

Europäisches Verbindungskomitee

„Gegen den Krieg – gegen den sozialen Krieg“



STATEMENT FROM THE FIRST BALKAN ANTIWAR CONFERENCE

(Belgrade, Serbia 5-7 July 2024)

During three days comrades from the Balkans, with our friends from European Committee against the war and from the Caucasus, have participated in the first Balkan antiwar conference organized by the Serbian Committee against the war and imperialism. Together we have engaged in the discussions on various topic, presenting situation in our countries, sharing experiences and actual problems, with the intention of building antiwar network in our region and forming foundations for the regional movement that could stand up to the war that is coming. We do not have doubt that the ruling classes are pushing us towards new global war.

Militarization of the economies around the world, return of the mandatory military service in whole Europe and in the Balkan countries, coupled with huge spending on weapons and criminal increases of the military budgets are clear proofs of that. This is why we feel that response to that situation is warranted here and now.

In the discussions that were held we have agreed that the goal of the antiwar movement should be to articulate antiwar sentiment that we feel is prevalent in all our societies. We feel that an alternative to the war, not only verbal, but real, with material foundations must be provided for those who will be opposing the war: be it the deserters or war refugees, be it movements that

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the ***German Coordination of the European Liaison Committee "Against War - Against Social War"*** is **organising a European conference in Berlin on 2 November 2024**

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will engage in different activities and direct actions to try to prevent the war and militarization. And while we feel that the participants in the movement that we are building should not shy away from presenting radical critique to the system that is creating war and suffering around the world, or from presenting alternatives to this conditions, we also concluded that we want to stay away from verbal radicalism with the intention of gathering widest masses in the antiwar front.

We have discussed different possibilities for joint actions against the war in our region, but also considered organizing joint campaigns against similar problems that we are facing. One of the important points in that regard was return of the conscription, that is announced by almost all regimes in our region. But, we have also concluded that building of real, material infrastructure for the antiwar movement is not an easy task, and it would include building of economic structures that would be able to carry the task. We have talked about the important roles of the union and cooperatives in this struggle, but some of the comrades also pointed out that other struggles, such as ecological mass movements, could help our mobilization against the war.

Some of the comrades noted general disappointment that exists in the Balkans in the traditional parties and yellow unions, presenting the idea that alternative forms should be used in our activities. In that context the fact that the European liaison committee against the war is independent of all parties was hailed as a good example. In that same line, the horizontal and federalist structure of the European committee, as well as its financial independence, was cheered and participants have exchanged information with the idea of creating local committees in their respective countries. European wide cooperation was underlined as especially important, and



Further information about the appeal and the conferences

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thus it was agreed that we would send our greetings to the large antiwar demonstrations that will be held in October this year, and the intent to participate in the organizing of the Berlin antiwar conference together with the European committee. European appeal against the war was also debated and signed by many of the participants in the conference.

We have agreed that we are opposing all imperialism, but that the primary duty of the antiwar movement is to fight warmongers in its own region. Balkan is a region which is under total NATO control, and therefore main

goal of the movement we are building here is organizing masses in struggle against NATO. In that context we are very worried by the announcements of the largest NATO base in Europe being built in Romania, and we are going to use all our strength to oppose that.

Finally, we have agreed about importance of maintaining regular contact among us, with the intention of organizing further antiwar conferences in the Balkans that will strengthen our resolve and infrastructure against the war and militarism.

Stop the war! NATO out of Balkans!

Romania: Report to the committees against the war in the Balkans and beyond

Comrades, thank you for inviting us.

We salute this meeting and we want to work closely with the anti-war committees and coordinate our work in the Balkans and beyond.

Our activity in Romania consisted in a few meetings in Cluj and Bucharest and also one which we were invited at, in Craiova and two protests in Bucharest (on the 25th of November and on the 14th of February). The meetings organized by us had the aim to demystify the reason war happens in the first place and why is it happening now. We also joined most of the protests in solidarity with Palestine. Before the Israeli invasion of Gaza, there were not many people protesting against the apartheid regime, after the 7th of October last year, the Romanian-Palestine Solidarity group enlarged itself and many other similar groups started popping up in many parts of the country.

