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Ukraine

Fourth International statement on Ukraine

- Debate - 2022 - Ukraine -

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The following statement on Ukraine was agreed by the International Committee of the Fourth International in Amsterdam in February 2015.

1- Over the last year, the war in the Donbass has led to the deaths of at least 5000 men and woman (mostly civilians) and around 2000 soldiers. More than 1,500, 000 persons were expelled by war, forced to leave their houses and property; more or less half of them as refugees in Russia and the others in different parts of Ukraine.

Millions of inhabitants of the Eastern regions of Ukraine on both sides of the front-line found themselves in the situation of humanitarian catastrophe under the authoritarian regime of a de facto state of war which prevented popular resistance to social attacks.

2- Fearing a Russian social and political movement like Maidan, Putin has described the post-Yanoukovitch regime in Kiev as dominated by anti-Russian fascists, distorting reality in order to legitimate his annexation of Crimea and the so-called need to "protect" Russophone populations. While "Ukrainians" were often identified with "fascists", the "hybrid war" instrumentalized by Moscow in Eastern Ukraine to destabilize the country's turn toward western institutions, has transformed political life in Ukraine : increasing hate and hysterical rhetoric of vengeance has been used by the ruling elites all over the country as excuse for their anti-social politics - while Donbass people, discredited as post-soviet "vatniki" (pejorative description of workers clothes), were submitted to Kiev's disastrous "Anti-Terrorist Operation" (ATO).

3-Therefore, we appeal to the Left activists and unionists in Ukraine, Russia, EU and all over the world to break with unilateral (campist) logic that harms workers solidarity and benefits only right-wing and conservative forces in all parts of Ukraine as well as in Russia and the rest of Europe.

Reunification of the left, workers' and other progressive movements in Ukraine on democratic and left-wing grounds is still possible, but the prerequisite of such an orientation is the de-escalation of military confrontation and cease-fire. Each day of war strengthens the right-wing and radical nationalists (sometimes open neo-Nazis) on the both sides of the conflict and makes the introduction of authoritarian dictatorship all over Ukraine more feasible. Moreover such solidarity and reunification is the only way to break with the logic of war, stabilizing peace and consolidating Ukraine as an independent state and democratic society. It means expressing solidarity with all victims of the conflict, defending labour, social, and democratic rights including constitutional linguistic and regional rights and national self-determination through the self-organisation and expressions of the population.

That is why we are in favor of a cease-fire " with international control - because there is no possible progressive military solution. In the present conditions, we know that such a ceasefire will be signed by reactionary international and national actors. That is why an absolute independence from those actors, and a clear critical approach of the conditions of such cease fire are necessary to protect the future conditions of a real " meaning democratic and just " peace, based on the mobilisation of the population defending their social and political rights and choices.

4 -We don' t recognize any "historical" right of Russia to control or dismantle Ukraine, and we support the full right of self-determination of all populations in Ukraine – including in Crimea and Donbass – a right which could not be expressed freely under authoritarian and military pressure, without any real democratic procedure and political choice. That is why we denounced the annexation of Crimea.

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Neither do we recognize any legitimacy in NATO's expansion after the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact in 1991 nor to any kind of Western imperialist attempts and means to dominate Ukrainian political choices. But it is the past experience of Great Russian policies, the repressive nature of Putin's regime, the war in Donbass and the annexation of Crimea by Russia that have reinforced NATO's legitimacy amongst a growing part of the Ukrainian population.

This concrete aggression has consolidated an anti-Putin Ukrainian patriotic feeling including in the East of Ukraine. Even in the Donbass, pro-Russian forces have struggled to mobilize and control the whole region.

But Kiev's policy and "Anti-terrorist Operation" has been a disaster, leading to significant popular support in favor of more autonomy. Yet in December 2014 the vast majority of respondents were in favor of maintaining the status of the two regions in Ukraine respectively and only has 6% and 4% of respondents believed that the rebel territories should be granted independence or join the Russian Federation. The situation is very heterogeneous and confusing and a seems to vary from one town or village to another.

There are increasing popular concerns and disillusionments about the total incapacity of the leaders of those "Donbass Popular Republic" (and of Russia) to permit any political freedom and secure daily life and social rights. Even strong "regional" identities and distrust towards the Kiev government did not mean active support for very violent and undemocratic powers. The Donbass "Popular Republic" completely lacks democratic functioning : even the Ukrainian Communist Party had more possibility to express itself and present candidates in the rest of Ukraine "in spite of some calls to ban it - than in those so-called Popular Republics. The local population has been taken hostage by the bombing and crimes by both sides. "

5- Therefore we are in favor of immediate cease-fire. But we don't recognize the political content of the Minsk agreements.

Besides being a de facto recognition of the Crimean annexation, they are a more explicit way to establish a new constitution for Ukraine through the procedure of secret diplomacy led by Great Powers and governments, sharing their "zone of influence": We denounce this.

Putin's purpose is to have some control over Ukrainian choices without having to pay the subsidies that the industry of that region received from Kiev. So the "NovoRossya" appellation has been abandoned to give more credibility to a more "limited" project of a "state" within the Ukrainian state - like the "Republika Srpska" (Serbian "entity" within Bosnia). The agreements include the change of the constitution of Ukraine giving a legal and judicial system to local leaders, as a precondition for any border control.

The Minsk negotiation did not permit agreement on the status of the railway node of Debeltseve which included several thousands of Ukrainian soldiers. Its conquests, which cost the lives of probably more than 1000 soldiers, gives a continuity to the "Union of Popular Republics" in the Donbass. So the Minsk's agreements have not established a stable cease-fire.

6 Practically,

- We support all efforts for a cease-fire under international control to guarantee it, against all military offensives. Deployment of UN peacekeepers from third countries not involved into this conflict could be required.
- We are in favour of a neutral status for Ukraine, the withdrawal of Russian troops and the immediate demilitarization of all the regions.
- We support enquiries into war crimes and condemnation of criminals from both sides. War criminals should be punished on the basis of the present international law, while paramilitary units should be disarmed and

disbanded.

- We defend the need for a democratic procedure for changes to the Ukrainian constitution.
- We condemn xenophobia and hate speech wherever it comes from We support antifascist and anti-war movements in Ukraine and Russia as in the EU, independent from all governments and criticizing racism and war propaganda. Ukraine is not a “mistake of history”; neither Russians nor Ukrainians should be demonized.
- Against so-called “aid” from IMF and EU which impose further attacks on social rights. We demand joint international efforts for reconstruction of war-torn regions as well as for the return of refugees and displaced persons and refugees to their homes.
- We call on left political and union militants in all parts of Ukraine to unite around the social justice agenda stopping the country's looting by oligarchs via offshore tax dodging and breaking the vicious circle of borrowing from IMF to pay back previous loans. In order to survive and achieve social and political rights the Ukrainian population needs, like the Greek one, to denounce and reject austerity policies by collective actions of the working classes and to build parties which really support such orientation.
- In Russia, Ukraine and all European countries, within or outside the EU, we fight for another Europe based on free association of sovereign people against all relationships of domination – that is, for us, socialism.