Ukrainians Haven't Been Forgotten

Connor Beaton writes for Heckle.scot, publication of the Republican Socialist Platform, on the recent day school in February 2024 organised by Ukraine Solidarity Campaign Scotland.

A landmark seminar organised by the Ukraine Solidarity Campaign Scotland (USCS) began on Saturday *[3rd February 2024]* before last with the uplifting news that public service union UNISON's Scottish council had just voted unanimously to affiliate to the relatively young organisation. With the war featuring less and less prominently in the media, this was welcomed as an encouraging signal that Scottish trade unionists have not forgotten about their Ukrainian counterparts as the second anniversary of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine looms.

Taking place under the title 'Ukraine's fight is our fight', the four-hour-long event in Edinburgh's Augustine United Church – which was live-streamed in its entirety – boasted an impressive range of speakers, many of whom were Ukrainian socialists, trade unionists and environmentalists. This made the event a refreshing departure from many other left-wing forums in Scotland and the rest of these islands in which the

war has tended to be discussed with very little, if any, input from or reference to the views of Ukrainians.

USCS was established in the immediate aftermath of the all-out invasion in February 2022, initially as an outgrowth of the longer-running London-based Ukraine Solidarity Campaign (USC) but increasingly functioning as an independent organisation in its own right.

It rejects the argument advanced by some sections of the left, particularly those in and around the Stop the War Campaign, that the war in Ukraine should be understood principally as a conflict between Russia and NATO in which socialists should be neutral; instead, taking its cue from left-wing Ukrainians, it recognises that Ukraine is fighting a defensive war against Russian imperialism in which it deserves support from those who uphold the right of nations to self-determination.

This event, by far the most substantial and successful event organised by USCS in its short existence, served two purposes: firstly, to aid socialists in Scotland in better understanding the current situation in Ukraine and the impact of the war on Ukrainian workers, the economy and the environment; and secondly, to focus minds on how we can organise the most effective and practical solidarity from Scotland to Ukraine.

Pictured: Dr Taras Fedirko speaking at the USCS seminar in Edinburgh.

Radical perspectives

The day suitably began with a harrowing report from Olesia Briazgunova, international secretary of the Confederation of Free Trade Unions of Ukraine (KPVU), who joined the event remotely from Kyiv. She set out a now-familiar description of the dual role of Ukrainian trade unions in supporting their members on the frontlines while also defending their interests against employers and the state, all against the backdrop of martial law which has made strikes and union rallies illegal. The KPVU has called on western governments to continue to provide economic, humanitarian and military aid to Ukraine (not an uncontroversial demand in trade unions here), to impose stronger sanctions on Russia and to use frozen Russian assets towards a "just reconstruction".

Solidarity greetings were subsequently heard from Labour MSP Katy Clark, SNP MP Tommy Sheppard, Green MSP Ross Greer and PCS assistant general secretary John Moloney – a reflection of the broad nature of USCS, whose members consciously decided not to have a narrow focus on the trade union movement but to instead build support for Ukraine across Scotland's trade unions, political parties and social movements.

An exceptionally good, if sobering, presentation was given by Dr Taras Fedirko, a political and economic anthropologist at the University of Glasgow. He explained in clear terms the extent to which the Ukrainian economy is now overwhelmingly dependent on western aid. Ukraine's defence spending alone was greater in 2022 than the entire state budget in 2021; the country's annual tax revenue just about covers military salaries.

Even the International Monetary Fund (IMF), alarmed by this unsustainable reliance on other countries, has encouraged the previously libertarian Zelenskyy government to pursue progressive taxation (an irony observed by LSE's Luke Cooper

in a recent article which Fedirko mentioned and endorsed).

Fedirko's presentation left an impression of two distinct paths open to Ukraine: one in which the massive labour shortages created by the war, combined with the expansion of the state and a turn towards progressive taxation, provides enough leverage to organised labour to push for a social-democratic reconstruction; or one in which Ukraine becomes an "Eastern European Israel" with a powerful military-industrial complex orienting the entire economy and society around confrontation with Russia. With well-paid British consultants among western experts deployed to Ukraine to shape economic strategy, there is an acute danger of the British and European left leaving the question of Ukraine's economic future uncontested and allowing the right to exclusively shape it.

Pictured: Iryna Zamuruieva speaking at the USCS seminar in Edinburgh.

Environmental crisis

A similarly thorough presentation by Iryna Zamururieva, an ecological activist based in Edinburgh, highlighted the scale of the environmental damage caused by the war, much of which will have a cross-generational impact. For example, up to 40% of Ukrainian land is now mined.

While the full extent of the damage can understandably not be

determined until areas which are either occupied or the site of active conflict become safe for researchers to access, it has already been established that hundreds of species of animals and plants are at risk of extinction (alarming not least because biodiversity is recognised as a bulwark against climate change) while fresh water, already in short supply in Ukraine as a result of climate change, has been widely contaminated by destructive actions such as the flooding of coal mines.

The destruction of the Kakhovka dam last June, leading to devastating flooding in the Kherson region, is perhaps the best known environmental disaster arising from the war in Ukraine. Zamuruieva pointed out, however, that the construction of the dam in the 1950s was also an environmental disaster, motivated in large part by the need for fresh water in Crimea during the deportation of the Tatars – a Russian colonial crime. She also highlighted other environmental disasters; in one case which received remarkably little publicity, more than four million chickens died at Europe's largest poultry farm after the occupation made it impossible to feed them.

With fossil fuels playing a significant role both in driving and funding the war, the Scottish climate movement forms a critical part of global anti-imperialist struggle, Zamuruieva put across. She encouraged USCS supporters to attend Climate Camp Scotland this summer, as well as to pressure the Scottish Parliament to take more action; opportunities include Labour MSP Monica Lennon's proposed bill on ecocide, and the Scottish Government's ongoing consultation on a national adaptation plan that also encompasses international action.

A more technical presentation on Ukraine's major environmental challenges was separately given by Ecoaction, a Ukrainian NGO which is to receive a £400 donation from USCS – the group's first international donation.

A divided left

Very little of the day was dedicated to discussing the way in which the war has divided the left internationally, but where these came to the fore most clearly was in a session on self-determination led by Irish writer Conor Kostick, who has previously written and delivered talks about Ukraine and the politics of James Connolly.

Though at times veering too close to a speculative exercise along the lines of 'what would Connolly say if he were here today?', Kostick correctly pointed out that Connolly was prepared to accept arms from a rival imperialist power, i.e. the German Empire, in order to wage a struggle for national liberation against the British Empire. Condemning Ukrainians for soliciting and accepting arms from NATO countries may be a legitimate political position, he said, but those advocating for it can't claim they've derived their analysis from Connolly.

Neither can they claim to stand in the tradition of Lenin, added Mike Picken of Ecosocialist.scot, highlighting the Bolshevik revolutionary's writing on self-determination and in particular his opposition to annexations ("because annexation violates the self-determination of nations, or, in other words, is a form of national oppression"). This did not appear to convince Graham Campbell, now an SNP councillor, who said he had been a Leninist for almost all of his life but had since come to believe that the Soviet project was imperialist from the very beginning, owing to its suppression of Ukrainian self-determination and the subsequent Holodomor.

Leslie Cunningham, national organiser for Scotland in rs21, put across their position that Ukraine has a right to obtain weapons from whoever is willing to supply them, but also that the UK should not provide them. Everyone in the room, including the rs21 comrades, seemed to accept this was a bit

of a fudge.

Most socialist opponents of western arms supplies to Ukraine rely on the specious argument that these supplies are prolonging the war, and that ending these supplies would quickly result in peace. USCS's persuasive counter-argument, which could have been more clearly articulated from the platform on the day, is that it is up to Ukrainians to decide the extent to which they resist the Russian invasion and occupation, and when to pursue peace and on what terms. This argument was recently and very coherently made by Colin Turbett in the *Scottish Left Review*.

Allan Armstrong, a member of the Republican Socialist Platform who has incidentally written extensively about Connolly and his politics, said a withdrawal of western support for Ukraine would inevitably lead to something resembling the Munich Agreement. Ukrainian independence is vastly preferable to the alternative seen in Donetsk, Luhansk or Chechnya, he said – fascism of a far more aggressive kind than is seen in the core of Russia.

Pictured: Ukrainian students and refugees carry a flag through Dundee city centre to mark the first anniversary of the

Russian invasion in February 2023.

Building the movement

The biggest takeaway from this event is that USCS is capable of organising discussions of a remarkably high calibre, a great achievement particularly in the context of wider post-pandemic organisational challenges being faced by virtually all of the left in Scotland. There was a welcome sense of comfort with USCS's political breadth and good-natured debate flowed easily from this. It was great that printed materials from Ukrainian writers, including English editions of the Ukrainian left journal *Commons/Spilne*, were on offer.

The second anniversary of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, landing on Saturday 24th February, will overlap with Palestine solidarity demonstrations in towns and cities across Scotland. There is a valuable opportunity here to connect the Ukrainian and Palestinian peoples' struggles through a self-determination framework, which USCS is uniquely positioned to do. USCS has already rightly supported Palestine solidarity demonstrations in Scotland and distributed copies of the Ukrainian letter of solidarity with Palestinian people. Efforts to place Ukrainian and Palestinian solidarity in competition with each other should be fiercely resisted. Demonstrations organised by Ukrainian communities in Scotland should be given whole-hearted support.

Looking further ahead, the Scottish Trades Union Congress (STUC) and various trade union conferences will provide more opportunities for USCS to win affiliations from trade unions, which – while representing only one aspect of its work – will boost its capacity to organise political and practical support for Ukrainians.

There is a positive sense of momentum building in USCS. It is virtually alone on the Scottish left in answering the call for internationalist solidarity with Ukraine. Its success or

failure will reverberate for a long time to come.

CONTRIBUTOR
Connor Beaton is a republican socialist based in Dundee, where he works as a journalist. He was one of tens of thousands of young people drawn into politics by the 2014 independence referendum campaign. He is now the secretary of the Republican Socialist Platform and a local organiser for the Radical Independence Campaign.

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Main photo: USCS activists supporting Ukrainians in Glasgow's George Square on the 2nd anniversary of the Russian invasion 24 Feb 2024 (Mike Picken for ecosocialist.scot)

Other photos: Connor Beaton for Heckle.scot

Two years of war : Statement of Fourth International on Ukraine

This statement was adopted by the International Committee of the Fourth International on 25 February 2024.

a) In the context of the anniversary of 24 February 2022 invasion of Ukraine, we express our global internationalist and systematic support for Ukraine's right to self-determination and right to resist occupation and oppression, as we express it for all peoples whoever be the colonial oppressor.

b) We affirm our political independence from the neoliberal Zelensky government. That is why we aim to develop direct internationalist links from below with the left, feminist, LGBTQ+, social and environmental struggles and currents within the popular resistance to build a free, democratic therefore pluralist, independent nation.

c) Therefore we continue to give our support to the demands expressed by left political and trade-unionist Ukrainian currents:

· An immediate end to shelling, the withdrawal of Russian troops from Ukraine;

· to increase the resources consolidating the public services and social protection so much needed in the context of war and for the future independent Ukraine, and resist the ongoing attempts by the neoliberal government of Ukraine to use the war as an excuse for dismantling public services and destroying social protection

· The need to abolish all forms of “aid” conditional on privatizations;

· The support for material and financial aid which does not increase the Ukrainian foreign debt, in line with our support for the demand of cancellation of the existing debt;

· A general orientation to use funds devoted to help Ukraine resistance and reconstruction in order to contribute to building a social and democratic European project, which means the reduction of inequalities and therefore opposition to the logics of fiscal and social dumping and “competition”;

· The increase of Ukrainian wages – individual and social income – as an outlet for Ukraine industrial and agricultural production is to be radically opposed to the ongoing dominant policy (which is trying to increase Ukrainian “competitivity” in exports by reducing taxes and wages)

d) Our support to Ukrainian armed and non-armed resistance against the Russian invasion also means our solidarity with all citizens of the Russian Federation who refuse that war and are repressed because of their democratic stance.

e) We oppose the logic of 'Great Russian power' and domination over neighbouring countries. The victory of the free and democratic Ukrainian people is organically favourable to the emergence of a pluralist, peaceful and democratic Russian Federation and union of the peoples of Europe.

The Russian aggression and threats against its neighbours creates more support for NATO in those countries. The defeat of Russian aggression would therefore facilitate the struggle against NATO. We oppose the use of the Russian invasion of Ukraine as an excuse to increase military budgets. We have always been, and continue to be against any logic of counter-posed military blocs or zones of influence. We struggle for the dissolving of military blocs that are in the service of imperialism such as NATO and the Russian-led CSTO alliance. In our struggle against imperialism and for the self-determination of all peoples we fight for the defeat of Putin's project.

We reaffirm such a programme for the second anniversary of the Russian invasion of Ukraine helping to combine our full support to Ukrainian resistance to the war and to neoliberal policies with promoting new European and international progressive projects integrating eco-socialist anticapitalist dimensions.

Republished from: https://fourth.international/en/510/europe/588

From Ukraine to Palestine – Occupation is a Crime

*Ukraine socialist organisation, **Sotsialny Rukh** ('Social Movement') has published the following statement on the war against the Palestinian people in Gaza. The translation is by the Ukraine Solidarity Campa*ign.

> ***The Social Movement stands** for a just peace in the Middle East, which requires the elimination of structural oppression of Palestinians and systemic violence against the civilian population. We also condemn the Iron Swords Operation launched by the far-right Netanyahu government in response to the condemnable October 7 attacks and the war crimes being committed in its process.*

The war in the Gaza Strip has been going on for more than two months.

The Social Movement stands for a just peace in the Middle East, to achieve which it is necessary to eliminate the structural oppression of Palestinians and systematic violence against the civilian population. Our organization condemns the bloody attack carried out on October 7, 2023 against the civilian population as part of the attack on Israel by the militarized Islamist movement Hamas. The brutal massacres of kibbutzim women, foreign workers, Bedouins and other civilians, which claimed more than a thousand lives, as well as the kidnapping of civilians as hostages, cannot have any justification.

However, we condemn the Iron Swords Operation launched by the far-right Netanyahu government in response to the October 7

attack and the war crimes being committed in its process. The actions of the Israeli army in the Gaza Strip are punitive against its entire population, about half of which are children. Israel has imposed a total siege on the Gaza Strip, which has been under an illegal Israeli-Egyptian blockade since 2007, preventing the supply of water, electricity, food and medicine to Gaza's more than 2 million people, turning it into "the world's largest open-air prison ".

According to various data provided by international organizations, within a few weeks of this operation, up to 18,000 civilians, including 7,800 children were killed and another 50,000 people were injured; 85% of the nearly 2 million population of the Gaza Strip – were forced to flee their homes. More than 200 medical workers and more than 100 UN employees were among the dead. UN confirms that at least half of the population of Gaza is reduced to starvation. It seems unacceptable to justify the imposition of a humanitarian catastrophe and the terror of a powerful military machine against the civilian population under the pretext of a "war on terror", as the Russians did in Ichkeria/Chechnya or the Americans did in Iraq.

Israel's next military operation in the Gaza Strip is the

exact opposite of an effective resolution of the conflict. Such a policy has been going on for decades, since the state of Israel, after confrontation with neighboring Arab countries, reinforced by British colonial policies, displaced hundreds of thousands of Palestinians from their land, after which millions of their descendants were doomed to flee (events known as the Nakba – "catastrophe" in Arabic). The Israeli authorities continue to ignore numerous UN resolutions, the latest of which was adopted on October 27 by the votes of 120 of the 193 member states in the General Assembly and called for a ceasefire. Reports from the UN and human rights organizations have repeatedly compared the segregation of Palestinians practiced by Israel to the apartheid regime in South Africa.

