



# REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNISM

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## Russia: A Mirror of the Future

Ukraine: Kherson Liberation & Danger of Great Power Deal

“Left” Stalinism & Program of Russian Social-Imperialism

Ukraine War: Marxism vs. Centrism (IMT, ISA)

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Picture on the cover: Anti-War Protestors in Yekaterinburg, Russia (Source: Wikipedia, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2022\\_anti-war\\_protests\\_in\\_Russia#/media/File:Protest\\_against\\_the\\_invasion\\_of\\_Ukraine\\_\(Yekaterinburg,\\_February\\_24,\\_2022\).jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2022_anti-war_protests_in_Russia#/media/File:Protest_against_the_invasion_of_Ukraine_(Yekaterinburg,_February_24,_2022).jpg))

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**www.thecommunists.net - rcit@thecommunists.net**  
**Tel/SMS/WhatsApp/Telegram: +43-650-4068314**

# Ukraine War: The Liberation of Western Kherson Oblast and the Danger of a Great Power Deal

## Full liberation of the Ukraine! Defeat Russian imperialism! No support whatsoever for NATO imperialism!

*Statement of the Revolutionary Communist International Tendency (RCIT),  
jointly issued by the International Secretariat and Socialist Tendency (Russia), 15 November 2022*

1. The *Revolutionary Communist International Tendency* (RCIT) and *Socialist Tendency* (the RCIT section in Russia) strongly welcome the expulsion of Russian occupation forces from the Western Kherson Oblast (including its capital, Kherson). It represents an important victory of the Ukrainian people as it liberates another part of the territory which Putin's army has illegitimately occupied since 24 February.

2. Since the first days of the occupation, people in Kherson courageously demonstrated against the occupation despite brutal suppression. After the retreat of Russian troops, thousands of people spontaneously marched through the streets and celebrated their liberation. We ask the Putinista defenders of Russian imperialism: how many pro-Russian protests have you seen in the territories controlled by the Ukrainian forces in the last nine months?! How many people have marched in Russian-controlled areas celebrating their occupation?! All these confirms once more what the RCIT and all authentic socialists have said since the 24 February: Putin's invasion has a *national oppressive character* while the Ukrainian resistance is a legitimate *national liberation struggle*! We reiterate our internationalist and anti-imperialist position: *Defend the Ukraine against Putin's invasion! Against Russian and against NATO imperialism!*

3. Nevertheless, there is an important difference between the liberation of Western Kherson Oblast and that of Kharkiv in early September. The latter was a devastating and humiliating rout for Putin's army resulting in dramatic steps by the Kremlin and provoking a political crisis in Russia. In contrast, the Kherson retreat was an organised military manoeuvre. It was not the direct result of intense battle but rather a tactical retreat ordered by General Sergei Surovikin (the new commander-in-chief of Russia's so-called "*Special Military Operation*"). Clearly, Russia had strong reasons for this retreat. Its forces have come under enormous pressure by the Ukrainian army and partisans behind the lines in the past months. Ukrainian forces were able to strike the supply lines and to severely limit Russia's ability to support its troops in the Western Kherson Oblast across the Dnieper. While the loss of Kherson – the only regional capital Russia has managed to conquer since 24 February – represents a political humiliating blow for the Kremlin, a retreat to fortified positions on the eastern side of the Dnieper makes sense from a military tactical point of view.

4. It is not possible to make predictions about the further course of the war in the next few months. There are rumours both about another surprising offensive of the Ukrainian forces as well as about one of the Russian army. What seems certain is that Russian forces – with the paramilitary Wagner Group (Yevgeny Prigozhin's mercenaries and criminals) at the head – will try to conquer Bakhmut

and some other territories in the Donetsk Oblast to redeem a bit their humiliating losses of the past months.

5. However, more might be behind the latest developments in Kherson. In fact, there are a number of signs that both Moscow as well as Washington might be interested to relatively freeze the frontline for some time. Among these indications are:

\* The Russian retreat did run extraordinarily smoothly. Neither did the Ukrainian forces launch any major attack on the Russian troops, nor has the Russian army bombarded the advancing Ukrainian forces in Kherson or blast the dam at the Kakhovka Hydroelectric Power Plant in Nova Kakhovka. Russian forces did not even strike the city of Kherson when Ukrainian President Zelensky visited it to join the public celebrations.

\* The Kremlin has repeatedly indicated that it is ready for negotiations. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov responded to a Turkish offer in mid-October to mediate talks by claiming Moscow would be open to that suggestion and "*was willing to engage with the United States or with Turkey on ways to end the war.*" Russian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Maria Zakharova also emphasised: "*We are still open to negotiations, we have never refused them, we are ready to conduct them – taking, of course, into account the realities being established at the moment.*"

\* For the first time, powerful voices are emerging in the camp of Western imperialism calling for negotiations with Moscow. It has been revealed that National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan had been in contact with Yuri Ushakov, a foreign-policy adviser to Mr. Putin, and with Russia's Security Council Secretary Nikolai Patrushev.

\* Sullivan also made an unannounced visit Kyiv where he met with President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and top Ukrainian officials. He "*raised the need for a diplomatic resolution to the war and made the point that Ukraine's leverage would be strengthened – not weakened – if it expressed openness to ultimately negotiating with the Russians.*" (NBC, 9 November 2022)

\* NBC also reports that "*the U.S. and Western allies have discussed whether Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan could help mediate between the two sides, and he has already signaled a willingness to help broker a deal.*"

\* Furthermore, CIA Director Bill Burns and Sergei Naryshkin, the head of Russia's SVR, had a meeting in Ankara on 14 November, organised by the Turkish secret service MIT. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov claims that this meeting "*was the American side's initiative.*"

\* U.S. Army General Mark Milley, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the highest-ranking U.S. military officer, said in a speech: "*There has to be a mutual recognition that military victory, in the true sense of the word, is maybe not achievable through military means, so therefore you need to turn to other means. There's also an opportunity here, a window*

*of opportunity, for negotiation.*" (Wall Street Journal, 13 November 2022)

\* U.S: President Biden himself suggested that the time might have come for a "compromise". *"It remains to be seen whether or not there'll be a judgment made as to whether or not Ukraine is prepared to compromise with Russia. They're going to both lick their wounds, decide...what they're going to do over the winter, and decide whether or not they're going to compromise."* (Wall Street Journal, 13 November 2022)

\* At the same time, the Ukrainian side show no willingness to stop the liberation war as the Russian forces are clearly weakened and demoralised. This determination has been reflected in the statement of the Commander of Ukrainian forces, General Valerii Zaluzhnyi, who reiterated to his US counterpart, General Milley: *"I assured that we will fight as long as we have the strength. Our goal is to liberate all Ukrainian land from Russian occupation. We will not stop on this path under any circumstances. The Ukrainian military will not accept any negotiations, agreements or compromise decisions. There is only one condition for negotiations - Russia must leave all captured territories"* (Ukrinform.net and CNN, 14 November 2022)

6. There are powerful factors which motivate both Russian as well as Western imperialism looking for a ceasefire if not a (temporary) deal.

\* Russia must win time. Its military forces have suffered huge losses, lack troops, armament, proper organisation, and fighting moral; it has faced soldier rebellions and mass protests against mobilisation. Furthermore, the army command needs time to train its 300,000 mobilized soldiers as well as to replenish stocks of weapons and ammunition. At the same time, it has not lost the war as it still controls 15% of the Ukraine's territory. On the global scale, while Russia succeeded in withstanding unprecedented Western sanctions, its economy has clearly suffered. All in all, the Putin regime faces the danger of a veritable political crisis. There is a real risk that the regime will utilize a period of ceasefire in order to launch another wave of repression against opposition and anti-war activists.

\* The U.S. and Western Europe find it increasingly difficult to bear the financial and economic brunt of the war. They are in the midst of the deepest depression since nearly a century with sky-rocketing prices for energy and the worst inflation since the 1970s. Europe witnesses an increasing number of mass protests against the consequences of the economic crisis. In such times, Washington and Brussels become increasingly reluctant to finance Ukraine's budget deficit and deliveries of arms. This is even more the case as Western stocks of some modern weapon systems are running down. Furthermore, Western powers have failed to isolate Russia and to bring it down despite unprecedented sanctions. In several cases – most importantly Europe – the sanctions, resp. the geopolitical dynamic provoked by the war, have massively hurt their own economies and threaten to result in a process of deindustrialisation. In the case of the U.S., the Ukraine War increasingly causes the problem of deflecting Washingtons' focus on combatting the rise of Chinese imperialism – its main rival. Last but not least, Washington and Brussels have no interest in provoking a collapse of the Putin regime which could open a revolutionary situation in the (geographically) largest country of the world with the second-biggest arsenal of nuclear weapons.

