that the Ukrainian population submit to Russian occupation in order to end the war. The authors make not the slightest reference to socialist, feminist, and anarchist forces in Ukraine and Russia. They argue from a distinctly German perspective. They are not alone in this.

Many statements of the old peace movement turn against the "escalation of the West" and "forget" that Russia has already escalated long ago and wants to systematically destroy Ukrainian society. The statement of the five authors ignores anti-imperialist solidarity to such an extent that we consider it appropriate to set our arguments against it.

## Reversal of Responsibility

The statement of the authors reads like many contributions from the old peace movement and a one-sided sham anti-imperialist left. Of course, at the beginning of the text they condemn the invasion of Ukraine "without any reservation or relativization". But afterwards they do exactly that: they relativize the aggression of the Putin oligarchy. Under the title "No Interest in Ceasefire," they explain in detail why NATO is much worse than Russia and that the West, first and foremost the U.S., does not want an early ceasefire but is primarily using the Ukrainian battlefield to weaken Russia.

The five authors turn the responsibility for the war around. They say that it is not Putin, who has openly and repeatedly rejected any cease-fire beyond a Ukrainian surrender, who is responsible for the ongoing war, but the "regime" in Kyiv, which had offered negotiations on neutrality just a week before the Russian attack began.

They write that the "Kyiv regime chose the military response to the invasion from the outset, and it shows no sign of making any effort to reach a cease-fire even in early June." It is not the Putin regime, which has repeatedly stated that it will continue the war of destruction and attrition until Ukraine surrenders, but Ukraine, which is desperately asking for weapons in self-defence, that is responsible for allowing the destruction of its own country to continue, they say.

The authors castigate the alleged arming of Ukraine by the West, but they do not mention with a single word that Russia began its campaign of conquest only after a long period of political, economic, logistical and military preparation.

Behind this reversal of responsibility lies a fundamental misjudgment of the Putin regime, whose character the five authors do not even rudimentarily attempt to define. On the contrary, they equate the proto-fascist Putin dictatorship with the corrupt bourgeois parliamentary democracy in Ukraine. For the authors, they are quite simply "two bourgeois states, both determined by an oligarchic system."

Bizarrely, the authors rely on former U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger as a key witness. Because Kissinger explicitly demanded concessions from Ukraine and the cession of parts of the country to Russia, they attribute to him a more responsible position than the current U.S. leadership.

Yet Kissinger is certainly in continuity with his own positions. From 1969, as security advisor to the President, he had the resistance of the Vietnamese population buried under carpet bombing, while in 1973 he orchestrated the coup against President Allende in Chile leading to the establishment of Pinochet's dictatorship.

Equally, now in his old age, he is overriding the sovereignty of the Ukrainian people and recommending that they "realistically" give up. In this respect, it is by no means a coincidence that Vladimir Putin, of all people, while still a local politician in St Petersburg in 1993, chose Pinochet's dictatorship as a model and thus revealed, just like Kissinger, what he thinks of democratic achievements. [2] Kissinger and Putin are brothers in spirit. When socialists invoke Kissinger, of all people, as a representative of a reasonable position, it indicates quite a shift in the political coordinate system and a questionable level of argumentation.

## The Putin Regime Denies the Existence of a Ukrainian Nation

The Kremlin wants to prevent any independent development of Ukraine. The Putin leadership considers Ukraine, together with Belarus, to be part of Russia. [3] Ukraine's independence contradicts Russia's alleged historical claims.

