

No to war and surging prices!

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Resistance is growing across Europe to the massive price hikes being used to pass the costs of the proxy war that the US and NATO are waging against Russia in Ukraine onto working people.

A poll conducted by YouGov in France, Germany, Poland and the United Kingdom concludes that the rise in the cost of living has become the most important issue in all four countries.

One in five respondents says he or she is having to dip into savings to survive. One in 10 is skipping meals. More than half expect to be unable to heat their homes adequately in the winter. The majority expect social unrest in the coming months. In France, four out of 10 respondents wish the Yellow Vest protest movement would return.

Even financial advisers are now warning of social unrest. “There are many headwinds ahead for the rest of this year that could impact investor returns,” writes Nigel Green of deVere Group. “One of the biggest—and most overlooked—is the rising risk of large-scale social unrest. The global cost of living crisis is the major contributing factor.”

According to the civil unrest index of the global risk intelligence company Verisk Maplecroft, more than 50 percent of the nearly 200 countries covered experienced an increase in mass mobilizations risk between the second and the third quarters of 2022, the largest number of nations since the firm released the index in 2016. At the top of the list are countries as poor as Bosnia-Herzegovina and as rich as the Netherlands and Switzerland.

The claim that Russia is to blame for everything is increasingly losing ground, according to the YouGov survey. In the meantime, many see the responsibility also with the energy companies and their own government. The massive attack on their own standard of living, while the energy companies are raking in record profits and are compensated for losses by the state with sums in the billions, has opened the eyes of many.

The propaganda according to which NATO is defending democracy, freedom and independence in Ukraine is being believed less and less. The gigantic arms deliveries with which it is fueling the war despite the danger of nuclear escalation are meeting with rejection. The same is true of the

sanctions, which in Russia, as in Europe, primarily affect the working class.

The ruling class is reacting to this with increasing nervousness and aggressiveness. It is escalating the war by supplying evermore powerful weapons and preparing for an open confrontation with the working class.

In Britain, it has made Liz Truss prime minister, a woman who, without batting an eye, declares her willingness to start a nuclear war and who hates the working class even more than her role model Margaret Thatcher. In Italy, Mussolini admirer Giorgia Meloni has good prospects of becoming the next head of government. And in the US, ex-President Donald Trump is building the Republican Party into a fascist movement that also has backing in the state security apparatus.

The ruling elites are also reacting so aggressively to the growing opposition because they have so far been unable to achieve their military goals, and their economic sanctions have proven counterproductive. This makes them even more dangerous.

The Ukrainian war has turned into a war of attrition, similar to World War I, claiming thousands of victims while the fronts hardly move. NATO’s attempt to break through this with more effective weapons inevitably brings with it the danger of widening and escalating the conflict to the point of nuclear war.

The economic sanctions against Russia, especially in the energy sector, have led to an explosion in gasoline and natural gas prices and have triggered the highest inflation in decades. In winter, the European economy is threatened with recession, and numerous companies are on the verge of bankruptcy due to high energy prices.

Outside NATO, few countries have joined the sanctions. India is staying away, as are most African and South American countries. Even NATO member Turkey and EU member Hungary reject the sanctions and continue to get most of their energy needs from Russia.

Russia has been hit by the absence of Western electronics parts and the exodus of information technology workers but has benefited from high energy prices and expanded its economic ties with China. From January to August this year,

the volume of trade between Russia and China rose by nearly a third to \$117.2 billion. Russia is China's top oil supplier and a major source of gas, coal and agricultural products.

President Putin represents the interests of the Russian oligarchs, combining a reactionary policy of military confrontation with efforts to get back into business with the imperialist powers. That is why he had long refrained from stopping gas supplies to Europe altogether, even though the EU stopped commissioning the completed Nord Stream 2 pipeline immediately after the war began and decided to become completely independent of Russian gas supplies by 2027.

This only changed after the finance ministers of the seven most powerful industrialized countries, the G7, agreed on a "price cap" for Russian energy exports. It is to be enforced, for example, by no longer insuring oil tankers carrying Russian oil to Asia or Africa if the oil is sold at a higher price. EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen also published a 16-page plan to that effect last week.

In response, Gazprom halted all deliveries through the Nord Stream 1 pipeline, which will cause massive energy shortages in Germany and other parts of Europe, especially when the winter turns cold, with devastating consequences. Yesterday, at an economic forum in Vladivostok, which was also attended by China, President Putin announced that Russia would no longer abide by current supply contracts in the event of a price cap. At the same time, he offered to put the Nord Stream 2 pipeline into operation, which would eliminate the European gas shortage in one fell swoop.

The EU and NATO will not go along with this and will intensify the confrontation with Russia and the attacks on their own working class. The so-called "relief packages" that many European governments are currently adopting to cushion the social impact are no more than the proverbial drop in the bucket, designed to buy some time. Much of the money is being used to support large energy companies that have agreed to long-term supply contracts at fixed prices and are now making losses.

NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, in a guest editorial for the *Financial Times*, threatened anyone who questions NATO's war policy. "We face a difficult six months, with the threat of energy cuts, disruptions and perhaps even civil unrest," he writes. "But we must stay the course and stand up to tyranny—for Ukraine's sake and for ours."

Stoltenberg openly admitted in the *Financial Times* that NATO has been preparing for this war for years and will not let up until it has defeated Russia militarily, ruined it economically and subjugated it to its domination.

Since 2014, Stoltenberg boasted, "allied countries have

provided billions of dollars of support for Ukraine's security sector and institutions, and trained tens of thousands of troops, including special forces." Since the beginning of the war, NATO has provided "unprecedented military, humanitarian and financial support," he said. "And we will continue to help the country strengthen its defence and security sector for the longer term, and transition from Soviet-era weapons to NATO-standard capabilities."

NATO, Stoltenberg said, was making "the most fundamental shift in its deterrence and defence since the Cold War, significantly enhancing our presence on the eastern flank, putting hundreds of thousands of troops on higher readiness and continuing to invest in cutting-edge capabilities."

This policy, which threatens a new world war, can only be prevented by an independent movement of the international working class. The strikes and protests against the destruction of living standards, against cuts in wages, jobs and social achievements need a clear orientation and perspective. They must be developed into a conscious movement against war and into a socialist offensive to overthrow capitalism, uniting the workers of Europe, America, Russia, Ukraine and all other countries.

The pseudo-left parties of the affluent upper middle class, together with the trade unions, have embraced the US-NATO war drive. The Greens are among the most openly warmongering parties in Germany, with Green Party Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock demanding that Germany develop nuclear weapons. The growing opposition to war and the surging cost of living within the working class will come into headlong conflict with all of these parties.

The struggle against war requires the building of a conscious socialist leadership: the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party, SGP) and the International Committee of the Fourth International.



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