

The results of capitalist restoration and the fight for Trotskyism in the former USSR

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The following speech was given by Andrei Ritsky, a representative of the Young Guard of Bolshevik-Leninists in Russia, at the International May Day 2024 Online Rally, held Saturday, May 4.

Today, on May Day, I send my congratulations and warmest greetings to the international comrades and listeners who have gathered once again to celebrate the Day of International Workers' Solidarity, which traces its origins to the May Day demonstrations of 1886 in Chicago and was enshrined by the Paris Congress of the Second International in 1889.

On this day of international working class solidarity, I call upon the workers and youth of the world to come to the defense of my comrade, Bogdan Syrotiuk, the founder and leader of the Young Guard of Bolshevik Leninists in Ukraine. Bogdan was arrested by the Ukrainian secret service (SBU) in a fabricated case of "violation of the territorial integrity of Ukraine" last week. He faces a serious prison sentence of up to life imprisonment.

The only "crime" that Bogdan committed was his conviction that Ukraine can become truly free only through the independent struggle of the Ukrainian working class, acting together with the international working class against imperialism and war. He advanced a principled political position based on a Marxist understanding of the war, opposed to the fanatical worship of Ukrainian nationalism as well as the reactionary Russian nationalism of the Putin regime. Like our entire movement, he has fought for the unification of workers in Russia and Ukraine with the workers in the imperialist countries, to put an end to a fratricidal war that has claimed the lives of at least half a million Ukrainians and tens of thousands of Russians.

The position of the International Committee and the Young Guard of Bolshevik-Leninists on this war is rooted in the theoretical and historical traditions of Marxism. For us, history is of the utmost importance. Without a correct understanding of the history of the Soviet Union, its dissolution, and the establishment of new capitalist regimes, it is impossible to advance a clear and consistent program of

action to combat the modern crisis of capitalism and the threat of a third world war, the wicks of which have already been lit in the wars in Ukraine and the Middle East.

The objective force of Marxism and its theoretical foundation, historical materialism, lies in the fact that it understands history as the struggle of social classes. Capitalists and workers are not just people on opposite sides of an enterprise, but classes with their own historical material antagonistic interests.

For us, the social foundation of a regime is more important than how it tries to present itself. This fundamental question in Marxist theory is very often denied by "pseudo-leftists" who try to pretend to be followers of Marxism or Bolshevism, but, in reality, worship bourgeois nationalism or imperialism.

The dissolution of the Soviet Union was not only the product of the betrayal of Stalinism. It was also a consequence of the changes in the world economy that led to the globalization of production in the 1980s. These conditions undermined the basis for "socialism in one country" as a practical policy of the Stalinist bureaucracy. Having reached a dead end, and fearing a revolt by the working class, the Soviet bureaucracy decided to re-integrate the USSR into the world capitalist system.

The dissolution of the Soviet Union proved to be a nightmare for the vast majority of the population. Pervasive poverty, looting of state property, banditry, a huge increase in social inequality, devastation in education, medicine and science. In short, the country was living the kind of catastrophe that wars and natural disasters usually lead to. The Soviet working class found itself divided and crushed. Imperialism celebrated victory alongside the newly formed Russian, Ukrainian and other oligarchies. Today, the disintegration of the Soviet Union is again making itself felt in the war in Ukraine.

The Russian oligarchy, continuing the Stalinist policy of "peaceful coexistence," believed that it could work with imperialism as an equal partner that would respect and recognize the interests of the Russian oligarchy. Even now,

the Kremlin is working in this tradition, despite the threat of direct war with NATO, and is eager to make a deal.

With the outbreak of NATO's proxy war in Ukraine, many defenders of both Putin's regime and Zelensky's regime have emerged. Each of them has their own arguments in favor of supporting one side. But for both of them, there is no class struggle. The defenders often like to talk about who is "responsible" for the war, thus shifting the question from the merits of the case to who first "started it." But according to Trotsky's correct observation:

Of decisive importance is the question, not of who "started" first, who appeared as an "aggressor," but which class is leading the war and on behalf of what historical ends. If the oppressed class or an oppressed nation appears in the role of "aggressor" on behalf of its liberation, we will always welcome such aggression.

The main argument of the defenders of Zelensky's regime is that it is supposedly defending the right to national self-determination and that it is fighting a war in defense of democracy against dictatorship. The persecution of comrade Bogdan gives the lie to all of this war propaganda. All those who are opposed to the regime are declared agents of the Kremlin and persecuted, threatened with imprisonment or even death. The Zelensky regime has refused to hold presidential elections and banned all opposition parties in the country, introduced anti-worker legislation, and is forcibly mobilizing half a million people in the name of alien class interests.

The main argument of the defenders of Putin's regime is that it faces the aggression of NATO imperialism and seeks to protect Russia from being carved up. The defenders of the Putin regime and its invasion of Ukraine prefer not to refer to their own history, recalling only the crimes of imperialism.

Putin's regime emerged out of the bureaucracy's restoration of capitalism and reaction against the 1917 October revolution. As the heir of the Stalinist bureaucracy, it has inherited all its counterrevolutionary features. Its principal function is to defend the gains of the capitalist restoration on behalf of the oligarchy. With the war in Ukraine, Putin is not "protecting Russia," but the national sovereignty of the bank accounts of Russian billionaires.

The outbreak of the war in Ukraine has aggravated the political crisis in the country, which is growing by the day. Despite the "positive results" of the presidential election, economic stability and success on the front, the country is in

limbo and a single overt action by the ruling class can trigger a wave of social anger hitherto unseen in the history of modern Russia. The economy will not withstand another major upheaval, and the front will not survive without the economy.

The ruling class in Russia is at an impasse. On the one hand it is under pressure from NATO imperialism and torn by factional infighting in the oligarchy. On the other hand, it is forced to reckon with the resentment of the Russian working class. More than imperialism, the Russian oligarchy fears revolution. It recalls all too well that the First World War ended in Russia with the coming to power of the Bolshevik Party in a working class revolution. No doubt, the Russian billionaires and politicians who today scream about national security will have no qualms to ask their NATO "enemies" of today for "protection" from revolution tomorrow.

Fighting for the revival of Trotskyism in the former USSR, the Young Guard of Bolshevik-Leninists is preparing the ground for the creation of sections and parties of the working class that will fight for the power of the working class in opposition to the rule of the imperialists and the oligarchs.

The workers and youth in the former Soviet Union are now being drawn into gigantic struggles, on which will depend not only the fate of the individual regimes, but of humanity.

No bourgeois regime is capable of resolving the crisis other than through war and destruction, because any other way would be contrary to its fundamental capitalist interests. The contradictions of capitalism cannot be resolved within national borders and on the basis of a defense of private property. Only the international working class armed with the program of world socialist revolution will be able to put an end to the wars and resolve the fundamental crisis. To do so, however, it must fight for its unity with its brothers and sisters around the world.

Today's celebration is an excellent step in this direction.

Long live the International Committee of the Fourth International!

Long live the Young Guard of Bolshevik-Leninists!

Free Comrade Bogdan Syrotiuk!

For the unity of the Russian and Ukrainian working class!

No to nationalism and imperialism!

Forward to the world socialist revolution!



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