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War in Ukraine - a view from Greece

# Support the Ukrainian people in their resistance against the war!

- Debate - 2022 - Ukraine -

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**Tassos Anastassiadis is a member of “Anametrisi”’s leadership and also a member of the TPT-“4” (part of the Greek section of the Fourth International). Anametrisi (=confrontation), founded in March 2022, is a product of radical left recomposition process in Greece these last years. [1]** This text was submitted to the leadership of Anametrisi on 19 May 2022. The original Greek text is published on Anametrisi’s site.

## Positions on the Ukrainian war and our stand

1) The Russian invasion of Ukraine is an “**imperialist**” attack. [2]. Analyses may differ on the source of this “imperialism” [3], on the extent of its dynamics, on the causes of this particular invasion, and even on its function in the capitalist world arena. But what is fundamental is that it is an unjust war of the strong against the weak. [4] And in particular, it is a “national” type of oppression - that is a challenge at gunpoint to the right of a population to exist as a political entity and to decide for itself and freely about its own existence.

2) From this point of view it is a matter of **principle** [5] for the left to take a clear position on the war being waged: It must place itself on the side of the weak, those who are under attack and fighting back i.e. **on the side of the Ukrainian people**. The right of a people, a population, a nation, to define itself is a fundamental component of an emancipatory programme.

3) This means that in this war the left cannot be **indifferent**: it is not a “war” that is simply taking place somewhere out there, without subjects and without responsibilities. It is a military attack and there is contestation and resistance to it. The left must take a stand **against the war being waged by Russia**, and consequently, in favour of those who oppose it, basically the Ukrainian people but also the Russian left. That means **in favour of the war being waged by the Ukrainian people**.

4) For the same reason that it cannot be indifferent, the left cannot remain neutral either, supposedly “pacifist” [6] or “against both side”. [7] The Russian army is in the wrong and therefore we demand that it should withdraw and, if it does not do so on its own accord, **it must be forced to withdraw, that is be defeated**. [8] The Ukrainians have a just cause in their struggle for the withdrawal of the Russian army from their territory and, therefore, we must support them politically and materially. [9]

5) Also, the left, by definition, cannot adopt views or attitudes of **indifference** - theorizing that we don’t care what happens elsewhere as we are only concerned with “our own struggles» or have a policy of “no interference». On the contrary, we have acknowledged that capitalism and the various systems of oppression and problems it creates have an international and global dimension. [10] No position of “the enemy is within our own country» is therefore justified [11] and would be programmatically suicidal. The oppressed of the whole world need us (they need our solidarity and support) and we need them too. There is **no reason to abandon this principle now** – quite the opposite. [12]

6) Our support for the oppressed internationally is not only for reasons of abstractly internationalist principle or because we programmatically recognize the international nature of exploitation and oppression. It also has a much more expedient significance: every victory for the system of the dominately powerful, every defeat of our own camp, strengthens and reinforces our own conditions of subjugation, and vice versa. **Imperialism, and every aspect of it, however large or small, [13]** (as well as sexism, exploitation, and other forms of domination), must be defeated in

order to strengthen the general correlation of powers in favour of the weak throughout the world. Conversely, every victory of the strong over the weak strengthens and unites them.

7) Obviously, we are in a world where the ruling classes, both internally and externally (they consider it their right to have external “spheres of influence»), are allied against us [14] but they are also sometimes in competition with each other. [15] In particular with regard to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, it is an opportunity for various Western imperialisms to suddenly feign interest in the Ukrainian people: but this, however hypocritical [16] it may be, **does not negate the justness of the Ukrainian struggle**. [17] We must follow the principles that the socialist movement has always held.

8) Every form of resistance against a national oppression, a specific invasion, must be supported, **regardless of who else supports it** - and there is usually some well-meaning “opponent» of the oppressor who will try to benefit. Therefore, we have rightly supported the struggle of the oppressed every time, even if it was supported by rivals or “our», imperialisms. [18] The Ukrainian people do not cease to be fighting for a just cause on account of being supposedly “supported” by members of NATO in the face of the Russian invasion; likewise, the Kurdish cause didn't cease to be a just one because they were armed by NATO against ISIS.

