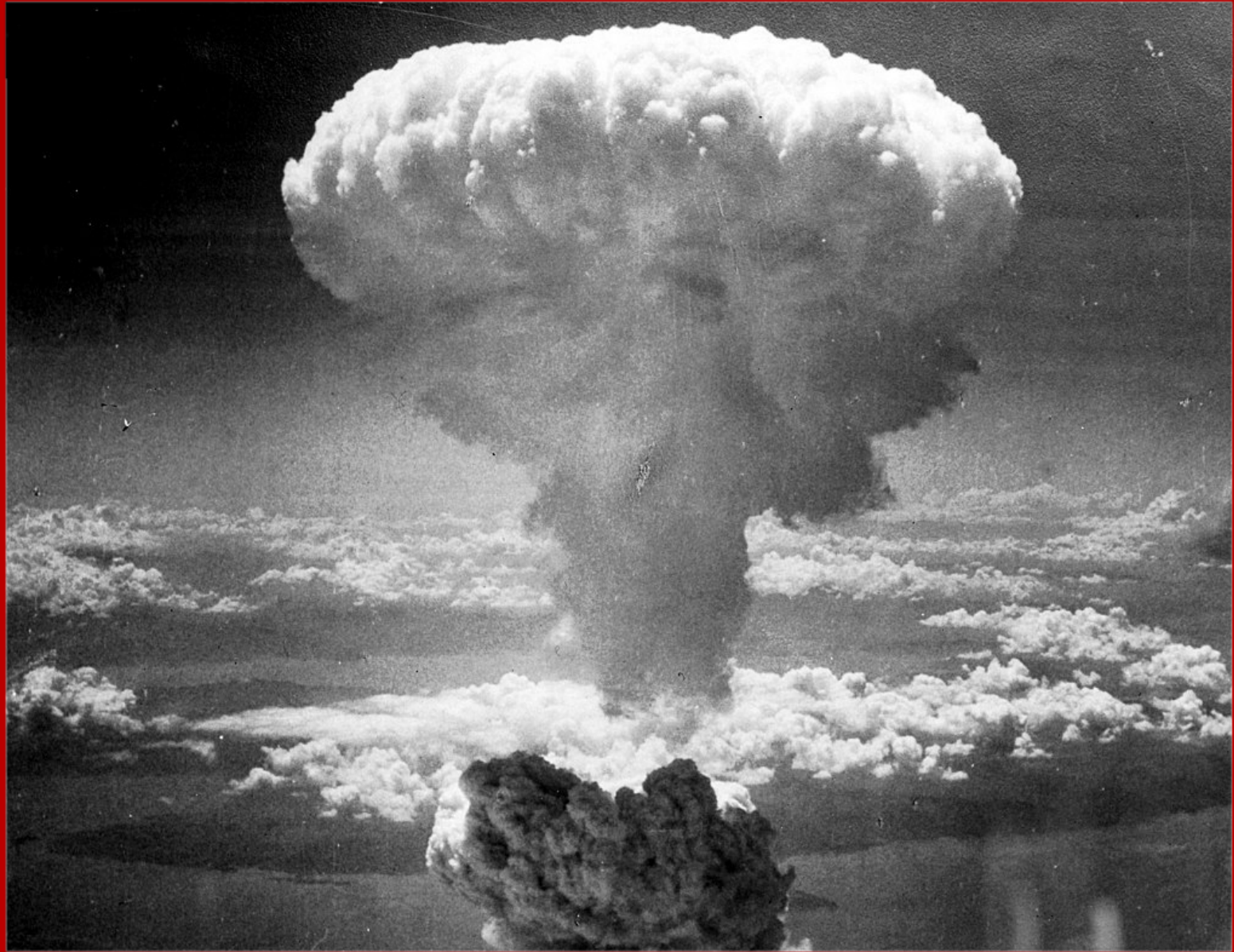




# REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNISM

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November 2022

## World Situation: A Peculiar and Explosive Combination

Food and Energy Crisis \* The G-7 Oil Price Cap & Cold War

Revolutionary Tactics against Putin's Mobilisation

## English-Language Theoretical Review of the Revolutionary Communist International Tendency (RCIT), New Series No.81, November 2022

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# A Peculiar and Explosive Combination

## Notes on the current world situation

By Michael Pröbsting, International Secretary of the Revolutionary Communist International Tendency (RCIT), 6 October 2022

The following is not a comprehensive world perspective document but rather some brief notes about, what seems to us to be, a peculiar feature of the current world situation.<sup>1</sup> Let us get directly to the point.

The extraordinary character of the current world situation is that it *combines several crises*. The capitalist world economy is facing its worst depression since the 1930s. At the same time, the global political order is in a process of decomposition. These developments go hand in hand with wars and looming political explosions. While all these processes have their own laws and dynamics, they influence each other and deepen a *crisis of comprehensive political and economic character*.

### The current Great Depression and its difference to 2008/09

As we have analysed these individual developments in detail elsewhere, we will limit ourselves to a short summary. The capitalist world economy entered a period of Great Depression in late 2019. After a severe first slump which lasted until the second half of 2020, and a subsequent short-lived recovery, the global market began to enter a second slump at the end of 2021. This crisis process is deepening now into a kind of recession which might dwarf the notorious years of 1929-33.<sup>2</sup>

The following is peculiar about the current recession – if we compare it with the crisis of 2008/09. First, the *monopoly bourgeoisie is in a much weaker position to counteract*. It is weaker in so far as:

a) it has much smaller financial reserves given that the

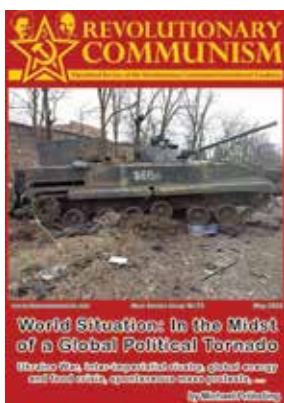
level of indebtedness is substantially higher than it was in 2007; global debt, for example, stood at 256% of GDP in 2020, compared with “only” 195% in 2007.<sup>3</sup>

b) China – the world’s second-largest economy – was in a much better position in 2008/09 with high growth rates while now it is in actual recession (e.g. China’s industrial production, by volumes, declined by -7.2% in the second quarter).<sup>4</sup> Hence, Beijing was able to help the world economy to avoid the worst in 2008/09 – this time it can not.

However, the even more important difference to the last recession is that this time it goes hand in hand with the *most dramatic crisis of the world political order since 1945*. As we explained in a number of documents, the decline of U.S. imperialism – the long-time hegemon – and of the Western powers in general, and the parallel rise of new Great Powers (most importantly China and Russia), constitutes a key feature of current historic period.<sup>5</sup>

Such crisis of the world political order has direct and indirect consequences for the economic development. The rivalry between the Great Powers makes a coordinated response to the recession – as it happened to a certain degree in 2008 – impossible. Just watch the desperate policy hiking of interest rates by central banks and the extreme fluctuations in the currency exchange rates currently taking place.

Worse, the escalating policy of mutual sanctions between the Western and Eastern imperialists has dramatic repercussions for the global production as well as trade as it provokes additional disruptions and dysfunctions in nearly all sectors – from computer chips to food and energy.



## 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

### Heading towards a world revolutionary situation?

The crisis of the world political order manifests itself in wars – most importantly the Ukraine War since 24 February.<sup>6</sup> However, other military confrontations did also take place in the last months (e.g. the clashes between Armenian and Azerbaijan,<sup>7</sup> between Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, the revival of the Ethiopian civil war<sup>8</sup>); add to this threats of war (e.g. the conflict between Greece<sup>9</sup> and Türkiye).<sup>10</sup>

The acceleration of inter-imperialist rivalry and the militarisation of world politics inevitable increases the danger of a war between the Great Powers. We have seen such sabre-rattling during the latest Taiwan Strait crisis in August<sup>11</sup> and, more importantly, the current threats with nuclear war as a result of Russia's humiliating defeats in the Ukraine War.<sup>12</sup>

It is self-explaining that even a "limited" use of nuclear weapons in one region would have devastating and long-term consequences for the world political situation as well as for the global economy. And it would, among others, provoke even more wars and civil wars.

