

Appeasing Putin's aggression will not bring peace - Opposite Messages from the Irish left: Sinn Féin and the Labour Party Versus People Before Profit

Wednesday 1 March 2023, by [MEEHAN John](#), [Ó FLATHARTA Tomás](#) (Date first published: 25 February 2023).

On the first anniversary of Vladimir Putin's "Special Military Operation" in Ukraine, February 24 2023, 12 elected left-wing Oireachtas members had a letter published in one of Ireland's main daily papers, the Irish Times. A number of correspondents rejected the contents of this letter.

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On the same day two party leaders, Sinn Féin President MaryLou McDonald and Ivana Bacik of the Labour Party brought an opposite message to thousands of protesters in Dublin's O'Connell Street.

Both Bacik and McDonald clearly backed occupied Ukraine against the Russian imperialist and ethnic-cleansing invader.

Putin must immediately withdraw his army and end his criminal invasion

- Sinn Féin President MaryLou McDonald

I agree with McDonald and Bacik on this point. Many Irish Times correspondents are also on the side of McDonald and Bacik. All the letters are below.

On Saturday Irish Left With Ukraine proudly sponsored a Dublin walking tour featuring the Queen's University Belfast historian Maurice Casey. We were joined at one stage by Ivana Bacik TD (Labour Party leader), who offered us political support.

John Meehan

We are on our Walking tour of Dublin's Eastern Europe with [@MauriceJCasey](#)
So many brilliant insights into our shared history. Delighted to be joined by [@ivanabacik](#)
who told us of her own family's migration to Dublin from Czech Republic after WW2
pic.twitter.com/gBRic3p5e5

— Irish Left With Ukraine (@Ilw_Ukraine) [February 25, 2023](#)

The choice of more escalation or moves to open peace negotiations

Sir, – On the first anniversary of the war in Ukraine, it is time for a change in Irish policy so that we become advocates for peace.

The war has already cost thousands of lives of civilians and both young Ukrainian and Russian soldiers. Homes have been destroyed and a major humanitarian and refugee crisis created. The war has had a serious impact on global food prices.

We condemn Russia's invasion of Ukraine as illegal.

We reject the brutal tactics that have seen many civilian areas bombed.

At this point we face the choice of ever more escalation or moves to open peace negotiations.

The only winners of more escalation are arms manufacturers and militarists in both Russia and Nato who are pressing for increased spending on armaments.

We know from our own experience that violent conflicts must be ended by ceasefires and negotiations.

In our opinion, peace offers the best opportunity for the people of Ukraine to promote their right to self-determination and national sovereignty by political means, reflecting the principles of the UN charter.

We reject those who are using this war to undermine Irish neutrality and move us towards Nato membership.

We think that the positive element of Irish neutrality needs to be exercised. Namely, that Ireland uses its position as a neutral country to call for a ceasefire and peace negotiations. – Yours, etc,

Senator FRANCES BLACK,

RICHARD BOYD BARRETT TD,

Senator TOM CLONAN,

JOAN COLLINS TD,

CATHERINE CONNOLLY TD,

Senator EILEEN NÍ FHLOINN,

Senator ALICE-MARY HIGGINS,

GINO KENNY TD,

THOMAS PRINGLE TD,

PAUL MURPHY TD,

Senator LYNN RUANE,

BRÍD SMITH TD,

Appeasing Russian aggression will not bring peace

Such a “peace” would send a signal to despots across the world that their barbarisms will be tolerated

Sir, - It is quite amazing that the letter from some members of the Oireachtas calling for peace in Ukraine does not even mention the withdrawal of Russian troops from Ukraine's internationally recognised and sovereign territory (Letters, February 24th). Rather it seems that for them the real villains in all of this are the “arms manufacturers and militarists”, in other words the old 1960s left-wing shibboleth, known as the military-industrial complex.

They do, however, mention the principles contained in the UN Charter as a political way forward, so it is worth quoting Article 51: “Nothing in the present Charter shall impair the inherent right of individual or collective self-defence if an armed attack occurs against a Member of the United Nations, until the Security Council has taken measures to maintain international peace and security”.

Given that Russia and China will always veto any moves by the Security Council to end the conflict, I am quite sure that the vast majority of the Irish people, including the constituents of these public representatives, will continue to support the current international effort to defend Ukraine's right to exist. - Yours, etc,

MARTIN McDONALD,

Terenure,

Dublin 12.

Sir, - A recent letter urged Ireland to “call for a ceasefire and peace negotiations”. What is really meant by “peace” in this instance is the forced subjugation of one country to another and the endorsement of revanchism, torture, and terrorism. Such a “peace” sends a signal to despots across the world that their barbarisms will be tolerated and that territories can be gained through wars of aggression. - Yours, etc,

EDWARD GARRAHY,

Ballyneety,

Co Limerick.

Sir, - The letter from assorted TDs and Senators, replete with irrelevancies, truisms and non sequiturs, only has value in that it highlights the dangers inherent in having a letter written by a committee.

The letter's central thesis, which seems to be that Ukraine's best chance of promoting its right to self-determination and national sovereignty is by having its supporting nations attempt to appease the Russian despot Putin flies in the face of everything we should have learned from global history. - Yours, etc,

SEAMUS McKENNA,

Dublin 14.

