

Your Wars – Our Dead

Contribution to a debate on War and Militarism

Federation for Anarchist Organizing

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Balkan Anarchists against War

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Introduction

More than a year has passed since the already long and devastating war in Ukraine escalated to the new heights of mass organised technological slaughter and imposed itself decisively on the consciousness of the world. In February 2022, after almost eight years of civil war that claimed thousands of lives and caused enormous destruction, the military forces under command of the Russian Federation launched a wide-scale invasion of territory of the Ukrainian state, which was met with a resolute armed response of the military forces under command of Ukraine. As battles engulfed both the cities and the countryside the flow of weapons to a newly created war zone dramatically increased. Large parts of the country and of the population are now under effective military occupation, entire cities and vast fields were turned into post-apocalyptic death zones. By now many states, militaries, intelligence and other structures have actively joined the war in this way or the other, many among them in continuity with their previous engagements. The intrinsic volatility of a military conflict between strong and technologically advanced armies is continuously raising the global geopolitical stakes, while at the same time the needs and interests of the civilian population both in the war-zone and elsewhere in the world are being sidelined by all the warring parties. **The war continues and the logic that brought it in motion is being normalised.**

After almost a year and a half the concern of many is not just the ongoing daily terror of frontline slaughter, forced conscription, attacks on civilian population and the general totalitarian nature of the war regime, but also what happens next. The anxiety of many across the world is fueled by the stubborn warmongering proclamations on either side of the frontline. The official speakers for the ruling class that is presiding over both sides of the war routinely evoke the possibility of nuclear armageddon and the necessity of the nationalist driven militarist revival in their respective geographies. All the war parties try hard to impose their truths on the populations that they rule over and on the world in general. Yet, as in most other wars there are many people that choose not to comply with the orders of the commanders on either side and they often do so at the risk of being ridiculed, stigmatised, censored, criminalised, imprisoned or harmed in other ways.

Like so many others we, the political groups and individuals affiliated with *Federation for anarchist organising* (FAO), have discussed, reacted to, reflected on the new war. We have done that on the back of many previous occasions in the past decade and a half when we dealt with the issues of war, occupation and resistance.

We have opened a lot of questions and reached some conclusions. As a part of our effort we have listened and engaged with our comrades from different parts of the world, including with those from Ukraine. This text represents a partial summary of the conclusions that we have come to. Regardless of their potential strength we recognise that the issues addressed here are difficult and that no word can compensate for the horrors experienced by so many. Despite all the complexities of international politics in general and of war as a specific phenomenon in particular and despite contradictions implied by any political activity, we believe that our conclusions are

simple and clear. They are above all also open for further development. It is our sincere hope that our contribution can be considered in conjunction with our previous articulations and political engagements.

We are aware that in this specific context we are relatively privileged in the sense that our lives are not in danger from the immediate weapons of war. We are privileged in having the luxury to take time to come together as a collective social and political body and to ask questions without the necessity to immediately come up with practical answers on the merit of which our lives would depend. This is the privilege that is denied to many on the frontlines in Palestine/Israel, in Syria, in Yemen, in Ethiopia, in Ukraine and in many other places that are currently being consumed by war. Yet, we don't believe that certain relative privileges should oblige one to remain silent. We are aware of the fact that to some this might be a controversial position to take. Nevertheless, we consciously choose to take it and we do it openly.

We believe that even in the most difficult of times there is an option to stand your ground, to not withdraw into isolation, paralysis and silence but instead to actively reflect and if the opportunity arises to act. We believe that this should be what the anarchists and the anarchist movement as a whole should aspire to. In fact, it is exactly this point of view that has brought many of us to the anarchist movement in the first place. We are aware that acting in this way may bring one in conflict with the powers-that-be and with their operations through which they manufacture consent to their actions. Furthermore, it is our understanding that in these times of apparent confusion and uncertainty there is much to benefit from the analysis, positions and practices of many of our predecessors who took part in consistent anarchist activity in the specific historical and political context of some previous times. This does not mean that we intend to throw our Malatesta, Goldman, Durutti, an anonymous Kronstadt sailor, Makhno or anybody else in the fire of the debate claiming that the very references of this kind settle the argument. This would be against the spirit of what we understand anarchism to be. This would be ahistorical and it would also be rude. We merely affirm that there were people before us that dealt with issues that are not dissimilar to those what we are dealing with now and that they have come up with interesting analysis and proposals that we too can put to a good use.

