

# **Anti-Imperialist Anti-War Balkan 2Day Event Organized by PAME**

**Thessaloniki, June 24-25, 2017**



## **Introduction**

**PAME Executive Secretariat**

**International Anti-Imperialist Meeting, June 25**

Dear Colleagues,

On behalf of the PAME Executive Secretariat, we welcome you to our today's meeting "**With Workers From All Countries For A World Without Exploitation, Wars, Refugees**". We particularly want to welcome colleagues from our neighboring countries who came under very difficult conditions, such as colleagues from Syria and Palestine. But also colleagues and organizations who wanted to be here with us today, but because of many obstacles they did not succeed. It is our great pleasure to welcome colleagues from 14 trade unions from 10 Countries of the region, here in the city of Thessaloniki.

A city of particular international importance for the class trade union movement of our country, as it was the city where the first major, internationalist, class-oriented trade union organization of our country, the legendary FEDERACION. An organization that had workers of all nationalities, Greeks, Turks, Bulgarians, Serbs, Israelis, etc., an organization that did not bend in hatred calls of the imperialists of the First World War, but held up the flag of the working class.

In this city yesterday, thousands of workers and hundreds of unions were demonstrating with PAME, a rally that clearly gave the message "Outside NATO-Stop Imperialism-Long Live the Friendship of the Peoples". A demonstration that we believe is of great importance as it is a continuation, like our current meeting, in the Campaign Against Imperialism signed by hundreds of trade unions and trade unionists from Greece and abroad.

PAME took this initiative of joint co-ordination and stepping-forward against the imperialist war, the interventions, the various conflicts that unfold in our neighborhood and around the world. Within this campaign, PAME has taken a series of initiatives to inform and mobilize Greek workers, to support and strengthen friendship with the peoples of the region.

On May 1st, thousands of workers were gathered in Greece and other countries, such as the concentration of colleagues from Nakliyat Is in Turkey, where the resolution of the Trade Unions against the imperialist war was read and voted by strike gatherings. We had the pleasure of welcoming colleagues from Turkey at the 1<sup>st</sup> of May Demonstrations in Lesvos, Samos, Kos, Alexandroupolis and Komotini. The Ambassador of Palestine welcomed the PAME Meeting in Athens. While in previous events in Ioannina, Larissa, Thessaloniki, Patras, we expressed our Solidarity to the peoples fighting, to the peoples of Syria and Palestine. Also colleagues from the Birlesik Metal Is Trade union from Turkey were present in the Metal Trade Union Strike in Perama, Athens.

We want to thank particularly our colleagues from Turkey as Turkish fighters come under difficult conditions, overcoming obstacles and dangers to send the message together from both sides of the Aegean: **We will not bleed for their profits in Peace! We will not become flesh for their weapons in the war! Peoples have nothing to divide, we have the same sufferings, the same needs. The enemy is one and the same, imperialism!**

Also note that this initiative does not stop there. On 1 and 2 July 2-day-events will take place in Samos, Lesvos, Kos. PAME, the class-oriented movement of Greece will continue, will strengthen these actions.

Dear Comrades,

All Workers Militant Front took the initiative of this Anti-imperialist Campaign, implementing the decision of our 4th National Congress, that the working class must be alerted, prepared and fight both against the anti-working policies of the Capital and its Governments, and against the conflicts of the imperialists. In the center of their competitions are:

- How to share the damages of the crisis and how they will benefit from the capitalist development, which all agree that is weak, with big problems.
- Which monopolies will take the lead in the course of the competition
- Who is going to take control of the markets, the energy sources of gas, oil and even water, the energy pipes and commercial transport routes.

That's why this position does not arise from a pacifistic logic, a general anti-war mood, but comes from the experience of the world working movement summarized by Brecht in 5 simple words:

*"Their war kills  
Whatever their peace  
Has left."*

For us, therefore, it is not a coincidence, but a characteristic of our movement, the class unions of Greece, that PAME was born in 1999 in the flames of the war in Yugoslavia. It is no coincidence that PAME's action, from the very beginning, linked the struggle for the defense of wages and workers' rights, with the struggle against imperialism, imperialist interventions and wars. Today, completing nearly two decades of unwavering class and anti-imperialist struggle, we feel justified because we have correctly predicted developments. We were rightly placed as a class movement against the plans of imperialism against the division of Yugoslavia and made every city and place of work, a place of resistance and struggle against the imperialist intervention. Correctly, here the forces of PAME in Thessaloniki then sent the NATO hubs to the downtown-markets, changing the signs. We correctly positioned and called for a General Strike against the US invasion of Iraq. We were right to inform the workers against the so-called "anti-terrorist" US-NATO-EU campaign after the attack to the Twin Towers. A campaign, almost twenty years later, that is the Trojan Horse of War and the intervention of the imperialists around the globe.