Israeli settlers, many of them militant fanatics, continue their policy of colonization and violence against the Palestinian population in the West Bank with the connivance of the Israeli authorities, who carry out the daily humiliation, arbitrary detention and killing of Palestinian men and **women {and children}??.** Even before this year's events, according to the calculations of the Israeli human rights organization Bezelem, since 2000, Israelis have killed more than 10,000 Palestinian men and women. Moreover, the general rule is the disproportionality of violence on the part of Israel, with which it responds even to exclusively peaceful protests. For example, during the suppression of the Palestinian **[Great March of Return]** to the wall blocking Gaza Israeli security forces killed 195 Palestinians, including 41 minors **[in a year since March 2018]** (data from the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs). And in terms of the number of Palestinians killed in the West Bank, 2023 became a record year for the entire time that the UN has been keeping statistics (and this is as of October, when Israeli security forces killed more than a hundred people in this part of Palestine, which does not have any Hamas bases). The indifferent reaction of the world community, no more than

“deep concern”, led to the further despair of local residents in peaceful ways of resolving the conflict, which is what the fundamentalist forces are using.

The current Netanyahu government, also filled with reactionaries and religious fanatics who openly dehumanize the Palestinians and call for their murder and genocide, has gone even further than its predecessors. Israel itself at one time played a not insignificant role in supplanting the mainly secular and non-violent resistance to the occupation among the Palestinians of the time of the first Intifada with a more right-wing, violent and fundamentalist variety. Netanyahu and his officials admitted that they have encouraged the reactionaries and religious fanatics from Hamas, because that weakened the Palestinian Authority, introduced additional discord into the condition of Palestinians and sabotaged the prospects of building a sovereign state for them.

This reckless policy did not change even after Egyptian, but also Israeli intelligence, current and retired military ranks warned of possible escalation as a result of the blockade and colonial policy. Thus, the former head of the Israeli Navy and the Shabak secret service, Ami Ayalon, warned that “when Palestinians see us destroying their homes, fear, frustration and hatred grow. These are the reasons that push people to terrorist organizations.”

Netanyahu, like other conservatives, constantly used the rhetoric of “defence against threats” to justify their attacks on democratic freedoms and further build-up of the security apparatus, which, however, did not avert the attacks of Hamas from Gaza but instead was preoccupied with terrorizing the Palestinians in the West Bank. After all, the never-ending spiral of violence has not and will not increase security for anyone except extreme conservative-nationalist forces. Such an atmosphere has already led to the most right-wing Knesset and government in Israel’s history. And the current war has provided an indulgence for the Netanyahu cabinet against which

mass protests continued for most of 2023 (characteristically, a poll conducted on the eve of the escalation showed that the majority of the population of Gaza did not trust the Hamas movement, which more than a decade and a half ago after a civil conflict with Fatah established an authoritarian one-party government here).

At the same time, the mainstream of both leading parties of the main patron of Israel – the United States – demonstrated an immediate readiness to provide unconditional military and diplomatic support for almost all actions of the Israeli government. Here, both the contrast with the hesitation regarding arms supplies to Ukraine and the desire of the most reactionary circles of the American ruling class – the right wing of the Republican Party – to finance the ethnic cleansing and adventures of the Netanyahu government at the expense of depriving Ukrainians of aid are notable. In this, the Trumpists are similar to many other far-right forces in the West: having many anti-Semites in their ranks, such parties at the same time protect the ability of both Israeli and Russian security forces to kill residents of Palestine and Ukraine with impunity.

What's more, Washington itself contributed to the current rise in tensions, supporting Israel's encroachment on Jerusalem as its capital exclusively since the Trump administration. Now the US is vetoing initiatives in the UN Security Council, such as Brazil's proposed provision of humanitarian corridors or the latest ceasefire resolution of December 8, which was voted for by 13 out of 15 members of the UN Security Council. As in the case of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, this once again proves that the permanent members of the UN should be deprived of their veto powers which paralyze the ability of the international community to stop the carnage.

Russia's full-scale aggression against Ukraine has increased the atmosphere of international tension and impunity, enabling the escalation of a series of conflicts that put entire

communities on the brink of survival as already happened with the Armenian population of Nagorno-Karabakh as a result of the aggressive actions of the Aliyev regime in September of this year. The current round of confrontation in the Middle East is of the same ilk and resulted in disturbing trends in the rest of the world, in particular, a surge in anti-Semitism and Islamophobia (up to attempted Jewish pogroms, such as in the North Caucasus controlled by Putin's Russia, armed attacks on Palestinians such as the students in Vermont, or the murder of people such as the Palestinian boy in Chicago or the police shooting of Jewish tourists and a local guide in Egypt).

Unfortunately, the reaction of the Ukrainian authorities also reveals an extremely biased and one-sided approach: rightly condemning the attacks on civilians in Israel and honouring the dead, it at the same time prefers to ignore the dead civilians in Palestine. Despite the fact that Ukrainian diplomacy at the UN has consistently condemned the illegal occupation of Palestinian lands and other violations by Israel in almost all cases, whose authorities take an ambivalent position on the Russian occupation and provide the latest precedents to follow. Instead, the shameful rhetoric of demonizing Palestinians, declaring all of them, from infants to the elderly, as "terrorists" prevails in the Ukrainian media.

Yes, one should be aware that for many of the self-proclaimed "friends" of Palestine, whether they are well-known Hamas partners and sponsors, such as the authoritarian authorities of Qatar, Turkey, Iran, Saudi Arabia, or Russia (which maintained emphatically friendly relations with both the Netanyahu government and with Hamas), the tragedy of the Palestinian people is only a bargaining chip. But reducing the Palestinians to "proxies of Tehran and the Kremlin" in the domestic information space is as illiterate and outrageous a caricature as the "proxy" justification of Russian aggression against Ukraine.

Instead, it is in Ukraine that the suffering of the Palestinian people should be understood: there, too, the occupation by a state that possesses nuclear weapons and superiority in the armed forces continues, simply disregards UN resolutions and international law, denies the rights to subjectivity and resistance. The tragedy we are now experiencing should sharpen our sensitivity to similar human experiences in all corners of the world. The Ukrainian letter of solidarity with the Palestinian people, posted on the platform of the "Spilne" magazine website, demonstrated such alternative voices to the official one, which affirm the universal right to self-determination and resistance to the occupation.

"How lonely are you, our loneliness, when they win their wars," asked the Arab writer Hiba Kamal Abu Nada in her poem, when "your land is sold at auction, and the world is a free market… This is the age of ignorance, when no one will intercede for us." The 32-year-old poet became one of the thousands of civilian victims of Israeli airstrikes this year. The duty of the world is not to leave the oppressed alone, especially when faced with the threat of their physical extermination. Not to put up with bombs and rockets flying at their heads. Neither in Ukraine nor in Palestine.

Therefore, the "Social Movement" calls for an immediate ceasefire and the admission of humanitarian aid to the region, and also expresses its support for the Palestinian people in their legitimate desire for a just and lasting peace.

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More information from: https://rev.org.ua/english/

Соціальний рух

Ukraine’s Fight is Our Fight – Seminar in Edinburgh Saturday 3rd February 1pm-5pm

https://bit.ly/USCScot24

UKRAINE'S FIGHT IS OUR FIGHT

Perspectives from social movement and trade union activists

Edinburgh's Augustine United Church, Saturday 3rd February 2024, 1pm-5pm.

Free seminar with guest speakers including:

- Tommy Sheppard MP & Katy Clark MSP
- Chris Ford of Ukraine Solidarity Campaign
- Dr Taras Fedirko on the Ukrainian economy
- Iryna Zamuraieva on the environmental crisis
- Irish historian Conor Kostick on self-determination

More info & registration: bit.ly/USCScot24

Organised by Ukraine Solidarity Campaign Scotland

Ukraine Solidarity Campaign Scotland sponsors include: Tommy Sheppard MP, Ross Greer MP. Affiliations include Edinburgh TUC, Dumfries and Galloway TUC, N Lanarkshire Unison.

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Interview with Ukrainian and Russian socialists

At the recent International Committee of the Fourth International, held at the IIRE in Amsterdam, two delegates from Ukraine and Russia attended. The interview below is with Vasylyna, a member of Sotsialnyi Rukh/Соціальний Рух, and Mia, an activist in the Russian Socialist Movement/Российское социалистическое движение, about the war and their organisations' activities.

How did you get involved in politics?

Vasylyna: My interest in political activism emerged during my studies in urban studies, where we often used Marxist theory to analyse different processes that affect our living spaces. Surrounded by lots of young progressive people from all over Europe at the university and united by similar struggles of being international students, we initiated a union for the students of our department, fighting for equal tuition fees for European and non-European students. I joined Sotsialnyi Rukh because theory alone is not enough, driven by an urge to be active on the ground. Facing devastating current challenges, Ukrainian society is extremely vulnerable but definitely more open to change. Obviously, things cannot go on in the same way as they did before. For instance, there is a lot more discussion on corruption, and journalists are uncovering examples at the highest levels of power, so it feels like things are starting to shift.

Mia: I became interested in politics during my school years. When I was 14 years old, the annexation of Crimea happened. This was a moment when I really started to dive into news

reports and listen to political commentators. However, I was almost unaware of differences on the political spectrum. The opposition field in Russia is predominantly liberal, so for many, the words “liberalism” and “democracy” are often equated. Like many people my age, I was anti-Putin, anti-conservative, pro-free elections, civil rights, and anti-corruption. I suppose my time spent at the university was important in this sense. I started reading a lot more about history and politics, and I was able to engage in political debates from a much more critical perspective. Since 2021, I have engaged in politics outside of the Student Council and university settings. I served as an election observer for the parliamentary and municipal elections of 2021 and started to participate in the activities of RSM. Soon after this, I became a full member.

What is Sotsialnyi Rukh’s position on the Zelensky government?

Vasylyna: The government’s stance is clear about fighting for the sovereignty of Ukraine, and this gets a lot of support from people. But we as an organisation are extremely critical of the political direction of the government, accompanied by neoliberal reforms and massive cuts to public spending. In Sotsialnyy Rukh, we are finding ways to organise around these issues. People stand united to defend the country, but this does not mean that Zelensky has unanimous support.

Unfortunately, oligarchy and foreign capital have a significant influence on our current president. The current government was not capable of transitioning from an economy based on profit to a war economy that would work for providing defence capacity and solving humanitarian problems. Seeking allies amongst international partners, mostly among the richest states that have their own imperialist interests (like the USA), could cause harm to the support of Ukraine and bring out confusion in the countries of the Global South. We do not believe that our government is capable of fixing mistakes. That’s why there is a strong urge for mass grassroots pressure

and political critique from a leftist perspective. The key priorities of the state should be based on the protection of people's interests, fostering social cohesion, and promoting global solidarity against oppression.

What campaigning work is the Revolutionary Socialist Movement doing?

Mia: Campaigning work is difficult for our comrades in Russia due to the repressive regime. We try to work within the law because we don't want to endanger activists. Our main goals now are to shift the oppositional political conversation to the left and provide practical support for people. For instance, we have been doing work with independent trade unions in Russia. There is a union for delivery workers, which we have been helping to organise and support. When the activists and independent trade union leaders are imprisoned, we organise help—financially and via media campaigns.

We are actively working within the "University Platform" that unites professors and students to defend their rights and freedoms. We try to build communities and provide a space to discuss politics to overcome the atomisation of Russian society. Even inside repressive regimes, there are still struggles and problems that are fought on the ground. When possible, we align with grassroots initiatives to defend people's rights against construction companies' lobbying and resist the destruction of nature. We are also prioritising the feminist platform as well as anti- and decolonial work within our movement; this is particularly important to us given the invasion of Ukraine. What is often overlooked is that while our government wages a colonial war against Ukraine, indigenous people in Russia are dying out. Indigenous populations often live in poor outlying areas of Russia's periphery, where people are mired in poverty and debt. Mobilisation occurs disproportionately in poor regions of the country, where people are pressured to join the army to pay off debts, often lack the ability to resist, and have fewer

sources of information than the rest of the population.

What about the war?

Vasylyna: We support the Ukrainians' right to resist the invasion and colonisation. Some Sotsialnyi Rukh members have joined the armed forces and are fighting the Russian army. There are not really other viable options in terms of separate fighting militias and units at the moment.

Some on the left say that the conflict is primarily a proxy conflict between imperialists; do you agree?

Vasylyna: We do not see this as a proxy war. It is, first and foremost, a people's war for national liberation. At the beginning of the full-scale invasion, people were self-organising, doing anything they could to resist the occupation, speaking to soldiers, and older women making homemade explosives. People from all walks of life—LGBT+ people and women, artists, workers, and academics—joined the army to fight for the Ukrainians' right to self-determination.

> *"We do not see this as a proxy war. It is, first and foremost, a people's war for national liberation."*

Mia: Some on the left have this false pacifism, and they put an ideological lens on the war that obscures rather than clarifies, but actually obscures the situation for real people on the ground. Of course, the Ukrainians have the right to defend themselves; they are the main victims in this conflict. This label of 'proxy war' doesn't give any agency to the Ukrainians themselves. People calling for negotiations and a ceasefire need to be clear on what basis. The problem is, no one would dictate to Russia the price they would demand for peace. But some on the left want to dictate conditions to the Ukrainians and say they need to sacrifice their national sovereignty by accepting annexations. Why?

What is the strength of the far right in Ukraine?

Vasylyna: The far-right can still be a threat to some individuals and social movements, but in general, Ukrainian society stands against authoritarian and chauvinistic ideas, as those ideas are at the base of Russian imperialism. Moreover, the influence and visibility of far-right movements in Ukraine are less strong compared to Western societies, for instance, Germany. Currently, far-right activists are not represented in big politics, but we need to be prepared to resist far-right interests in the future. History shows that wars, unfortunately, shape the favourable base for spreading hateful ideologies. Nevertheless, Ukrainian society demonstrated that it's empowered by its diversity and not by cultivating ethnic nationalism and national isolation.

> *"Ukrainian society demonstrated that it's empowered by its diversity and not by cultivating ethnic nationalism and national isolation."*

Will Ukraine win the war?

Vasylyna: Of course! It is the only way to liberate the country. We have to end the Russian invasion as a priority. We definitely need more arms because this is an actual fight, and these things matter.

How can the international workers movement and left help?

Vasylyna: We have the European Network of Solidarity with Ukraine, which meets weekly. There have been international visits by delegates from different countries. There was a good campaign to cancel Ukraine's debt and, recently, to free the Ukrainian human rights activist Maksym Butkevych, who was captured by Russian forces and tortured before being sentenced to 13 years in prison. Anything that people can do to help spread information about people like Butkevych and put pressure on Russia to release him would help. We would very

much like the international left to offer Ukraine progressive solutions that would allow us to implement a just reconstruction and ensure sustainable development. The people of Ukraine want to live in peace and decent social conditions, and for this, it is necessary to eliminate the influence of the oligarchy, transfer all economic resources to public ownership, and write off the foreign debt.

Mia: We urge comrades around the world, but especially in the Western world, where politics is more open and you can have more public discussions: We don't want the Russian regime to win; it will be a disaster in Ukraine and Russia. There has been a precedent for lifting sanctions from Russian oligarchs in Europe (for example, the head of "Alfa Bank," Mikhail Fridman). We claim that sanctions against Russian capitalists should be maintained, and the money should be directed towards the Ukrainian resistance, Russian civil society organisations, and helping reconstruct Ukraine after the war. We also call for international solidarity with political prisoners. Among them are leftists, anarchists, anti-fascists, and trade union organisers. We welcome direct actions to help us raise money to help those needing political asylum and those already imprisoned. Prosecuted activists often escape, but they end up fleeing to places like Kazakhstan and other countries under Russian influence, where they are detained and then face deportation back to Russia. At the same time, the visa regime is very restrictive, and the procedures take a very long time. Land borders with EU countries are effectively closed, and the simplified procedure for obtaining visas has been canceled. There is a need to support those needing political asylum—those who refuse to be sent to war and escape. It is necessary to demand that the European Commission and the European Parliament adopt a unified approach to providing international protection for Russian citizens who are at risk of persecution.