\* Clearly, such Great Power interests are in contradiction to the goals of the Ukrainian liberation struggle. The latter's interests call for the continuation of the war against the occupation, for appealing to the ordinary Russian soldiers and the working class and national minorities in Russia in the spirit of international solidarity and anti-imperialism, for bringing down the reactionary Putin regime, for combining the war with the global class struggle against all imperialist powers. However, Washington and Brussels are likely to put enormous pressure on Kyiv and might try to force it to the negotiation table. Given the thoroughly bourgeois and pro-NATO nature of the Zelensky regime, it would not be surprising if the Bankova, despite widespread popular opposition, would submit to the directives of Biden.

7. However, it would be wrong to ignore the highly contradictory character of the current situation. While the above-mentioned factors point towards a temporary stalemate and negotiations, there exist also important countervailing tendencies. First and foremost, the Ukrainian people demand a continuation of the liberation war, and it is quite possible that the armed forces will stage military strikes which could torpedo the efforts for an ignoble peace. (For example, there is speculation about an incursion into Russia which might be such a humiliating blow for Putin that he could not start ceasefire negotiations under such conditions without provoking outrage by his own chauvinist-militarist supporter base.) Likewise, sections of the ruling class and the army command both in Russia as well as in the Western camp oppose a turn towards negotiations and might support military actions undermining such an approach.

8. The RCIT and *Socialist Tendency* alert all internationalist and anti-imperialist activists that the Ukrainian liberation struggle is threatened by a Great Power deal aimed at the pacification of the war. Such a deal would mean, at least temporary, the consolidation of the Russian occupation of significant parts of the Ukraine's territory. In other words, the Ukrainian people face the danger of a sell-out by Western imperialism. Washington and Brussels might push for such a pacification of the war before it destabilises the imperialist world order too much and provokes mass unrests or even revolutionary crises in Russia, Europe or in other parts of the world.

9. There can be no doubt that a turn of the situation towards negotiations and pacification will provoke criticism and internal division in all camps.

\* First of all, it would provoke outrage in the Ukraine as the popular masses nearly unanimously demand the continuation of the liberation war. There will be a huge feeling of betrayal by the Western powers.

\* It will also provoke protests in Russia. The hard-line chauvinist camp will criticise the Kremlin for "betrayal" not only of the official goal of "denazification" of the Ukraine but even of the desire to defend the very territory which has become officially part of the Russian Empire since Putin formally annexed Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson and Zaporizhia in September. (Aleksandr Dugin, the well-known ideologist of semi-fascist Eurasianism, did already publicly criticise Putin for the Kherson retreat.) At the same time, popular criticism will become stronger as many will ask what, after all, was the purpose of all the sacrifices – including the loss of tens of thousands of sons,

husbands, and fathers?!

\* Likewise, there would be a massive outcry in Europe. Both progressive supporters of the Ukraine as well as anti-Muscovite warmongers will be outraged about appeasing Putin. People suffering from high energy prices will ask if a ceasefire deal with Putin is possible why not also a deal on oil and gas deliveries?!

10. The RCIT considers the following tasks as urgent for revolutionary socialists.

\* In the Ukraine, socialists fight for a continuation of the liberation war against Russian imperialism. No political support whatsoever for the reactionary Zelensky government; against interference and domination by U.S. and European imperialism, no accession to NATO, EU or any other Western institution, no to a "*Kyiv Security Compact*" agreement similar to the U.S.-Israel model (as former Secretary-General of NATO, Rasmussen, and Zelensky's chief of staff, Andriy Yermak, propose); for independent workers and popular committees and militias; for a *people's war* to drive out the Russian occupier; for expropriation of the oligarchs and nationalisation of the key sectors of the economy under workers control; equal rights for all minorities, for a workers government, for an independent, free and socialist Ukraine.

\* In Russia, socialists stand for the military defeat of Russian imperialism and the transformation of the war into a revolutionary crisis at home. Immediate and unconditional withdrawal of all Russian troops from the Ukraine; no to the mobilisation, full democratic rights for soldiers; no to any Great Russian chauvinist ideology under the camouflage of "*support for the Russian people in Donbass*" (or in other regions of the former Soviet Union); expropriation of the oligarchs and nationalisation of the key sectors of the economy under workers control; self-determination for all national minorities in Russia (including the right of separation), solidarity with the Chechen *Republic Ichkeria*; down with the Russian occupation forces in Syria; for a workers government, for a socialist Russia!

\* In the U.S. and Western Europe, socialists stand in solidarity with the Ukrainian people. Support the right of the Ukraine to get weapons from wherever possible, no sabotage of weapons deliveries; open borders for all refugees; no to chauvinist Great Power policy, no support for imperialist sanctions against Russia; for a cap of energy consumer prices, expropriate the energy corporations under workers control, for a sliding scale of wages; for a workers government, for a socialist republic!

11. A possible foreign policy change by Western imperialists towards striving for a treacherous deal with Russia creates the danger of an ignoble peace to the detriment of the Ukrainian people as well as of the interests of the liberation struggle in East and West. Such a Great Power deal imposed on the Ukrainian people would be comparable to the shameful *Dayton Agreement* which the imperialists enforced on the Bosnian people in 1995. The RCIT resolutely opposes such a reactionary deal as we did during the Balkan Wars.

12. We are aware that liberation forces can be forced to agree to a compromise in a situation characterised by a disadvantageous relation of forces. The well-known *Treaty of Brest-Litovsk* which German imperialism forced upon young Soviet Russia in February 1918 was such a case. Likewise, liberation forces defending their country today,

including in the Ukraine, can be forced to agree to such an unfavourable treaty. However, the current situation in the Ukraine – characterised by weak and demoralised Russian forces and a victorious Ukrainian army which successfully expelled the occupiers from Kharkiv and Western Kher-son in the past months – is in no way comparable to such an unfavourable scenario.

13. We are of course aware that Western imperialism has played an important role in the Ukraine government and army command for some time. This is, as the RCIT has pointed out since the beginning of the war, the result of the *dual character* of the whole conflict – legitimate national liberation war and inter-imperialist Great Power rivalry. However, until now, the Ukrainian army has been forced – under the pressure of the Russian aggression as well as by the massive expectation of the popular masses – to defend their country and, in this sense, act primarily as a (bourgeois and distorted) instrument of the national war of defence. The next period will show if Washington and Brussels can manage – with the help of their lackey Zelensky – to force the Ukrainian army stopping its struggle for the liberation of the occupied territories and to transform it from an instrument of the national struggle of the Ukraine into one of NATO interests. If they succeed in this, the Ukrainian army would act as a servant of Western imperialism. In such a scenario, it would stop having an even limited independent character and socialists could no longer lend critical support to the struggle of the Armed Forces of the Ukraine. In such a case, our call for an *independent people's war* against Russian occupation would gain even greater importance than it has already today. Of course, only great events can show if such a transformation has taken place or not. The task of socialists is to resolutely oppose any subordination of Ukrainian forces to the interests of Western imperialism.

\* \* \* \* \*

We refer readers to a special page on the RCIT website more than 140 RCIT documents on the Ukraine War and the current NATO-Russia conflict: <https://www.thecomunists.net/worldwide/global/compilation-of-documents-on-nato-russia-conflict/>

## Russia: A Mirror of the Future

### Notes on Russia's role in the current world situation, the global class struggle and revolutionary regroupment

By Michael Pröbsting, International Secretary of the Revolutionary Communist International Tendency (RCIT), 5.11.2022

In the past period, we have put much emphasis on the ongoing analysis of the political crisis, social contradictions and class struggle in Russia. The reasons for this are obvious.

1) Russia is one of a handful of imperialist Great Powers. <sup>1</sup>

2) The Ukraine War, which the Kremlin has launched on 24 February, is one of the largest wars since decades with no end in sight. <sup>2</sup>

3) This war has direct (and devastating) consequences first and foremost for the Ukraine – but not only! It bears also massive ramifications for the global economy and world politics. See the food and energy crisis, <sup>3</sup> see the dramatic acceleration of the Great Power rivalry, etc. <sup>4</sup>

We will not deal with the analysis of these developments at this place since we have already done so in much detail in other documents (see the RCIT's literature mentioned in the footnotes). In the article at hand, we rather like to draw attention to some additional issues. While they might be less in the fore of public attention, they seem to us nevertheless as highly important for socialists.

#### The weakest link of the imperialist chain

First, it is important to recognise that among the Great Powers, Russia is currently the weakest link of the imperialist chain. While its economy is dominated by a domestic monopoly capital, it is without doubt weaker than the combined power of its Western rivals. (Things would be different if Russia would be confronted by individual European states or even by Europe without the U.S. but this is currently not the case.)

For this reason, Russia suffers from the financial and economic sanctions of the "collective West", albeit less than Washington and Brussels had hoped for. <sup>5</sup> These sanctions could become really harmful in the longer term if Russia does not manage to replace high-tech imports from Western countries like chips.

