



# REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNISM

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## Russian Imperialism, Ukraine War and Revolutionary Tactics

## English-Language Theoretical Review of the Revolutionary Communist International Tendency (RCIT), New Series No.74, May 2022

A Revealing Document of Great Russian Totalitarianism	p.3
On the attitude of revolutionary Marxists to Imperialist War	p.5
Russia's Monopolies: An International Comparison	p.8
Once Again on Russian Imperialism (Reply to Critics)	p.11
LIT-CI "Would Undoubtedly Defend Russia"	p.16
No to Workers Boycott against Russia but Yes to Boycotting the Ukraine?	p.19

*Pictures on the cover: Ukrainian postage stamp, depicting a Ukrainian soldier giving Russian cruiser Moskva the finger, issued two days before it sank (Source: Wikipedia, [https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/3/3f/Stamp\\_of\\_Ukraine\\_s1985.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/3/3f/Stamp_of_Ukraine_s1985.jpg))*

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# A Revealing Document of Great Russian Totalitarianism

## On an article published by the Russian state-owned news agency RIA Novosti

By Michael Pröbsting, International Secretary of the Revolutionary Communist International Tendency (RCIT), 7 April 2022

**P**ostscript: One day after we published this commentary, a second English-translation of the RIA Novosti article, with which we deal at this place, was published. <sup>1</sup> There are two things worth noting. The new translation contains only minor stylistic changes but no political alterations of this disgusting document of Great Russian totalitarianism. However, what is much more remarkable is the publisher of this second translation. It is the website "A Socialist In Canada" which is run by Roger Annis. Annis is a former Trotskyist who was affiliated with James Barnes and his SWP in the U.S. This is the organization which was part of the Mandelist "Fourth International" until the early 1980s and which runs the prestigious "Pathfinder Press". After he left this tendency two decades ago, Roger Annis has trod a path of shamefully adaption to Stalinism. Today, he ends up as cheerleader of Great Russian totalitarianism who serves the counterrevolution. In other words, he has become another political corpse. What a powerful confirmation of the political truth that formal affirmation of "Marxism" has no relevance in politics! The decisive issue is if one supports and participates in the liberation struggle of the working class and the oppressed people – or if one just stands aside or, worse, becomes an agent of counterrevolution! (9 April)

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The Putin regime tries to justify its imperialist invasion of the Ukraine by instigating an arch-reactionary wave of Great Russian chauvinism. Moscow does not only call for "the defense of the motherland" against NATO. It also disseminates extremely poisonous propaganda against the Ukraine and the Ukrainian people. Effectively, Putin and his ideologists deny the very existence of the Ukrainian nation and its right to have a separate state. We did already deal somewhere else with Putin's explicit denial of the right of national self-determination for non-Russian people and his wild denunciation of the Bolshevik's policy. <sup>2</sup>

The war and the setbacks for Russia's troops have exacerbated the Great Russian chauvinist policy of the Kremlin, on some occasions reaching even the level of fascist genocidal propaganda. This becomes evident if we take a lengthy article published by RIA Novosti – a Russian state-owned domestic news agency – on 3 April. Titled "What Russia should do with Ukraine", the article does not only repeat the Putinist denial of the existence of the Ukrainian nation. <sup>3</sup>

This article goes further as it characterizes the Ukraine as "Nazi, Banderite Ukraine". It calls the Zelensky government, all state institutions as well as all armed formations as "Nazis". Since it is obvious that the majority of the Ukrainian support its government and its armed forces, it means that the majority of the Ukrainian population are "Nazis" who have to be dealt as enemies by Russian forces. "Denazification is necessary when a significant part of the people - most likely its majority (!) - is mastered and dragged by the Nazi regime into its politics. That is, when the hypothesis "the people are good - the government is bad" does not work. The

recognition of this fact is the basis of the policy of denazification, of all its activities, and the fact itself constitutes its subject."

RIA Novosti calls for the widest-possible killing of all Ukrainian armed forces. "Nazis who have taken up arms must be destroyed on the battlefield to the maximum extent possible. No significant distinction should be made between the AFU [Armed Forces of Ukraine] and the so-called Natsbat (national battalions), as well as the territorial defense that joined these two types of military formations. All of them are equally complicit in outrageous cruelty against civilians, equally guilty of genocide of the Russian people, and do not observe the laws and customs of war."

It also advocates the creation of a totalitarian regime in order to "de-nazify" the Ukrainian population. "The further denazification of this mass of the population consists in re-education, which is achieved by ideological repression (suppression) of Nazi attitudes and severe censorship: not only in the political sphere, but necessarily also in the sphere of culture and education."

According to these Great Russian fanatics, a future Ukraine under Russia's control must not even retain the name "Ukraine"! "The name "Ukraine" apparently cannot be retained as the title of any fully denazified state entity on territory freed from the Nazi regime."

The unconcealed goal of the Great Russian propagandists is the liquidation of any Ukrainian national consciousness. The supposedly "brotherly people" should recognize that it is part of the "Ruskij Mir" – of the Russian world. "Denazification will inevitably be de-Ukrainization - a rejection of the large-scale artificial inflating of the ethnic component of the self-identification of the population of the territories of historical Little Russia and Novorossia, which was started by the Soviet authorities. (...) It [the Ukraine, Ed.] must be returned to its natural boundaries and stripped of its political functionality. Unlike, say, Georgia and the Baltic states, Ukraine, as history has shown, is impossible as a nation-state, and attempts to "build" one lead inevitably to Nazism. Ukrainianism is an artificial anti-Russian construction, which has no civilizational content of its own and is a subordinate element of a foreign and estranged civilization. Debanderization by itself will not be enough for denazification - the Banderite element is only a performer and a screen, a disguise for the European project of Nazi Ukraine, so the denazification of Ukraine is also its inevitable de-Europeanization."

It hardly needs any explanation that such a project is not only totalitarian-fascist in its character. It effectively legitimizes the annihilation of everything "Ukrainian" in the Ukrainian people. It opens the road to a policy of genocide.

The remarkable thing about this article is not only its unconcealed totalitarian views. What makes this article extraordinary is that it has not been published by right-wing extremists in the tradition of Alexander Dugin. No, this has been published by RIA Novosti – a state-owned domestic news agency. It therefore does not reflect the views of some fringe elements but of the Russian regime itself!



## Stalinist accomplices

As we did show in other documents, the “*Communist Party of the Russian Federation*” (KPRF), led by its long-time General Secretary Gennady Zyuganov, has fully supported Putin’s war against the Ukraine since the very beginning. It even shares his extremely chauvinist Great Russian rhetoric and talks about the desired “*Denazification*” of the Ukraine. For example, in its statement published at the beginning of the war, the KPRF wrote: “*Following an appeal of the leadership of the DPR and LPR the Russian authorities have commenced a military-political operation aimed at coercing Nazi provocateurs into peace. The steps taken aim to guarantee peace in Donbass and to secure Russia against increasing threats on the part of the USA and NATO. (...) Only demilitarization and denazification of Ukraine can ensure lasting security for the peoples of Russia, Ukraine and the whole of Europe.*”<sup>4</sup>

In another statement, the KPRF wrote: “*The need to demilitarize and denazify Ukraine in order to stop it becoming a hotbed of Nazi ideology should become the main concern of the world community in order to prevent the country from turning into a Nazi state, a bridgehead of the aggressive imperialist USA-NATO alliance spearheaded against Eurasian countries. We call on all the progressive and political forces in Russia and the world to use the mechanisms of people diplomacy for the sake of the centuries-old friendship between Russians and Ukrainians.*”<sup>5</sup>

As one can see, the Russian Stalinists not only “defend their motherland” in occupying the Ukraine, but they also even adopt the whole arsenal of unconcealed Great Russian chauvinism against “Nazi-Ukraine”!

Today, many Stalinists around the world have become embarrassed by the unconcealed Great Russian chauvinism of their comrade Zyuganov. But this creature has never made a secret about his support for the chauvinist concept of “*Ruskij Mir*”. In reality, many Stalinist parties around the world did join the KPRF in social-imperialist support for Russia (and China).<sup>6</sup>

The RCIT is proud that its Russian comrades are steadfast opponents of Russian imperialism and its chauvinist propaganda. Together, we stand for the defense of the Ukraine against Putin’s invasion and for the defeat of Russian imperialism. At the same time, we oppose *both imperialist camps* – Russia as well as NATO.<sup>7</sup>

## Footnotes

1 What should Russia do with Ukraine? Analysis by Timofey Sergeytsev, columnist, originally published in RIA Novosti, Apr 3, 2022 (Translated to English by A Socialist In Canada) <https://socialistincanada.ca/what-should-russia-do-with-ukraine/>

2 See on this e.g. chapter 5 and 6 in a pamphlet by Michael Pröbsting: *Putin’s Poodles* (Apologies to All Dogs). The pro-Russian Stalinist parties and their arguments in the current NATO-Russia Conflict, 9 February 2022, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/nato-russia-conflict-stalinism-as-putin-s-poodles/>.

3 Тимофей Сергейцев: Что Россия должна сделать с Украиной, 03.04.2022, <https://ria.ru/20220403/ukraina-1781469605.html>; an English translation is available here: <https://cryptodrfng.substack.com/p/day-40-what-Russia-should-do-with?s=r&fbclid=IwAR1P1VbCOvOIQcBKupt2KEKXOnc7EGihI9oyWm3qTccjIKRUzmB60fMnpxc>. All quotations (if not indicated otherwise) come from this article.

4 KPRF: The People of Ukraine Must Not Be a Victim of World Capital and Oligarchic Clans, 25.2.2022 <http://www.solidnet.org/article/CP-of-the-Russian-Federation-The-People-of-Ukraine-Must-Not-Be-a-Victim-of-World-Capital-and-Oligarchic-Clans-Statement-of-the-CPRF-CC-Presidium/>; see also e.g. KPRF: What is happening in and around Ukraine, 11.3.2022 <http://solidnet.org/article/CP-of-the-Russian-Federation-What-is-happening-in-and-around-Ukraine/>; KPRF: The war crimes of Nazi-Bandera nationalists must be condemned by the whole world, 2.3.2022. <http://solidnet.org/article/CP-of-the-Russian-Federation-The-war-crimes-of-Nazi-Bandera-nationalists-must-be-condemned-by-the-whole-world/>; V.N.Tetekin: Hostilities in Ukraine. What is happening and why? 21.3.2022, <http://www.solidnet.org/article/CP-of-the-Russian-Federation-Hostilities-in-Ukraine.-What-is-happening-and-why/>; KPRF: Fascists from Europe and terrorists from the Middle East support Nazis and Bandera nationalists, 8.3.2022, <http://solidnet.org/article/CP-of-the-Russian-Federation-Fascists-from-Europe-and-terrorists-from-the-Middle-East-support-Nazis-and-Bandera-nationalists/>; Gennady Zyuganov: The Heinous Provocation of Bandera Nazis Requires Investigation, 5.4.2022, <http://www.solidnet.org/article/CP-of-the-Russian-Federation-THE-HEINOUS-PROVOCATION-OF-BANDERA-NAZIS-REQUIRES-INVESTIGATION/>; Vyacheslav Tetekin, Nazism - Ukraine’s Deadly Disease, 26.3.2022, <http://www.solidnet.org/article/CP-of-the-Russian-Federation-Nazism-Ukraines-Deadly-Disease/>;

5 KPRF Position concerning the special operation of the RF in Ukraine, 4.3.2022, <http://solidnet.org/article/CP-of-the-Russian-Federation-CPRF-Position-concerning-the-special-operation-of-the-RF-in-Ukraine/>

6 See on this, in addition to the above-mentioned pamphlet “*Putin’s Poodles*” another pamphlet by Michael Pröbsting: *Servants of Two Masters. Stalinism and the New Cold War between Imperialist Great Powers in East and West*, 10 July 2021, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/servants-of-two-masters-stalinism-and-new-cold-war/>; by the same author: *One-sided and Naïve ... at Best! A joint call by the friends of Chinese imperialism and the daydreamers of well-meaning global capitalism*, 31 March 2021, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/joint-call-by-friends-of-chinese-imperialism-and-the-daydreamers/>; Stalinist and “Trotskyist” Supporters of Chinese Imperialism under the Fig-Leaf of “Anti-Imperialism”. A commentary on the statement “No to U.S. war threats against China!” by the “United National Antiwar Coalition” in the U.S., 4 April 2021, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/stalinist-and-trotskyist-supporters-of-chinese-imperialism-under-the-fig-leaf-of-anti-imperialism/>

7 We refer readers to a special page on our website where currently about 60 RCIT documents on the current NATO-Russia conflict and the Ukraine War are compiled: <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/compilation-of-documents-on-nato-russia-conflict/>. The most important documents are: RCIT Manifesto: Ukraine War: A Turning Point of World Historic Significance. Socialists must combine the revolutionary defense of the Ukraine against Putin’s invasion with the internationalist struggle against Russian as well as NATO and EU imperialism, 1 March 2022, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/manifesto-ukraine-war-a-turning-point-of-world-historic-significance/>; RCIT: Ukraine War: An Action Program for Authentic Socialists, 1 March 2022, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/ukraine-war-an-action-program-for-authentic-socialists/>; Medina Gunić: A new turning point in Russia’s invasion of the Ukraine, 25 February 2022, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/a-new-turning-point-in-russia-s-invasion-of-the-ukraine/>; RCIT: Down with Putin’s Imperialist War against the Ukraine! Neither Russia nor NATO - against all imperialist powers! For an independent popular struggle to defend the Ukraine! For a workers government to defeat the Russian invaders! No to imperialist sanctions! For an independent socialist Ukraine! 24 February 2022, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/down-with-putin-s-imperialist-war-against-the-ukraine/>.