9) The involvement of the rival imperialisms (and their ruling classes) is never for those fighting a struggle, but rather to undermine the power of their opponents, to gain points of “influence» and to guide the leadership of the movements (through local ruling classes). [19] However, this does not automatically turn them into indirect wars of the powerful (interimperialist); on the contrary, this is what is mainly at stake in war from a social aspect, especially in a “national» war where the population demands its political entity! The peoples themselves, especially in national issues, are never “puppets» as the powerful would have it, they are political subjects. So the Ukrainian war **is in no way a “war by proxy”** as if the Ukrainian people in particular were “pawns” and not able to claim and have their own political entity.

10) The same applies to the involvement of our own imperialism and its government, as well as the various international aggregations in which it participates (EU, NATO, international economic leaders, IMF, Worldbank, OMC, etc.). Issues of principle that we have, i.e. dismantling the EU, IMF or NATO, socialism, world peace, etc. do not respond to the question of their involvement as “no involvement» would be tantamount to letting the Ukrainians die. **Therefore, we neither denounce nor deny “aid” to the Ukrainian people in general**. Our response must be **more specific** regarding the points, the methods, the terms:

– For example, we must accept and reinforce the policies of welcoming migrants from Ukraine [20] and in no way denounce Western imperialism for “interfering” by helping Ukrainians.

- We must think ahead and be ready to prevent **their troops** from interfering, but also to oppose the **militarization** of Western societies against the Russian imperialist bogeyman. [21] We want the latter to be defeated but by the people and the mass movement of Ukraine (and Russia), not by guardianship and for this they must be strengthened politically and materially.

– Furthermore, we must go beyond what these imperialists want to do and in a more substantial way: for example we must demand the **cancellation of Ukraine's debts**, as the Ukrainian social movements have highlighted, and we know, as in the case of Greece, how popular this is in the capitalist circles!

– We must take an equally specific and undogmatic view of their “sanctions» against Russia as with “aid” to Ukraine. The fact that we (the left) do not control their range is not a reason for either **general** denial or **general** support. We have to formulate specific positions with the help of our Ukrainian and Russian comrades and our appreciation of

their reach. Thus, we cannot disagree with “sanctions» on the Russian oligarchy (economic or political) which to be effective, however, would have to challenge tax havens and therefore the freedom and opacity of the world markets! On the other hand, we must oppose sanctions that are directed primarily against the Russian people (or other peoples).

So whatever the case, we accept the support of the Ukrainian people and their resistance but refuse any aid which has an extortionate character. Because this may be more complicated than it seems, the final say on the need for aid must be held by the Ukrainian militants, their movements and their organisations.

11) Our solidarity and support for a just struggle is always **undivided** and **unconditional** [22] for two reasons: first, because programmatically we must treat victims not as mere objects but as real subjects [23] and secondly, so that we have the freedom to have our own opinions - and to speak them - without them being coercive. Thus, we must support the Ukrainians themselves in the war they are waging against the Russian invasion and, above all, we must agree to support them in whatever decisions they themselves make about how to wage it. That is why, in particular, we support their resistance, armed or unarmed - it is not our place to decide what is best for them. [24]

12) A just struggle must be supported **regardless** not only of the individual perceptions of the people waging it, but also of **the nature of their leaderships**. [25] A people, a nation struggling against an aggressor is still a society permeated by class, patriarchal, etc., relations; it is never homogeneous, even if the particular struggle itself may contain elements of superficial unanimity against the aggressor.

13) Despite the diversity of national liberation struggles, their outcome is always judged by the general dynamics of social liberation that they create. Therefore:

- a) the support of Ukrainians in the war is not only against their ethnic oppression; it is also for the **general emancipation** of different social groups including workers, ethnic (Roma), gender, etc.
- b) the **hegemony of the local bourgeoisie tends to be challenged** by the very dynamics of the struggle even when it is merely one of national liberation [26], as, by definition it is carried out to turn the oppressed into political subjects.
- c) the final outcome will also depend on the hegemony of the struggle by the socially oppressed strata and their own will at the expense of the programmes of the ruling class (oligarchs, etc.), which is why the **social programme of the war** and the challenging of bourgeois hegemony in practice are of such great significance.
- d) and for this same reason, the strengthening of the groups, parties, trade unions, collectives (large or small) that make up the sections of society struggling and fighting against the aggressor is even more important.