In our view, there exists also another important difference to the last recession 2008/09. A delayed political consequence of this crisis was the process of Arab Revolution which began in early 2011 and which was mostly limited to this region.<sup>13</sup> This time, in contrast, the political repercussions of the Great Depression started both immediately as well as globally – the world-wide wave of popular uprisings in the second half of 2019. Other major political upheavals followed – among these the Black Live Matters uprising in the U.S. in summer 2020,<sup>14</sup> the #End-SARS protests in Nigeria,<sup>15</sup> the mass protests against the authoritarian policy of the COVID Counterrevolution,<sup>16</sup> the popular uprising and subsequent civil war against the military coup in Burma/Myanmar,<sup>17</sup> or the current uprising in Iran.<sup>18</sup>

It seems to us that the combination of the above-mentioned features of the world crisis will result in major political explosions not only in semi-colonial countries in the Global South but also in the centres of imperialist powers. The humiliating defeats of the Russian army, the consequential divisions within the elite in Moscow, the mass protests in North Caucasus and other regions against the "partial mobilisation", etc. – all this are indicators of an approaching storm which could provoke a revolutionary situation and the downfall of the Putin regime.<sup>19</sup>

Likewise, Europe – facing a dramatic energy crisis, a cold winter and deep social divisions – could experience mass upheavals and even revolutionary crisis.<sup>20</sup> The U.S. too is marked by deep social and political divisions. And the Xi regime in China could also face dramatic events given the worst economic crisis since the "Cultural Revolution" in the last 1960s, the draconic Lockdown policy ("Zero-COVID") and the accelerating tensions with the American rival.

Add to all this the likely revolutionary explosions in various countries of the Global South.

In other words, the ruling class *on all continents* is sitting on an explosive volcano. Hence, there are strong indications that we are heading towards a truly *world revolutionary situation*.

### On the tasks of socialists

Clearly, such explosive developments have important consequences for the tasks of revolutionaries. At this point we have to limit ourselves to outline these only in a few notes.

1) First and foremost, it is crucial to have a correct analysis of the world situation. This includes, among others, that socialists must recognize the class character of the Great Powers (i.e. understanding that not only the Western powers are imperialist but also China and Russia). This puts the RCIT and all authentic revolutionaries in stark contrast to the social-imperialist lackeys and semi-lackeys of Putin and Xi as well as those who are confused on this issue and refuse to take a clear position. From this follows that it is a condition *sine qua non* that socialists must oppose *all* imperialist Great Powers on the basis of the program of revolutionary defeatism.<sup>21</sup>

2) Likewise, one can not be a socialist without understanding what is a revolution deserving support, and what is a counterrevolution which must be combated by any means necessary. We remind, as an example, to the numerous Putinistas and abstentionists who shamefully denounced the Arab Revolution soon after its beginning as a "*reactionary struggle*" or "*colour revolution*"; or take those – like the Stalinists and Alan Woods' IMT – who hailed the military coup of General Sisi in Egypt in July 2013. The same holds true for the Ukraine War today where many "socialists" refuse supporting the just war of national defence of the Ukrainian people (which, of course, has to be combined with intransigent opposition against Russian as well as NATO imperialism).

3) It is an axiom for revolutionaries that the workers vanguard has to utilise every crisis which has been provoked by the political, economic and military contradictions of the capitalist system in order to advance the liberation struggle of the working class and the oppressed. Lenin once noted, in the light of World War I: "*The essential thing is to utilise the crisis for revolutionary propaganda and to prepare for revolutionary action.*"<sup>22</sup> This is no less true today! Hence, we have nothing but contempt for those demoralised ex-Marxists – overpopulating the ranks of reformism and centrism – who whine about the burden of the revolutionary struggle and who use the looming dangers of war and barbarism as a pretext ... to withdraw from the battlefield. Let's be clear: the sharper, the more explosive the political, economic and military contradictions are between the classes, the more likely are not only wars and counterrevolutions but also – if not necessarily immediately – social explosions and revolutionary opportunities. This is what revolutionaries have to prepare for – politically and practically.

4) Revolutionaries have to combat the influence of opportunist ideologists, social-imperialist lackeys, and abstentionists from the liberation struggle, within the workers vanguard. Without pushing back such demoralising and confusing influence, it is impossible to win over the best elements of the socialist activists.

5) It is equally crucial for revolutionaries not only "*to interpretate the world but also to change it*" – to paraphrase the famous words of Karl Marx in his *Theses on Feuerbach*. This means to intervene wherever possible in mass struggles and to consolidate and deepen roots within the working

class and the oppressed. Revolutionaries are condemned to become sectarians if they remain isolated from the class struggle and the masses.

6) Such intervention in the class struggle, such “fusion” with the masses, is only possible if revolutionaries are completely free of all forms of aristocratic prejudices against the “rough” masses. Experience of the past decade has demonstrated that it happens again and again that it is not necessarily the “politically educated” sectors which join mass struggles first but rather the less “educated”, less organised parts of the working class and oppressed which start popular uprisings. Authentic revolutionaries take the class struggle as it is and don’t measure it based on how it “should be” – according to pseudo-Marxist dogmas.

7) Finally, the RCIT and all authentic revolutionaries have to work towards rapprochement and, if possible, unity of different groups and organisations. There is no time for conservative routinism – this is the time for bold initiatives and courageous steps forward! Mistakes can be made but there is no reason to fear such; Marxists are not afraid of making mistakes – they only fear to be bad revolutionaries by missing opportunities in the class struggle and by refusing to learn from mistakes! However, such a regroupment process must take place on the basis of principled agreement on the main tasks of the international class struggle – rather than on abstract phrases (a la “for socialism” or “for Trotsky’s transitional program”).

We do not know, and we can not know, what the coming months and years will bring. But there is no doubt that we are living in a historic moment, in a literally sense, and that it is in such times that all political forces are tested. The RCIT has a long record of theory and practice in the class struggle on the basis of an internationalist, anti-imperialist and revolutionary program. We look forward to starting close collaboration with other socialists in order to overcome the deep crisis of leadership so that we can jointly build a *Revolutionary World Party!* Comrades, brothers and sisters: do not hesitate – act now, act decisively!

## Footnotes

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5 The RCIT has published a number of studies on the accelerating rivalry between the Great Powers and the emergence of China and Russia as new imperialist states. Many of these are compiled on these sub-pages on our website: <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/>. In particular we want to refer to the 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/>

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than 120 RCIT documents on the Ukraine War and the current NATO-Russia conflict are compiled: <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/compilation-of-documents-on-nato-russia-conflict/>.

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13 The RCIT has published numerous documents on the Arab Revolution which can be read at: <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/>

14 The RCIT has published a number of documents on the popular uprising in the U.S. which are compiled on a special sub-page on our website: <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/north-america/articles-on-uprising-after-murder-of-george-floyd/>.

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16 The RCIT has analyzed the COVID-19 counterrevolution extensively since its beginning. Starting from 2 February 2020 we have published about 100 documents which are compiled at a special sub-page on our website: <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/collection-of-articles-on-the-2019-corona-virus/>. See also our book by Michael Pröbsting: *The COVID-19 Global Counterrevolution: What It Is and How to Fight It. A Marxist analysis and strategy for the revolutionary struggle*, RCIT Books, April 2020, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/the-covid-19-global-counterrevolution/>.

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# Food and Energy Crisis: For a Strategy for Popular Uprising

## Socialists need to intervene in the mass struggles with an internationalist, anti-imperialist and revolutionary program

By Michael Pröbsting, *International Secretary of the Revolutionary Communist International Tendency (RCIT)*, 15.09.2022

There are moments when one can breathe the explosive air of evolving world history. No doubt, the turbulent and dramatic period which we are currently experiencing, is such a moment!

We are facing a comprehensive and unprecedented economic, social and political crisis all over the world. It combines economic depression, dramatically rising living costs, devastating wars, militarist chauvinism, and climate change.

