Putin's peacemakers

Anarchistická federace

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Today marks the the one year anniversary of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Since then, supporters of the invasion have engaged in a constantly shifting rhetorical focus, from denying the invasion would happen, to downplaying its severity, blocking aid to those affected, rejecting the aggressor's responsibility, sympathising with the regime's rationale, and finally blaming the victims for their own suffering. Despite the many setbacks against Putin's imperialist war of conquest, it seems now that calls for appeasement are louder than ever. Here we publish a translation of the Czech Anarchist Federation's statement on these "peacemakers". *Neprojdou!*

This month marks the beginning of one of the darkest moments of recent years. On 24 February last year, Putin's Russia launched a military invasion of Ukraine. The modern tsar's aim was nothing less than to occupy the country within three days and to "de-Ukrainianise" it according to a genocidal scenario not dissimilar to the plans of Nazi Germany. In his propaganda vocabulary, this was to be called "de-Nazification" and "demilitarisation". In practice, it was to be a blanket purge of the entire resisting population and the Russification of those willing to submit to the occupation dictate.

But somehow the anointed heads in the Kremlin did not count on the people of Ukraine resisting their imperial designs, and the blessing of the tanks by the head of the Orthodox Church in Russia, Patriarch Kirill, did not help. In fact, not even the Western states, which like to describe themselves as democratic, had counted on such a wave of popular resistance. If Ukraine had not resisted, they would probably have just condemned the invasion and imposed a few sanctions. Putin would probably get away with it again, as he did with the annexation of Crimea or his murderous involvement in Syria. The main thing would be that mutual deals in natural gas and oil would not be affected.

But thanks to the resilience and determination of Ukrainians to resist the onslaught of the invading army, everything is different. So Putin has opted for scorched-earth tactics — bombing civilian infrastructure and residential buildings, killing civilians, raping and torturing have become the tactics of his military machine, which may be creaking but is crushing human lives with its sheer weight. The other tactic is the wanton sacrifice of its own foot soldiers, whose lives mean nothing to the Kremlin papalists, who continue to follow (and are not afraid to say so openly) the good old Stalinist slogan of "nas mnogo" ("there's plenty of us").

It is great that a huge wave of solidarity was raised in our country immediately after the invasion began. Initiatives organised from below immediately began to help the refugees, while the Czech interior minister was more concerned about keeping people of a different skin colour to his own out. Some even got involved in helping the defenders of Ukraine. Anarchists have done so by supporting their Ukrainian friends who have decided to oppose the armed importation of Putin's Z-fascism. Alongside them stood anarchist emigres from Russia and Belarus, for whom the defeat of Putin's invasion holds the promise of ending dictatorship in their own countries.

The invasion of Ukraine did not happen because of a sudden movement of Putin's mind. He had been preparing the ground for many years before, from influencing the US elections in favour of his fan Trump or the Brexit referendum in favour of weakening the EU, to building Germany's dependence on Russian gas, to the explosions of ammunition depots in Bulgaria and the Czech Republic. In Syria, he tested weapons and military terror on the civilian population without any consequences, while in Russia itself he eliminated any semblance of opposition and gave the green light to the genocidal ideology of the non-existence of the Ukrainian nation.

Long before the invasion, he sponsored far-right parties in Europe – in France, Germany, Austria... His propagandists always joked that while the Western far-right had to be paid, the ultra-left usually acted in Russia's interests for free. No wonder then that people from both authoritarian camps immediately aligned themselves with the so-called "tankies", supporting Putin and his narrative of an anti-fascist special operation in Ukraine. Yet, if anyone today represents fascism in its most heinous form, it is him. A tragic case in point are the groups in the West that call themselves anti-imperialist but are in fact nothing more than die-hard opponents of NATO, without taking into account that the Russian regime is the imperialist aggressor in this conflict, and following the perverse principle of "the enemy of my enemy is my friend", they end up supporting Russian imperialism.

But the ruscist (another favourite term for Putin's fascism) tentacles have not disappeared from Europe. Their aim is to support the forces that call for an end to aid to Ukraine. Perhaps the most popular argument is that we must think first and foremost of our own people, and therefore helping others is unacceptable. This is a favourite rhetorical tool of the anti-solidarity ideology, which has recently manifested itself, for example, in the fight against refugees. Another or a parallel variety of Putin's fifth column are the so-called "peacemakers", who argue that it is necessary to act and secure peace immediately. In practice, this means demanding the surrender of the Ukrainian side, not a ceasefire. And the fact that these would-be "peacemakers" take rhetorical cover by condemning the invasion does not change that.

We need to persevere on the side of ordinary people who are resisting the Z-fascist occupiers in Ukraine. At the same time, it is also necessary to stand up to Putin's fifth column and to refuse all kinds of sympathy for aggression, totalitarianism and genocide.