Today, therefore, on the one hand, we feel justified for this estimation, for our predictions, but at the same time we feel the responsibility we have as a class, struggling trade union movement to go forward. To anticipate developments, to prepare the working class, to inform it so that it can resolutely deal with the plans of its exploiters.

In all countries, governments, regardless of hue, sign, progressive, conservative, or even "left", participate in imperialist competitions, interventions and wars, with one or another imperialist camp. Their main concern is to defend the interests of the ruling class of their own country, their business groups in the international chessboard. Their declarations of peace and security are rapidly increasing as far as their war budget is growing. As much as they swear to the contrary, the figures disprove them. Doubling of war expenditure for the US, five times for China in the coming years and 10times for the EU military research.

Workers in the world are witnessing the spread of warfare in more and more areas, especially in our neighborhood. The Balkan peoples pay for the consequences of border change, state dismemberment and the continued cultivation of nationalist hatred, US-NATO-EU-Russia boots in the region. In Eastern Europe, in Georgia, in Ukraine the war between NATO and Russia were expressed, while in Romania the massive NATO military exercise "Noble Jump" takes place, escalating tension.

NATO's General Secretary said specifically a few days ago: "Since 2014, we have increased our forces since the Cold War. We have tripled the composition of the NATO Response Force to 40,000 men. We set up eight armies in Eastern Europe. In the Baltic States and Poland we

have promoted 4 multinational Battle Formations. We are strengthening our presence in the Black Sea, with a multinational brigade based in Romania, enhanced naval and air presence, and the UK are sending additional patrol aircraft. At the same time, we are strengthening our capabilities in cybersecurity. "

While at the recent NATO Summit in Brussels, despite the oppositions of the interests of the imperialists, they decided:

- Completion - by accelerating moves at all levels - of the implementation of the dangerous decisions of the 27th NATO Summit in Warsaw in July 2016, the reinforcement of NATO forces across the line from the Baltic to the Black Sea, combined with the installation of the "anti-missile shield" in the context of dangerous competition with Russia.
- Strengthening the NATO engagement in the imperialist war in Syria by taking part in the coalition of states led by the US that bloodshed the people of Syria to meet their own strategic interests.
- The demand for excessive NATO spending by reaching the 2% of GDP target for all member states.
- Military presence with NATO forces, the Aegean, the Eastern Mediterranean.
- The continuation of the imperialist intervention in Afghanistan and Iraq.

They are decisions that smell gunpowder and blood for the peoples. Decisions that confirm the criminal nature of the imperialist organization.

At the same time, the EU is strengthening its militarization. It establishes a European Army, European Headquarters, emergency forces (the Eurocorps), and promotes the European Defense Union as well as the European Defense Fund.

NATO and the EU are transnational imperialist unions, of which the peoples can only wait for exploitation and poverty, war and refuge for the many and immense wealth for the very few and in our country it is our duty to strengthen our struggle against them.

At the same time in the Middle East, the people of Libya, Iraq and Afghanistan are experiencing the consequences of these imperialist interventions. The people of Syria's martyrdom are in the swirl of multi-year imperialist intervention and antagonisms involving a series of imperialist powers. On the one hand, the US-EU-funded jihadists and the oil giants of the Gulf, the USA, and others that are willing to participate, including the Greek Government. At the same time, Russia, Turkey, Iran, and more distinctly China and other countries. As crows are waiting to feed on the flesh of the Syrian people.

We can see today that the outbreaks are spreading. The developments between Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, where one accuses the other of supporting terrorism, countries dominated by the obscurantism and religious fanaticism of the emirs, who led the Jihadists' support, the interventions in Syria and Yemen, the more general planning in the region, rearranging their alliances, demanding the control of their areas and their wealth.