Sir, - The TDs and Senators calling for moves to open peace negotiations in Russia's war on Ukraine miss the point that the onus for such a process lies entirely with Russia. As we have heard Ukrainians say so succinctly: if Russia stops fighting, there will be no more war; if Ukraine stops fighting, there will be no more Ukraine. - Yours, etc,

JANE MAHONY,

Ranelagh,

Dublin 6.

Sir, - A number of our TDs and Senators wrote to you calling for Ireland to change its policy and call for a ceasefire and peace negotiations. Were things only that simple. One assumes they accept that such a call will have precisely zero effect on the aggressor in the war. What it would do is undermine the solidarity shown by all of Europe in opposing the war. It would be exploited by Russia for its propaganda value. Sadly, rather than having any positive effect, such a call would only serve to encourage Russia and potentially prolong the horrific and senseless slaughter of young Russian and Ukrainian men and women in uniform and Ukrainians in their homes. - Yours, etc,

PADDY SWEETMAN,

Wexford.

Sir, - A letter regarding the ongoing conflict in Ukraine, signed by TDs and Senators, calls for a ceasefire and peace negotiations, but neglected to call for a withdrawal of Russian forces from Ukraine, which would immediately halt hostilities. They also claim there are moves afoot to "undermine" Irish neutrality. As stated by Micheál Martin in the Dáil on a number of occasions, we are "militarily non-aligned" and not neutral, in this conflict. Nor should we be. We should give all practical assistance to Ukraine, including what little weapons systems we possess. Russia started this war, deliberately targeted civilians and civilian infrastructure, committed horrendous atrocities, and appear to be uninterested in any peace negotiations. The only answer, currently, is the defeat of Russian forces in Ukraine. - Yours, etc,

CONOR HOGARTY,

Blackrock,

Co Dublin.

Sir, - I find myself almost in complete agreement with one paragraph of the letter from a number of members of the Oireachtas. It is indeed true that "peace offers the best opportunity for the people of Ukraine to promote their right to self determination and national sovereignty". However, how that much to be desired outcome can be achieved by "political means", in the face of an "illegal invasion", Russian "brutal tactics" and "civilian areas bombed", is not explained by the signatories. The principles of the UN Charter are referenced. The recent resolution of the UN General Assembly, overwhelmingly passed, calling on Russia to withdraw its forces from Ukraine might provide the TDs and Senators involved with a solid basis under international law from which to continue their no doubt genuine efforts to promote peace and Ukrainian sovereignty, reflecting, as it does, the principles of the UN Charter. - Yours, etc,

MICHAEL O'DWYER,

Clogheen,

Cork.

Sir, - Congratulations to your assortment of TDs and Senators for a consummate repetition of Russia's talking points on its invasion of Ukraine and never once referring to the democratic will of that country in resisting an illegal war of aggression.

These contributors are free to delude themselves that appeals to peace will have any impact on Vladimir Putin; all the evidence of the past 20 years tells us the opposite. Couching such rhetoric as support for the UN is a new low. Article 51 of the UN Charter clearly supports Ukraine's democratically elected government in its self-defence. Similarly we should listen to that government when it explains bluntly what it needs and rejects the Russian ceasefire narrative which is designed to hold territory occupied contrary to international law. Ireland has a role to play in this illegal war based firmly on supporting international law which prohibits wars of aggression and the horrific war crimes committed by Russia on which your contributors are silent. As a country which knows what it is like to live in the shadow of a dominant neighbour, we should be extra supportive of the needs of Ukraine's elected government to fight with all it takes consistent with the UN Charter to survive as a sovereign state. These are the principles which should guide our response to Russia's aggressive and illegal war. - Yours, etc,

MICHAEL McLOUGHLIN,

Dublin 15.

Sir, - Once again, a well-meaning letter calling for "peace and dialogue" appears on your letters page. A peaceful end to the war in Ukraine is certainly desirable, but people who call for peace rarely state what the dialogue would be like. Rather than publish vague "calls for peace", I ask that The Irish Times allows such people and organisations space on your opinion page to spell out what they think would be on the agenda during peace negotiations. They should cover such points as responsibility for the war, territorial arrangements, war crimes and reparations. It might help to consider a mental experiment: suppose Russia occupied all of Connacht, deporting Irish citizens to Russia and committing several war crimes in the process, how much should Ireland concede in order to achieve a peaceful resolution? - Yours, etc,

KEVIN BUTLER,

Dublin 3.

Sir, - The letter by Senator Frances Black, et al, regarding the Russian invasion of Ukraine is strong on piety but provides no useful succour to Ukraine. All who support Ukraine wish for peace but simply calling for a ceasefire and negotiations can only be to the benefit of the invader. Conflating Russia and Nato as militarists ignores the importance of Nato in the defence of Europe, which absolutely includes Ireland. It is the sacred cow of neutrality that needs to be challenged in the modern world where Ireland is deeply integrated within the western alliance. - Yours, etc,

BILL MADDOCK,

St John's,

Newfoundland,

Canada

John Meehan
Tomás Ó Flatharta

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P.S.

Tomás Ó Flatharta

<https://tomasoflatharta.com/2023/02/25/russias-imperialist-genocidal-and-ethnic-cleansing-invasion-a-ppeasing-putins-aggression-will-not-bring-peace/>