# On the attitude of revolutionary Marxists to Imperialist War

Yossi Schwartz, ISL the RCIT section in Israel/Occupied Palestine, 24.03.2022

The masses in Europe at this moment raise the demand: End the war of Russia in the Ukraine which is a pacifist position. When the masses raise pacifist demands it is a step in the right direction. It is a different story when organizations claiming to be revolutionary Marxists adopt pacifism. Different Stalinists and centrist organizations adopt their position to this pacifist mood rather than being interested in a revolutionary program of revolutionary defeatism for Russia and revolutionary defense of Ukraine – namely military victory of the Ukrainian people without giving Zelensky's government any political support.

While the actual war in Ukraine is between Russia, which is an imperialist state and Ukraine which is not an imperialist state, WWI was a war between two imperialist camps. Nevertheless, we can learn a lot about the revolutionary attitude to imperialist war by studying the positions of Lenin and Trotsky to WWI.

The resolutions of the Socialist International about the First World War were adopted at the Stuttgart Congress in 1907 and reaffirmed at Copenhagen in 1910 and Basle in 1912. They outlined the responsibility of socialists to prevent the outbreak of war and added: *'Should war nonetheless break out, they must intervene and bring it to an end, and with all their energies to use the political and economic crisis created by the war to rouse the masses of the people and to hasten the fall of capitalist domination'*. Lenin wrote on Stuttgart congress:

*"Bebel's resolution (moved by the Germans and coinciding in all essentials with Guesde's resolution) had one shortcoming—it failed to indicate the active tasks of the proletariat. This made it possible to read Bebel's orthodox propositions through opportunist spectacles, and Vollmar was quick to turn this possibility into a reality. That is why Rosa Luxemburg and the Russian Social-Democratic delegates moved their amendments to Bebel's resolution. These amendments (1) stated that militarism is the chief weapon of class oppression; (2) pointed out the need for propaganda among the youth; (3) stressed that Social-Democrats should not only try to prevent war from breaking out or to secure the speediest termination of wars that have already begun but should utilize the crisis created by the war to hasten the overthrow of the bourgeoisie"* [i]

As we know while the Bolsheviks, Trotsky, and Rosa Luxemburg carried out this program the other parties of Socialist International betrayed the working class and supported their ruling classes, proving to be social imperialists.

During the war, The Zimmerwald conference in September 1915 brought together for the first time since the outbreak of the war socialist groups in the different countries at war to call the working class to *'begin the struggle for peace'*, as the conference manifesto written by Trotsky who was a centrist at that time stated. This manifesto advanced the slogan of a peace without annexations or war indemnities and based on self-determination for all peoples. However, it left out the connection between peace and social revolution. Lenin voted for the Zimmerwald manifesto because he considered it would have been sectarian to stand aside. But he reserved full freedom to criticize the weaknesses of the manifesto, and the Bolshevik group issued a declaration regretting the absence of a clear declaration as to the methods of fighting against the war.

After Zimmerwald, Lenin advanced his 'defeatism' the-

sis, which was valid for all countries participating in the war. In 'The War Program of the Proletarian Revolution' Lenin wrote:

*"Firstly, socialists have never been, nor can they ever be, opposed to revolutionary wars. The bourgeoisie of the imperialist 'Great' Powers has become thoroughly reactionary, and the war this bourgeoisie is now waging we regard as a reactionary, slave-owners and criminal war. But what about a war against this bourgeoisie? A war, for instance, waged by peoples oppressed by and dependent upon this bourgeoisie, or by colonial peoples, for liberation? In Section 5 of the Internationale group these we read: "National wars are no longer possible in the era of this unbridled imperialism." That is wrong"* [ii]

*"Secondly, civil war is just as much a war as any other. He who accepts the class struggle cannot fail to accept civil wars, which in every class society are the natural, and under certain conditions inevitable, continuation, development, and intensification of the class struggle. That has been confirmed by every great revolution. To repudiate civil war, or to forget about it, is to fall into extreme opportunism and renounce the socialist revolution"* [iii]

*"Thirdly, the victory of socialism in one country does not at one stroke eliminate all wars in general. On the contrary, it presupposes wars. The development of capitalism proceeds extremely unevenly in different countries. It cannot be otherwise under commodity production. From this, it follows irrefutably that socialism cannot achieve victory simultaneously in all countries. It will achieve victory first in one or several countries, while the others will for some time remain bourgeois or pre-bourgeois. This is bound to create not only friction but a direct attempt on the part of the bourgeoisie of other countries to crush the socialist state's victorious proletariat"* [iv]

*"Theoretically, it would be wrong to forget that every war is but the continuation of policy by other means. The present imperialist war is the continuation of the imperialist policies of two groups of Great Powers, and these policies were engendered and fostered by the total of the relationships of the imperialist era. But this very era must also necessarily engender and foster policies of struggle against national oppression and proletarian struggle against the bourgeoisie and, consequently, also the possibility and inevitability; first, of revolutionary national rebellions and wars; second, of proletarian wars and rebellions against the bourgeoisie; and, third, of a combination of both kinds of the revolutionary war, etc"* [v]

In November 1916 Lenin wrote: *"The 'socialist' who under such circumstances delivers speeches to the people and the governments about a nice little peace resembles the clergyman who, seeing before him in the front pews the mistress of a brothel and a police officer, who are working for hand in glove, 'preaches' to them, and the people, love of one's neighbor and observance of the Christian commandments... Whatever the outcome of the present war, those who maintained that the only possible socialist way out of it is through civil war by the proletariat for socialism will have been proved correct. The Russian Social-Democrats who maintained that the defeat of Tsarism, its complete military smash-up, is, 'in all cases', the lesser evil, will have been proved correct. For history never stands still; it continues its forward movement during this war too. And if the European proletariat cannot advance to socialism now, cannot cast off the social-chauvinist and Kautskyite yoke in the course of this first great imperialist war, then East Europe and Asia can advance to*

democracy with seven-league strides only if Tsarism is utterly smashed and deprived of all power" [vi]

Lenin clashed with Trotsky over the demand for Peace without annexation, and Lenin's line on 'defeatism'. Trotsky opposed Lenin's line that the defeat of Russia is the less evil. In his 1914 pamphlet on The War and the International Trotsky wrote: "If we presuppose a catastrophic Russian defeat, the war may bring a quicker outbreak of the Revolution, but at the cost of its inner weakness. And if the Revolution should even gain the upper hand under such circumstances, then the bayonets of the Hohenzollern armies would be turned on the Revolution. Such prospect carts hardly fail to paralyze Russia's revolutionary forces; for it is impossible to deny that the party of the German proletariat stands behind the Hohenzollern bayonets. But this is only one side of the question. The defeat of Russia necessarily presupposes decisive victories by Germany and Austria on the other battlefields, and this would mean the enforced preservation of the national-political chaos in Central and South-Eastern Europe and the unlimited mastery of German militarism in all Europe" [vii]

In the summer of 1915, Lenin and Zinoviev, in their pamphlet Socialism and War wrote:

"Both the advocates of victory for their governments in the present war and the advocates of the slogan "neither victory nor defeat", equally take the standpoint of social chauvinism. A revolutionary class cannot but wish for the defeat of its government in a reactionary war, cannot fail to see that its military reverses facilitate its overthrow. Only a bourgeois who believes that a war started by the governments must necessarily end as a war between governments and wants it to end as such, can regard as "ridiculous" and "absurd" the idea that the Socialists of all the belligerent countries should wish for the defeat of all "their" governments and express this wish. On the contrary, it is precisely a statement of this kind that would conform to the cherished thoughts of every class-conscious worker and would be in line with our activities towards converting the imperialist war into civil war. Undoubtedly, the serious anti-war agitation that is being conducted by a section of the British, German, and Russian Socialists has "weakened the military power" of the respective governments, but such agitation stands to the credit of the Socialists. Socialists must explain to the masses that they have no other road of salvation except the revolutionary overthrow of "their" governments, and that advantage must be taken of these governments' embarrassments in the present war precisely for this purpose" [viii]

Trotsky, to be sure, opposed bourgeois pacifism. With the outbreak of World War I, the pacifist philosopher Bertrand Russell became involved in anti-war activities and in 1916 he was fined 100 pounds for authoring an anti-war pamphlet. Because of his conviction he was dismissed from his post at Trinity College, Cambridge. [ix]

'Only very slight injury can be done to the machinery of war of the ruling class by pacifism. This is best proved by the courageous but rather futile efforts of Russell himself during the war. The whole affair ended in a few thousand young people being thrown into prison on account of their conscientious objections... In the old Tsarist army the sectarians, and especially the Tolstoyans, were often exposed to persecution because of their passive resistance to militarism; it was not they, however, who solved the problem of the overthrow of Tsarism.' [x]

"Bourgeois pacifism and patriotism are shot through with deceit. In the pacifism and even the patriotism of the oppressed, there are elements which reflect on the one hand a hatred of destructive war and on the other a clinging to what they believe to

be their good elements which we must know how to seize upon to draw the requisite conclusions. Using these considerations as its point of departure the Fourth International supports every, even if insufficient, demand if it can draw the masses to a certain extent into active politics, awaken their criticism and strengthen their control over the machinations of the bourgeoisie" [xi]

These Days the Stalinists and the centrists are spreading pacifist illusions about the war in the spirit of Kautsky.

The American Stalinists wrote:

"We, the members of the CPUSA, unequivocally join with peace forces around the world in demanding: No expansion of NATO, No deployment of troops, No war on Ukraine, No war on Russia, and No war period! The future of the planet depends on it" [xii]

Very nice, very nice but how to achieve peace without socialist revolutions?

The Communist party of Israel stated "We are against war and the Russian invasion. However, I will not take sides in unnecessary wars that harm innocent civilians, strengthen those in power and enrich the masters of war," said Hadash MK Ofer Cassif. "I do not support nationalists and persecutors of the communists in Ukraine, and no, neither do I support Putin and the Russian communist-hating nationalists. No to war – yes to peace." added. "Very sad that good leftists are being deceived after false propaganda – and even expect my friends and me to align with the lies being fed to us," Cassif said in a tweet." [xiii]

A typical reformist position that put on the same level an imperialist state and non-imperialist state.

The Stalinist Party of Cyprus on March 2, stated:

"A fruitful and constructive debate took place in the Parliamentary Foreign and European Affairs Committee, examining all the facts surrounding the Ukrainian crisis. We would like to express our satisfaction because the Foreign Minister appeared to fully share the views we have expressed in the Committee on Foreign and European Affairs. We would like to take this opportunity to stress the following: The need for an immediate end to the Russian invasion of Ukraine and a return to dialogue and diplomatic efforts to find a solution to the Ukrainian crisis" [xiv]

Really? And how dialogue and imperialist diplomacy will stop the imperialist's drive for wars?

The ISA wrote: "Will arms deliveries – Swedish or from other states – ensure peace and freedom?"

In the last 12 months, the United States has sent weapons worth one billion dollars (9 billion kronor) to Ukraine. Now there are drones from Erdoğan's Turkey, missiles from Germany, and body armor from the Swedish military. The Swedish military has previously trained Ukrainian soldiers. The Finnish Parliament and the Danish Parliament have unanimously decided to send weapons.

The fact that governments are now sending weapons to Ukraine is not happening for humanitarian reasons. We witnessed a stark demonstration of this in Afghanistan. Military operations were prioritized for over 20 years with devastating results.

The weapons now being sent may slow down the Russian attack, but few believe it can decide the war; rather, it is a revolt against the war at home in Russia, mass protests internationally, and a global workers' blockade against Putin's war machine that can have the greatest effect. It is unlikely that the Western powers will deploy air force and soldiers, which would create a major war. But the pressure will grow for escalated efforts.

The fact that public opinion massively favors ending the horrors of war means that the governments can initially get support for weapons shipments to Ukraine. This will also be used for even greater investment in the military in the country after country and for both Finland and Sweden to join NATO." [xv]



The British SWP wrote in the same spirit:  
*"The first reply is that the genuine horrors of Vladimir Putin's invasion are no reason to escalate to an even more appalling war. NATO's increasingly aggressive demands and its arms shipments threaten a reckless march towards a wider conflict that could be fought with nuclear weapons."* [xvi]

Both centrists oppose the sending of weapons to the Ukrainian people against imperialist invasion. Demonstrations against the Russian invasion are important and so is the growing opposition in Russia and among the Russian soldiers in Ukraine, but the interest of the international working class is for the resistance to the invasion to win in the war and for this, the Ukrainian fighters need sophisticated weapons. There is no doubt that Western imperialism is sending weapons to Ukraine for its imperialist reasons, but this does change the need for the Ukrainian fighters to have weapons. In addition, these weapons can be used by working-class militias that can and should be organized in Russia and Ukraine.