At the same time, the Putin regime is waging the largest war which an imperialist power has initiated since many decades – at least since the U.S. war in Vietnam in 1965-75. Of course, it is not the largest war from the perspective of the victims, i.e. from the peoples in the semi-colonial countries facing rape by the imperialist predator. Iraq and Afghanistan suffered for many years of devastating wars and occupation regimes – horrible crimes which resulted in hundreds of thousands of deaths.

However, these wars were "small" from the perspective of the aggressor. True, they were huge operations in terms of financial costs. But they were small wars in that sense that the occupiers suffered a relative low number of deaths. In 20 years of war and occupation of Afghanistan, the U.S. lost only about 2,500 troops and the whole imperialist "coalition" altogether about 3,500. And 8 years of war and occupation of Iraq resulted in the death of about 4,500 U.S. soldiers. (As we noted already somewhere else, it is remarkable that such small losses were sufficient for the

imperialist occupiers to pack and run – reflecting the low morale among the decadent, rich imperialist powers. But this issue is beyond the scope of this article. <sup>6</sup>)

Given the relatively small number of deaths, the American (and other Western) societies were not massively affected by these wars. Washington's wars in the Middle East did not impact daily life of most people in the U.S.

The Ukraine War has very different consequences for Russian society. Putin tried to keep the war away from the population – at least from the majority of ethnic Russians. Things have been differently in the regions of national minorities which have always suffered oppression by Great Russian chauvinism. The army command has recruited heavily among them since the beginning of the war, and they have suffered huge losses. Obviously, the Kremlin hoped to pacify the Russian society by using primarily young men of these oppressed nations as cannon fodder

However, the Kremlin grossly underestimated the determination of the Ukrainian people to defend their country (which is no surprise given the fact that Putin does not even recognise the existence of a Ukrainian nation!). <sup>7</sup> As a result, the Russian army suffered tens of thousands of deaths and wounded.

In order to avoid defeat, the regime saw itself forced to formally annex four Ukrainian regions and to call a "partial mobilisation" of 300,000 additional troops. <sup>8</sup> As is well-known, these measures have provoked a number of popular protests. More recently, such protests have even started among conscripted soldiers. <sup>9</sup>

For all these reasons, the Kremlin had to increase state repression against all forms of dissent and opposition. As we noted already somewhere else, the Putin regime, which always had a Bonapartist character, has moved towards more totalitarian forms of dictatorship since 24 February.

All these developments in combination have put the regime under unprecedented strain – more than ever since Putin took power in 1999. In a recently published article on the world situation, we noted: "*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.*"

The latest protests of soldiers fully confirm our assessment. It does not need much explanation why a revolutionary crisis in one of the biggest countries of the world – which is also a nuclear power, an important energy exporter, a veto-wielding country in the UN Security Council, etc. – would have profound consequences for global politics.

For all these reasons, we consider Russia as key to the world situation – both in the light of the global imperialist order as well as from the perspective of international class struggle.

### Indicator of the future

There are also additional reasons why we consider the current developments in Russia as highly important for Marxists. As we elaborated in several documents on the world situation in the past years, the RCIT considers the current historic period as one of capitalist decay, resulting in economic depression, dramatic acceleration of Great Power rivalry and revolutionary and counterrevolutionary crises. In our Manifesto, we spoke not by accident about “catastrophic capitalism”.<sup>10</sup> We can add now that the world has entered an *Armageddon Age* which makes the alternative “socialism or stone-age” more relevant than ever.

For these reasons, it is inevitable – as long as the ruling class in the major countries has not been overthrown by socialist revolution – that the contradictions between the Great Powers will continue to deepen. In such a context, all Great Powers will increasingly strive to put semi-colonial countries under their exclusive domination and, at the same time, to confront their imperialist rivals.

Hence, it is likely that not only Russia and the U.S. but also Western European powers, Japan as well as China will increasingly feel obliged to launch military interventions in this or that country of the Global South. Likewise, we will see an escalation of tensions and confrontations between the Great Powers themselves. A war in Europe between Western Powers and Russia or in the Taiwan Strait between the U.S. and China is not only possible in the next years resp. within the coming decade but rather inevitable.

Such a dynamic of militarism will have profound consequences for each and every imperialist state. The ruling class will be forced to restructure their economy in order to reduce dependency on rivals or on regions which are not under their domination (the so-called “global supply chain” which bourgeois economists discuss a lot currently). They will have to massively expand their arms industry, their armed forces, etc. Furthermore, the ruling class will only be able to wage big wars or to threaten rivals if they have laid the organisational and ideological foundation for mobilisation of hundreds of thousands of troops.

For the same reasons, the ruling class will have to “counter-revolutionise” domestic politics. A society in arms facing foreign enemies needs an expanded state apparatus to fight “spies” and “traitors”. It needs a radically altered ideological apparatus – from schools to the media – which indoctrinates the population in reactionary chauvinist ideas. Making sacrifices, being mobilised and accepting (at least passively) the danger of being killed “for the fatherland” requires an ideological mindset which hardly exists in Western societies yet.

Of course, there exist many obstacles for such a development – from the institutions of bourgeois democracy, the prevailing decadent ideologies characterised by liberalism, individualism and hedonism, to, most importantly, the resistance of the working class.

Today, the Western governments call their Cold War against Russia as a conflict “between democracy versus autocracy.” Consequently, they denounce the authoritarian Putin regime and praise themselves for their “values of freedom”. However, this is – and always has been – sheer hypocrisy. Western governments have always counted brutal dictatorships among their allies – from Pinochet to

the Gulf regimes. They avoided suppression of parliamentary democracy only because they could – as the richest countries in the world – afford some liberties in domestic policy, at the price of poverty and tyranny in the countries of the Global South.

However, as the global political and economic conditions change and the crisis deepens, the ruling class in North America and Western Europe will themselves become more “Putinista”, i.e. they will increasingly strangle democratic rights and introduce more and more elements of bonapartism. In other words, Western governments will follow the footsteps of Putin and expand the bonapartist state machinery. They will create a *Leviathan state monster* – to paraphrase the Marxist theoretician Nicolai Bukharin who warned that the epoch of imperialism will see a “*New Leviathan, beside which the fantasy of Thomas Hobbes looks like a child’s toy.*”<sup>11</sup>

As we have explained since spring 2020, the COVID Counterrevolution – i.e. the policy of responding to a pandemic with anti-democratic, authoritarian measures – was a first dress rehearsal for such a turn towards what we called *Chauvinist State Bonapartism*.<sup>12</sup>

While such a shift of ruling class policy towards bonapartism is inevitable given the deepening of capitalist crisis, an acceleration of social and political contradictions and revolutionary explosions is equally inevitable. Domestic policy in North America, Western Europe, and Japan did hardly experience any revolutionary crisis since the late 1940s. There is no doubt that such pacifist times are over and that we are heading towards a radically different future! This is why we think that Russia is a mirror of the future for all imperialist powers – in West as well as in East.

### Russia as a litmus test for Marxists

Given the above-mentioned developments, the RCIT considers Putin’s imperialist war against the Ukraine, the current acceleration of the Great Power rivalry and the domestic political situation in Russia as a litmus test for revolutionaries. The deepening of contradictions, the imposition of harsh political conditions – these developments expose the character of all forces proclaiming adherence to Marxism. It is one thing for an organisation to announce its policy on war, Great Power chauvinism, etc. “in abstract”, i.e. under relative peaceful conditions of wealth and stability. It is something very different to take such position under concrete conditions of war, crisis, and state repression!

As we demonstrated in a number of articles, most self-proclaimed “Marxists” in Russia have shamefully capitulated to the wave of imperialist militarism and chauvinism. Stalinist-chauvinist forces like Zyuganov’s KPRF<sup>13</sup> or Tyulkin’s RKRП have jumped Putin’s wagon – without a spark of honour (not to speak about Marxist principles)!<sup>14</sup> Pseudo-Trotskyist forces like the Russian section of Alan Woods’ IMT<sup>15</sup> or the RRP have failed to take an anti-imperialist position and opportunistically adapted to the KPRF.<sup>16</sup> As we noted recently: Zyuganov’s KPRF acts as a servant of Putin and the RRP and the IMT Russia act as servants of the KPRF.

Only the comrades of “*Socialist Tendency*” (which has become the Russian section of the RCIT in summer 2022)<sup>17</sup> as well as the comrades of “*Socialist Alternative*” did fulfil

their duty as internationalists and anti-imperialists and took a position of revolutionary defeatism, i.e. they sided with the national liberation struggle of the Ukrainian people and called for the defeat of the Russian Empire.<sup>18</sup>

Reformist and centrist forces outside of Russia did not fare better. Just think about the numerous Stalinist and populist parties which sympathise with Russian and Chinese imperialism.<sup>19</sup> Many reformist forces preach pacifism and advocate the reactionary utopia of a “multi-polar world order”, i.e. the peaceful coexistence of several imperialist Great Powers.<sup>20</sup> And other parties have lent support to Western imperialism, support its policy of sanctions, vote for the expansion of NATO or are even part of its governments (e.g. Podemos, IU and PCE in Spain or the small reformist *Sinistra Italiana* in Italy’s subsequent governments of Conte and Draghi).<sup>21</sup> Add to this those centrist organisations which fail to recognise the imperialist character of Russia and China, or which refuse to defend a semi-colonial country like the Ukraine against an imperialist predator.

