



## **Demos Institute of Critical Thought and the Left Alliance of Lithuania open letter to Western European Comrades**

27<sup>th</sup> February 2022,

Vilnius

Dear Comrades,

We have read your call for peace in Europe while the autocratic regime of Putin is firing hypersonic weapons upon civil infrastructure in Ukraine and threatening to destroy our societies. We have firmly stood behind pacifist positions and made all efforts to deconstruct institutionalised warmongering. We, the Lithuanian Left, are wholeheartedly in favour of diplomatic solutions and other non-violent attempts to restore peace in Europe.

However, the position declared in the “Europe Peace Manifesto” is plausible in peacetime only and it is no longer valid when Russian tanks and missiles are crushing civilians in their residential areas in Ukraine’s cities, towns and villages. Moreover, the call to neutrality is based on the wrong assumption that there are two morally equal sides to the story and that the war in Ukraine must be resolved between two “comparably guilty” parties.

We, the undersigned, are one of the very few organisations within the comradeship of Transform who experienced full Soviet occupation and were part of the Soviet Union. Therefore, we feel that our perspectives should be valued in these circumstances and consulted before declaring positions. And from our experience, we say that such a position will be taken as an insult to Ukrainians, foremost by the brave Ukrainian Left, which fights now directly with tyrannical military invasion. Formulating statements about peace without consulting with the progressives in our part of Europe is an exclusionary and Western-centric practice. Even NATO does not discuss Ukraine's matters behind its back.

Putin is a reckless tyrant. He is the aggressor while Ukrainian society is the victim. Saying that negotiations will help resolve current situation is like calling to negotiate with Hitler or Franco while they invade Poland or encircle Madrid – and accusing those who are repressed and being killed by an unjust aggressor for taking up arms! Neutrality in this conflict implies that part of the blame falls under the victims and their refusal to be victims by fighting back for their and their children’s future. Putin's speech on the 21 of February – we watched it in disgust and terror – when he accused Lenin and the Soviet Union of giving autonomy to its republics and claimed that it was the Soviet Union that created Ukraine and therefore paved the way for its independence later, together with his earlier claims, demonstrate his perverted belief in a new imperial autocratic Russia within the boundaries of the former USSR. Thus, if the tyrant is not stopped, other countries, including Lithuania, may also be under attack sooner or later.

We all know Putin's ultimatum to reduce NATO to the state of 1997 so that he can freely occupy, if he decides so without any regard for the will of his own people, the previously occupied territories. In this sense, and only in this sense, NATO and the EU now are the only hope for a country like Lithuania. We also want to remind you that it was the absolute majority of Lithuanian people, including the people on the Left and ethnic minorities, who democratically decided to join the EU and did not oppose the membership in NATO in 2004. Nobody forced Lithuania (or any other Baltic state) to join NATO, it was our democratic decision.

Even though we fully stand behind the claim that „**Weapons and wars should belong to the past, the future of Europe and humanity must be peace!**“, we say that the beginning of peacebuilding is only possible when the autocratic aggressor who invades the sovereign country is fully stopped and punished. Otherwise, negotiating for a peace settlement with him is like following the fool's gold. We ask you to imagine the hypothetical situation of a foreign aggressor rolling its tanks into beautiful Vienna or if Turkey launched its military might against Athens. What would the Austrian Left and the Greek Left do?

After the aggressor is stopped, our solidarity with Ukraine and the return to peace are inseparable from social reforms within the country. Hours before the bloody attacks started, Ukraine's left-wing "Social Movement" has called on the government to nationalise strategic businesses and the property of billionaires to guarantee public access to medicine, transport, housing and food. Members of the movement argue that state policy during the war must be geared to the interests of workers. Residents of the country are invited to join volunteer circles, organise support networks in their communities and trade unions. But they are in dire need of a cogent and uncompromising response from the International Left. It must demand the immediate withdrawal of Russian forces from the territory of Ukraine, for an end to military action and for peace, which will not be possible without social reforms in Ukraine. Solidarity with the Ukrainian Left, as well as with the country's civil society, includes the demand that Western states write off Ukraine's external debt immediately. Sanctions are needed against Putin's regime and its oligarchic base. The cosmetic sanctions that our government and the West are pondering now are insufficient. We must call for significant taxation of the assets of the Russian oligarchs acquired with dirty funds, or the confiscation of the latter's assets, both in the United Kingdom and in the countries of the European Union.

Contrary to the practices of some sections of the Lithuanian ruling class and the media, it is essential to express solidarity with the Russian people, who well understand that this war will only bring suffering and pain in the long run. For many years, their efforts to resist aggressive foreign policy have been repressed. Following Putin's invasion of Ukraine, one member of Russia's "Social Movement" wished her country's army a "revolutionary defeat" out of love. According to her, Putin's regime is trying to bring the country's economy, culture, and society back into the dark past. Thus, as of now, only the defeat in the war will guarantee a future for Russian citizens, open their eyes to what Putin's clique is disguising (the far-right – openly chauvinist – politics and social degeneration), and give them the courage to fight for economic democracy and social justice.

Demos and The Left Alliance express solidarity with Ukraine's trade unions, civil society, national minorities, the LGBTQ + community and all exploited and oppressed groups. We fully support the anti-war movement in Russia and condemn the aggression of the Putin regime in Ukraine.

Signed by:

DEMOS institute of Critical Thought

Left Alliance of Lithuania