Trotsky wrote on this question of weapon:  
*"Let us assume that rebellion breaks out tomorrow in the French colony of Algeria under the banner of national independence and that the Italian government, motivated by its imperialist interests, prepares to send weapons to the rebels. What should the attitude of the Italian workers be in this case? I have purposely taken an example of rebellion against democratic imperialism with intervention on the side of the rebels from a fascist imperialism. Should the Italian workers prevent the shipping of arms to the Algerians? Let any ultra-leftists dare answer this question in the affirmative. Every revolutionist, together with the Italian workers and the rebellious Algerians, would spurn such an answer with indignation. Even if a general maritime strike broke out in fascist Italy at the same time, even in this case the strikers should make an exception in favor of those ships carrying aid to the colonial slaves in revolt; otherwise, they would be no more than wretched trade unionists – not proletarian revolutionists. At the same time, the French maritime workers, even though not faced with any strike whatsoever, would be compelled to exert every effort to block the shipment of ammunition intended for use against the rebels. Only such a policy on the part of the Italian and French workers constitutes the policy of revolutionary internationalism. Does this not signify, however, that the Italian workers moderate their struggle in this case against the fascist regime? Not in the slightest. Fa-*

*scism renders "aid" to the Algerians only to weaken its enemy, France, and to lay its rapacious hand on her colonies. The revolutionary Italian workers do not forget this for a single moment. They call upon the Algerians not to trust their treacherous "ally" and at the same time continue their irreconcilable struggle against fascism, "the main enemy in their own country". Only in this way can they gain the confidence of the rebels, help the rebellion and strengthen their revolutionary position"* [xvii]

The only way out from the danger of Western and Eastern imperialists and their wars leading eventually to the WWII unless we get rid of them, their economic crisis, their inability to fight the Covid-19, the disaster to the ecology they create, the starvation they cause to close to 1 milliard people is to turn the war to an armed civil war of the working class against the ruling classes in a world socialist revolution.

*Turn the imperialist war to a civil war!*

*Military victory for the Ukrainian people!*

*No political support for the Zelensky government!*

*Down with the US and NATO! Down with Russian imperialism!*

#### Endnotes:

[i] Lenin: The International Socialist Congress in Stuttgart [1] (Proletary) Collected Works, Progress Publishers, 1972, Moscow, Volume 13, pages 75-8.

[ii] Lenin: The Military Programme of the Proletarian Revolution

[iii] Ibid [iv] Ibid [v] Ibid

[vi] Lenin A Separate Peace Collected Works, Progress Publishers, 1964, Moscow, Volume 23, pages 125-133.

[vii] Leon Trotsky: The War and the International

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[xvi] <https://socialistworker.co.uk/comment/whats-the-alternative-to-nato-intervention-in-ukraine>

[xvii] Leon Trotsky Learn to Think: A Friendly Suggestion to Certain Ultra-Leftists (May 1938)



## Publications of the RCIT

# The Inter-Imperialist Cold War between the US and China

By Michael Pröbsting, March 2021

**Introduction \* A symbolic public row \* Two thieves as upholders of moral standards \* Escalating the conflict between China and Japan \* The Quad Summit \* Inter-Imperialist tensions in the Taiwan Strait \* Unavoidable continuation and acceleration of inter-imperialist rivalry \* Continuing doing business \* Towards escalation on the Korean Peninsula? \* "Fuck the EU" and Russia, again? \* Confirmation of the Marxist analysis \* Footnotes**

**A RCIT Pamphlet, 20 pages, A4 Format**

# Russia's Monopolies: An International Comparison

## On some interesting data which confirm the imperialist character of Russia

An Article (with 3 Tables) by Michael Pröbsting, International Secretary of the RCIT, 21 April 2022

The class character of Russia is one of the key issues in the current debate among Marxists. The RCIT has elaborated in a number of works, that Russia is not only a capitalist state but also an imperialist Great Power. We have explained that Russia's imperialism has some peculiar features.<sup>1</sup> For example, its share in the global economy is smaller than its political or its military role.<sup>2</sup>

However, we insisted that even from a purely economic point of view there can be no doubt that Russia is an imperialist state. This is in full accordance with the Marxist theory of imperialism as it was developed by Lenin and later defended by Trotsky. The starting point of the Marxist analysis of imperialism is the formation of monopolies and their dominating role in the economy. Such Lenin wrote in *Imperialism and the Split in Socialism* – his most comprehensive theoretical essay on imperialism:

*„We have to begin with as precise and full a definition of imperialism as possible. Imperialism is a specific historical stage of capitalism. Its specific character is threefold: imperialism is monopoly capitalism; parasitic, or decaying capitalism; moribund capitalism. The supplanting of free competition by monopoly is the fundamental economic feature, the quintessence of imperialism. Monopoly manifests itself in five principal forms: (1) cartels, syndicates and trusts—the concentration of production has reached a degree which gives rise to these monopolistic associations of capitalists; (2) the monopolistic position of the big banks—three, four or five giant banks manipulate the whole economic life of America, France, Germany; (3) seizure of the sources of raw material by the trusts and the financial oligarchy (finance capital is monopoly industrial capital merged with bank capital); (4) the (economic) partition of the world by the international cartels has begun. There are already over one hundred such international cartels, which command the entire world market and divide it “amicably” among themselves—until war redivides it. The export of capital, as distinct from the export of commodities under non-monopoly capitalism, is a highly characteristic phenomenon and is closely linked with the economic and territorial-political partition of the world; (5) the territorial partition of the world (colonies) is completed.“<sup>3</sup>*

### Dominating role of monopolies in Russia's economy

For these reasons, we have emphasized that the domination of an economy by monopolies is a key indicator for the imperialist character of a state. A recently published essay by Professor Stephen Crowley provides some interesting statistics which demonstrate the monopolistic character of Russia's capital. In this essay, the author compares the degree of concentration of capital in Russia with that in other imperialist countries. As a measure for concentration of capital, Prof. Crowley looks at the size of manufacturing enterprises in terms of numbers of employment. He divides enterprises into several categories – those with more than 250 employees, those with 50-249 employees and those with less than 50 employees.<sup>4</sup>

The result of his analysis is that Russia has a substantial higher share of large enterprises (with more than 250 em-

ployees) than any other imperialist state! In Russia 80% of all manufacturing employees work in enterprises with more than 250 employees. This share is only 63% in the U.S., 54% in Germany, 49% in Japan and 45% in France. Even if we add the second category - enterprises with 50-249 employees – Russia still has a much larger concentration of capital. (See Table 1)

Various self-proclaimed Marxists characterize Russia as a “dependent” or “peripheral” and suggest that Russia is dominated by or dependent of foreign monopolies (corporations, banks, etc.).<sup>6</sup> Of course, if it would be true that Russia's economy is dominated by foreign (instead of domestic) monopolies, one could hardly talk about an imperialist state.

However, as we did demonstrate in our works, the opposite is the case. Russia's economy is first and foremost dominated by Russian monopoly capital. A recently published academic book about Russia's economy arrives at the conclusion that “the proportion of investment in Russian, foreign, and joint venture companies kept the same for the past five years: 86.3%, 7.3%, and 6.4%, respectively.”<sup>7</sup> (See Table 2)

This is also the case in the banking sector. Here too, it is Russian capital which dominates while foreign owners play only a subordinated role. In fact, in the past decade, the role of domestic capital has even increased. (See Table 3)

In summary, we can conclude that Russia's economy is totally dominated by domestic monopolies. The extraordinary monopolization of its manufacturing sector (i.e. the core of capitalist value production) is the economic basis for the imperialist character of Russia's economy. Hence, this is another confirmation of the RCIT's analysis of Russia as an imperialist power. Its imperialist character is evident not only from its political and military features but also from its economy.

### A brief historical analogy

Let us add, at the end, a brief discussion about an interesting historical analogy about similarities and dissimilarities of the global position of Russia's economy. As it is well known, Marxist theoreticians considered Russia before 1917 as an imperialist power despite the backward development of its economy. Here are a few quotes from Lenin and Trotsky.

*“In Russia, capitalist imperialism of the latest type has fully revealed itself in the policy of tsarism towards Persia, Manchuria and Mongolia, but, in general, military and feudal imperialism is predominant in Russia. In no country in the world are the majority of the population oppressed so much as in Russia.”<sup>10</sup>*

*“The last third of the nineteenth century saw the transition to the new, imperialist era. Finance capital not of one, but of several, though very few, Great Powers enjoys a monopoly. (In Japan and Russia the monopoly of military power, vast territories, or special facilities for robbing minority nationalities, China, etc., partly supplements, partly takes the place of, the monopoly of*



modern, up-to-date finance capital.)”<sup>11</sup>

“Only idiots or shrewd persons can deny that the war from Russia’s part has an extraordinary imperialist character. The whole political order of 3<sup>rd</sup> June has been an attempt to bring together the capitalist bourgeoisie with the bureaucratic machinery and the nobility – under the condition that the monarchy succeeds satisfying the international ambitions of Russian capital. (...) Russian imperialism, whose extraordinary counter-revolutionary character has been beyond doubt for all Russian social democrats, has played a huge role in the preparation of the present war.”<sup>12</sup>

In his major study about the history of the Russian Revolution, Trotsky pointed out the peculiar features of Russia’s capitalist economy. He emphasized the extraordinary concentration of capital in large enterprises – similar to the current configuration of Russian capital as we demonstrated above.

“But it is just in the sphere of economy, as we have said, that the law of combined development most forcibly emerges. At the same time that peasant land-cultivation as a whole remained, right up to the revolution, at the level of the seventeenth century, Russian industry in its technique and capitalist structure stood at the level of the advanced countries, and in certain respects even outstripped them. Small enterprises, involving less than one hundred workers, employed in the United States, in 1914, 35 percent of the total of industrial workers, but in Russia 17.8 percent. The two countries had an approximately identical relative quantity of enterprises involving one hundred to one thousand workers. But the giant enterprises, above 1000 workers each, employed in the United States 17.8 percent of the workers and in Russia 41.4 percent!”<sup>13</sup>

However, Trotsky also emphasized another characteris-

tic of Russia’s economy. “The confluence of industrial with bank capital was also accomplished in Russia with a completeness you might not find in any other country. But the subjection of the industries to the banks meant, for the same reasons, their subjection to the western European money market. Heavy industry (metal, coal, oil) was almost wholly under the control of foreign finance capital, which had created for itself an auxiliary and intermediate system of banks in Russia. Light industry was following the same road. Foreigners owned in general about 40 percent of all the stock capital of Russia, but in the leading branches of industry, that percentage was still higher. We can say without exaggeration that the controlling shares of stock in the Russian banks, plants, and factories were to be found abroad, the amount held in England, France, and Belgium being almost double that in Germany.”<sup>14</sup>

As we demonstrated above, this feature is largely absent today. Russia’s economy is no longer dominated by foreign capital but rather by domestic monopolies. This difference can be explained historically by the fact that capitalism in Russia was annihilated after 1917 by a successful socialist revolution. Hence, after the collapse of Stalinism and the restoration of capitalism in 1991, the new regime – in particular after Putin took power in 1999 – managed to consolidate a domestic monopoly bourgeoisie and to rebuild Russia as an imperialist power.<sup>15</sup>

We repeat that recognizing the imperialist character of Russia is essential to understand its role in world politics in the context of the inter-imperialist rivalry between the Great Powers.<sup>16</sup> It is equally essential in order to understand the necessity to defend the Ukrainian people against Putin’s reactionary invasion.<sup>17</sup>

**Table 1. Russian Labor Employed in Manufacturing**<sup>5</sup>

*Enterprises with Number of Employees (Percentage of Total Employment)*

	>250	50-249	<50
Russia	80	18	2
U.S.	63	18	19
Germany	54	24	22
Japan	49	25	26
France	45	22	33

**Table 2. Share of Investment in Russia by Russian, Foreign, and Joint Venture Companies, 2015**<sup>8</sup>

<i>Origin of Investment</i>	<i>Share of Investment in Russia</i>
Russian Companies	86.3%
Foreign Companies	7.3%
Joint Venture Companies	6.4%

**Table 3. Share of Foreign Banks in Russian Banking Sector, 2014 and 2018**<sup>9</sup>

	2014	2018
Share of Foreign Banks	23%	13.44%

## Footnotes

1 The RCIT has published numerous documents about capitalism in Russia and its rise to an imperialist power. See on this e.g. several pamphlets by Michael Pröbsting: *The Peculiar Features of Russian Imperialism. A Study of Russia's Monopolies, Capital Export and Super-Exploitation in the Light of Marxist Theory*, 10 August 2021, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/the-peculiar-features-of-russian-imperialism/>; by the same author: *Lenin's Theory of Imperialism and the Rise of Russia as a Great Power. On the Understanding and Misunderstanding of Today's Inter-Imperialist Rivalry in the Light of Lenin's Theory of Imperialism. Another Reply to Our Critics Who Deny Russia's Imperialist Character*, August 2014, <http://www.thecommunists.net/theory/imperialism-theory-and-russia/>; *Russia as a Great Imperialist Power. The formation of Russian Monopoly Capital and its Empire – A Reply to our Critics*, 18 March 2014, in: *Revolutionary Communism* No. 21, <http://www.thecommunists.net/theory/imperialist-russia/>; *Russian Imperialism and Its Monopolies*, in: *New Politics* Vol. XVIII No. 4, Whole Number 72, Winter 2022, [https://newpol.org/issue\\_post/russian-imperialism-and-its-monopolies/](https://newpol.org/issue_post/russian-imperialism-and-its-monopolies/); *Once Again on Russian Imperialism (Reply to Critics)*. A rebuttal of a theory which claims that Russia is not an imperialist state but would be rather "comparable to Brazil and Iran", 30 March 2022, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/once-again-on-russian-imperialism-reply-to-critics/>. See various other RCIT documents on this issue at a special sub-page on the RCIT's website: <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/china-russia-as-imperialist-powers/>.