The food and energy crisis are a key issue of the current period. The *Revolutionary Communist International Tendency* (RCIT) has therefore published a program of action dealing with this issue. In this manifesto, we summarise the key demands and tactics which we consider as urgent for the looming mass struggle. In the present article we will elaborate in more detail on a few issues.<sup>1</sup>

### On the causes of the food and energy crisis

The starting point of our strategy is the recognition of the peculiar nature of the current phase in the world situation. The food and energy crisis does not exist in isolation but is rather closely related with the Ukraine War and the acceleration of the Great Power rivalry. However, it is important to understand the concrete relationship between these factors.

High inflation is ultimately caused by the deep crisis of the capitalist world economy which started in late 2019.<sup>2</sup> In such periods full of contradictions, the relationship between money, prices and commodities is thoroughly unstable and distorted.

The economic depression was undoubtedly exacerbated by important political developments. These factors were, first, the draconic lockdown policy in most countries under the pretext of the pandemic – a politically motivated program of chauvinist state bonapartism which expanded the powers of the ruling class, and which limited democratic rights in an unprecedented degree.<sup>3</sup>

The second factor was the acceleration of the Great Power rivalry – most importantly between the U.S. and China. These developments resulted in the disruption both of production as well as trade which created a shortage of commodities.

As a result, prices of major commodities rose already dramatically long before the beginning of the Ukraine War. In late 2021, prices were about 40-60% higher than in 2019. (See Figure in the Appendix).

These developments were followed by another major political event which has driven up prices even more: the Ukraine War and the further acceleration of the Great Power rivalry. Putin's invasion and Russia's control of the Black Sea had devastating consequences for the Ukraine which is a major agricultural producer (16% of global grain exports). Furthermore, unprecedented Western sanctions against Russia resulted in disrupting resp. driving up of prices of Russian exports – one of the world's most impor-

tant producer and exporter of raw materials (e.g. oil, gas, fertiliser, grain etc.).<sup>4</sup>

In summary, the food and energy crisis are ultimately caused by the depression of the capitalist world economy. However, it has been exacerbated by political events – the Lockdown policy, the Ukraine War and the inter-imperialist rivalry.

### Self-organisation and united front tactic

Socialists need to recognise the extraordinary gap between the outrage of the masses about the dramatically rising living costs, on one hand, and the crisis of leadership. As a matter of fact, the official leadership of the trade unions and other workers organisations are extremely reluctant to organise defensive battles. At best, the bureaucrats limit themselves to organise one-day strikes or demonstrations.<sup>5</sup>

However, it is evident that such limited protest activities can neither make the bosses accept a massive rise in payment nor can it force the capitalist governments to impose meaningful price caps. For this we need much more radical actions!

This is why socialists have to work towards the creation of committees of action in the workplaces and neighbourhoods. Such committees – which should integrate all activists as a first step and broader masses as a second step – can serve as pressure groups to force the bureaucrats to organise more radical actions than they are inclined to.

If the bureaucrats refuse to fight to the extent necessary (which can be taken for granted), such committees of action should take the struggle into their own hands. They should elect delegates and create a national coordination body.

However, as long as such committees do not exist or are not strong enough, socialists need to apply the united front tactic and call the existing leadership of the workers and popular organisations to organise the struggle against the deteriorating living conditions.<sup>6</sup>

### Linking with political issues: the Ukraine War and Great Power rivalry

As we explained above, the Ukraine War and the acceleration of the Great Power rivalry are important factors which have worsened the food and energy crisis. The RCIT therefore opposes the typical approach of reformist and centrist forces who strive to limit the struggle to economic demands only. Surely, these opportunists will argue that it would be pragmatically better to ignore political slogans since there are huge differences on such issues while we can all agree on economic demands.

Such an argument is false and faint-hearted! First, it is impossible to ignore these political issues since they play a dominating role in the evolution of the food and energy crisis as well as in public opinion. Furthermore, the bosses

and the governments will use these events as excuse for their passivity on the food and energy crisis. They will say that they “understand our concern” but “it is not in their hands” since these are global issues beyond their sphere of influence. Western governments will also claim hypocritically that “we” (i.e. the popular masses) must be prepared to pay a price for solidarity with the Ukraine.<sup>7</sup>

Against this we have to explain that this is not true – the energy corporations make much profit and the governments in the EU are active participants in the sanctions policy. We tell the bosses and governments: you gain from the crisis, you are co-responsible for it – you have to pay for it!

What is, however, true is that the food and energy crisis is an international issue, and it must be solved on a global scale. Hence, it is urgent that the trade unions and other mass organisations organise an international struggle.

Finally, one should have no illusions. The main reason why the reformist bureaucrats and centrist muddleheads want to limit the struggle to economic demands is because they want to hide their political positions on the Ukraine War and the Great Power rivalry. As a matter of fact, most of them sympathise either with Russian<sup>8</sup> and Chinese<sup>9</sup> or with Western imperialism.<sup>10</sup>

This makes it all the more urgent that socialists intervene strongly with a consistent internationalist and anti-imperialist program. This means, as the RCIT has elaborated in its documents, to take a clear stance in defence of the Ukraine and for the defeat of Putin’s invasion. At the same time, socialists must oppose not only Russian but also Western imperialism.<sup>11</sup> This means, among others, that

socialists must not lend any support to Western sanctions (or such of any other Great Power).<sup>12</sup>

### On the strategy of popular uprising

Finally, socialists must take into account the specific nature of the kind of attacks and the context in which the current crisis evolves. We are in a period of capitalist decay. We face huge attacks which have a global character. Any serious struggle – even only for the defence of our living conditions – will face determined resistance by the ruling class. Such developments will provoke, rather sooner than later, the question of power. Who runs the society, who controls the economic wealth and the state apparatus?

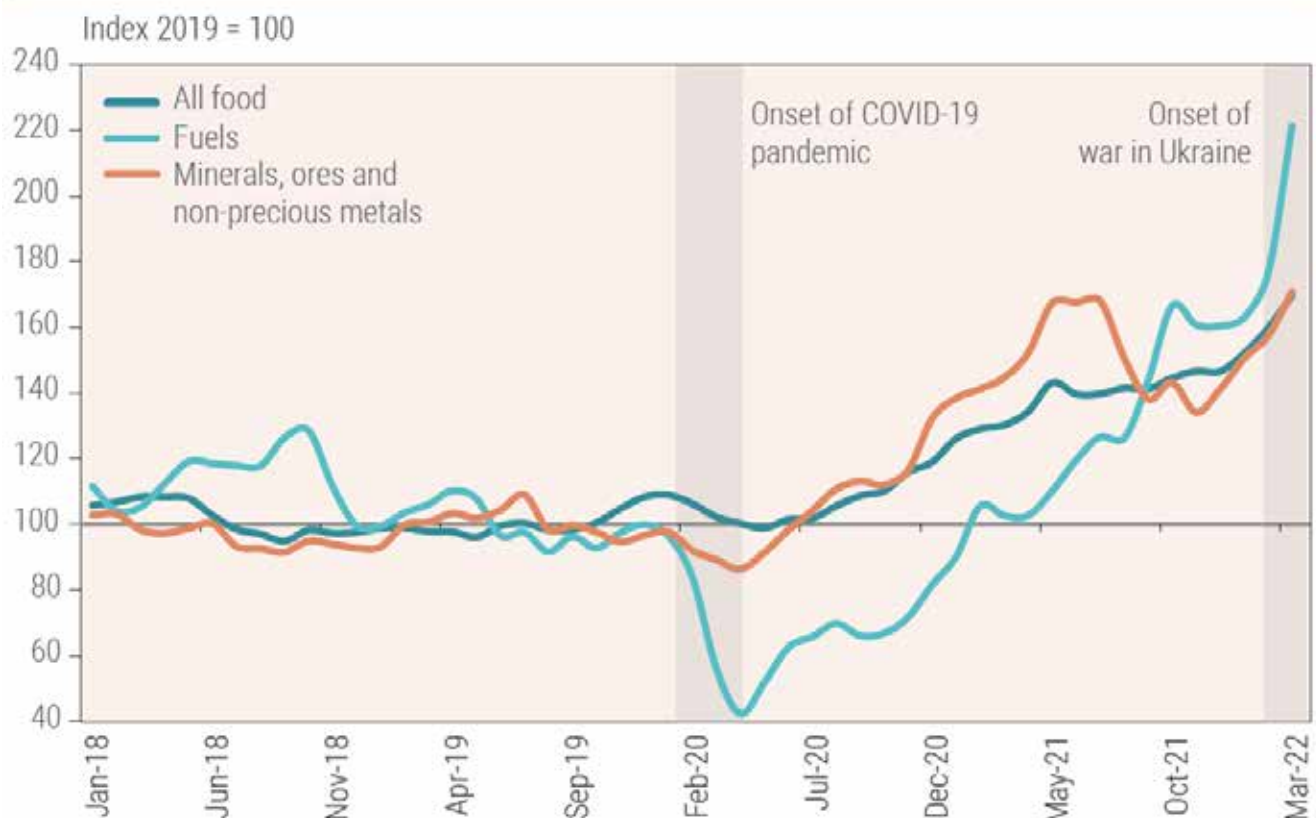
The RCIT considers it as urgent that socialists do not avoid such questions but give a clear answer to this challenge. We need to explain that, indeed, it is necessary to overthrow the bosses and their governments! The workers and oppressed must take power in their own hands!