What was your view of the International Committee meeting?

Vasylyna: It was very important to come and hear the arguments from different organisations. There are certainly some contributions that my organisation would disagree with. But also, I am interested in discussing within SR how to develop our policies and ideas based on some of what I heard.

Mia: There were some positives, but also some negatives. On the positive, everyone is open to hearing other positions and wants to know more about the positions of the RSM and what is going on in Russia. But my criticism is that we merely exchange political opinions; the left spends so much time arguing over concepts like whether something is imperialist or not. But where is the practical solidarity? We need to do more to share what we are doing on the ground. It cannot just be ideological positions.

Originally published by Anti*Capitalist Resistance https://anticapitalistresistance.org/interview-with-ukrainian-and-russian-socialists/

NOTE: The Fourth International is a worldwide organisation of revolutionary ecosocialists. Defending the self-organization of the exploited and oppressed, towards the abolition of capitalism and the building of ecosocialism, the Fourth International brings together organizations convinced that this is not possible without a root and branch, revolutionary, transformation of society. Read more here: https://fourth.international/en/166

Ukrainian Letter of Solidarity with Palestinian people

The following letter of solidarity has been published by the Ukrainian journal 'Commons'.

> *We, Ukrainian researchers, artists, political and labour activists, members of civil society stand in solidarity with the people of Palestine who for 75 years have been subjected and resisted Israeli military occupation, separation, settler colonial violence, ethnic cleansing, land dispossession and apartheid. We write this letter as people to people. The dominant discourse on the governmental level and even among solidarity groups that support the struggles of Ukrainians and Palestinians often creates separation. With this letter we reject these divisions, and affirm our solidarity with everyone who is oppressed and struggling for freedom.*
>
> *As activists committed to freedom, human rights, democracy and social justice, and while fully acknowledging power differentials, we firmly condemn attacks on civilian populations – be they Israelis attacked by Hamas or Palestinians attacked by the Israeli occupation forces and armed settler gangs. Deliberate targeting of civilians is a war crime. Yet this is no justification for the collective punishment of Palestinian people, identifying all residents of Gaza with Hamas and the indiscriminate use of the term "terrorism" applied to the whole Palestinian resistance. Nor is this a justification of continuation of the ongoing occupation. Echoing multiple UN resolutions, we know that*

there will be no lasting peace without justice for the Palestinian people.

On October 7 we witnessed Hamas' violence against the civilians in Israel, an event that is now singled out by many to demonize and dehumanize Palestinian resistance altogether. Hamas, a reactionary islamist organization, needs to be seen in a wider historical context and decades of Israel encroaching on Palestinian land, long before this organization came to exist in the late 1980s. During the Nakba ("catastrophe") of 1948, more than 700,000 Palestinians were brutally displaced from their homes, with entire villages massacred and destroyed. Since its creation Israel has never stopped pursuing its colonial expansion. The Palestinians were forced to exile, fragmented and administered under different regimes. Some of them are Israeli citizens affected by structural discrimination and racism. Those living in the occupied West Bank are subjected to apartheid under decades of Israel's military control. The people of the Gaza Strip have suffered from the blockade imposed by Israel since 2006, which restricted movement of people and goods, resulting in growing poverty and deprivation.

Since the 7th of October and at the time of writing the death toll in the Gaza Strip is more than 8,500 people. Women and children have made up more than 62 percent of the fatalities, while more than 21,048 people have been injured. In recent days, Israel has bombed schools, residential areas, Greek Orthodox Church and several hospitals. Israel has also cut all water, electricity, and fuel supply in the Gaza Strip. There is a severe shortage of food and medicine, causing a total collapse of a healthcare system.

Most of the Western and Israeli media justifies these deaths as mere collateral damage to fighting Hamas but is silent when it comes to Palestinian civilians targeted and killed in the Occupied West Bank. Since the beginning of 2023 alone,

and before October 7, the death toll on the Palestinian side had already reached 227. Since the 7 of October, 121 Palestinian civilians have been killed in the occupied West Bank. More than 10,000 Palestinian political prisoners are currently detained in Israeli prisons. Lasting peace and justice are only possible with the end of the ongoing occupation. Palestinians have the right to self-determination and resistance against Israeli's occupation, just like Ukrainians have the right to resist Russian invasion.

Our solidarity comes from a place of anger at the injustice, and a place of deep pain of knowing the devastating impacts of occupation, shelling of civil infrastructure, and humanitarian blockade from experiences in our homeland. Parts of Ukraine have been occupied since 2014, and the international community failed to stop Russian aggression then, ignoring the imperial and colonial nature of the armed violence, which consequently escalated on the 24th of February 2022. Civilians in Ukraine are shelled daily, in their homes, in hospitals, on bus stops, in queues for bread. As a result of the Russian occupation, thousands of people in Ukraine live without access to water, electricity or heating, and it is the most vulnerable groups that are mostly affected by the destruction of critical infrastructure. In the months of the siege and heavy bombardment of Mariupol there was no humanitarian corridor. Watching the Israeli targeting the civilian infrastructure in Gaza, the Israeli humanitarian blockade and occupation of land resonates especially painfully with us. From this place of pain of experience and solidarity, we call on our fellow Ukrainians globally and all the people to raise their voices in support of the Palestinian people and condemn the ongoing Israeli mass ethnic cleansing.

We reject the Ukrainian government statements that express unconditional support for Israel's military actions, and we

consider the calls to avoid civilian casualties by Ukraine's MFA belated and insufficient. This position is a retreat from the support of Palestinian rights and condemnation of the Israeli occupation, which Ukraine has followed for decades, including voting in the UN. Aware of the pragmatic geopolitical reasoning behind Ukraine's decision to echo Western allies, on whom we are dependent for our survival, we see the current support of Israel and dismissing Palestinian right to self-determination as contradictory to Ukraine's own commitment to human rights and fight for our land and freedom. We as Ukrainians should stand in solidarity not with the oppressors, but with those who experience and resist the oppression.

We strongly object to equating of Western military aid to Ukraine and Israel by some politicians. Ukraine doesn't occupy the territories of other people, instead, it fights against the Russian occupation, and therefore international assistance serves a just cause and the protection of international law. Israel has occupied and annexed Palestinian and Syrian territories, and Western aid to it confirms an unjust order and demonstrates double standards in relation to international law.

We oppose the new wave of Islamophobia, such as the brutal murder of a Palestinian American 6-year old and assault on his family in Illinois, USA, and the equating of any criticism of Israel with anti-Semitism. At the same time, we also oppose holding all Jewish people all over the world accountable for the politics of the state of Israel and we condemn anti-Semitic violence, such as the mob attack on the airplane in Daghestan, Russia. We also reject the revival of the "war on terror" rhetoric used by the US and EU to justify war crimes and violations of international law that have undermined the international security system, caused countless deaths, and has been borrowed by other states, including Russia for the war in Chechnya and China for the

Uyghur genocide. Now Israel is using it to carry out ethnic cleansing.

Call to Action

- *We urge the implementation of the call to ceasefire, put forward by the UN General Assembly resolution.*
- *We call on the Israeli government to immediately stop attacks on civilians, and provide humanitarian aid; we insist on an immediate and indefinite lifting of siege on Gaza and an urgent relief operation to restore civilian infrastructure. We also call on the Israeli government to put an end to the occupation and recognise the right of Palestinian displaced people to return to their lands.*
- *We call on the Ukrainian government to condemn the use of state sanctioned terror and humanitarian blockade against the Gazan civilian population and reaffirm the Palestinian people's right to self-determination. We also call on the Ukrainian government to condemn deliberate assaults on Palestinians in the occupied West Bank.*
- *We call on the international media to stop pitting Palestinians and Ukrainians against each other, where hierarchies of suffering perpetuate racist rhetoric and dehumanize those under attack.*

We have witnessed the world uniting in solidarity for the people of Ukraine and we call on everyone to do the same for the people of Palestine.

For a full list of signatories, see the original article on the web https://commons.com.ua/en/ukrayinskij-list-solidarnosti/

Copies of the new English language edition of 'Commons' are available in the UK state for £10 each from Resistance Books, London – info@resistancebooks.org www.resistancebooks.org –

and in Scotland from Ukraine Solidarity Campaign Scotland uscscotland@gmail.com.

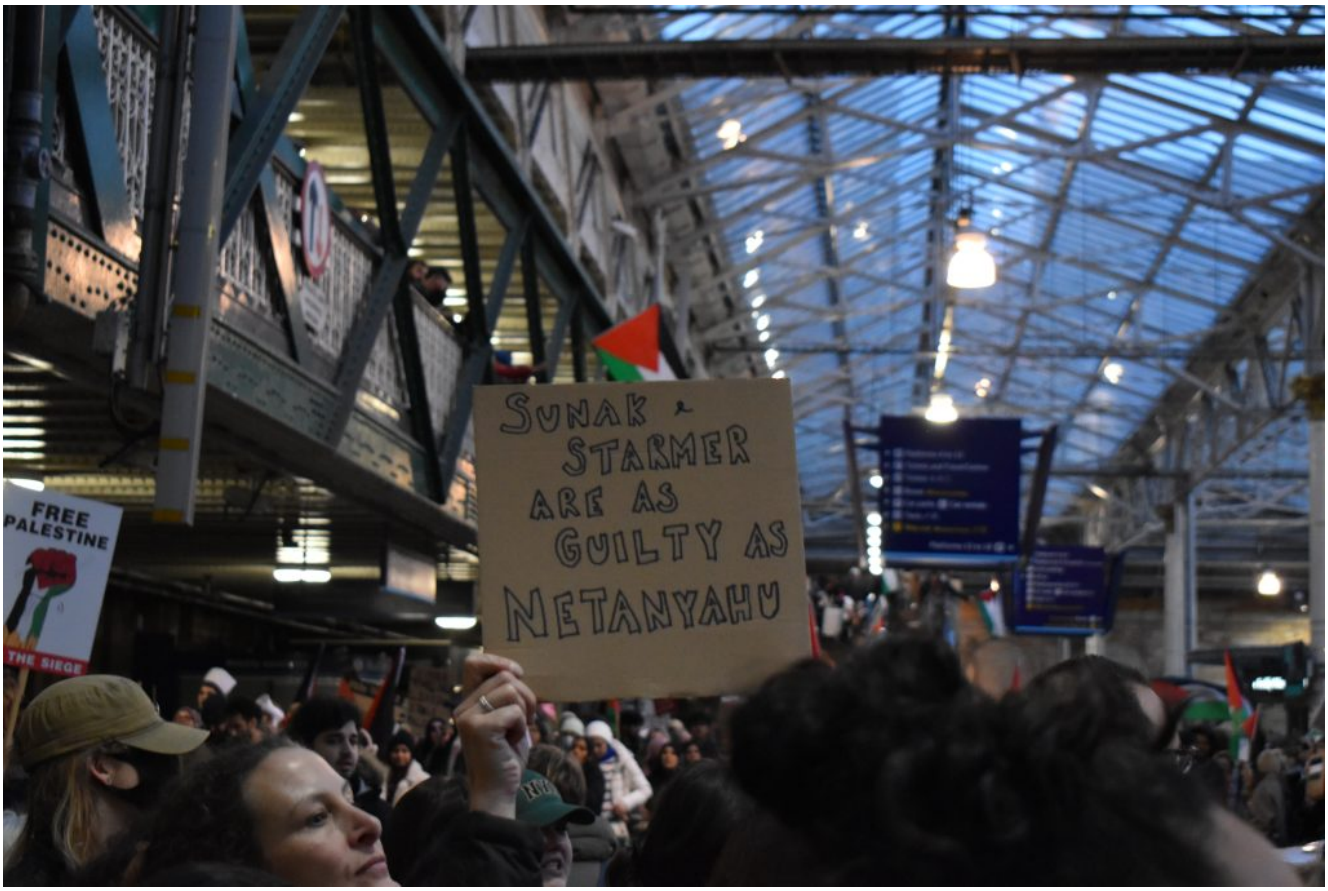
Fight the Racist Campaign Against Palestine Solidarity by Heckle Editors

Suella Braverman's smearing of the huge and diverse Palestine solidarity movement as "hate marchers" bringing violence to the streets of cities like London and Edinburgh is not merely, as some have suggested, a provocative preamble to her future Conservative leadership campaign – it is yet another example of a wider turn to authoritarianism in the UK and other European states in order to forcibly suppress democratic and progressive challenges from below.

It is significant and welcome that those organising marches and rallies for Palestine in towns and cities north and south of the border have so far refused to be cowed. They have maintained their determination not only in defiance of the Westminster government and virtually all of the mainstream media, but also frivolous arrests and violent threats from police and far-right networks.

The sheer size of these demonstrations over the past month, across these islands, Europe and the world, has already succeeded in greatly amplifying the voice of the occupied and blockaded Palestinian people and robbing the extremist Israeli government of the moral authority it claims in its military campaign against Gaza. We should recognise this enormous achievement.

Still, it is clear that these massive mobilisations alone will not be enough to stop the bombs falling on Gaza and the tanks rolling in, much as millions taking to the streets just over two decades ago could not stop the criminal Iraq War. This is why large parts of the renewed movement have embraced radical tactics including civil disobedience – as seen in train station occupations, university student walk-outs and trade union boycotts – as well as direct action targeting arms manufacturers and other institutions complicit in Israeli apartheid and genocide. These bold actions are justified and must continue. The Palestinian call for boycott, divestment and sanctions also remains extremely relevant (even if regularly misrepresented).



That this movement is so large, broad, increasingly militant and willing to break the law to prevent a greater injustice is a powerful combination. This is why there has been such a sharp state response from western governments who have, for 75 years, ranged from sponsors to allies of Israeli settler-colonialism for their own economic and geopolitical advantage.

This is another expression of the same anti-democratic impulse which has seen, for example, the criminalisation of the climate justice movement. The blocking of a Scottish independence referendum by the UK Supreme Court is also, in fact, part of this campaign against popular sovereignty.

The suppression of Palestine solidarity, however, has a unique racialised character. Across Europe, ostensibly liberal and right-wing governments alike have smeared millions of Palestine supporters as 'Islamists' to justify harsh restrictions on immigration, weaponising citizenship against protesters. The UK is far from an outlier in this regard; a looming threat is a likely expansion of the racist Prevent programme. Building strong community networks to protect our neighbours from all forms of racism, including Islamophobia and antisemitism, will be a crucial challenge in coming months.

Overcoming all of these obstacles necessitates unity and bravery. We saw an extraordinary example of this last week when the Ukrainian left journal *Commons* published its statement of solidarity with Palestinians, rejecting those – including the Ukrainian government – who have counterposed solidarity between one of these peoples and the other. We will need many more principled initiatives like this, that forge links between all those asserting the power of people against the power of states, to eventually win a democratic, peaceful and free world.]

Originally published by Heckle: https://heckle.scot/2023/11/fight-the-racist-campaign-against-palestine-solidarity/

Heckle is an 0nline Scottish publication overseen by a seven-person editorial board elected by members of the Republican Socialist Platform.

To join the Republican Socialist Platform, visit: https://join.republicansocialists.scot/

Republican Socialists

Main photo: Edinburgh Gaza demo 11 November 2023, ecosocialist.scot, other photos and graphics, Heckle and Republican Socialist Platform

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In solidarity with people's struggles against unbridled imperialism, for the liberation of the peoples and saving the environment

Statement by the International Committee of the Fourth International adopted on 25 October 2023

1. The contradictions of global capitalism continue to bring forth brutal wars and occupation. Threatened by economic and political crisis, capitalist governments, bearers of racist, patriarchal and imperial ideologies, construct external and internal enemies, provoking wars and continuing oppression. Such conflicts are part of the global logic of neo-liberal capitalism, the logic of intense economic and political competition, of widening inequalities and of the chaos it brings at every level. The wars we are facing are linked to the global crisis of capitalism and the resulting headlong rush into conflict between rival imperialist powers.