2 In this context, we refer readers also to a new article by Alex Steiner which contains an interesting and insightful analysis of Russian imperialism (Alex Steiner: *War in the Ukraine: the socialist response*, Part I and II, <http://forum.permanent-revolution.org/2022/04/war-in-ukraine-socialist-response-part-i.html> and <http://forum.permanent-revolution.org/2022/04/war-in-ukraine-socialist-response-part-ii.html>)

3 V. I. Lenin: *Imperialism and the Split in Socialism*, pp. 105-106 (Emphasis in the original)

4 Stephen Crowley: *Who's to Blame? Sanctions, Economic Hardship, and Putin's Fear of Color Revolutions*, PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo No. 767, April 2022, p. 4

5 Stephen Crowley: *Who's to Blame? Sanctions, Economic Hardship, and Putin's Fear of Color Revolutions*, PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo No. 767, April 2022, p. 4

6 See on this the pamphlet by Michael Pröbsting: *Putin's Poodles (Apologies to All Dogs)*. The pro-Russian Stalinist parties and their arguments in the current NATO-Russia Conflict, 9 February 2022, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/nato-russia-conflict-stalinism-as-putin-s-poodles/>

7 Veronika Chernova, Sergey U. Chernikov, Alexander Zobov, and Ekaterina Degtereva: *TNCs in Russia: Challenges and Opportunities*, in: Bruno S. Sergi (Ed.): *Exploring the Future of Russia's Economy and Markets: Towards Sustainable Economic Development*, Emerald Publishing Limited, Bingley 2019, p. 188

8 Ibid, p. 188

9 Victor Gorshkov: *Fundamentals and Recent Trends in Russian Banking*, in: Steven Rosefielde (Ed.): *Putin's Russia: Economy, Defence and Foreign policy*, World Scientific Publishing, Singapore 2021, p. 81

10 V.I. Lenin: *Socialism and War. The Attitude of the R.S.D.L.P. toward the War (1915)*, in: *LCW* 21, p. 306

11 V. I. Lenin: *Imperialism and the Split in Socialism (1916)*; in: *CW* Vol. 23, p. 116

12 Leon Trotsky: *Über den russischen Imperialismus (1916)*, in: Leo Trotzki: *Europa im Krieg*, Arbeiterpresse Verlag, Essen 1998, pp. 203-204 (our translation). To our knowledge, this text has never been translated into English language.

13 Leon Trotsky: *History of the Russian Revolution (1932)*, Haymarket Books, Chicago, Illinois 2008, p. 8

14 Ibid

15 See on this our first analysis of Russia's transformation into an imperialist power ("*Political and Economic Problems of Capitalist Restoration in Russia*") which was written in the year 2001. It has been republished as an appendix in the above-mentioned pamphlet *Russia as a Great Imperialist Power (2014)*.

16 The RCIT has dealt on numerous occasions with the inter-imperialist rivalry of the Great Powers. See e.g. the RCIT document: *World Perspectives 2021-22: Entering a Pre-Revolutionary Global Situation*, 22 August 2021, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/world-perspectives-2021-22/>; see also: RCIT: *The Coming Inter-Imperialist War on Taiwan*, 10 October 2021, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/the-coming-inter-imperialist-war-on-taiwan/>; *The Meaning of the AUKUS Pact. The U.S. escalates the inter-imperialist Cold War against China and provokes the EU*, 18 September 2021, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/the-meaning-of-the-aukus-pact/>; *Russia Fires Warning Shots against UK Warship in the Black Sea. Down with Cold Warmongering! No support for any imperialist Great Power – neither UK, US nor Russia!* 24 June 2021, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/russia-fires-warning-shots-against-uk-warship-in-black-sea/>; see also the following book by Michael Pröbsting: *Anti-Imperialism in the Age of Great Power Rivalry. The Factors behind the Accelerating Rivalry between the U.S., China, Russia, EU and Japan. A Critique of the Left's Analysis and an Outline of the Marxist Perspective*, RCIT Books, Vienna 2019, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/anti-imperialism-in-the-age-of-great-power-rivalry/>; see also these two pamphlets by the same author: "A Really Good Quarrel". *US-China Alaska Meeting: The Inter-Imperialist Cold War Continues*, 23 March 2021, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/us-china-alaska-meeting-shows-continuation-of-inter-imperialist-cold-war/>; *Servants of Two Masters. Stalinism and the New Cold War between Imperialist Great Powers in East and West*, 10 July 2021, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/servants-of-two-masters-stalinism-and-new-cold-war/>; for more works on this issue see these sub-pages: <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/china-russia-as-imperialist-powers/> and <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/collection-of-articles-on-the-global-trade-war/>.

17 We refer readers to a special page on our website where more than 60 RCIT documents on the current NATO-Russia conflict and the Ukraine War are compiled: <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/compilation-of-documents-on-nato-russia-conflict/>. The most important documents are: RCIT Manifesto: *Ukraine War: A Turning Point of World Historic Significance*. Socialists must combine the revolutionary defense of the Ukraine against Putin's invasion with the internationalist struggle against Russian as well as NATO and EU imperialism, 1 March 2022, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/manifesto-ukraine-war-a-turning-point-of-world-historic-significance/>; RCIT: *Ukraine War: An Action Program for Authentic Socialists*, 1 March 2022, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/ukraine-war-an-action-program-for-authentic-socialists/>; Medina Gunić: *A new turning point in Russia's invasion of the Ukraine*, 25 February 2022, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/a-new-turning-point-in-russia-s-invasion-of-the-ukraine/>; RCIT: *Down with Putin's Imperialist War against the Ukraine! Neither Russia nor NATO - against all imperialist powers! For an independent popular struggle to defend the Ukraine! For a workers government to defeat the Russian invaders! No to imperialist sanctions! For an independent socialist Ukraine!* 24 February 2022, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/down-with-putin-s-imperialist-war-against-the-ukraine/>; see also our joint statement with UIT-CI and LIT-CI, <https://www.thecommunists.net/rcit/joint-statement-on-ukraine-war-13-3-2022/>

# Once Again on Russian Imperialism (Reply to Critics)

## A rebuttal of a theory which claims that Russia is not an imperialist state but rather “comparable to Brazil and Iran”

By Michael Pröbsting, International Secretary of the Revolutionary Communist International Tendency (RCIT), 30.3.2022

It is not surprising that the Ukraine War and the escalating conflict between the imperialist Great Powers (U.S., Western Europe and Russia) has provoked debates among Marxists about the question of Russia’s class character: Is it an imperialist power or is it rather a country dependent on imperialism?

The RCIT defends the Marxists thesis that Russia is an imperialist power. As a consequence, the RCIT considers it as imperative that socialists refuse to take a side in conflicts between the Great Powers (U.S., China, EU, Russia and Japan). Our tendency has elaborated this analysis in much detail in a number of pamphlets and essays.

We have demonstrated in our works that Russia is an imperialist Great Power. Its economy can not rival with China’s or that of the U.S.. Still, it is the world’s eleventh-largest by nominal GDP, and the sixth-largest by PPP. At the same time, it has the largest number of nuclear warheads – together with the U.S. – and is the world’s second-largest arms exporter.<sup>1</sup>

As a result, Russia plays a crucial role in world politics as one of the five veto powers in the United Nations. While Russia plays less a global role – compared to the U.S. or China – it wields important influence in the Middle East, Africa, in Eastern Europe as well as in Asia.<sup>2</sup>

In the past decade we have been engaged in several debates with critiques who reject our analysis. Since the beginning of the Ukraine War, our position was also attacked by various centrists – mostly by Putinistas, i.e. pro-Russian social-imperialists. Usually, our critics limit themselves to denouncing our anti-imperialist opposition against the Putin regime and its reactionary foreign policy as “support for NATO”. However, one of these polemics attempts to provide a serious criticism and to refute our analysis on the basis of facts and statistics.

This article has been written by Robert Montgomery and Davey Heller and was published on the website of class-conscious.org.<sup>3</sup> This website recently hosted a public zoom meeting which brought together various organizations which agree on supporting Russian imperialism in its war against the Ukraine.<sup>4</sup> The article itself starts with the statement that the authors extend “critical support to Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. This is because we classify Russia, not as imperialist, but rather as a nationalist and dependent bourgeois regime in conflict with imperialism. We support Russia’s right to defend its national sovereignty against NATO imperialist aggression on its borders, up to and including the use of military force. (...) This is why Marxists must support Russia’s right of self-defence against imperialism and extend military support as it fights imperialism in defense of its own national sovereignty.”

In contrast to the Putinistas, the RCIT recognizes the dual character of this whole conflict. Hence, it is necessary for socialists to apply a dual tactic which can be summarized in revolutionary defensism of Ukraine against Putin’s invasion and revolutionary defeatism against NATO as well as

Russian imperialism.<sup>5</sup>

At this place we will not repeat our analysis of Russian imperialism and we refer interested readers to our works. We will rather deal with the main arguments put forward by the article on classconscious.org as it is representative for the logic of the deniers of Russia’s imperialist character.

### Lack of scientific approach

The main failures of the article can be summarized by the following:

\* It doesn’t meet the basic standards of a scientific research.

\* The authors are not familiar with Lenin’s analysis of imperialism and his criteria of Great Powers.

\* The authors misinterpret the meaning of the facts which they provide as support for their thesis.

At a first glance, the article makes a serious impression insofar as it provides several statistics and figures. However, a closer look shows embarrassing deficits of elementary research.

The key chapter of the article – titled “Is Russia imperialist?” – begins with a quote from the US State Department which the authors claim is from a report published in 2020. They conclude from this quote: “This picture is one of a backward, stagnating capitalist country not investing in new roads, ports, bridges, schools, hospitals or physical and human capital of any kind. The Russian economy is living off of outdated capital stock constructed before the restoration of capitalism in the USSR. So much for Russia having reached the ‘highest stage of capitalism.’” However, a click on this report reveals that the study of the US State Department was not published in the year 2020 – as the authors claim – but rather in the year 2000! While it is true that Russia’s economy had many deficits in the 1990s, it is hardly a fact relevant for an analysis of this country today, nearly a quarter of a century later!

The authors also claim that Russia has a capital shortage and is a capital importer. As the source for this claim they publish a graph from an article by Michael Roberts. However, while this graph is indeed from Roberts, it does not deal with capital at all but rather with primary income credit per person!

It is also striking that nearly all facts and figures – as far as sources are provided – originate from works which were published about one decade ago! In itself, there is nothing wrong in using older material. But in discussing Russia’s class character today, it might be helpful to rely not exclusively on outdated figures!

In general, there are strong indications that the authors basically rewrote old articles without much original or new research. They also criticize and quote from a study which the author of these lines published in 2014 – ignoring the works published since then. Our study is, by the way, the only work defending the thesis that Russia is an imperialist state to which the critics refer in their article.



### Lenin's analysis of imperialism and its distortion by the Putinistas

However, the weakness of our critics is not limited to their unserious dealing with scientific research. They also seem to be not very familiar with Lenin's analysis of imperialism. Like other deniers of Russia's imperialist character, they refer to Lenin's well-known five characteristics of the epoch of imperialism (monopolies, finance capital, export of capital, international monopolist associations, territorial division of the world).

However, like all pro-Russia and pro-China falsifiers of Lenin's imperialism analysis they misinterpret this quote from Lenin in several ways. First, in this quote Lenin basically dealt with the *economic* features of the imperialist epoch, but not so much with its political characteristics. The reason for this is that in his main book on imperialism (to which the authors refer), he was forced to limit himself mostly to the economic analysis of imperialism because the book was written *"with an eye to the tsarist censorship."*<sup>6</sup>

However, Lenin had always a combined, *economical and political*, understanding of imperialism. This is why he attacked the revisionist theoretician Karl Kautsky. Lenin criticized the German theoretician that he *"divorces imperialist politics from imperialist economics, he divorces monopoly in politics from monopoly in economics in order to pave the way for his vulgar bourgeois reformism, such as "disarmament", "ultra-imperialism" and similar nonsense. The whole purpose and significance of this theoretical falsity is to obscure the most profound contradictions of imperialism and thus justify the theory of "unity" with the apologists of imperialism, the outright social-chauvinists and opportunists."*<sup>7</sup>

Following Lenin's approach, the RCIT has always emphasized that the class character of a given state is based not solely on a single criterion (like the volume of capital export) but rather on the *totality of its economic, political and military features*. As we have elaborated in a number of works, the RCIT considers the following definition as most appropriate: *An imperialist state is a capitalist state whose monopolies and state apparatus have a position in the world order where they first and foremost dominate other states and nations. As a result they gain surplus-profits and other economic, political and/or military advantages from such a relationship based on super-exploitation and oppression.*

We think such a definition of an imperialist state is in accordance with the brief definition which Lenin gave in one of his writings on imperialism in 1916: *"... imperialist Great Powers (i.e., powers that oppress a whole number of nations and enmesh them in dependence on finance capital, etc.)..."*<sup>8</sup>

It is exactly because Lenin had such a combined political and economic understanding of imperialist powers, that he characterized not only the most modern and strongest Great Powers as imperialist (like e.g. Britain) but also others, less developed, less strong ones. Among these were Russia before 1917, Japan, Italy, Austria-Hungary and others. Such Lenin wrote in 1916: *"The last third of the nineteenth century saw the transition to the new, imperialist era. Finance capital not of one, but of several, though very few, Great Powers enjoys a monopoly. (In Japan and Russia the monopoly of military power, vast territories, or special facilities for robbing minority nationalities, China, etc., partly supplements, partly takes the place of, the monopoly of modern, up-to-date finance capital.)"*<sup>9</sup> Later, Trotsky followed this approach.

And so do we today in our analysis of Russian imperialism. It is the totality of its political, economic and military features which make it one of the key Great Powers in the world today.

### Is Russia really a backward economy suffering from super-exploitation?

However, even if we limit ourselves to the analysis of Russia's economy, it is impossible to agree with the authors claim that it lacks imperialist features. First, the authors are forced to reluctantly admit that Russia's economy is dominated by domestic monopolies. (*"Monopolies do dominate the economy."*) They try to relativize this fact by stating: *"The monopolies contribute a large share of the GDP but they are not large by US standards."* Well, many imperialist monopolies around the globe are *"not large by US standards."* In fact, this argument reflects the approach which many Western "Marxists" do assume – openly or concealed – that the U.S. would be the only imperialist Great Power and every country which is weaker than it does not meet the standards of an imperialist state. Obviously, the Marxist law of uneven development is a closed book for these people!