Our contribution is divided into **three main parts**. In the first we try to outline some basic factors that shape our politics in general and our approach to the war in particular. In the second we summarise our analysis on what are the driving forces behind the present conflagration in Ukraine. In the third part we articulate what we believe should be the basic positions that the anarchist movement should pay attention to while navigating the challenging terrain of war and resistance to it.

In relation to the second part we stress that to us the understanding of the processes, causes, interests and motivations involved does not constitute any kind of endorsement or support. And in relation to the first part we stress that it is based on the premise that it might be useful to be explicit about some important factors that are shaping our perspectives and positions. We do not claim that these factors give our positions any inherent legitimacy or credibility. We merely say: these are our views, this is what has shaped them.

We are based in so called Slovenia and Croatia, in one of the many borderline areas of Europe that is known also as the Balkans. This is an area that has been for a long time subjected to mystification, demonisation, exoticisation and all the other ideological tricks from the toolbox of orientalism. Also, while the Balkans is geographically an integral part of Europe, it is well integrated in the political and economical structures of the European Union and to some other

transnational bodies and organisations that are linked to it. It has to be stressed however that this integration takes place through many different arrangements.

The state structures we find ourselves in are situated at one extreme side of this geography, the one that has been already for quite a while well integrated in political, military and economic structures of European and Atlantic integration such as European Union (Slovenia since 2004, Croatia since 2013), NATO (Slovenia since 2004, Croatia since 2009) and OECD (Slovenia since 2010). We are based in geographies with only a few million inhabitants and we believe it is fair to say from the point of view of big geopolitical games, relatively irrelevant in terms of population, economy, natural resources and military structures. Yes, most of our efforts might be limited to a geographically small corner of the world, but we are here and we share the same passion for freedom as is found everywhere. In addition **we hold the somewhat narcissistic opinion that the Balkans are one of those geographies that offer a valuable insight into the contemporary mechanics of the global capitalist system even to the outside eye. Among the central elements of this system that have been particularly clearly expressed in our geography in the last few decades we include war, nationalism, repatriarchalization, religious obscurantism and massive redistribution of wealth from the poorer segments of the society towards the rich. Rather predictably none of these elements that have been imposed from the top on the population of the Balkans since the late 1980's has turned out to be in the interest of the majority of people.** While the political and economic elite feasts on the profits, rents and theft that they continue to extract from the divided and despairing population, the social ties deteriorate and the slide to new capitalist authoritarianism or the system of modern totalitarianism as some of our comrades call it continues.

Yet, it was not always like that in our part of the Balkans. In fact, relatively short time ago, things looked very different. Recent history of our geography has seen an authentic popular revolutionary partisan struggle against the Nazi and fascist occupation during the 2nd World War that resulted in the formation of an authoritarian socialist and multinational regime with liberal overtones and multicultural pro-atheist society. This regime was known by the name Yugoslavia (Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia) and does not exist anymore. To the entire generations it meant dramatic increase in their living standards, acknowledgement of women rights, establishment of systems of public health, education, social housing and other material achievements that should be recognised as socially progressive even from contemporary viewpoint.

Despite the sincere investment of a large part of the population in Yugoslavia as a political and social project it was still a one-party system, with a clearly formed repressive apparatus whose goal was to prevent emergence of any viable political competition. It was also a system where historical narration of antifascist resistance was owned by the Communist party which emerged out of it as by far its most dominant force and where there was not much political organizing outside of official structures. Yugoslavia's was a dynamic system that changed a lot from its establishment through partisan resistance in 2nd World War to its collapse at the end of Cold War in early 1990's. On the level of international relations there was a break with Soviet Union in 1948, strategic affiliation with the Non-Aligned movement in which it was one of the leading protagonists, and partnership relations in different domains, including economic, scientific and academic with many countries of the so called West, including Germany and USA and with many of the countries of the so called 'Eastern bloc' and of course with the rest of the world. Internally Yugoslavia experienced waves of political liberalizations, but also occasional regressions. Gradual economic integration with the West was expressed also in relatively high levels of emigration.

As the border regime with time became increasingly liberal, everyday life, cultural influences, working and study arrangements followed suit.