In short, most self-proclaimed Marxists have failed the political test of the Ukraine War and the accelerated Great Power rivalry. And when the political conditions in Western countries become more similar like those in Putin’s Russia today, one can take it for granted that these opportunist parties will act very similar like the KPRF and the RKRП today. “Putinist” conditions create Putinist “socialists”!

We said above that Russia is a mirror of the future. The same is true for opportunist parties. Conditions of war and crisis push such parties dramatically to the right, towards accommodating and subordinating to the reactionary policy of the ruling class.

However, such conditions also provoke inevitably internal dissents and divisions. In fact, we have already seen individual and collective splits from such opportunist forces in Russia – both from Stalinist parties as well as pseudo-Trotskyist organisations.<sup>22</sup> In some cases, such splits are the result of demoralisation and tiredness. But in other cases, they reflect the process of moving to the left, towards internationalist and anti-imperialist conclusions.

In order to relate to this process and to advance the unification of such revolutionary forces, our comrades in “*Socialist Tendency*” have published an “*Open Letter to Russian Socialists*” some months ago. In this document, they call all authentic Marxists to join us in the struggle against social-imperialism and chauvinist patriotism.<sup>23</sup>

There is not doubt that we will see similar processes of internal crisis and splits among reformist and centrist parties in many other countries. “Putinist” conditions do not only create Putinist “socialists” but also divisions and ruptures among such opportunist parties by sectors which are repelled by such a policy, and which prefer adherence to the principles of internationalism and anti-imperialism!

The future *Revolutionary World Party* will be built, among others, by such revolutionary forces splitting with the opportunist servants of social-imperialism! This is why the RCIT has emphasized in the past months that authentic revolutionaries must unite their forces. This is why we consider the relentless struggle against treacherous social-chauvinist and pacifist forces as an indispensable task of Marxists today.

We conclude this essay by repeating that it is urgent for

revolutionaries to break with routinist conservatism and narrow-minded self-complacency. Those who have not decisively broken with the social-imperialist servants must no longer wait. Those who have made such a rupture but could not decide to join forces with other authentic revolutionaries, should also not longer wait. Time is pressing! Comrades, brothers and sisters: do not hesitate – act now, act decisively!

### Footnotes

1 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/>.

2 We refer readers to a special page on the RCIT website more than 140 RCIT documents on the Ukraine War and the current NATO-Russia conflict: <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/>

3 See on this e.g. two RCIT documents which can be read here: <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/action-program-against-the-food-and-energy-crisis/>

4 See e.g. RCIT: *Threats of Nuclear War between Great Powers*. On some consequences for the world situation and for socialist tactics in the defence of the Ukraine, 5 October 2022, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/threats-of-nuclear-war-between-great-powers/>; see also Medina Gunić: *Recession, Energy Crisis, Strengthening of the Imperialist Blocs – The World Situation will change soon enough*, 23 August 2022, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/world-situation-will-change-soon-enough/>; Michael Pröbsting: *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, 13 April 2022, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/world-situation-april-2022/>; by the same author: *A Peculiar and Explosive Combination*. Notes on the current world situation, 6 October 2022, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/world-situation-notes-10-2022/>

5 The phrase “*collective West*” has become popular among Putinista ideologues like Fyodor Lukyanov, Andrei Sushentsov or



Boris Mezhev who are publishing in important think tanks like the *Valdai Discussion Club* or the *Russian International Affairs Council* or publications like *Russia in Global Affairs* (the Russian equivalent to *Foreign Affairs* in the U.S.).

6 See on this e.g. the chapter “The Moral Crisis in the Western Imperialist Countries” 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, pp. 209-230, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/anti-imperialism-in-the-age-of-great-power-rivalry/>

7 See on this Michael Pröbsting: *The Program of Great Russian Totalitarianism*. On a revealing interview with Nikolai Patrushev, Secretary of the Security Council of the Russian Federation, 11 May 2022, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/the-patrushev-interview/>; by the same author: *A Revealing Document of Great Russian Totalitarianism*. Commentary on an article published by the Russian state-owned news agency RIA Novosti, 7 April 2022, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/europe/ria-novosti-great-russian-totalitarianism/>.

8 The latest RCIT documents on these developments are: *Putin Announces Colonial Annexation of Ukrainian Territories*, 30 September 2022, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/putin-announces-colonial-annexation-of-ukrainian-territories/>; *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/>; *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, 28 September 2022, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/revolutionary-tactics-in-the-struggle-against-putin-s-mobilisation/>

9 RCIT: *Ukraine War: On Spontaneous Protests of Soldiers of the Russian Army*, 3 November 2022, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/europe/ukraine-war-spontaneous-protests-of-soldiers-of-russian-army/>

10 RCIT: *The Fire of Revolution Will Burn Down Catastrophic Capitalism! Manifesto for the Liberation Struggle of the Workers and Oppressed*. Document adopted by the III. Congress of the RCIT, April 2021, <https://www.thecommunists.net/rcit-fire-manifesto-2021/>

11 Nikolai Bukharin: *Toward a Theory of the Imperialist State* (1915), in: Robert V. Daniel: *A Documentary History of Communism*, Vol. 1, Vintage Russian Library, Vintage Books, New York 1960, p. 85, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/bukharin/works/1915/state.htm>

12 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/>.

13 See on this e.g. the pamphlets by Michael Pröbsting: *Putin’s Poodles (Apologies to All Dogs)*. Putins Pudel. 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/>; *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/>; see also: *Russia: Zyuganov Calls for “General Mobilisation” to defeat the Ukraine*. The “communist” KPRF leader joins the long-standing demand of the hard-core sector of the Great Russian chauvinist camp a la Igor Strelkov, 13 September 2022, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/europe/russia-zyuganov-calls-for-general-mobilisation-to-defeat-the-ukraine/>; “Socialism” a la Putin and Zyuganov. On a telling dialogue between the Stalinist party leader and the Russian President, 13 July 2022, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/europe/socialism-a-la-putin/>.

14 See on this e.g. Michael Pröbsting: “Left” Stalinism and the Program of Russian Social-Imperialism. On the latest resolu-

tion of the RKRП about Putin’s “partial mobilisation”, annexation and the Ukraine War, 18 October 2022, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/europe/rkrp-program-of-russian-social-imperialism/>; see by the same author: *Russia and the Theory of “Lesser-Evil” Imperialism*, On some Stalinists and “Trotskyists” who formally recognize Russia’s class character but reject the political consequences, 28 July 2022, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/russia-and-the-theory-of-lesser-evil-imperialism/>

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16 See on this Michael Pröbsting: *Against Russia’s War without Internationalism and Anti-Imperialism? A revealing statement of the RRP (Russia) about Putin’s “partial mobilisation”*, 8 October 2022, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/europe/rrp-russia-and-ukraine-war/>

17 See on this: *An Important Step Forward in Revolutionary Unity! Joint Statement on the Fusion of the Socialist Tendency (Russia) and the RCIT*, 6 August 2022, <https://www.thecommunists.net/rcit/fusion-declaration-between-ct-russia-and-rcit/>

18 See on this Said Kaba - 1985-2022. Obituary for a Russian comrade, [https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/compilation-of-documents-on-nato-russia-conflict/#anker\\_40](https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/compilation-of-documents-on-nato-russia-conflict/#anker_40); For our latest critique of the ISA’s position on the Ukraine War see Michael Pröbsting: *A Confirmation*, Unfortunately. The ISA officially reiterates its refusal to defend the Ukraine against Putin’s invasion, calling it an “inter-imperialist proxy war”, 29 July 2022, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/a-confirmation-unfortunately/>

19 See on this see e.g. the pamphlets 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/>; by the same author: *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/>.

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21 See on this RCIT: *Sweden and Finland Seek NATO Membership: Down with all Imperialist Powers!* 17 May 2022, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/europe/sweden-and-finland-seek-nato-membership/>; Michael Pröbsting: *Only 6 out of 16*. On the shameful capitulation of the Finnish “Left Alliance” in face of the parliamentary vote about NATO membership, 19 May 2022, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/europe/finnish-left-alliance-parliamentary-vote-about-nato-membership/>; by the same author: *Crossing the Line*. A critique of Murray Smith’s article “Four points on the war in Ukraine” which falls into line with NATO in the name of solidarity with the Ukraine, 12 May 2022, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/ukraine-war-murray-smith-is-crossing-the-line/>

22 See e.g. *Ukraine War: Former Russian Members of Alan Woods’ IMT Speak Out*. Two Interviews with a Preface of the Revolutionary Communist International Tendency (RCIT), 29 October 2022, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/europe/ukraine-war-former-russian-members-of-alan-woods-imt-speak-out/>

23 *Open Letter to all Socialists in Russia: Unite in Fighting Russian Imperialism!* Open Letter by the Socialist Tendency (Russia) and the RCIT, 12 July 2022, <https://www.thecommunists.net/rcit/open-letter-to-all-socialists-in-russia-12-07-2022/>

# “Left” Stalinism and the Program of Russian Social-Imperialism

## On the latest resolution of the RKR about Putin’s “partial mobilisation”, annexation and the Ukraine War

By Michael Pröbsting, International Secretary of the Revolutionary Communist International Tendency (RCIT), 18.10.2022

The so-called “Russian Communist Workers’ Party of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union” (PKPPI-KPCC, in the following: RKR), led by Viktor Tyulkin, is an “orthodox” Stalinist party. While substantially smaller than its bigger “brother” – Zyuganov’s KPRF – it is still a sizeable party which claims a membership of several tens of thousand members.

