

Against the War from the Left and the Right. London Peace Actions Week

By [Konrad Rekas](#)

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London, the Euro-Atlantic capital of war and imperialism, has at least partly become one of the centres of the movement for peace, disarmament and a multipolar world based on respect for the right of nations to self-determination and their civilisational autonomy.

All thanks to a whole series of events, co-organized by No2NATO, International Ukraine Anti-Fascist Solidarity, Stop the War and Not Our War movements, with participation of activists and independent authorities, such as ex-London mayoral candidate Piers Corbyn and former ambassador Peter Ford, as well as by guests from abroad, headed by Irish MEP Clare Daly and Sevim Dağdelen, Member of the Bundestag representing Die Linke.



Against the War from the Left and the Right

Rallies, information stalls, conferences, as well as musical performances and cultural events promoting UK disengagement in the war in Ukraine are becoming more and more part of the landscape of the British capital. Despite the growing censorship and administrative difficulties, the penultimate week of April was full of anti-imperialist and anti-system actions. On Thursday, 20th April, the International Ukraine Anti-Fascist Solidarity committee organised a picket outside the premium office in Downing Street to protest against British depleted uranium ammunition being sent to Ukraine.

“More and more people in Great Britain realize what is really happening in Ukraine and how tragic the growing military involvement of NATO countries, unfortunately led by the UK, is for its inhabitants. Britain spends billions military aid for Kiev, supporting the illegal regime there since the coup in 2014, while the people of the UK struggle with increasingly difficult living conditions, high prices and inflation,” said Theo Russell of the IUAFS during an action actively supported by the movement No2NATO.

Massive demonstrations took place on Friday, 21st April and Saturday, 22nd April, respectively in front of the US Embassy in London and opposite to the British Ministry of Defence building on Whitehall.

“We stand outside the US Embassy to testify to our understanding of the provocation we are being dragged into. They want to push us into war with Russia! Ukraine is just another in a long list of countries treated as an American military training ground, such as Korea, Vietnam, Indonesia, Laos, Lebanon, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Cambodia, Grenada, Libya, Panama, Iraq, Somalia, Bosnia, Haiti, Kosovo, Afghanistan, Yemen,

Syria. Although this American dominance, built on military strength and the position of the dollar, is coming to an inevitable end. Unfortunately, people do not remember much about history, they are deceived by the media and politicians, while all historical American interventions, attacks, Washington-sponsored *coups d'état* were based on propaganda lies. And exactly the same happened in 2014 and again in 2022 in Kiev.”
— David Clews from Not Our War, a well-known activist of pro-BREXIT, unionist and right-wing movements has spoken.

UKrainian occupation?

London authorities tried to push the demonstrators out of Trafalgar Square where the meeting was primarily planned. Mayor Sadiq Khan censorship attempt was not surprisingly supported by allegedly anti-system climate organisation Extinction Rebellion, hastily registering their own competing demonstrations there. In turn, opposite several hundred demonstrators in front of the Ministry of Defence, a group equipped with loudspeakers and flags of Ukraine and the Belarusian pro-Western opposition set up their jamming point. Despite the police protection, the participants of the counter picket were unable to break through the spontaneous hails of support for the Russian liberation of Donbass.

Meanwhile, on the anti-war scene, Peter Ford, the former British ambassador to Syria and Bahrain, recalled the *“five big lies behind Western involvement in Ukraine”*.

“They tell us that Ukraine is ‘fighting for freedom’ and ‘against authoritarianism’. This lie is repeated by the same politicians who here, in our country, deny us freedom of speech, do not agree to freedom of assembly, who have abandoned the principles of democracy and the rule of law, also in international relations, replacing all of that with own brutal tyranny! said Mr Ford, renowned critic of the policies of his former Foreign Office colleagues.

Ukraine is one of the most corrupt and authoritarian regimes in the World, depriving its inhabitants of linguistic, cultural and even religious rights. The authorities in Kiev have banned opposition political parties, trade unions, and recently even the Orthodox Church, and we are told that supporting these people is in the interest of freedom and democracy?!”