14) In this social war (which is ultimately a national one) of the Ukrainian people against imperialism, the left, and especially the international left, has an enormous responsibility. [27] First of all, for not handing over national liberation to the bourgeoisie by refusing to join the struggle of the Ukrainians. Secondly, because it has to ward off the elements of blackmail that the “aid» from the rival imperialists entails in order to neutralise the people themselves and “satellite” their country. Thirdly, since class struggle, the particular struggle of the oppressed is not only not cancelled by war, but constitutes what is mainly at stake, and the left is necessarily involved in the main way to a victorious outcome. It is our duty, the duty of all the left in the world and above all for the working classes, the trade unions, the grass roots movements and all the oppressed to measure up to our brothers and sisters in Ukraine and Russia, who both ask for and need our help. For the defeat of the imperialist invasion, for the victory of social liberation in Ukraine, in Russia and in the rest of the world.

What we need to do:

- a) Acknowledge our mistakes and shortcomings so far, especially in our positions up to now. [28].
- b) We should not hesitate to confront the majority of the Greek left, which is essentially bankrupt in its task of supporting the Ukrainian struggle. Looking for excuses and “theories” to justify itself, killing any principle of support for the oppressed and recognition of the necessity of their self-emancipation and, in practice, siding with imperialism (with the sole concern to defeat the Ukrainians).
- c) To make direct contact with movements, trade unions, collectives, etc., which constitute the society that is fighting. Clearly, not in order to tell them what to do or impose our own geopolitical or social plans on them, but to listen to them, ask them what they need and organize it, etc. We can also join the networks of support to the Ukrainian people [29] against Russia’s war.
- d) To convey their voice, their views and their struggles both in the resistance and in their political and social reality to Greek society. To try to help them in what they need and not what some omniscient smart aleck from here imagines they need.
- e) To stop indiscriminately reproducing Putinist propaganda (i.e. Nazi nation or “non-nation») and to seek out the truth even when there are questions, real or imagined, about history, social and political reality, the burden of capitalism (and oligarchs), etc. [30]

PS:

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[1] See Antonis Faras & Tassos Anastassiadis [“An “Encounter” of Movements. A “Confrontation” with our Shortcomings”](#).

[2] As clarified by the Russian leadership (questioning the national existence of the Ukrainian people), as said by the Ukrainian people themselves, as interpreted by the independent Russian left and as implied even by the majority of the Western left (which sometimes rhetorically calls for the “withdrawal of the Russian army”).

[3] Is it capitalist accumulation; is it the search for resources; is it the expansion of political influence; is it positioning in a bilateralist antagonism? Even the term is sometimes questioned. But the essence of the attack remains and is not under question.

[4] As we have seen repeatedly in history, especially with colonialism, but also recently with the wars of Western imperialisms or smaller ones (e.g. Rwanda, Yugoslavia, Yemen).

[5] “A question of principle”, in the sense that at the foundation of our society, the “aristocrats» of the market, the relations of exploitation and oppression are all tied together. Misogyny, racism, national arrogance, etc., are all mutually reinforcing. We cannot deny one without poisoning the root of the other.

[6] And this is a programmatic issue, in general. Because we are indeed “peace-lovers», just as we are against rape, against exploitation, etc. But exploitation exists, and in workers’ struggles we have to support the workers; rape also happens and we have to support the victims, because we have the opinion (correct), and precisely because we have it, that rape is bad, war is bad and exploitation is bad. And they are not fought with

## Support the Ukrainian people in their resistance against the war!

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verbalistic exorcisms. For the same reason, too, we also reject any attitude of “justification» (even real or actual - such as the familiar “but caused by the victim») for rape, ethnic oppression (and invasion), etc.

[7] The reason why we cannot be “neutral” is not (only) moral but also political: because attitudes such as “we are not bloodthirsty and we are not concerned with wars but with people’s bread» and therefore “all those who fight should lay down their arms, let there be peace,” etc., not only equate the perpetrators with the victims, but furthermore allow the powerful to impose their power, since it invites the victims to accept it and not to question it.

[8] Imperialism must be defeated both as a whole (as an expression of the accumulation of capital by political and military means) and in each of its specific expressions (here Russian imperialism). And this is a matter of principle: obviously, the condemnation of a rapist does not solve the problem of a society that produces rapists, but we are on the side of the victim and for the condemnation of the specific rapists (or murderers, etc.) in each case, refusing to postpone the specific oppressions to a vague future.