2. Since 24 February 2022, with the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine, aiming at the total subjugation of Ukraine, Russian imperialism led by Putin has passed a qualitative milestone in its war against the peoples, against all those who oppose its authoritarian and "Great-Russian" colonial project. Through their resistance, the Ukrainian people succeeded in containing the invasion, but Putin's war means a prolonged war, bringing death, the destruction of towns and infrastructures, the displacement of populations, ecocide and crimes of all kinds by the invading army.

3. The Israeli state has transformed Gaza into a new and massive ghetto. Since 8 October 2023, using the attacks by Hamas as a pretext, the Israeli state has been raining down fire on the Gaza Strip while totally cutting off the Palestinians living there from outside resources, and increasing violence in the West Bank as well. Israeli colonialism, today led by Netanyahu and his extreme right-wing coalition, has reached a new qualitative stage in its project aimed at annihilating and expelling the Palestinian people from their territory. This project is at the heart of Israeli colonialism, it is a project of extreme violence that is actively supported by the governments of the United States and the European Union.

4. The new assault by the Israeli state on the Palestinian

people has called forth protest in large parts of the world. Western powers and large parts of mainstream media call the new Israeli assault a “war against terrorism” and a response to the attack by Hamas and its allies on 7 October. During this attack, which broke through the physical wall of colonial repression and surprised the army of occupation, Hamas also committed unacceptable murders of civilians. We resolutely reject such crimes as acts that are contrary to our emancipatory project. But unlike those who use “double standards”, we, like the Israeli left, can see how such violence comes from a context of extreme oppression.

5. The Russian invasion of Ukraine and the Israeli occupation of Palestine are different in many respects, but in both cases the Fourth International is guided by the principle of support for the right to self-determination of peoples. We reject any form of campism that favours one imperialist power over another or that would reduce revolutionary politics to geopolitical calculations. Instead, we base ourselves on solidarity with the peoples and their struggles, even if today the people are led by bourgeois and/or reactionary forces. The ruling classes refuse to recognize the right of peoples to self-determination and attempt to repress any resistance. But this repression is facing determined resistance. We support the struggle of the Ukrainian people and that of the Russian and Belarusian opposition to defeat Putin’s criminal regime and obtain the withdrawal of Russian troops as the only way to achieve a just and lasting peace. Equally, we support the resistance of the Palestinian people and recognize that only the end of Israeli colonialism can bring an end to the violence.

6. Situations of war are developing in different parts of the world where oppressive powers deny the rights of peoples and national minorities. For example, the recent military offensive by the Azerbaijani regime resulted in the expulsion of more than 100,000 Armenians from Nagorno-Karabakh. This

offensive was carried out in collaboration with Erdogan's Turkish regime, which continues to wage a war of its own against the Kurds in Turkey and Syria while constantly muzzling any progressive opposition in Turkey. Elsewhere, Kashmir continues to be the victim of colonial oppression by India and Pakistan. Saudi Arabia has waged an atrocious war in Yemen over the last few years, with the support of Western arms, French arms in particular.

7. In cynical fashion, the regimes of Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Iran and others pretend to be friends of the Palestinian people. They attempt to instrumentalize the global sympathy for the Palestinian cause to legitimize their own repressive regimes while refusing to give real meaningful support to the self-determination of the Palestinian people. Equally hypocritical are the Western governments that mouth noble rhetoric about democracy and self-determination in regard to Ukraine but simultaneously persist in their cooperation with and support for Israeli colonialism, ignoring all its violations of international law. Meanwhile, the Chinese government claims leadership over "the global south" while supporting oppressive regimes such as the murderous dictatorship in Myanmar.

8. US imperialism, still the leading imperialism in the world, has seized on the Russian war against Ukraine as an opportunity to strengthen itself. Part of this is its attempt instrumentalize Ukraine in its inter-imperialist rivalry with Russia. NATO has used the opportunity to enlarge itself and NATO member-states are using the Russian invasion as a pretext for massive increases of their military budgets. We demand the immediate dissolution of NATO and CSTO. Such military blocs of imperialist states are the enemies of social and national emancipation.

9. The French state has waged its own so-called "war against terrorism" in the African Sahel, a war which has not solved any problems. This French war has provoked an anti-imperialist

response among the peoples of Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger, a response which has been used by military adventurers to seize power through coups d'état that offer no prospect of a progressive alternative. In Sudan, the military putschists are waging a war against their own peoples who are challenging their power.

10. This world of militarism and wars, of the use of weapons banned by international conventions, of the denial of fundamental rights, particularly those of women, and massacres of civilians; this world of refugees pushed around the global and dominant classes refusing to tackle the climate crisis, this world seems to be losing all sense. Sadly, this is not new: previous decades have seen wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, Chechnya, Syria and elsewhere. But the situation seems even more difficult today: a catastrophic logic of a "clash of civilizations" is being implemented by both so-called "Western" governments as well as those of Putin and Xi Jiping. This logic provides a stepping stone for the racist and sexist far-right, which is on the rise everywhere. At a time when the climate emergency has us by the throat, precious resources are squandered in wars of aggression and occupation.

11. And yet we are witnessing a massive worldwide aspiration for dignity and the defence of basic rights, for democratic, social and environmental justice, and for protecting the environment. People's movements against imperialist and colonial domination, feminist movements, movements for LGBTIQ and minority rights, environmental movements, movements for social rights. In the face of current wars, we urgently need to take the offensive again through mass movements. Peace can only be just and lasting if it puts an end to oppression, occupation and militarism. This means rejecting any logic of sharing zones of influence between military blocs, neither NATO nor CSTO! Peace can only be just and lasting if it is anti-imperialist; if it is democratic, respects the rights of all and allocates the means necessary for ecological

solutions. What is urgently needed is the mobilization of all energies, intelligence and means on a global scale. We need an ecosocialist transition to satisfy the fundamental needs of people everywhere!

12. In the face of the barbarity of war, we need to mobilize in concrete solidarity from below, with peoples fighting for their rights, in complete independence from governments, global or regional powers and reactionary political forces. We insist on the universality of principles such as the right of self-determination and the right to resist, whether in Ukraine, in Palestine or elsewhere. We support resistance against oligarchs and capitalists wherever they operate and have no illusions in reactionary and right-wing leaderships. We support the fight against the ultra-liberal agenda of the Zelensky government, and against its alignment with US imperialism. We condemn the reactionary world-view of Hamas and reject its criminal tactics. We do not forget how the repression of progressive forces favoured religious fundamentalist forces such as Hamas.

13. Today we must do everything we can to mobilize a massive worldwide movement in solidarity with the Palestinian people, together with their allies in Israel. The Palestinian people are isolated and occupied. They stand alone, with almost no material support from outside. This makes our solidarity all the more necessary. We must prevent the expulsion of people, the “ethnic cleansing” of the Palestinian people by the Israeli state and a second “Nakba”, we demand an immediate end to the bombing and blockade in Gaza, a ceasefire, and humanitarian aid. We demand the release of prisoners on all sides. We stand in solidarity with Palestinian civil society and support its call to strengthen the Boycott Disinvestment Sanctions (BDS) movement.

14. Our goal is a political solution that puts an end to colonization and guarantees the right of return of those expelled and equal rights of people of all origins on the

land. Mobilizations in solidarity with Palestine are facing major obstacles such as rhetoric aimed at isolating the mobilizations and the forces building them, and in other countries the physical repression of demonstrations and other expressions of solidarity. Despite such repression, the Palestine solidarity movement continues and, by overcoming such obstacles, the movements also fight for democracy in their own countries.

15. We know that Hamas or other religious fundamentalist forces will not be allies in the search for a progressive Palestinian solution. The idea that the Palestinian people can achieve their national emancipation through a military defeat of the Israeli state, a state with overwhelming military superiority, is an illusion. In a Middle Eastern context of a mosaic of peoples and minorities, peace is possible only through the democratic emancipation of all.

The solution to the current worldwide crises can only come through mass international mobilization of the working people against imperialist occupation, for the right of peoples to self-determination, against the restriction of democratic freedoms, and for concrete solidarity, including humanitarian solidarity.

It is the role of the organizations of the workers' movement and and popular movements to mobilize a broad section of the working class and the oppressed to contribute to these internationalist mobilizations, build concrete links with organizations of the oppressed and change the global balance of power.

End the Israeli attacks against the Palestinian people, ceasefire now!

Russian troops out of Ukraine!

Dissolve NATO and CSTO!

Against all forms of imperialism, international solidarity!

Originally published at https://fourth.international/en/510/asia/548

Photo: Demonstration in Liège (Belgium). © Fourth International

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Stand with Ukraine: UK TUC backs their right to resist Russian aggression

Fred Leplat reports on the UK TUC Congress in Liverpool
The TUC congress on 12 September adopted overwhelmingly a motion in solidarity with the people Ukraine in their war of liberation from Putin's invasion of their country. Three major unions, the RMT, the UCU and the NEU, abstained while the FBU spoke against the motion. It commits the TUC to support "The immediate withdrawal of Russian forces from all Ukrainian territories occupied since 2014" and "A peaceful end to the conflict that secures the territorial integrity of Ukraine and the support and self-determination of the Ukrainian people". The motion also states that the TUC notes "That those who suffer most in times of war are the working class, and that the labour movement must do all it can to prevent conflict; however, that is not always possible".

TUC Resolution Affirms Solidarity with Ukrainian People

The position now adopted by the TUC, which has unions representing over 5.5 million workers, is a huge boost for the

morale of the Ukrainian people, and the Ukrainian unions in particular. The TUC policy is now to support "The full restoration of labour rights in Ukraine and a socially-just reconstruction that … rejects deregulation and privatisation," which is the opposite of what the Tory government was pushing at its Ukraine Reconstruction conference in June with its neoliberal emphasis on private investment and reforms.

> *"The position now adopted by the TUC…is a huge boost for the morale of the Ukrainian people, and the Ukrainian unions in particular."*

The TUC resolution is pro-Ukraine, not pro-war. However it was caricatured by Andrew Murrayof the Stop the war Coalition as "a call for the trade unions to align in support of the most hard-line elements among NATO policy-makers and push for the war to continue until Russian surrender". The StWC denounced the vote as "A vote for war that Sunak and Starmer will welcome", while the SWP declares that the "TUC backs war and clears the way for more arms spending." These responses fall into the binary trap set by Blair and Bush to win support for the war in Iraq: "Either you support the war or you support Saddam Hussein." It is entirely possible to support the people of Ukraine in their armed resistance, be critical of Zelensky's neoliberal government and also oppose NATO.

No to NATO Expansion and Arms Escalation

Internationalists cannot condemn Ukrainians because they are using every means available for their self-defence. If the war is one mainly for liberation of the country from Russian imperialism, Western imperialism is also involved for its own geostrategic interests. Of course, NATO and Western imperialist countries have not suddenly been converted to being fighters for democracy. They happily support and sell arms to many dictatorships, such as Saudi Arabia, provided

they are loyal to their interests. While the TUC motion is silent on the role of NATO, conversely, it does not repeat the Starmer position of "unshakable" support for NATO. The spurious accusation that support for Ukraine also means support for NATO and militarism should be unashamedly rejected. Describing the conflict as only a "proxy war" by NATO removes from the Ukrainians any self-determination, and erases Putin's responsibility for the military aggression and the brutal treatment of Ukrainian civilians.

> *"The spurious accusation that support for Ukraine also means support for NATO and militarism should be unashamedly rejected."*

The position adopted by the TUC is a welcome contrast to that adopted a few days earlier by the G20 summit in India. The G20 stepped back from the support they gave to Ukraine in 2022. The G20 summit last year declared that it "deplores in the strongest terms the aggression by the Russian Federation against Ukraine and demands its complete and unconditional withdrawal from the territory of Ukraine". This year, it did not directly mention Russia or Ukraine, and stated vaguely that states should "refrain from the threat or use of force to seek territorial acquisition."

Eighteen months after the beginning of the war, there seems to be no quick end. While the Ukrainian army has made some gains recently, it has not yet routed the Russian troops. Arms continue to be supplied by the West, but not in sufficient quantities. Internationally banned cluster munitions and dangerously toxic depleted uranium shells are being supplied to Ukraine. These risk the war escalating into a direct inter-imperialist conflict.

The Ukrainians desperately want peace and freedom. But a ceasefire for peace negotiations without simultaneously a withdrawal of Russian troops is in reality and annexation of

parts of Ukraine. This will not bring lasting peace. While there have been several attempts at peace negotiations, some were not encouraged by Western leaders who see the war as an opportunity to marginalise Russia. However, Russia's position has remained that any peace plan can only proceed from Ukraine's recognition of Russia's sovereignty over the regions it annexed from Ukraine in September 2022, and that Ukraine should demilitarise and "de-Nazify". While Ukraine, quite reasonably, wants recognition of its territorial integrity along internationally recognised borders. Putin is unlikely to make any moves for peace any time soon as he has already suffered two defeats. He failed in a quick war for regime change in Kyiv, and NATO has expanded further with Finland and Sweden joining the alliance. Putin's naked aggression and invasion of Ukraine has been a gift to NATO which has found a new purpose in a fight for democracy, replacing the failed war against terrorism. Hence the push for increases in defence spending and the possible return of US nuclear weapons to Britain, both of which should be opposed.

The Ukrainians have made tremendous sacrifices and suffered enormous casualties with over 70,000 dead and 120,000 injured. Russia's casualties are even higher, with close to 300,000 of which 120,000 have been killed, according to the Guardian. A staggering total of 500,000. Apart from the ecological devastation, the destruction of civilian infrastructure and homes, Ukraine is now the most mined country in the world.

The mood of Ukrainians is resigned and sombre, but support for the war effort is still there. A Gallup poll conducted a year ago in September 2022, showed that 70% of Ukrainians wanted to continue the war with Russia until victory. Political solidarity and humanitarian aid are necessary to demonstrate that the Ukrainians have not been abandoned. There have been many spontaneous and independent efforts of practical support for Ukrainians. Today, 64% of Europeans agree with purchasing and supplying military equipment to Ukraine (it is 93% in Sweden). With the US presidential elections in 2024, Trump's continuing electoral threat and his isolationist policies are affecting the mood in Washington. How long will NATO's support for Ukraine last if the economic cost for western capitalism is too high a cost to pay for the Ukrainians fight for democracy? That's why it was always right to say "don't trust NATO". No peace deal should be imposed on

Ukraine. As long as the Ukrainians are prepared to fight, we should be in solidarity with them.

“No peace deal should be imposed on Ukraine. As long as the Ukrainians are prepared to fight, we should be in solidarity with them.”

What you can do:

- Circulate the motion from the TUC, and amend it as necessary.
- Invite Ukrainian trade-unionists and socialists to speak to your organisation.
- Twin your workplace or trade-union with a similar organisation in Ukraine.
- Raise funds for medical and humanitarian aid.
- Support the anti-war activists being persecuted and imprisoned in Russia.
- Affiliate to the Ukraine Solidarity Campaign. info@ukrainesolidaritycampaign.org www.ukrainesolidaritycampaign.org
- or in Scotland
- uscscotland@gmail.com https://ukrainesolidarityscot.wordpress.com/https://www.facebook.com/groups/USCScotland

Ukraine Solidarity Campaign Fringe meeting at TUC Liverpool. Included in the picture: Maria Exall TUC

President, Gary Smith GMB National Secretary, Barbara Plant GMB President, Chris Kitchen NUM General Secretary, Simon Weller Assistant General Secretary ASLEF, John Moloney PCS Assistant General Secretary.

This article is reposted from Anticapitalist Resistance: https://anticapitalistresistance.org/stand-with-ukraine-tuc-backs-their-right-to-resist-russian-aggression/

Headline picture: Ukraine refugees hold GMB We Stand with Ukraine placard, George Square, Glasgow, August 2023 (M Picken)

Building International Solidarity for Ukraine: Three Perspectives

The Russian left wing website Posle (После – 'After') recently published three perspectives on Building International Solidarity for Ukraine, from the UK state, from Poland and from the USA, that ecosocialist.scot is republishing below. You can find about Scottish solidarity with Ukraine from the website of the Ukraine Solidarity Campaign Scotland.