As we elaborated in an essay published a few months ago, the RKR recognises – in contrast to the KPRF as well as pseudo-Trotskyist groups like Alan Woods’ IMT – the imperialist nature of Russia. ° However, such insight is eclipsed by its vulgar thesis that Russia is a “lesser-evil” imperialism which communists should support against the Ukraine as well as against Western imperialism. At this point we shall not repeat our arguments against this pathetic theory of “lesser-evil” imperialism which served Stalinism in the past century as justification for its collaboration with, alternating Anglo-Saxon and Nazi-German, imperialist powers. °

We explained in this essay that today this lesser-evil theory serves these Stalinists as justification for supporting Putin’s invasion and its brutal colonial war against the Ukraine. In contrast, authentic Marxists have recognised the *dual character* of this conflict since the very beginning. It is an imperialist war waged by Russia against the Ukraine. 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 and its comrades in *Socialist Tendency* (Russia) have advocated since the beginning of the war: *Defend the Ukraine against Putin’s invasion! Against Russian and against NATO imperialism!*<sup>1</sup>

Shamefully, the RKR leadership stands on the other side of the barricade. While formally acknowledging Russia’s bourgeois and imperialist character, it still advocates support for Russia’s invasion and annexation of the Ukraine under the pretext of the struggle “against fascism and NATO”.

### To the last consequence

The latest resolution of the RKR’s Central Committee not only confirms our critique of this party but also demonstrates that it is prepared to carry out its social-imperialist policy to the last consequence.<sup>2</sup>

Let us start with reproducing the most important excerpts of this statement. First, the RKR repeats its “lesser-evil” theory. “The cause of the war is the struggle of the largest imperialist predators, led by the United States, for world hegemony. (...) Russian imperialism, which is much weaker and in its infancy, is fighting for its place in the market world, for the right to exploit the country’s energy and other resources.”

So, despite its imperialist character, Russia is able to wage progressive wars ... because of its supposed “Soviet legacy” (which, as everyone knows, has been violently denounced by Yeltsin and Putin since more than three de-

cares!)<sup>3</sup> In contrast, both the Ukraine as well as NATO are “fascist”.

“The scientific assessment given by our party of the aggressive foreign policy of the United States and its NATO allies, as objectively fascist, continuing the chain of reprisals against sovereign states: Yugoslavia, Iraq, Libya, Syria, Donbass, was confirmed by our party. Today, on the territory of Ukraine, more than 50 countries are waging war with Russia and Donbass under the iron control of the United States. Ukrainian fascism, which is a product of the policy of American mentors, is real living fascism, which recognizes itself as fascism - the heir of Hitler’s accomplices. Due to the presence of the Soviet military legacy, Russia today is the only country capable of resisting the predatory pack of imperialists led by the United States. In the event of Russia’s defeat, repeating the fate of Yugoslavia, Iraq, Libya, the iron heel of the modern fascist dictatorship will be established over most countries of the world for a long time. In this regard, the struggle of the Russian armed forces to suppress fascism in Ukraine is legitimate.”

It is not difficult to see that the RKR applies not a scientific but a charlatan-type of analysis. If the NATO countries are not only imperialist (which they are, of course) but also “fascist”, how do these party leaders explain that bourgeois democracy exists in most of these countries, with limited democratic rights and many trade unions and parties (including “communist” parties which are certainly no less “communist” than the RKR – not that this party sets the bar very high!). Does this not make a mockery of the category “fascist” ... or of the RKR standard of “scientific assessment”?!

### “Liberate” the Ukrainian people against their resistance?

Hence, it is only consequential that the RKR leadership considers Putin’s invasion of the Ukraine as “objectively progressive”, despite its recognition of the bourgeois character of the regime.

“The Plenum of the Central Committee of the RKR decides: Recognize that the fighting currently underway against the fascist regime in the territory of the former Soviet Ukraine is legitimate.”

“We have noted many times that this war on the part of the Russian Federation, although being waged by a bourgeois state, has a defensive character against the imperialist policy of the reactionary alliance of Western powers and contains a positive component. The Russian state, while expressing the interests and aspirations of the Russian bourgeoisie to dispose of natural resources and to exploit the labour force, at the same time has to take into account the progressive sentiments of a significant part of Russian society. Russian workers sympathize with the Ukrainians, who found themselves under a terrorist dictatorship and total Nazi propaganda. Thus, the Russian bourgeois state is forced to suppress fascism and help the national liberation struggle in Ukraine.”

It is really unfortunate that the stubborn Ukrainians don’t view this war as one which would serve their “national

liberation" but rather as one of colonial occupation! They are so unanimous in their rejection of this aggression that since the first day of the war, tens of thousands of young men and women have volunteered to serve in the army to fight the invaders! What a "surprise" that there are no anti-war demonstrations in Kyiv, Kharkiv and Lviv! Compare this with the situation in Russia where people demonstrate against the war and against the "partial mobilisation", where the regime must offer relatively high salaries for men in the poorest regions of the country in order to make them join the army, and where hundreds of thousands of men flee the country so that they must not participate in this reactionary onslaught against the Ukrainian people!

It is obvious that the RKRП leaders, trapped in a bizarre phantasy world of "Ruskij Mir" social-chauvinism, wish to "liberate" the Ukrainian people against their will and against their resistance! In the real world, this is not called "liberation" of a people but colonialist rape!

It is also worth noting that the RKPR claims that Putin's invasion of the Ukraine has been caused by ... "the progressive sentiments of a significant part of Russian society" and of "Russian workers sympathize with the Ukrainians, who found themselves under a terrorist dictatorship and total Nazi propaganda." So, we are informed that Putin's militarism and aggressive foreign policy is not driven by the inherent expansionism of Russian imperialism (see Chechnya 1994-96, 1999-2009 <sup>4</sup>; Georgia 2008, Syria since 2015, <sup>5</sup> Kazakhstan 2022 <sup>6</sup>), by the Great Russian chauvinist denial of the existence of a separate Ukrainian nation, or by the pressure of the extreme right-wing warmongers a la Alexander Dugin and milbloggers like Igor Strelkov ... but by the "progressive pressure of the working class"! Welcome to the parallel universe of Stalino-chauvinist phantasies!

### **RKRП: Support Putin's war, annexation and "partial mobilisation" ... but denounce the anti-war movement!**

But neither logic nor reality shall impress the RKRП leaders. Hence, they call international communists to "promote" Putin's war. "Therefore, the RKRП and orthodox Marxists believe that the main task of the world proletariat now is to prevent international imperialism and its satellites (...) and Bandera's attack detachments from defeating bourgeois Russia. It is not in the interests of the working class that Russia repeats the fate of Iraq and Libya. The RKRП considers it necessary to promote the Special Military Operation (this is the official Putinist term for Russia's war against the Ukraine, Ed.) in terms of measures and actions aimed at defeating the Ukrainian Nazis (fascists)."

Once the RKRП leaders have boarded the social-chauvinist train, they are determined to stay on it and pass through all the inevitable stations of Russia's imperialist war. Hence, they call to recognize the shame referendums which the Putin regime organised in order to legitimise the annexation of four occupied regions of eastern and southern Ukraine (Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson and Zaporizhia). "Recognize the progressive significance of the results of the popular referendums of the LPR, DPR, Zaporozhye and Kherson regions on their entry into Russia. To express gratitude to the residents who showed courage and, under pressure and shelling from the Nazis, took part in the vote and retained fraternal feelings for the peoples of Russia."

Likewise, they support Putin's "partial mobilisation" to strengthen Russia's army and its efforts to occupy parts of the Ukraine. "Recognize the inevitability of military mobilization for the suppression of fascism."

(Dis)armed with such a program of full-scale imperialist militarism, the RKRП leaders are therefore only logical if they strongly denounce the anti-war movement as "agents of U.S. imperialism". "The liberal, pro-Western part of Russian society wants to take advantage of the situation and organize an alleged popular protest "against the war" and for the withdrawal of troops (...). We are already seeing the consequences of such protests, directed by the USA or its satellites, in Ukraine - the degradation of the nation to the state of Nazism. The same can happen in the Russian Federation and in European countries in the event of the defeat of the Russian Federation and Donbass in Ukraine."

