

Reports from the front

Unites States: Vermonters in solidarity with Ukrainians

Tuesday 22 March 2022, by [FLECKENSTEIN Paul](#), [RAMEY Jim](#) (Date first published: 13 March 2022).

Jim Ramey reports on an anti-war rally in Montpelier, VT that featured a speech from Tempest Collective member Paul Fleckenstein.

On March 13, 2022, an ad hoc coalition of Ukrainian Americans, elected officials, and anti-war organizations held a small statewide rally of around 125 people in opposition to Russia's military invasion of Ukraine on the Statehouse lawn in Montpelier, VT. This was eighteen days after the invasion began.

The rally was in many ways an attempt to show support for Vermonters with Ukrainian roots, who have been in a state of shock and hyperactivity since late February. Yulia Gulenko Rudick, one of the main organizers, spoke openly about this trauma, "You can't sleep and at the same time you can't impact what's happening to your loved ones." Emphasizing her sense of powerlessness she rhetorically asked, "How can this happen in the twenty-first century?" When asked what should be done she stated, "Everything!" and though not specifically calling for a "no-fly-zone" in her address to the crowd, she held a blue and yellow sign saying, "Block Sky Over Ukraine." Several other Ukrainian speakers recounted the trauma and brutality inflicted on Ukraine by Putin's invasion, and celebrated the heroic resistance of Ukrainians.

U.S. Representative (and Senate candidate) Peter Welch and representatives from Senators Leahy and Sanders' offices commenced the rally with speeches that highlighted humanitarian and military aid that was needed in Ukraine. Sanders' representative, in particular, stated his support for the "strongest possible sanctions" on Russia, a position that will further immiserate an already besieged anti-war movement in Russia. Tiptoeing carefully around both direct military intervention through NATO, and policies that would strengthen a genuine opposition to the Russian invasion, the congressional delegation left the crowd with no further steps to take.

Jim Ramey

Paul Fleckenstein, the speaker for the Democratic Socialists of America, and member of the Tempest Collective, spoke last and enumerated demands and steps the movement might take that could help mobilize the overwhelming outrage that has emerged after the invasion, both domestically and internationally:

"Hello sisters, brothers, and siblings.

First, thank you to the organizers of this rally. This is important work.

The many anti-war protests I have attended on this lawn involve standing in solidarity with the victims of war, with those who resist occupation, understanding how we got here, and asking what

are we going to do?

Russia's invasion of Ukraine is horrific. Decimation of cities, homes, and hospitals. Over 2 million refugees forced out of the country. Large number of casualties and mass terror.

Putin believed his propaganda lies about Ukrainian's welcoming Russian forces.

The Ukrainian resistance has derailed and slowed Putin's invasion. We must stand in solidarity with their fight for freedom and national self-determination.

The opposition to the invasion in Russia, facing harsh repression, is a positive development and an important part of stopping Moscow's war. In Belarus too. Reports are that large sections of the military there refused deployment to Ukraine, hindering Moscow's invasion. This is how wars are stopped.

The war in Ukraine threatens a global crisis.

We all have a stake in this fight.

This means several demands for us now:

Open the borders to Ukrainian war refugees (and for refugees fleeing war in other parts of the world)

Support Ukrainians' right to arms to free themselves from imperial occupation.

Humanitarian aid and canceling the billions of debt to the U.S.-controlled IMF that will keep Ukrainians in economic subservience after this war is over.

We have to combat the xenophobia and Russophobia being whipped up around this war.

We also cannot rely on other imperial powers to resolve this crisis in a way that helps Ukrainians.

U.S./ NATO intervention is not the answer.

NATO since its inception has been a predatory and expansionist alliance seeking to increase the U.S. sphere of influence. It engaged in a 20-year occupation of Afghanistan, carried out war crimes, and left the country in shambles.

While Moscow is to blame for the war in Ukraine, the U.S./NATO contributed to the disaster with decades of military expansion.

Neither Moscow nor Washington, capitalist states locked in an inter-imperial conflict that sacrifices the needs of people to profit and empire, offer a way forward.

We have to remember that we have more in common with:

- Ordinary Russians, including the large numbers in opposition to the war who have long suffered under Putin's repression;
- Ukrainians heroically resisting Moscow's invasion;
- With working-class people around the world that will suffer the food shortages, economic impacts, and the threat of a new world war,

than we do with the rulers of Russia and the United States, or the European Union.

Our struggle must be with Ukrainians' fight for self-determination, for solidarity across borders, and with the growing international anti-war movement to stop Moscow's war and all imperialist wars.

Solidarity with Ukraine!"

Paul Fleckenstein

P.S.

- TEMPEST. POSTED MARCH 16, 2022:

https://www.tempestmag.org/2022/03/vermonters-in-solidarity-with-ukrainians/?utm_source=rss&utm_medium=rss&utm_campaign=vermonters-in-solidarity-with-ukrainians