[9] For the same reason, there can be no evasion, of the type “neither with one nor with the other» (i.e. with equal responsibility!), but also - even worse evasion - if it eliminated the Ukrainian people as a subject (like “neither NATO nor Russia» - Ukrainians do not count as people... ), at least especially with this particular war of Russia against Ukraine... The same is true with the reduction to “nationalist» conflicts, “reactionary» in advance, without a fundamental separation of the nationalism of the oppressed from the nationalism of the oppressors...

[10] Not just the climate, but e.g. inequalities in growth and incomes, debt problems, international integrations, such as the EU or NATO or the IMF, etc... There is no “national» response to all this, which means “no interference” from us... Even if we really wanted to be indifferent, we cannot: refugees are coming, e.g. and we have to take a stand: is Mitsotakis’ Greece accepting them well or badly (because “we are involved” or “we are being targeted”)? And the questions can be many and cannot be answered with “indifference» or with a dogmatic denunciation of everything our bourgeois government does (as the example of the Ukrainian refugees shows) - for its own apparent interests.

[11] Because it is not true (the “international” of capital has no homeland...) and because it is practically equivalent to letting the powerful, the oppressors, the imperialists roam around when it is precisely the victims who need our solidarity the most!

[12] This is what we have been doing from the earliest moment in our history, from the 19th century (perhaps even earlier): we want [actually it’s not a “will» it’s a necessity] universal emancipation and we help the outcasts, the beaten, the oppressed, all over the globe. Obviously according to our means and for better or worse, but the matter of principle has always been to care and help in Vietnam or Allende’s Chile, the Spanish civil war, Ethiopia against the Italians or China against the Japanese, the Kurds, the Syrians, etc.

[13] This view has been challenged by the revival of an old hypothesis, Kautsky’s, about the possibility of a “super-imperialism» that would dominate the planet. Lenin may have called it “super-inanity”, but unfortunately, on the occasion of Ukraine, some have thus found justification for massacres of smaller imperialisms, because of their “asphyxiation» by world-dominant Western imperialism. We find this classless analysis again in the poor little capitalists who rightly exterminate their workers thanks to the multinationals, but we cannot discuss that here.

[14] The “we” here refers to all workers, peoples, women, minorities, etc., but also to the planet itself!

[15] Thus, every powerful person serves the world as a world of only the powerful, where the weak and the oppressed are nothing but mere puppets or pawns of their competitors: e.g. in every particular workers’ struggle, the businessman presents the strugglers as “agents” of his competitors, and sometimes the support of the latter is real. The same happens in questions of national oppression and imperialist interventions.

[16] Obviously, the hypocrisy is endless, even for Ukraine. E.g. the Westerners already condemned Russia’s first invasion of Ukraine (in 2014), but no matter what they said, they continued to supply the Russian army with weapons (at least until 2021, mainly Italy, France, Germany)! Hypocrisy that, unfortunately, parallels a Western (and politically bankrupt) left that wants to pretend to be peace-loving and “anti-NATO», but has not made a single mobilization against this flow of NATO weapons to Russia with which, among other things, the Russian imperialist war against Ukraine (as well as the previous one against the Syrian revolution) is being waged.

[17] The same is the case with the Palestinians, for example, and their “support” by various expansionist regimes, Saudi, Iranian, etc.

## Support the Ukrainian people in their resistance against the war!

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[18] E.g. the Irish struggle was supported by the Kaiser (in 1916) and by the Nazis in 1940, the guerrillas in occupied Europe were supported (and armed) by British imperialism, the Algerian revolution was partly armed by the CIA and almost all of world imperialism supported China against the Japanese invasion in 1937, and finally, where “our” imperialists refused to help, the workers’ movements demanded it (the case of the Spanish Republic in 1936).

[19] As the experience of the Kurds has shown, and also more generally: it is not for the good of the people that British imperialism armed the guerrilla movements (including ELAS) in the Nazi occupation. It is to blackmail, influence and undermine their imperialist opponents.

[20] And even use it to expand immigration rights in Europe.