Another argument of the authors is that Russia's economy would be characterized by capital flight instead of capital export. Albeit there is an element of truth in it, this argument is a great distortion of reality. First, capital flight – i.e. transferring money out of the country by declaring it as "foreign direct investment" (*"Phantom FDI"*) – is a global phenomenon, not something unique for Russia. As we demonstrated in our latest study on Russia, researchers estimate that the share of such *"Phantom FDI"* has increased to 40% of all global FDI. Most of this *"Phantom FDI"* come from Western imperialist countries.<sup>10</sup>

Furthermore, we also demonstrated in this pamphlet that a significant share of this so-called *"Phantom FDI"* are in fact not money parked in off-shore destinations. There are estimations that up to half of foreign investment in Russia is in fact not "foreign" but comes from Russian monopolies which try to pay less taxes by such operations. This is also relevant for foreign investments in other countries. To give one example: the largest foreign investor in Kazakhstan is the Netherlands (more than 40%). In contrast, Russia-originating FDI adds up to only 2.5% of total inward stock. However, in fact, a significant share of Dutch foreign investment comes from Russian corporations which are officially registered in the Netherlands.<sup>11</sup>

Likewise, we can not agree with our critics that Russian foreign investment in Eastern Europe and Central Asia would not extract super-profits but would rather result in "value transfer" to these countries. At one point, the authors even claim that *"Russia does not appropriate value from Ukraine, rather it transfers value to Ukraine."* Do the authors want to suggest that it is not Russia which exploits the Ukraine, but rather the Ukraine exploiting Russia?! An extraordinary claim! How do these people explain that Russia supposedly transfers value to Eastern European and Central Asian countries? Do these states have so much power that they can force Russia to such generosity? Obviously, our critics have not thought about the bizarre logic of their arguments!

As a matter of fact, most Russian outward FDI – about

¾ – come from private Russian multinationals. Are these generous charities which are giving money as a present?! Russian monopolies play an important role in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. <sup>12</sup> In addition, our critics ignore the imperialist super-exploitation of migrants living and working in Russia. <sup>13</sup>

Another argument put forward by the authors against our thesis of Russian imperialism reads as follows: “Russia is not in the association of the leading capitalist powers.” As proof they refer to the fact that Russia is not part of the OECD and the G7, has been admitted to the WTO only in 2012 and “is encircled up to its borders by NATO, the imperialist military alliance.” The fact that Russia is not part of traditional Western imperialist alliances proves only that it is not a Western imperialist power. But is it not logical that Western imperialist do not welcome new rivals from the East in their ranks?

And the classic Putinista argument that Russia “is encircled up to its borders by NATO” appeals only to people without elementary knowledge of geography. As a short look at the map demonstrates, NATO countries do not encircle Russia at all but only exist at its Western borders.

Furthermore, as we pointed out in our pamphlet about “Putin’s Poodles”, U.S. imperialism is in decline since at least one decade and, by now, it has lost its absolute hegemony. It suffered a number of setbacks in the Middle East and Afghanistan. As a result, it has been Russia and China which expanded their influence in the past decade. China possesses enormous political and economic influence on all continents. It tries to control the whole *South Sea* (or “East Sea”, as it is called by Vietnam) irrespective of the

claims of all other littoral states. Beijing also threatens to invade Taiwan which has been allied with U.S. imperialism since the end of the civil war.

Russia, which is economically weaker than China but militarily stronger, wields important influence in the Middle East, in North, East and Central Africa, in Europe as well as in Asia. Its troops are stationed – officially or concealed – in various other countries and regions (e.g. in Central Asia, Eastern Ukraine, Syria, Libya, Mali, Central African Republic, etc.) As Moscow’s military intervention in Kazakhstan has demonstrated recently, Russia acts as the imperialist *Gendarme of Eurasia*. <sup>14</sup>

In short, it is simply a denial of reality to present Russia as an encircled victim while Western powers are constantly expanding their spheres of influence.

### A confused theory provoking utter distortion of reality

Lenin always insisted that theory must be a guide to action. Hence, a Marxist theory must be able to explain the reality and provide revolutionaries with a method which allows them to elaborate correct strategies and tactics for the class struggle.

The Putinistas face the challenge that Russia (as well as China) are so obviously global powers that many people recognize that these are key players in world politics. In addition, even Putinistas have to admit that Russia is obviously a capitalist state. As a consequence, they face the problem to explain how a capitalist state can wield so much influence within a capitalist world order without being imperialist!

## Books of the RCIT

### Michael Pröbsting: Anti-Imperialism in the Age of Great Power Rivalry

The Factors behind the Accelerating Rivalry between the U.S., China, Russia, EU and Japan.  
A Critique of the Left’s Analysis and an Outline of the Marxist Perspective

In *Anti-Imperialism in the Age of Great Power Rivalry* Michael Pröbsting analyses the accelerating rivalry between the imperialist Great Powers – the U.S., China, EU, Russia, and Japan. He shows that the diplomatic rows, sanctions, trade wars, and military tensions between these Great Powers are not accidental or caused by a mad man in the White House. They are rather rooted in the fundamental contradictions of the capitalist system. This rivalry is a key feature of the current historic period and could, ultimately, result in major wars between these Great Powers.

*Anti-Imperialism in the Age of Great Power Rivalry* demonstrates the validity of the Marxist analysis of modern imperialism. Using comprehensive material (including 61 Tables and Figures), Michael Pröbsting elaborates that a correct understanding of the rise of China and Russia as new Great Powers is crucial for assessing the character of the current inter-imperialist rivalry.

In *Anti-Imperialism in the Age of Great Power Rivalry* Michael Pröbsting critically discusses the analysis of modern imperialism by a number of left-wing parties (left social democrats, Stalinists, Trotskyists and others). He demon-

strates that most of these organizations fail to understand the nature of the Great Power rivalry and, consequently, are not able to take an internationalist and revolutionary stance.

The author elaborates the approach of leading Marxist figures like Lenin, Trotsky and Luxemburg to the problems of Great Power rivalry and imperialist aggression against oppressed peoples. He outlines a Marxist program for the current period which is essential for anyone who wants to change the world and bring about a socialist future.

The book contains an introduction and 29 chapters plus an appendix (412 pages) and includes 61 figures and tables. The author of the book is Michael Pröbsting who serves as the International Secretary of the RCIT.

### Anti-Imperialism in the Age of Great Power Rivalry

The Factors behind the Accelerating Rivalry  
between the U.S., China, Russia, EU and Japan  
A Critique of the Left’s Analysis and  
an Outline of the Marxist Perspective



By Michael Pröbsting

Published by the Revolutionary Communist International of Workers

The result are bizarre theories which artificially present Russia as a victim of the capitalist world order. In their conclusions, our critics claim: *"In summary Russia is not imperialist. It is a mid-range capitalist economy comparable to Brazil, Iran, or South Africa. On balance Russia transfers more value to the world economy than it appropriates from it."*

In reality, it does not make sense to compare these states with Russia. In contrast to Brazil, the largest of the named countries, Russia's economy is not dominated by foreign monopolies. As we did demonstrate in other works, imperialist corporations control since decades nearly half of Brazil's foreign trade and more than half of the largest 500 private Brazilian companies. In contrast, 86.3% of investment in Russia comes from Russian companies (with 7.3% resp. 6.4% coming from foreign and joint venture companies).<sup>15</sup>

And can any serious person compare the role of Russia in world politics with that of Brazil, Iran, or South Africa?!

The wide gulf between the reality and such bizarre theories is also revealed in one of the concluding statements of our critics. *"We will leave the final word on Russian imperialism to the economist Tony Norfield who combines economic size, foreign assets, international banking, foreign exchange, and military expenditures in a single graphic. Russia is just behind S. Korea and ahead of Belgium."*

In fact, the figure which the authors provide is titled *"World Power Rankings: Top 20 in 2020"*. According to this figure, China is number 2 behind the U.S. This must be a damned uncomfortable truth for the authors (as well as for the author of the figure, the Marxist economist Tony Norfield) since they all deny the imperialist nature of China!<sup>16</sup> But we shall not dwell about the intellectual problems of the Putinistas.

What does the figure, provided by our critics, tell us about Russia as a "world power"? According to it Russia is a world power on the level of Belgium and is ranked below Switzerland, Australia, Singapore and Spain! What a bizarre caricature of reality! Russia is a Great Power with veto power in the UN, with one of largest militaries, sending military to a number of countries, etc. It is currently engaged in the invasion of a large semi-colonial country in the heart of Europe and – at the same time – confronts the united front of Western imperialists? Could any of the above-mentioned states do such things?!

All this is a brilliant example of an artificial theory elaborated by petty-bourgeois intellectuals without any understanding to the real world! With such a theory, it is impossible to understand the world and to find a correct political orientation!

We are hardly wrong in assuming that it is not their theory which leads the authors and similar-minded Putinistas to supporting Russian imperialism. It is rather their political appetite for such a political crime which motivated them to construct such a theory in order to justify their political views! Marxists can only sharply refute such misleading ideas!

## Footnotes

1 The RCIT has published numerous documents about capitalism in Russia and its rise to an imperialist power. See on this e.g. several pamphlets by Michael Pröbsting: *The Peculiar Features of Russian Imperialism. A Study of Russia's Monopolies, Capital Export and Super-Exploitation in the Light of Marxist Theory*, 10 August 2021, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/the-peculiar-features-of-russian-imperialism/>; by the same author: *Lenin's Theory of Imperialism and the Rise of Russia as a Great Power. On the Understanding and Misunderstanding of Today's Inter-Imperialist Rivalry in the Light of Lenin's Theory of Imperialism. Another Reply to Our Critics Who Deny Russia's Imperialist Character*, August 2014, <http://www.thecommunists.net/theory/imperialism-theory-and-russia/>; *Russia as a Great Imperialist Power. The formation of Russian Monopoly Capital and its Empire – A Reply to our Critics*, 18 March 2014, in: *Revolutionary Communism* No. 21, <http://www.thecommunists.net/theory/imperialist-russia/>; *Russian Imperialism and Its Monopolies*, in: *New Politics* Vol. XVIII No. 4, Whole Number 72, Winter 2022, [https://newpol.org/issue\\_post/russian-imperialism-and-its-monopolies/](https://newpol.org/issue_post/russian-imperialism-and-its-monopolies/). See various other RCIT documents on this issue at a special sub-page on the RCIT's website: <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/china-russia-as-imperialist-powers/>.

2 The RCIT has dealt on numerous occasions with the inter-imperialist rivalry of the Great Powers. See e.g. the RCIT document: *World Perspectives 2021-22: Entering a Pre-Revolutionary Global Situation*, 22 August 2021, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/world-perspectives-2021-22/>; see also: RCIT: *The Coming Inter-Imperialist War on Taiwan*, 10 October 2021, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/the-coming-inter-imperialist-war-on-taiwan/>; *The Meaning of the AUKUS Pact. The U.S. escalates the inter-imperialist Cold War against China and provokes the EU*, 18 September 2021, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/the-meaning-of-the-aukus-pact/>; *Russia Fires Warning Shots against UK Warship in the Black Sea. Down with Cold Warmongering! No support for any imperialist Great Power – neither UK, US nor Russia!* 24 June 2021, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/russia-fires-warning-shots-against-uk-warship-in-black-sea/>; see also the following book by Michael Pröbsting: *Anti-Imperialism in the Age of Great Power Rivalry. The Factors behind the Accelerating Rivalry between the U.S., China, Russia, EU and Japan. A Critique of the Left's Analysis and an Outline of the Marxist Perspective*, RCIT Books, Vienna 2019, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/anti-imperialism-in-the-age-of-great-power-rivalry/>; see also these two pamphlets by the same author: *"A Really Good Quarrel". US-China Alaska Meeting: The Inter-Imperialist Cold War Continues*, 23 March 2021, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/us-china-alaska-meeting-shows-continuation-of-inter-imperialist-cold-war/>; *Servants of Two Masters. Stalinism and the New Cold War between Imperialist Great Powers in East and West*, 10 July 2021, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/servants-of-two-masters-stalinism-and-new-cold-war/>; for more works on this issue see these sub-pages: <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/china-russia-as-imperialist-powers/> and <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/collection-of-articles-on-the-global-trade-war/>.

3 Robert Montgomery and Davey Heller: *Setting the Record straight: Ukraine, Russia and imperialism*, 9 March 2022, <https://classconscious.org/2022/03/09/ukraine-russia-and-imperialism/>. All quotes are from this article if not indicated otherwise.

