Speech to the December 10 IYSSE anti-war rally

The socialist and internationalist basis for opposing the Putin government and fighting US-NATO imperialism

Andrei Ritsky
10 December 2022

The following are the remarks by Andrei Ritsky to the December 10 rally, "For a Mass Movement of Students and Youth to Stop the War in Ukraine!" organized by the International Youth and Students for Social Equality.

Ritsky is a representative of the Young Guard of Bolshevik-Leninists in Russia. For more information on joining the IYSSE, visit iysse.com.

Today's anti-war event takes place in the context of a serious socio-economic crisis of the world capitalist system, highlighting the transitory nature of capitalist society.

The crisis is a manifestation of old contradictions, above all, of two fundamental contradictions: 1) between the social character of production and private-capitalist appropriation; and 2) between a globalized economy and the division of the world into nation-states.

The harmonious development of mankind and its productive forces is impossible within the framework of the capitalist mode of production. By its irrational character, this system proves the necessity of overthrowing it.

The current crisis is not only heir to the past crises of the 20th century, which caused two world wars and other social disasters, but also harbors the threat of a new world war.

The main driving force of a future world war is American imperialism. Its policies provoked the bourgeois Putin regime into a reactionary invasion of Ukraine.

The war begun by Putin's invasion of Ukraine on February 24 is only an intermediate stage in the escalation of a world war that will affect every country no matter where it is located.

The crisis facing global finance capital, especially American and European finance capital, is pushing it toward a new war to redivide the world in order to restore capitalist equilibrium and thereby preserve the capitalist order.

No matter how much Putin's capitalist regime tries to play on the feelings of the Russian people about the Second World War, which is called the Great Patriotic War in Russia, it cannot forever obscure the obvious contradictions between the class nature of the Soviet Union and the Russian Federation.

The Soviet Union was the product of one of the greatest events in history, the October Revolution of 1917, which gave birth to the first workers' state.

The historical circumstances were such that the first country in which the proletariat was able to take power was backward Russia, populated mostly by illiterate peasants.

However, the same causes that forced the Russian proletariat to take power before the proletariat of the advanced countries also contributed to the national reaction of the Stalinist bureaucracy to the international program of the October Revolution that Lenin, Trotsky and the Bolsheviks fought for.

This led to the degeneration of the Soviet Union and the emergence of a privileged bureaucracy, hostile to the international interests of the October Revolution.

The contradictory and transitional position of the Soviet Union was expressed in the formula advanced by Leon Trotsky: either the bureaucrat will devour the workers' state, or the worker will overthrow the bureaucrat.

The subsequent development of the Soviet Union confirmed Trotsky's formulation in the negative. By the mid-1980s, the bureaucracy decided on "perestroika" and paved the way for the restoration of capitalism in the Soviet Union. Russia and Ukraine became two of its 15 products.

The newly minted Russian bourgeoisie believed that it would be able to integrate into the global financial system while maintaining a benevolent relationship with the imperialist predators.

This naivety has been destroyed by the policies of Western imperialism, which is moving toward an escalation of war because of a domestic crisis that itself is a manifestation of the fundamental international crisis of capitalism.

The Putin regime has no means to stop this escalation. It only cares about preserving the privileged position of the Russian bourgeoisie in a country rich in raw materials.

All its dreams of a "multipolar world" are utopian fantasies of a class at the tail end of history. The Russian bourgeoisie entered the stage of dying capitalism too late.

As for the Ukrainian oligarchy, its demagogic rhetoric about the struggle for "democracy" and "a European way of development" is a vile deception of the working masses.

© World Socialist Web Site

The policy of Ukrainian capital, which is under the boot of Western imperialism, is incapable of solving all the most important problems of Ukrainian society.

The Ukrainian masses are faced with a very heavy historical burden. They are trapped between two fires: Western imperialism and Putin's national chauvinism.

While sincerely sympathizing with the current situation of the Ukrainian and Russian working masses, we urge them to rethink the events taking place in their territory.

