Youth and Militarization

A resolution passed by the international delegates conference of the communist youth organization REVOLUTION

Declaring war on war: No to the increasing militarization!

There is war: whether in Yemen, Myanmar, Kurdistan, or Ukraine. Wherever war rages, it destroys our livelihoods, drives millions of people from their homes, and brings death. And in between destruction and weapons production, heated up by the interests of the profiting parties, we young people are the ones who have to cope with the consequences of this chaos. But simply hoping for peace will not help us, because warlike conflicts and military budgets have steadily increased in recent years. In particular, the Russian war of aggression on Ukraine represents a new quality of the conflict. This war is an escalation of the imperialist conflict between Russia and NATO and bears the danger of escalating even further. We say clearly: No to the imperialist invasion of Ukraine by Russia, for an immediate withdrawal of all Russian troops! But equally, we oppose the influence of the NATO powers, which only want to expand their own influence at the expense of the Ukrainian population. because this conflict is inciting young people in particular.In the end, they only have two options: to fight at the front or to desert. We take the side of the Ukrainian youth and the workers' movement against the Russian war of aggression, with the aim of building up a resistance that is politically independent of NATO. The effects of the war do not stop at the borders of Ukraine or Russia, but are felt worldwide. The war is driving up inflation, causing energy and food prices to skyrocket. This should not be our future! But if we want to fight effectively against war and its consequences, we must first ask ourselves: Why does war exist at all? And why has there been an increase in warlike conflicts in recent years?

The strongest wins

The world we live in is completely subjected to capitalist production and the logic of profit. There is no land, no raw material on earth, that does not belong to a capitalist. This is a characteristic of the highest stage of

capitalism, imperialism. Even if everything is divided, competition still exists between different capitalists as well as different nation states. They sometimes have no choice but to wage wars over economic routes (the West African coast), economic spaces (Mali), or geostrategic spheres of influence (Ukraine, Syria, Afghanistan) in order not to fall behind.In some crises, however, profits are too low for capitalists to want to invest in their own production, in which case it may be worthwhile for them to destroy competing productive forces in a war. In short, the policy of recent years is a sharpened form of economic competition, and war is ultimately the continuation of this policy by other means.

Capitalism has the compulsion to always accumulate ever more profit, to open ever newer markets, and to obtain ever cheaper labor. The imperialist blocs have the urge to escalate conflicts between them ever further in order to destroy competing capital and productive forces. Both will inevitably lead to war. If we are to fight against these forces, we must look at their role at all levels of the global system. Fighting wars is thus always synonymous with fighting capitalism!

Crisis

Crises act as accelerators in this process, as they increase competition between the individual factions of capital. So it is no wonder that military spending has skyrocketed in the last 10 years and international conflicts are on the rise again. After all, the global economic crisis of 2007/8 is still shaping current events. At that time, bailout plans were created for capitalist states to end the crisis. Thus, we have been witnessing a long-standing low interest rate policy of the U.S. Federal Reserve and the European Central Bank, government stimulus programs of the Chinese state, and the growth of new speculative bubbles. Instead of capital being destroyed in the crisis, its costs were passed on to the working class, and further crises were artificially delayed by means of the rescue plans. The consequences were massive impoverishment and indebtedness, an international shift to the right, and increasing competition. With the collapse of the international economy during the Corona pandemic, the situation has now worsened again – and the struggle for the redivision of the world has been further fueled. The main

conflict here is between the U.S. and China, who are fighting over who will be the dominant force on the world map. At the same time, however, other forces are also getting into the mix, trying to save themselves from going under in the context of the competition.