It might cheer the heart of the RKRП's leaders to learn that Alan Woods' IMT has a similar view as it also considers the anti-war movement in Russia as "negligible and completely dominated by pro-Western liberal forces which are out of touch with the general public." <sup>7</sup>

Likewise, the RKRП denounces those socialists in Russia who call for an end of Putin's war. Stopping the war, according to these shameless social-imperialists, would only serve ... "fascism"! "Hence, they [some erroneous socialists] according to the RKRП, Ed.] conclude that the war must be stopped immediately and all troops must be withdrawn from Ukraine! (...) [T]he call to "stop the war" is tantamount to a proposal to stop beating the Nazis."

### **The "critical" tail of Zyuganov's KPRF**

The RCIT and its comrades in "Socialist Tendency" (Russia) have repeatedly denounced Zyuganov's KPRF which has acted as a servant of Putin since the beginning of the war. <sup>8</sup> However, while using more critical words about the bonapartist regime of the Kremlin than its bigger brother, the RKRП leaders essentially follow the same policy of social-chauvinist support for an imperialist war! Effectively, Tyulkin's RKRП is the "critical" tail of Zyuganov's KPRF.

Authentic Marxists in Russia must resolutely combat the theory and program of forces like the RKRП. As we noted in our above-mentioned essay on the theory of "lesser-evil" imperialism: "The theory of "lesser-evil" imperialism is wrong in principle. There are stronger and weaker, bigger and smaller imperialist states. None of them is a "lesser evil". They are all enemies of the working class and the oppressed peoples. The people in Afghanistan and Iraq, suffering from years of U.S. war and occupation as well as the people of Chechnya and Syria, tortured by Russia, bear witness to the equally criminal character of the imperialist powers of East and West. It is impermissible for socialists to lend support, in any form, to one or the other of these imperialist states. (...) The RCIT therefore unreservedly condemns the theory of "lesser-evil" imperialism. We strongly reject the position advocated by various Stalinist and pseudo-Trotskyist forces - like the RKRП (Russia), the KKE (Greece) or Alan Woods' IMT - that Russia would constitute such a "lesser-evil" imperialist power. This thesis is wrong and only serves as an excuse for downplaying the reactionary role of Russian imperialism. The practical consequences of this revisionist theory are either open support for its reactionary wars of aggression (RKRП) or, at the least, denunciation of the legitimate resistance of oppressed people like in Syria or in the

*Ukraine (KKE, IMT)."*

Make no mistake: the RKRП leaders and like-minded "communists" support Putin's invasion, they support the annexation of parts of the Ukraine, they support the regime's "partial mobilisation" and they oppose anti-war demonstrations. In words, they might swear to the "*Communist Manifesto*" of Marx and Engels and pray to Lenin on Sunday, but in deeds they are servile servants of Russian imperialism. They are enemies of the working class and the oppressed people!

V. I. Lenin and G. Zinoviev noted in "*Socialism and War*" – their well-known pamphlet published during World War I – that authentic Marxists must have nothing to do with any kind of social-chauvinist traitors. "*Social-chauvinism is advocacy of the idea of "defence of the fatherland" in the present war. (...) Social-chauvinism, which is, in effect, defence of the privileges, the advantages, the right to pillage and plunder, of one's "own" (or any) imperialist bourgeoisie, is the utter betrayal of all socialist convictions and of the decision of the Basle International Socialist Congress.*"<sup>9</sup>

It should not go unmentioned that the RKRП is not an isolated party in the international Stalinist milieu. There are still various forces which collaborate with these "communist" war-mongers or which, at least, offer them a tribune to spread their social-imperialist filth.<sup>10</sup> For example, their statements are regularly republished by [www.solidnet.org](http://www.solidnet.org), a website run by the *Communist Party of Greece* (KKE). The KKE is a key force in the international Stalinist milieu since it has been the initiator of the so-called *International Meeting of Communist and Workers' Parties* – a loose alliance which holds annual conferences since 1998 and which collaborates on a federalist and loose basis.<sup>11</sup> While even the KKE sometimes feels embarrassed by the shameless social-chauvinist tirades of the RKRП and occasionally criticizes them,<sup>12</sup> they still consider them as "comrades" as advertise their documents on their website.

Likewise, the RKRП was invited to speak at the "*Kommunismus Kongress 2022*" – a conference which was organized by German Stalinists in October 2022.<sup>13</sup>

### **The struggle against imperialist war necessitates the struggle against the social-imperialist servants**

It is an axiom that the struggle against imperialist war is impossible without struggle against its promoters, its defenders and its apologists. This includes particularly those war advocates who conceal their support for imperialist war with "communist" phrases. Authentic socialists and communists must wage an intransigent political and ideological struggle against such servile social-imperialist servants! Hence, our comrades in Russia have repeatedly emphasized that fighting against Putin's colonial war in the Ukraine requires a merciless struggle against its social-chauvinist lackeys like the KPRF and the RKRП.

In a draft resolution for the famous Zimmerwald Conference – held in the midst of World War I in 1915 – Lenin and the Bolsheviks noted: "*The working class cannot achieve its historic aims without waging a most resolute struggle against both forthright opportunism and social-chauvinism (...) and the so-called Centre, which has surrendered the Marxist stand to the chauvinists.*"<sup>14</sup>

This is no less true today when social-chauvinist parties like the KPRF, the RKRП or the OKP advocate the ideas

"*Ruskij Mir*" social-imperialism and support Putin's colonial war against the Ukrainian people. 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.

We repeat our appeal to authentic Marxists that they need to decisively break with those who contaminate communism with dirty collaboration with the "*Ruskij Mir*" social-chauvinists! Supporters of "*Socialist Tendency*" 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>15</sup> Indeed, this is one of the most crucial tasks of today!

### **Footnotes**

1 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/>.

2 Michael Pröbsting: *Russia and the Theory of "Lesser-Evil" Imperialism, On some Stalinists and "Trotskyists" who formally recognize Russia's class character but reject the political consequences*, 28 July 2022, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/russia-and-the-theory-of-lesser-evil-imperialism/>.

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/>.

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5 See on this e.g. our e.g. 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,

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7 The RCIT has published a number of booklets, statements, and articles on the Syrian Revolution that can be accessed on a special sub-section of this website: <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/collection-of-articles-on-the-syrian-revolution/>.

8 The RCIT has published several documents on the popular uprising in Kazakhstan. They are all compiled at a special page on our website: <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/asia/compilation-of-articles-on-the-popular-uprising-in-kazakhstan/>.

9 See on this Michael Pröbsting: Nothing Learned and Nothing Forgotten. The theory and practice of Alan Woods' IMT demonstrates its continuing adaptation to pro-Russian social-imperialism, 15 October 2022, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/imt-russian-imperialism-ukraine-war/>

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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 Tendency

## Spare the Dummy ... and Trotsky!

### Reply to a not very intelligent IMT polemic on the slogan of “Arms for the Ukraine”

By Michael Pröbsting, International Secretary of the Revolutionary Communist International Tendency (RCIT), 11.11.2022

Alan Woods' IMT – a self-proclaimed “Trotskyist” organisation with a London-based leadership – has published another article justifying its refusal to defend the Ukraine against Putin's invasion.<sup>1</sup> The most remarkable thing about this article is not the content but its formal occasion. It is a 3,200-words long polemic against an article ... published in April this year, i.e. seven months ago! That article was written by John Reimann, a 75-years old socialist in Oakland (California, U.S.) and an individual activist in various campaigns (incl. solidarity with the Ukrainian resistance).<sup>2</sup>

To our knowledge, comrade Reimann never wrote or said a single word about the IMT. So, one wonders why Alan Woods' group feels obligated to write a wordy polemic against an article published seven months ago by an individual activist? The reason is pretty clear: Reimann is just a dummy for the real target of the IMT.

As we did report, the IMT currently faces internal turmoil in its Russian section because of its treacherous position on Putin's invasion against the Ukraine. A number of members have left this organisation in protest against its refusal to consistently oppose Russian imperialism. The RCIT has dealt with the IMT's policy on the Ukraine War in several documents and our comrades in Russia have also published interviews with ex-IMT comrades.<sup>3</sup> Hence, the new IMT polemic is a badly disguised attempt to counter its internal and external critiques.