This is why the struggle against the food and energy crisis must be combined with a revolutionary perspective. This means, most importantly, the organising of a general strike and the preparation of a popular uprising.

Such an uprising must not be misunderstood as a putsch by a small minority. No, such nonsense would be the high road to ruin! An uprising can only succeed if it has the support of the majority of the working class and the popular masses. Hence, we advocate the strategy of popular uprising not because we call for an ultraleft adventure. But socialists need to explain patiently to workers that in order to overcome the decay of the society it is necessary to take

Figure: Major Commodity Prices, January 2018 to March 2022<sup>13</sup>

### Major commodity prices, January 2018 to March 2022



power – by direct action and not via election (the parliament by its very nature as an aloof and corrupted institution is no instrument for working-class power).

No collective action can win without organisation. No uprising, no socialist revolution can win without organisation. And without organisation, no program for socialist transformation can be spread and neither is it possible to unite supporters of such a program for collective work!

Hence, the creation of such an organisation – a party for socialist revolution on a national as well as international scale – is the most important task of socialists today. This is why the RCIT calls all socialists, who agree with the above-outlined strategy, to join forces!

## Footnotes

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# Books of the RCIT

## Michael Pröbsting: *Marxism and the United Front Tactic Today*

### *The Struggle for Proletarian Hegemony in the Liberation Movement and the United Front Tactic Today.*

The RCIT is proud to announce the publication of a new English-language book – *MARXISM AND THE UNITED FRONT TACTIC TODAY*. The book's subtitle is: *The Struggle for Proletarian Hegemony in the Liberation Movement and the United Front Tactic Today*. On the Application of the Marxist United Front Tactic in Semi-Colonial and Imperialist Countries in the Present Period. It contains eight chapters plus an appendix (172 pages) and includes 9 tables and 5 figures. The author of the book is Michael Pröbsting who serves as the International Secretary of the RCIT.

The following paragraphs are the back cover text of the book which give an overview of its content.

The united front tactic is a crucial instrument for revolutionaries under today's circumstances in which the mass organizations of the working class and the oppressed are dominated by social democratic, Stalinist and petty-bourgeois-populist forces.

The purpose of this document is both to summarize the main ideas of the Marxist united front tactic while at the same time explaining its development and modification which have become necessary due to political changes which have transpired in the

working class liberation movement since the tactic's original formulation.

In this book we initially summarize the main characteristics of the united front tactic and elaborate the approach of the Marxist classics to this issue. We then outline important social developments in the working class and the popular masses as well as in their political formations in recent decades. From there we will discuss how the united front tactic should be applied in light of a number of new developments (the rise of petty-bourgeois populist parties, the decline of the classic reformist parties, the role of national minorities and migrants in imperialist countries, etc.). The eight chapters of the book are accompanied by nine tables and five figures.



# The G-7 Oil Price Cap: A New Stage in the Great Power Rivalry

## Cold War between Western powers and their Eastern rivals points towards escalation

By Michael Pröbsting, International Secretary of the Revolutionary Communist International Tendency (RCIT), 7.9.2022

On 2 September the G-7 states announced that they agreed on a plan to impose a set price on Russian oil. The details are expected to be ironed out before 5<sup>th</sup> December when EU sanctions on seaborne imports of Russian crude kick in. In addition, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said on 7 September that the EU should also set a price cap on Russian natural gas.<sup>1</sup>

The G-7 is comprised of the leading Western imperialist powers – the U.S., Canada, France, Germany, Italy, the U.K. and Japan. They justify imposing such a price cap by saying that Russia makes huge profit from selling oil since it started its invasion of the Ukraine. As the EU's Energy Commissioner Kadri Simson said, *"it is unfair to pay excess revenues to Russia."*<sup>2</sup>

Indeed, according to latest calculations, Russia earned €158 billion in revenue from fossil fuel exports in the first six months of the war. This exceeds Moscow's estimated military expenditures of approximately €100 billion in the same period.<sup>3</sup>

True, this calculation leaves out the financial and economic losses of Russia due to Western sanctions. The seizure by the West of half of Russia's currency reserves alone meant a loss of about \$300 billion. (Of course, the Ukraine has suffered much worse, both in human as well as in economic terms.) Nevertheless, the figures demonstrate that the expectations of Western powers to substantially weaken Russia have basically failed. As it is well known, leading representatives of the U.S. and the EU declared shortly after the beginning of the war that their sanctions would ruin Russia within a short period of time. For example, France's economy minister Bruno Le Maire boasted on 1 March: *"We're going to cause the Russian economy to collapse ... The European Union is discovering its power."*<sup>4</sup>

Instead, the EU is discovering not only that it has failed to push Moscow over the brink but also, and even worse, that it is still highly dependent on energy imports from Russia. More than half of Russia's above-mentioned revenue from fossil fuel exports since 24 February (54%) is paid by EU itself!

### The policy of hypocrisy

One can not fail to recognise the gigantic hypocrisy of leading representatives of Western imperialism. First, nobody forces the EU to import Russian energy! If the Western leaders are really so outraged about Putin's imperialist aggression against the Ukraine, why do they continue to import Russian fossil fuel and pay Putin so much money?!

Second, while Washington and Brussels are outraged about Putin's war, they don't utter a word of protest against the barbarous war of aggression which Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates are waging against Yemen since 2015 (with weapons provided by the U.S. and European powers). This war has resulted in the death of about 400,000 people and starvation of many millions! Not only this, but the EU tries to replace Russian oil with imports ... from these murderous Gulf monarchies which

are, furthermore, hardly more democratic than Putin's regime!

Third, who are the Western powers to denounce Putin for his war crimes?! They themselves have waged long-term wars and occupations in Iraq and Afghanistan in the past decades resulting in death and destruction no less than Putin is causing today in the Ukraine. The conflict between NATO and Russia is a conflict between two serial killers with no moral right to accuse the other!

Finally, it is worth noting the irony of the Western attempts to regulate the energy price. As is well known, Washington, London and Berlin were champions of the "free market" for decades. Again and again, they denounced any regulation of the market and criticised other states for manipulating prices. In reality, Western imperialism praised the laws of "free" supply and demand only as long as ... Western corporations dominated the world market – a dominance which secured them *"excess revenues"*. To their bad luck, the Western hegemony has ended as new imperialist powers have emerged, Russia and – more importantly – China. Now, as the West can no longer dictate the rules, they want to change these in their favour!

So, when a leading representative of the EU laments that *"it is unfair to pay excess revenues to Russia,"* one can only laugh or shrug shoulders about such hypocritical nonsense.

### A desperate attempt of Western imperialism to regain hegemony

In reality, the real meaning of the conflict about Russian energy prices can not be found in the sphere of moral or war crimes. The G-7 plan to impose an oil price cap on Russian exports represents a desperate attempt of Washington and Brussels to avoid the failure of its sanctions war against Russia (and its most important ally, China).