It is fair to say that Yugoslavia was also deeply characterized by a personality cult of Josip Broz – Tito that has led both the Communist Party and the state until his death in 1980. It was central to the many rituals through which the official ideology of state socialism was proclaimed and reproduced. Importantly, some of the central elements of this ideology such as workers self-management, antinationalism, universality of rights and benefits and women's liberation also resonated heavily with the values and perspectives of a large share of the population. While many people might have developed a distance from the ideology overload of the regime rituals, they still took much of the content as their own. For example, Brotherhood and Unity was an official slogan of the regime, heavily used in daily political life. It was meant to convey the message that the affirmation of multi-cultural character of Yugoslavia was the fundamental pillar on which everything else is built. But it was not just a slogan that would be repeated ritually by the officials, it was at the same time an articulation of what a large part of the population sincerely felt. The fact that the notion of 'Brotherhood and Unity' is still alive in the whole of the territory of ex-Yugoslavia even more than thirty years and a devastating war later is a testament of this.

Three decades ago and in the context of the end of the Cold War era Yugoslavia was destroyed through war. Curiously, this happened exactly at the point when the integration into the global capitalist market became the guiding light of the newly reconstituted ruling class, not only in our region, but also in the rest of Eastern Europe and throughout the world. While the exact processes, players and potential hidden agendas still remain buried in the murky waters of history of the transition to post-Cold War world, to us the explanations of what transpired that are rooted in the myth of 'realization of long held national dreams' that for decades is being imposed on many of us – in Slovenia and Croatia at least – don't seem neither plausible nor something that we can relate to. In any case today we are living as the heirs of the violent destruction – deliberate or inadvertent – of a multinational society that was realized in the name of nation, religion, free market and individual freedom.

Still now, decades after the end of military confrontations that brought images and testimonies of genocide, ethnic cleansing to living rooms throughout the world, ever new generations in large parts of ex-Yugoslavia grow up with the sense of enormous loss and with a lack of local opportunities to live free from poverty, violence, chauvinism and exploitation. True, there are tangible differences between the different parts of the region, but no part truly escaped the many pitfalls of a new era and none avoided the restoration of capitalism, the ultimate cause of the most devastating forces that are tearing the societies apart. All seven of new state entities were born in a well documented nationalist frenzy that brought immense suffering to many of their respective residents. All remain rich hunting grounds for religious fundamentalists, nationalists and other merchants of lies, pain and immediate gratification. On top of all this we have seen the rise of individualism, consumerism and destruction of historical narratives of solidarity built after World War 2, the very same narratives that for almost half a century fostered strong links between people of different ethnic, linguistic and religious identities.

If we speak about war it is on the back of the fact that war has been woven into the daily social fabric of our geography. It is because we are still affected by the consequences of the one that happened within living memory. And yes, some of us did experience it in the form of bombs falling on the cities where we have lived, in the form of family members being mobilised, in the form of friends deserting the military forces, in the form of ourselves becoming refugees or eco-

conomic migrants, looking for a way to create a new life in a new environment. Additionally if we speak about war it is also on the back of another war, the one that our grandparents experienced and which they turned into a revolutionary war of liberation from nazi and fascist occupation that exactly because of its explicitly revolutionary character was able to establish conditions for the emergence of a more egalitarian and just society after the war. Admittedly the society that was built around the model of a one party state could never have led to an antiauthoritarian system of self-organized communes. Yet, the basic fact remains that the many worthy ideas that were to a significant degree realized once the peace was won, such as solidarity that transcended ethnic, linguistic, religious identities and relative women's liberation were woven into the armed struggle itself from its very beginning.

If we sometimes mention that we too are from Eastern Europe it is because this is how we have been categorised by the rulers of the world. Indeed, Slovenia joined the EU and NATO as a part of the first wave of expansion of the EU to Eastern Europe in 2004. If we make references to the experiences of socialism and post-socialism this is because we still live in a society that is deeply marked by the legacy of both and we do have a thought or two to share about all this. As in reflecting other historical events we accept the existence of contradictions and nuances, while at the same time firmly reject vulgarisations and oversimplifications.

These are some of the understandings that are woven into our reflections.

