

## **NATO and Stop the War Coalition**



**I HAVE TO CONFESS** to certain prejudices. I favour the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation because I see it as an alliance of bourgeois democratic states founded in 1949 for the mutual defence of its members against the incipient threat posed by the tyranny of Joseph Stalin. Since the disintegration of the Soviet dictatorship in the years 1989 to 1991 it has expanded to encompass most of the states that escaped from Moscow's 'sphere of influence' on the collapse of the USSR.

Now, my prejudices, or to put it more politely, my 'fore-conceptions', have some holes and threadbare patches. Turkey for example is not a democracy – it is an elective dictatorship rather like Vladimir Putin's Russia. Hungary, under prime minister Viktor Orbán is

not a model democracy, and Romania and Bulgaria's claims in this regard are somewhat shaky.

That being said, NATO is on the whole an alliance of democracies that defends the sovereignty of the states which border Russia and Belarus: Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, and Bulgaria. Since 1945 the Soviet Union annexed or occupied all of these countries, which explains their eagerness to join and retain NATO membership. They don't want to risk Russian incursions or interference in any form.

As if to remind everyone of this wretched past Russia has also entered and occupied parts of Ukraine since 2014. In that year Moscow's armed forces invaded the Ukrainian provinces of Luhansk and Donetsk in support of Russian separatists, who have styled their pocket states the People's Republic of Luhansk, and the People's Republic of Donetsk. Immediately following this action Russian forces entered the Crimean Peninsula on Ukraine's Black Sea coast, and suddenly announced the incorporation of the territory into the Russian Republic.

This naked aggression is designed to undermine Ukrainian democracy and bring it back into the sphere of Putin's Russia and the dictatorship of Belarus's President Alexander Lukashenko. Putin, and the oligarchy in Moscow, share Lukashenko's fear of democracy on their borders. They know that if the Ukraine is allowed to succeed as an open bourgeois democracy, fully integrated with Western Europe, then it will become a pole of attraction for the democratic movements in Moscow and Minsk. They know that the appeal of democracy among the mass of working people is likely to become overwhelming, threatening the security of their dictatorships, without a shot being fired.

"Without a shot being fired." This is the point – the influence of Western European capitalism will, despite all its problems, offer a large measure of freedom and a better life to the people of

Ukraine, Belarus, and Russia. The West does not need military aggression – on the contrary it is Russia that needs soldiers and the threat of war to destabilise Ukraine’s economic and social life in an attempt to stop its pivot to the West, and to destroy its burgeoning democracy.

Nato’s expansion, particularly to Poland and the Baltic States, since 1991 has so far prevented Russian incursions and annexations in Lithuania, Estonia, Latvia, and Poland. However, Moscow prevented Ukraine taking a similar course by manipulating the political situation in Kiev until Putin’s proxy, President Victor Yanukovich, ordered troops and police to fire on pro-Western demonstrators in Kiev in February 2014. This was a tragic mistake, resulting in Yanukovich being unceremoniously bundled out of the Presidential Palace, and his undignified rush to the airport, back to his pals in Moscow. It was Yanukovich’s failure to defeat the democratic movement in Kiev that has resulted in Russia’s invasions, annexations, and proxy wars.

This is what the *Stop The War Statement on the Crisis Over Ukraine* is supporting. By characterising NATO’s expansion to the borders of Russia and Belarus as Western military aggression they are, despite all arguments to the contrary, supporting the Kremlin’s narrative concerning NATO’s hostile intentions. They are supporting the Russian annexation of Crimea and Lukashenko and Putin’s arming and encouragement Russian separatists in Luhansk and Donetsk.

STWC apparently opposes any war over Ukraine and appears to back both horses by recognising “the right of the Ukrainian people to self-determination” and also supporting “Russian security concerns.” The peculiarity of the Corbynista left’s position is revealed by the following sentence: “It [the British government] has also declared that Ukraine has a ‘sovereign

right' to join NATO, when no such right exists to join it or any other military alliance.”

Now, if the Ukrainian state based in Kiev, is an emanation of the “Ukrainian people’s right to self-determination”, it is sovereign; it does have the right to join any military or economic alliance that it likes. So, STWC’s belief that Kiev does not have the right to apply for NATO membership, surely undermines their own claim to support the self-determination of the Ukrainian people. The STWC’s *de facto* rejection of Ukrainian sovereignty is further emphasised by the following sentence: “Stop the War believes that Russia and Ukraine should reach a diplomatic settlement of tension between them, on the basis of the *Minsk II Agreement* already signed by both states.”

*Minsk II* was merely a cease-fire agreement designed to stop the fighting between Ukrainian forces and Russian-backed separatists in Luhansk and Donetsk. It was a ‘dead letter’ almost before the ink was dry in February 2015, because of the failure of Ukrainian forces to surrender the town of Debaltseve to Russian troops and separatist fighters. STWC surely knows this, just as they know that it has zero chance of persuading the Ukrainians (whose self-determination they apparently support) to allow the Russian-backed forces to consolidate their rule over the disputed enclaves.

It is notable that *Stop the War Statement on the Crisis Over Ukraine* has nothing to say about the 2014 Russian invasion and annexation of Crimea. This act of aggression is quietly forgotten, while the peace-loving activists of the Corbynista left, call “for a halt” to NATO’s “eastward expansion”, and ignore the 14,000 already killed in the fighting.

The Kremlin’s attempt to destabilise Ukraine with separatist insurgencies and annexations is akin to their role in Georgia. Here Moscow’s support for ‘ethnic Russians’ (who represent 0.7

per cent of the population) has resulted in two separatist 'republics', amounting to one fifth of the country's territory, hampering any moves towards independent action by the Georgian state in their capital at Tbilisi. True to form the STWC does not concern itself with Russia's aggression while denouncing NATO at every twist and turn.

STWC's hatred for the West and Western bourgeois democracies leads it ineluctably on every occasion to support tyrants and dictators. The Corbynista left are the enemies of bourgeois democracy – *despite having no working conception of socialist democracy to put in its place.*

This is why they always find themselves in bed with the enemies of the West. This is why they speak up for Russia's "security concerns" and "security tensions" against the potential well-being and relative prosperity that bourgeois democracy could bring to working people in Belarus, Russia, and Ukraine.

Against the Corbynista left – this *ersatz* or fake left – our slogans must be "Hands off Ukraine!" and "Down with Russian Imperialism!"