In itself, the article does not contain any new arguments. Once more, the IMT confirms its assessment that the U.S. is the “the most reactionary force on Earth” (this silly phrase has a near-programmatic meaning for Alan Woods which is why the author repeats it twice). Sure, the Kremlin's policy is bad. But in the IMT's fantasy world of semi-Putinism, only the U.S. and its allies are real imperialist powers. Russia has only, the article emphasises once more, “imperialist ambitions”. This is utter nonsense and ignores the fact that Russia is an imperialist power in its own right.<sup>4</sup>

Consequently, the IMT is incapable of recognizing the rivalry between the Great Powers (U.S., China, Western Europe, Russia and Japan) as a key characteristic of the current historic period.<sup>5</sup>

The IMT wrongly claims that the Ukraine does not fight a national war of defence but merely a proxy war on behalf of NATO. In reality, as we demonstrated in several article, they even consider Russia as a “lesser evil”.<sup>6</sup> Consequently, the Russian IMT section supports and collaborates with Zyuganov's KPRF – an undisguised Great Russian social-chauvinist party which has supported Putin's war since the very beginning.<sup>7</sup>

#### “Trotsky” a la IMT

It is not necessary to repeat here our analysis of the Ukraine War or our critique of the IMT.<sup>8</sup> At this place, we will limit ourselves to refute a blatant distortion of a Trotsky quote which constitutes the core of the whole IMT article at hand. The IMT author criticises Reimann for his

interpretation of Trotsky's anti-imperialist position elaborated in his article “Learn to Think”. Let us first reproduce the quote in question.

*“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 own 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 a 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-leftist 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 favour 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.”<sup>9</sup>*

The IMT author claims, after reproducing this Trotsky quote, that Reimann would ignore the “class aspect” in the whole issue. “It is very telling that Reimann omits the class aspect of Trotsky's argument. If we were talking about a working-class revolution in Ukraine, which overthrew the oligarchs, installed a workers' government, and then came under attack from Russian imperialism, it might be that the western imperialists would weigh the advantage of supporting the Ukrainian workers' regime to strike blows against Russia, though we suspect they would be far more reluctant. Our position in this case would be very different.”

Surely, if the Ukraine would be socialist, if Russia would be imperialist, the IMT swears that in such a case it would side with the Ukraine and that it would not sabotage Western military aid. “Unfortunately”, (in fact, fortunately, as it relieves the IMT from redeeming its promise!) this is not the case so Alan Woods' group can continue to call for the blockage of aid for the Ukraine.

#### The real Trotsky

In fact, it is the IMT which completely misinterprets Trotsky's argument. The quote in question refers to an attack of an imperialist power against a capitalist non-imperialist country. In this quote, Trotsky takes the example of a rebellion in Algeria – at that time a colony of French imperialism – which would receive weapons from fascist-imperialist Italy. As it is well-known, Trotsky and the Fourth International did side with the oppressed peoples not only in theoretical scenarios but also in the real class struggle. Furthermore, they took the same position in wars between an imperialist power and a *semi-colony*, i.e. a formally independent capitalist state which has a dominated position in world economy and politics.

For example, the Marxists supported the struggle of the China and Ethiopia in the 1930s and 1940s. *“Only, where the struggle is imperialistic only on one side, and a war of liberation of non-imperialist nations or of a socialist country against existing or threatening imperialist oppression on the other, as well as in civil wars between the classes or between democracy and fascism—the international proletariat cannot and should not apply the same tactic to both sides. Recognising the progressive character of this war of liberation it must fight decisively against the main enemy, reactionary imperialism (or else against the reactionary camp, in the case of a civil war), that is, fight for the victory of the socially (or politically) oppressed or about-to-be oppressed: USSR, colonial and semi-colonial countries like Abyssinia or China, or Republican Spain, etc.”*<sup>10</sup>

From such a fundamental differentiation between reactionary and progressive wars follows that Marxists advocate very different tactics. We are against the escalation of reactionary wars and therefore, socialists oppose the delivery of armaments in such wars. But things are very different in liberation wars! In such cases, socialists support the delivery of armaments! Trotsky stated, on the occasion of the Italo-Ethiopian war in 1935: *„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>11</sup>

Another example is the scenario of a war between “democratic”-imperialist Britain and a “fascist” Brazil, which Trotsky outlined in an interview in 1938. *“I will take the most simple and obvious example. In Brazil there now reigns a semi-fascist regime that every revolutionary can only view with hatred. Let us assume, however, that on the morrow England enters into a military conflict with Brazil. I ask you on whose side of the conflict will the working class be? I will answer for myself personally—in this case I will be on the side of “fascist” Brazil against “democratic” Great Britain. Why? Because in the conflict between them it will not be a question of democracy or fascism. If England should be victorious, she will put another fascist in Rio de Janeiro and will place double chains on Brazil. If Brazil on the contrary should be victorious, it will give a mighty impulse to national and democratic consciousness of the country and will lead to the overthrow of the Vargas dictatorship. The defeat of England will at the same time deliver a blow to British imperialism and will give an impulse to the revolutionary movement of the British proletariat. Truly, one must have an empty head to reduce world antagonisms and military conflicts to the struggle between fascism and democracy. Under all masks one must know how to distinguish exploiters, slaveowners, and robbers!”*<sup>12</sup>

As we pointed out in several works, these (semi-)colonial countries did receive substantial support from imperialist powers which were in rivalry with the aggressor (e.g. the imperialist League of Nation against Italy in 1935, the U.S. and Britain against Japan in 1937-45). However, in contrast to the IMT today, Marxists at that time did not use such support as pretext for dropping their support for these semi-colonial countries.<sup>13</sup>

### Silence on crucial issues

The IMT wisely ignores this fundamental position of Trotsky and the Fourth International as this would destroy their whole argument. This allows them to claim that Trotsky’s scenario about Italy’s aid for the Algerian

uprising does not apply to the case of the Ukraine. *“There is an important difference here. What is happening in Ukraine is not a revolutionary uprising by an oppressed colony or a case of self-defence by a proletarian regime.”*

Formally, this is true. The Ukraine today is neither a “colony” nor a “workers state”. However, it is a capitalist semi-colony! As we did show above, the Trotskyist policy of revolutionary defensism against imperialist aggression applies not only to colonies and workers states but equally to semi-colonies.

In order to cover its trick, the IMT simply ignores the question of the class character of the Ukraine. They could hardly claim that it is an imperialist state. That would be too silly. But they can also not admit that it is a semi-colony. Hence, the only solution is ... silence.

The IMT tries to present its betrayal of the Ukrainian people by claiming that they would be in staunch anti-imperialist opposition against the Western Great Powers. Nothing could be further from the truth! Just remember how Ted Grant and Alan Woods refused to defend Argentina against Britain during the Malvinas War in 1982?<sup>14</sup> Or their refusal to defend Iran or Hamas against Israel.<sup>15</sup>

In contrast to such social-chauvinist capitulators, the RCIT and all authentic socialists have always defended the oppressed people – like Argentina, Iraq or Afghanistan – against the Western imperialists!<sup>16</sup> But in contrast to the IMT, we apply the program of *revolutionary defeatism* not only against the U.S. but against *all* imperialist powers – the U.S., China, Russia, Western Europe and Japan. Where an oppressed people is waging a legitimate war of defence (like in the Ukraine, Syria and Palestine today or Iraq, Afghanistan and Chechnya in the past), we stand for *revolutionary defensism*, i.e. we side with their military struggle without lending any political support to their (bourgeois) leadership or to an imperialist power with which this leadership might be allied.<sup>17</sup>

### Misusing the slogan “The Main Enemy Is At Home”

Finally, we should also point to another distortion of the IMT: their claim that Karl Liebknecht’s well-known slogan *“The Main Enemy Is At Home”* would mean that Marxists must not support a (semi-)colonial country which receives support by their “own” ruling class.

As we did demonstrate somewhere else, Lenin and Trotsky always refuted such reactionary nonsense. Applying the IMT’s method in the past would have meant, among others, that the American and British section of the Fourth International could not have supported the Ethiopian or Chinese people in the 1930s and 1940s because “their” imperialism supported their liberation struggles in one way or another. As a matter of fact, the program of consistent anti-imperialism means that Marxists oppose all Great Powers – *their own as well as any other* – and that they never lend political support for such an imperialist state even if it delivers material aid to a legitimate struggle.<sup>18</sup>

We shall briefly also add that the IMT’s pseudo-“orthodox” emphasis on the principle *“The Main Enemy Is At Home”* is particularly grotesque since Alan Woods’ himself has repeatedly renounced Lenin’s policy of *revolutionary defeatism!*<sup>19</sup>

In conclusion, the IMT article is a badly disguised attempt to counter its internal and external critiques by using comrade Reimann as a dummy. The means of this strike

against their opponents are a) a shameless distortion of Trotsky and b) casting a veil of silence over crucial issues like the class character of Russia and the Ukraine.

Naturally, the IMT leadership is free to do as it likes. But, please, spare the dummy ... and Trotsky!

## Footnotes

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# Protests in Iran and Ukraine War: The ISA's Double Standard

## Unprincipled "socialists" combine opposition against Ukrainian resistance struggle with support for draconic Western sanctions against Iran

By Michael Pröbsting, International Secretary of the Revolutionary Communist International Tendency (RCIT), 28.10.2022

Since the beginning of Putin's invasion of the Ukraine, we have been forced to criticise the "International Socialist Alternative" (ISA) for its shameful position on this war. <sup>1</sup> Its international leadership, while denouncing Moscow's aggression, has consistently opposed the defence of the Ukrainian people against Russian imperialism, claiming that their resistance would only serve the interests of the Western Great Powers. While the comrades of "Socialist Alternative" in Russia and the Ukraine take a courageous anti-imperialist position, <sup>2</sup> the ISA leadership not only refuses to take the side of the Ukrainian people but even calls to stop any military aid to the Ukraine!

