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Against the war, a European assembly

Collettivo Euronomade

1. And now, there is war. We thought the pandemic was a point of no return, that the acceleration of a set of processes that had been underway for a long time — the increasingly close link between digitalization and financialization of the economy, to name just one example — had arrived at an abrupt realignment and violent synchronization of the forms of exploitation and domination that make up global capitalism. But the pandemic, even before it has run its course, has been joined by war. It is a war that is being fought in Europe, but its stakes go far beyond the borders of what is still called the “old continent”. Tectonic shifts in world order and disorder, which have been taking place for some time now, have violently fallen on primarily Central and Eastern Europe, the scene of some of the most terrible tragedies of the Second World War.

2. The current war is a war of aggression. We cannot be indifferent to the bombing of Ukrainian cities, the mass flight of civilian populations, the fear and terror of those who take refuge in cellars and basements. We are against Putin's neo-imperial design, on the side of the women and men who challenge him every day in the streets of Russian cities, the feminist and LGBTQI activists, the workers who rebel against the misery imposed by a capitalist

economy built on rent and the promotion of narrow oligarchies. We reject the mystification of a Russian “civilization” that would be by nature patriarchal and hostile to freedom and equality, cemented by the colorful amulets of the Orthodox Church and an unbending martial ethic. Let’s say more: we don't really want to know about “civilization” and “values” as the foundation of politics and belonging, whether these attributes are projected in large imperial spaces or at the scale of the nation. We are against all nationalism, because we know the trail of blood it has left in history and because we know that nationalism by definition has not only a very close link with racial hierarchies and patriarchal order, but also tends to shut spaces for struggles of the oppressed and exploited.

3. Nevertheless, we also know that the time of war is the time of nationalism. In a world that is now fully multipolar, nationalism can spread far beyond the dividing line around which the fighting is taking place in Ukraine, to the West as well as to the East. The dynamics of civil war on the Syrian model can, for example, radiate towards the Balkans, towards the Caucasus and towards Central Asia. What really count today are large continental spaces, such as the United States and China, and these are spaces in which, albeit in different forms, the struggle to affirm a more mature and egalitarian form of cooperation has never ceased. The war can compress this struggle within nationalistic rhetoric, while the risk of tensions and military clashes between poles far from defining anything like a “world order” is obviously very high. For this reason, today, the struggle for peace is a priority for anyone in any part of the world who is fighting for equality and freedom. And this global horizon, which qualifies and certainly does not elude the specific intensity of conflicts, must characterize political action on every scale — even the most local. We’ll put it like this: in the war

in Ukraine today, at issue is what form will be taken by the architecture of world powers in the coming decades. And the more we are able to desert the war, the more that architecture will be disarmed — that is, the more open it will be to the movements and struggles, the desires and claims of the oppressed and exploited. The time to fight on this ground is now.

4. If the time is now, the space for us who live in this part of the world can only be that of Europe. At least since the early 1990s, great social movements have materially shaped the European space — movements for the freedom of movement and freedom of communication, for income and for peace. Of course, those movements have radically challenged Europe's policies: they have fought against the European attitude towards the devastating Yugoslav wars, against the brutal violence of the control regime at the “external borders”, against austerity — and the list goes on. But as far as we are concerned, we have always rejected any nostalgia for the nation state, affirming that the European state must be practiced as an essential space of struggle. We cannot but reiterate this today, in the time of a war that is also a European war. And yet we cannot overlook the ways in which war is imposing itself as a constituent principle within the European Union. Rearmament looms as a global trend and is becoming the critierium according to which national and EU budgets are being remodeled. The “eventualities” contained in a certain sense in the “Next Generation EU” plan (moving towards a possible transformation of social welfare systems) is giving way to a classic “war Keynesianism”. The “Green New Deal” that was apparently even on the agenda of European capital seems to have been already forgotten in light of the imperative of fossil and nuclear-based energy sovereignty. And finally, the war gives dynamism to the entire European defense project in view of an operative and

political subordination to NATO. In this sense the Eastern expansion begun in the 1990s culminates in the silencing of conflicts opened up by the question of the rule of law in the Visegrad countries and in Poland in particular. And unfortunately, there is one certainty: taking in Ukrainian refugees will, at least in the plans of the ruling classes, change nothing about the framework of the criminal European policies against those fleeing from other wars via the Mediterranean or the “Balkan route”.

5. If the time is ripe and the space is Europe, then we need some form of even just preliminary analysis of European societies. The war has met societies for which it is no exaggeration to say after two years of pandemic that they are stunned and exhausted. It is surely not possible to summarize the developments and trends that have affected very different societies in a few lines. But it can be said with certainty that Europe has emerged from the pandemic crisis impoverished and with its basic structures of “social cohesion” on trial. The process of the hollowing-out of social guarantees and protection measures has further accelerated, as has the precarization of work. These processes have affected not only individual workplaces but dependent and exploited labor in general, including a large part of factory work. In sectors that were particularly affected before the pandemic — for example, in logistics and in agriculture — there are particularly significant forms of self-organization and struggle that will be relevant in the near future. It is certain in any case that without a general uprising of the workforce in Europe, it will not be possible to effectively fight the war and start a political project to transform the current situation. In recent years, three large movements traversed European space that have agency on a much larger scale: the movement of migrants, the feminist movement and the movement against climate change. In various ways, these movements question

the terrain of work and go beyond it — they enable us to grasp their most fundamental and innovative transformations and to search for new fields of struggle. For us, they are the basic starting point to reflect on a European politics of freedom and equality in the here and now.

6. So what is to be done? We repeat this question in a dark time, with unbearable images of war hanging over us. A war that changes everything. It is no longer possible to repeat the words of recent years, not even those that we repeated. The struggle against war, whose logic we must "deactiviate" at material and imagistic levels, forces us to position ourselves in a world — and for us, in a European space — that has radically changed. Movements and parties, artistic practices and media platforms, unions and associations: in the first place, we must meet. And then we must start a great campaign to make Europe a No-War Zone, a space in which the mechanics of social movements, of the struggles and movements that determine its constitution act against the possibility of war itself, above all by rejecting armament and by acting as a force for peace at the global level. We know well that this is not the current trend. This is one more reason to start organizing. We repeat: the time is now, the space is Europe. Let us build together in a directly transnational dimension the committee to initiate a great European assembly. A new common space is necessary and possible.