

**SPEECH, Thanassis Pafilis, General Secretary of the WPC
ON THE 65th ANNIVERSARY OF THE WPC
At the celebratory event in Athens, 1st September 2014, organized by EEDYE**

Friends and fellow militants,
Comrades,

This year marks 65 years since the founding of the World Peace Council (WPC) which was the pioneering global anti-imperialist peace organization. It was established after World War II in response to imperialist aggression, under Cold War conditions.

The horrific crimes of American imperialism in Hiroshima and Nagasaki carried out to terrorize humanity and allow the USA to impose its own terms in the post-war scene, along with the declaration of the Cold War by the imperialist forces, objectively destroyed any illusions concerning an end to war or the character of imperialism. These actions confirmed that war, just as fascism, was and is the creation of the exploitative capitalist system itself.

On August 6th, 1948 in the devastated Polish city of Wroclaw, the first world congress of intellectuals for peace was held. They adopted an appeal calling for the mobilization of peace-loving forces against nuclear weapons and imperialist aggression.

On April 20, 1949 simultaneous congresses were held both in Prague and Paris, where the decision to found the World Peace Council was decided. The Cold War measures taken by the imperialists did not allow for a unified congress to take place in Paris.

A year later in Warsaw, and in Sheffield, the WPC was constituted under the presidency of French Nobelist, physicist and chemist **Frederic Joliot-Curie** who would remain in the post for 9 years. Celebrities with broad recognition worldwide took part, including many from our own country Greece such as Elli Alexiou, Giannis Ritsos and others.

On March 18, 1950 the Stockholm Peace Appeal against nuclear arms was issued and circulated all over the world, amassing more than 350 million signatures.

The reaction of imperialism to the appeal was vicious. In our own country, Greece, on the 5th of March, 1951, the young communist, 23-year old Nikos Nikiforidis was executed for "gathering signatures for peace", in an unprecedented military court decision. This proved to be the most characteristic example of how imperialism dealt with the appeal.

The founding of the WPC provided great momentum for the creation of numerous member organizations in almost all of the countries of the world. The militant sections of the anti-imperialist peace movement were mobilized within its ranks. Tens of thousands of prominent intellectuals, artists, and cultural workers were organized within the Peace Committees of the WPC.

Despite reaction, the attempts at subversion and slandering on the part of the imperialist forces, due to the actions of the WPC supported by the Soviet Union, the other socialist countries and the communist and anti-imperialist forces, the peace-loving anti-imperialist struggles of the people began to grow immensely and to embrace the entire planet. The slogans of the WPC for nuclear disarmament, against intervention and imperialist wars, against foreign bases, for the liberation of the peoples, embraced and mobilized millions of people. It stood strongly at the side of the national liberation movements on all the continents. Hundreds of International and Global assemblies took place with the initiative of the WPC. It stood at the side of the Soviet Union and the other socialist countries, supporting the mass peace initiatives for a reduction in armaments, for nuclear disarmament, solidarity with the peoples who were struggling against imperialism.

No peoples' or workers' liberation struggle took place that the WPC was not a part of. It stood in solidarity with the great social struggles of the working class and popular masses for the improvement in their living conditions and for social liberation.

We can, without a doubt, state that the course of the WPC constitutes a highly significant factor in the modern history of humankind after World War II, having made an enormous contribution to the peoples' struggles.

The counter-revolutionary overthrows of the 1990s with the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the overthrow of socialism in the Soviet Union and the other socialist countries brought about a massive temporary setback in terms of imperialist domination. This had severe consequences for the worldwide movement and the WPC. Despite the great difficulties and ideological problems, the WPC was reconstituted and went on to hold its 1996 Congress in Mexico where it decided to move its headquarters to Paris. During this period, ideological differences were sharply expressed with the basic issue being whether the WPC would maintain its line of anti-imperialist struggle or turn into a pacifist organization. At the Congress in Athens 2000, its anti-imperialist character was re-confirmed and its headquarters was moved to Athens.

Subsequent congresses took place in Athens 2004, Caracas, Venezuela 2008 and Kathmandu, Nepal in 2012.

All these years, despite the difficulties it faced under the new conditions the WPC organized mobilizations and assemblies all over the world against the wars against Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Iraq, etc. It stood in solidarity with embattled peoples building initiatives and demonstrations. At the same time, working through ideological conflicts, disagreements and contradictions it adopted its policies to today's conditions and despite the many pressures, maintained its anti-imperialist character.

Friends, fellow militants, comrades,

With the overthrows at the beginning of the 1990s and the dramatic change in the balance of forces to the benefit of imperialism, imperialist aggressiveness intensified even more; inter-imperialist rivalries over the division of markets and spheres of influence and the control of the wealth-producing natural resources sharpened as well. These developments, the savage and barbaric reality that has been created for the working class

and the great mass of people on a global and national level, blatantly reveals that capitalism at its highest and final stage, imperialism, is becoming increasingly dangerous.