Bloc formation and the threat of conflict

Thus, in the wake of the Ukraine war, NATO, which was thought dead, has re-formed – and even expanded to include Finland and Sweden. In addition, imperialist states such as Germany and the EU as a whole have moved closer to the United States in the wake of the war of aggression. Even if ultimately each side fights for itself, different blocs are forming in the current showdown. Not every power can be fully counted towards a bloc. The struggle for spheres of influence also generates forces such as India and Pakistan, which cannot assert their interests internationally on their own, but try to make the best of it through shifting alliances. However, even if the bloc formation is not yet complete, it is certain that confrontations will increase due to the sharpened struggle for control. Where the confrontations will take place is not clear, but looking at the bloc formations and the world economic crisis, some regions more than others may become more and more the scene of confrontation. In addition to Ukraine, Taiwan is another country that is repeatedly targeted by the superpowers China and the United States. Taiwan is denied its national independence by the Chinese, because Xi Jinping, who is currently struggling with recurring unrest, is beating the drum of chauvinism more and more before the upcoming elections. In addition, China has been trying to establish a new Silk Road on land and water for several years, sometimes with great success, and is making many semi-colonial countries dependent on it. The dwindling power and influence of the USA in North Africa, the Middle East, and parts of Asia, leads to a power vacuum on the one hand, and on the other, leaves the door open for other imperialist powers. However, it should be clear to all of us that this struggle will not take place without military means.

More money for death

A look at arms spending also shows us this: in 2020, global military spending

will reach a new record: according to the Stockholm International peace research institute Sipri, it will be $1.981 trillion, more than ever before. That's $5.4 billion per day and $226 million per hour. If the amount spent per hour on military spending were spent on hunger in a year, world hunger could be eliminated in 15 years.[1] The United States spends 39% of all military spending worldwide ($778 billion). Next in line is China, which within the last decade (since 2011) increased its defense spending by 76% to $252 billion, covering 13% of global spending. Germany is also increasing its military spending, to $52.8 billion, an increase of 5.9%, It has thus increased its spending even more than the U.S. compared to last year, ranking 7th behind China, India, Russia, the UK, and Saudi Arabia. Japan is another example of the ongoing militarization of the world. The country has already softened its pacifist foreign policy in recent years, and in 2022 it will again massively increase its military budget. The figures speak for themselves, and make it clear: the imperialist states are arming themselves and preparing for coming wars.

Future: Cannon Fodder?

All these developments show that „the good life" is not automatically part of our future if we don't do anything for it. We young people, in particular, are frequently sent to the frontlines first, while a wave of nationalism tries to persuade us that it is in our best interests to die for the fatherland. However, we saw during the pandemic that nations do not act in our best interests. The economy was shrinking; the health sector was collapsing in many countries – but instead of investing in it, arms spending kept growing and growing. And this is just one of countless examples that should make this clear: the wars that are currently being waged are wars of capital. They occur in order for the ruling class to secure their own profits. But advertising and the obligation to die are routine for many of us. Because youth is an essential part of armies. We are not yet completely part of the productive process, can therefore be drafted without great losses for the economy, and often do not even have to be paid. The fact that the youth have no say in political issues and social decisions makes it deliberately difficult for resistance to arise or be formulated.

