

# A letter from the Young Guard of Bolshevik Leninists to the International Committee of the Fourth International

Andrei Ritsky  
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*The following letter was sent by a representative of the Young Guard of Bolshevik Leninists (YGBL) in Russia to the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI). The YGBL has declared its political support for the ICFI.*

Dear Comrades,

In the last week, a very important development occurred that will affect the current status of the war between NATO-backed Ukraine and Russia. The situation is such that the supply of tanks by NATO countries may change the course of the war: from an indirect or proxy war to a direct conflict between the NATO countries and Russia. This development does not exclude the use of nuclear weapons.

Throughout the war, NATO countries have continually expanded aid to Ukraine. If current aid includes tanks, then what might future aid include? How long until NATO countries decide to close the skies over Ukraine with their fighter jets? To directly support the seizure of Crimea and even a nuclear strike?

Although the Western media periodically tries to convince readers that NATO will not use nuclear weapons first, this does not in any way negate the responsibility that NATO's policy could lead to the use of nuclear weapons by Putin's regime, which is in danger of being overthrown.

The Western media are trying to present Russian society as a country of monsters united by an intoxicated thirst to take over Ukraine. I am obliged to refute this slander. Russian society, just like the society of the NATO countries, is composed of two main warring classes: workers and capitalists. It is far from being as monolithic as the media tries to make it out to be.

What is interesting, the pro-Russian media comes to the same conclusions as the Western media, only for them all of Russia is united in its "national" struggle against "globalism and liberalism." In this way, they try to consolidate Russian society, which is not consolidated.

I want to make it clear that Russian society is divided over the war. There are at least as many people who want the hostilities to stop as there are people who support the hostilities in Ukraine. And these are based on the government's own figures. The real numbers will show even more opposition to Putin's regime and this war.

However, even those who back the military action are far from united in their support for Putin's regime. Many of those who support it do so on the basis of illusions that the current war is, in their view, a war against imperialism and a unipolar world. So, being aware to some extent of the reactionary nature of Putin's regime, they still support the war, because they think that this is the only way to resist NATO imperialism.

Undoubtedly, support for Putin's regime is fueled by the real threat from NATO, which is felt by large segments of the population. All of Putin's propaganda is built on mixing truth with outright lies. It aims to make workers, who are aware of the danger of Western imperialism,

entrust the fight against it to Putin, as if he were the protector of their interests.

And when workers see the militarization of the NATO powers abroad, especially Germany with its dispatch of Leopard tanks to Ukraine, they become increasingly aware of the real threat of a full-scale war with NATO up to and including the use of nuclear weapons. And since workers have an underdeveloped socialist consciousness, they see no alternatives other than Putin's regime.

The Putin regime is trying to bolster this patriotism, to which there is supposedly "no alternative," by using the experience of the "Great Patriotic War" between the USSR and Germany. But as part of this, there is real anti-communist propaganda. Putin is trying to put an equal sign between the current regime of capitalist restoration and the Soviet Union during World War II, which was still a workers state, though a degenerated one. And this despite his open hatred of the October Revolution and the Bolsheviks. For him, the main point is to "educate the masses" in the spirit of Great Russian chauvinism.

It is very remarkable how Russian propaganda works against Ukraine. Putin's entire "special operation" was based on two principles: "demilitarization" and "denazification." The second principle serves to cover up the first, based on making a deal with imperialism. Moreover, both principles only ended up turning into their own opposite: the militarization of Ukraine intensified, and the neo-Nazis only strengthened their places in the apparatus against the backdrop of war, eliminating opposition forces.

If Putin cares about the neo-Nazis, who have serious influence in the Ukrainian state apparatus, it is only in the sense that they serve NATO interests and support the anti-Russian campaign, both on the ideological and military fronts. If the neo-Nazis held at least neutrality, Putin would accept their existence. We must not forget that his idol is the reactionary monarchist philosopher Ivan Ilyin, who supported Hitler's rise to power and his "fight against Bolshevism."

Ultimately, all of these illusions, fueled by Putin's propaganda, will be under constant pressure as the Putin regime's adventure fizzles out and increasingly shows its reactionary nature.

Every worker needs to understand that it is impossible to defeat imperialism based on bourgeois nationalism. The bourgeoisie, despite its internal clashes, is nevertheless united on one fundamental question: the suppression of the struggles of the working class. This understanding is sorely lacking right now.

Russian society is split. The poor have a more negative attitude toward the war than the well-off. More and more families are being affected by the war. The mobilization that took place in the fall of 2022 strengthened the link between the front and the working class. Even if there is not yet an open aversion to war, as people fear reprisals from Putin's regime,

discontent is spreading. So many people simply do not understand what will happen next and what to do in such a situation.

The bankruptcy of Putin's "special operation," well demonstrated by the defeats of Russian troops in Kherson and near Kharkov, only fuels these sentiments. Even in official state surveys, many people openly express their anti-war views. The Russian working class has kinship, intellectual and friendly ties with the Ukrainian working class. It is disgusted by this war.

The true state of affairs is stronger than any propaganda. The deluded, exploited workers of Russia are slowly, through zigzags, making progress toward an understanding of the current war. Their situation fuels this forward movement. Not knowing what to do, the masses seek a sensible way out of an unreasonable situation.