The Russian leadership has not reacted to one or another of NATO's moves; rather, it is pursuing fundamental goals with its war, which it justifies with its Great Russian ideology. Putin and exponents of his regime have repeatedly placed themselves in the historical continuity of the tsarist empire, thereby excluding the existence of an independent Ukrainian national culture and identity. In June, Putin placed the war of conquest against Ukraine on a par with the Great Northern War under Russia's Tsar Peter I, speaking simply of a reclaiming of Russian soil. [4]

Thus, the goals of the Russian leadership are fundamental, far-reaching and go far beyond repelling NATO: destroying Ukraine as an independent country and incorporating it as "Little Russia". The war practice coincides with the war goal. Towns and villages are systematically destroyed, the population terrorized and expelled. In the occupied territories, the Russian state establishes a regime of terror, incorporates the schools into the Russian school system, allows only Russian media and imposes the ruble as a means of payment. By June 20, Russia had brought over 1.9 million Ukrainians to Russia, including 300,000 children. Thousands of Ukrainians are holding out in camps in eastern Siberia, far from Ukraine. [5]

Ukraine's resistance to the invading Russian forces, surprising both to the U.S. and European governments and to the Putin regime, prevented a rapid occupation of the country and the installation of a puppet pro-Russian government. It was this popular resistance in Ukraine that presented all actors with a new situation.

The Ukrainian oligarchs had to get behind the resistance and against Russia. The governments of Europe and the United States had to correct their assessment that Ukraine would quickly collapse. Putin was forced to adapt his war

strategy to the new situation.

At the same time, the Putin regime links the war with a "struggle for values" against the decadent West. It wants to push back democratic rights, achievements of the workers', women's and LGBTIQ movements, not only in Russia but also in the areas under its influence. Russia funds and promotes far-right parties throughout Europe and the world. The Putin regime is the admired spearhead of a reactionary and even fascist movement with Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil, Marine Le Pen in France, and the AfD in Germany.

## Ukrainian Resistance Puts Arms Deliveries on the Agenda

It was the determined and self-sacrificing resistance of the Ukrainian people against the occupying forces that confronted the NATO countries with the question of comprehensive arms deliveries. Immediately after the war began, the U.S. and U.K. governments advised Ukrainian President Zelensky to leave the country and offered him protection. Like the leadership in the Kremlin, they expected Ukraine to be defeated quickly. They were all mistaken in the Ukrainian people's will to resist. They assumed that after a wave of outrage and economic sanctions, European and U.S. corporations would return to normal business with Russia.

The tenacious resistance of Ukraine and the military difficulties of the Russian occupation forces opened the opportunity for the governments of NATO countries to weaken Russia's military and geopolitical position through massive arms deliveries to Ukraine. Thus, the fighting people in Ukraine are not the executors of an imperialist plan, but are fighting for their legitimate goals and rights in Ukrainian society; fighting for their existence as Ukrainians.

Until the outbreak of war, there could be no talk of NATO arming Ukraine. Ukraine received \$4 billion in military aid from the United States from 2014 to 2022. Since at least 2015, the U.S. Army also trained Ukrainian troops, albeit on a relatively small scale. [6] [7] From 2014 to 2021, direct military assistance amounted to \$2.4 billion. German arms exports to Ukraine have been relatively small to date; German arms exports to Russia have been disproportionately larger since 2014 - despite the embargo - and even into the period immediately before the war began. [8]

Without the deliveries of militarily usable components by the German (as well as Swiss, Italian Japanese, and U.S.) machine tool industry, the Russian defence industry would not have been able to incorporate complex control systems into its weapons. The Soviet Union's technological path was exhausted and Russia has had to import key machine tools ever since. The oil boom of the 2000s provided the money. Without these imported machine tools, Russia could not operate a defence industry. [9]

In mid-April, President Biden announced another \$750 million military aid program for Ukraine. [10] Finally, on May 19, the Senate passed a \$40 billion program of military and humanitarian assistance to Ukraine, making this the largest foreign aid package in at least two decades. Much of this sum, however, will be spent on infrastructure and replacement investments in the U.S. itself. [11] Thus, U.S. and NATO involvement has taken on a comprehensive dimension. The U.S. government openly states that it wants to substantially weaken Russian military capabilities. Obviously, the same goal is pursued by the Ukrainian government.