With the Russian invasion of Ukraine the Western left split into two camps. Yet, attempts to build a broad solidarity

movement with Ukraine have been underway since February 24. International activists talk about their work:

Simon Pirani [UK], honorary professor, University of Durham

His most recent book on Russia is *Communist Dissidents in Early Soviet Russia* (2023)

I have always believed that support for people resisting imperialist violence is central to socialism. It was the US war in Vietnam that first moved me to political action, when I was a teenager. Supporting Ukrainian resistance to Russian imperialism is consistent with supporting Vietnamese resistance then, and supporting Palestinian resistance to Israeli apartheid. For me, the difference is that Ukraine is closer, in the sense that I have been travelling there, and to Russia, for the last thirty years. (I worked in both countries as a journalist and doing academic research.)

After the invasion in February last year, the most effective responses from the labour movement and social movements in which I am involved were the direct ones. Some young people from the UK and other European countries travelled to Ukraine to join volunteer units; a much larger number of people organised material aid for front-line areas. Personally I supported those efforts, and played a small part in trying to highlight the situation in the Russian-occupied areas.

In the labour movement, perhaps the clearest voice in support of Ukrainian resistance was that of the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM). We have no deep mines left in the UK, but the union – which historically was one of the strongest, until its defeat in the big strike over pit closures in 1984-85 – continues to support former miners and their communities. It

has a historical connection to Ukraine: links were established in 1990 between the miners union in Durham, in north east England, with the Independent Miners Union of Ukraine, in the first place in Pavlograd, in the western Donbass.

Straight after the invasion, the NUM and other unions sent more than £20,000, and supported trade unionists who drove vehicles full of medical equipment and other supplies to Ukraine, and left them with miners' union activists there. There have been at least seven deliveries of that kind. Along with the NUM and the train drivers union ASLEF, a strong source of support has been a cross-party group, Senedd Cymru [Welsh parliament] Together for Ukraine. The chief legal officer of Wales, Mick Antoniw, is a labour movement activist of Ukrainian family background, and has travelled several times to deliver vehicles, with fellow parliamentarians and trade union representatives.

Other unions have participated in, or at least declared support for, such solidarity actions, including those representing civil servants, teachers, university staff and health workers: efforts to win them over have been coordinated by the Ukraine Solidarity Campaign, which works with the Confederation of Independent Unions of Ukraine (KVPU).

The USC last month also organised a conference, Another Ukraine is Possible, at which labour, feminist and anti-capitalist perspectives on the post-war reconstruction of Ukraine were advanced, in contrast to the neoliberal slant of the government-level talks also held in London. Another initiative, that I have myself been involved in, has been to raise the profile of Solidarity Zone, the group supporting Russians who take direct action against the war, for example by translating and circulating material.

In terms of actual material aid delivered, all these initiatives by labour movement and anti-capitalist movements are smaller than the mountains of support given to Ukrainian

people by civil society in a wider sense. Community groups, churches, voluntary associations, charities, and e.g. Ukrainians living in the UK and their friends have not only raised very large sums of money but also taken vehicles and other aid to Ukraine. On the other hand, the UK's support for Ukrainian refugees, or for Russians fleeing war and repression, has been very limited. While the government, for cynical political reasons, made it easier for Ukrainians to get to the UK than it is for most refugees from other wars, it is still difficult. The number of Ukrainian refugees here is negligible compared to Poland, Germany or other countries in continental Europe.

In my view, in the UK there are two problems that we face, in building a broad Ukraine solidarity campaign. The first is that, for reasons we all understand about inter-imperialist rivalries, the UK government has steadfastly supported Ukraine militarily, e.g. with weapons supplies. This has given the most right-wing UK government in decades the opportunity to pose as lovers of freedom. And this has its effect on society: the media reports Ukraine sympathetically; president Zelensky appears smiling for the cameras with our ministers, who to people here represent austerity and racism. The hypocrisy of the British ruling class, who for so long prevailed over an empire that dripped with blood (and who have spent the last thirty years gearing its financial system to the benefit of Russian kleptocrats), is obvious – especially to migrant communities whose suffering has been shaped by British and other western imperialism.

There is a danger that this hypocrisy can cause resentment and division. People in the UK who face constant pressure from the state for supporting Palestinian rights, or who deal daily with the consequences of the state's racist migration policies, can not fail to be struck by the state's "favouritism" towards Ukrainians, or, for another example, political refugees from Hong Kong. Socialists and labour

movement activists who support Ukrainian resistance have answered this in the best way possible – by seeking to build alliances between Ukraine's struggle and others resisting other imperialism. This is a work in progress.

The other issue is that, as in other western countries, there are post-Stalinist tendencies that in practice oppose solidarity with Ukraine. A tiny handful of pro-Putin extremists issue soundbites à la Solovyev or Rogozin. But more numerous groups describe themselves as "anti imperialists", seeing the Kremlin as the lesser evil and Ukraine as a tool of the western powers, or "pacifists" who issue disingenuous calls for peace talks, without e.g. withdrawal of Russian troops, and repeat Kremlin talking points about NATO being to blame for the war. So in the Labour party, the left minority is divided: John McDonnell (effectively deputy Labour leader when Jeremy Corbyn was leader), has supported "the provision of weapons to Ukrainians to defend themselves"; Corbyn himself is against that.

> ***Just as the sore of the illegitimate, Russian-supported "republics" festered in the body of Ukrainian society, so reactionary forms of ideology that supported them gnawed away at the labour movement across Europe***

Looking back, I think that, collectively, those in the labour movement with connections to Russia and Ukraine did far too little after 2014 to explain our case. This socalled "anti-imperialism" was already vocal, with regard both to Ukraine and Syria. Like others, I made individual efforts to oppose it (see e.g. here, here, here and here) but these efforts were inadequate. Just as the sore of the illegitimate, Russian-supported "republics" festered in the body of Ukrainian society, so reactionary forms of ideology that supported them gnawed away at the labour movement across Europe.

> ***Hopefully the very widespread, and very human, feeling among ordinary people in the UK, that Ukrainians deserve solidarity against a brutal, violent onslaught, will serve as the background for a new clarification of what socialist anti-imperialism actually means***

One good thing that has happened in the last 18 months is that these issues have come out into the open and been discussed more widely. Hopefully the very widespread, and very human, feeling among ordinary people in the UK, that Ukrainians deserve solidarity against a brutal, violent onslaught, will serve as the background for a new clarification of what socialist anti-imperialism actually means.

Zofia Malisz [Poland], Razem International Office

Razem is a left party in Poland with six members of parliament and structures at home and abroad. We support the sovereignty of Ukraine as well as the efforts of the Belarusian and Russian people to democratise their countries since our party was formed in 2015 (see "Polityka wschodnia"). After the Russian invasion we launched and co-organised several campaigns, often in cooperation with Sotsialnyi Rukh, to gain support on the European and global left for sending weapons that the Ukrainian people needed to defend themselves.

We co-founded the European Network for Solidarity with Ukraine (ENSU), which is so active today. There we worked within the feminist "right to resist" group. Our co-leader Magdalena Biejat and other female left coalition MPs filed a motion in the Sejm to expedite access to abortion for Ukrainian refugees who had been raped. Unfortunately the right-wing parliamentary majority rejected it. Other initiatives of ENSU also include a visit to Lviv in 2022 with various left parliamentarians. Right after the invasion we gathered members of Nordic and Eastern European left parties

in Warsaw and issued a statement in support of Ukraine, condemning the invasion and appealing for sanctions against Russia. Our cooperation on a range of issues including cancelling Ukrainian external debt has made a difference, in the form of several legislative efforts in Europe and the US in favour of supporting the cancellation. This was a result of broad social media campaigns, meetings, press conferences and articles on the topic that we took direct part in, initiated or co-ordinated.

We took part in countless meetings, live and remote in 2022, with the global left, to challenge Russian propaganda regarding the invasion and Ukrainian statehood. We confronted falsehoods embedded on the left, particularly within the Western "peace" movement. We did our best to explain the complexities of our regional situation that many were disappointingly ignorant about or chose to ignore – despite decades-long relationships. As a consequence of such unwillingness to engage with the challenges facing the Eastern European left and to support Ukrainian sovereignty, we decided to leave Progressive International and Diem25 shortly after the invasion.

We do feel the Polish, Ukrainian and Russian opposition left movements have unique contributions to make to the global left. Our traditions and the challenges we face, be it geopolitical or stemming from the transformation, are different, so are our solutions and ways of communication. Much can be learned from us. One of the hardest challenges is the neoliberal ideologisation in our societies. Due to that we see the great risk that rebuilding Ukraine entails – we believe, together with our partners in Ukraine, that it should be rebuilt for the benefit of the people, not foreign corporations or domestic oligarchs, with great focus on social infrastructure and support for workers, women as well as on nurturing bottom up communal organising that grew strong during the war. Our politicians have been communicating this

constantly: there can be no sell-out of Ukraine to corporations in exchange for weapons. These days we put most of our efforts for Ukraine into campaigning for socially oriented rebuilding.

> ***We do feel the Polish, Ukrainian and Russian opposition left movements have unique contributions to make to the global left***

Razem also wants to offer to millions of Ukrainian refugees in Poland our vision of a safe, environmentally sustainable welfare state for everyone. A vision that we believe we can realise together both in Poland and in Ukraine. We want to show that Ukraine, in order to rebuild itself, needs its workers to return to stable working conditions with expanded labour rights. It needs its veterans to heal and to receive support from a well funded public services sector. Its children need to be able to grow up with the prospect of a planet that is not only livable, but thriving. We need Ukrainian victory for that, as well as a great deal of left cooperation and campaigning together for social Ukraine. We continue paving the way for that with our partners, both within the Central-Eastern European Green-Left Alliance organisation including Ukrainian partners that we have been building (that is launching at the moment). We also work with partners on the Western left who are willing to engage and to develop concrete proposals of rebuilding plans that challenge the liberal plans (e.g. many activists in the UK and some Labour politicians).

There is broad consensus in Poland, as you know, regarding condemning the invasion as well as political and military help for Ukraine. There are no disagreements on that within the left in Poland. We are a political force though that keeps a watchful eye on the government’s attitude and possible emerging far right threats to Ukrainian refugees. We also criticize any attempts to sacrifice human rights, the right to

due process etc., regarding whatever issue concerning Russian citizens on Polish soil.

John Reimann and Cheryl Zuur [USA],

co-chairs Ukraine Socialist Solidarity Campaign

Supporting Ukraine is the concrete expression of the number one responsibility for any socialist. That responsibility is international working class solidarity. But that is not just some moral responsibility; it is directly connected to the class struggle at home.

We see Putin's invasion of Ukraine as a decisive step in the general world process of the rise of extreme right wing nationalism, bigotry and counterrevolution. The more Putin succeeds, the more that process advances. We saw that with the Assad/Putin led counterrevolution in Syria which played a big role in the setback of the whole Arab Spring. And the Arab Spring did, in fact, inspire workers and young people around the world. The result of its defeat (for now) has been, among other things, the increase of religious reaction – Islamic fundamentalism in this case.

Here in the United States, Trump used Islamic fundamentalism and Islamophobia as a major tool to get elected in 2016. Once in office, his first major initiative was to, in effect, bar Muslim people from entering the United States. This is an example of how the Putin-led counterrevolution had an effect on politics here in the United States.

Trump supports Putin not only because he served as a money launderer for the Russian oligarchy for many years. His support is also because of political affinity. That is also why extreme right wing politicians, even outright racists and fascists like *America First* and individuals like Matt

Heimbach, support Putin. If Putin's imperialist invasion succeeds even in part, it will strengthen these forces and further drive forward global reactionary movements.

Finally, if we as socialists and as working class activists ignore this massive attack on the Ukrainian people, what are we saying to US workers? We would be telling workers "think only of yourselves in the most immediate sense. Think only of your own paycheck. Don't think about the wider issues that directly affect our lives." It would be no different from saying that oppression of women, or people of color or LGBTQ people is not a matter for all workers to oppose. It would be impossible to help strengthen the working class with that attitude, never mind to build a truly working class socialist movement.

As a result of this, a small group of us founded the Ukraine Socialist Solidarity Campaign shortly after the 2022 invasion of Ukraine started. (In reality, Putin's military invasion of Ukraine started in 2014!). We base ourselves on several points of unity, including the demand that in order to fight the invaders Ukraine should receive all the weapons it needs and with no strings attached. That means we criticize Biden not because he is sending arms to Ukraine but, on the contrary, because he is too hesitant and putting too many handcuffs on Ukraine, on how it may use these arms. That is an unusual position for socialists to take, but it is not unprecedented. During the Spanish Civil War, US socialists called on the US to send arms to the Spanish republicans who were fighting fascism, and during WWII no socialist in the U.S. would have opposed the US's sending arms to the Soviet Union to fight the Nazis.

The Ukraine Socialist Solidarity Campaign has a lively presence on social media, including a Facebook group with over 630 members and almost 2,000 followers on Twitter. Both of these present news and analyses related to the war in Ukraine. We have a linktree with quite a few public resources.

We also have regular public Zoom forums on topics such as the environmental aspects of the war in Ukraine, the Iranian revolution, whether Russia is fascist (with Ilya Budraitskis), the present political situation in Ukraine, and coming up a presentation on the Holodomor. Recordings of those forums are available on our youtube channel.

One of the most important discussions we had was a two part series on "fascist ideas on the left". That was a discussion on how and why the ideas of the far right, including even fascist ideas, have come to permeate the socialist movement. This is vitally important because – we have to admit it – the majority of the socialist movement and the "left" in general supports or at least apologizes and makes excuses for Putin's invasion of Ukraine. We explicitly decided to include "Socialist" in our name because we believe it is vital to reclaim socialism from this betrayal.

This betrayal is not accidental. It relates to the generally low political level of the US working class, a working class that has never had its own political party and that has been under attack, both ideologically and practically, for many decades. This ideological attack has been carried out not only by the capitalist class, but also from our very own leaders – every wing of the union leadership – who have also collaborated in helping the capitalists drive down the living conditions of US workers.

So, while the majority of US workers support Ukraine, they do so passively. "It's not for me (us) to play an active, independent role in politics," is the attitude.

In addition to our regular forums, the Ukraine Socialist Solidarity Campaign has mobilized in the streets where and when we can. We have participated in wider street mobilizations in support of Ukraine, for example a unity march organized by Iranian Americans in San Francisco. We have also mobilized to counter the pro-Putin propaganda of the "left",

such as Code Pink and various “socialists.” We also have done some fundraising for Ukraine, including selling t-shirts we designed, and a member of ours actually carried medical supplies to Ukraine last year. We are currently encouraging unions to pass a resolution we produced calling for full support – including arms – for Ukraine and we also have a petition calling for the IAEA to take over operation of the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant (you can sign it here).

We are still a very small group of activists and, can hardly have a major effect on objective events. What is needed is a renewed uprising of the working class in the United States and globally. We hope to help prepare the way by trying to clarify some of the most vital political issues of the day, many of which revolve around the fascistic imperialist invasion of Ukraine. That and building support for Ukraine to the maximum degree we can.

It is an honor and a privilege to work with and be associated with those brave Ukrainian and Russian comrades (as well as others) who are fighting against the Putin-led counterrevolution. We think that, together with a renewed worker uprising, this sort of collaboration in both the ideological and the practical realms will be the basis for the rebirth of a new, healthy, working class oriented socialist movement.

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Russia’s war on Ukraine and the European lefts – Murray Smith writes

Murray Smith writes on the Russia’s war on Ukraine and the response of the left.