At this point, we want to emphasize that given the ideological brain-washing carried out by the forces of the capitalist system, the falsification of history and today's attempt at distortions by EU leaders and other imperialist forces, the people, especially the youth, cannot forget that the history of the capitalist system and of imperialism is marked by hundreds of interventions, by World War I and II, by local and regional wars, by the slaughter of entire peoples, by the support and emergence of fascist regimes and dictatorships.

War and the wars that were unleashed do not constitute 'sins' or an exception; they reveal the true nature of the capitalist system. They are the continuation of its policies with different means. Even after and during World War II, the imperialists carried out more than 100 interventions in order to promote monopoly interests. The Greek people endured the first bloody intervention of British imperialists in December 1944 before World War II had even ended. On almost all the continents, despite the theoretical declarations of the imperialists, despite their supposed agreements with the constitutional authorities of the UN to not intervene in the internal affairs of countries and for the peaceful resolution of whatever differences, the imperialist forces are wholly responsible for tens of millions dead, for the massive destruction in so many countries that sought a different course and road of development.

While they supposedly come out against fascism and against fascist parties and organizations, it's the capitalist system itself that created and supported fascism in Germany and other countries. Despite the fact that today there are those who pose as enemies of extreme Islamists and other 'terrorist' as they say 'organizations', it is the imperialist forces of the USA and the EU that created eg. the Taliban in Afghanistan, arming and supporting them, eg. in Syria to impose their own dominance, to serve their own interests, to overthrow governments who stand as an obstacle to imperialist designs.

The imperialist forces have always used different pretexts for wars and interventions. After World War II, they spoke of freedom, democracy, the communist threat and the avoidance of civil war. After 1990 – 91, they replaced the old pretexts with new ones. Genocide in Yugoslavia, terrorism in Afghanistan, chemical and biological weapons in Iraq that were never found, authoritarian regimes in Libya and in Iraq, nuclear weapons in Iran and in North Korea, civil wars in Africa.

The interests of capital and the monopolies lie behind all of this; their competition for the control of the wealth-producing natural resources and the energy transportation networks, ensuring their profits and the dominance of those who exploit the working class of the world and the peoples; those who have taken the immense possibilities that humankind has for scientific and technological development and turned them into a curse for working people who are condemned to poverty, unemployment, and misery in order to ensure immeasurable wealth for those who own the means of production and political power.

The overthrows at the beginning of the decades of 1990-1991 did not vindicate bourgeois and opportunist forces that were celebrating the supposed end to the Cold War,

for a new world of peace and cooperation. On the contrary, they unleashed imperialist aggression, revealing the horrific face of imperialism. War not only did not end but spread and multiplied to many countries and areas.

Inter-imperialist rivalries heightened on all levels, economic, military, political, and became evident on all the continents, even in the Antarctic.

International law, as the people knew it during the period in which the socialist system was actively present in international affairs, was replaced by the imperialist dogma of a preemptive strike, the "campaign against terrorism". The UN was transformed into a tool to legalize imperialist policies.

Militarization was not only reduced but was increased by the military presence and political influence of various imperialist centers on almost all of the continents. Military spending, the export of weapons, plans for production and installation of new nuclear weapons were all increased.

NATO, the armed tool of imperialism, not only did not dissolve but expanded, declaring its new aggressive dogma, abolishing all restrictions on its action, extending it by thousands of miles, giving itself the right to intervene in all areas of the planet as well as in the internal affairs of countries, against the people's movements.

The aggressiveness of the capitalist system increased in the social sphere with a generalized attack on the working class and the popular strata, markedly intensifying exploitation, stripping away whatever minimal gains existed. This aggressiveness was expressed with particular viciousness after 2008 during the massive capitalist economic crisis, which heightened the aggressiveness of imperialism even more, the conflicts and competition between imperialist forces over their share of the markets and spheres of influences.

A characteristic and blatant example is the situation that is unfolding in the wider region of the Eastern Mediterranean, the Middle East, Northern Africa, the Persian Gulf, The Balkans and the Caspian, where competition between older and newer forces is sharply evident. If they continue in this course, it's possible that war may overtake the entire region.

Historical experience shows that both World War I and World War II were the result of a pronounced sharpening of the inter-imperialist contradictions over the division of the world. These contradictions were exacerbated even more after World War II given the economic crisis and the existence of the Soviet Union.