[21] If the latter already exists, the former is currently being blatantly denied by the Western imperialisms, whatever illusions the Ukrainian leadership may have had, even more so as it is being used precisely to rush Sweden, Finland, etc. into NATO. It is not only the costs they thus avoid, such as the risk of actually creating a bi-imperialist war, it is also the risks of widening the conflict, which is obviously of interest to us as well.

[22] Thus, we unconditionally support a girl who was raped, even if we disagree with her decision not to report it to the police (or vice versa) and we support a workers’ struggle against capital, even if we don’t like its reformist leadership or regardless of the possible delusion of workers in its assertive framework.

[23] “The emancipation of the workers will be the work of the workers themselves», which applies to all oppressions (women, ethnic oppressions, immigrants, etc.). And it is especially true for political existence, it is not the “party” or “left” (especially Western!) that brings “emancipation” from the outside...

[24] Even if we were of the opinion (as seems to be the case) that it would be better for them to lay down their arms, we must recognise in advance that it is not our decision and that our opinion cannot be blackmail (of the type “you will do this, or we will not support you»): just the opposite, whatever opinion we may have does not make our solidarity and support conditional, whatever they decide.

[25] The support of a just struggle, regardless of the nature of its leadership, is particularly important for workers’ or other social and ecological struggles, but also and especially for national struggles, such as the Ukrainians’ today. As repulsive as the “Shanghai Massacre», Chiang Kai-shek was, the left supported Chiang Kai-shek’s China War against the Japanese invasion in 1937 (there were exceptions, fortunately fewer than today...) and the same happened with Haile Selassie against Mussolini’s invasion. Similarly, the left in general (and rightly!) denounced the US invasion of Iraq (both times) despite the political “democratic» nature of the US and the repugnance of Saddam Hussein.

[26] This is the case of the guerrilla movements in Nazi-occupied Europe, e.g. in Greece.

[27] Responsibility in the sense that the handing over of struggles against national oppression to the ruling classes, with theories such as “workers have no homeland» or that these are “nationalist» or “bourgeois conflicts», among other things, undermines the internal correlation of the militants who challenge their bourgeois leadership (as now with the Ukrainian workers who, in order to win the war against Russia, are fighting specific struggles against their government’s neoliberal policies - layoffs, working hours, bans, the forest issue - while their government is telling them crudely that you are fighting a lost battle, the international left is not helping you, so only NATO could help. ..).

[28] The announcements that constitute the “position» of the confrontation so far are summarized in the following political points: 1. The first announcement (25/2/2022) calls for the dismemberment of Ukraine. 2. In the 2nd announcement (27/2/2022), the question of ‘our’ tasks put forward: no aid to the Ukrainians. 3. The 3rd announcement (2/3/2022) sets out what the Ukrainians should do: stop resisting (in the form of “equal distances» -both are armies). 4. The 4th statement (7/4/2022) names the enemy of the peoples, i.e. the Ukrainians (through their elected representative) as those main responsible for the war, as agents of the “aggressive NATO expansion in Eastern Europe». In other words, they are (to put it politely) exactly the opposite of the positions expressed in this text and therefore must be annulled.

[29] Such as the European network for solidarity with Ukraine (ENSU), there are others, such as anarchist Operation Solidarity, if we want to...

[30] There are many issues that can (or should) be investigated. We do not list them here, but they have already been expressed in the

## **Support the Ukrainian people in their resistance against the war!**

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discussions of the assemblies and pose a problem, sometimes even an information problem! For example, Maidan, the popular uprising that managed not only to bring down Yanukovich's populist government, but also to dismantle the state repressive mechanisms (police and army - even to the extent that the Russian invasion of Crimea was carried out without even a rifle shot!) What was the social reality into which the Russian fascist gangs that occupied the East stepped? What was the Maidan (and the anti-Maidan)? Or for the far-right, in these countries (Ukraine, Russia, ..), or in particular in the so-called "people's democracies», but also in general (Greece, France). Or what exactly happened in Odessa with the burning of the trade union building? What was the scope of the "Ukrainization" (and also "de-communization") policy of the previous Poroshenko government and how are the issues of minorities in Ukraine (Russians, Tatars, etc.) raised? What is the reality in the east or in Crimea today, after the persecution of the populations? There are probably many questions that we can leave open for research and discussion.