Editorial note by ecosocialist.scot: Murray Smith is a well known figure on the left in Scotland. He studied History, Politics and Soviet Studies at the University of Glasgow, was a founder of the Scottish Socialist Party (SSP), SSP International Secretary for a period in its early days, and editor of the journal Frontline, a prominent marxist journal in Scotland during the early 2000’s. Currently he lives in Luxembourg where he is is a leading member of the left wing party Déi Lénk (The Left), and its representative on leading bodies of the European Left Party. In this lengthy article Murray Smith explains the background to the internationalist and marxist position on the war in Ukraine and describes the retrograde position of ‘campism’ – those on the left who see the Ukraine war as nothing more than a proxy war between the USA and Russia in which the interests of the 40+million Ukraine working class are regarded as irrelevant. He also

explodes the myths that the Russian aggression against Ukraine was justified by the allegations of a 'right wing coup d'etat' in 2014 and that US foreign policy is entirely aimed at military aggression against the Russian state. At its most recent conference in March 2023, the current day SSP lapsed into the position of 'campism', with many of the arguments used by leading figures, such as the present International Secretary Bill Bonnar, being drawn entirely from the arguments that Murray Smith demolishes below. The (unpublished) position passed by the SSP in March supports the campaign of those who now seek to disarm the Ukraine working class, a position that has been regrettably advanced in the UCU and other trade unions in Britain, and stands in counter-position to that passed overwhelmingly by the annual congress of the Scottish TUC , backed by the Ukraine Solidarity Campaign, which supported Ukraine's right of self-defence against the Russian invasion and right to get weapons from wherever it wishes. All the evidence is that the vast majority of working class people in Scotland support Ukraine's right to self-determination and right to resist Russia's invasion militarily. Bill Bonnar has been declared as the SSP candidate in the forthcoming Rutherglen and Hamilton West Westminster by-election and this will provide an opportunity for the SSP position on Ukraine to be examined in public and contrasted with the arguments of Murray Smith below. The article was originally published on the website of 'Europe Solidaire Sans Frontières' (European Solidarity without Boundaries)

Russia's war on Ukraine and the European lefts – by Murray Smith

The war in Ukraine has cast a harsh light on the radical left in Europe, revealing the best and the worst. On the one hand,

an internationalist response of solidarity with Ukraine. On the other, a “peace camp” where you find pacifists, but especially sectarians, for whom the main enemy is always US imperialism. Rather than a movement for peace, it is above all a movement of non-solidarity with Ukraine. We will come back to that.

Let’s start with some thoughts on war. We can be against war in general. We can consider that we must overcome this barbaric way of settling conflicts. We can think that it is possible to do it in the existing capitalist society, or that to put an end to war it is necessary to finish with capitalism. But historically, and again today, the left is never confronted with war in general, but with real existing wars, specific wars, which succeed each other and do not always have the same nature. So, each war must be analyzed in its specificity. There are no slogans outside of time and space, which are valid for all wars. It is not because Lenin or Luxemburg or Liebknecht spoke of revolutionary defeatism or said that the enemy was in one’s own country, that we can trot out these slogans for any war, independently of the context.

World War I was an inter-imperialist conflict over the distribution of territories, resources and markets. Those who refused to support their own imperialism were right. And history proved them right. The activity of the small minority of internationalist circles of 1914 led to strikes, mutinies, mass parties and revolutions. Yet since 1914 no war has been a simple repetition of World War I, and a simple repetition of the slogans of 1914 has not been enough. In all the wars of national liberation against the colonial empires, it was clear that it was necessary to support the insurgents who fought for the independence of their countries. The same applies to attacks on independent countries by imperialist powers. So, in the 1930s, the left supported China against Japan and Ethiopia against Italy. And, closer to the present day, Iraq against the United States. This despite the fact that these countries

were ruled by regimes that the left could not support.

In general, it is not obligatory for the left to take a position in the civil wars of other countries. But in some cases it is, on the basis of political criteria. Obviously, it was necessary to support Soviet Russia against the Whites and the imperialist armies that helped them. And in Spain from 1936 to 1939, without going into all the political complexities, it was a war against fascism where the Republican camp had to be supported against the Francoists, whatever one might think of the Popular Front government. And this would have been the case even if the Francoists had not been supported by Germany and Italy. Immediately after came World War II, which was much more complex (and more global) than the first. And which posed political and tactical problems that cannot be dealt with in detail here. But it must be clear that revolutionary defeatism and the enemy being one's own country did not fit there. It was not indifferent to live in a bourgeois democracy or under the Nazi yoke. Many European countries learned this from bitter experience.

The guiding line is to put ourselves at the service of the exploited and oppressed. Of those who want to liberate their country from colonialism or other forms of domination, or to defend their country against aggression. We must think in terms of peoples and classes, not blocs or spheres of influence, which are only vehicles for the oppression of small countries by the dominant. powers. In doing so, we must give priority to political action and not geopolitical constructions.

The current war is in its essence not complicated at all. A country, Ukraine, which had been part of the Russian empire, was invaded by Russia, the current expression of this empire, which it wants to rebuild. Whether you call Russia imperial, imperialist or whatever, it is indisputable that it launched the war with the aim of subjugating Ukraine to its will.

Even those who refuse to support Ukraine cannot deny the reality of the invasion. So, they find excuses. Yes, Russia invaded, but it was threatened, surrounded, provoked, so it had to defend itself. And they build a whole edifice to demonstrate that the war is really between the United States and NATO on the one hand and Russia on the other. And the Ukrainians who resist the invasion? Nothing but pawns in a "proxy war".

In all this mess one could almost believe that Russia is a peaceful country, which has never hurt anyone. But, in reality, it is the most reactionary, repressive and aggressive country in Europe. And it is the heir of centuries of wars and annexations by an empire of which Marx always understood that it was the gendarme of Europe, of the peoples of Europe. As for Lenin, he never underestimated the reactionary force represented by Great Russian chauvinism.

In the European left, we can agree on at least three points:

- Russia invaded Ukraine on February 24, 2022.
- To resist this invasion, Ukraine received a considerable amount of weapons, mainly from North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) countries and especially from the United States.
- NATO has seen an eastward expansion since the 1990s, notably incorporating the countries that were previously part of the Warsaw Pact, as well as three former Soviet republics, the three Baltic states of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia.

From these three observations, we can arrive at different, even contradictory, analyses and conclusions. But those who seek to relativize or even deny Russia's responsibility for the war are forced to deny certain facts and invent others.

Russia invaded

Why did Russia invade Ukraine?

Whether the invasion is against international law, however true that may be, is entirely secondary. The bottom line is that Russia, an imperial, imperialist, dominant power for centuries, does not accept that the republics of the former Soviet Union, independent since 1991, should escape its control. In particular, it has never really recognized the independence of Ukraine. It has always wanted, at a minimum, a government in Kyiv under its orders, without excluding the annexation of all or part of its territory. And it has said so more and more openly.

Ukraine had been part of the Tsarist empire, of the "prison house of nations". It was Lenin who characterized it thus and who also said: "What Ireland was for England, Ukraine has become for Russia: exploited to the extreme, without receiving anything in return." In addition to economic exploitation, there was under Tsarism the banning of the Ukrainian language and the repression of anything that could express Ukrainian identity, culturally and politically. After a brief period in the 1920s when Ukrainian language and culture were encouraged, the Stalinist counter-revolution brought a halt to it. Between famine and terror, the 1930s were a dark decade for Ukraine, followed by war.

Despite this history, a certain left would have us believe that if Putin went to war it was because of NATO's eastward expansion, which he saw as a threat and against which he was reacting.

In fact, there is plenty of evidence that Putin always knew exactly what he wanted, that he was not pushed or provoked by anyone. We can start with his famous observation in 2005, when he said that "the disintegration of the Soviet Union was the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the twentieth century." Geopolitical, not social. What he wanted (since well before 2005) and still wants is to regain control of the territory of the former USSR, which moreover corresponded more or less to that of the Tsarist empire. And it is this empire that he

wants to rebuild. Not necessarily by annexing the former republics but by controlling them. And in addition, to regain the sphere of influence in Europe that Stalin had established in 1945. In this project, Ukraine occupies a central place. As Zbigniew Brzezinski, adviser to Carter and Obama, said: "Without Ukraine, Russia ceases to be a Eurasian empire." Because we must never forget that Russia is not a national state, but precisely an empire.

So, in Putin's vision and in his plan there was no room for an independent Ukraine, especially since it was increasingly turning towards the West.

Euromaidan

Before February 24, there was 2014. The gulf between a part of the Western left and the Ukrainian reality already manifested itself then.

The idea that the annexation of Crimea was a reaction to the Maidan "coup" does not hold water. First, we can only speak of a far-right "coup d'état" or "coup de force" without taking the trouble to make a concrete analysis of a mass movement that lasted three months and of its evolution. And by replacing it with a *made in Russia* caricature. But the peddlers of such a caricature should no longer expect to be taken seriously. For those who want to understand, there are books, interviews with participants and articles that are easily accessible online. There's even Wikipedia.

The same people who talk of a far-right coup in Kyiv explain that Putin annexed Crimea in reaction to it. But the annexation of Crimea was discussed and planned before the fall of Yanukovych and the victory of Maidan. And not only Crimea. The whole plan to annex the eastern and southern oblasts, going through a phase of "people's republics", was also put forward in a document submitted for discussion in the Russian presidential administration between the 4th and 12th February

2014 and published in full by the newspaper *Novaya Gazeta* on February 26, 2015. The newspaper's introduction begins with a quote that says it all: "We consider that it is appropriate to initiate the accession of the eastern regions to Russia". The document begins with three observations: the bankruptcy of Yanukovych, who was rapidly losing control of the political process; then the paralysis of the government and the lack of a body politic of interlocutors with which Russia could negotiate; and finally, that such an "acceptable" body politic was unlikely to come out of the scheduled elections.

Moreover, we were able to recently read the testimony of Bill Clinton, who recounts a conversation with Putin in 2011, where the latter said that he did not agree with the agreement that Clinton had made with Yeltsin. This was the Budapest Memorandum of 1994, where in exchange for giving up its nuclear weapons, Ukraine's sovereignty and borders would be guaranteed by Russia, the United States and the United Kingdom. Putin reportedly said: "I don't agree with this deal. And I don't support it. And I am not bound by it". And Clinton adds: "I knew from that day that it was just a matter of time." Three years in fact, before Putin found the right opportunity to do what he had already decided to do.

To get the "accession" plan started, it was obviously necessary to be able to count on support from the population. In his speech before the NATO summit in Bucharest in 2008, where he already questioned the legitimacy of the Ukrainian state, Putin spoke at one time of 17 million Russian speakers in Ukraine and at another time of 17 million Russians. It is possible that he thought they were the same thing. And even that he believed his own propaganda about the "persecution of Russian speakers". But being a Russian speaker does not mean that you are Russian. One can be a Russian speaker and a Ukrainian patriot. This was already evident in 2014, even in the Donbas. And even more today. But there are many testimonies of Russian soldiers who were truly astonished to

encounter the hostility of the inhabitants of the occupied areas. They had believed what they had been told, that they would be welcomed as liberators.

NATO enlargement

The equivalent of NATO in the Soviet bloc was the Warsaw Pact, established in 1955. East Germany – the German Democratic Republic (GDR) – which was part of it, ceased to exist upon German reunification in October 1990. But after the fall of the Wall in November 1989 and even before the first free elections in the GDR in March 1990, it was obvious that we were moving towards more or less rapid reunification. The question was: what reunification? One possibility was that of a united and neutral Germany. The other, that of a united Germany, a member of NATO, the preferred choice of the United States in particular. It was in this context that US Secretary of State James Baker, seeking a way forward, floated in conversation with Gorbachev on February 9, 1990, the idea that a united Germany could be a member of NATO, and that in return there would be a commitment that NATO would not advance one inch ("not an inch") towards the East. Gorbachev mostly agreed. The day after. Baker put both possibilities to Kohl, who ended up preferring the second choice. We know how events went afterwards.

The whole edifice of this history of NATO, which supposedly promised not to expand towards the East and which broke its promise, is built around this little phrase from Baker, which is still subject to debate. A promise or a mere hypothesis? Concerning only Germany, or all of Eastern Europe? What is certain is that there was never a written commitment. Putin himself regrets this, saying in his interviews with Oliver Stone that nothing "was written down…In politics, everything has to be written down". Besides, even if there had been something written down, it could not have been definitive. Like the Budapest Memorandum… Diplomacy and international relations are not based on promises, oral or written, but on

formal treaties. Which can also be violated, but this is rather rare, since if a regime systematically violates treaties, no one will want to negotiate with it anymore.

The only treaty signed was the "Treaty on the Final Settlement with Respect to Germany" of September 1990. The signatories were the two German states, plus France, the United Kingdom, the Soviet Union and the United States. This treaty stipulated that there would be neither non-German troops nor nuclear weapons on the territory of the former GDR. It was respected.

On the 25th anniversary of the fall of the Wall, Gorbachev confirmed that there was no promise regarding NATO enlargement, that there was not even a discussion about it. But he added that the enlargement had been a "big mistake" and a violation of the "spirit" of what was said in 1990.

So this story of the broken promise, which is after all the starting point of the entire discourse about an aggressive and treacherous NATO, is based on a sentence from a US politician to the president of a country, the Soviet Union, which neither of them suspected would no longer exist less than two years later.

Not only did the Americans not see the breakup of the Soviet Union coming, they did not even want it. They were quite ready to deal with Gorbachev's Soviet Union. President George H. W. Bush even initially opposed Ukrainian independence, notably in his famous "Chicken Kiev" speech.

Let us look at the East-West relations at the time. Already in 1991, the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC) had been created between the countries of NATO and those of the Warsaw Pact. In 1994, the Partnership for Peace was created, with the members of the NACC and a few others, notably Kazakhstan.

In 1993, Yeltsin wrote to Clinton: "Any possible integration of Eastern European countries into NATO will not automatically

lead to the alliance somehow turning against Russia." In 1997, the NATO-Russia Deed of Foundation was concluded, which noted that NATO and Russia "do not consider each other as adversaries" and saw NATO enlargement as "a process which will continue".

All of this was happening under Yeltsin's mandate. This does not indicate an attitude of confrontation or a search for a weakening of Russia, rather a search for cooperation and integration into the international order dominated by the West.

Did Putin have a different attitude? Initially, there was no break with NATO. Putin was not against equal relations with the alliance. The NATO-Russia Council was established in 2002. Putin said the same year in a press conference with Ukrainian President Leonid Kuchma: "I am absolutely convinced that Ukraine will not remain in retreat from the growing processes of interaction with NATO. The decision is to be taken between NATO and Ukraine. This is a question that concerns these two partners". And in 2004, when seven countries joined NATO: "Each country has the right to choose the option it considers the most effective for ensuring its own security". At the time, Russia expressed some concerns, but did not really see NATO as a threat. How to explain the change?

Putin was convinced from the beginning of his first term, or even well before, of the need to restore order inside the country (by asserting his own authority) and to restore Russia to what he considered to be its place in the world. At first, he may well have thought that this could be done within the framework of good economic and political relations with the United States and Europe and even with NATO. In reality, the West was perfectly prepared to have good relations with Russia. But accepting a Russian sphere of influence, as Putin understood it, especially in Europe, was another matter.

Putin began to adopt a more muscular discourse, in particular

in his speech in Munich in 2007. He took part in the NATO summit in Bucharest in 2008, raising his tone by questioning the legitimacy of Ukraine. Even after the lightning war against Georgia in 2008, Russia took part in NATO exercises in 2011. It was from 2014 that the rupture was consummated, following the annexation of Crimea and the intervention in Donbas. And it is also from that point that the anti-NATO discourse became systematic. The rupture took place not following the enlargement of NATO but following the use of force by Russia against Ukraine. And this use of force took place following the Maidan revolution, which far from being a coup was a profound movement, especially of the youth.