At the same time, the working class at international level is experiencing the continuation of a brutal attack against its rights. For the profits of business groups, the European Union and governments of each country, legislate anti-labor measures. They cut wages or give rise to very small increases in relation to multinational inflation and profits. The internationalization of important, key services is being promoted internationally. Hospitals, schools,

telecommunications, harbors, roads are all assigned to business groups, resulting in downgrading of services for the peoples and the high, prohibitive for the working class, cost. An important attack is the rights of workers to trade union action, the right to organize in trade unions and the right to strike.

We saw it, in France with the El Khomri law, in England with the negotiations for BREXIT where the people will be the victim, in Turkey, where especially after the coup attempt almost every labor claim is considered a "national danger", in Italy with the notorious JOBS ACT, in the Balkan countries with the EU accession process, the attack on labor rights is escalating.

In Greece specifically the Government of the so-called "Left" SYRIZA, who co-establishes with a nationalist party, ANEL, has just legislated, in the past few days:

- Freezing already reduced pensions by the end of 2022
- Reversals to the Strike Law and trade unions that will signify newer obstacles to their actions
- Reducing the tax-free limit so that even the poor, the impoverished must be taxed

These measures follow up on his anti-labor measures 4<sup>th</sup> Memorandum imposed by SYRIZA in May, which includes new wage cuts, new barbaric taxation, collective lay-offs. At the same time that the SYRIZA government is crushing the Greek people at the same time Greece's military expenditure is 2,38% of GDP and is second only to those of US with 3.61% among all NATO members.

In the name of the geostrategic upgrading of the Greek bourgeoisie, the SYRIZA-ANEL co-operation fully adopts the NATO and EU war plans and improves its involvement. At the recent NATO summit this government committed to taking a more active role in planning. The barbarity of anti-people, anti-worker policy is the one aspect of a class policy that plutocrats, who gave birth to the crisis, implement for the growth of their profits, the expansion of their business interests, in order to gain in the race with their competitors. The other facet of the same policy is the geostrategic upgrading operation of the Greek bourgeoisie in the wider region that increasingly resembles the eye of the tornado.

At the same time that the government, for the benefit of the large capital, takes constant and wild measures against the working people, it celebrates the new installments the country is taking. At the same time that the country gets a blooded-up grant of € 8.5 billion based on wages-pensions-rights slaughter, it gives back literally to the massacres of the peoples every year 4 billion euros, which corresponds to Greece's participation in NATO. These amounts go to NATO warfare, support upgrades and acquisitions of the Armed Forces in NATO-based figures and bodies. That is why the government received the congratulations of the USA President.

NATO is not a factor of stability and security! Wherever it goes, it carries death and destruction. It puts the peoples one against the other. It is the killing machine of the imperialists, it does not recognize borders and sovereign rights.

Consequently, the participation of the country in these imperialist organizations and alliances is anything but beneficial for our sovereign rights, the borders and the interests of the Greek people, who pay high price for this participation in the circumstances of a particular economic crisis.

NATO is currently expanding its army and fleet from the Baltic to the Balkans, the Black Sea, the Aegean, the Mediterranean, defending the interests of the predatory alliance, the interests of its own monopolies in the region against their competitors. In this routine, the NATO Armada trips to the Aegean, while FRONTEX has acquired powers at the land and sea borders of the country.

Greece participated and participates in imperialist aggressive projects. Greek troops were found and are found outside the country's borders. Our country participates in 13 NATO missions abroad, either permanently in the Indian Ocean, the Horn of Africa and Suez, Kosovo, Afghanistan, Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Mali, Lebanon and Libya.

Lately, more and more NATO troops are developing in Europe, doing exercises. The most recent is the 3rd Armored Brigade in Poland with hundreds of armored vehicles and 3,500 soldiers who have the eye in Russia. At the same time, the Americans call for additional facilities and access of their Armed Forces to Greek bases, looking forward to accessing Larissa, Aktio, Andravida, Skyros.

The NATO headquarters in Thessaloniki, where we held the big nationwide demonstration yesterday, is one of the NATO Force Structures. It is one of the National Land Forces and has multinational staffing, working through Memoranda of Cooperation. These are funded by the national budgets of the countries in which they are based. These headquarters are "High Standards, they have a role to play for participating in a Rapid Reaction Force, and beyond Thessaloniki, there are military headquarters in Milan, Valencia, Istanbul, Strasbourg, Lille, Munster, Raintalen.

