

Webinar script – 07.11.23 – 20:00-22:00/8-10 pm

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Dear friends, greetings from Kyiv.

Yesterday my city was disturbed again by air raid sirens, so I runned from Vernadsky scientific library to hide in closest shelter, in subway station.

Ruthless Russian aggression against Ukraine continues, as well as Ukrainian defensive war effort. Civilians are dying, cities are bombarded on both sides of frontline, and that is the essence of any war, - aggressive or defensive, - the pure evil of war, which is barbaric mass killing by definition.

Air raid alert didn't stopped President Zelensky from signing a request to his pocket parliament to continue martial law and compulsory mobilization for another 90 days, not last time: top Ukrainian General Zaluzhny admitted that war is a stalemate.

This stalemate took more than half a million lives, but enormous losses on the battlefield didn't change attitudes in Moscow and Kyiv to fight, not just months, but years and years. Irony is that ambitious plans to win in the indefinite future cause everyday losses in cruel irrational war of attrition.

Corpses buried in trenches, endless graveyards of fallen heroes will make questionable any value of victory if someone even dare to celebrate such after this tragic mess, and I am optimistic about this "after the mess" expectation because some chilling voices on both sides already said that this war will never end.

It is forbidden to seek peace, peace activists are persecuted, international initiatives like Vienna Summit for Peace in Ukraine are falsely portrayed as enemy's propaganda with personal defamation of organizers and participants.

Propaganda of war became the state ideology, intellectuals are mobilized to serve it and punished for any doubts. Just one example: for long years Jürgen Habermas was an icon for Ukrainian philosophers, but now, after his moderate advocacy of peace talks, they turned academic journal "Philosophical thought" into a quarterly exercise in pamphleteering which should be called more correctly "Philosophical thought against Habermas" because there are attacks on Habermas almost in every article.

Structural, existential, fundamentalist militarism poisons our minds and our everyday lives. The hate consumes us. Even pro-war thinkers can't ignore this. I didn't expected from Myroslav Marinovich a realist quip that there will never be a ditch with crocodiles between Ukraine and Russia. Sergiy Datsyuk warned quite rightly that the war will never end if people will continue to refuse to think and transform, because the war is exactly how you deal with conflicts without thinking. Any war is dumb indeed.

These voices of common sense, however, are rare. Talking to the Time magazine about unrealistic military goals of President Zelensky, a member of his team preferred to be anonymous, and not without reason: immediately after the publication, one of functionaries in presidential office called for security service to expose and punish those who don't believe in victory.

As you probably know, the Security Service of Ukraine absurdly accused me, a pacifist, of the so-called justification of Russian aggression in a statement which clearly condemns Russian aggression. They searched my house, took my computer and mobile phone, I am under house arrest now until the end of this year at least, and then a trial could be started: there is a risk that I could be jailed up for five years.

All my "crime" was that I sent to President Zelensky a statement entitled "Peace Agenda for Ukraine and the World" which calls for ceasefire, peace talks, respect to the right to refuse to kill, non-violent democratic governance and conflict management. To be precise, it is what is written in formal notification of suspicion I got, but my real crime in the eyes of militarists is that Ukrainian Pacifist Movement and I personally raised popular awareness about human right to conscientious objection to military service, which is furiously denied by Armed Forces of Ukraine contrary to all obligations and commitments according to Constitution of Ukraine, European Convention on Human Rights, and International Covenant for Civil and Political Rights. Number of people willing to die for the sake of militarism decreases, there are thousands of draft evaders despite it is pity they are not courageous enough to become antiwar activists. Lacking manpower, instead of changing ambitious plans, Zelensky's regime still pursue utopian goal to make soldiers whole population of country and punish all those who refuse to kill.

So they opened criminal investigation against me for the thought-crime of pacifism, and started hidden surveillance, infiltrated agent provocateurs to our organization long before the letter to President Zelensky, his pocket national security service did it because of my human rights defending work, my legal aid to conscientious objectors.

Individual conscience and serious attitude to peace studies or just to old commandment "you shall not kill" could easily make you an enemy of the state in Ukraine.

Seventh-day Adventist Dmytro Zelinsky became a prisoner of conscience, thrown to jail for his demands to replace conscription with alternative service. Another prisoner of conscience, Vitaliy Alekseyenko, was released from jail by the Supreme Court but not acquitted, a retrial was ordered with reference to outdated law which contrary to the Constitution grants access to alternative service only in peacetime. I prepared a constitutional complaint to Vitaliy but my notes were seized during the search. I still managed to prepare constitutional complaints in his case and in my case, but Constitutional Court found procedural pretexts to avoid consideration of both complaints on the merits, so apparently constitutional complaint is not effective human rights remedy in Ukraine, but I will continue to try this instrument in hope that once it will start to work properly.