As far as Ukraine is concerned, Russia never accepted its independence, but was at first confident in its ability to influence politically the course of events by relying on Ukrainian political currents favorable to strong ties with Russia. We must add to that a systematic infiltration of the Ukrainian state apparatus, especially the security organs, the extent of which was revealed in 2014. The first shock occurred in 2004, with the so-called "Orange Revolution", in fact a mass movement against electoral fraud. Coming after the "Rose Revolution" in Georgia and before the "Tulip Revolution" in Kyrgyzstan, it was enough to worry Putin, who feared contagion. Hence the discourse on "color revolutions" supposedly guided by the hand of Washington. In Ukraine, Yanukovych's rise to power in 2009 seemed like a return to normal, but the next shock, the Maidan, was a bigger blow for Russia.

NATO enlargement took place quite quickly, between 1999 and 2009 for the most part. It certainly corresponded to the interests of the United States, but probably more to consolidate its influence in Europe rather than to confront Russia. But we must not, as the Western left often does, forget what the most interested parties thought, those who lived in the countries concerned. It is clear that NATO

membership corresponded not only to the wishes of the new capitalist elites in these countries but also to the will of the peoples. In Hungary a referendum saw more than 85 per cent vote “Yes” to NATO. There is no reason to think that NATO membership would not have had broad majority support everywhere. Simply because all these countries had been dominated by Russia for decades, and some of them, for centuries.

As for the “encirclement” of Russia by NATO, let’s be serious. Just look at a map. The three countries with the longest borders with Russia are China, Mongolia and Kazakhstan, none of which are members of NATO. What there is today, from Finland through to Bulgaria is a barrier, a line of defense. And this line is a defense against Russia, not a threat to it. Putin is not afraid of NATO attacking Russia. Russia is a nuclear power, as he keeps reminding us, and no nuclear power has ever been invaded. What bothers Putin is not a military threat. It’s quite simply that the accession of these countries to the European Union and to NATO is a way of definitively turning their backs on Moscow and gravitating towards the West.

Weapons for Ukraine

No one disputes the fact that Ukraine received weapons. What is questionable is the idea that this demonstrates that what is happening is therefore a proxy war between NATO and Russia. And for this to be credible, a story is invented where Ukraine has been armed and prepared for this war since 2014.

Before returning to this, let’s look at the example of the Vietnam War.

What was the character of this war? It was obviously a war of national liberation against US imperialism and its Vietnamese auxiliaries, the continuation of the First Indochina War against France. Did Vietnam have support in its fight? Yes, it

was helped by the Soviet Union and China.

Chinese military aid began in the latter period of the First Indochina War. Following the victory of the Chinese Revolution, between 1950 and 1954, this was considerable and very useful: rifles, machine guns, mortars, artillery pieces, etc. After the Geneva agreements in 1954, which split Vietnam in two, China did not want a new war. But when the Vietnamese took the decision to reunite their country by force, it continued to provide military aid, which was still very useful, especially in the first period of the war, from 1959 to 1963. China also sent troops to Vietnam, especially to defend Hanoi and its surroundings. At the high point in 1967, there were 170,000 Chinese troops. A thousand Chinese troops died during the war.

At the height of the war, Soviet aid began to play an increasingly important role in quantity and quality. Faced with the escalation of US intervention from 1964, the type of aid that the Soviets were able to provide played a crucial role, in particular in defending North Vietnam against US bombardments. This aid seriously increased after the fall of Khrushchev. On November 17, 1964, the CPSU Politburo decided to increase its support for Vietnam. This aid included combat aircraft, radar, artillery, anti-aircraft defense systems, small arms, ammunition, food and medicine deliveries. In 1965, the Soviets took a step further by sending surface-to-air missiles and fighter planes. In addition, Vietnam received about 2000 tanks, as well as helicopters and other equipment. The Soviet Union also sent about 15,000 military specialists to Vietnam. As advisers, but also, especially at the beginning, as fighters operating anti-aircraft defense systems. And also, occasionally as pilots. Which was less necessary once 5000 Vietnamese had been trained as pilots in the Soviet Union. All this equipment and Soviet specialists were sent to North Vietnam. Some of the equipment subsequently headed south. But not the specialists. The Soviets wanted to

avoid any escalation, and therefore took no risk of Soviet-American clashes.

US forces lost 4000 planes during the war. Without Soviet help, this would have been hard to imagine. The extent of Soviet military aid, but also Chinese, is striking. Obviously, they were weapons of the 1960s, less sophisticated than those of today. But, in the context, this aid was certainly more substantial than the weapons sent to Ukraine up until today.

The Vietnam War coincided with the Sino-Soviet schism. Relations between the two countries were execrable; in 1969 they even came close to armed conflict. Out of necessity, and not without friction, they were obliged to cooperate to help the Vietnamese. But each of them was trying to pull Vietnam into its orbit. Did all this change the nature of war? No. It was still a war of national liberation. The extent of Soviet and Chinese aid and the possible motivations of these two regimes did not change anything.

Back to Ukraine. I have appendix at the end of this article, a piece from the *Quotidien* in Luxembourg (based on the work of the Kiel Institute): a good summary of the arms deliveries. First observation: the weapons are indeed more and more heavy. But at the beginning, in February-March 2022, they were not heavy at all. At first the Americans, like the Russians, like almost everyone, thought that the Russians would quickly occupy Kyiv, Kharkiv and other cities, and that Ukrainians would at best wage a war of resistance in the west and a war of partisans elsewhere. That is why the US wanted to evacuate Zelensky to Lviv or even out of the country. Against all expectations, things turned out differently. The Russians were forced to withdraw from the north of the country. The Ukrainians had therefore scored a first victory. It was important. Having shown what they could do, they were given heavier weapons, which they would need for the fighting in the east and south.

But some weapons were still missing. The Ukrainians had been begging for months for modern tanks before receiving them, and so far, not enough of them. They have had HIMARS short-range missiles (70km) since last year. Then medium-range missiles (130km) and finally, in May, the British long-range Storm Shadows. It seems that now they will also receive long range missiles from France. And only now do they have the promise of receiving what they have been demanding for months: F-16 fighter jets. In the meantime, they operate with Soviet-made planes (considerably modernized, of course) that they have received from Eastern European countries. Quite recently, Germany authorized the delivery of five MiGs that had been part of the air force of the GDR, a country that ceased to exist in 1990. Putin must have trembled…

US goals and actions

The United States has two concerns. They really want to help Ukraine to defend itself; they do not want to see it occupied by Russia. But at the same time, they are afraid of an escalation with Russia, which explains the slowness and hesitation in the delivery of sophisticated weapons. It is also possible that they wish to avoid a total military defeat of Russia for fear of the destabilizing consequences, preferring to let them withdraw gently or even let them keep some territorial gains. But this also depends on the balance of power on the ground. Nevertheless, if the blockages on the types of armament supplied tend to be lifted, albeit slowly, it is not only because of pressure from Ukraine and some other countries, but because of the behavior of the Russians. Except for the use of nuclear weapons, they do just about everything, including attacks against infrastructures and civilian targets, not to mention the crimes they commit in the occupied areas.

It should be added, however, that the slowness of deliveries from certain countries can also have a logistical aspect. Because contrary to what some campists/pacifists say, far from

permanently militarizing, the reality is that after the end of the Cold War, most NATO member countries seriously reduced their military personnel and expenditure. This was particularly the case in Germany.

An examination of the period between 2014 and 2022 is quite revealing. We are very far from the image of a NATO that was arming Ukraine against Russia. During Obama's presidency, until 2017, the total arms deliveries by the United States to Ukraine was zero. That was Obama's policy. And since it was the United States that led the way, NATO member countries in Western Europe followed its lead. Poroshenko, then president of Ukraine, was present at the emergency NATO summit in Wales in September 2014. He asked for weapons but left empty-handed. Only certain Eastern European countries, notably Poland, provided some weapons, but in small quantities. After some hesitation, Trump supplied Javelin anti-tank missiles: a first delivery in 2018, followed by others in 2019 and 2021. But the Ukrainians only received authorization in 2020 to deploy them to the front in the Donbas.

The Wales NATO summit was supposed to sound the alarm and push member countries to increase their military spending to two per cent of their GDP. It must be noted that the response was overall quite lukewarm. It took February 24 for that to begin to change.

Minsk agreements

Far from preparing for war, the response of the United States after 2014 was to push Ukraine towards an agreement with Russia within the framework of the infamous Minsk agreements, the application of which was subcontracted to France and Germany. These agreements had been imposed on Ukraine by Russia in 2014-15 on the basis of a military balance of forces unfavorable to the Ukrainians. Beyond their inconsistencies and ambiguities, they had, according to according to Wolfgang Sporrer, a diplomat working for the OSCE who was involved in

the Minsk process, an even greater weakness. They were not getting to the root of the conflict. According to him, this stemmed from Russia's desire to exert its influence on Ukraine's internal policy and international relations: the fundamental conflict was that between Moscow and Kyiv. In itself, the Donbas problem was quite solvable. But for Russia the "republics" constituted a useful lever of pressure on Ukraine.

While refusing to send weapons, the United States and NATO did send military equipment – helmets, boots, bulletproof vests, night goggles, computer equipment, etc. But they did something more important: they provided training for the Armed Forces of Ukraine (AFU). And in a serious way. During 2015, there were three major training programmes, led by the United States, Canada and Great Britain, respectively. In total, the number of Ukrainian military personnel who went through these programs was more than 70,000. So, NATO was ready to give Ukraine the means to have what it had lacked in 2014, a modern army worthy of the name. But not to provide it with the necessary weapons. If they had, the current war could have been shortened or even avoided.

In conclusion, we can say that the United States and, even more so, some of their NATO allies (especially France and Germany) still bear some responsibility for the current war. But not in the sense of pushing for war. Quite the opposite. They persisted beyond reason in treating the Putin regime as a rational, responsible and reliable partner. Yet the alarm signals were not lacking. From Chechnya in the 1990s, via Georgia, Syria, Crimea, Donbas. We can even consider that the softness of the West's reactions on all these occasions encouraged Putin to think that he could safely dare to invade Ukraine in 2022. Besides, it is even possible that if "the special operation" had been as rapid as expected he might have been right…

The divisions of the left

The European radical left is deeply divided over Ukraine. It is not just an ideological battle but involves choices that determine political action. Not only does the left adopt different positions from one country to another, but often there are divisions within the left in the same country.

It is possible to identify three major currents: the internationalist current, the campist current and the pacifist current.

The first is clearly in solidarity with Ukraine. It supports the country in its war of resistance against the Russian invasion. For many, this also includes support for sending arms, but, at a minimum, support is expressed by clearly putting forward the demand for the withdrawal of Russian troops from Ukraine, unconditionally. And also, as much as possible, by providing material assistance.

The campist current considers that the main cause of the war, or at least an important cause, is the enlargement of NATO towards the east, which leads it to dilute Russia's responsibility for the war without necessarily denying it completely. In general, this current calls for ceasefires and negotiations. Without conditions and sometimes specifying on the current front lines. And it either refuses to support the sending of weapons or even calls for a ban on arms deliveries. Obviously, this position is objectively pro-Russian. Its result would be to push Ukraine into negotiations in a position of weakness. Some campists admit this, in the name of the primacy of the fight against NATO. Others hide behind calls for peace whose sincerity is doubtful, to say the least.

Being against war on principle, the pacifist current starts from the desire to end the war as quickly as possible. It does not necessarily share the campist vision. But this is often the case, since in Western Europe certain peace movements date from the Cold War era and were directed against US imperialism and NATO. But whether it is out of campism or simply the

sincere aspiration for peace, they often arrive at the same demands as the campists: ceasefire, negotiations, no delivery of arms.

Where do these divisions come from? Let us look at the campists first. Some comrades ask why we speak of campists. It must be said that there is a touch of irony. During the Cold War, there were indeed two camps: the Soviet camp, which called itself the socialist camp, and the western US-NATO camp, which called itself the democratic camp and was correctly called by others the imperialist camp. Today, there is no longer a camp that claims to be socialist. Nobody can regard Russia as socialist or even progressive and the countries which vote with it at the United Nations are just as indefensible, if not worse: North Korea, Syria, Iran, Eritrea, Nicaragua.

Quantitatively, the majority of campists come from Communist parties or were trained by them. Which does not mean that all Communists are campists nor that all campists are Communists. There is also a second source of campism, among those who opposed US wars after 1991. But whether before or after 1989-91 the result is the same: an ossified view of the world, ultimately dogmatic and sectarian. No need to make the concrete assessment of a concrete situation so dear to Lenin. In all circumstances, the main enemy is US imperialism. It is enough to apply this assumption to any situation, deforming reality as required. For example, by demanding the withdrawal of several hundred US soldiers from Syria, without saying a word about the Russian and Iranian forces and their active participation in Assad’s war against the Syrian and Kurdish peoples.

True pacifists, unlike campists who hide behind calls for peace, are something else. We may think that they are naive. In an interview with *Médiapart* at the start of the war, the French philosopher Etienne Balibar, a strong supporter of Ukraine, noted: “Pacifism is not an option”. In fact, in a

war, pacifism is never an option. Trying to end a war as soon as possible, regardless of the context, can lead to the worst results. On the other hand, in times of peace, campaigning against war in general is quite respectable, without necessarily being effective. Conducting campaigns of information and action against nuclear weapons is more than useful.

What characterizes the internationalist current in the face of war? To precisely make a concrete analysis, to define the nature of the war. If it is a war of national liberation or a war of national defense, then support to those who fight against oppression. Support to those who are oppressed and exploited and help to their resistance and their right to self-determination. In the specific case of the current war, it is a war of defense, national and democratic. The Ukrainian left is therefore a thousand times right to participate in the defense of its country. The real Ukrainian left, not the pro-Russian “left”. In passing, we can again refer to Lenin, who is said to have been against the slogan of defense of the fatherland. This is inaccurate. In 1914 he was against the use of this slogan as a justification for supporting one’s own imperialism. But not against the slogan as such, when it was a question of national wars, as he later made clear.

We might add that the internationalists are not giving lessons from afar to those who are fighting. We are currently witnessing campists and pacifists who do not limit themselves to calls for a ceasefire and negotiations. The Ukrainians are also called upon to make concessions, compromise and to take into account the interests of Russia. Campists are the worst and their advice is mostly given from the comfort of the countries of the imperialist core of the European Union. We may wonder what political or moral right they have to do that. We are consoled by the observation that they have less and less respect and credibility in Eastern Europe.

Appendix: Ever heavier weapons

Le Quotidien (March 30, 2023)

Recent deliveries of tanks and long-range rockets illustrate how the West is adapting to Kyiv's needs.

From the start of the Russian invasion in February 2022, Ukrainians benefited from the first deliveries of weapons by the West. Between February and March, they received more than 40,000 light weapons, 17,000 manpads – portable surface-to-air defense systems – as well as equipment (25,000 helmets, 30,000 bulletproof vests, etc.), according to data from the Kiel Institute which has listed since the beginning of the war the weapons promised and delivered to Ukraine. Greece notably has sent 20,000 Kalashnikov AK-47s, the United States 6000 manpads , 5000 Colt M4 carbines and 2000 Javelin portable anti-tank missiles , Sweden 10,000 manpads , the Czech Republic 5000 Vz58 assault rifles and 3 20 Vz59 machine guns.

In an emergency, these lightweight weapons and equipment are easy to deliver, pick up, and move across the battlefield. Faced with fierce resistance in Kyiv and Kharkiv, the country's second city, the Russian army withdrew at the end of March to concentrate its efforts on the territories of Donbas and the south.

In April, artillery deliveries began (howitzers, rocket launchers, etc.), capable of striking behind enemy lines to reach ammunition stocks and block Russian logistics chains. There were delivered until the autumn 321 howitzers, including 18 French Caesar guns, 120 infantry vehicles, 49 multiple rocket launchers, 24 combat helicopters, more than 1,000 American drones, as well as 280 Soviet-made tanks, sent mainly by Poland, which the Ukrainian army is accustomed to using.