The "NobleJump" NATO exercise, which is being held today, is another proof that the SYRIZA-ANEL government offers "land and water" to the murderers of the peoples, it provides NATO with ports, airports, highways and even camps in Evros to pass . It is prepared to take on more active roles in imperialist plans to secure a share of capital from interventions and wars. In addition to the above mentioned exercise, at the same time, the NATO ships, the ships of death, sail freely in the Aegean and our harbors. After "USS Mesa Verde" and "USNS Trenton", a catamaran type and designed to support, among other things, Special Forces operations, it anchored in Neo Ikonio. The intense mobility in the port has already triggered mobilizations in Piraeus by mass organizations and trade unions.

In addition to troop activity, a number of conferences are taking place, such as the 8th Annual NATO Maritime Prevention Training Center Conference held in Souda last week, or the 70th anniversary of the Defense Cooperation Office that governments advance in Greece and the USA, the tripartite summit in Thessaloniki, Greece-Cyprus-Israel.

At the opposite of this activity, PAME, the class trade union movement, openly supports the reactions of Greek soldiers serving their military service. With constant letters, soldiers from several camps in the country oppose plans, NATO exercises, they are thundering that they will not become meat for imperialist cannons, they will not be assisting personnel in NATO troops.

We are addressing workers, the unemployed, the poor farmers and the self-employed across the country, not to appease them, as the government and the other parties do, but to discuss with them about these dangerous developments in our region that "smell gunpowder".

We are addressing them in order to discuss what our answer should be, i.e. the response of the working class of the people from the point of view of our own interests. Let us discuss what supposed necessity puts us in NATO, in these plans, the obligations arising from our participation in these alliances, i.e. what are the interests of our people for our troops to be involved across the earth. What borders do the military, naval and air forces involved in these missions defend?

What is the need for Greek coverage in the US imperialist attack on Syria? What is NATO's role in the Aegean? What makes it beneficial to us? Is it a factor of stability?

The presence of EU-NATO in the Aegean is encouraging Turkey's provocation, with continuous violations of the sovereign rights of Greece, as well as of the Cyprus EEZ. In these

NATO's specific forces in the Aegean, also participate Turkish forces, ships, planes that fly and sail with the NATO's flag and permission over the Aegean islands. It is practically applied the NATO's fixed guideline, which does not recognize national borders in the Aegean, but it considers it as a single operational area. It is this exact line that encourages the demands of the bourgeoisie of Turkey. This is one of the reasons why the violations and the Turkish provocations have multiplied since NATO came to the Aegean and we are counting violations every day.

The nationalism is growing in Albania, in the Balkans altogether, a wanted UCK former governor is running for Kosovo's prime minister, racist murderous criminal organizations are being supported and funded, like the Golden Dawn in Greece. Issues of minorities and borders are again being raised. The imperialists are re-dividing the earth.

In the wider region of the Balkans, pipelines are being promoted, resources are being exploited in the name of the EU's goal of gaining energy self-sufficiency and be independent from the Russia's natural gas supply. As Turkey questions the half of the Aegean, as Albania's provocations about the Great Albania and Tsamouria are continuing, the TAP pipeline is being built in a friendly co-operation between Greece, Turkey and Albania. The businesses about the energy that are being built across the Eastern Mediterranean are escalating the competition for which business group will prevail over its competitors, they intensify the controversy among capitalist states about who owns the rights of exploitation, in which designated EEZs, who will have the control of critical energy passages. And that's the cause of the ongoing competitions in Balkan countries such as FYROM, Serbia, Kosovo, etc. with inter-bourgeois contradictions in each country and with the involvement of forces such as the USA, Russia and the EU. Contradictions that are also associated with border changes, taking advantage of the poison of nationalism.

In any case, the peoples of the region will be harmed, entering into great adventures. For the peoples the issue of energy, the new pipelines and deposits are false hopes, because while the pipes around these peoples are rapidly appearing, the people are still paying heavily the electricity, the oil, in total, the energy.

Consequently, our participation in these imperialist organizations is far from beneficial for our sovereign rights, the borders and the interests of the Greek people, who, in the period of the economic crisis, pay a heavy cost for this participation. The Greek people, like the peoples of the neighbouring countries, have to demand the disengagement of Greece from the imperialist interventions and adventurisms, the closure of the NATO bases, such as of Souda, which the Greek government is upgrading and is also expanding the infrastructures (in Larissa, Aktio, Andravida), the return of Greek troops from missions abroad, disengagement from the looting of the capital in the wider region. To throw off together the poison of nationalism and racism that infects the workers and the youth.

