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Reviews

# Ukraine: voices of resistance and solidarity

- Reviews section -

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**The war in Ukraine has generated a vast amount of reportage, analysis, opinion and debate (and also propaganda and disinformation), but the voices of the Ukrainian Left – socialists, feminists, union activists – are too seldom heard.**

**This book [1]** does much to fill that gap. Most of the contributors to this collection of essays, articles and interviews are Ukrainians, living in Ukraine or abroad, or people of Ukrainian descent. Several of them are members of the new left organisation Sotsialny Rukh/Social Movement. Other contributions are from international (including Russian) Left supporters of the Ukrainian resistance.

Great upheavals in world politics, wars especially, pose a challenge to radical thought. New divisions arise, or existing ones are deepened and clarified. At the same time, new connections are made, and new alliances formed.<sup>4</sup>

Broadly, attitudes to the war in Ukraine in the international Left fall into three camps.

There are those who support, or at least excuse, Putin's war, in the name of anti-imperialism. Russia, it is claimed, is pushing back against NATO's expansionism. Ukraine is viewed as a proxy for NATO. Russia is viewed by some as a counterbalance to the West's world domination.

An intermediate view is that this is an inter-imperialist conflict, in which both sides are equally to be opposed. At least this has the merit of recognising Putin's drive to conquer all or part of Ukraine, and absorb as much as possible of it into the Russian Federation, for the blatant imperialism it is.

There is an assumption underlying both these viewpoints (indeed, shared by many who support the West against Russia), that the desire of the Ukrainian people to shape their own lives is subsumed by the contest between the great powers.

The contributors to this book show that the Ukrainian people are not pawns or proxies. They are fighting for their own freedom, independence and self-determination.

The book presents a powerful argument for international Left and labour-movement support for the Ukrainian struggle, and a devastating critique of tendencies that deny that support.

## Right to armed resistance

If Ukraine has the right to armed resistance to invasion, it must have the right to receive arms from whatever source – in actuality, mainly the NATO countries. The unexpected success of the Ukrainian armed forces on the battlefield is due to their greater motivation and the receipt of advanced weapons and equipment from the West. For us, it is counter-intuitive to support arms exports. In general, the arms trade is one of the evils of capitalism. However, right now, the supply of arms is vitally necessary for Ukraine to survive as an independent country.

John-Paul Himka provides a brief (40-page) account of Ukraine's history, from the ninth century to the present.

Taras Bilous explains why he, a socialist and internationalist, is serving in the Territorial Defence Forces to resist the Russian invasion.

In an interview, Yulia Yurchenko discusses a range of issues including: the goals and ideology of Russian imperialism as shaped by Putin; the possibility of a progressive solution to the Donbas question (devolved autonomy, to be discussed in a democratic process, without Russian troops); the need for debt cancellation; the formation of Sotsialny Rukh and the problems of arguing for socialism in Ukraine.

Viktoriia Pihul is interviewed about the impact of the invasion on women and girls; women's participation in the resistance; and problems of sexism in Ukraine's armed forces and civil society.

Nataliya Levitska, Deputy Chairperson of the NGPU (Independent Mineworkers Union of Ukraine), speaks of the role of the unions in keeping essential industries and services running and supporting vital human needs.

In *Reinventing Nazism for State Propaganda: How Morality is Being Replaced by Force*, Ilya Budraitskis dissects Putin's use of "denazification" as a pretext for his attack on Ukraine.

## Reconstruction

Several of the writers address the question, what sort of reconstruction does Ukraine need? Ukraine's government and ruling class, Western states and financial institutions insist on the all-too-familiar neoliberal package of privatisation, deregulation, and precarious employment. Here, at least in outline, are a set of counter-proposals in the interests of working people: restoration and extension of workers' rights, public consultation, and – very important – debt cancellation.

Several contributions challenge the refusal of a substantial part of the Left to support Ukraine.

Oksana Dutchak poses a heartfelt and scorching critique of *Ten Terrible Leftist Arguments Against Ukrainian Resistance*.

Niko Vorobyov explains: *I Marched Against Putin's War for the Same Reason I Protested the War in Iraq*.

Gilbert Achcar, Simon Pirani, and Stephen R Shalom and Dan La Botz make important contributions to the same polemic. It's a pity this is even necessary, but such is the state of the contemporary Left.

The Ukraine Solidarity Campaign and Resistance Books are to be congratulated for producing this important book.

*The International Marxist-Humanist Organization is affiliated to the Ukraine Solidarity Campaign (in the UK) and the Ukraine Solidarity Network – U.S.*

Source [IMHO](#):

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[1] "Ukraine: voices of resistance and solidarity " Resistance Books and USC 2022 RRP: £10, €12, \$14 (print) 168 pages; 140x216mm.