Young people, as always, are the main representative of the anti-war wing in Russian society. But despite a certain progressiveness, the younger generation still has a number of shortcomings. Excessive opposition makes young people a good target for the propaganda of NATO countries. However, even under this pressure from all sides, the shoots of a future mass anti-war movement based on a socialist program emerge from among young people.

Putin's propaganda is also trying to pressure the younger generation. All the activities of his regime were aimed at fostering a "spirit of patriotism" in young people. The beginning of the "special operation" accelerated these processes to an incredible speed. The younger generation knows about World War II, but the regime wants to limit their knowledge to "the struggle against fascism" and "for the Motherland." The older generation has long been simmering in the cauldron of this propaganda, while the younger generation has a certain independence.

But Putin's propaganda, appealing to the experience of the war between the USSR and Germany, opens a real Pandora's box. Young people are drawn into the history of the 20th century; its most advanced elements do not want to follow the methodology of Russian chauvinism, but to understand events beyond superficial observation. A comparison of historical periods in the development of the country leads to interesting trends.

The attitude of the masses at large toward the October Revolution has always been contradictory, but since 1991 there has generally been a positive trend toward support for the revolution. In 2005, the Putin regime even abolished November 7 as a holiday and introduced a new holiday, November 4, "People's Unity Day." Even so, the trend remained the same. Currently, more people have a positive attitude toward the October Revolution than at any other time in the history of modern Russia.

As for the Soviet Union, the older generation has always had a positive attitude toward it. Young people have a more sober attitude toward the USSR, trying to make sense of its history. According to a recent VTsIOM poll in honor of the centenary of the Soviet Union, we can see that almost one in three young people has a positive attitude toward the Soviet Union. And this is after all the piles of piles and lies with which the masses were shrouded in the years following the restoration of capitalism.

The restoration of capitalism itself is associated mainly with negative consequences, with disasters for the general population. Only the affluent segments of the population have the most positive attitude toward it, justifying the transition to capitalism with the desire for "economic freedom." In general, we can note traces of class sentiments in one opinion or another: workers have the best attitude to both the revolution and the USSR, while the layers of the bourgeois have a negative attitude to everything except the restoration of capitalism, which gave them the "right to property."

Despite all the positive trends I have pointed out, Russian society still suffers from ignorance and misunderstanding of its own country's history. If the feelings of workers and young people have certain positive trends, their minds are still poisoned by many of the clichés of the Stalinists,

Gorbachev's, Yeltsin's, and Putin's propaganda. And because of this mess, many are simply confused in their understanding of the October Revolution, the Soviet Union, and the restoration of capitalism. This also contributes to the perception of the current war, splitting the working class.

One of the main obstacles to the development of anti-war consciousness among the Russian working class and youth is the absence of a genuine socialist and revolutionary voice. Russian parliamentarism, rotten to the core, in no way represents the interests of the vast majority of the population. All the current parties, from the right to the left, are engaged in a warmongering policy, echoing their "Western counterparts." They are trying in every way to ensure the stability of Putin's regime in a very unstable environment.

Of the illegal opposition, none of the parties or organizations can give a clear revolutionary program for the working class. Rather, each of them confuses the understanding of the current situation and splits the working class, weakening it. Of the "socialist and communist" groups and organizations opposed to Putin's regime, none can give a clear program for the working class.

The Stalinists, the Maoists, the Pabloites and others, all these political forces do not represent a historically progressive movement against capitalism and war. Each and every one of these forces has already demonstrated its betrayal of the working class.

The Stalinists are the main culprits of the current situation, since the war is one of the long-term consequences of the restoration of capitalism in the USSR, carried out at the initiative of the Stalinist bureaucracy. The CPSU's main heir, the CPRF, supports Putin's military action in Ukraine.

The Maoists try to confuse the working class. For some of them, the class struggle is replaced by identity politics. For others, worship of Mao and his guerrilla warfare is above understanding modern society and the key arena where the struggle between the working class and the bourgeoisie, the cities, takes place.

The Pabloites were the left flank of Stalinism, but they are now indirect defenders of American imperialism. Some of them are outspoken defenders of the corrupt bourgeois Zelensky government. Others bring confusion to the understanding of the war, downplay its risks and consequences in every possible way, thus feeding the ground for passive observation rather than intervention on the basis of a revolutionary program. Their practice is based on the subordination of the working class to legal parliamentary parties, primarily the Communist Party (KPRF).

The Russian working class supports the anti-war struggle in NATO countries in every possible way. This support can become a bridge to strengthen the international unity of the working class in Russia, Ukraine, Europe, America, Asia and Australia. In Russia, as in every capitalist country, opposition to war exists and will expand, but this opposition can only gain real strength on the basis of a scientific program of socialist internationalism.

We see that a genuine struggle to build and expand the International Committee of the Fourth International as the World Party of the Socialist Revolution is only possible through educating the working class of each country on the basis of bringing clarity to the history of the October Revolution, the Soviet Union and the restoration of capitalism, which is impossible without studying the history of the struggle of Trotskyism against Stalinism and Pabloism. This means that our activities, which are directed toward building a section in Russia and throughout the former Soviet Union, are confronted with a very important question: the elimination of all Stalinist and Putinist filth from the consciousness of the working class and the introduction of revolutionary clarity into it.

With revolutionary greetings,

Andrei Ritsky

On behalf of the YGBL



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