Understanding the socioeconomic and historical reasons for the current situation will help the Russian and Ukrainian working class to realize the full importance of the struggle for internationalism, overcoming all national, religious, and ethnic obstacles.

It was the false policy of Stalin and his followers, running counter to Lenin's original national policy, that turned the Soviet Union into a powder keg of inter-ethnic conflicts, which immediately flared up as capitalism was restored in the USSR.

The fratricidal war between Russia and Ukraine is one of the gravest consequences of this false policy, for which the working classes of Ukraine and Russia are paying not only with a worsening of their situation, but with their very lives.

But, despite the conflicts among themselves, the bourgeoisie of the whole world is united on one fundamental question: that in no way will the world socialist revolution be allowed to take place.

It would rather drown the world in rivers of blood than allow the elimination of capitalism and the construction of a new social order capable of leading mankind forward without senseless human victims.

In both Russia and Ukraine, the ruling regimes impose and spread national-chauvinist rhetoric, trying to stabilize their own regimes through "national unity," which is reflected in the growth of far-right tendencies: The "Azov" Battalion in Ukraine, the "Wagner" Private Military Group in Russia.

The international working class, however, has a special place in the global economy. All international economic ties and the production of all the wealth of human society are based on it.

The position of the working class gives it a world-historical importance in resolving the contradictions of capitalism, which have an international character.

The internationalism of the working class can help humanity to overcome in a harmonious way all nationalist conflicts, including the conflict between Ukraine and Russia unleashed by imperialism.

However, objective factors alone are not enough to overcome the crisis. There is also the subjective factor. The working class needs its own organization, a party that will be able to defend and promote its interests internationally.

In this respect, the struggle by Lenin and Trotsky for the Third International against the betrayal of Social Democracy, and then Trotsky's struggle for the Fourth International against the Third International that had degenerated because of Stalinist reaction, is very relevant.

Both Trotsky and Lenin always fought for the construction of an independent proletarian organization, united at an international level. They saw and understood very sharply the question of revolutionary leadership.

It was not for nothing that the Bolsheviks succeeded in making the October Revolution, showing the importance of revolutionary leadership in the days when the fate of the revolution could be decided for years to come.

The crises of the twentieth century were not overcome because the world revolution, due to a number of factors, could not be accomplished. What the revolution could not do, the counterrevolution, represented by the bourgeoisie and the reformist and Stalinist parties, tried to do.

They managed to restore a certain equilibrium after World War II, but it was temporary and only raised the problematic issues to a new level, without solving any of them at all.

Reality has overwhelmed reformists of all hues. All the old workers' organizations have shown their counterrevolutionary character. The majority of workers and youth do not simply ignore these organizations, they hate them.

The involvement of the broad masses of workers and youth in politics is only possible on the basis of rejecting all the old reactionary organizations. The broad masses need a new revolutionary organization based on a commitment to the Bolshevik principles of 1917.

We call ourselves Bolshevik-Leninists for a reason. By this we emphasize our historical and principled connection to the struggle of the Left Opposition against Stalinism for the preservation of the traditions of Bolshevism. The Bolshevik-Leninists were the real socialist alternative to the reactionary Stalinist course of developing "socialism in one country."

They waged their struggle against the revision of Marxism by the Thermidorian Stalinist bureaucracy, whose activities later led to the restoration of capitalism in the USSR. It was from the international ranks of the Bolshevik-Leninists that the Fourth International would take shape.

The Young Guard of Bolshevik-Leninists sets itself the serious historical task of building a section of the International Committee of the Fourth International as an independent Trotskyist party in the former Soviet Union.

The emergence of our organization and the formation of a connection with the International Committee is a very important event that shows the revival of Bolshevik principles of internationalism on the territory of the former Soviet Union.

The International Committee of the Fourth International does not simply call for a mass movement of young people against the war, it seeks to lead it on a worldwide scale and to link it closely with the struggle of the working class as the only way to overcome the crisis of capitalism.

"The struggle against the war, means now the struggle for the Fourth International!" (Leon Trotsky, "The Fourth International and War").

To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact

© World Socialist Web Site