These groups contacted us for joining the anti-war committee and we are working right now to find a way to collaborate. There are a few trends in this movement, most of them are against all war and some of them are reluctant in criticizing the BRICS-related parts of the conflicts ongoing around the world. However, one subject we agree on is anti-militarization. Here are the demands under which we protested:

1. An unlimited ceasefire in Ukraine.
2. Unlimited ceasefire in the Gaza Strip.
3. Start a diplomatic dialogue for peace in Ukraine
4. Stopping arms shipments to Ukraine and Israel.
5. Stopping the brutal attack on the social rights won by the working masses in European countries.
6. Stopping the war.
7. We say no to NATO and all western imperialism, no to sanctions and no to Russian imperialism.
8. Stop the blockade on the Gaza Strip.

We believe that being in touch with other workers, especially organized workers, is of utmost importance right now. Romania is the 3rd largest exporter of weapons to Israel. Elbit system workers have the power

to stop this, but not by themselves. What we should aim for within this movement is organizing a strike in all sectors against the war.

The Romanian state cuts funds for social welfare and invests it in war. 2.1 percent of GDP goes to education, while 2.5 percent of GDP goes to the Ministry of Defence. I think it is obvious what is the priority of the ruling class in Romania today.

I think it's equally obvious that the enrichment of a part of society at one end leads to misery at the other end.

The same thing is happening at European level, the EU is fighting an economic war, billions invested in arms, cuts to public services, infrastructure, all this is happening while the EU population is deepening into poverty.

There are offensive, not defensive, NATO troops arriving in Romania since last autumn. There are over 5.500 foreign military troops in Romania. Almost all parties are pro-NATO and those who are not, are pro-Russia.

Near Constanta, the most important port city of Romania, NATO is building its biggest base in Europe, where they are planning to garrison 10.000 soldiers. Liberal parties and news sources are continuously making war propaganda. There are more and more acquisitions of weapons, such as PATRIOT systems. Even with this investment, the defence system in work is MAMBA.

After the next set of elections, probably this autumn, there is an allegation that suggests all people in the range of 18-35 year old will be obliged to join the army and be prepared to fight, at least minimally.

These are clear escalations in our eyes.

Therefore, we reiterate: our movement should seek ways to include workers in it and expose these problems to workers and how will war affect their lives. If the ruling class wants to push us into war, we should transform the war into class struggle.

All power to the workers! should be our slogan.

Mugurel Popescu

Chairman of the trade union Hermes, Romania

Interview with Zlatko Jankovic, Croatia

How does the Croatian population feel about the war in Ukraine?

That's a complicated question. In the beginning, the population was also in favour of Ukraine. But of course the people were not in favour of the war either. They also know the war, it is alive for them. But in the face of everyday worries, these take centre stage. The rise in prices and the inflation rate of over 8 per cent last year were difficult for people to cope with. Nobody tells them that inflation is a consequence of the war. Against this backdrop, the Conservatives are calling for a price freeze on basic foodstuffs, while the Liberals are against it. At the same time, they want to lift the ban on working on Sundays... It is becoming clear to people that they have no political representation, not only in everyday life, but also on the issue of war and peace.

What is the Croatian government's position on the war?

That is easy to answer. The government stands behind NATO, without ifs and buts. And this applies to the issue of support for Ukraine, but also for the Israeli government. Croatia is one of those countries that unconditionally support Benjamin Netanyahu even in the UN. And they practice this and support both with weapons, but also with trainers. Anyone who opposes dominant narrative about war in Ukraine is labeled as Putin's agent, but nonetheless more and more people start to see through it. To take an anti-war stance on Ukraine means risking public defamation, isolation, or even losing your job.

In this moment, it is not that hard to take a pro-Palestinian position like it this in Germany, but it doesn't mean this won't change as global situation gets worse. Pro-Palestinian gatherings are happening monthly and that is positive, but for now they are in form of artistic performances and pro-Nato Greens (local allies of Annalena Baerbock) also take part in them because these gatherings

don't have clear political profile. That is also why we will try to build real anti-war group which will clearly say who is the greatest threat for all humanity and main enemy of Ukrainian and Palestinian people.

What anti-war forces are there?

No one wants to go to war for imperialists as people in our country know too well about evils of war destruction, but the organized anti-war groups are still in beginning phase.

On the second anniversary of the escalation of the war in Ukraine in February, we anarchists organized a discussion together with colleagues from Italy. This was only a panel, but I consider it very positive sign, as it was first public leftist and anti-NATO gathering in Croatia in over 10 years. Young people in particular took part and perhaps we can form a Croatian committee against the war after all.