As we pointed out in other works, the course of the Western sanctions policy has already demonstrated that the period of their hegemony is over.<sup>5</sup> Despite many efforts, the U.S. and the EU failed to pressurise successfully non-Western states to follow its policy of sanctions against Russia. As a result, Moscow has been able to replace Western buyers of its fuel exports by others – like China, India and the United Arab Emirates. China – the most important imperialist rival of the U.S. – has become the destination No. 1 of Russian fossil fuel exports and total trade between the two countries has surged by 31.4% year-on-year from January to August to \$117.2 billion in the dollar terms.<sup>6</sup> India has also dramatically increased its purchases of Russian crude: in the period April-June of this year it soared to 682,000 bpd from just 22,500 bpd in the same period in 2021, making Moscow India's second largest oil supplier after Iraq.<sup>7</sup> It is, by the way, not without irony that India mixes a large amount of its oil imported from Russia with imports from other countries in order to resell it ... to European buyers!

In fact, it is extremely difficult to subjugate Russia on the

global energy market since it is the world's leading exporter, accounting for 17% and 12% of global output of gas resp. oil.<sup>8</sup> Moscow has a particular dominating position in the EU energy market where it supplies 20% of coal, 25% of crude oil and petroleum products and 37% of natural gas.<sup>9</sup>

In response to the G-7's plan of an oil price cap, Moscow responded already by saying that it will not sell oil to nations that impose such a price limit. Speaking at the 7th *Eastern Economic Forum* held in Vladivostok (Russia), President Putin warned: *"If they try to implement this dumb decision, it will entail nothing good for those who will make it. Will they make political decisions contradicting contracts? In that case, we will just halt supplies if it contradicts our economic interests. We won't supply any gas, oil, diesel oil or coal."*<sup>10</sup>

Tellingly, in the wake of the G-7 announcement, Russia's state-owned energy giant Gazprom said it would not restart flows via the Nord Stream 1 pipeline due to technical issues, blaming Western sanctions for such problems. (As a result, European gas prices jumped more than 25%.)

Hence, the Western imperialists can only impose its price cap if they succeed in two things. First, they have to convince China and India – the most important non-Western purchaser of Russian energy – to support such a plan. And, secondly, they must push other crucial exporters of oil and gas – most importantly the Gulf states – to support such a policy by substantially increasing their exports in order to replace Russian commodities.

Neither the one nor the other is likely to succeed. China and India buy Russian energy at a substantial discount to the global price (the Brent / Urals differentials increased from \$1-5 per barrel in February to \$32-35 per barrel in June-July). They have established privileged relations with Russia. Furthermore, as mentioned above, India makes a huge profit from reselling its imported Russian oil to Western buyers. Why on earth should they now undermine their close and beneficial relationship with Russia in order to help Washington and Brussels? Because of love for "Western values"?! This is particularly true for China which is in a Cold War with the U.S. facing a series of hostile economic sanctions?!

It is therefore hardly surprising that the Stalinist-capitalist regime in Beijing made already clear that it will not support the G-7 oil price cap.<sup>11</sup>

And while India has not formally responded to the Western demands, it would be surprising if they give in. A few days ago, Indian Petroleum Minister Shri Hardeep Singh Puri replied diplomatically to questions of journalists, saying that *"We will look at it very carefully."* However, he made clear that India's decision will be determined by its national interests and not by Western wishes. *"I said the Europeans buy more in one afternoon than I do in a quarter. I'd be surprised if that is not the condition still. But yes we will buy from Russia, we will buy from wherever."* Asked whether he had a moral conflict with buying Russian oil amid the Kremlin's onslaught in Ukraine, Puri replied: *"No, there's no conflict. I have a moral duty to my consumer. Do I as a democratically elected government want a situation where the petrol pump runs dry? Look at what is happening in countries around India."*<sup>12</sup>

Neither are the OPEC states – with the Gulf states playing a dominating role – willing to give up their extra revenues which they have made since the beginning of the

war with the oil prices exploding. During his visit to Saudi Arabia in July, U.S. President Joe Biden demanded that the Gulf states substantially increase their exports. This demand was rebuffed when the OPEC+ – this is the alliance of OPEC and non-OPEC partners with Saudi Arabia and Russia as the most important members – agreed to raise oil output by just 100,000 barrels per day. Now, after the G-7 announced their plan for an oil price cap, the OPEC+ decided ... to cut production targets by about 100,000 barrels per day from October!<sup>13</sup> This is nothing but the middle finger in the language of oil diplomacy.

In short, the attempts of Western imperialism to regain its hegemony – at least in the global energy market – is not likely to succeed.

### *"A mockery of West's intervention in global oil market"*

Such an interpretation is shared by bourgeois analysts. Chris Weafer, a well-known observer of Russian trade and finance, commented: *"The main impact of the G7 oil price cap will be to further shift economic competitiveness from Europe to India, Turkey, China and other Asian states. Russia will not sell oil to so-called unfriendly western nations but will continue to sell to Asian nations at a discount to the global price. (...) OPEC has already said it will not add enough extra oil to compensate. So the price of oil will rise this winter and Russian revenue will not be badly hit because of sales to Asian buyers. This move will not help bring down global inflation as the price of oil will inevitably rise once Russian barrels are removed from Europe and Moscow will not sell indiscriminately to the global market. It will sell only to so-called friendly nations and all others (G7, EU, etc.) will pay the full market price. Neither OPEC nor US producers will cut their price just because Russia is cutting deals with India, China, Turkey and other Asian buyers."*<sup>14</sup>

Another analyst, Ben Aris, wrote the following analysis. *"Now [Russia] has launched its Phase 2 of its economic war against Europe by stopping the gas flows through Nord Stream 1 completely in response to the G7 threat to impose an oil price cap scheme. (...) Gazprom's announcement came after the G7 finance ministers said they were going ahead with the oil price cap scheme that is designed to cut the Kremlin off from its oil export tax revenues, but Russia has already said that it will simply stop exporting to anyone that attempts to implement the scheme. Basically it's now a game of chicken: the West is banking on the hope that Russia will need the money and so continue to export oil even at reduced prices; and Russia is banking on the hope that if it cuts off European oil exports that will cause a global shortage and send oil prices into the stratosphere, thus massive exacerbating the energy crisis that is already tearing into European economies. Plus Russia seems pretty confident that the oil price cap scheme can't be made to work because of all the leakages. Who can take the most pain? At this point my money is on Russian President Vladimir Putin as Russians do pain like no one else."*<sup>15</sup>

Aris adds that the escalation of the Cold War since 24 February has become very costly for imperialist Europe and that it is very doubtful how long these governments will be able to continue the conflict on this level of escalation. *"One aspect of this whole story that is underreported is just how expensive this war is proving to be. German Chancellor Olaf Scholz announced a new €65bn relief package on Saturday – double the total amount of two previous packages – and Italy's economic minister also said Rome has already spent €54bn and*

that will reach €100bn by the end of this year. The total cost to Europe so far is on the order of €300bn but that will clearly hit half a trillion by Christmas and maybe €1 trillion by the end of the heating season? (...) European governments have yet to put themselves on a war footing and prepare their populations for two years of hardship. Scholz's new relief package is symptomatic of the general approach so far: throw money at the crisis to try and keep life as usual going, but the question is if Europe can afford it and how committed is the EU population to actually suffer for the sake of Ukraine? Call me cynical, but I don't think they are committed enough to wreck their own economies for the sake of a country that is a member of neither Nato nor the EU."

And the *Global Times* – the English-language mouthpiece of the Stalinist-capitalist regime in Beijing – characterises the decision of the OPEC+ to cut their oil production as making "mockery of West's intervention in global oil market". They add: "[T]he OPEC+ production cut, which came just days after the Group of Seven, or G7, agreed to impose a price cap on Russian oil exports, is an unmistakable sign of the oil-producing countries' opposition to the West's geopolitical gambits at the expense of these countries as well as global markets. (...) For starters, Russia has made it clear that it will not sell any oil to countries that participate in the oil cap plan. Second, China and India, the two largest buyers of Russian oil, are also unlikely to support G7's price cap plan in that such a move goes against their stance on sanctions against Russia. (...) It is therefore impossible for the US and Europe to ask other countries to sacrifice their own interests to align with their geopolitical strategic goals." <sup>16</sup>

The above-quoted Western analysts are unquestionably no sympathisers of the reactionary Putin regime. But they are well-informed observers and their doubts about the chances of success of the G-7 plan reflect an increasing scepticism if the Western powers can win the Cold War. In contrast, *Global Times*, of course, sympathises with Putin since Russia is China's closest imperialist ally (Xi Jinping and Vladimir Putin symbolically announced, shortly before the beginning of the war in early February, the "friendship without limits" between the two powers). <sup>17</sup> However, their statement reflects the increasing self-confidence of the Eastern powers that they can withstand the economic pressure of their Western rivals.

