

Russian Pabloites and Ukraine's pseudo-left "Social Movement" back NATO war against Russia

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The Russian Socialist Movement (RSM), and the Ukrainian group Sotsialnyi rukh (Social Movement, SR), a SYRIZA-style formation, published a joint statement on the Pabloite International Viewpoint website that calls for an escalation of NATO's proxy war in Ukraine against Russia.

The statement, "Against Russian Imperialism," is explicitly addressed against anyone refusing to line up behind US imperialism in the conflict with Russia over Ukraine.

"It is Putin, not NATO, who is waging war on Ukraine," it declares. "That is why it is essential to shift our focus from Western imperialism to Putin's aggressive imperialism, which has an ideological and political basis in addition to an economic one."

This statement turns reality on its head.

While the RSM and SR proclaim that "Putin's aggression is hard to explain rationally," it was, in fact, deliberately provoked by decades of NATO expansion to Russia's borders and, in particular, the heavy intervention of imperialism in Ukraine.

In 2014, the US backed the overthrow of the Yanukovich government that had rejected an association agreement with the European Union. The RSM supported the coup at the time and even justified collaboration with the neo-fascist forces that played the principal role in carrying it out.

Since then, Ukraine was built up as an attack dog against Russia. The country's military was massively expanded and armed with NATO weapons. The new military strategy adopted by the Kiev government in March 2021 left no doubt that this military build-up was in preparation for war with Russia: it openly proclaimed that "retaking" the Black Sea peninsula Crimea and the Donbas was the military objective of Kiev. Throughout 2021, the US and NATO did everything to bolster these reckless provocations, openly backing the "Crimean platform" and staging one major NATO exercise on Russia's border after another.

Against this background, the invasion of Ukraine by the Putin regime *can* be explained: it is a desperate and bankrupt attempt to defend the national interests of the Russian oligarchy and somehow force the imperialist powers to the bargaining

table.

One can oppose the invasion and the Putin regime without lining up behind US imperialism, from the standpoint of revolutionary internationalism, fighting to unify workers in Russia, Ukraine, across Europe and the US in a joint struggle against imperialist war and for the overthrow of capitalism.

It is precisely against this genuinely left-wing opposition to the war that the statement by the RSM and SR is written.

The Pabloites effectively express support for NATO's military build-up against Russia. Their statement explicitly rejects calls "to demilitarize Eastern Europe," as "naïve" because this would "only be appeasing Putin and will make Eastern European countries vulnerable to Putin's aggression. Discourse about NATO expansion obscures Putin's desire to divide the spheres of influence in Europe between the US and Russia."

In other words, the position of the RSM and SR is not only that Eastern Europe should remain a massive military base of operations for the NATO powers, above all the US, but the division of the region into "spheres of influence" should be resolved in favour of NATO.

The statement also provides a cover for the fascist shock troops of imperialism in the region. It describes the neo-Nazi Azov Battalion, which openly places itself in the tradition of Nazi collaborationist, Ukrainian nationalist forces as "a problem," but then, absurdly, claims that "unlike in 2014, the far right is not playing a prominent role in today's war, which has become a people's war."

This is an outright lie. The neo-Nazi Azov Battalion and similar far-right paramilitary formations—which, as of 2020, constituted 100,000 troops or about 40 percent of Ukraine's armed forces—are central to the military and political operations of imperialism and the Kiev regime.

The Azov Battalion, now fully integrated into the army, forms the backbone of Ukraine's military operation against Russia's forces in Mariupol, a city of key strategic importance. Members of the Azov Battalion were among the first to enter Bucha near Kiev. Their commanders are being awarded orders of "heroes of Ukraine" by the government, and President

Zelensky recently even invited a member of Azov to accompany him on his official trip to Greece.

Moreover, with open state backing, the Azov Battalion is recruiting far-right forces from all over the world who are using the war in Ukraine as a training ground where they can network and get combat experience with advanced NATO weapons' systems.

The RSM and SR not only cover up this process, they even argue for its escalation.

Their statement explicitly calls for more NATO weapons for Ukraine—many of which are ending up in the hands of fascist formations like the Azov Battalion. To the Pabloites, the over \$2.6 billion of NATO weapons delivered by the White House alone since the war began are not enough.

Claiming that the EU had already delivered weapons to Russia in the past, they write, “The discussion about whether weapons sent to the region end up in the right or wrong hands sounds a bit belated. They are already in bad hands, and EU countries would only be righting their earlier wrongs by providing weapons to Ukraine.”

In other words, the Pabloites' “opposition” to “Russian imperialism” translates into the demand for the EU and NATO to deliver more weapons into the “better hands” of Ukraine's military and fascist forces.

The statement also singles out as a specific demand the provision to Ukraine of “air defence systems”—that is, advanced weaponry capable of shooting down Russian aircraft. This demand, which was published on April 9, was issued the very same weekend that the US and European powers announced that it would be doing exactly this, providing Ukraine with weapons that would allow it to strike territory within Russia. The Kremlin has long warned that it might consider such a move as direct NATO involvement in the war and respond accordingly.

In order to somehow present this right-wing tirade, which reads like a compilation of NATO talking points, as “left-wing,” the RSM and SR insist that Russia is an “imperialist” country. Making no serious attempt to justify this assessment, they only point to the “rhetoric” of the Putin regime and its nationalism. This argument has nothing in common with the Marxist understanding of imperialism and can provide the basis to designate virtually any country in the world that stands in the way of imperialism as itself “imperialist.”

While this position is both theoretically bankrupt and an act of political charlatanry, from a historical standpoint it is a logical extension of the Pabloites' hostility to the socialist revolution of 1917 and their support for the Stalinist reaction against the revolution, which culminated in the restoration of capitalism and the destruction of the USSR in 1991.

Pabloism historically arose in the aftermath of World War II as a revisionist tendency within the Fourth International. Amidst the temporary restabilization of capitalism and the establishment of the “buffer states” by the Soviet bureaucracy

in Eastern Europe, the Pabloites denied that the working class could play an independent revolutionary role and ascribed a progressive role to Stalinism.

On this basis, they advocated the liquidation of the Fourth International into the Stalinist bureaucracies and social democratic parties, claiming that the struggle for socialism could only be realized by pushing the bureaucracies “to the left.” In 1985-1991, the Pabloites lined up behind the drive of the bureaucracy toward the full restoration of capitalism, presenting this social counterrevolution as a progressive, democratic event and the realization of the “self-reform” of the bureaucracy that they had advocated.

Thirty years later, Russia's position in the world economy is defined above all by its role as a raw material supplier to more advanced capitalist countries—the hallmark not of an “imperialist” power but of a semi-colonial country. Not content with the only limited access they were granted to Russia's vast raw material and social resources after 1991, the imperialist powers are now seeking to completely subjugate Russia through a combination of military and economic pressure over Ukraine and regime change operation in Moscow.

Having completed their integration into imperialist and bourgeois state politics, the Pabloites now lend their full support to these operations. Far from representing anything even resembling left-wing politics, they are speaking for layers of the upper-middle class that see a future for themselves in a capitalist Ukraine and a capitalist Russia “without Putin,” that would be controlled by pro-US oligarchs and integrated into NATO. That this means not only the imperialist arming and build-up of fascist forces in Ukraine and across the world, but the very real possibility of a nuclear escalation of the conflict is not of the slightest concern to these layers.

Any genuine anti-war movement in the working class must be built in irreconcilable opposition to these right-wing forces, and the long history of the struggle of the Trotskyist movement against both Stalinism and Pabloism.



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