— Ambassador Ford



The legendary leader of the anti-system, Piers Corbyn, expressed his opposition to the pro-Kiev policy of the British government even more strongly:

“Look at those flags on the Government buildings!” he pointed out. “Out of three blue and yellow only one, shamefully, on the side with the Union Jack. We are under Ukrainian occupation! Occupied by lies and deceit to hide that this is not only the war of the West against Russia, but also the war of Western governments against their own citizens, also here in the UK!” explained Corbyn, assuring that he did not fully agree with the position of his brother, Jeremy (former leader of the Labour Party).

“We cannot hold the view that the condition of peace in Ukraine would be the withdrawal of Russian troops, quite the opposite: if the Russians retreat, then Zelensky and his corrupt Nazi regime will win, i.e. the imperialists who support Kiev will really win. And then there will be genocide, the Kiev regime will have no qualms about murdering Russian-speaking civilians, as it has already proved more than once” Mr. Corbyn stressed.

“It is a complete misunderstanding to present the war in Ukraine as a *defence of the Ukrainian right to self-determination*, as while recognising the right of Ukrainians to have an independent state, how could the inhabitants of Donbass be denied the same opportunity? The UK Governments pursue a policy of hypocrisy, if they recognise, for example, the Scots’ right to at least express their independence views, why did they reject the assumptions of the Minsk Agreements and the subjectivity of the people’s republics in Donetsk and Luhansk?” pointed out Stuart Richardson from the Stop the War initiative.

Take Britain out of NATO



The entire rally took place in an atmosphere over any ideological divisions.

“We come here from all sides of the UK political scene. We may have different views,

for example, on the role of trade unions or immigration policy, but we are united by our opposition to the threat posed to all of us by further membership in NATO. That is why we formed a broad No2NATO coalition, and that is why our joint initiative is the Petition to the UK Government and Parliament about invoking of the Article 13 of the North Atlantic Treaty to withdraw the UK from NATO. We are collecting signatures under that here today and at all similar rallies around the Britain.” — Laureen, No2NATO and Workers Party of Britain. Activist has informed.

“The UK was a founding member of NATO, which was established to address a perceived threat from the Soviet Union. Although when hen the USSR dissolved in 1991 NATO’s initial reason to exist disappeared. Despite that, rather than winding up its operations NATO nearly doubled the number of member states. Since 1991, NATO, which claims to be a defensive military alliance, has been directly engaged in various offensive military operations. I believe that the membership of NATO is now endangering UK citizens.” — Chris Williamson, former Labour MP, and now one of the Socialist Labour Party leaders explains.

In accordance with the law, collecting 100,000 signatures on the petition will force a debate on it in the House of Commons, with a public hearing of the position of the initiative group and yet at 10,000 signatures the Government has to respond to this petition.

Bloody hands of NATO

Traditional pacifist movements’ main problem is their difficulty in understanding the dialectic nature of the war in Ukraine as a conflict between the imperialists who support the Kiev regime and the forces objectively allied to anti-imperialism and workers class struggle. The principle of the supposed “*equal distance from Kiev and Moscow*” expressed by some revisionist and Trotskyist parties, as well as equating “*two imperialisms, from the West and from the East*”, in fact only weakens efforts for peace and to overcome the last offensive of capitalism. Fortunately, the truth about the NATO-Russian war is getting more and more widely aware, so it can be welcomed that the Stop the War conference, coordinated with the pan-European Europe for Peace initiative, consisted almost entirely of speeches objectively and honestly assessing the situation in Ukraine.

The starting point of the conference was the unanimous criticism of the growing arms race and the accustoming of Western societies to the inevitability of confrontation. According to Kate Hudson, Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament,

“The instant increase in the military budget is clearly at the expense of the rest of the economy, especially the social sphere. The depleted uranium ammunition, that took such a deadly toll in the former Yugoslavia, is now supplied to Ukraine, what will have tragic effects for generations. And if the war in Ukraine was not destabilising enough, the UK is already declaring its support for a US war with China. NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg has not only expressed his satisfaction with the escalation that the admission of Finland leads to, but also, in an open text, announces the acceptance of Ukraine membership, which can only conduct and spread this unnecessary, tragic war. This makes the clearer what a global disaster NATO is for all of us, a Pact with blood on its hands, which should be replaced as soon as possible with a new, consensual peace architecture, which moves away from militarisation and nuclear weapons,” said Ms. Hudson, announcing further anti-war protests during the Vilnius NATO summit in July 2023.