4 Marxists speak out on the conflict between Russia and imperialism, 28.3.2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mo5hsobzg7c>. We shall note at this point that there are also comrades with whom we share the revolutionary defense of the Ukraine against Putin's invasion but who reject our thesis of Russia as an imperialist power. See on this e.g. Michael Pröbsting: *LIT-CI "Would Undoubtedly Defend Russia"*. Recent articles of LIT-CI reveal a dangerous step towards social-imperialism, 29 March 2022, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/lit-ci-would-undoubtedly-defend-russia/>

5 We refer readers to a special page on our website where



more than 50 RCIT documents on the current NATO-Russia conflict and the Ukraine War are compiled: <https://www.thecomunists.net/worldwide/global/compilation-of-documents-on-nato-russia-conflict/>. The most important documents are: RCIT Manifesto: Ukraine War: A Turning Point of World Historic Significance. Socialists must combine the revolutionary defense of the Ukraine against Putin's invasion with the internationalist struggle against Russian as well as NATO and EU imperialism, 1 March 2022, <https://www.thecomunists.net/worldwide/global/manifesto-ukraine-war-a-turning-point-of-world-historic-significance/>; RCIT: Ukraine War: An Action Program for Authentic Socialists, 1 March 2022, <https://www.thecomunists.net/worldwide/global/ukraine-war-an-action-program-for-authentic-socialists/>; Medina Gunić: A new turning point in Russia's invasion of the Ukraine, 25 February 2022, <https://www.thecomunists.net/worldwide/global/a-new-turning-point-in-russia-s-invasion-of-the-ukraine/>; RCIT: Down with Putin's Imperialist War against the Ukraine! Neither Russia nor NATO - against all imperialist powers! For an independent popular struggle to defend the Ukraine! For a workers government to defeat the Russian invaders! No to imperialist sanctions! For an independent socialist Ukraine! 24 February 2022, <https://www.thecomunists.net/worldwide/global/down-with-putin-s-imperialist-war-against-the-ukraine/>; see also our joint statement with UIT-CI and LIT-CI, <https://www.thecomunists.net/rcit/joint-statement-on-ukraine-war-13-3-2022/>

6 In the book itself, Lenin stated at the beginning: "I shall not be able to deal with the non-economic aspects of the question." (V. I. Lenin: Imperialism. The Highest Stage of Capitalism (1916); in: LCW Vol. 22, p. 195). In a later written preface, he explained: "This pamphlet was written with an eye to the tsarist censorship. Hence, I was not only forced to confine myself strictly to an exclusively theoretical, specifically economic analysis of facts, but to formulate the few necessary observations on politics with extreme caution, by hints, in an allegorical language" (p. 187)

7 V. I. Lenin: Imperialism and the Split in Socialism; in: LCW Vol. 23, p.107

8 V. I. Lenin: A Caricature of Marxism and Imperialist Economism (1916); in: LCW Vol. 23, p. 34

9 V. I. Lenin: Imperialism and the Split in Socialism (1916); in: LCW Vol. 23, p. 116

10 See chapter "Phantom FDI: No Russian Peculiarity but a Global Phenomenon" in the above-mentioned pamphlet *The Peculiar Features of Russian Imperialism*.

11 See chapter "Capital Export and the Problem of "Round-Tripping" Foreign Direct Investments" in the above-mentioned pam-

phlet *The Peculiar Features of Russian Imperialism*.

12 See chapter "Imperialist Super-Exploitation via Capital Export" in the above-mentioned pamphlet *The Peculiar Features of Russian Imperialism*.

13 See chapter "Imperialist Super-Exploitation via Migration" in the above-mentioned pamphlet *The Peculiar Features of Russian Imperialism*.

14 See on this the pamphlet by Michael Pröbsting: Putin's Poodles (Apologies to All Dogs). The pro-Russian Stalinist parties and their arguments in the current NATO-Russia Conflict, 9 February 2022, <https://www.thecomunists.net/theory/nato-russia-conflict-stalinism-as-putin-s-poodles/>

15 We provided the sources for the Russian figures in the above-mentioned pamphlet *The Peculiar Features of Russian Imperialism*. For Brazil see the above-mentioned book by Michael Pröbsting: *Anti-Imperialism in the Age of Great Power Rivalry* (p. 152).

16 The RCIT has published numerous documents about capitalism in China and its transformation into a Great Power. See on this e.g. the above-mentioned book by Michael Pröbsting: *Anti-Imperialism in the Age of Great Power Rivalry*; see also by the same author an essay published in the second edition of *The Palgrave Encyclopedia of Imperialism and Anti-Imperialism* (edited by Immanuel Ness and Zak Cope), Palgrave Macmillan, Cham, 2020, [https://link.springer.com/referenceworkentry/10.1007/978-3-319-91206-6\\_179-1](https://link.springer.com/referenceworkentry/10.1007/978-3-319-91206-6_179-1); China: An Imperialist Power ... Or Not Yet? A Theoretical Question with Very Practical Consequences! Continuing the Debate with Esteban Mercatante and the PTS/FT on China's class character and consequences for the revolutionary strategy, 22 January 2022, <https://www.thecomunists.net/theory/china-imperialist-power-or-not-yet/>; China's transformation into an imperialist power. A study of the economic, political and military aspects of China as a Great Power (2012), in: *Revolutionary Communism* No. 4, <http://www.thecomunists.net/publications/revcom-number-4>; How is it possible that some Marxists still Doubt that China has Become Capitalist? (A Critique of the PTS/FT), An analysis of the capitalist character of China's State-Owned Enterprises and its political consequences, 18 September 2020, <https://www.thecomunists.net/theory/pts-ft-and-chinese-imperialism-2/>; Unable to See the Wood for the Trees (PTS/FT and China). Eclectic empiricism and the failure of the PTS/FT to recognize the imperialist character of China, 13 August 2020, <https://www.thecomunists.net/theory/pts-ft-and-chinese-imperialism/>. See many more RCIT documents at a special sub-page on the RCIT's website: <https://www.thecomunists.net/theory/china-russia-as-imperialist-powers/>.



## Publications of the RCIT

# The Peculiar Features of Russian Imperialism

A Study of Russia's Monopolies, Capital Export and Super-Exploitation in the Light of Marxist Theory

By Michael Pröbsting, August 2021

Introduction \* Another Denial of Russia's Imperialist Character \* The Methodological Failure of our Critics \* Russia's Economy: Dominated by Domestic, not Foreign, Monopolies \* Capital Export and the Problem of "Round-Tripping" Foreign Direct Investments \* "Phantom FDI": No Russian Peculiarity but a Global Phenomenon \* Russia's Leading Multinational Corporations and their Foreign Investments \* Imperialist Super-Exploitation via Capital Export \* Imperialist Super-Exploitation via Migration \* Conclusions \* Footnotes

A RCIT Pamphlet, 20 pages, A4 Format

# LIT-CI “Would Undoubtedly Defend Russia”

## Recent articles of LIT-CI reveal a dangerous step towards social-imperialism

By Michael Pröbsting, International Secretary of the Revolutionary Communist International Tendency (RCIT), 29.3.2022

LIT-CI is one of the few Trotskyist organizations which takes a basically correct position in the current Ukraine War and the escalating conflict between NATO and Russia. Albeit we have differences with them on some issues, they support the defense of the Ukraine and – at the same time – do not support the imperialist policy of NATO.<sup>1</sup> For this reason, the RCIT could sign a joint statement with this organization on this issue.<sup>2</sup>

However, we have also explained on various occasions that the approach of LIT-CI suffers from profound weaknesses. Among these are an adaption to pacifism (they call for nuclear disarmament which is illusory as this is impossible as long the imperialist system exists) as well as a concession to the Western imperialist Cold War policy (they call governments to break diplomatic relations with Russia).<sup>3</sup>

However, the most important weakness of the LIT-CI position is their refusal to recognize the imperialist class character of Russia. They claim that Russia (as well as China) is not dominating other countries but is rather “dependent on imperialism”. Consequently, they put Russia in the same category with Brazil and Mexico (countries which are semi-colonies).

In contrast, the RCIT defends the Marxist analysis of Russia as an imperialist Great Power. We have demonstrated in several substantial studies that Russia has peculiar features. While it is economically weaker than the U.S. or China, it is clearly a global power with one of the largest armed forces in the world. As a result, it wields important political influence in the Middle East, in North, East and Central Africa, in Eastern Europe as well as in Asia. Its troops are stationed – officially or concealed – in various countries in these regions.<sup>4</sup>

Since we have dealt with LIT-CI’s mistaken analysis on Russia in other works, including a recently published article<sup>5</sup>, we will not repeat our critique in the present article.<sup>6</sup>

At this place we want to focus on the dangerous political consequences of LIT-CI’s refusal to recognize the imperialist class character of Russia. In our last article, we did already draw attention to the strange logic of a LIT-CI statement (from 5 February 2022) in which the comrades gave advice to the Putin regime how it could best “defend itself against the NATO troops on its borders.”<sup>7</sup> We warned that if LIT-CI does not correct its wrong analysis, it would “run into danger of joining the camp of pro-Russian social-imperialism in the future.”

### Defending Russia only on Russian territory?

In two new articles, the LIT-CI leadership unfortunately goes further and openly states that it would defend Russia in a conflict between NATO and Russia on the latter’s territory.

*“This [the Ukraine War, Ed.] is not a NATO military invasion of Russian territory. In that case, we would undoubtedly position ourselves in defense of Russia, both because it is an economy dependent on imperialism and because it has been invaded.”<sup>8</sup>*

This statement reflects the confused logic of LIT-CI’s policy and, worse, represents an extremely dangerous concession to the policy of social-imperialism!

First, we have to ask, why the LIT-CI comrades want to defend Russia only on Russian territory but not outside? Marxists have always rejected the bourgeois approach according to which it would be relevant who attacks first or on which territory such a war takes place. Lenin and the Bolsheviks made this very clear in their programmatic documents. In a resolution adopted at the Berne Conference in February 1915, the Bolsheviks explained.

*„The question of which group dealt the first military blow or first declared war is immaterial in any determination of the tactics of socialists. Both sides’ phrases on the defence of the fatherland, resistance to enemy invasion, a war of defence, etc., are nothing but deception of the people.”<sup>9</sup>*

Later, Lenin and Zinoviev elaborated this statement in more detail: *„By a “defensive” war socialists have always understood a “just” war in this particular sense (Wilhelm Liebknecht once expressed himself precisely in this way). It is only in this sense that socialists have always regarded wars “for the defence of the fatherland”, or “defensive” wars, as legitimate, progressive and just. For example, if tomorrow, Morocco were to declare war on France, or India on Britain, or Persia or China on Russia, and so on, these would be “just”, and “defensive” wars, irrespective of who would be the first to attack; any socialist would wish the oppressed, dependent and unequal states victory over the oppressor, slaveholding and predatory “Great” Powers.”<sup>10</sup>*

Let us give a more recent example. The Baathist regime of Saddam Hussein attacked and conquered Kuwait in August 1990. The US Administration of George Bush exploited this attack as a pretext to mobilize its troops in the Middle East and to wage a war against the Iraqi forces. While we did not support Saddam Hussein’s aggression, it was clear to us that socialists had to defend the Iraqi forces against the U.S. attack from the very beginning – irrespective of the fact that this war did mostly take place on Kuwait’s territory.<sup>11</sup>

Our approach was based on the Marxist analysis of the class character of the states involved. While Iraq has been a capitalist semi-colony, i.e. a country dependent on imperialism, the U.S. and the European powers are imperialist states. In such a conflict, Marxists defend the semi-colonial country against the imperialist power.

### The policy of revolutionary defeatism

For Marxists, the decisive question is not who starts a war or on which territory such military confrontations take place. The decisive question is rather what is the class character of the states involved and what are their goals. In the case of the current conflict between the U.S., the EU and Russia it is obvious that it is a product of the inter-imperialist rivalry between the Great Powers.

For this reason, the RCIT advocates the policy of revolutionary defeatism on both sides. This means that social-

ists oppose both imperialist camps in any political, economic or military conflict and denounce the chauvinist campaigns and the warmongering of all governments involved. Such an anti-imperialist strategy has found its expression in the famous phrase of Karl Liebknecht in World War I *"The main enemy is at home"* as well as in Lenin's formula of the *"transformation of the imperialist war into civil war"*. In other words, the only authentic socialist program in such conflicts is the independent and internationalist stance against *all* imperialist Great Powers.<sup>12</sup>

The question which we pose to the comrades of LIT-CI is the following: if Russia is really *"dependent on imperialism"* (like Brazil or Mexico), is it not obligatory that you *"defend Russia"* not only on Russian territory but also on Ukrainian territory? What would be the position of LIT-CI if NATO – as some of its member states propose – deploys troops (*"peacekeepers"*) to the Ukraine? It is evident that in such a case, clashes between NATO and Russian troops are likely.

The RCIT and other authentic socialists will take a defeatist position against both imperialist camps in such a conflict. What will be the approach of LIT-CI? If the comrades do not side with the Russian troops but take a correct, i.e. defeatist, position, we would strongly welcome this. But we would also point out that such a position is completely inconsistent because Marxists defend a country *"dependent on imperialism"* against the aggression of a Great Power on its own territory *as well as* outside! If the LIT-CI comrades would be consistent (we hope that they are not!), they should *"defend Russia"* against NATO not only on Russian territory but also in the Ukraine!

### An eclectic lack of logic

The best test of a theory is the reality. LIT-CI claims that Russia is *"dependent on imperialism"*. In their opinion, only

the U.S., Western Europe and Japan qualifies as imperialist powers. If that would be true, how do the LIT-CI comrades explain the fact that *"dependent"* Russia has entered a major confrontation with its supposed *"masters"* by its own initiative? If it would be really a country *"dependent on imperialism"*, why does it ignore the wishes of its masters, why does it either a strategic confrontation with these, and why does it dare to provoke the danger of a nuclear war with American imperialism?! Is it not a – to put it diplomatically – an extraordinary behavior of a semi-colony towards the united front of Western imperialism?! It is not the case that Putin's bold, extremely aggressive, foreign policy is much more characteristic to an imperialist Great Power and not to a semi-colony which is *"dependent on imperialism"*!?

Furthermore, comrades of LIT-CI, if your thesis of Russia being *"dependent on imperialism"* would be true, it would mean that the current conflict represents a rebellion of a subordinated country against the dominating powers. Would it not be the duty of LIT-CI to side with Russia in such a supposedly *"anti-imperialist"* struggle already now – during the Ukraine War?

It seems to us that the LIT-CI comrades are not aware of the contradictions of their position and its consequences. As a result, these contradictions push them sometimes in this and sometimes in the opposite direction.

