

The Antiwar Movement. Demonstrate Together.

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If the Feb. 19 rally to end the war in Ukraine fails it will not be a success for other antiwar organizations that disagree with the Libertarian Party. It will only show that internal divisions can unravel every hope.

A bunch of people who disagree with each other on a lot of things have actually gotten together to organize a big antiwar rally in Washington next Sunday. I say, Bravo!

In a nation as divided as the United States is today, a large rally of people who agree with each other on everything is hardly imaginable.

A rally by people who disagree with each other gives hope that a movement to stop war can grow, and even shake the political system paralyzed by the military industrial congressional complex and confusion spread by its servile media.

Abroad, the United States has exploited deep political enmities to provoke a war in Ukraine intended to split Europe definitively, cutting Russia off totally from Germany and the EU, cementing permanent U.S. control of Western Europe.

This divisive policy is pursued in all sorts of sneaky ways that make it hard to uncover and explain. The war in Ukraine creates division between those who have understood what it's all about and those who haven't. A large movement is needed to spread discussion, understanding and opposition.

While supporting the war machine's foreign policy of divide and rule, in recent years the American political class has also fostered internal divisions to an unprecedented extent — some of them real, some of them more or less artificial.

The degree of internal animosity echoes the international hatred fostered by U.S. President Joe Biden's geopolitical mindset. WE are the GOOD (democracy), THEY are BAD (not communism any more, rather, "autocracy").

At home, Democrats and Republicans, left and right are two different species, one species born good and the other bad. The bad are inherently bad, with a contagious badness, so we must not meet and try to persuade them. We must have nothing to do with them, and a political apartheid might be the solution. A sort of moral/political racism, creating total division between US and THEM reigns both at home and abroad.

In such an atmosphere, it is no wonder that the Feb. 19 rally “Rage Against the War Machine,” its organizers and its speakers, are being attacked for not being good enough.

Organizers & Speakers

The main announced organizers of the Rage rally are two relatively weak political organizations: the People’s Party and the Libertarian Party. Their weakness should be a positive signal. Inasmuch as neither has the strength to manage a really significant antiwar movement alone, these sponsors are voluntarily offering the movement as a gift to all who take it up. So grab it!

Inevitably, however, the rally itself is being attacked, even by some opponents of the current war, on grounds of the political deficiencies of the organizers.

Could veteran activists be so petty as to be jealous that somebody else got there first? I hope not.

Veteran socialist and antiwar militant Jeff Mackler has strongly condemned the rally as “reactionary” mainly because it is backed by the Libertarian Party. Its success would be a defeat for all enemies of the capitalist system, he has claimed. At one point he observes:

“The Libertarians’ call for a return to a capitalist society where ‘free competition’ prevails is pure fantasy.”

For one thing, that policy has nothing to do with the demands of the rally. For another, if Libertarian Party socio-economic policies are indeed pure fantasy, totally inapplicable in today’s world, they are nothing to worry about.

Come to the rally, try to find a Libertarian and argue. Libertarians are against spending billions for war, this is a point of agreement that could start a fruitful discussion.

Leftist militants who believe a man can be transformed into a woman should have no trouble believing that a libertarian might be transformed into a socialist. Such miracles do occur.

Guilt by Association

Besides that, the presence of the People’s Party makes it clear that the Libertarians’ extreme free market policies are irrelevant to the rally.

The Libertarian Party quickly demonstrated its incapacity to lead the movement very far by its failure to support an important announced speaker against personal attacks — to the dismay, incidentally, of leading libertarians. But the bandwagon rolls on.

Some critics of the rally trot out a favorite cliché of the self-righteous left according to which

we must stay away in order not to “legitimize” rightwing participants. This “legitimize” threat is merely the other side of the “guilt by association” coin. Both are used to evade discussion of serious matters by treating political convictions as if they were incurable contagious diseases.

It is perfectly childish to claim that anyone is “legitimized” (or guilty) by random association, such as participation in an antiwar demonstration.

The Feb. 19 speakers’ list is very long, perhaps even too long for the time allotted. But the point is precisely to show a range of viewpoints.

However much I may disagree with this one or that one on somethings, or even on everything else, I am glad to see them getting together to stop the rush toward World War III.

When the subject is WAR, if you can join in opposition only with people who agree with you about everything else, you have lost the sense of common humanity.

The organizers’ list is short, too short. It would be great to see ANSWER, Black Alliance for Peace, Code Pink and other longstanding antiwar organizations involved. No single one of them is strong enough to build a major mass movement alone — at least, so far, none of them have proposed anything as promising as Feb. 19.

The failure of Feb. 19 would not be their success. It would be a failure for all who oppose the war, showing that internal divisions can unravel every hope.

The rally is open. Everyone can share its success by crashing the party, arousing their supporters and friends, turning the rally into the broad, wide-open mass movement that can really begin to challenge the war machine. The need for peace is nobody’s private property.

Wherever you see popular resistance to war begin to come to life, go to it and make it belong to everybody.

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Featured image: Winter sun over Lincoln Memorial, planned focal point of the Feb. 19, 2023, Rage Against the War Machine rally for ending the war in Ukraine. (Tim Brown/GPA Photo Archive, Flickr, CC BY-NC 2.0)

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