

For the unity of the Russian and Ukrainian working class!

Revolutionary greetings from two members of the Young Guard of Bolshevik Leninists

Stepan Geller, Andrei Ritsky
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These greetings were delivered by two representatives of the Young Guard of Bolshevik Leninists (YGBL) to the International Online May Day Rally 2023, hosted by the International Committee of the Fourth International on April 30. The YGBL is a Trotskyist youth organization in the former Soviet Union that has declared its political solidarity with the ICFI and joined the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE). Stepan Geller addressed the rally as a representative of the YGBL in Ukraine, and Andrei Ritsky delivered his greetings on behalf of the YGBL in Russia.

Speech by Stepan Geller, YGBL in Ukraine

My name is Stepan Geller. I am speaking to you, dear listeners, from war-torn Ukraine. This war was unleashed by US imperialism, NATO, and the Putin regime. It is an imperialist war, waged not in the interests of the proletariat of Russia, Ukraine and America but in the interests of capital in these countries. This war is the result of capitalism, a system stricken with a deadly disease. In anticipation of its impending death and bristling with weapons of mass destruction, capitalism is digging a grave for all living things, to bury them before they bury it.

Is it true that all the people of Ukraine support this war? My answer is: No! The claim that all Ukrainians support this war is a brazen lie. The main prop for this war is not the proletariat and the Ukrainian population, whose situation is appalling. The main prop for this war are the Ukrainian bourgeois nationalists and those they serve.

We, the orthodox Trotskyists of the Young Guard of Bolshevik Leninists, do not support this war, either in Ukraine or in Russia.

Yes, there are those in Ukraine who sincerely believe that American imperialism can stop this war. They believe that the weapons supplied to the regime established by the 2014 coup d'état and now represented by Zelensky can lead Ukraine to victory and end this war.

But in fact, US imperialism is fueling this war and inciting a third world imperialist war. The fomenting of this third imperialist war involves not only America, NATO countries and the Kiev regime represented by Zelensky but also the bourgeois Ukrainian nationalists, who serve these regimes. These forces call themselves supporters and ideological followers of the fascist Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) and the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA). They have unleashed terror against the people and national and political genocide on the territory of western Ukraine. They have sowed death, fear, grief and tears on Ukrainian soil.

They have poured blood into peasant huts and filled wells with corpses.

The WSWs recently published my article about these atrocities, which the bourgeois Ukrainian nationalists and pseudo-leftists who support this war have dubbed as fiction, as something that really never happened at all. Others have asked in the comments under it, "Why are you touching on Bandera, who died more than 60 years ago, and the Banderovites of whom there are only a handful left?"

One would like to ask such gentlemen a similar question: Why are you destroying monuments to Lenin, who died almost 100 years ago? Why do you destroy monuments to the Soviet people, dedicated to the Ukrainian people as well, dedicated to the victory over the German fascist invaders, when almost 80 years have passed since those events, when the crimes of the Banderovites were committed even after that war. Was it not to destroy the people's memory of those events, to erase the memory of those people and what was done then?

When after so many years we speak again and again about the Ukrainian bourgeois nationalists and their crimes, we say this for the working class of Ukraine and the whole world to remember. They must know who committed crimes against it, who spilled its blood and the blood of its children and grandchildren. They must know those who have served and are serving German, British and American imperialism, strangling and oppressing the workers.

The working class of any country, of any nation, must remember that it is not bourgeois nationalism but proletarian revolutionary internationalism that can deliver and liberate them, their children and grandchildren from poverty, oppression and injustice. While capitalists have bourgeois nationalists in their service and support, revolutionary internationalists serve only the interests of the proletariat and the revolution, not the interests of anyone's bourgeoisie: imperialist or national.

The working class and the revolutionary youth can stop the impending imperialist war only by their internationalism and unity. Only internationalism, not bourgeois and petty-bourgeois nationalism, can end poverty, human oppression and injustice.

The end of capitalism will inevitably come sooner or later. This end can only come under an internationalist strike at the heart of capital. Its demise will open the way to a new and brighter life in which all that plagues today's life will be gone.

Let the May Day of 2023 bring us all even closer to this new world, for which the real masters of the earth and builders of the new world have fought and will fight: the workers of all countries and continents.

Today, on this important annual event, I, Andrei Ritsky, am sending greetings on behalf of the Young Guard of Bolshevik Leninists.

Today, Russian society faces a socioeconomic crisis unprecedented since the collapse of the Soviet Union. An obvious manifestation of this is the war now raging in Ukraine.

Only 30 years ago Russia and the US were signing another nuclear disarmament agreement. But now we are on the verge of a nuclear catastrophe between states that together possess almost 90 percent of the world's nuclear arsenal. To make sense of this degradation in international relations, it is necessary to delve into the not-too-distant past.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the US declared a "unipolar" world in which US imperialism would dictate its terms to any country. At the same time, the Russian Federation, formed after the restoration of capitalism, began its course of "equal cooperation" with the imperialist environment.