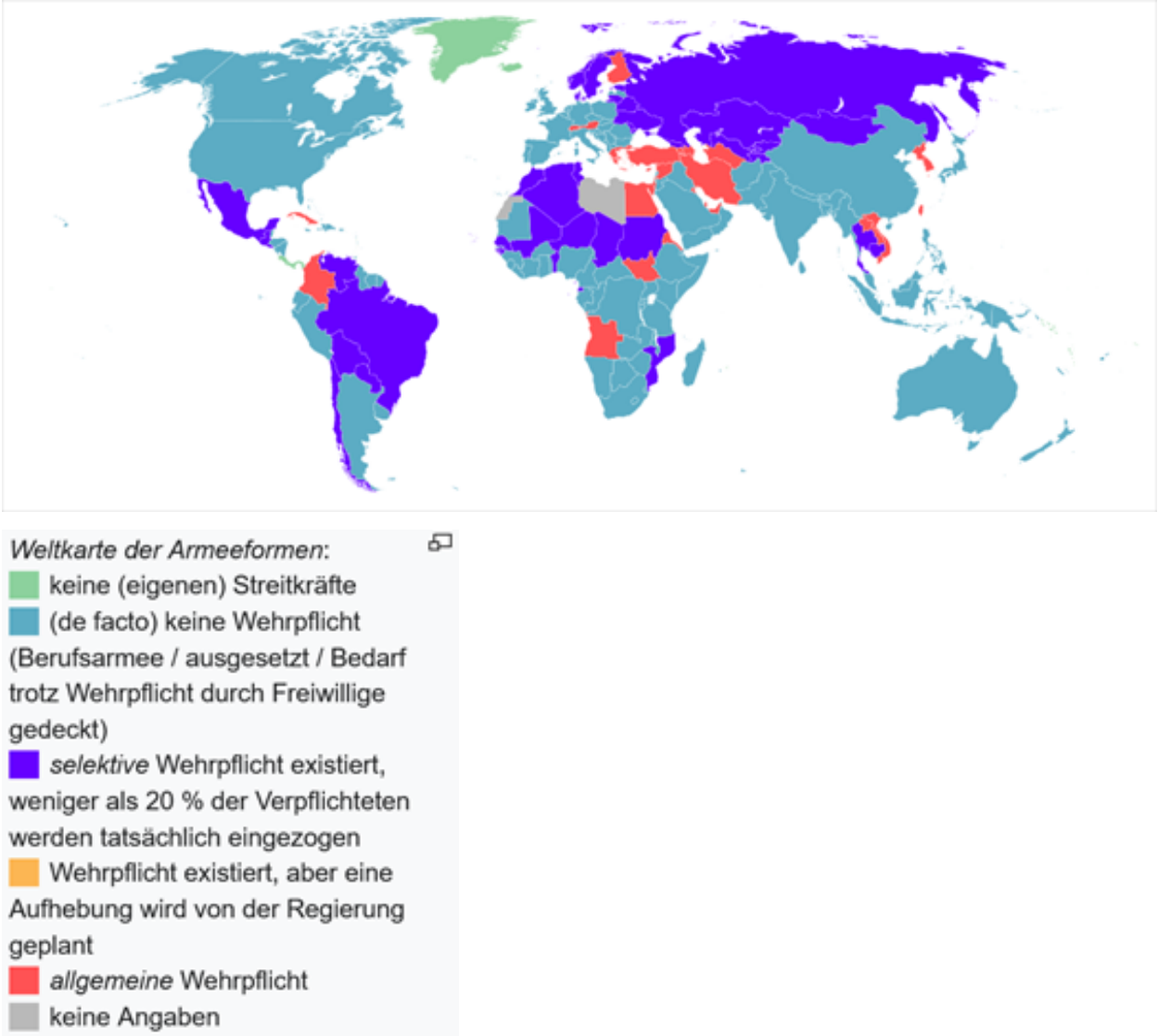
Bitter Truth: Youth in the Crossfire

Currently, 250,000 children and young people around the world are deployed as soldiers in armed conflicts, both by regular armies and by rebel groups. They increasingly form an integral part of the military infrastructure, whether as regular foot soldiers, as spies, as information transmitters, or in other emerging activities. In addition, it is often forgotten that sexual violence is always on the rise in military conflicts and is also used specifically as a weapon of war. For example, 5 to 20 percent of child soldiers are girls, who are mainly used as forced prostitutes[2]. In this context, mass rape is the highest form of violence and unfortunately a recurring weapon, especially in massacres, wars against minorities, etc. Myanmar (2017), Ethiopia (2021/22), and the Democratic Republic of Congo (since 2007) are sad examples of our time, in which several thousands of women have been raped to break the will of the people and dehumanize them in the most brutal way.

Thus, in 2022, there are 67 countries in the world where there is compulsory military service[3]. It can be seen that most countries in the world have some form of army, but they differ mainly in the way they recruit. Countries without conscription often have large recruitment campaigns and various offers that provide both affordable opportunities for education and the option to serve in the military for life. In addition, some countries have de jure conscription, which means that men, and in some countries women, must enlist in the military between a certain age and are recruited when „needed." Currently, however, sufficient volunteers enlist in most countries, so this is implemented in very few cases.

