

Ukrainian President Zelensky speaks to New Zealand parliament

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On Wednesday morning, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky addressed the New Zealand parliament via video-link.

As with his previous speeches to the UK, German and Australian parliaments, Zelensky's 10-minute address was a propaganda exercise aimed at escalating the US-NATO proxy war in Ukraine against Russia. Afterwards, Labour Party Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern and the leaders of every other parliamentary party hailed Zelensky and made clear their fervent support for the war.

Underlining the significance of his appearance, Zelensky is only the second world leader invited to address the NZ parliament (the first was Australia's Julia Gillard in 2011). Despite being a small country on the opposite side of the world from Ukraine, New Zealand is playing a significant role in the war.

Zelensky praised the Ardern government for sending 130 New Zealand soldiers to Britain where they have assisted in training hundreds of Ukrainian conscripts and other soldiers. Dozens of other NZ military personnel are involved in gathering intelligence and coordinating supplies for Ukraine. New Zealand has also provided millions of dollars for ammunition and other lethal aid.

The Ukrainian president called for support for his 10-point "peace framework," which includes bringing war crimes charges against Russian leaders and restoring all territories occupied by Russia, including Crimea. Zelensky presented this as a defensive platform, aimed at preserving "freedom" and "peace" against unprovoked aggression from the "terrorist state" Russia. He thanked New Zealand for being part of an "anti-war coalition [of] more than 100 countries, those who support the fundamental principles of international law and the UN charter."

This is a complete fraud. Russia's invasion was deliberately provoked by decades of military encirclement by NATO, the US and their allies, which have massed

military hardware and troops throughout Eastern Europe. The 2014 US-backed coup in Kiev, spearheaded by fascist and anti-Russian groups, sparked a civil war with breakaway Russian-aligned provinces in eastern Ukraine, and Moscow's annexation of Crimea. The US and its allies poured billions of dollars worth of weapons into Ukraine in preparation for war.

While Washington deliberately provoked and goaded Moscow, the Putin regime's military intervention is utterly reactionary and has proven to be an unmitigated disaster for the people of Ukraine and Russia. It also raises the immense danger of a third world war, fought between nuclear-armed powers.

Every action by the US and its allies, and their puppets in Kiev, is intended to escalate the war—including the recent attacks inside Russia. Their ultimate aim is regime change in Russia and to bring the vast resources of the Eurasian landmass, above all China, under imperialist control.

Aside from the material support being provided by New Zealand, Ardern's embrace of Zelensky is intended to help boost his celebrity status and to whitewash the character of the Kiev regime and its war. Ardern has been relentlessly glorified by the international media, including various self-styled "left" commentators, as the embodiment of "kindness" and liberal values, in supposed contrast to Trump and other right-wing leaders.

In reality, New Zealand is a minor imperialist power and Ardern has strengthened its military and intelligence alliance with the United States. Successive Labour and National Party governments have supplied troops for the criminal US-led wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and are supporting the US build-up to war against China. In return, Washington supports the New Zealand ruling elites' neo-colonial interests in the South Pacific.

Following Zelensky's speech, Ardern declared that her government was "committed to join Ukraine's case

against Russia at the International Court of Justice and have provided funding to the International Criminal Court to investigate war crimes and crimes against humanity in Ukraine.” She added that New Zealand had just announced sanctions against Iran over its provision of drones to Russia—pointing to the potential for the war to spill into neighbouring countries.

Ardern concluded her speech with the battle cry *Slava Ukraini* (glory to Ukraine), which was popularised by Ukraine’s Nazi collaborationists in World War II.

Opposition National Party leader Christopher Luxon said Ukraine was fighting “for the democratic values and national sovereignty that so many countries and people all around the world share and believe in.” In fact, Ukraine is a police state, where the Zelensky regime has outlawed about a dozen opposition parties because they called for negotiations with Russia.

Green Party co-leader James Shaw—who is a minister in the Labour-led government—hypocritically referred to his party’s stated “fundamental commitment to non-violence,” while at the same time declaring that “Ukraine’s response to Russia’s violence will itself involve some violence.” The Greens, like their counterparts in Germany and Australia, are pacifists in times of peace, and militarists in times of imperialist war.

Shaw told Zelensky: “I applaud the efforts of you and your administration to minimise harm to civilians and to conduct your war within the norms that we would expect of a civilised nation.”

This is a lie. In fact, the Ukrainian military is rife with fascists who idolise the Nazi collaborator Stepan Bandera. Far-right militia such as the Azov Battalion and the Slobojanshchyna Battalion, part of Ukraine’s armed forces, have committed war crimes, including the torture and execution of Russian prisoners, according to reports in the French media.

A report by Amnesty International published in August stated that “Ukrainian forces have put civilians in harm’s way by establishing bases and operating weapons systems in populated residential areas, including in schools and hospitals.”

Significantly, Māori Party co-leader Debbie Ngarewa-Packer said she supported Shaw’s remarks. She told Zelensky: “We share in your pain and we wish you peace,” without expressing any disagreement with the Ardern government’s support for the US-NATO war effort.

The Māori Party, which represents indigenous capitalists, had previously sought to distance itself from

the war, with co-leader Rawiri Waititi declaring recently that New Zealand should have remained “neutral” and was acting as a “puppet of America.” Such statements are thoroughly hypocritical: the party was part of the 2008–2017 National Party-led government, which repeatedly sent troops to Iraq and Afghanistan.

The population is being bombarded with war propaganda from all sides, including the media, universities and politicians. A recent exhibition held at the Auckland Museum and Victoria University of Wellington openly glorifies the Azov Battalion and whitewashes the role of Ukrainian right-wing nationalists in the Holocaust.

At the same time, there is widespread opposition, among workers and young people internationally, to the agenda of the US and its allies, which is leading towards World War III. The most conscious political expression of this opposition was provided by last Sunday’s webinar, held by the International Youth and Students for Social Equality, the youth organisation of the International Committee of the Fourth International.

The webinar, titled “For a Mass Movement of Students and Youth to Stop the War in Ukraine!” presented the real causes of the war, rooted in the crisis of world capitalism. It refuted the lies of the imperialist governments, and opposed the national chauvinism being whipped up by Moscow and Kiev. Speakers from throughout the world explained the socialist and internationalist program that is required to unite the international working class—the only force that can put an end to the war and its root cause, the capitalist system.



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