Under the military-industrial complex occupation

Lowkey, Britain's leading musician, performer and activist, one of the first organisers of No2NATO, focused on interests of the Western military-industrial complex active in Ukraine and on a global scale. At the same time, Ukraine remains a laboratory for testing new types of weapons, while the Ukrainians themselves, often sent to the front after several hours of training, are not prepared to use such technologies safely, even for themselves, not to mention the Ukrainian civilian population. We will not hear about anything like this from the media or from mainstream politicians, financed by armaments corporations, such as Sir Keir Starmer, the leader of the opposition. It is no coincidence that Boris Johnson, who involved the UK in this conflict, is today one of the candidates for the next NATO Secretary General. These people are paid by entities interested in continuing the war indefinitely, which is not only extremely dangerous, but also devastating for the Western economies, spending €3 billion monthly to maintain a bankrupt regime in Kiev. And yet these decisions are made by the same people, the same circles that once made solemn promises not to enlarge NATO to the East! Instead the British Army was supplying and training the Ukrainian Armed Forces in underwater terrorism just before the terrorist attack on NordStream. However Lowkey also noted that it is difficult to talk about the sovereignty of British policy in a situation where over 12,000 US Army soldiers are already stationed in the UK.

In the discussion, the artist also referred to the involvement of many people of art and culture in supporting the Kiev regime. Ignorance and a desire to please the mainstream media must be distinguished from crossing the clear line of taking the side of Nazism and genocide, as is done in particular by numerous bands from Ukraine, often enthusiastically welcomed in the West as alleged "*voices of freedom*". This was the case with the recent London concert of the openly Banderite band *Okean Elzy*, trying to organise a public fundraiser for the purchase of armaments for the Nazi-battalions, despite of the protest of the British anti-Nazi activists and independent artists.

783,000 Germans for peace

The voice from Germany was especially expected in the discussion, as it is no coincidence that over 783,000 people have already signed the Manifesto for Peace, initiated by Alice Schwarzer and Sahra Wagenknecht. Motives for such a significant involvement of German voters were explained by Sevim Dağdelen, MP. In her opinion, we are facing a fundamental issue for democratic sovereignty in Europe, its limitation and violation by the United States. We have witnessed an American attack on German infrastructure, NordStream, and instead of demanding an international investigation under the aegis of the United Nations, Chancellor Olaf Scholz helps to cover up this act of aggression! Meanwhile, in Germany we have a fall in real wages by 5% per year, the largest since 1945, and we know perfectly well that the war with Russia and the economic war against our own citizens are two sides of the same coin - noted Ms Dağdelen. As Lowkey rightly said, on the Western side, it is just a war of the rich for privilege, not any "*defence of freedom and democracy*". On the contrary! Turkey has participated in attacks on Iraq and Syria, occupies Cyprus and persecutes its own citizens, and is accepted in NATO. In the UK it should be well remembered when Iraq was attacked under false accusations of having banned weapons, and now London itself is sending internationally prohibited ammunition to Kiev! Julian Assange is still in prison for exposing the truth about the lies of the rulers leading to war and corruption on an international scale, while these are the Western warmongers who should be prosecuted and convicted! Western countries and Poland, with their arms and equipment supplies for Kiev

regime, are only sustaining this conflict, while the only solution is an early ceasefire and peace without preconditions on the Russian side, and an immediate suspension of supplies other than truly humanitarian ones. Unfortunately, such a program still lacks support among the economic and political elites, including the Greens, who have finally taken the position of the new neoconservative right. At the same time, however, according to *Die Linke* MP, there is still hope, because by referring to the classics, the USA, like Goethe's Mephisto, seem to be "*part of that power which eternally wills evil and eternally works good*", that is, by increasing their pressure on peripheral countries, Americans also create conditions for their emancipation, the end of neo-colonialism and imperialism due to the collapse of the dollar and the exhaustion of Washington's military potential.

Silent majority's voice

A less optimistic assessment of the situation was presented by Irish MEP, Clare Daly (Independents 4 Change, No2NATO). According to her, in fact,

"the current lies resemble those of Iraq, Libya and Syria, but they also occur at new levels of propaganda and persuasion. The situation of the anti-war movement is also different. At that time, 2002 discussions and dissents were allowed even in the mainstream media, and we were able to organise and attend massive public protests. Now these basic manifestations of democracy and freedom of speech are ruthlessly hindered and blocked. Strictly required unanimity applies. Instead of a difference of opinion, we have censorship in the media and a lack of access to real news. Officially it was supposed to be '*a war for democracy and against authoritarianism*', but authoritarianism has shown itself to us in all its glory in our own countries," Ms Daly pointed.

