

# **The Irish Left's response to Russia's war on Ukraine - Debate on the letters page of the Irish Times - Part Two**

Thursday 2 March 2023, by [Ó FLATHARTA Tomás](#) (Date first published: 1 March 2023).

**We published a post covering the Irish left's response to Russia's imperialist invasion of Ukraine on [February 25](#).**

We included references to an Irish Times letter signed by 12 Oireachtas public representatives ((TD's and Senators) - which prompted several critical replies. One of the original Oireachtas 12, Senator Tom Clonan, responded positively to the critics.

On Wednesday March Ivana Bacik TD (Labour Party Leader) joined the discussion - robustly stating

We believe that it is misguided for anyone on the left in Ireland to call for a ceasefire, without making any reference to the need for Russian withdrawal from this illegal and barbaric occupation

- Ivana Bacik TD, Irish Labour Party Leader

## **Left's response to Russia's war on Ukraine**

### **A clear and unequivocal stance?**

Sir, - Many of the 12 Oireachtas members who signed the recent letter (February 25<sup>th</sup>) calling for a ceasefire in Ukraine would identify as being on the left in Irish politics. We in the Labour Party, as members of the Party of European Socialists, are a proudly centre-left internationalist party. While we are proud of Ireland's military neutrality, we believe that Ireland cannot be politically neutral in the face of Russia's brutal invasion of Ukraine. Putin is the aggressor, the war criminal. There is no moral equivalence, no equality of bargaining power where a sovereign democratic European state is invaded and occupied, where atrocities are committed against civilians and millions forced to flee their homeland.

That is why Labour will continue to express solidarity with the people of Ukraine; and why we have taken a clear and unequivocal stance against Russian aggression.

We believe that it is misguided for anyone on the left in Ireland to call for a ceasefire, without making any reference to the need for Russian withdrawal from this illegal and barbaric occupation. - Yours, etc,

IVANA BACIK TD

Sir, - I welcome the call from members of the Oireachtas for peace in Ukraine (Letters, February 25<sup>th</sup>).

I look forward to hearing of the outcome of any forthcoming trip to Ukraine to bring this call to open peace negotiations to the frontline. I'm confident that they will be allowed to travel unencumbered as they're on a mission of peace, with military escorts to meet the Russian forces, who as they say, are illegally in Ukraine.

Indeed, as is their tradition, they could decide to march the last few kilometres, banners aloft and megaphones blaring their message of peace and solidarity.

I'm sure their pleas will be given every hearing by the wide variety of occupying Russian military forces in Ukraine, especially those who are part of the Wagner Group. Those men of the Wagner Group will certainly listen keenly to the concerns of such wise personages and we will all await the live stream of these representatives expressing themselves as forcefully to them as they do in the Oireachtas.

I'm sure they will do these things because these are people of conviction and action. They weren't elected simply to write letters to the papers. Were they? - Yours, etc,

DANIEL K SULLIVAN,

Marino,

Dublin 3.

Sir, - Senator Tom Clonan (Letters, February 27<sup>th</sup>) seeks to clarify his position in relation to a previous letter (February 25<sup>th</sup>) submitted by him and a number of other Oireachtas members.

However, I think it is important to highlight and remember the following.

In 1994, Ukraine handed over its nuclear weapons to the Russian Federation in return for security guarantees. The guarantees were codified in the Budapest Memorandum which was formally signed by the leaders of Ukraine, Russia, the United States and the United Kingdom.

The memorandum recognised the independence, sovereignty and the existing borders of Ukraine. At that time it was hailed as a triumph in nuclear non-proliferation. Ukraine honoured the terms in full and returned its significant nuclear arsenal to Russia. Russia completely and utterly dishonoured its obligations, in an act of treachery last February. Thankfully, the United States and the United Kingdom have followed through on their treaty obligations by providing Ukraine with the means to defend itself.

Had Ukraine not relinquished its nuclear arsenal, it would not have been attacked by Russia. If Putin is allowed to win, what nation would ever relinquish their nuclear weapons again? Many nations are closely observing events in Ukraine, wondering if in order to preserve their sovereignty they too should develop nuclear weapons as the ultimate guarantor of their sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Currently, Russia is not interested in peace talks, as made clear last week in a speech by President Putin. Unfortunately, the only option currently available is the military one.

We live in dangerous times, Putin must be stopped. - Yours, etc,

CONOR HOGARTY,

Blackrock,

Co Dublin.

Sir, - I welcome Senator Tom Clonan's elaboration on the letter he co-signed with 11 other members of the Oireachtas published in The Irish Times on the first anniversary of the war in Ukraine.

The fact that Senator Clonan needed to address both what was unsaid and what was actually stated is an indication that the original letter could have benefitted from deeper reflection before being "signed off".

Unfortunately, he did not address the glaring absence of any indication, whatsoever, that Putin is prepared to compromise and allow a peace "for the people of Ukraine to promote their right to self determination and national sovereignty". This for me seriously undermined the veracity of the primary correspondence on the anniversary of the war.

Finally, I welcome Senator Clonan's call for renewed Irish efforts at the UN Security Council to end this conflict, a more considered perspective than the discordant call "for a change in Irish policy so that we become advocates for peace".

When has Irish policy ever advocated against peace?

MICHAEL GANNON,

Kilkenny.

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**Tomás Ó Flatharta**

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**P.S.**

Tomás Ó Flatharta

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