Capitalism, Crisis, End of Neoliberalism and War

In its quest for endless accumulation of capital and limitless economic growth capitalism has emerged as a global system driven by the ceaseless exploitation of workers, other human and non-human animals and nature. Despite being a global system it is not built on harmony of all parts, but on the logic of competition that is found on all the levels: competition within a company, competition between individual companies, competition between centres of capitalist power and it is not surprising at all that one of the fundamental fantasies of capital is to impose the conditions of the most brutal competition for necessities of life such as food, lodging and social relations to the working class.

While the belief in limitless economic growth is the core ideological premise of capitalist system, the limits to the expansion in fact do exist and so do the limits to the expansion of the domain under control specific capitalist power. Be it in form of resistance or limited availability of workers, limited natural resources, flawed economic scriptures on which it relies for its reproduction or in the form of a competing centre of capitalist power, the managers of the capitalist system are forever haunted by the dual spectre of crises and expansion. Indeed, its entire history is characterised by a long journey from one destructive crisis to the next. Only in the last decade and a half, the crisis had been given different names, e.g. economic crisis, migrant crisis, Covid-19 crisis, climate crisis. Despite the different names, the reaction of the authorities to these supposedly very different challenges has been strikingly similar: enormous investment in propaganda-like efforts to impose a monolithic narrative, strengthening of the various state and para-state structures of repression, surveillance and control, militarisation, digitalisation and bureaucratisation, innovations in and entrenchment of politics of hate, violence and exclusion, persecution of social opposition and immense destruction of the lives of humans and nonhuman animals.

With the end of neoliberal era of the global economic system its ideological promises are everywhere exposed as empty words. The ruling class itself is well conscious of the fact that not only it cannot guarantee anything anymore to the big majority of people it wants to rule over, it is also increasingly unable to hide this. Under the existing system there is now even according to the official proclamations no more offer of affordable health, security, housing, education, fair share of the cake, let alone prosperity of the kind that was characteristic for post-World-War 2 welfare states. What the ruling class is nowadays offering instead is successive states of emergency, austerity, further privatisation of public services, militarisation and enormous rise of the scope and brutality of policing. No longer capable of delivering even the previous level of prosperity, the authorities throughout the so-called West increasingly resort to sheer violence and other authoritarian methods just to maintain their grip on power. Covid-19 regime was the clearest expression yet of the mechanisms of the new and extremely repressive normality which is not anymore confined only to those that from the point of view of racist, patriarchal and otherwise authoritarian structures are deemed marginal and thus valid targets of state violence.

As the neoliberal utopia of global free trade collapsed under the contradictions between ideology and the wider geopolitical considerations of their main protagonists – the USA – the economic protectionism has yet again emerged as a rallying point for the competing centres of capital, all vying for competitive advantages and thus their very survival. Following the iron logic of capitalist competition and in resonance with historical events from more than a century ago the new economic, political and eventually military blocks are coalescing and manoeuvring to secure what they deem to be their existential geopolitical and economic interests. Wherever there are competing claims, the option of war, that most absolute of all crises, is brought to the tables of those who make decisions on behalf of the ruling class. Thus, after so many other geographies before, Ukraine too has now been added to the long list of war theatres. The fact that the considerations that would take into account the well-being of the majority of the population do not count for much in this geopolitical games of the ruling class is in itself a testament of how enormous the gap between the rulers and the ruled today is.

The war in Ukraine is fought between an existing transnational military alliance in the service of the USA-led unipolar world system on the one hand and the emerging transnational economic alliance with military aspects in the service of the multipolar world system embraced by Russia, China and other powerful capitalist powers on the other. Despite the importance of local factors the war in Ukraine is not based in a local political conflict. Rather, Ukraine, its population, its landscape, its resources, cities and fields was chosen as the terrain of a military confrontation between two powerful capitalist centres. Geopolitically speaking the core of the issue is thus not Russia versus Ukraine and for sure not Russians versus Ukrainians. It is a battle between centres of economic and political powers that align themselves to two competing models of global political system and have at their disposal the military and other tools to stake their respective claims. Despite the many differences in their economic and political models both models are rooted in capitalism, militarism, nationalism and therefore necessity of large scale exploitation and destruction. The war in Ukraine is thus not a war between people, but a war between great systems of capitalist domination. In it, people are only dying.