All is not lost, however, according to her, as very often she can hear voices of support, assurances of a community of views, which, however, cannot be openly proclaimed "*Because you understand that we can't...*". Even MEPs from other groups after the votes on war or sanctions tell Ms Daly and her colleague, Mick Wallace, that they are right, in a way: "*It's good that you say what you say, we think the same, but because of our leaders and media in our country ... you know how it is ...*".

"Of course, we hear even more words of support from people at meetings like this, because let's face it: WE SPEAK ON BEHALF OF THE MAJORITY!" Ms. Daly emphasised.

It is just that most people are muffled, hushed, scared. Albeit it is also the majority, which the rulers fear the most, perfectly understanding people's power. This is why we must increase the pressure on our governments for peace, although understanding how difficult to do so, while jingoism and imperialism sell better. However, we have strong arguments. First of all, historically, because no one will deny that the current phase of the conflict is a straight consequence of 2014 and after, when 14,000 of civilians have been killed in Donbass by the Kiev offensives, and Russian-speaking population has been persecuted and terrorised. Secondly, simple logic is behind us, because if in fact the Russians were provoked by the Western arming of Ukraine and sanctions, how sending even more weapons and more sanctions would stop them? Ms Daly pointed, that in the European Parliament she often hears about understanding of Ukrainian defence needs "*because they are fighting foreign occupation*", but the Irish also fought the occupation, and no one were urged to send arms to the IRA.

“I never hear them call on arming Palestinians to protect themselves! So do not say it is about *“fighting for freedom”*, because that is just not true. War can never be stopped by war it can only be stopped by peace was on the table a year ago. I think we should be highlighting,” pointed Ms Daly reminding that it was Boris Johnsons and Americans who prevented that to happened.

In her opinion Ukraine was and is one of the most corrupt countries in Europe, deprived of elementary civil liberties. As a result of the conflict provoked and sustained by the West, under the present regime Ukraine has become even more corrupt, even more repressive, in addition has lost even more territory and population and is economically exploited by the West. In no way is the current policy helping the Ukrainians either. It is therefore necessary to support international peace initiatives, such as those of China, and to build civic coalitions for real peace and reconstruction, summed up MEP Daly, noting that it is no coincidence that the next step in international destabilisation may be to attack China, using the Taiwanese issue analogously to the Ukrainian one.

Take to the streets across Europe!

Lindsey German, Stop the War convenor has summarised discussion: *“We live in the most dangerous time I have ever experienced in my life”*. This reminds the situation on the brink of the First World War, with series of regional conflicts, increasing destabilisation of the international order, formation of opposing pacts and alliances, and finally the escalation and global cataclysm. In historiography, the leaders who led to that catastrophe are sometimes called *“Sleepwalkers”*, but some of them consciously aimed at destruction, and to an even greater extent we are dealing with it today, perhaps at the beginning of WW3. The *proxi* war between NATO and Russia in Ukraine continues. The arms race speeds up. We are experiencing a revival of modern McCarthyism, hunting the opponents of war, and armaments. At the same time, the economic crisis, the internal political crises of Western states, and the international crisis cannot be separated. It is not only a matter of the fact that if we do not believe domestic politicians when they talk about finance, health care or education, then why should we assume that they are telling us the truth when talking about foreign policy? In the UK, it is a disgrace to Labour and it is a shame to the Greens who have moved to pro-NATO positions, but it is also a wider problem.

“Why do we have MPs here from other countries but none from the House of Commons?” asked Ms. German.

“What happened to the British and Western European anti-war movement? Our great task is to rebuild it. We must form an international coalition against war and the deterioration of living conditions. In July 2023, at the NATO Summit in Vilnius, we will see the warmongers in all their glory, pushing to accept Ukraine membership and continue the current strategy. We must then take to the streets all over Europe, otherwise barbarism will triumph!” Ms. German called, referring to the well-known Rosa Luxemburg’s sentence.

Actions for peace were also organised in Bristol and Brighton. More centres from England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland are expected to join soon. European peace movement, active e.g. in Germany, France, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Bulgaria, Romania, Austria and Italy – becomes a fact.

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