There always should be hope for peace and justice, it is the worst thing to lose hope.

I am persecuted for a dream about the world where everybody refuses to kill and because of that there could be no wars; but even if militarists will imprison me, I hope to continue my human rights work and advocacy of peace from behind the bars.

I am convinced that peace is possible, but I don't expect that peace could be reached in some secret high level talks. Don't leave the cause of peace to generals and heads of states armed to the teeth!

Currently it was leaked that due to the stalemate on the battlefield some Western officials tried to suggest Ukrainian counterparts negotiations with Russia, - not because they want peace but because they want to wage war on China and Arab world, - but this high-level pseudo-peace impulse was not welcomed and even a fact of stalemate was denied by president Zelensky, he still demands more weapons and promises quick victory.

Quiet diplomacy hardly helps facing loud militarist arrogance. How it could help when media calls to war, churches preach war, war chests are cosmic and budgets of diplomacy are laughably poor?

The main problem is that militarism is a structural problem in the West and everywhere on the West's model - so the West need to think how to provide for the rest of the world more sane and peaceful model to copy.

Without post-Soviet military patriotic upbringing and conscription copied from centuries old Prussian and French militarism, a cult of sacred army, I doubt Russia could start or Ukraine could be dragged into current senseless bloodshed, this pointless waste of lives.

Without cold-war epoch heritage of military industrial complex there would be no NATO expansion and no nuclear arsenals in Russia and United States threatening to kill all life on our planet insanely pretending it somehow ensures so-called national security, I don't even know what it means: the security of graveyard protected from second death?

I remember parades of nukes on Red Square in Moscow, and I am horrified by a thought that such sort of deadly glory could make people, deceived by propaganda of war, not scared, but proud for their "great country."

And even if there is no radioactive militarist vanity fairs on the streets of your city, people almost everywhere are proud about having an army, the organization of people trained to kill a lot of people. Only one in ten countries in the world decided not to have army; I envy Costa Rica that prohibited creation of army by Constitution. They host a United Nations University for Peace, and most of all I wish that every country could have its own University for Peace, I mean real peace institution, not just a signboard for another despicable military school.

I wish peace education courses will be a part of curricula of basic education everywhere. I wish when people hear terms "nonviolent resistance," "unarmed civilian protection," they don't ask what is that, they don't respond as propaganda teaches that nonviolence is utopia and total killing of others is supposedly not utopia, which in fact it is.

And I wish when your minister of defence makes witty remark like "Tell about nonviolent resistance to people in Bucha, where Russian army perpetrated the horrible massacre!" - someone among his audience could tell him: "Actually, I was in Bucha and I learned from locals their experience of nonviolent experience; furthermore, I donated local NGOs and religious organizations to prepare for nonviolent resistance in future, to protect their right to conscientious objection. Because no violence, even self-defending killing could give hope for better future; only readiness to resist violence without violence could give hope for better future."

We need strengthening peace movements, more people engaged, more intellectual and material resources. We need investments in peace, - not into weapons, armies and militarized borders, but into nonviolent conflict resolution, peacebuilding dialogues, peace education and human rights initiatives.

Workers humiliated by war should work for peace.

Markets robbed by war should give peace a budget.

You could start from donating to ObjectWar Campaign, to provide asylum to conscientious objectors from Russia, Belarus and Ukraine.

Every soldier rescued from militarist serfdom of conscription weakens warmongers and makes peace closer.

All so-called enemies of the West are wannabes copying Western militarist politics and economy; so the best way to end all wars is to discuss at home and abroad profound antiwar reforms and to work on big structural changes towards nonviolent governance.

Any pacifist changes in the West will entail pacifist changes everywhere, like Western militarism generates omnipresent wars.

Without structural changes in our way of thinking and our way of life the war in Ukraine, the war in Middle East and all other wars will never stop.

We need to awaken the popular conscience to make the refusal to kill a preeminent factor in culture and politics.

We need to activate popular imagination, produce and popularize more textbooks, or just books, as well as games, films, songs and paintings of the world without violence. It should be easy to imagine and try life without violence. It is called culture of peace, and it is already approved by consensus of the United Nations General Assembly.

People need to believe, discuss and understand the simple truth that it is possible to live without violence, without wars, and in fact it is insane to succumb to violence while deep rooted structures of peace are so powerful and universal that peace could thrive everywhere even in a tragic time of war.

Take this preeminent dynamics of peaceful life and develop it in modern democratic institutions, because true democracy is decision-making in conversation with others, in cooperation, knowledge sharing, harmony and service for common good, not in killings, hate, inequality, coercion and dictate. Make the reason, truth and love great powers ruling the world.

Path to peace lies through big structural changes. Our mission, as peace movements, is to move forward and pave the way for the whole family of humankind on the common planet to future knowledge-based nonviolent way of life.