When thinking about the war we should not forget that peace does not necessarily mean the absence of war. It can also mean that the war a certain centre of power is waging is taking place far away. This is the truth of the apparent peace and democracy that supposedly reigns and has reigned for many decades in the so-called West. What is conveniently forgotten is that practically

all the states from the so called West have built their economic success and apparent prosperity by exploitation and conquest. Most of these states were built on systematic crimes against a part of the population over which they imposed themselves. This is true even for a tiny, unimportant Slovenia that in the aftermath of securing its independence has stripped tens of thousands of its residents of their legal rights in a clearly racist administrative operation. This is true for a tiny, unimportant Croatia whose current ruling class imposed itself through nationalist war that served as a screen behind which a large scale ethnic cleansing of its territory during which several hundred thousand people were expelled from their lands on racist grounds and hundreds, if not thousands killed outside of any military battles. In the cases of many other states it has taken other and deadly forms: colonisation, genocides, organised terror and mutilations, slavery, brutal suppression of entire distinct linguistic and cultural communities and many others.

Also, war is not the only form of terror and it's clear brutality should not mean that all other forms of state organized structural violence should be ignored. Even today and probably more than in the not to distant past, we can see that the big part working force of Europe consists of mainly seriously underpaid labor power from countries from the periphery or outside – conditions that in many cases are legitimately described as modern slavery. This confirms the now practically undisputed fact is that any capitalist power needs a regular supply of cheap labor and reliable access to natural resources, not only nowadays fashionable lithium and other precious metals, but also clean water and fertile soil. As long as capitalism as a world system is not dismantled the states will remain the mechanism through which a tiny minority impose authoritarian rule over the world in such a way that requires war in order to reproduce itself. **Thus, it can be claim again that capitalism is war.**

Anarchists and the War

For us, the enemy in this war is war itself. For us, the states, which need the war in order to impose themselves over the population, are the enemy. For us, the enemy is capitalism that needs states and wars to perpetuate its grip on the world. For us this is the core of the anarchist analysis and politics. Without them the anarchism as a clear, specific political position and practice makes no practical or theoretical sense.

We absolutely recognise the right of every individual and community to defend itself against any kind of violations of their freedom. A military invasion and subsequent occupation imposed by an uninvited and unwelcome foreign entity is without a doubt a clear example of exactly such violation that has been taking place in Ukraine. If people – whatever their claimed political affiliation – in these circumstances choose to join the different military forces under the command of the state of Ukraine (or in that matter any other state), we will not preach to them that they should not do so. It is of course up to every individual, community and political group to make their own assessments and corresponding decisions regarding their self-defense.

We support popular self-defense and see it as an integral element in struggles in defence of already achieved social, political and other gains or in creation of conditions in which these gains can be achieved. To us popular self-defense refers to a set of many different activities conducted in a way that allows for autonomous political, social, economic and militant practice in adherence to the principles of antiauthoritarian self-organisation. Even though it might take the form of organised armed struggle

it is antimilitarist in the sense that it is based on voluntary involvement, it claims no authority over non-combatant population and its ultimate goal is the dissolution of a system that needs war and military structures to reproduce itself.

We recognise humbly that presently this has limited practical application in our immediate circumstances – but also that it might not always stay like that. Furthermore, as part of an anarchist movement – we continuously try to learn from history, including history of popular revolutions – and from contemporary experiences of our comrades that are engaged in struggles for dignity and life. It is on the back of these reflections that we claim that not only as a matter of principle but also as a matter of analysis we do not believe that taking up arms in one hand while wielding a national flag in the other or accepting the command from those that do can bring about anything else but a reproduction of the society based on nationalism, patriarchy and exploitation. According to what we have been able to understand until now about the military conflict in Ukraine we do not see the involvement as part of the armed forces of Ukraine state or in a military coalition under its command as consistent with any model of antiauthoritarian self-organisation that we can envision. We do however understand and respect the impulse of many towards self-defence that lead them to take the decision to join the armed struggle against the invasionary forces. **But to do this as a part of the national army or as its proxy and under the command of its officers is not anarchist politics and can not be articulated as such.**

In case Russia is proclaimed as the winner in this war there is no question about the fact that this will certainly not bring about any favorable conditions for the development of any kind of anticapitalist revolutionary project. But even in the case of the so-called victory of Ukraine and its ‘western allies’ it is illusory to expect the emergence of anything of this kind. Indeed, exactly in the context of a war between competing blocks of capitalist power the banner of transnational revolutionary working class engaged in class struggle should explicitly be put at the center of any militant activity. It is the one banner under which workers, fighters and the rest of the population from both sides of the frontline can fight together for life and against their mutual enemy: the military commanders and their bosses.

