

A year has passed since Putin's invasion of Ukraine. There is little doubt: as long as Putin is in the Kremlin, the war will not end. It will drag on and expand. The size of the Russian Army is rapidly increasing, the defense industry is being reoriented, and education is becoming an instrument of propaganda and military training.

For Putin, it is one "forever war". After all, Putin and the people around him seriously think that they have long been involved in some war. It's just now that this war is entering an aggressive phase.

It is obviously impossible for Putin to win this war, but there are no achievable goals there; the real goal is simply to keep Vladimir Putin in power.

For the first two months, all the crushing power of the Russian army was split by a handful of weary, somewhat armed Ukrainian fighters. They fought with the stubborn belief that history favors them, because they carried in the depths of their souls the freedom that must surely give birth to victory – the goal of every war. The Russians carried only their lonesome blindness.

Judging by the results of the first year, the Russian side suffered between 100,000 and 200,000 dead and wounded, lost half of its tanks, and almost emptied its stockpiles of ammunition. Cut off from the Western world, Russia has lost its largest natural oil and gas markets. The best part of the Russian elite is in exile.

The war is also failure of all Russian foreign policy, because aid to the Donbas has turned into not so much aid to the inhabitants of the Donbas, but rather into a process of sacrifice of the residents of the region. However, Putin still does not believe that he has lost the war; on the contrary, he continues to lead it, and prepares a big new offensive to take full control of the Lugansk and Donetsk regions.

The Western countries do not seem to have realized the extent of Vladimir Putin's existential threat to the world.

In 2016, Putin held a mini-geography exam for gifted children. During the exam, the president asked a nine-year-old schoolboy where the borders of

Russia end. “The borders of Russia end through the Bering Strait with the USA...” - a schoolboy began to answer. Putin interrupted it and answered himself: “Russia’s borders do not end anywhere”.

Does all this mean that Putin will not stop in Ukraine? I think that his goal is not only the conquest of Ukraine, but also the total defeat of the entire Western system which he hates so much; along with the Western way of life, with all our freedoms, openness and democracy – yes, imperfect but therefore no less priceless. And we cannot afford to lose, because no one wants to live in peace under the laws of Charles Darwin, where the strong take whatever they want and the weak have only to submit or die.

We must firmly decide that we must win. The victory of all of Europe in a war that we did not choose depends on Ukraine’s victory. The West should stop signaling its indecisiveness and frugality to Putin, and instead declare once and for all resolutely: “Stop this war and start negotiations – otherwise your army will be destroyed in Ukraine by all possible means”.

Whenever the West supplied Ukraine with homeopathic portions of weapons, it sent a signal to Putin that it had its limitations. If Ukraine had had tanks in November, which the West has only now promised, the Ukrainians could have decisively changed the strategic balance of power by recapturing most of the Lugansk region and cutting off the Russian “land corridor” between Crimea and Donbas.

In that case, the desperate Kremlin might have come to the negotiating table. Instead, the war continues, and Putin refuses to admit that he has been defeated.

By Putin’s logic, it sounds like this: “Yes, everything went wrong in the best scenario – well, it’s okay, we are ready to shed all the blood we have, but the West will not sacrifice those resources that are so precious to it”. In this manner, Putin ruthlessly exploits the West’s regard for human life, which he himself does not share.

In Russia, a particular emotion runs high. This emotion is resentment, a monstrous endless bitter resentment. Nothing can satisfy this resentment.

Putin and Russian society as a whole are offended by the world order, which looks unfair to them.

This resentment is projected on the one who appears to be responsible for this world – the United States. Putin chose resentment as a formula for life. And resentment is a convenient emotion: you feel, firstly, right all the time, and secondly, unjustly trampled.

Putin now thinks it's great that the current problems with his army have been forcefully revealed prior to a major war against the entire West, which the Russian leadership considers inevitable.

We are both in trouble, Ukraine and Russia. And it would be good if we thought not only about how to help Ukraine, but also about what can be done for those who remain in Russia.

The main emotion in today's Russia is the resentment that is preserved by fear multiplied by hopelessness. And it needs a compensatory answer. Fear is beaten with hope. People need to be given hope.

It is pointless and futile to accuse the Russians today of supporting a criminal war, and to pin a collective guilt on Russia's already exhausted population. It is now politically futile because we are dealing with people who are convinced of their own powerlessness and are very scared. And in this situation, Russians should at least be given hope by demonstrating that things can be different, that Russia can be arranged differently.

Peace seems elusive, and war is inevitably long-lasting... In this war, both Ukrainians and Russians are fighting each other for their truth. The Ukrainian truth fights the Russian one, and both are paradoxically based on the historical weightlessness of absurd dogmas and prejudices. Even if Russia asks for peace now, it cannot get it – Ukraine is already seeking revenge. In addition, for those people in Ukraine, Donbass and Russia who have lost relatives and friends, any call to peace sounds like a disgrace and betrayal.

Peace, if it were to be, would be called unfair by many, but better it be: peace!