### An economic Armageddon option

There are Russian analysts who propose that Putin should consider to massively escalate its economic war against the Western rivals. Ruslan Nickolov, an energy expert who worked for many years for Western as well as Russian corporations, recently published an interesting article in which he proposed a plan which we could call Putin's "economic Armageddon option". "[U]ntil now, most of the restrictive measures by Russia have been precisely retaliatory. But what if Russia decides to force things? For example, it could announce its own embargo against everyone who adheres to the oil price cap imposed on Russia. To make its response asymmetric, Russia could add a threat to stop exporting gas, fertilizers, grain, rare gases, etc. to world markets, as well as require payment in rubles for all buyers from hostile countries. And to demonstrate its determination and the effectiveness of countermeasures, Moscow may begin to reduce supplies without waiting for the introduction of new sanctions. At the same time, having seized the initiative, Russia may want to leave the

door open for a package solution on Ukraine and on the entire set of sanctions and countermeasures. The removal of the bulk of Russian barrels, tons, cubic and nanometers from global commodity markets will result in the most dramatic price surge in all affected categories. (...) Yet the biggest jolt this shockwave will send through the system will not be in the shortage of raw materials leading to a lack of power and heating and to production stoppages in core manufacturing industries. Rather, it will be a shock from a broader inflationary impact that could sway central banks to push interest rates aggressively. If the increase in rates is sharp (...), it will cause a curtailment of most corporate investment programs, a long series of bankruptcies, and glaring fiscal cuts across the entire spectrum of state, regional, and municipal budgets. The world economy will collapse into a deep recession.

Granted, if Russia does not resume its exports soon, its economy (...) will be among the hardest hit. But we must keep in mind a much higher pain threshold for society as a whole in Russia, due to its highly centralized political and economic structure, as well as the traditionally high level of stamina and perseverance of the Russian people. At some point, if Russia feels that sanctions have gone too far, it may decide to try its luck with these economic weapons of mass destruction." <sup>18</sup>

Of course, one needs to be aware that the author is a bourgeois analyst who advises the Putin regime how it best could wage its economic war against the Western rivals. It is not surprising that he is optimistic about Moscow's chances to the Western enemy. However, we consider his strategy interesting as it reflects that analysts in Russia (and the same is, of course, true for the West powers) consider the options for a dramatic escalation of the Cold War. And if we call to mind the above-quoted excerpt from Putin's speech in Vladivostok where he threatened his Western rivals to stop "supplying any gas, oil, diesel oil or coal," we see that Nickolov's proposal is no utopian speculation but a strategy which seems to be taken seriously in the Kremlin. <sup>19</sup>

### Another confirmation of Marxist analysis

The latest developments in the Cold War between Western and the Eastern imperialists are a powerful confirmation of the analysis which the RCIT and other Marxists has elaborated since a number of years. They demonstrate once more that the long-term hegemony of the U.S., Western Europe and Japan are in decline.

At the same time, the rise of China <sup>20</sup> and Russia and their ability to withstand the Western pressure confirms our analysis that they are imperialist Great Powers and that they are not – contrary to the thesis of numerous Stalinist, Bolivarian and centrist forces – "semi-colonial", "semi-peripheral" or "sub-imperialist" states. <sup>21</sup>

In other words, the current conflict about the global energy market is a struggle between imperialist robbers. Neither side defends a progressive cause. Only the struggle of oppressed peoples, facing aggression by imperialist powers, deserves support from socialists. Examples for such liberation struggles is the current war of the Ukrainian people against Putin's invasion, <sup>22</sup> of the Chechen people against the Russian occupation or of the Syrian people against the Assad tyranny and its master in Moscow. Other examples have been the struggles of the Afghan and the Iraqi people against Western occupation or that of the

Palestinian people against the Zionist Apartheid state.<sup>23</sup>

Therefore, socialists have the duty to oppose all imperialist powers – the U.S., EU and Japan as well as against Russia and China. They must take a revolutionary defeatist position, advocating intransigent class struggle opposition against each and every Great Power. The principles of working-class internationalism and anti-imperialism, which have informed the revolutionary Internationals in the past, remain fully valid today: *with the oppressed people – always, with the imperialists – never!*

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# 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 (RCIT)

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# Revolutionary Tactics in the Struggle against Putin's Mobilisation

## On some issues of the program of defeatism under the current conditions of Russia's war against the Ukraine

By Alexey Sedov, Denis Sokolov and Michael Pröbsting, Revolutionary Communist International Tendency (RCIT), 28.9.2022

Putin's mobilisation – in combination with the planned annexation of parts of the Ukraine – opens a new stage in the Ukraine War. This is particularly true when we consider its consequences for the domestic political situation in Russia. <sup>1</sup> At this place we will not repeat the RCIT's analysis of the Kremlin's decision but rather discuss some important issues which are relevant for the current tactics of revolutionaries.

Let us start by noting that this latest development demonstrates once more the character of the Ukraine War. It is an imperialist, colonial war by Russia against the Ukraine. <sup>2</sup> At the same time, it is combined with the rivalry between the Great Powers of West and East. From such a *dual character* of the conflict follows the *dual tactic* which the RCIT has advocated since the beginning of the war: *Defend the Ukraine against Putin's invasion! Against Russian and against NATO imperialism!* <sup>3</sup>

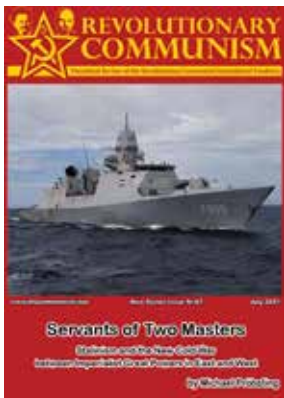
Putin's mobilisation has profound consequences for the Kremlin's warfare and, more importantly, the Russian society. It shatters the de-facto "social contract" which the Putin regime has imposed since its beginning in 1999: people should remain passive and acquiesce the policy of the Kremlin. In exchange, the regime would not meddle too much in personal lives and secure relative economic and social stability.

The Ukraine War and the acceleration of the Great Power rivalry with the draconic Western sanctions has already shattered this "model". However, while sanctions caused inconvenience, most Russians were not affected too much

until now as they were not being asked to contribute directly to the war effort. Putin's mobilisation, which shall result in the recruitment of 300,000 new soldiers (or even more), is dramatically changing the situation. It is a shock for Russia's society and its long-term consequences must not be underestimated as it massively accelerates the political contradictions.

One just needs to think about the domestic situation in the U.S. in the later 1960s during the Vietnam War when widespread opposition to the U.S. intervention skyrocketed once large numbers of draftees faced deployments to Southeast Asia. However, in contrast to Russia today, the U.S. was at that time still a rich country which experienced economic growth and increasing prosperity.

It is well-known that a reactionary, unjust war deepens the contradictions within the capitalist society. In contrast, a just war provokes stronger unity among the people – even within a capitalist society and even if the leadership has a bourgeois character. The current war strongly confirms this truth. In Russia, where the regime has waged a brutal colonial war, mass protests started already on 24 February. Now, in the light of Putin's mobilisation, these protests have taken a more radical character. In contrast, there have been no "anti-war" activities in the Ukraine – despite the fact that there has been mass mobilisation from the very first day. The reason is obvious: people know their country is in danger of colonial subjugation and they are determined to smash this aggression.