We strongly oppose the creation and reproduction of any sympathetic public imagery of war. We observe that despite the fact that this imagery is being heavily based on patriarchal values, it is splashed also all over the supposedly progressive media. Images of macho looking warriors-men in all kinds of romantic situations – imagery that stands in contrast with discourse of ‘shameful deserters’ and of those who dare question involvement in the ongoing massacre. Correspondingly to this we observe practically total denial of the existence of desertion ‘on one’s own side’. **The right to a life outside of the war has to be acknowledged for everyone, not depending on their gender, age or social status.**

We strongly oppose the distinction and promotion of ‘good refugees’ in comparison with ‘bad ones’ that we have seen in the immediate aftermath of the beginning of the current Russian invasion in Ukraine. We have seen another strong confirmation that the European migration system is based on racial and religious prejudices and differentiates between the refugees on the basis of their perceived colour of skin and supposed religious affiliation. Systematic violence either directly by the states of the European union or on their behalf against refugees and other migrants from various countries that we have seen in at least 20 years made life a hell on Earth for millions – running from war they have been greeted with further dehumanisation and new death traps. We can not accommodate ourselves to the world where empathy and solidarity is

based on the passport one holds, language one speaks or place of one's birth. We will not accept that a person from Syria is less worthy of a safe and nourishing home than a person from Ukraine, we will not accept that a person fleeing from Ukraine is worth less than a person fleeing from Syria. **The principles of solidarity are either applied universally or they are not applied at all.**

We reject in most absolute terms any profiteering from war. We do not support the production of and trade in weapons that is controlled by the state and primarily serves the interests of the shareholders of the military-industrial complex. Weapons, the war industry and military alliances are the problem, not the solution. That is why we reject acquisitions and sale of weapons and of all other forms of strengthening the war apparatus. Our solidarity is not with the states and their armies that are now measuring the strengths of their weapons of mass destruction in Ukraine. **Our interests can not be aligned with the war profiteers who are already cashing in heavily and are rubbing their hands over the promise of a long war with exciting opportunities.** Our boundless solidarity is with all those who are suffering the consequences of war on all sides of the front lines. We are in solidarity with all those who raise their voices against the war and with those who do not put their own bodies at the disposal of the war machine and with those who become targets of repression precisely because of their resistance to war. Like us, they did not want war, they did not seek it, but they have become its prisoners and captives.

We oppose the normalisation of the discourse of preparations for another big future conflict, a normalisation that is creating an illusion that the only answer to war is more war, more tanks, more weapons, more ammunition, more submission to the plans of military commanders. **Contrary to that we need serious engagement with the question of how to radically change the society in the way that dismantles *conditions of war*.** We believe that this is one of the main focuses of us as anarchist political groups, organisations and networks. In order to do this effectively we should understand what these conditions are and what can be done about them. Leading among them are patriarchy, nationalism, selective empathy and solidarity, militarisation and securitisation. All these are tools of class struggle that the ruling class is using in order to divide the working class and keep it in submission to the interests of capital, while they – the ruling class – reap the dividends. All should be continuously rejected, resisted and dismantled in all their many localised manifestations. We know that this is easier written than done, yet we believe that there is no other tool available to us that could block the perpetuation of war and militarism. We also believe that some meaningful efforts of this kind can be engaged in by any, even the smallest anarchist group and in the least favourable context and it is something that on the long run can make a tangible difference in one's immediate community and even in a wider society as a whole. In a sense a war can start only when and where many of the conditions just outlined become normalized and naturalized. Only when war is successfully planted in people's minds as necessary, viable, honourable and just, even joyful and adventurous, it also becomes a practical possibility.

