

PM address at the Brave Ukraine fundraising event: 5 May 2022

Thank you very much, what an honour to speak after my friend Volodymyr Zelenskyy, truly one of the most incredible leaders of modern times.

What a blessing for Ukraine and for the world, and what a disaster for Putin that he should now be leading Ukraine in Kyiv.

It is almost exactly 80 years ago, 1942, that the BBC first broadcast Shostakovich's Leningrad symphony to the world. This was played by a half-starving orchestra during the siege of Leningrad, while it was being pounded by the Nazis, and that symphony became a symbol of resistance to fascism, and the power of the human spirit.

I do not know whether Vladimir Putin is a Shostakovich buff or not, but is it not a tragic irony that a Russian leader, himself from Leningrad, should now be laying waste to cities in Ukraine as Volodymyr has just described.

Starving civilians, bombarding their homes, driving them underground, forcing families to huddle together in cellars, or as we have seen, in that giant steel plant in Mariupol.

But no matter what Putin tries to do to Ukraine's people, what the exhibition that we are opening tonight shows, is that he will never break their spirit. He will never overcome those indomitable armed forces, who have already repelled the Russian army from the gates of Kyiv, and therefore achieved the greatest feat of arms of the 21st century.

That is why I'm more certain than ever that Ukraine will win. Ukraine will be free, and a sovereign Ukraine will rise again.

And it's because this struggle is so clear cut, and without any moral ambiguity that I can see, a struggle between freedom and oppression, between democracy and tyranny, independence and imperialism, light and darkness, good and evil, that is why I think it speaks so deeply to us.

That is why here in the UK, you can see blue and yellow flags flying everywhere, from town halls and church spires and front gardens and children's playgrounds, and we in the United Kingdom, of every political party, all backgrounds, we are proud to be friends of Ukraine.

When Russian troops were massing on the frontiers of Ukraine in January, we were among the first European countries to send anti-tank missiles. I want you to know, and I told Volodymyr this earlier on today in our conversation, we will continue to intensify this effort for as long as Ukraine wants and needs our help.

And it is precisely because the Ukrainian people refused to surrender and precisely because they resisted so heroically that their suffering today is

so severe.

Putin has driven at least one Ukrainian in every four from their homes, including two thirds of all Ukrainian children.

And just as we must help Ukraine to defend herself against aggression, so we must also do everything we can ease the terrible burden of suffering imposed on an innocent people.

Let me conclude by saying: take part in today's charity auction. Whether you are bidding for Volodymyr's fleece – a snip at £50,000, I want much higher bids than that, or you are bidding for a tour of Kyiv with Mayor Klitschko, I have had a tour of Kyiv with Mayor Klitschko, it's a beautiful city. Well worth it, dig deep.

Support Ukraine tonight my friends so that that great ancient European capital Kyiv can never be threatened again, and that Ukraine can be whole and free once more.