Friends, Fellow militants, Comrades,

We have gathered today to celebrate 65 years of the WPC. Naturally, we have presented a historical overview of the actions of the WPC and evaluated its work, while honoring the millions of militants who organized within its ranks. However, it is absolutely crucial to draw conclusions from the many years of struggle of the WPC that can and should constitute a guide for the ongoing struggles of the people.

The contemporary world of capitalist barbarity has literally shattered the myths that have been cultivated by its supporters. At the same time, it has proven wrong all those who in the name of realism promoted and promote delusions even today that there can be a peaceful and "internationally just and creative world" without eliminating the cause of wars. This is nothing else but the exploitation of man by man, the system of capitalism itself.

War is an extension of capitalist exploitation, brought about by the economic and political dominance of capital. Capitalist exploitation and capitalism cannot be humanized; it is by its very nature inhumane.

The developments also shattered the myths that were cultivated both in Europe and worldwide that the EU can constitute a counterweight to American imperialism. The EU was and remains an imperialist union, aggressive towards the peoples. It was created to serve the interests of European capital; it will not change; it cannot be turned into a Europe of the people, but it can become more aggressive. The EU Security and Defense policies exist to serve this end.

The developments especially in recent years show that the theories of a "multi-polar world" that will bring about international balance, that will reform the UN and other international bodies and will guarantee peace, are entirely unrealistic. The so-called "multi-polar world" with new up-and-coming capitalist forces aggravates the rivalries on a global level even more due to the participation of new monopolies of these states and the states themselves, creating an explosive global situation. The peoples must not fall into the trap of choosing one imperialist over another.

The situation in Ukraine and the developments in the region confirm this estimation.

The thousands of dead and wounded, the refugees, the dramatic situation that is taking place in this country is the result of the blatant intervention of the USA and the EU within the framework of fierce competition with Russia over their share of the markets, the energy transportation networks and the other wealth-producing resources, for the inclusion of Ukraine in one or another capitalist intergovernmental union. The attempt at promoting nationalism creates a divide between the people of Ukraine on a nationalist basis and leads to a massive bloodbath with tragic consequences for the people who lived fraternally under the socialist system. Imperialist support of the governance of Kiev together with fascist forces shows how the USA and the EU have no hesitation when it comes to supporting their interests. Their aim to supply the nuclear stations in Ukraine with American nuclear fuel which may be unsuitable holds great danger for the whole of Europe.

We express the condemnation of the WPC for foreign interventions. We declare our solidarity with the people of Ukraine and the communists and anti-fascists that are on trial. We state our position that the people of Ukraine must disengage themselves from the designs and conflicts of the imperialist forces and the bourgeoisie class and must choose their own road of development in opposition to the conflicting interests of sections of the Ukrainian plutocracy.

Friends, Fellow militants, Comrades,

We are fully aware of the difficulties, the negative balance of forces. At the same time, we have faith in the people's forces. History itself and the evolution of humanity show that however dark it may get, light always follows.

What is the basic prerequisite for this to happen? What is the central issue posed by the developments? What is the dilemma of our times, objectively and independently of difficulties?

The dilemma is submission to capitalist barbarity or resistance and the creation of conditions for overthrowing it? Compromise and assimilation or uncompromising and heroic struggle to encourage a popular counterattack?

What movement is necessary? Our answer is that it demands a powerful workers' – popular movement, anti-imperialist – anti-capitalist- anti-monopoly, a mass movement that will mobilize the people, struggling every day to eliminate the causes that give rise to exploitation, fascism, and wars. The contemporary experience of the WPC and the popular movements show that those who abandoned this goal in the name of realism were assimilated into capitalist barbarity.

We appeal to the working class and the popular strata, to people all over the world, calling upon them to join us in a common anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist struggle, to struggle for disengagement from all the imperialist bodies.

We would like at this point to emphasize, in regard to the WPC campaign against NATO, that the position for the dissolution of NATO should and must be accompanied, in the NATO member states, by a struggle from every movement in its own country to leave NATO because we know that imperialist bodies do not dissolve of their own accord; they must be defeated.

We must fight for the withdrawal of foreign military and nuclear bases. Against imperialist interventions and wars. For the disengagement of every country from imperialist mechanisms and wars. To stand in solidarity with the oppressed.

I would like to conclude by expressing on the behalf of the WPC our profound solidarity with the Palestinian people who for decades now are literally being murdered by imperialism. It goes without saying that the Palestinians must have their own independent homeland.

I would also like to state our solidarity with the Cypriot people who are experiencing very difficult moments, and to emphasize the WPC stands for a unified, sovereign, independent Cyprus, without foreign armies or military bases.

We recognize that the road in front of us is a difficult one. Our promise marking 65 years of the WPC's action is to continue forward. This does not constitute an obligation. It is an objective necessity. The world must and can change.