In our ranks and in our closest sister-movements we have comrades that experienced directly the wars of the 1990s in Yugoslavia as well as the NATO bombing of Yugoslavia in 1999. We share our evenings and social spaces with people that experienced wars in Syria and in Palestine/Israel. What they all teach us is that even in the worst of times it is possible to take a strong anti-nationalist, antimilitarist position and act on the most universal ethical principles. The price for this is admittedly often not a small one – poverty, social exclusion, isolation by general society,

forced migration and direct repression. But it is the price that has been paid and is continuing to be paid by many in wars around the world. As Yugoslavia was being torn apart we have seen how a transnational and local solidarity helped people survive and keep their dignity in the worst of situations. Desertion was relatively widely spread on all sides of the conflict. In Serbia whole military units with hundreds of soldiers refused to go to the battlefield. While the authorities were hunting on the streets and in bars for soldiers, many went into hiding and many escaped the country altogether. In this they were supported by family members, friends, neighbours and others that all together had woven the fabric of social resistance against the war that the nationalist elite imposed on them. In those troubled times it was self-organisation and solidarity inside the communities that kept many people alive and, crucially, provided a source of dignity when the flame of war died out. It is on the back of these experience that we recognize that among the most tangible things that can be done by many of us is to offer help and support to the deserters from all the armies and to those that run away from forced conscription. And if the situation arise we must become these deserters and military objectors ourselves.

As with other wars also the war in Ukraine poses the central question *qui bono* – who is gaining? While we cannot predict with certainty how the big geopolitical game will play out, what is clear already is that there will be no winners among the general population. There will be no proper prosperity, freedom and possibility of self-determination. In the absence of a meaningful future the patriarchy, nationalism, religious fundamentalism and other systems of oppression will further impose themselves over the population. Where there was multilingual reality for generations, cultural monoculture will prosper. Maybe even, as the Zapatistas have written, after war there will be no landscape. The war might spread to other geographies and new armies might openly join the fighting. This will further guarantee the never-ending production of the refugee population, which will be sucked by the capital of the EU as a cheap working force that from their racist point of view will this time be white and thus much more welcome. We assume that the peace will be accepted only after the weapon deals are successfully realised and the control over the fertile soil of Ukraine divided in a satisfactory way for the investors, which are preying for the healthy returns to be secured by the rulers of Ukrainian state, who would probably promise and possibly underwrite anything they can just to supposedly secure their own personal and political future. All this wheeling and dealing of course takes place regardless of the consequences that will fall on the general population of Ukraine which will eventually be tasked to pay for it all in many forms. When in the ruins of war peace is finally agreed upon people will try to rebuild their lives saddled with enormous amounts of debt to pay for all the ‘donated’ weapons, mourning for the lost family members and friends.. What will be offered to them will be capital driven reconstruction with all the known brutality: privatisation of public services and resources, further dismantling of workers rights, many of wich have been already suspended under the banner of ‘necessity of war economy’, individualisation, austerity, repatriarchalisation, religious renewal etc. That this horizon is not a pessimist fantasy is confirmed by – of all other sources – the Ukrainian state itself as shortly after the invasion started it launched an advertising drive aimed towards investment capital from the so-called West whose central pitch was that Ukraine offers a glorious investment opportunity for those willing to take the risk. This offers a clue that the future that is being fought for in Ukraine is not something majority of the people can look for forward to. It amounts to a promise of a special economic zone, catering to the interests of capital, where again people are reduced to cheap highly exploitable labor force.

Again we express our support for any practices of self-organised antiauthoritarian self-defence and communal organising in the geographies directly affected by war as long as they are based on clear antinationalist principles. We further express our preparedness to build concrete solidarity with the comrades involved in such projects. We want to also explicitly note that any new mode in which Ukraine will be integrated in the global capitalist system will imply the need for widescale workers self-organisation as this will be the only lever that the workers will have available in to order to push back against the well known predatory schemes of the war and post-war economy. We are very well aware that the propaganda machine of every involved state would keep us in the dark about the existence of any such project in the territory of Ukraine (or anywhere else for that matter). This is why we insist that the anarchist movement everywhere should continuously invest in building of stable networks of information sharing, discussion and coordination. It is them that can offer a possibility of independent analysis and action when the proverbial shit hits the fan. When the hostilities start it might be already too late. This is why this needs to be done while there is still time, but it is always better to start late than not at all.

The war is not being fought only with bombs and tanks, and not only on the Ukrainian territory. A significant part of the war is being fought in societies seemingly safely removed from theatres of direct violence. There it takes the form of arms production and trafficking, promotion of nationalism, propaganda, repression, racism, selective treatment of the victims of war, ban on freedom of speech, funding campaigns for weapons and many others. To reject war is to reject all the forms in which it takes place and everywhere it takes place.