## The Interests of the USA and Western Europe

The governments of Europe and the United States share responsibility for the escalation of geopolitical tensions, but

not because of the alleged NATO encirclement of Russia that Russian propaganda painted on the wall and that many on the left in Europe adopted quite cheaply. It is forgotten that the expansion of NATO with the accession of Russia's neighbouring countries was essentially completed by 2004, and above all that numerous countries in Eastern Europe sought NATO membership not out of a desire for military rearmament, but out of fear of a strengthening Russian revanchism. [12]

The real co-responsibility of the NATO countries for the aggravation of the contradictions lies in their economic interest in the former Soviet republics. Capital in the imperialist countries of Europe and North America was not only looking for new NATO members, but primarily wanted to open up further markets and obtain cheap raw materials. For this, it needed governments that could organize the process of social transformation in an orderly manner and, if necessary, by force.

The Western imperialist powers, first and foremost the United States and Britain, recognized in Ukraine's initially successful resistance to Russian occupation forces the opportunity to substantially weaken Russia's geopolitical position by strengthening Ukraine's military capabilities. NATO leaders, however, do not appear interested in either a protracted war or its escalation. NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg explained the balancing process at a meeting in Finland on June 12: At some point, he said, Ukraine will have to announce what territorial losses it is willing to accept and what democratic rights the population is willing to give up. [13]

At the same time, it is obvious that key countries in Europe, including Germany and France, but also Austria and Switzerland, are giving Ukraine only limited support. They are seeking an understanding with the Russian oligarchy. Neither do they really supply the necessary weapons, nor do they relieve the blood-dry Ukrainian society by cancelling their debt..

Major factions of capital in Europe, especially those linked to the fossil industries (Germany, Austria) and to the international commodity trade (Switzerland), have been doing highly profitable business with the Putin oligarchs for years. They would like to quickly return to normality and resume these businesses. Russia is a much more important market for Western European capital than Ukraine.

The public statements of important representatives of capital in favour of ending the war are becoming more frequent. Western governments should make it clear to the Zelensky government that solidarity and patience are limited. After all, they are dependent on Russian gas. An even greater reduction or even a halt in deliveries would inevitably lead to economic catastrophe.

VW CEO Herbert Diess demanded that the EU negotiate a settlement of the war. The utmost should be done "to reopen the world." [14] BASF's management has repeatedly warned against an embargo of Russian oil and gas and sees the geopolitical bloc formation as a major threat to business. [15] Magdalena Martullo-Blocher, the head of EMS-Chemie in Switzerland, calls for a quick negotiated settlement with Putin.

The sovereignty of Ukraine and the social concerns of the people in Ukraine are naturally indifferent to these representatives of capital. [16] In a survey of 280 companies by KPMG, only just 10 per cent said that they had left the Russian market completely. 37 per cent put their activities on "stand by» to resume business later. [17] These statements show: large parts of capital have no interest in a long war. Sooner or later, governments will try to reach an agreement with Putin on how to reopen the world of markets.

## The Character of the War

The five authors of the article in *Junge Welt* want to apply the defeatist position of Rosa Luxemburg, Karl Liebknecht and Vladimir Lenin in World War I to the current Russian war of occupation against the Ukrainian population. This analogy to the debates in the workers' movement during World War I distorts history.

More appropriate would be a critical reflection on the justification of anti-colonial struggles. After all, Ukraine is not an imperialist country, nor did it threaten to attack other countries. Rather, Ukraine is a young country whose independence and own nation-building Russia does not accept and therefore has been attacking militarily since 2014. However, the Putin regime wants to integrate Ukraine once again as an internal colony into a Greater Russian Empire, as was the case under the tsars.

Thus, the Ukrainian population is not waging a NATO "proxy war" against Russia, but is fighting for its own independence and for democratic and social rights, all of which it would lose under Russian occupation. The situation in the so-called People's Republics in the Donbas is threat enough as a likely prospect under an occupation regime.