This is against the background that from 1 January 2025, young people will have to decide whether to do a 3-month military service or a 6-month social service. Those who join the military will receive €900 per month, which is a lot of money. There is some resistance to this from young people.

How do you rate the outcome of the conference?

The discussion on the issue of our NATO occupiers and NATO military bases was very important. We have common problems. To what extent can our countries make independent economic and political decisions? Even our infrastructure is determined by the EU. The Balkans must become independent of the EU and NATO.

Against this background, there is a need for closer co-operation in the Balkans. At the same time, we should also be politically and financially independent ourselves, i.e. not make ourselves dependent on states like many NGOs.

I will be preparing a contribution on these issues for the Berlin conference.

Interview with Tara Komanović

(student, Serbian Committee against War and Imperialism)

How does the Serbian population feel about the war in Ukraine?

There are two main currents in Serbia. If you walk through Belgrade, you see a lot of slogans on the walls, in favour of Putin, in favour of Russia. These are the slogans of the Serbian nationalists. They say Russians and Serbs are brothers. They are loud, but not many.

The liberal opposition is in favour of supplying weapons to Ukraine. But many "left-wing" organisations are also in favour of arms deliveries. Some are in favour of arms deliveries to Ukraine, others are in favour of Russia.

We at the Serbian Committee Against War and Imperialism are convinced that no weapons should be supplied. They are just ammunition for the continuation of the war.

Our position is meeting with growing interest among the population. Many people recognise it and the number is growing every day. This is also shown by the demonstrations we have organised against NATO.

Can the social consequences of the war be seen in Serbia?

At the same time, military spending has been increased. We realise that this increase has to be financed. Last year, Serbia had an inflation rate of over 12 per cent and wages did not rise accordingly. So we had a real wage loss. This year it is expected to fall to 4.5 %. But these figures or poverty and social problems are not linked to war policy. Nobody links these issues together. We see this as one of the tasks of our committee.

There is a lot of discussion here in Germany about an in-

terview with Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić. In it, he goes into great detail about the impending war between Russia and NATO. A major confrontation is not far away. "No more than three or four months. And there is a danger that it will happen even sooner." Is the Serbian president not on the side of the peace movement?

No, certainly not. He has promised not to supply weapons, but he is sending them. The Serbian government is obliged to supply weapons because a contract with the US government stipulates this. It is also sending weapons to the Israeli government, which is using them against the population in Gaza.

And other countries' weapons for Ukraine are transported from Croatia through Serbia. The Serbian government has also imposed sanctions against Belarus in line with the West. It is clear that it would also impose sanctions against Russia, but that would lead to unrest among the Serbian population.

What anti-war forces are there?

Since the population has its experience with a NATO war and knows the consequences of sanctions, the Serbian government must always appear to be against the war. Our committee is a coalition of different groups and forc-

es. And since our foundation last year, we have developed a common practice and acted together without wanting to impose our own position on others. Solidarity is very important for this.

How do you rate the outcome of the conference?

It was a very important discussion that also led to joint results. The discussion was partly theoretical. Regardless of which country we come from, our countries are under the control of or connected to the EU and NATO. Croatia is a member of the EU, but Serbia also has its relationship with the EU. NATO bases are everywhere in the Balkans. And we must ensure that our peoples in the Balkans free themselves from this boot. That is why we have developed the demand for the withdrawal of all NATO troops from the Balkans.

What do you think about the European appeal that you have signed?

I am convinced that the connection between the war in Ukraine and the massacre in Gaza is very important. We are affected by the same politics throughout Europe. And only together can we prevent the war. We will therefore also support the Berlin conference!

European Liaison Committee "Against War – Against Social War"

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Friday 1 November should be the day of arrival and a first joint meeting should take place in the evening.

The conference will take place on **Saturday 2 November**.

A meeting of the European Liaison Committee is planned for **Sunday 3 November**.

The German coordination of the European Liaison Committee is calling for support for the **major demonstration of the "Never again war - Lay down your arms" initiative on 3 October 2024, 1 p.m., Brandenburger Tor**, with greetings and participation from other European countries. The appeal will be published in the next few days.

Further information about the appeal and the conferences: GotthardKrupp@t-online.de

Homepage: gegendenkrieg-gegendensozialenkrieg.info

As we are and want to remain independent, we ask for **donations to the account** C. Boulboullé,

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