

Nato: a driving force for war for 70 years

Liz Payne, convener of the British Peace Assembly, interviews **THANASSIS PAFILIS**, general secretary of the World Peace Council for the Morning Star



Liz Payne (LP): The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (Nato) has always stated that it is an alliance whose purpose is defensive – to guarantee the freedom and security of its members, an assertion continually repeated by the mass media of the countries concerned. What is the World Peace Council's response to Nato's claim?



BUILDING PEACE: Thanassis Pafilis

Thanassis Pafilis (TP): There is nothing more wrong than to say that Nato was ever or is defensive.

It is actually and absolutely the opposite, an offensive war machine of imperialism, defending the interests of big capital and the monopolies, especially of its powerful members.

Nato has a long record of crimes, of military interventions and wars. It has initiated, co-ordinated or supported coups and violent regime changes in many parts of the world. Nato stands for crimes and murder, for imperialist wars and injustice in the world.

LP: Nato was founded in 1949. How would you sum up the legacy of its 70-year history?

TP: Nato claims that it was founded in order to "respond to" and contain the "Warsaw Pact," when the latter was only founded six years after Nato. The dates speak for themselves and when the Warsaw Pact was dissolved in 1991, the supposed reason for Nato's existence disappeared.

But Nato went on expanding to the east, affiliating more and more member states and enlarging its radius of devastating imperialist crimes and wars in all continents.

The 1999 aggression with the 78 days of bombing of Yugoslavia was a milestone in its endeavours, acting for the first time out of the territory of the Nato alliance. Many examples followed since then, in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Libya, Ukraine and Yemen, etc.

LP: What key threats does US-led Nato pose to the world today?

TP: Nato leads the arms race and global military spending, burdening the peoples. In 2018, the total war-related spending by all 29 Nato members reached \$963 billion, 53 per cent of worldwide military spending – more than the remaining 164 countries of the world.

Only Nato European members and Canada will spend \$100 billion more on military expenses by the end of 2020.

The US, with Nato's support, withdraws from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF), a decision that poses a serious threat of nuclear escalation and of the redeployment of US missiles in Europe, as has happened with the Pershing II missiles in the 1980s, leading

to mass peace demonstrations in defence of peace and disarmament.

The US and its Nato allies relentlessly increase their military activities and expand their bases and installations from the Caspian Sea to the Arctic, closer and closer to Russia, but also in the Asia-Pacific region, tightening the encirclement of China.

This vast network of foreign military bases, naval fleets, the so-called anti-missile systems and the systems of global surveillance, which the US and its allies in Nato have spread across Europe and the world, are instruments of their strategy of world domination.

And all the above is being unanimously signed, ratified and endorsed by all the governments in the Nato states.

LP: The World Peace Council was also established 70 years ago – to struggle against imperialist aggression, against Nato and for peace. Could you tell us something about how it fulfils this role?

TP: The WPC was founded under the slogan "No more war – no more fascism," on the ashes of World War II with its more than 50 million victims, half of them only from the USSR.

The WPC was always on the side of the poor and the oppressed, from the time of the national liberation movements, the imperialist wars in Korea and Vietnam, in support of the Cuban Revolution and all just causes of the peoples of the world.

What differentiates the WPC from other movements and structures is its anti-imperialist line and identity and our comprehensive and global analysis of the root causes of wars and misery.

We were the only international peace structure which opposed the Nato aggression in Yugoslavia and the successive aggression which followed all these years without "discounts" or a pacifist approach towards the European Union which was considered by several others as the "democratic counter-pole" towards the US.

Life has proved us right, especially if you look at the militarisation of the EU which goes hand in hand with Nato, the Permanent Structural Cooperation (Pescos) of the EU, the European Interventions' Initiative and the plans to create an EU army.

The WPC took a clear position towards the imperialist intervention and invasion in Iraq, Libya and now in Syria and denounced the multiple attempts for an overthrow of the democratically elected government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

Likewise we denounced the coup d'etat in Bolivia which led to the overthrow of the legitimately re-elected president Evo Morales.

In all these cases the driving force for imperialism's and Nato's aggressiveness is the aim to control natural and energy resources, the roads and pipelines and the spheres of influence, together with the markets.

The WPC relies absolutely and exclusively on the support of its members and friends and is accountable to them.

LP: Turning to Nato's summit in London, in what ways do the priorities of its agenda threaten peace, stability and development across the globe?

TP: At its London summit Nato will celebrate its superior military forces' readiness for war,

along with its 70th anniversary.

As its secretary general has pointed out, "For the first time in history," Nato achieved "combat-ready" battle-groups; increased its presence in the east; tripled the size of the Nato Response Force; increased defence spending in all Nato allied countries for five years in a row and stationed more US troops in Europe."

After the previous Warsaw and Brussels summits, Nato has officially declared its readiness for a nuclear first strike. It has declared Colombia to be an almost affiliated member and it now also considers Brazil as a strategic partner for its plans.

LP: What would you say are the most urgent tasks for the peace movements based in leading Nato member countries and how might their struggles be better linked with those of peace organisations elsewhere in the world?

TP: We appeal to all organisations and activists in Europe who defend the cause of peace, to promote actions against Nato and its London summit, for the dissolution of this political-military bloc and in support of the immediate struggle within each Nato member state for withdrawal from this aggressive military pact.

The WPC was present at all previous summits in the protests and demonstrations against Nato, including in Washington DC last March where we also held, for the first time in history, a WPC anti-Nato event on US soil.

We propose to the peace movements and stand for the struggle for the dissolution of Nato and at the same time we underline the need to struggle in the Nato states for disengagement from it.

We demand the immediate withdrawal of all Nato forces involved in military aggression and occupation. Under our campaign "Yes to Peace – No to Nato" we will be present also in the demonstration on the streets of London, together with the British Peace Assembly on December 3.

■ The British Peace Assembly is affiliated to the World Peace Council.



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