Of course, the war can be understood only in the context of international rivalry between the major imperialist powers. The U.S. and NATO countries, with their rearmament offensive launched even before the Russian attack on Ukraine, are preparing for possible military conflicts with China and the intensified struggle for raw materials and ecological sinks.

Therefore, it is obvious that the U.S. and the European powers want to use the war in Ukraine strategically for their goals. As long as Ukraine's resistance meets their goals, they will engage, but of course not unconditionally. Different capital factions of Western imperialisms even see themselves hindered by the war from serving markets in Russia. Moreover, neither the U.S. nor the European countries are belligerents. If they were, we would indeed have a world war.

Etienne Balibar recently analysed this war in an inspiring contribution to the discussion. [\[18\]](#) He argues convincingly that this war has four interwoven dimensions: first, a national war of independence similar to Algeria or Vietnam; second, another war as a result of the collapse of the Soviet Union and the state-bureaucratic countries; third, a globalized war, since the warring countries are involved in global alliances and networks and the war has catastrophic effects on the food supply in many poor countries; and fourth, finally, the threat of nuclear war, since Putin is deliberately using this blackmail potential. However, the determining factor in the dynamics of the war is the socially broadly supported war of independence against Russian occupation. Balibar concludes that the defeat of Ukraine is a completely unacceptable prospect.

Characteristic of the current phase of the war is that there is a temporary and partial alignment of interests between Ukraine and imperialist powers. In a similar situation of temporary alignment of interests, the People's Defence Forces and the Syrian Democratic Forces in northern Syria have had massive support in their fight against the Islamic State from U.S. air power, without which they would have lost the battle.

We are seeing right now, in the face of increased Turkish attacks, that this protection does not last. These days, the leadership of the PYD, the strongest party in northeastern Syria, is demanding a no-fly zone from NATO, paradoxically against the NATO country Turkey. This is of course no reason to distance ourselves from the resistance in Rojava, but on the contrary is a reason to strengthen solidarity.

From our analysis we conclude that Ukraine has the right to obtain weapons wherever it gets them. The U.S. and European governments are supplying arms in well-judged doses and for their own motives. It is possible that sooner or later the governments of the Western imperialisms will force Ukraine, as part of a "negotiated settlement", to relinquish sovereignty over large parts of the country in the east and south and thus accept partial defeat. In this

respect, those who are now calling for immediate negotiations are not so far away from "their" imperialist governments.

# Arrogant Recommendation for Capitulation and "Social Resistance"

In their article in Junge Welt, the authors hardly conceal their recommendation to Ukraine and therefore also to Ukrainian leftists, trade unions and other emancipatory movements to capitulate. Do they seriously believe that under the conditions of a military occupation dictatorship and mass deportation of potential opposition members, a lively civil society or even militant trade unions can emerge? Are Russian troops to be peacefully persuaded to leave in this way? This idea is grotesque and absurd, and the recommendations to the people of Ukraine derived from it are paternalistic and neocolonial.

On 28 June, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov once again stated in no uncertain terms what the preconditions for a ceasefire are: "The Ukrainian side can stop everything before the end of today." For this, he said, "an order to the nationalist units", to the "Ukrainian soldiers to lay down their weapons" is necessary. Kiev would also have to meet all Russian conditions, he said. "Then everything would be over within a day." [19] So long as the Ukrainian population does not capitulate bombed out, exhausted, traumatized, and demoralized, the Putin dictatorship will continue its bombing terror.

The authors do not take seriously the war aims of destroying the Ukrainian society openly formulated by the Putin regime itself. That is why they make misguided historical analogies. Their comparisons with experiences of "peaceful" resistance to the Kapp Putsch in 1920, the Ruhr occupation by French and Belgian forces in 1923, and the peaceful resistance of Czechoslovak democracy movements to Soviet troops in 1968 are absurd.

They ignore the fact that the Putin regime questions the existence of an independent Ukraine and Ukrainian nation-building. They fail to recognize the systematic warfare of Russian imperialism aimed at ethnic cleansing. The five authors demonstrate with this ignorant arrogance that they do not even want to discuss with the socialist, anarchist and feminist forces in Ukraine, Belarus and Russia. They obviously do not take them seriously.