A reflection of the eclectic methodology of LIT-CI is the fact that today, it calls Western imperialist governments to break off diplomatic relations with Russia – as step which is usually associated with the declaration of a Cold War or even a hot war. So, if – according to LIT-CI – the U.S. and the EU are imperialist powers but Russia is not, it means that the comrades' call to Western governments to rupture diplomatic relations with Russia represents an appeal to Great Powers to launch political aggression against a country *"dependent on imperialism"*! In other words, follow-



## PUBLICATIONS OF THE RCIT

# Putin's Poodles (Apologies to All Dogs)

*The pro-Russian Stalinist parties and  
their arguments in the current NATO-Russia Conflict*

*by Michael Pröbsting, February 2022*

**Introduction** \* 1. NATO is the sole aggressor! Really? \* Is it relevant for Marxists who is the aggressor?  
\* What is causing the escalation of tensions between Great Powers: the party of warmongers or the imperialist system? \* Can socialists defend *"legitimate spheres of influence"* of Great Powers? \* Putin and Great Russian Chauvinism claim that the Ukraine is not an independent nation \* Stalinism versus Bolshevism: The Ukraine and the right of national self-determination \* From Kazakhstan to Syria: Stalinism is siding with the counterrevolution \* Is Russian imperialism a *"force of social progress"*?  
**Discussion of a remarkable Stalinist document** \* Stalinism and social-imperialism: concluding remarks  
\* Footnotes

*A RCIT Pamphlet, 20 pages, A4 Format*



ing their own logic, LIT-CI becomes an accomplice in imperialist warmongering!

The eclecticism of the LIT-CI policy becomes even more evident by the fact that today it appeals to the West to declare diplomatic war on Russia. At the same time, it promises to defend Russia against the very same Western powers if the current political-diplomatic war transforms itself into a military conflict!

### Conclusions

The fundamental problem is that LIT-CI ignores Russia's imperialist character and therefore fails to recognize the inter-imperialist nature of the rivalry between Washington, Brussels and Moscow. It is therefore incapable of consistently applying the necessary *dual tactic* in this conflict – defending the Ukraine against Putin's invasion and, at the same time, taking a defeatist position against both imperialist camps (NATO and Russia).

As every observer of world news knows the issues under discussion in this article are by no means abstract speculation. Some sectors of the ruling class in NATO countries did already propose to send troops forces into the Ukraine. At the moment, these voices represent only a minority, but this can change. If the conflict between NATO and Russia escalates (e.g. because of Russian advances in the Ukraine, or because of the escalating sanctions), it is quite possible that NATO governments change their mind and send troops to the Ukraine. We can't say if this will happen or when but surely this is an issue at stake in the coming weeks.

In such a period full of explosive tensions in world politics, it is imperative for revolutionary socialists to take a have a clear analysis of the class character of the states involved in this conflict and to possess a consistent internationalist and anti-imperialist program. It is highly unfortunate that LIT-CI lacks one as well as the other. Currently, it's policy has an eclectic and vulgar character. It suffers from the lack of a serious Marxist theoretical foundation as well as a coherent program. It is urgent that the comrades in LIT-CI overcome these deficits. Otherwise, this organization could become a social-imperialist defender of Russia with the next sharp turn in world politics!

### Footnotes

1 We refer readers to a special page on our website where more than 40 RCIT documents on the current NATO-Russia conflict and the Ukraine War are compiled: <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/compilation-of-documents-on-nato-russia-conflict/>. The most important documents are: RCIT Manifesto: Ukraine War: A Turning Point of World Historic Significance. Socialists must combine the revolutionary defense of the Ukraine against Putin's invasion with the internationalist struggle against Russian as well as NATO and EU imperialism, 1 March 2022, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/manifesto-ukraine-war-a-turning-point-of-world-historic-significance/>; RCIT: Ukraine War: An Action Program for Authentic Socialists, 1 March 2022, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/ukraine-war-an-action-program-for-authentic-socialists/>; Medina Gunić: A new turning point in Russia's invasion of the Ukraine, 25 February 2022, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/a-new-turning-point-in-russia-s-invasion-of-the-ukraine/>; RCIT: Down with Putin's Imperialist War against the Ukraine! Neither Russia nor NATO - against all imperialist powers! For an independent popular struggle to defend

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3 See on this the "Note from the RCIT" at the end of the above-mentioned Joint Statement.

4 The RCIT has published numerous documents about capitalism in Russia and its rise to an imperialist power. See on this e.g. several pamphlets by Michael Pröbsting: The Peculiar Features of Russian Imperialism. A Study of Russia's Monopolies, Capital Export and Super-Exploitation in the Light of Marxist Theory, 10 August 2021, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/the-peculiar-features-of-russian-imperialism/>; by the same author: Lenin's Theory of Imperialism and the Rise of Russia as a Great Power. On the Understanding and Misunderstanding of Today's Inter-Imperialist Rivalry in the Light of Lenin's Theory of Imperialism. Another Reply to Our Critics Who Deny Russia's Imperialist Character, August 2014, <http://www.thecommunists.net/theory/imperialism-theory-and-russia/>; Russia as a Great Imperialist Power. The formation of Russian Monopoly Capital and its Empire – A Reply to our Critics, 18 March 2014, in: Revolutionary Communism No. 21, <http://www.thecommunists.net/theory/imperialist-russia/>; Russian Imperialism and Its Monopolies, in: New Politics Vol. XVIII No. 4, Whole Number 72, Winter 2022, [https://newpol.org/issue\\_post/russian-imperialism-and-its-monopolies/](https://newpol.org/issue_post/russian-imperialism-and-its-monopolies/). See various other RCIT documents on this issue at a special sub-page on the RCIT's website: <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/china-russia-as-imperialist-powers/>.

5 See Michael Pröbsting: Is Russia "Dependent on Western Imperialism"? Critical remarks on the LIT-CI statement on the current NATO-Russia conflict, 14 February 2022, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/critical-remarks-on-lit-ci-statement-on-the-current-nato-russia-conflict/>

6 See e.g. chapter X in the above-mentioned book *Anti-Imperialism in the Age of Great Power Rivalry*.

7 LIT-CI: Statement on the U.S.-NATO-Russia-Ukraine Conflict 5 February 2022, <https://litci.org/en/statement-about-the-usa-nato-russia-ukraine-conflict/>

8 Eduardo Almeida: El estalinismo, la crisis del orden mundial y la invasión rusa, LIT-CI, marzo 7, 2022, <https://litci.org/es/el-estalinismo-la-crisis-del-orden-mundial-y-la-invasion-rusa/>. This quotes has been also reproduced and confirmed in another important article by Alejandro Iturbe, a leader of LIT-CI: Controversy over the "No to War" in Ukraine slogan, marzo 17, 2022, <https://litci.org/en/controversy-over-the-no-to-war-in-ukraine-slogan/>. The English translation of the quote is taken from the latter LIT-CI article.

9 V. I. Lenin: The Conference of the R.S.D.L.P. Groups Abroad (1915); in LCW 21, p. 159

10 V.I. Lenin and G. Zinoviev: Socialism and War (1915); in: LCW 21, pp. 300-301

11 See on this chapter 12 and 13 in our book by Michael Pröbsting: *The Great Robbery of the South. Continuity and Changes in the Super-Exploitation of the Semi-Colonial World by Monopoly Capital Consequences for the Marxist Theory of Imperialism*, RCIT Books, Vienna 2013, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/great-robbery-of-the-south/>.

12 See on this, in addition to the above-mentioned book *Anti-Imperialism in the Age of Great Power Rivalry*, the following document of the RCIT: Theses on Revolutionary Defeatism in Imperialist States, 8 September 2018, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/theses-on-revolutionary-defeatism-in-imperialist-states/>

# No to Workers Boycott against Russia but Yes to Boycotting the Ukraine?

## On the support of the PTS/FT for boycott actions against arms shipments for the Ukraine

By Michael Pröbsting, International Secretary of the Revolutionary Communist International Tendency (RCIT), 26.3.2022

**W**ars and revolutions are the sharpest tests for socialists. They force all organizations of the workers and popular movement to develop their program concretely and to elaborate its consequences in face of dramatic clashes between classes and states. The current Ukraine War and the escalating tensions between the imperialist powers of NATO and Russia are a powerful confirmation of this old Marxist truth.

The *Revolutionary Communist International Tendency* (RCIT) and other authentic socialists have pointed out since the beginning of the war that the current conflict has a *dual character*. We therefore support the Ukrainian people and their resistance against the invasion of imperialist Russia. At the same time, we oppose both camps in the ongoing inter-imperialist rivalry between the Great Powers – Russia as well as NATO. We summarized our position in the following slogans:<sup>1</sup>

\* *Defend the Ukraine! Defeat Russian imperialism! International popular solidarity with the Ukrainian national resistance – independent of any imperialist influence!*

\* *Down with all imperialist powers – NATO and EU as well as Russia! In all conflicts between these powers, revolutionaries fight against both camps!*

Many socialists have failed the test of war and take a confused or even reactionary position. Unfortunately, the comrades of the *Fracción Trotskista* (with the PTS in Argentina as its leading section) are among those who fail to approach the war in a revolutionary fashion.

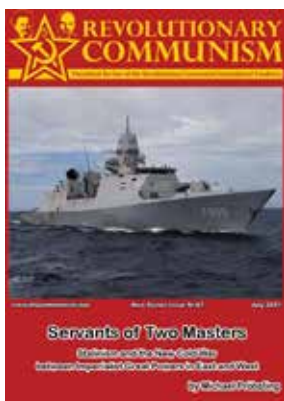
It is true that the comrades have stated their opposition

against Putin's invasion – in contrast to various pro-Russian Stalinists and pseudo-Trotskyist forces.<sup>2</sup> In a key statement on the war, the FT demands "*Russian troops out of Ukraine*" and makes clear that it "*completely repudiates the military occupation of Ukraine by Russia*".<sup>3</sup>

However, at the same time, the PTS/FT refuses to support the Ukrainian resistance against the Russian invasion. In other words, they oppose the occupation but do not support those who fight against this occupation! They explain this by the reactionary nature of the Ukraine's President Zelensky. It is of course true, as we have pointed out for long, that socialists must intransigently oppose Zelensky who is a thoroughly bourgeois pro-NATO figure. But the war is not limited to Zelensky and his wishes. It is first and foremost a popular war which mobilized the masses. There exist many reports, and this has also been confirmed by comrades in the Ukraine, that many people volunteer to take up arms or to support the resistance by other means. Even political forces which were initially Russophile, have condemned the invasion.

There can be no doubt: this is first and foremost a *war of the Ukrainian people for national self-determination and against foreign occupation by an imperialist power!*

Of course, Zelensky pursues bourgeois and pro-imperialist goals. True, NATO hopes to exploit the war in the Ukraine to expand its sphere of influence against its Russian rival. But it would be utterly wrong to imagine that the Ukrainian resistance struggle is simply an extension of the NATO war machinery!



## PUBLICATIONS OF THE RCIT

# Servants of Two Masters

*Stalinism and the New Cold War  
between Imperialist Great Powers in East and West*

by Michael Pröbsting

*A RCIT Pamphlet, 24 pages, A4 Format*

**Introduction** \* **The New Inter-Imperialist Cold War** \* **A View on the Military Strength of the Great Powers** \* **The Main Point of both Statements: Siding with Chinese and Russian Imperialism** \* **Stalinist Fantasies Shredded in the Light of Reality: The Rise of Chinese Imperialism** \* **The KKE's "criticism" and its fraternal bonds with the Chinese CP** \* **Beside the Servants of Assad the Butcher - Who Signed the KKE-initiated Joint Statement?** \* **The Xi Fan Club: Signatories of the CPUSA-initiated Joint Statement** \* **The Concept of Multilateralism and Peaceful Coexistence: A Reactionary Illusion** \* **"Socialism in One Country": The Historical Roots of the Stalinist Concept of "Peaceful Coexistence"** \* **Serving Two Masters: The Eastern Imperialists as well as Sectors of the Domestic Bourgeoisie** \* **A Note on the tight-lipped "Trotskyists" (CWI, IMT, ISA)** \* **Conclusions** \* **Footnotes**

True, it is a possible scenario in the future that NATO intervenes in such a way that it would transform the character of the war. We have seen such a development, for example, in the Kosovo War in 1999 when NATO troops entered the country and effectively subordinated the national liberation struggle of the Albanian people to its imperialist goals. But this is not the situation today and Marxists have to apply tactics on the current reality and not on possible developments in the future. For now, NATO does not wish to take the risk of sending troops to the Ukraine which would, most likely, provoke a war with Russia.

Hence, the reality today is that Russian imperialism invades the Ukraine – a semi-colonial country – and tries to totally subjugate it. No doubt, NATO tries to exploit this situation for its own interest. It is a well-known truth that Great Powers always try to utilize difficulties of their rivals. But this does not change the character of the current war. The situation in the Ukraine today is first and foremost characterized by the fact that it is the Russian army – and not NATO troops – which fight on Ukrainian soil, kill thousands of people and destroy Ukrainian cities. Socialists must give an answer to this concrete situation and this can only mean to support the defense of the country and the defeat of the Russian invaders.

### **Progressive wars led by reactionary forces in the past**

In our view, the reactionary nature of the political leadership does not negate the legitimate character of the resistance struggle of the Ukrainian people! In fact, it is often the case that democratic and national liberation struggles against dictatorships and foreign occupation take place under the leadership of bourgeois forces. As we did elaborate in our works, it is obligatory for socialists, to side with the oppressed people – irrespective of the current political leadership – and to call for the defeat of the oppressors.<sup>4</sup>

This has always been the approach of Marxists. To name only a few examples we refer to the Chinese struggle against the Japanese invaders in 1937-45 which was led by Chiang Kai-shek (who killed tens of thousands of communists). Or take the resistance of Ethiopia against the Italian occupation 1935-37 which was led by the absolutist regime of Emperor Haile Selassie. More recent examples are the struggle of Iraq – led by the Baathist dictatorship of Saddam Hussein – against the US aggression in two wars (1991 and 2003) and the resistance of the Taliban against the US invasion in Afghanistan in 2001. Or, to add one last example, the Chechen liberation war against the Russian invasion in 1994-96.