The armor arrives

Despite its withdrawal to the east and south of the country, Russia has been conducting parallel waves of air strikes (kamikaze missiles and drones) on energy infrastructure and

urban centers, well beyond the front. To deal with this, the Ukrainians were asking for missile defense systems. The United States has provided eight systems, the United Kingdom six, Spain four and Germany one. Washington recently ended up agreeing to deliver to Kyiv its Patriot medium-range surface-to-air missile system, considered one of the best anti-aircraft defense devices in Western armies.

In recent months, trench warfare has taken hold in Bakhmut and Ukraine feared a major Russian offensive with the arrival of conscripts. Against this background, Kyiv got heavy and modern Western tanks, long demanded, in order to seize the initiative and get out of the war of attrition. Several Western countries promised at the end of January to deliver them: Washington announced Abrams tanks, London Challenger 2s, Berlin Leopard 2s, reputed to be among the best in the world. The green light from Germany has also allowed other countries to promise Leopard 2s, of which Poland has sent 14.

Until now, Kyiv only had Soviet-made tanks and lost a lot of them. Western tanks are more technologically efficient with more precise sighting systems, on-board electronics… On Monday, the first deliveries of armored vehicles by London, Washington and Berlin were confirmed.

Promised by the United States in early February, long-range GLSDB rockets were also provided, according to Russian claims not denied by Kyiv. Ukraine considers these munitions, with a range of up to 150 kilometers, crucial to launch its next counter-offensive and threaten Russian positions far behind the front lines.

Murray Smith Sunday 16 July 2023

Republished from: https://www.europe-solidaire.org/spip.php?article67205

Photo of Internationalism in action, Welsh union members and politicians hand over supplies to Ukrainian miners in Pavlograd https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/odr/ukraine-russia-uk-trade-unions-solidarity-support/ Photo by Mick Antoniw

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Climate Camp Grangemouth – 12-17 June 2023 – Indigenous leader and Ukrainian activist among international speakers

At Climate Camp Grangemouth community groups, local people, workers and climate activists will assemble for a people-powered ‘festival of resistance’.

Learn practical skills, watch local and international talks and films, meet new people, explore local nature and history, play games and take collective action! Vegan food will be provided on site and the camp will be fully equipped with compost toilets and camping space.

Book a place

INEOS Grangemouth is Scotland's most polluting site and billionaire owner Jim Ratcliffe stashes record profits in a tax haven while the community here are blighted by pollution and struggling with food and gas bills.

Climate camp will be a place to build a just transition led by people, not billionaires, to resist and reimagine a greener future together.

Details about the programme, travel and practical information can be found in the Camp Guide. And remember to book your place and donate to help us cover our costs.

Climate Camp Scotland Press Release 27 June 2023

Indigenous leader and Ukrainian activist among international speakers at camp

- Indigenous leader and Ukrainian activist among international speakers to address Climate Camp in Grangemouth
- The programme of events for Climate Camp Grangemouth, taking place 12-17th July, has been released and will include a number of international speakers, as well as sessions focusing on Scottish independence and land rights.
- The Camp will be opened by Indigenous leader Leonidas Iza, Ecuadorian activist (pictured above) and president of the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador.
- Grangemouth will also hear from Ukrainian activist Iryna Zamuruieva about the Russian destruction of land and environment in Ukraine, and autonomous resistance in the country.
- Campaigners from Kurdistan and India will also speak at the camp.
- The camp will challenge INEOS's petrochemical plant in Grangemouth, Scotland's biggest polluter, emitting 2,752,000 tonnes of CO2 in 2020 (1)

Free Photos of speakers and camp at this link:

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1KG1UspbztIfMgBBLPpJ4_tEK7eEoNekX?usp=sharing

International speakers and activists will join local communities and campaigners as part of the programme at a climate camp in Grangemouth.

Held from 12 to 17th July, the camp is a chance for local residents, workers and activists to meet and build relationships. With guests from Ecuador, Ukraine, Kurdistan

and India, the camp aims to forge solidarity between those affected by the fossil fuel industry worldwide.

The camp will be opened on 12th July by Ecuadorian activist Leonidas Iza, leader of the country's biggest indigenous group. Iza led the 2019 and 2022 protests against the Ecuadorian government's austerity measures and rising fuel prices, which disproportionately impacted the country's poorest.

Later in the programme, campaigner Iryna Zamuruieva will hold a session about Russia's destruction of Ukranian ecosystems and land, exploring the resistance to such practices in the country.

Other international speakers include representatives of the Internationalist Youth Coordination, who will share knowledge on Kurdish ecology and youth mobilisation, as well as a session on LGBTQ+ climate activism in India. Discussions on land rights, rewilding and Scottish independence will also feature, among other topics.

Quân Nguy□n, a spokesperson for Climate Camp Scotland, said:

> *"Climate Camp Grangemouth is an orientation point for climate activists to think about our strategies and tactics, and how we can restore momentum to hold polluters and governments to account. Having so many activists and resistance leaders from abroad leading the debate helps us learn from those on the frontline of the climate crisis. This knowledge in the face of an ever intensifying climate crisis is more urgently needed than ever."*

Climate Camp Grangemouth speaker Iryna Zamuruieva added:

> *"Ukraine's resistance is also a climate justice struggle. This war reinforces the need to end the fossil fuel economy which Russia uses to fund ecocide and genocide. It also shows*

the need to join up our struggle with those defending their kin-regions against imperial and colonial violence."

INEOS petrochemical plant in Grangemouth, the location for this year's climate camp, is Scotland's biggest polluter, emitting 2,752,000 tonnes of CO2 in 2020. Last month INEOS refused to participate in a Parliamentary inquiry about transition at Grangemouth (2) Levels of inequality in the surrounding areas are high, with 25% of children in the Falkirk council area living under the poverty line (3) while INEOS's owner, Jim Ratcliffe, consistently ranks as one of the UK's richest people (4).

The organisers of the camp say that this same pattern of inequality and exploitation exists across the world. By bringing international leaders and activists together, they hope to learn from each other's struggles for fairness, equality and safe environments.

NOTES TO EDITORS

Climate Camp Grangemouth is being coordinated by Climate Camp Scotland, who are bringing workers, front-line communities, and climate action groups together to build the movement for a swift just transition from fossil fuels, and to take mass action that brings about climate justice. www.climatecampscotland.com

1. INEOS controls four sites in the top 20 climate polluters in Scotland, all in Grangemouth town. See: https://theferret.scot/rogues-gallery-climate-polluters-top-20-revealed/

2. Petrochemical giant Ineos snubs Scottish Government net zero committee refusing to 'go on the record' – Falkirk Herald https://www.falkirkherald.co.uk/news/environment/petrochemical-giant-ineos-snubs-scottish-government-net-zero-committee-refusing-to-go-on-the-record-4126406

3. One in four children across Falkirk council area living in poverty – Faklirk Herald https://www.falkirkherald.co.uk/news/politics/council/one-in-four-children-across-falkirk-council-area-living-in-poverty-4179839

4. Manchester United bidder Jim Ratcliffe up to second on UK rich list – The Guardian – https://www.theguardian.com/business/2023/may/19/manchester-united-bidder-jim-ratcliffe-up-to-second-on-uk-rich-list-hinduja-family-richard-branson

Republished from Climate Camp Scotland website: https://www.climatecampscotland.com/

Solidarity with Kyiv Pride! Leaflet distributed at Edinburgh Pride

The following leaflet was distributed by Ukraine Solidarity Campaign Scotland at the Edinburgh Pride march on 24 June 2023.

SOLIDARITY WITH KYIV PRIDE

It is currently impossible to stage Pride marches in Kyiv due to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Last year, the Kyiv Pride March was held in Warsaw. The Ukraine Solidarity Campaign (Scotland) distributed Kyiv

Pride solidarity leaflets at Edinburgh Pride.

This year Liverpool will host Kyiv's annual Pride with the city's own march being held jointly with Ukrainian organisers KyivPride. The announcement comes just a few weeks after Liverpool hosted the Eurovision Song Contest on behalf of Ukraine, which organisers said gave a "massive boost" to the city's LGBTQ+ scene.

Andi Herring, CEO of the LCR Pride Foundation, said. "Even in the UK, we are all aware of how easily these rights can be backtracked on or removed entirely, that is why we are proud to share our March with Pride this year with the LGBT+ communities of Ukraine. It is a message of solidarity, of unity and of hope for people here in Liverpool City Region and in Kyiv." And in Scotland, we have seen the right wing UK Tory government (with no resistance from Sir Keir Starmer's Labour 'opposition') overriding the democratic decision of Holyrood to implement Gender Recognition Reform.

Lenny Emson, who was a founding member of KyivPride a decade ago and has led the organisation as an Executive Director for the last two years, said: "The Russian invasion took our right to march away from us. But international solidarity gives us a chance to keep marching for Ukraine, for LGBTQI rights, for freedom. KyivPride supports self-determination in its national, social and individual senses. and the Ukrainian people's right to militarily resist the Russian occupiers.

UKRAINE SOLIDARITY CAMPAIGN (SCOTLAND)

https://www.facebook.com/USCScotland/

СОЛІДАРНІСТЬ З КИЇВСЬКИМ ПРАЙДОМ

Через російську агресію, на даний момент проведення прайдів у Києві неможливе. Минулого року Варшава прийняла київський Марш рівності; Українська кампанія солідарності (Шотландія) розповсюдила листівки про цей марш на единбурзькому Прайді.

Цього року Ліверпуль прийматиме щорічний київський Прайд. Хода буде проведена спільно з КиївПрайдом, українськими організаторами київського Маршу рівності. Це станеться всього через кілька тижнів після того, як Ліверпуль прийняв пісенний конкурс Євробачення від України, який, за словами організаторів, дав «значний поштовх» ЛГБТК+ сцені міста.

Енді Геррінг, генеральний директор ліверпульської організаціх LCR Pride Foundation, сказав, що «Навіть у Великій Британії ми всі усвідомлюємо, як легко можна втратити наші права, тому ми з гордістю ділимо наш прайд-марш із ЛГБТ+ спільнотами України. Це послання солідарності, єдності та надії для людей тут, у регіоні міста Ліверпуль, і в Києві». А в Шотландії ми бачили, як правий британський уряд Консервативної партії (без опору з боку лейбористської «опозиції») скасував демократичне рішення шотлиндського уряду про реформу гендерного визнання.

Ленні Емсон, який був одним із засновників КиївПрайду десять років тому і очолював організацію як виконавчий директор протягом останніх двох років, сказав: «Російське вторгнення відібрало в нас право маршувати. Але міжнародна солідарність дає нам шанс продовжувати маршувати за Україну, за права ЛГБТКІ, за свободу. КиївПрайд підтримує самовизначення в національному, соціальному та індивідуальному сенсі. та право українського народу на військовий опір російським окупантам».

“Prigozhin’s March”: What Was It All About?

The Posle Editorial Collective assess Wagner’s mutiny and its consequences:

The events of June 23-24 are already being described as the most serious domestic political challenge to Putin’s regime. In a matter of hours, Wagner units managed with little resistance to take control of Rostov-on-Don and Voronezh, major cities in southern Russia. They even got a few hundred kilometers outside of Moscow. By announcing the start of a military rebellion, Wagner leader Yevgeny Prigozhin openly challenged the necessity for a full-scale invasion of Ukraine, demanded the removal of Russia’s military leadership, and claimed his goal was the restoration of “justice.” And while the conflict was resolved with little blood it seems to have forever undermined Putin’s promise of stability and regime’s unity.

There’s no doubt Prigozhin is a war criminal and an opportunist pursuing his personal interests. In the months leading up to the mutiny, Prigozhin made numerous statements bashing the Russian military leadership trying to take control of Wagner units staffed by both former Russian prisoners and retired army officers. Yevgeny Prigozhin, who owes his career to Putin’s patronage and has extensive connections in the state security apparatus, has turned out to be the most aware of the regime’s weaknesses and the vulnerability of Putin’s “chain of command.” Generals Surovikin and Alekseev, who have played key roles in the so-called “special military operation” in Ukraine, publicly called on Prigozhin to “come to his

senses” and “resolve the matter peacefully.” Most of the army stood in silent neutrality toward the rebels. Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu and Chief of the General Staff Valery Gerasimov, whom Prigozhin demanded to meet, never commented on what was happening and disappeared. Note that the leaflets distributed by Wagner not only called for their resignation, but also for an immediate court martial for Shoigu and Gerasimov on accusations of the brutal treatment of soldiers, poor supplies to the army, and concealing the truth about the course of the war.

On the morning of June 24, Vladimir Putin delivered an urgent five-minute address to the nation. He called Wagner’s rebellion a “stab in the back” of the Russian army but did not mention any specific actions to crush it down. Putin highlighted the moral and political dimensions of the mutiny and called it a betrayal deserving of the harshest response. He blamed the mutineers for putting Russia on the brink of civil war and military defeat. Yet, the Russian president did not mention any names, revealing his poor preparedness and uncertainty about the situation. Several thousand-armed columns of the Wagner fighters crossed a vast distance in less than a day and voluntarily stopped 200 kilometers short of Moscow. At the same time, President Putin, presumably, rushed out of the capital, recording his addresses from his remote country residence in Valdai. Regional governors and pro-Kremlin politicians swore allegiance to the president and the constitutional order on social media only a few hours after the mutiny’s outbreak.

Predictably, some forces, factions, and citizens did not follow the president’s call to resist the traitors and expressed their support for the rebels. These include neo-Nazis on both sides of the front: the Russian Volunteer Corps fighting alongside the Ukrainian armed forces and the Rusich sabotage group, which has been engaged in armed conflict with Ukraine since 2014 as a Russian proxy. Prigozhin responded

unambiguously to Putin’s message. He stated that the president was “wrong” about Wagner’s betrayal, called himself and his fighters “patriots of the motherland,” accused Moscow officials of corruption, and refused to back down. Seeking to expand his support, Prigozhin voiced two hallmark claims of the anti-Putin opposition: Russian regions should oppose Moscow for expropriating the country’s resources and the Russian leadership is made up of crooks and corrupt officials and should be exposed and brought to justice.

Despite Prigozhin relying solely on the armed units, the program he announced was supposed to lend popular legitimacy to the coup d’etat. People in Rostov-on-Don cheered Wagner’s fighters as heroes, demonstrating that Prigozhin’s slogans could gain mass support. The attempted Wagner mutiny also revealed the unwillingness of the security services to actively intervene in the situation.

Prigozhin’s “march of justice” ended as unexpectedly as it began. The Belarusian dictator Lukashenko brokered an agreement between Wagner and the Kremlin. According to its terms, Prigozhin was to withdraw his units and the mutineers were to be spared punishment for their alleged “feats of arms.” The agreements with Lukashenko also seem to include secret provisions granting Wagner certain autonomy and defining the framework for further relations with the military leadership. The deal was guaranteed by the “word of the President of Russia,” as Putin’s spokesman Dmitry Peskov later stated. In other words, the public is kept in the dark as to the terms and content of these unofficial agreements. Although all Russian military units and ordinary citizens were called upon to participate in the mutiny and to resist the rebels, the crisis was resolved by a conspiracy between two war criminals with the Belorussian autocrat playing the role of both a broker and an umpire.

While the consequences of these events are difficult to predict, it’s already clear that they have forever changed

Putin’s political system. If this attempted military insurgency was so successful, why can’t this example inspire future attempts to build on its success? Contradictions within Russia’s elites have spilled over from the media into the reality of Russian cities and the armed forces. The whole world has witnessed that they were (temporarily) resolved outside any legal framework with the compromise guaranteed by Putin’s “word.” In Russia, the rule of law has given way to mafia codes. Words backed up by violence are stronger than the prosecutor’s office or even the president’s declarations of imminent punishment. The war unleashed by Putin’s regime is becoming an ever more apparent threat to its stability and will inevitably result in its eventual collapse. What form will this breakdown take? And could Russia’s intimidated and disempowered masses come to the fore? These questions remain open.

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ПОСЛЕ