### 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**

### Spontaneous mass protests have begun

We noted in our above-mentioned statement about Putin's mobilisation that *"it is a counterrevolutionary strike of the regime which, in the long run, can open a revolutionary crisis – in particular, if the Russian army fails to quickly defeat the Ukraine."*

The events of the last days seem to confirm our prediction. Spontaneous mass protests against the mobilisation have already begun. This is particularly the case in regions populated by national minorities which have been much more affected by military recruitment than ethnically Russian regions. According to a tally by the BBC's Russian service, at least 301 soldiers from Dagestan (a predominantly Muslim province in the Caucasus) have died - the most of any Russian region and more than 10 times the number of deaths from Moscow, which has a population five times larger.<sup>4</sup>

According to calculations by ОБД-News (an independent Russian human rights group), protests occurred in at least 35 settlements on 25 September and at least 10 settlements on 26 September. Residents of Endirej, a village in Dagestan, blocked a road and violently clashed with police, provoking the latter to fire warning shots. In Mahachkala, the capital of the same province, a crowd of women gathered and chanted *"No to war!"*

Street protests took also place in another North Caucasus region, Kabardino-Balkaria. Women also protested in the Siberian city of Yakutsk, chanting *"No to genocide!"* There have been protests also in regions with Mongolian population.

Russian military enlistment centres were set on fire in Uryupinsk (Volgograd Oblast) and Ruzaevka (Mordovia Republic). Some mobilized men harmed themselves to protest the mobilization, with one Russian man setting himself on fire in Ryazan Oblast. In the Siberian city of Ust-Ilimsk, a young man walked into the enlistment office and shot the military commandant at close range.<sup>5</sup>

In addition, thousands of men of fighting age have flocked to airports and Russia's land border crossings, trying to avoid being called up.

In short, Putin's mobilization could provoke social explosions and open the road to a revolutionary situation sooner or later. Even a former speechwriter for Russian President Vladimir Putin, Abbas Gallyamov, warned that Putin is *"risking a lot by announcing mobilization, he's losing support, he's creating a pre-revolutionary situation."*<sup>6</sup>

### Consequences for revolutionary tactics

What are the implications of these developments for the tactics of revolutionaries? First and foremost, the mass protests against Putin's mobilisation strongly confirm the RCIT's characterisation of the Ukraine War as a thoroughly reactionary colonial invasion where Marxists unconditionally defend the Eastern European country. Hence, socialists in Russia continue to advocate the program of *revolutionary defeatism*. This means, as the RCIT noted in its *Manifesto*, published a few days after the beginning of the war:

*"Socialists in Russia must approach the war from the principle: "The main enemy is at home!" They should support the courageous anti-war activities and call for solidarity with the*

*Ukrainian people. The strategic goal is to utilize this war in order to weaken and eventually to overthrow the bonapartist Putin regime by a workers revolution. Therefore, socialists call Russian soldiers to turn the guns around. They work towards the transformation of the imperialist war into a revolutionary crisis of the Putin regime. They should also call for the dissolution of CSTO – the Russian-led military alliance which helped the Tokayev regime to crush the popular uprising in Kazakhstan a few weeks ago. Furthermore, socialists need to explain workers that the chauvinist concept of "Russkij Mir" ("Russian world") is a dangerous trap which isolates the Russian masses from their brothers and sisters in other countries."*<sup>7</sup>

Such an approach follows closely the principles of the Bolsheviks: *"In each country, the struggle against a government that is waging an imperialist war should not falter at the possibility of that country's defeat as a result of revolutionary propaganda. The defeat of the government's army weakens the government, promotes the liberation of the nationalities it oppresses, and facilitates civil war against the ruling classes. This holds particularly true in respect of Russia. A victory for Russia will bring in its train a strengthening of reaction, both throughout the world and within the country, and will be accompanied by the complete enslavement of the peoples living in areas already seized. In view of this, we consider the defeat of Russia the lesser evil in all conditions."*<sup>8</sup>

Lenin wrote these lines in World War I – a war which was reactionary on all sides. How much more appropriate is such a position in a conflict like the current one where the war is reactionary only from the Russian side but legitimate from the Ukrainian side?!

Of course, socialists in Russia know best how to apply such a program under the concrete circumstances. Such activities include support for mass protests against mobilisation wherever these take place. In cases, where socialists are forced to serve within the army, they will act in order to undermine and sabotage the reactionary war and to aid the Ukrainian resistance. Socialists will explain to their comrades in the trenches – cautiously and patiently – that their enemy is not the Ukraine but rather the Putin regime. They will also encourage fraternisation of Russian soldiers with the Ukrainian people, partisans and soldiers.<sup>9</sup>

### Mobilisation in 2022 in comparison with 1914: Consequences for tactics

In this article, we want to draw attention to two issues which we consider as particularly important. First, we must recognize the peculiar nature of the situation which has been provoked by Putin's mobilization. If we look at the events in the last days, we can say that the current situation is very different to the situation at the beginning of World War I in 1914. In fact, it is even different to the first phase of the Vietnam War when the army command began to mobilize young Americans.

In 1914, there were no large protests, and most young men accepted the draft call (albeit often without enthusiasm). However, there was a certain sense that the "motherland" was under threat. Of course, this didn't stop the Bolsheviks in their heroic efforts to protest the imperialist war.<sup>10</sup> But, at the beginning, the huge majority of the popular masses became reconciled to the war-mongering policy of Tsarist autocracy.

The situation seems to be very different today. Sizeable



sections of the masses don't see any reason why they should fight and die in the Ukraine. They might be "patriots" in general – but they see no reason why they should risk their life for the political goals of the Kremlin. They don't consider their country "in danger" by the Ukraine – why should they?! In short, there is little popular enthusiasm among the masses in Russia for Putin's war against the Ukraine.

Such a contrast to the situation of 1914 is basically caused by the fundamental difference in the character of the two wars. World War I was a reactionary war on both sides – the Triple Entente (including Russia) as well as the Central Powers. The Ukraine War is different. It is a reactionary war on the side of Russian imperialism, but it is a just war on the side of the Ukrainian people. Hence, the popular support for this war is much smaller in the Russian society and resistance against it is much larger.

Such difference has profound consequences for revolutionary tactics. When nearly all conscripts accept the draft call, Bolsheviks are obligated to join them and to serve in the army. Of course, they will do so in a way remaining true to the program of socialism. They will work towards undermining the imperialist war and, eventually, to help organizing soldiers to turn around their guns. And if revolutionaries are drafted in the Russian army today, they will act according to the principles outlined above.

However, the peculiar character of the current situation, after Putin announced mobilisation, consists in the fact that such mobilisation is massively undermined by the spontaneous mass resistance. In such a situation, the prior task of revolutionaries is not so much to accept draft calls but rather to *agitate against the mobilisation*. Wherever it is possible, socialists have to encourage and support such activities of the masses. This is even more important as such mass resistance strongly aids the liberation struggle of the Ukrainian people.

### Focus on the oppressed national minorities in Russia

The second peculiarity of the current situation is the fact that, at least until now, the regions of national minorities are the focus of the active popular resistance against the mobilisation. This is the result of the oppressive conditions in which they find themselves. They are discriminated as minorities with many of them living under impoverished conditions. In some cases, they are forced to live under conditions of the horrific tyranny – just think about the Chechen people oppressed by Kadyrov the Butcher. In addition, they are affected by the war to a much larger degree than the rest of the society. This produces explosive conditions!

A report from the last days quotes a man who fled to Mongolia last week to avoid getting called up: *"For our state, we are not its citizens, but cannon fodder in this war. Just a resource! Siberia and the Far East are being actively sold – timber, minerals, land leased for 50 years. And it turns out that people living here are also processed as a resource."*<sup>11</sup> This sums up well how nationally oppressed people feel about the Russian state!