It also should be said that for us after all this is not an abstract discussion that we can conclude with some declarations and then move on to other things. It is the exact opposite of that. We live in a part of the world where war is not only a lived experience of many but a very realistic future as well. Already when there is any kind of massive social mobilisation against the political class and its capitalism a spectre of war is quickly evoked by that same political class as is the case so often in Bosnia-Herzegovina. It is being used as a warning what can happen if the workers demand too much. Another clear example of the threat of war being regularly used as a political tool is Serbia. Whenever there is any kind of more serious danger of the government loosing the practically total control over mainstream narrative on any major social issue, it turns the attention to the many unresolved issues around Kosovo. Often army is being sent to the border, military exercises are held, heightened state of preparedness is declared, fighting proclamations are made. All these is often mirrored by the Kosovo side and often it is the latter providing the seeming flash-point of confrontation. After days or weeks, the situation again calms down. Until again for reasons of domestic politics it flares up again. But the almost grotesque ritual nature of this dynamics that is going on for years does not mean that cheap public relations tricks cannot get out of control. This is why the way war is being routinely paraded in front of domestic audience in several parts of the Balkans should not be seen merely as a cheap propaganda trick. The threat is real and it is coming exactly from those that are able to deliver on it. It comes from firmly established nationalist elites who have proven themselves to be incapable of offering anything else to the people except hate, national flags and nationalism. When they lose legitimacy, they will likely turn to the same tools that brought them to power in the first place. One of them is war. The same can happen if they accept willingly or are forced into playing a minor role in the big geopolitical struggles by one or the other of their global super-power benefactors.

In a volatile geopolitical context all sorts of political tensions can develop into a war. Despite the calculations of the rulers for this to happen the population that has already suffered so much has to be either convinced that the new conflict against some 'the other' makes sense or it has to be forced to accept that. In any case the focus of the anarchists and other anti-nationalists in the Balkans should be not to allow this trickery to prevail again. This is why we advocate for and participate in building of transnational networks. This is why we meet, communicate, learn, build bridges of support and struggle and work on joint projects. This is why we encourage even the seemingly smallest gestures of disloyalty to the official narratives. This is why whenever we find ourselves in the middle of an authentic social upheaval we consistently argue against the use of national flags on the streets, against the use of any kind of ethnical designations, and against the use of other symbols and other expressions of nationalist ideology. To us the state flags, those of Slovenia and Croatia included, signify the crimes on which these were and are continuing to be built. We do not feel any allegiance to the Slovenian or Croatian nation and for us the only community to which we claim allegiance is the one that is being constituted through the world-wide struggle against oppression. We are convinced that not much can be achieved when one is isolated in their own geography. We also believe that not much can be achieved if one is separated from the society and social struggles.

In a climate of war, it is important to create spaces of anti-authoritarian resistance against everything that enables and drives it. Struggle against states that claim the territories in which we live, against militaries that try to mobilize us, against military industry that feeds on the wealth we produce, against rulers that claim to govern in our name and against all that enables war to thrive. Among the spaces in which it is necessary to be present and active are also a space of public debate on the one hand and the space of the anarchist and antiauthoritarian movement in particular. We believe it remains important to engage in self-organised exchange of information, views and organisation to offer practical solidarity to all those who most need it in this difficult situation. We shy not from an open debate, in fact we cherish any opportunity where our own view and positions are challenged in a respectful and comradely setting. We do not and will not however accept during a common process of the debate any kind of patronising attitude or emotional blackmail. We know that the stakes are too high to let only our emotions blind our vision and paralyse us in historically critical and otherwise important moments.

We have no illusions: this war in Ukraine will continue for a long time. Also, there will be other wars added to the already long list as long as capitalism thrives. Already from the beginning of the process of writing this text to the present version a new war erupted in Sudan. To continuously fight against this monstrous reality we will need all our imagination and boldness, all our analysis of both historical and current events, our bodies, our hearts and we will need comrades. It is our sincere hope that we will continue to find them all over the world and that they will find us in present and future fighting to abolish *the conditions of war* everywhere.

Fight nationalism, patriarchy, imperialism and war!

Solidarity with the oppressed working class in Ukraine and Russia!

Dismantle the borders!

For international workers solidarity!

Abolish the conditions of war!

Destroy capitalism!

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