*"The real nature of the war as a 'proxy war' is being revealed. Russian imperialism — claiming to be fighting NATO expansion, and US imperialism — aiming to weaken Russia are fighting it out using Ukraine as the battlefield. Many internationally are expressing their solidarity with the suffering of the Ukrainian people, Ukrainians themselves are justifiably opposed to the Russian occupation. But the solution clearly is not, as many of those sympathetic to the Ukrainians argue, to step up the supply of weapons, increase sanctions and support the strengthening of NATO. This will only prolong the war, with all its brutality. On the contrary, only independent working class action, by the Ukrainian working class with appeals to the Russian working class and even soldiers to oppose the war, by the Russian working class to oppose the mobilization for the war, by the international working class by giving solidarity, and blockading the transport of weapons can stop this conflict."* <sup>3</sup>

*"We completely oppose the invasion and occupation of Ukraine by the Russian army, and fully support the right of self-determination for Ukraine. That also means opposition to NATO, and the massive increase in militarisation, the supply of weapons and sanctions."* <sup>4</sup>

### The Marxist position on the Ukraine War

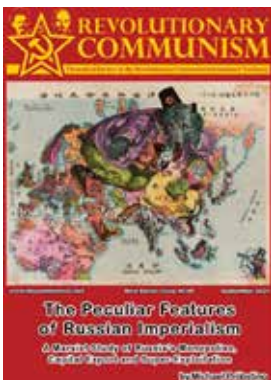
The RCIT has always strongly rejected such a reactionary abstentionist position. Recognising the *dual character* of the current conflict, we advocate a dual tactic. Similar to the approach of the Trotskyists in several wars in the 1930s and 1940s, we support the resistance of the Ukrainian people against imperialist Russia as a progressive and legitimate national war of defence. <sup>5</sup>

At the same time, we also recognize the reactionary character of the inter-imperialist rivalry between the Great Powers. In this conflict, socialists oppose *both* camps – Russia as well as NATO. We summarize the RCIT's position in the following slogan: *Defend the Ukraine against Putin's invasion! Against Russian and against NATO imperialism!* <sup>6</sup>

Based on such an internationalist and anti-imperialist position, we oppose Western sanctions against Russia since these are an instrument of Great Power rivalry. <sup>7</sup> At the same time, we strongly support the right of the Ukraine to get weapons from wherever possible as these can only aid the national liberation struggle. In short, we opposed measures which strengthen imperialist powers, but we support measures which empower the resistance struggle of oppressed people.

It is on such a political basis that the RCIT has been engaged in a number of international solidarity activities with the Ukrainian resistance struggle. <sup>8</sup>

As the quotes above demonstrate, the ISA leadership denounce any kind of Western activities concerning Russia under the pretext of "anti-imperialism". In reality, as we explained in our article, the ISA policy does not contain an inch of anti-imperialism! In fact, it is nothing but oppor-



## 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

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tunist adaptation to the pink-pacifist and semi-Putinista milieu of the Western left.

### Calling the imperialist states to fully sanction Iran

Our assessment is fully confirmed by the ISA's policy which its leadership is currently advocating in the international solidarity movement with the mass protests in Iran. Here they combine support for this popular uprising – which, of course, is an obligatory duty for each and every socialist<sup>9</sup> – with shameless advocacy of imperialist sanctions against Iran!

True, in general proclamations the ISA opposes Western sanctions.<sup>10</sup> But in their concrete Iran solidarity work, they make Trump look like a toothless pacifist. In a recently adopted manifesto, they call for the expropriation of Iranian assets abroad (something which the U.S. and other imperialist governments have done already in the past).

*"The sanctions decided by the EU are ultimately toothless symbolic politics. Only after weeks of protests did the EU decide to issue very limited entry bans and to freeze assets. As a labor movement in Austria, we must expropriate these assets."*<sup>11</sup>

Of course, for authentic Marxists the real problem with Western sanctions against Iran is not that these are "toothless" but rather that these measures strengthen the imperialist powers at the cost of Iran – a semi-colonial country of the Global South!

The ISA leaders might defend themselves by referring to the addition that they say: *"As a labor movement in Austria, we must expropriate these assets."* However, as every person living in this universe – and not in the phantasy world of ISA ideologists – knows, the labour movement can only expropriate the assets of Iran (or any other state) *after* it has taken power! Unfortunately, people of this mortal world (and not the Everafter) recognise that the labour movement in Austria (or any other Western countries) still has a stiff job to do until they can overthrow of the ruling class! In short, the call for the expropriation of Iran's assets effectively legitimises the imperialist policy.

The ISA's leadership advocacy of imperialist sanctions against Iran becomes particularly obvious in Austria. This example is telling because a) it is the country where the ISA's Iranian solidarity work has materialised and b) the local leaders play an important role in the ISA's international leadership.

In its articles and statements, the ISA in Austria demands not only the expropriation of *"all assets of the (Iranian) regime and associated organisations"*. They even call for the *"closure of Iran's embassy"* and the *"expulsions of all diplomatic personnel"*. In order to make the imperialist sanctions more effective, the ISA demands: *"Disclosure of the books of all companies that have done business with the regime over the past few decades to determine if those deals are still taking place indirectly. Confiscation of all profits derived from these deals."*<sup>12</sup>

This means nothing but stopping companies to carry on any trade with Iran. As widely-known, Trump and other Western imperialists have imposed harsh sanctions against Iran, prohibiting companies to do business with Iran in important sectors. But this is not enough for the ISA. They want to prohibit trade with Iran in each and every sector! What is this if not overtaking the Trumpians from the right?!

In another article, which repeats the same demands, the

ISA criticises that European governments have imposed only *"very limited"* sanctions against Iran until now and these were done only because of *"pressure from below by the global solidarity movement."*<sup>13</sup>

The European governments are also criticised for *"being interested in a nuclear deal"* with Iran. Obviously, the ISA prefers a continuation of the Western sanctions against Iran!

And to make its Trumpian policy even more explicit, the ISA calls for the *"closure of Iranian embassies all over the world"*.

In summary, the ISA calls imperialist governments to completely isolate Iran – economically as well as diplomatically.

### The hypocrisy of the ISA's "anti-imperialism"

The ISA's policy is nothing but complete hypocrisy. They oppose any sanctions against Russia but call for total sanctions against Iran! What a double standard!

Putin has slaughtered tens of thousands of Ukrainians in the last 8 months – are these people less valuable than the 250 or so killed demonstrators in Iran?! Cynically, the ISA even opposes military aid to the Ukraine which it needs for repulsing the invaders!

The reactionary regime in Iran oppresses women. But is the Putin regime – which is known for its homophobic tirades and which just now adopts in its Duma a draconic anti-LGBT+ bill – any better?!

The ISA's call for sanctions against Iran is particularly outrageous because, on one hand, it (correctly) opposes sanctions against Russia – a country which is an imperialist Great Power. But, on the other hand, it calls the Western imperialists to fully sanction Iran – a country which is not an imperialist state but a semi-colonial country! And, furthermore, it is a semi-colonial country which suffers from Western and Israeli aggression since more than four decades! Obviously, these sanctions are not enough for the ISA leaders, so they call for even more!

As we did point out repeatedly, this pro-sanction policy is a continuation of the ISA's (and its predecessor organization, the CWI) repeated failure to defend semi-colonial countries against imperialist aggression. The same with its long-standing support for "left" Zionism and its two-state concept.<sup>14</sup>

Likewise, we have not forgotten that the ISA leaders publicly stated their support for *Charlie Hebdo* – the Islamophobic and racist magazine in France which is known for its outrageous anti-Muslim caricatures. These "anti-imperialists" even participated in demonstrations of support organized by European governments after the armed attack on the *Charlie Hebdo* headquarter in 2015.<sup>15</sup>

Given such hypocrisy, it is impossible to ignore the fact that the ISA's policy on the Ukraine War and on Iran appeals to one and the same petty-bourgeois, liberal milieu in Western countries which is dominated by sympathies for Russia and China as well as by Islamophobic prejudices.

We conclude this article by repeating that socialists in the ISA need to draw conclusions. The leadership of this organisation has proven to be an opponent of the Ukrainian resistance struggle. It denounces Western sanctions against Russian imperialism but calls for harshest possible

sanctions by the same Western powers against semi-colonial Iran!

Those who don't want to become part of such a shameful policy must take decisive steps to free themselves from political captivity. This means to break with the ISA and to join forces with authentic revolutionaries on the basis of a consistent internationalist and anti-imperialist program! Comrades, don't hesitate – let us fight together for such a program!

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