The RCIT has always pointed to the importance of the national question in Russia with minorities counting for 1/5 of the total population.<sup>12</sup> In our above-mentioned *Manifesto* we stated: *"The RCIT considers it as urgent that socialists in Russia support the Chechen people in their struggle for national self-determination. The Chechens have proven in the past that they want to have their own independent state and Russian socialists have the duty to support this wish. Likewise, they should support the liberation struggle of the Syrian people against Assad the butcher and his Russian master. The Western and Eastern imperialists attack and oppress various Muslim people and national minorities. For authentic socialists, Muslim peoples like other oppressed nations are important allies in the anti-imperialist struggle against all Great Powers!"*<sup>13</sup>

Such an anti-imperialist position in support of nationally oppressed people is particularly important in the current situation where anti-war activities are most widespread in their regions. Furthermore, the oppressed nationalities



## 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

within the Russian state might be open at some point to solidarize with the Ukrainian people as it is another nation which faces imperialist aggression by the Kremlin.

Socialists in Russia have to explain that a defeat for the Kremlin in its war against the Ukraine would be highly advantageous for the oppressed peoples within Russia as it weakens the Putin regime and improves the condition for their liberation struggle.

It is worth calling to mind how Lenin linked the struggle against national oppression with the struggle against imperialist war waged by the "own" ruling class. He explained that the defeat of the "own" bourgeoisie can not but aid the liberation struggle of the working class and the oppressed peoples.

*„We say that the Great Russians cannot “defend the fatherland” otherwise than by desiring the defeat of tsarism in any war, this as the lesser evil to nine-tenths of the inhabitants of Great Russia. For tsarism not only oppresses those nine-tenths economically and politically, but also demoralises, degrades, dishonours and prostitutes them by teaching them to oppress other nations and to cover up this shame with hypocritical and quasi-patriotic phrases.”<sup>14</sup>*

Replace the word “tsarism” with “Putin regime” and you have an accurate characterization of the current situation!

From this follows that revolutionaries in Russia need to put an emphasis on the national question and on the struggle of the oppressed peoples. They must become the staunchest defenders of the rights of the small nations and they must advocate the struggle for equality and national self-determination. They need to emphasize also that if a national minority wishes to create an independent state, they will unconditionally support such a desire.

In the case where this such desire is already well-known – the Chechen people – socialists in Russia support the independence of the Republic Ichkeria.

Only such a program of courageous internationalism and anti-imperialism will allow Russian socialists to win the trust of the oppressed nations!

### The struggle against the Great Russian social-imperialists

The importance of the national question makes the struggle of revolutionaries in Russia against all advocates of Great Russian social-imperialism, and against those which opportunistically adapt and capitulate to such forces, particularly urgent. Lenin noted during World War I: *“It will be the duty of the Socialists to explain to the masses (...) that Russian Socialists who fail to demand freedom of secession for Finland, Poland, the Ukraine, etc., etc. — are behaving like chauvinists, like lackeys of the blood-and-mud-stained imperialist monarchies and the imperialist bourgeoisie.”<sup>15</sup>*

Such a statement is no less true today when the Stalinist KPRF of Gennady Zyuganov fully support Putin’s war and advocates “*Ruskij Mir*” social-chauvinism. Smaller Stalinist parties – like the RKRП and the OKP – basically share such a social-imperialist policy. Pseudo-Trotskyists like the Russian section of Alan Woods’ IMT adapt to the KPRF and even joined their electoral list at the recent regional elections (where they got one member elected as part of the KPRF delegation in a municipal council in Moscow).<sup>16</sup>

These forces behave like the social-chauvinists about

whom Lenin spoke in the above-mentioned quote. It is not possible to fight against Putin’s war without fighting its “socialist” or “communist” supporters. And it is not possible to push back such social-imperialist forces without fighting against those opportunists who adapt to these.

We repeat our appeal to authentic Marxists that they need to decisively break – once and for all! – from those who contaminate communism with dirty collaboration with the “*Ruskij Mir*” social-chauvinists! Supporters of “*Socialist Tendency*” – the RCIT section in Russia – have published an “*Open Letter to Russian Socialists*” in which they call revolutionaries to join us in the struggle against social-imperialism and chauvinist patriotism.<sup>17</sup> We urge all authentic revolutionaries to join us on the basis of such a consistent internationalist and anti-imperialist program!

### Footnotes

1 RCIT: Russian Empire Escalates its Colonial War against the Ukraine. Down with the shame-“referendums” in the Russian-occupied territories! No to “mobilisation”! Defend the Ukraine - Defeat Russian imperialism!, 21 September 2022, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/russian-empire-escalates-its-colonial-war-against-the-ukraine/>

2 The RCIT has published numerous documents about capitalism in Russia and its rise to an imperialist power. The most important ones are 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 (this pamphlet contains a document written in 2001 in which we established for the first time our characterisation of Russia as imperialist), <http://www.thecommunists.net/theory/imperialist-russia/>; see also these essays by the same author: Russia: An Imperialist Power or a “Non-Hegemonic Empire in Gestation”? A reply to the Argentinean economist Claudio Katz, in: New Politics, 11 August 2022, at <https://newpol.org/russia-an-imperialist-power-or-a-non-hegemonic-empire-in-gestation-a-reply-to-the-argentinean-economist-claudio-katz-an-essay-with-8-tables/>; 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/>.

3 We refer readers to a special page on our website where more than 120 RCIT documents on the Ukraine War and the current NATO-Russia conflict are compiled: <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/compilation-of-documents-on-nato-russia-conflict/>. In particular we refer to the 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/>

4 Al Jazeera: 'No to war!': Anger over troop conscription rages in Russia. 26 September 2022, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/9/26/no-to-war-anger-over-troop-conscription-rages-in-russia>

5 For regular reports about anti-war protests in Russia see e.g. *oed-News* (<https://ovd.news>) as well as the *Institute for the Study of War* (<https://www.understandingwar.org>).

6 Dasha Litvinova: Putin's call-up fuels Russians' anger, protests and violence, Associated Press, 2022-09-26, [https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-putin-georgia-estonia-5f0e250b65430b5f2ea9e066f3ccc44c?utm\\_source=homepage&utm\\_medium=TopNews&utm\\_campaign=position\\_02](https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-putin-georgia-estonia-5f0e250b65430b5f2ea9e066f3ccc44c?utm_source=homepage&utm_medium=TopNews&utm_campaign=position_02)

7 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/>; see also "In Russia, we say: 'The main enemy is at home!' Support the anti-war activities in Russia! Russian soldiers: Turn the guns around! For the transformation of the imperialist war into a revolutionary crisis of the Putin regime!" (Defend Ukraine against Putin's Invasion! Defeat Russian and NATO Imperialism! War Platform for Socialists in Russia and the Ukraine, 1 March 2022, [https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/compilation-of-documents-on-nato-russia-conflict/#anker\\_9](https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/compilation-of-documents-on-nato-russia-conflict/#anker_9))

8 V. I. Lenin: The Conference of the R.S.D.L.P. Groups Abroad (1915); in LCW 21, p. 163

9 For a more detailed discussion of the program of revolutionary defeatism see the chapters in "Part 3: The Program of Revolutionary Defeatism against All Great Powers" in our 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/>, pp. 167-266.

10 For a brief overview with reference to relevant literature see sub-chapter "Bolshevik Agitation against the War in Russia" in the above-mentioned book by Michael Pröbsting: *Anti-Imperialism in the Age of Great Power Rivalry*, p. 216

11 Quoted in Dasha Litvinova: Putin's call-up fuels Russians' anger, protests and violence

12 See e.g. Michael Pröbsting: *Russia as a Great Imperialist Power. The formation of Russian Monopoly Capital and its Empire – A Reply to our Critics*, 18 March 2014 (this pamphlet contains a document written in 2001 in which we established for the first time our characterisation of Russia as imperialist), <http://www.thecommunists.net/theory/imperialist-russia/>

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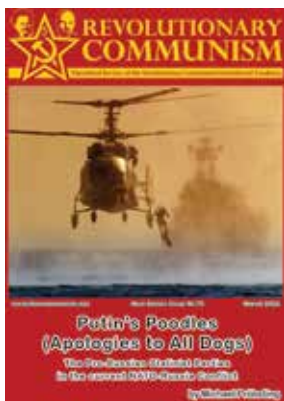
14 V.I.Lenin: On the National Pride of the Great Russians (1914), in: LCW Vol. 21, p. 104

15 V.I. Lenin: The Socialist Revolution and the Right of Nations to Self-Determination (1916), in: LCW Vol. 22, p. 154

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