

Defend Ukraine, defend the planet

Red-Green Labour Editorial Board response to the war in *Ukraine*.

We stand with the Ukrainian people in their remarkable resistance to Putin's brutal invasion of their country driven by Great Russian chauvinism and imperialist ambition. They are facing tanks, artillery, cruise missiles launched from ships in the Black Sea and aerial assaults by Russian paratroopers. Cluster bombs have been used against civilian districts of Kharkiv, Ukraine's second city. A 24 mile column of Russian armour is heading towards Ukraine's capital city with the aim (we can assume) of blasting the Ukrainian government out of office and instituting regime change by force.

We strongly support Ukraine's right of self-determination: i.e. its right to determine its own future free from interference or intimidation from East or West.

We also support Ukrainian demands for arms and military assistance from the international community and for economic measures to be taken against Putin's regime and its billionaire backers. Demands that are echoed by sections of the socialist and progressive opposition within Russia.

We are in awe at the mobilisation of popular resistance which appears to have slowed down the Russian advance. Weapons have been distributed on the streets and volunteers are joining the resistance in large numbers. The government website is not only urging people to join the resistance but is giving instructions on how to make petrol bombs for use in street

fighting. New recruits are going straight to the front lines with no military equipment other than a rifle a machine gun or a grenade launcher in their hands.

We welcome the decision of the EU countries to open their borders and to provide safe haven for refugees and we demand that the racist Johnson government in Britain follows suit – which it is still refusing to do. Also that it drops its racist *Immigration and Nationalities Bill*, which would impose further and draconian restriction on refugees trying to enter the UK.

We stand in solidarity with the remarkable demonstrations that have been taking place around the world – not least in Russia itself where thousands have been thrown into jail – in support of the Ukrainian resistance. A victory for Putin in this war would not only strengthen right-wing forces globally, but would strengthen imperialism both East and West.

The driving force behind Putin's invasion of Ukraine, we should be clear, has little to do with NATO's ambitions, which he hides behind, but his long-held ambition to promote Great Russian chauvinism with its own spheres of influence – including Ukraine.

We demand the withdrawal of all Russian and Byelorussian troops all the regions of Ukraine including from the Donbass region and Crimea.

The ecological dimension

The Russian invasion of Ukraine took place a few days before the publication of the IPCC's *Sixth Assessment on Climate Change* which has issued its starkest warning yet on the future of the planet. Catastrophic climate change, it says, is now "widespread, rapid, and intensifying".

This reminds us that a Putin victory against Ukraine would not

just have a reactionary impact on world politics, but would dislocate the struggle against global warming and climate change making the future of life on the planet even more precarious.

The struggle against Russian aggression and the struggle to save the planet from catastrophic climate change are now indivisible. The dangers posed by the petrochemical industry are not 'just' about carbon emissions – catastrophic as they are. They are also about the role of the petrochemical industry in geo-politics, and the drive it generates towards resource conflict and wars. Many of the wars that have taken place since WW2 have had this behind them.

In fact Putin sees Russian oil and gas reserves, and the vast profits that they generate for him, as his trump card in his invasion of Ukraine and his ongoing imperialist ambitions. The reliance of much of Europe, Germany in particular, on Putins oil and gas, has meant that the most effective measure against him, which would be to close down his oil and gas market, is very difficult to take.

The rapid transition to renewable energy that we need, therefore, is not 'just' to reduce carbon emissions and curb global warming, but to protect life on the planet by breaking the strangle-hold of the petrochemical industry and the conflicts and wars it generates. Renewables on the other hand can be developed anywhere in the world and offer a more equitable access to energy resources than the lottery of oil and gas deposits.

Nuclear power should also be rejected since it also locks us into the military industrial war machine since the existence of a nuclear power industry is an integral part of the manufacture of nuclear weapons. In Ukraine we have the nightmare of 15 soviet-era nuclear reactors in all (as well as the Chernobyl disaster site) now being contested in a war zone where anything could happen to them, either by accident or

design.

Our immediate task, however, is to stop Putin destroying the fragile gains made in Glasgow in November and to start the fight for better outcomes from COP27 to be held in Sharm el-Sheikh in Egypt later this year. To do that we have to stand in solidarity with the people of Ukraine.

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