As the joint declaration of the Trade Unions and the Unionists against the imperialist war:

***"The all-out attack that condemns the working class in every country in unemployment, poverty, misery is the one side of the class policy.***

***The other side is the unjust, imperialist war that they wage in the interests of the big business groups.***

***Faced with the possibility of a generalized warfare in our region, we are now building a wall of protection for the working class of our countries, our peoples, in joint action and solidarity with each other and with our trade unions at the forefront of this struggle. "***

Through the mobilization of thousands of workers from Greece yesterday, through today's meeting of trade unionists from 10 countries, PAME continues its efforts in this direction.

We consider it our task, we consider a first-line issue for the trade unions of each country, on the one hand, to strengthen the struggle for workers' rights, and on the other hand, to increase the vigilance of the working class against nationalism, xenophobia, racism and fascism. Against the hate incitements that our exploiters cultivate to keep us divided and to exploit us.

That is why we consider it very important that the 17th Conference of the International Congress of the WFTU, which was held successfully in Durban, South Africa, about a year ago, has set the tone for the decisions that the world working movement must be vigilant about imperialism. To strengthen its struggle against the NATO and the imperialist organizations.

At the same time we should be concerned as trade unions, about the role of the ITUC, which not only supports the US-NATO imperialist interventions, but also plays an active role in order to be supported by the workers of each country, as in the case of Libya, and as it is doing today, for example, in Syria.

Under these circumstances, it is necessary for the working movement of each country to prepare the workers so that they do not support foreign flags which are against their interests. As during the "imperialist peace" the workers should not accept to cut their salary for the profitability of their bosses, so in wartime they should not accept "to kill the peoples to feed the boss".

We have a duty to strengthen the struggle against nationalism, xenophobia, imperialist plans within the working class of each country. Strengthen the solidarity with other peoples, the solidarity with refugees and immigrants, the exclusion of the fascists. These problems cannot be left outside the trade unions because the workers have no interest in bleeding for the bosses. We shall not let our countries become a huge base for the imperialist massacres, and our children, the soldiers used for their cannons.

In this direction, it is necessary for the trade unions, that along with the struggle for salary, social security, free healthcare and education, they integrate the struggle against the imperialist plans.

They must strengthen their struggle against imperialist organizations, NATO and the EU to strengthen their struggles against the anti-workers governments in each country, against business groups.

We have nothing to divide among the working class of other countries, with other peoples. On the contrary, the common interest of struggle for a life without wealth and poverty, without bosses, unites us- that is the life that we own. Our struggle will be effective as long as it links the defence of the borders and sovereign rights, the struggle for the peoples to live peacefully, with the struggle to overthrow the barbarous exploitative system that has been proven to cause and nourish poverty, unemployment, wars and refugees.

*That's why we fight for:*

- *No involvement in the imperialist interventions and wars outside the borders. No involvement in NATO and EU slaughterhouses.*
- *Closure of all foreign military bases. NATO out of the Aegean and the Balkans.*
- *No involvement in the political- military alliance of the capitalists.*
- *Struggle against the change of borders.*
- *Struggle against the abolition of trade union rights and other freedoms.*
- *We say no to the war expenditure for military action outside the borders, we demand funding to satisfy the needs of the working class, of workers' family.*

- *Struggle against nationalism, racism, chauvinism*
- *Solidarity with the refugees, the immigrants, solidarity to all peoples.*

**We do not stand behind the foreign and hostile to us flag of the capitalists and their allies. We raise the flag of the interests of the working class.**

**We are fighting against the unjust wars, to eliminate what causes them.**

**Solidarity is the weapon of peoples.**

Colleagues,

Beyond today's meeting, we need to follow up on our action. We suggest for the following period:

- Joint statement of the participants in the meeting.
- A Pan-European meeting in Brussels on the role of the EU and the NATO
- Trade union action day against the imperialist war, solidarity with the peoples of Palestine, Syria, Cuba, Iraq, Libya.
- Campaign for Solidarity with the Refugees - Immigrants (which will include a joint poster, a joint declaration, events in all countries).
- Joint coordination to face the employers' aggression, such as lay-offs, etc..