Let us recall the beginnings of the Syrian revolution. In April 2011, when the people of Syria took to the streets in an extremely disciplined and peaceful manner, dictator Assad repeatedly ordered troops to fire into the crowd. Eventually, his army bombed entire cities. However, that was not enough to break the people's will to resist. Putin and his generals razed Aleppo and other cities to the ground starting in 2015. The same personnel are now doing their work of destruction in Ukraine. As is well known, even then a large part of the supposedly anti-imperialist left in Europe remained silent about these crimes.

Intellectuals, celebrities and leftist groups in Germany repeatedly call for an immediate ceasefire. But as long as the conditions of such a ceasefire are not specified, this perspective amounts to the annexation and colonization of large parts of Ukraine by Russia.

Those who make such demands ignore that it would be the far right - both in Russia and Ukraine - that would benefit if Russia wins. It already controls the Russian state and would celebrate victory over Ukraine accordingly and prepare further aggression. The extreme right in Ukraine could expand its organizational and military networks in armed resistance to the occupying forces. This scenario, much more than the current war, would lead to a long war with many thousands of dead, imprisoned, deported and tortured.

## Developing a Global Perspective of Solidarity and Ecology Together

Our solidarity is with the armed and unarmed resistance of the Ukrainian people against the Russian occupation forces, and we especially support the feminists, socialists and anarchists who politically and independently participate in this resistance with both civilian and military means. We stand in solidarity with the trade unions and social movements in Ukraine that oppose neoliberal economic policies and instead stand up for socio-ecological reconstruction. We also, of course, stand with the socialist, feminist and anarchist forces in Russia and Belarus who are courageously resisting their rulers despite grave dangers and risks.

The withdrawal of all Russian troops from the territory of Ukraine is the condition for a peaceful settlement of the conflict. Only on this basis can a process of understanding be opened up between democratically elected representatives of the regions in eastern Ukraine and the government in Kyiv under international observation. We support the demands of emancipatory leftists in Ukraine and will work for the identification of the Russian and Ukrainian oligarchs' assets hidden and invested in European countries and their use for humanitarian aid and the reconstruction of Ukraine. Ukraine is heavily in debt. The war makes independent economic development impossible. Therefore, Ukraine's debts must be cancelled.

At the same time, we oppose capital in our countries that continues to do business with the Putin oligarchs and seeks to quickly reach an understanding with the Putin regime at the expense of Ukraine. We reject the recently decided and prepared rearmament programmes in Western Europe and NATO. These serve not the victory of the Ukrainian people in their struggle for existence against Russia, but their own longer-term imperialist goals in the rivalry for resources.

We advocate the dissolution of NATO and the Russian-dominated military alliance CSTO. Instead, we are in favour of building a democratic and collective security system. The arms industry in the West and East must be continuously dismantled and converted into socially useful and ecologically compatible industries.

We support the climate movement's call for an exit from Russian oil and gas as a step toward a complete phase-out of fossil fuels. The Putin regime must no longer be allowed to finance its war and destruction machinery with the help of revenues from the plundering and export of oil and mineral resources. The price increases of energy must be countered with a cheap basic social supply of energy for workers, progressive pricing for high energy consumption and comprehensive energy saving measures.

In order to enforce this perspective, we want to build a movement for social appropriation and for ecological conversion and dismantling of the large fossil corporations together with the climate movement and grassroots trade union initiatives. This is the prerequisite for getting out of fossil fuels.

Those who now tolerate a Russian victory also tolerate a victory for both global and "domestic" fossil and commodity-based capital, which is closely intertwined with the Russian fossil and extractive sectors. Therefore, a new anti-militarist movement must uphold solidarity with the civil as well as armed resistance of the Ukrainian people, and with the Ukrainian, Belarusian and Russian leftists who oppose the Putin regime's war.

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