

UKRAINE, THE DEFEAT OF PUTIN

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The idea that Ukraine could win the war is no longer unthinkable. In order to safeguard the European project, the most effective way to contain escalation of the conflict is, by all possible means and without wasting time, to support armed resistance against the aggression for which Russia, and Russia alone, is responsible. Putin's Russia will have to engage in a collective examination of conscience, similar to that about Nazi Germany after the war ended. And the path to this will be via its defeat in Ukraine.



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So far, Putin has failed. He hasn't brought Ukraine to its knees, as he evidently believed would happen, and as he led his population and other states (and most especially China) to believe so they'd support him. This fact speaks for itself. It diminishes the image of Russian power, inside and outside the country, while also consolidating Ukraine's existence, a little more every day. The collective response of the population, whether of Ukrainian or Russian origin, is hastening the process (and having probably reached a point of no return) of national and institutional construction that dates back to 2014 after the first failed attempts of the Orange Revolution in 2004. Now, after the Ukrainian counteroffensives, the idea that Ukraine could win the war is no longer unthinkable.

Besides armed resistance, Ukrainian citizens have found the simplest, bravest, and most determined way of resisting the aggression, namely getting on with the most normal life possible. The population is proud of this "new normal" which, with echoes from the Spanish Civil War, has adopted its own version of *¡No pasarán!* (They shall not pass). "Things are very simple in Ukraine. If a missile doesn't fall on your head, you go to work", Oleksandra Romantsova, director of the Centre for Civil Liberties and the 2022 Nobel Peace laureate, recently **remarked**. With such civic mobilisation, the task of the Russian "denazifiers" isn't easy, despite the plans laid out and put into practice in the occupied territories, where the denazification of which the Kremlin speaks is no mere slogan for propaganda purposes.

Lest anyone be misled, it's worth noting what Moscow actually means by "denazification". One of the leading Russian ideologues of the term, Timofey Sergeytsev, explains in a highly illustrative **article** titled "What Russia Should Do with Ukraine", published in April 2022 by the state-owned news agency Ria Novosti that, "A total lustration must be conducted ... The further denazification of this bulk of the population will take the form of re-education through ideological repressions (suppression) of Nazi paradigms and a harsh censorship not only in the political sphere but

also in the spheres of culture and education.” He goes on to say that “the name of Ukraine cannot be kept ...” because, “The collective West is in itself the architect, source, and sponsor of Ukrainian Nazism”. Hence, “the redemption of their guilt before Russia for treating it like an enemy can be manifested only by relying on Russia in the processes of restoration, revival, and development. No “Marshall Plans” can be allowed to happen on these territories”. Accordingly, “Denazification will inevitably include de-ukrainization” but, since “Ukrainism is an artificial anti-Russian construct that has no civilizational substance of its own, a subordinate element of an extraneous and alien civilization ... the denazification of Ukraine means its inevitable de-europeanization.”

What Moscow fears isn't a Ukraine in NATO, as evidenced for example, by its total non-reaction to President Zelenskyi's announcement at the end of March 2022 that he accepted neutrality for Ukraine as part of a peace agreement with Russia. What it fears is a democratic and truly sovereign Ukraine. The outcome of the war is yet to be seen, but Putin has lost the Ukrainians for good.

Reading the whole text is a highly advisable exercise for anyone wanting to understand what awaits populations of the zones occupied by Russian troops, the thousands of kidnapped Ukrainian children sent to Russia to be “deprogrammed”, and Ukrainians in general, if they lose the war. It is advisable, too, if we're to have a clear idea of what we'd be consenting to, for them, if we don't support them in every area, starting with the military. After this reading, it's no longer acceptable to say, “we didn't know”, “we didn't have all the information”, or “it's known” that “both sides misinform”, or “it's known” that the West is peddling a one-sided story, as many supposedly critical voices claim in various branches of the media. It seems that the reports of Spanish and other foreign correspondents—many of whom speak Russian—don't count because “it's known” that they're on the payroll of the big media corporations. However, those who really know about today's Russia are aware that there's just one *pensée unique*, and that is the one produced at the orders of the Kremlin and conveyed by the mass media which broadcasts messages of hate and hysteria, taking a leaf from the playbook of the sinister Rwandan Free Radio and Television of the Thousand Hills, whose bosses ended up in the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda.

In this context, if we wish to safeguard the European project, the most effective way to contain escalation of the conflict is, by all possible means and without wasting time, to support armed resistance against the aggression for which Russia, and Russia alone, is responsible. Anyone who wants to qualify this statement should ask Russian, Belarusian,

and Ukrainian pacifists what they think. There's not a single Russian or Belarusian democrat who doesn't ardently desire Putin's military defeat. All wars are execrable but not all wars are equal. Some are inescapable, like those fought by Spanish Republicans in the Civil War, or by the Allies and German anti-Nazis in the Second World War. I grew up with the lament of exiled Republicans of all political stripes that, while German and Italian bombs—never in short supply on the Franco side—were raining down on them they'd been ignominiously abandoned by the European democracies.

The disgraceful attempts by France and the United Kingdom in 1938 to appease Nazi Germany predictably failed, and also allowed Hitler to occupy more territories and subjugate more countries. Likewise, the only containment policy that could satisfy Putin would mean accepting his *natural* claim to an area of influence under his exclusive control or, in other words, sacrificing the aspirations of the Ukrainian population, telling them that their struggle and all the deaths have been in vain and that, for the sake of peace in the rest of Europe, they must agree to being vassals in a devastated country. As things stand at present, any attempt at negotiation that Putin might accept must start here. What Moscow fears isn't a Ukraine in NATO, as evidenced for example, by its total non-reaction to President Zelenskyi's announcement at the end of March 2022 that he accepted neutrality for Ukraine as part of a peace agreement with Russia. What it fears is a democratic and truly sovereign Ukraine. The outcome of the war is yet to be seen, but Putin has lost the Ukrainians for good.

Consequently, asking Spain or any other European country to stop supplying weapons to Ukraine in order to avoid escalation and stop the war means condemning the Ukrainians to a slow death, in body and spirit, because they won't stop fighting ... Shouting "No to war!" is an act of protest and courage only in the streets of Moscow and Minsk. Here, it's easy-peasy.

There's still a long way to go if any change is to be wrought in the deep-rooted nature of Russian political culture, which is dominated by an imperialist mentality, the dogma of exceptionalism, and the blind conviction that Russia can only exist as a superpower. Putin's Russia will have to engage in a collective examination of conscience, similar to that about Nazi Germany after the war ended. And the path to this will be via its defeat in Ukraine. The Ukrainians' struggle is also our struggle, and we must keep helping them to prevail. Those of us who want a Europe free of archaic despots and wars must help the Ukrainians to win this one, and help the Russians to get rid of Putin and the Great Russian occupant that many still carry in their heads.