In all these wars, authentic Marxists supported the oppressed people against the reactionary aggressors despite the bourgeois nature of the leadership of this struggle. On various occasions, these forces received political, diplomatic and sometimes also military support from imperialist powers. In a recent article, we pointed to the US support for Chiang Kai-shek.<sup>5</sup> Likewise, did Ethiopia receive weapons from Nazi-Germany during the war with Italy as a military historian noted. *“Nazi Germany, eager to thwart Italian objections to its occupation of Austria, secretly sent military aid to Ethiopia that included 3 airplanes; 10,000 Mauser rifles; and 10 million rounds of ammunition.”*<sup>6</sup>

Trotsky and the Fourth International explicitly sided the legitimate resistance struggle of the Chinese resp. Ethio-

pian people. They refused to drop their support because of the reactionary character of their leaderships. In arguing against ultraleft sectarians who opposed support for the Chinese struggle, Trotsky stated: *““But Chiang Kai-shek? We need have no illusions about Chiang Kai-shek, his party, or the whole ruling class of China, just as Marx and Engels had no illusions about the ruling classes of Ireland and Poland. Chiang Kai-shek is the executioner of the Chinese workers and peasants. But today he is forced, despite himself, to struggle against Japan for the remainder of the independence of China. Tomorrow he may again betray. It is possible. It is probable. It is even inevitable. But today he is struggling. Only cowards, scoundrels, or complete imbeciles can refuse to participate in that struggle. (...) In participating in the military struggle under the orders of Chiang Kai-shek, since unfortunately it is he who has the command in the war for independence-to prepare politically the overthrow of Chiang Kai-shek ... that is the only revolutionary policy.”*<sup>7</sup>

Trotsky took the same approach in the case of the Italo-Ethiopian War in 1936. He explicitly argued that socialists must support all forms of aid – including weapons – to the Ethiopian forces. *„Of course, we are for the defeat of Italy and the victory of Ethiopia, and therefore we must do everything possible to hinder by all available means support to Italian imperialism by the other imperialist powers, and at the same time facilitate the delivery of armaments, etc., to Ethiopia as best we can.”*<sup>8</sup>

### **PTS/FT opposes workers boycott against Russian imperialism ...**

It is a shame that the PTS/FT effectively refuses to support the Ukrainian resistance against the invasion by Russian imperialism. In their above-mentioned statement of 3 March, the FT comrades say: *“At the same time, we must encourage the emergence of an independent position within the Ukrainian population facing the occupation, one that does not throw its lot in with the pro-imperialist government of Zelensky and reactionary nationalist forces that are subordinated to NATO. (...) In Ukraine itself we propose that the resistance to the Russian occupation take a path independent of the subordination to NATO preached by Zelensky.”* Fine. But for now, the Ukraine war of defense is carried out by the existing army and the territorial militias. This is the reality. So, while the PTS/FT defends the Ukraine in an abstract ideal scenario in the future, it does not defend the Ukraine as it is today and in the war which currently takes place!

It is a well-known truth of Marxism that neutrality in a war of an oppressed people against a foreign invasion is impermissible for authentic socialists. Unfortunately, the PTS/FT fails to take an anti-imperialist and internationalist position in the Ukraine War.

Worse, they promote tactics which objectively result in undermining the Ukrainian resistance struggle and support for Russian imperialism. This becomes clear when we look to the position of this organization concerning workers sanctions.

Trotsky and the Fourth International advocated actions of the international working class in order to support the liberation struggle of oppressed peoples. Among such actions were so-called *“workers sanctions (or boycott)”*. This meant actions of boycott to undermine the war machinery and economy of an aggressor state in order to aid the liberation struggle of the oppressed people. Such actions



are refusal to unload cargo, to blockade ships, to distribute goods from such a country, etc. At the same time, Marxists always opposed imperialist sanctions – as we see currently with the Western sanctions against Russia. Our opposition is not caused by sympathy for Russia (or any other aggressor) but by our refusal to support any side in the rivalry between imperialist powers.

Since we elaborated on this issue in detail in other recent works, we will not repeat our arguments and the statements from the Fourth International and refer readers to the respective articles.<sup>9</sup>

Since the beginning of the Ukraine War, there have been a number of actions by dockers who decided to show their support for the Ukrainian people by boycotting Russian cargo.<sup>10</sup> Shamefully, the PTS/FT denounces such actions of international working-class solidarity as “*servicing imperialist interests*”! A recently published article on their English-language website – titled “*Dock Workers Are Blocking Russian Cargo - and Inadvertently Bolstering Imperialist Interests*” states: “*This month, dock workers from countries around the world have decided to block Russian ships and cargo from ports. Most recently, the Swedish Dock Workers’ Union announced on Thursday that they will refuse to unload, load, and tow Russian and Russian-affiliated ships. In the context of increasing nationalism and Russophobia in these countries, these workers’ actions will harm the global working class rather than their war-mongering leaders.*”<sup>11</sup>

Hence, the PTS/FT denounces such workers boycott actions as “*reactionary*”. “*The dock workers’ actions are also wholly understandable. (...) But these aims, however laudable, are deeply misguided. The current set of sanctions against Russia – even if they come from civil society – are reactionary, not progressive. (...) Dock workers’ decision to block Russian ships and goods is no exception: it serves imperialist interests and will harm Russian workers.*”



## PUBLICATIONS OF THE RCIT

# World Situation: In the Midst of a Global Political Tornado

*Notes on global developments characterized by the Ukraine War, inter-imperialist rivalry, global energy and food crisis as well as spontaneous mass protests*

*by Michael Pröbsting, April 2022*

**Introduction \* On the Causes and the Nature of the Ukraine War \* The patriotic resistance of the Ukrainian people which Putin didn't expect \* Continuity and transformation of the bonapartist Putin regime \* On the dramatic acceleration of inter-imperialist rivalry \* A massive shift in the foreign policy of U.S. imperialism \* Challenges of EU imperialism \* Cracks in the capitalist world economy \* Russia's resilience against Western sanctions \* Who blinks first? \* The threat to the global financial order dominated by the US-Dollar \* At the beginning of a new global wave of mass uprisings \* The crisis of revolutionary leadership and the struggle against social-imperialism, social-pacifism and imperialist economism \* Conclusions \* Footnotes**

*A RCIT Pamphlet, 20 pages, A4 Format*

### ... but supports the boycott of military aid for the Ukraine!

At the same time, the PTS/FT advocates boycott actions which are directed against the Ukraine and its ability to resist the Russian invasion! The same article states: “*For example, the Swedish government has decided to send arms to Ukraine – workers should refuse to load and transport them, following the example of the Italian airport workers.*”

Another article of the PTS/FT – published on their English and German language websites – praises an action by Italian trade unionists which stopped the shipment of arms to the Ukraine. “*With their courageous actions, the workers not only prevented these weapons from being used to kill, but also provided an example for the entire working class on how we can fight the war with our own means. Unionized workers in the U.S. and beyond should take the action of their Italian colleagues as a model. (...) They should serve as an example to workers internationally on how to fight the war with their own means, such as strikes or blockades of arms shipments.*”<sup>12</sup>

As we see, the PTS/FT praises this single action as a model to be followed all over the world. This means that it calls the international workers movement to obstruct arms deliveries to the Ukraine which effectively means to keep it military inferior to the Russian armed forces.

The comrades of the PTS/FT should be fully aware about the consequences of their policy. They themselves characterized – in their above-mentioned statement from 3 March – Russia as “*a power that has the third-most powerful army in the world and nuclear arms*”. Hence, the comrades can not ignore the fact that stopping arms shipment to the Ukraine means to keep its armed forces weak and to limit their ability to eliminate the tanks, warplanes and military helicopters which constantly bombard the Ukrainian cities. It means to harm the ability of the Ukraine armed forces to resist the Russian occupation. It means, objectively, to

aid the militarily superior force – i.e. Russian imperialism. It is really a shame that the comrades of the PTS/FT get it completely wrong. They oppose workers sanctions against an imperialist power which invades a smaller semi-colonial country ... but they welcome such actions when these are directed against the very people defending themselves against this imperialist power! This has nothing to do with anti-imperialism and working-class internationalism! Objectively, even if the comrades might not be aware of this, it represents a step towards pro-Russian social-imperialism!

We should also add that it is difficult to imagine that the PTS/FT leaders are not aware that their policy – if workers would follow their advise – objectively aids Russia. It is well-known to Marxists that workers sanctions are an instrument which is applied not in a war where both camps are reactionary and where socialists do not take a side. It is rather an instrument in order to aid the victory of one camp against the other. This is why the Fourth International raised such tactics, as mentioned above, in the Italo-Ethiopian War and in the Second Sino-Japanese War. In both cases, the Trotskyists advocated the military victory of the Ethiopian resp. the Chinese people.

Hence, the PTS/FT's advocacy of workers sanctions against the Ukraine can only mean objectively that it wishes Russia to win this war!

It is symbolic and by no mean accidental that *Global Times* – the English-language mouthpiece of the Stalinist-capitalist regime in Beijing – also cheered the same action in Italy which the PTS/FT praises as “*an example for the entire working class!*”<sup>13</sup> In the case of *Global Times*, such appraisal is hardly surprising since Russia is the most important strategic ally of Chinese imperialism. But what is the excuse of the PTS/FT?!

### Refusal to recognize the imperialist character of the Russian state

Let us conclude this article by pointing out that we consider it as not accidental that the PTS/FT refuses to support the Ukraine and, objectively, sides with Russia. As we have noted in our book “*Anti-Imperialism in the Age of Great Power Rivalry*” and other works, the PTS/FT refuses to recognize the imperialist nature of the Russian state until today.<sup>14</sup>

In contrast to the claims of these comrades, Russia is an imperialist Great Power in its own right. As we demonstrated in a number of studies, Russian imperialism has peculiar features. It is economically weaker than the U.S. and China (which is however also true for nearly all other imperialist states). At the same time, it is dominated by domestic monopolies, super-exploits a number of semi-colonial countries in Central Asia and Eastern Europe, possesses one of the largest armies in the world and intervenes with its military in various countries not only in Central Asia and Eastern Europe but also in the Middle East and Africa.<sup>15</sup>

A few years ago, the RCIT wrote: “*It is only possible to understand the driving dynamic of the present period of capitalist crisis and to take a correct position if one recognizes the imperialist character not only of the US, EU and Japan but also of the new emerging powers, Russia and China. Only on such a basis is it possible to arrive at the only correct, anti-imperialist*

*program on this issue – proletarian internationalism and revolutionary defeatism, i.e., the perspective of consistent struggle of the working class independent of and against all imperialist powers. (...) Those who fail to recognize the reactionary and imperialist character of these Great Powers will inevitable fail to take a consistent anti-imperialist, i.e. Marxist, line and will end up, consciously or unconsciously, supporting one or the other imperialist camp as a ‘lesser evil’.”<sup>16</sup>*

The failure of the PTS/FT to recognize the imperialist character of Russia and its refusal to defend the Ukraine is a very concrete confirmation of our statement.<sup>17</sup> The wrong understanding of Russia's class character provides the theoretical basis for its opposition to workers sanctions against the imperialist aggressor and, at the same time, for its advocacy of such sanctions against the Ukraine.

Finally, we want to note that the refusal of the PTS/FT to defend the Ukraine against the Russian invasion reflects a serious and dangerous shift to the right of its leadership. We think such a treacherous position would have been impossible in the earlier days of this organization. It is worth reminding that we did – in the predecessor organization of the RCIT – issue joint statements with the PTS/FT on wars which did bear important similarities with the current conflict. For this we refer readers to a joint statement on the Russian war in Chechnya (1996)<sup>18</sup> and another one on the U.S. war against Afghanistan in 2001.<sup>19</sup> True, this was a long-time ago – when gaining positions in the parliament did not play a role in the strategic considerations of the comrades!

We strongly hope that the PTS/FT returns to such an anti-imperialist and internationalist program!

### Footnotes

1 We refer readers to a special page on our website where more than 40 RCIT documents on the current NATO-Russia conflict and the Ukraine War are compiled: <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/compilation-of-documents-on-nato-russia-conflict/>. The most important documents are: RCIT Manifesto: Ukraine War: A Turning Point of World Historic Significance. Socialists must combine the revolutionary defense of the Ukraine against Putin's invasion with the internationalist struggle against Russian as well as NATO and EU imperialism, 1 March 2022, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/manifesto-ukraine-war-a-turning-point-of-world-historic-significance/>; RCIT: Ukraine War: An Action Program for Authentic Socialists, 1 March 2022, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/ukraine-war-an-action-program-for-authentic-socialists/>; Medina Gunić: A new turning point in Russia's invasion of the Ukraine, 25 February 2022, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/a-new-turning-point-in-russia-s-invasion-of-the-ukraine/>; RCIT: Down with Putin's Imperialist War against the Ukraine! Neither Russia nor NATO - against all imperialist powers! For an independent popular struggle to defend the Ukraine! For a workers government to defeat the Russian invaders! No to imperialist sanctions! For an independent socialist Ukraine! 24 February 2022, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/down-with-putin-s-imperialist-war-against-the-ukraine/>; see also our joint statement with UIT-CI and LIT-CI, <https://www.thecommunists.net/rcit/joint-statement-on-ukraine-war-13-3-2022/>

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