Initially, the US could play the game of equal partners as long as it deemed it more necessary to turn its gaze to the Middle East rather than to the whole of Eurasia, of which Russia is a large part. The Yeltsin regime, followed by the Putin regime, continued to push the line of unification with the West. Russia even felt it necessary to join NATO.

However, the eastward expansion of NATO and the outright support for the 2014 coup d'état in Ukraine showed that the interests of US imperialism were completely opposite to those of the Putin regime, which dreamed of multipolar cooperation. This was reflected, among other things, in the conflict in Donbass, a local precursor to the current war in Ukraine.

The development of a domestic crisis in the US forced imperialism to go for broke. Direct control of Russia's resources could be very important for the US to resolve its crisis and support further rivalries with other imperialist and developing powers.

The modern Russian regime, in turn, emerged on the ruins of Soviet society with its rich heritage, which had been looted by the capitalist oligarchy. The final and irrevocable betrayal by the Stalinist bureaucracy of the gains of the October Revolution led to what may be called a sell-out of the great heritage won in the bloody struggle of the working class against exploitation and oppression.

The Russian oligarchy, the main heir to Stalinism, does not want to lose its privileged position by ceding it to imperialism. It therefore shows its teeth and is even ready for a military confrontation with NATO.

This position is perfectly expressed in the adventurous step of invading Ukraine on February 24, 2022. Weakly prepared and supported by the belief in a deal with imperialism, this move increasingly shows its reactionary and limited nature.

The goals outlined by the Kremlin have led to quite the opposite result. Instead of a deal with the devil, Russia is on the verge of a nuclear war with him. The belief in a "multipolar world" and the platform of bourgeois chauvinism are completely incapable of resisting imperialism.

No matter how much the Kremlin clashes with Washington, their regimes stand on the common foundation of private ownership of the means of production. They both defend the interests of the bourgeoisie against the revolutionary aspirations of the working class.

The current war in Ukraine is a consequence of the developing crisis of world capitalism. Therefore, the resolution of this war is only possible with the resolution of this crisis. To say that imperialism is able to solve this crisis means to condemn the world to decades of catastrophes ending in nuclear war and ecological catastrophe. To say that bourgeois apologists like Putin are capable of bringing peace is to believe that it is possible to pluck a weed without touching its roots.

The Kremlin, facing the threat of collapse due to the imperialist

invasion, is in acute political crisis. It is reflected in the constant squabbles at the top of the Russian ruling class and in its feverish zigzags; in the expansion of the repressive apparatus and tightening of laws, in its militaristic propaganda in schools and universities.

Putin, on the one hand, is ready to declare himself heir to the struggle against colonialism, on the other, he is slandering Russia's Bolshevik past. He attacks Lenin and Trotsky, the real fighters against colonialism.

The class wound of Russian society is making itself felt. The working class increasingly desires a speedy end to the war in Ukraine and expresses its antiwar stance, sympathizing with the situation of the Ukrainian workers. The working class, despite the outbreak of war, was able to maintain its militancy last year and, I am sure, will be able to expand it this year.

Workers understand that the war by the Kremlin will be financed at their expense, as well as the working class of other countries. Likewise, the Ukrainian, European and American working classes are now paying off the debts of the Zelensky regime.

More and more workers are facing wage cuts and even non-payment. It is no accident that the non-payment of wages was the main cause of the surge in workers' struggles last year.

Russian workers are as militant as any other workers. This has repeatedly manifested itself in their concrete struggles. A recent example was the strike of delivery workers at the company Wildberries.

But the brothers of Russian workers around the world should also know that in Russia the issue of working class political leadership is no less acute than anywhere else in the world. The current political forces calling themselves "leftists" do not offer a single progressive solution to the crisis.

Above all, these pseudo-left political forces stand on a nationalist point of view. "Legal" forces stand on the openly chauvinistic position of the Kremlin and defend Putin's invasion of Ukraine. "Illegal" forces mostly promote pro-imperialist or national reformist agendas.

They do not see that the war is a manifestation of an international crisis, not a national one. Therefore the resolution of this crisis is only possible on the world stage, where the main revolutionary subject is the working class, connected by the threads of global production, despite the national borders of the capitalist states.

They oppose the struggle for a world party of the working class as the starting point for the construction of national parties capable of advancing an international perspective.

I would like to conclude by saying that the International Committee of the Fourth International and its sections around the world are the only revolutionary organizations capable of resolving the crisis of leadership. This is based on the fact that for our movement, the revolutionary principles established in the century-long historical struggle of the proletariat, a struggle in which there have been grand victories and bitter defeats, are not empty words but part of our lives, part of the struggle against barbarism, exploitation and inequality between people.

This year marks the centenary of the founding of the Left Opposition under the leadership of Leon Trotsky, against the bureaucratic and nationalist degeneration of the Bolshevik Party and the Soviet state, personified in Stalin's rise to power.

The struggle waged by the Trotskyist movement against the Stalinist betrayal of the October Revolution has been vindicated by history. The Young Guard of Bolshevik Leninists exemplifies the resurgence of Trotskyism, under the banner of the International Committee, within Russia and throughout the former USSR.



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