

Annihilation & Neutrality by Proxy



IN AUGUST 1945 when Hiroshima and Nagasaki were destroyed by nuclear bombs, the two cities were forever twinned. A terror at once physical, and of the imagination, was unleashed upon the world. The apocalypse was upon us. The end of the world, was in sight. We have lived with this nightmare by pushing it to the back of our minds. Very occasionally it would surface at some critical point, but then be hurriedly pushed back into the dark where it belongs.

Now, Vladimir Putin has decided, quite deliberately, to let loose this terror back into the daylight, to the front of our worst imaginings. Dmitry Kisselyov, a presenter on Russian state television has threatened Britain with a tsunami by exploding a nuclear device off our coast and wiping out the UK with a 500-metre-high wave. Meanwhile Russia's foreign secretary, Sergey Lavrov has assured us that the Jewish president of Ukraine could easily be a Nazi

because “Hitler also had Jewish blood”, and “the Jews are the greatest anti-Semites”.

So, apart from the invasion Putin has mobilised all the wretched lies and terror propaganda he can. He has done this in order to strengthen his campaign for what he calls the “neutrality” of Ukraine. Not only does he want to ‘de-Nazify’ the place, he wants to demilitarise it too.

The core of the Kremlin’s struggle for the neutrality of Ukraine is that the government of the territory should pledge not to become a member of NATO or the European Union and accept the annexation by Russia of Crimea, Luhansk and Donetsk, and the Black Sea coast, including Odessa. Putin’s idea is that if Ukraine insists on seeing itself as a legitimate country and state then it had better seek its security within the orbit of the Russian Federation rather than that of the West.

The current government in Kyiv rejects all of these proposals. It acknowledges that membership of NATO is not on the cards, but it has applied for association with the European Union and for eventual membership of the organisation. Some Brexiteers have been questioning how can Ukraine be fighting for its sovereign independence from Moscow while actively seeking to link up with Brussels? So entranced are they by the fight of the UK to leave the EU they cannot conceive of why people in another state, in another part of Europe, with a completely different history and contemporary experience from our own, should want to join Brussels. This shows either how little thought they’ve given the matter or that they are enemies of the West in hock to Russia.

Indeed, it was the issue of association with the EU which resulted in the overthrow of the pro-Russian government in Kyiv in 2014. The administration, led by Kremlin favourite, Victor Yanukovich, fell amid mass demonstrations across the country, and the shooting dead of more than one hundred unarmed citizens, by forces loyal to Moscow’s man.

President Putin's response to the fall of his puppet in Kyiv was swift. He sent troops into Crimea, annexing the entire territory, and initiated separatist movements in Eastern Ukraine, arming insurgents in the eastern parts of Luhansk and Donetsk stiffened by soldiers sent from the Russian Federation.

The cause of the present war is undoubtedly the insistence by the Ukrainian government on maintaining the sovereignty of the country, the legitimacy of its pivot towards the West, its application to join the European Union, and the outright rejection of all of Russia's annexations of its territory. The dictators in Moscow and Minsk do not feel able to countenance a free and open bourgeois democracy along their borders. It is bad enough that Poland and the Baltic states abut Belorussia, and the Russian Federation, without the enormous country of Ukraine becoming a thorn in their side, promoting the idea of an open society, freely elected government, free speech, and economic arrangements regulated by the rule of law.

Given the historic cultural and social intermingling of Russians, Belarussians, and Ukrainians, the dictators in Moscow and Minsk know that it would be impossible to shield their own populations from the dangerous influence of a relatively prosperous bourgeois democratic Ukraine. The tyrants know that their days would be numbered. Consequently, the invasion and massive destruction of Ukraine's housing stock and infrastructure has the positive function of deterring their own populations from aspiring to the freedoms that Kyiv and President Zelensky represents.

Vladimir Putin's, invasion has destroyed almost 50 percent of Ukraine's economy. By the end of March half of all businesses had closed their doors, unable to pay wages, suppliers, or taxes. Twenty percent of IT specialists have fled abroad, along with the five and a half million people who have sought refuge in Poland, and other states across Europe. Ukraine's farming has been adversely affected by the

fighting and the dislocation of road and rail freight – almost a hundred ships carrying agricultural products have been stranded in the Black Sea by Russia. Ukraine's debt has risen to more than 54 billion dollars (US) and it must pay over 7 billion dollars in interest in this year alone.

Moves are planned, and donors are assembling, to ensure Ukraine's post-war recovery, but with all the help in the world it will take many years to recover from the damage done to it by the Russian Federation.

However, the country will recover and it will continue to represent a threat to the stability of the two dictatorships to its north and east, despite being wrecked and ruined by the war. This is because political arrangements in the dictatorships of Belorussia and the Russian Federation are unlikely to survive this war and its aftermath. The flagrant abuse of power by Moscow and Minsk, their brutality and crimes, cannot be concealed from their own populations indefinitely. Alexander Lukashenko and Vladimir Putin will be called to account either by their own immediate circles or by the general public. They will, like Adolf Hitler and the Nazis they're so fond of conjuring up, be utterly destroyed.

In Britain I've noticed that Putin's charge that the US and the UK are fighting a 'proxy war' against Russia is beginning to gain some traction amongst some left-wing people appalled by the military aid being supplied to Ukraine by NATO and ten other allied states.

The fact that forty countries have rallied to the side of Ukraine in its fight with the Russian Federation is not a 'proxy war'. I have no doubt that officials in the Pentagon and the ministries of defence in London and Paris are delighted by the opportunity provided by Putin's invasion to test their equipment and weapons against Russia's armies. But the West did not cause this war and its only possible objective is the collapse of the autocratic regime in Moscow.

These these Western military circles should be careful for what they wish for because political and economic chaos in Russia could have disastrous consequences for us all. Desperation and the prospect of defeat might lead the Kremlin to widen the war and to deploy nuclear weapons. Although it should not be forgotten that Britain, France, and America, are nuclear powers and the doctrine of deterrence is still in place. (The UK's nuclear submarines would have no difficulty in responding to Dmitry Kisselyov's tsunami.)

From the absurdity of accusing President Zelensky of being a Nazi, to the horror of threatening to destroy the UK with a tsunami, this war has got it all. Most importantly, it has the heroic defence of Ukraine's government, its state, and its people. Using all their energy, organisation, and initiative, in the struggle with the armies of the Russian Federation. Those on the left using Lavrov and Putin's phrase, 'proxy war' as a means of undermining the Ukrainian defence are plumbing new depths for the UK's ersatz left.

They will no doubt hotly dispute this, claiming that they oppose Russia's invasion, together with the West's ramping up the war. They will insist that they are even-handed and want only peace between Russia and Ukraine. Consequently, they are opposed to the artillery, drones, and tanks being shipped to the aid of the Ukrainian forces. They want Ukraine and Russia to be brought to negotiations regardless of what happens on the battlefield, and without the involvement of the West or of the military supplies being sent in by NATO and its allies.

The fact that Ukraine would lose without Western supplies is quietly elided by this 'peace and proxy-war argument'. Their Stop The War opposition to NATO and its allies in the fight to defend Ukraine is utterly shameless. It is support for bloody tyranny against bourgeois democracy, and deserves nothing but our contempt.