In Europe, only Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Estonia, Cyprus, Greece, Switzerland and Austria currently have compulsory military service, but in light of the Ukraine war, several more countries are considering reforming their military services. Latvia was the first country to introduce conscription at the beginning of July due to the war. A draft law on the matter is expected to be passed by parliament next year. The Minister of Defense Pabriks makes this clear in his statement about the reintroduction: „This should reduce the risk that Russia will attack Latvia at will „[4]. That other countries will follow is certain, in most countries of the EU (e.g. the Netherlands) the

strengthening of their own armies has been discussed, and studies about the reintroduction of military service have been commissioned. Germany has not remained silent in the debate either. Voices have been raised from the ranks of all parties calling for the reintroduction of conscription, which in this context is a vote for the progression of militarization.



War to war: not a cent, not a human to militarism!

We don’t want to be cannon fodder or watch as our livelihood is destroyed. Because wars do not only kill directly but also fuel the climate crisis. So what to do? We do not condemn it in itself when the youth take up arms to fight for their interests against capitalism, exploitation, and imperialism. When it comes to self-defense in contested areas, they frequently have no other option. From Kurdistan to Palestine, young people fight side by side in

liberation struggles for their own interests, against occupation and displacement. This is not the same as the wars of the imperialist states for the profits of an elite.

If we want to oppose them effectively, we have to learn from history. Here, the October Revolution as well as the anti-war movements of the First World War should be mentioned as relevant examples, in which workers took mass organized action against the imperialist system. Only if we attack the problem at its roots can we be successful. In the October Revolution of 1917 a workers' state was established, which, in combination with the failed November Revolution of 1918 led to the end of the First World War. On the basis of these historical events, it is necessary to analyze the strategies used and derive from them methodical ways of overcoming imperialist wars and imperialism as a whole. Another important example are the Arab Spring uprisings, which are of great importance for anti-imperialism movements in semi-colonial countries.

However, simply analyzing and transferring the strategies and tactics of previous worker and youth movements is insufficient. We must apply the lessons we can draw from them to today's changed situation in international politics and the changed realities of the situation for the working class. But there remains the necessity of building a workers' and youth movement against imperialist conflicts! But how and where can we succeed in this? To be successful, such a struggle must necessarily take place on an international level. Clearly, those of us in imperialist countries must oppose the war interests of our own nation. But since imperialism is also a global system, we can only be successful if we also organize internationally. This means that a successful anti-war movement must be international and combine the struggle against the effects of war with the struggle against the capitalist system. In doing so, it is important that we do not allow ourselves to be divided by nationalism and still defend the right to self-determination of oppressed peoples and semi-colonies.

- For the smashing of all imperialist military and economic alliances! For the defeat of imperialism – immediate withdrawal of all imperialist troops and their henchmen!

- Against all imperialist militarization: Neither conscription nor professional army – for the self-defense of the working class! For democratically legitimized workers militias under the control of workers councils!
- Not a cent and not a human to militarism: Against all advertising for the military! Against any „rearmament packages“ and military budgets!
- Smash the arms industry! Nationalize its war profits and convert the war industry into a civilian industry.
- For the establishment of a global youth and workers movement against war and capitalism!
- For the right of self-determination of oppressed nations.
- For the right of self-determination of Ukraine, neither under control of Russia nor under control of NATO.
- Expropriate the war profiteers! All arms corporations under workers control.
- For the workers‘ right to self-defense!Disarm the bourgeois state!
- No dying for imperialist wars: Against general mobilizations of the imperialist countries.
- For the establishment of an international workers‘ movement opposed to war and capitalism!

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[1]https://www.handelszeitung.ch/politik/welt-ohne-hunger-kostet-267-milliarden-dollar-810985#:~:text=Um%20in%2015%20Jahren%20den,650%20Millionen%20Menschen%20Hunger%20leiden.

[2]https://www.tdh.de/was-wir-tun/themen-a-z/kindersoldaten/

[3]https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/1334153/umfrage/verteilung-der-laender-nach-status-der-wehrpflicht/

[4]Translation from: https://de.euronews.com/my-europe/2022/07/27/welche-lander-in-europa-wollen-wieder-eine-wehrpflicht-einfuhren