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## The Bet Continues to Be on War

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In a formidable discussion featuring Frei Betto, on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the first edition of the book *Fidel and Religion*, the prominent Brazilian intellectual recalled a chilling fact: the European Union will disburse 800 billion euros from its coffers for the rearmament of member countries. This information was preceded by another: the FAO needs 500 billion dollars to eradicate hunger, a figure that has been impossible to raise.

The priorities are clear: the capitalist philosophy that permeates the planet places death above peace, Betto expressed.

These reflections led me to delve into a recent conflict that has become a point of divergence between the United States and the European Union: peace in Ukraine. While Trump tirelessly crows that he will end the conflict, Europe is betting everything on it *not* ending, at least for the time being.

Despite serious corruption cases shaking close collaborators of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, the European Union is analyzing how to continue funding Ukraine.

According to statements by the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, the bloc's authorities are evaluating two options: raising money through loans from member countries or using frozen Russian assets in European financial institutions. The latter, according to von der Leyen, is the most viable option.

The amount of frozen assets is not known exactly: data varies and few countries are transparent about it. It is estimated that the amount is around 200 billion euros. However, Belgium—the bloc's country holding the largest share of these assets—has expressed reservations about this alternative.

While they decide whether or not to seize the assets, they have announced that from the profits these assets generate, 6 billion euros have been sent to Ukraine, as part of the 45 billion agreed for this purpose within the G7. According to von der Leyen, this disbursement seeks to "*give a boost to Ukraine*," meaning, to further stoke a conflict that evidently fills the pockets of a few, to the detriment of the quality of life—or even at the cost of it—for

thousands of Europeans.

And this is not an empty statement: since the start of this conflict and the one in Gaza, the profits of arms companies have continued to grow. In 2023 alone, the earnings of the top 100 companies producing war materiel were around 600 billion dollars. Of course, among these entities are several European ones: Airbus (pan-European), Italy's Leonardo, France's Thales, and Germany's Rheinmetall.

These profits, along with those reported by smaller eurozone companies dedicated to the war industry, justify the 800 billion announced by Ursula von der Leyen. Following the example—or the bad example—of the United States, the European Union is betting on the arms industry to recover economically and continue winning Washington's confidence.

*"A strong Europe is a strong NATO,"* declared the President of the European Commission a few months ago in a meeting with the US Vice President.

Capitalist logic again privileges destruction and death. It can be asserted that the European bloc has reached this situation, largely, because of that conflict to which it now directs all its strength and financial reserves. Renouncing Russian energy carriers to buy them in US markets at higher prices—to cite just one example—was one of the first signals that the European economy would enter a difficult situation, which translates into inflation and hardships for its population.

Resorting to a warlike industry that has proven profitable is resorting to death, in a world deeply stricken that needs peace.

As I write these lines, the most recent announcement is the start of Operation "Southern Lance" against "drug trafficking," with unforeseen consequences for peace in Latin America and the Caribbean. And one wonders: are we destined to live in war? One of the answers to this question was offered by Betto when he expressed that a few believe they have the right to have everything at the cost of the suffering and death of many.

That is why every dollar or euro spent on arms is reprehensible, because the objective is not defense against the supposed Russian threat, nor against drugs, nor against Palestinians armed with stones. The true objective is to convert blood into money, suffering into luxury, and pain into waste.

**Translated by Sergio A. Paneque Díaz / CubaSi Translation Staff**

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