

May Day 2026

The Crisis of the Putin Regime and the Struggle for Historical Truth

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12 May 2026

This speech was delivered by Andrei Ritsky, a representative of the Young Guard of Bolshevik-Leninists (YGBL), at the 2026 May Day Online Rally, organized by the WSWs and the International Committee of the Fourth International.

Over four years have passed since the invasion of Ukraine by the Putin regime. At the time, it believed that it could, through a single adventurous and reactionary step, present NATO countries with a fait accompli and strike an advantageous deal. But these hopes quickly collapsed. They have been replaced by hopes that internal contradictions within NATO would allow the Kremlin to carry out another maneuver. The rise to power of Trump seemed to offer a second chance for reaching such a deal.

But Putin has dragged himself into such a deep quagmire that no way out appears possible. The war continues. Russians and Ukrainians continue killing each other in the name of alien class interests, disguised by nationalist slogans.

Four years ago, my close comrade and friend Bogdan Syrotiuk, the leader of the Young Guard of Bolshevik-Leninists, delivered a speech at the 2022 May Day Rally. He stated, “The invasion has shown that the Putin regime has no adequate solution to the problems facing not only Russia, but the entire world.”

For his opposition to this war, Bogdan has now been imprisoned by the Ukrainian state for two years.

But his position has been confirmed by events. With its diplomatic maneuvers having failed, the Kremlin intensifies the pressure on the working class. Every day, workers are being instilled with the idea that they should forget their independent interests and submit to “patriotic feelings,” obediently serving the Putin

regime both at the front and in the rear.

The Russian oligarchy is not oblivious to the threat of European rearmament. It fears a major war. However, even more than such a war, the oligarchy fears that the Russian workers will recall their revolutionary achievements of the past. The specter of revolution is embodied by Russian workers and soldiers, who increasingly recognize the bankruptcy of the Putin regime’s policy, which is leading the country toward catastrophe.

The class instinct of the Russian oligarchy is especially evident in the state’s deliberate ideological campaign to falsify history. History has been transformed from a science into an instrument of myth-making.

The goal of this campaign is to make Russian history sterile, devoid of internal contradictions, class struggle and sharp crises. It seeks to make the younger generation believe in fairy tales about a unified and indivisible Russian history, and turn them into patriotic citizens who unquestioningly serve the regime.

The creeping rehabilitation of Stalinism occupies a special place in this campaign. Stalin, as “the gravedigger of the revolution” and bureaucrat-in-chief, serves as an inspiration for Putin and his circle. His murder of hundreds of thousands during the Great Terror, among them generations of revolutionaries, is now being whitewashed. Statues to Stalin are being erected across the country.

Meanwhile, the Kremlin falsely presents the current war as a continuation of the heroic struggle of the Soviet working class against the Nazi invasion of 1941-1945. But this heroism was rooted in the determination of the working class to defend the

material gains of the October Revolution—gains against which Hitler unleashed the full military power of the Nazis to destroy the workers’ state.

Today, Russia is no longer a degenerated workers’ state but a decaying regime of capitalist restoration. The Soviet Union was destroyed not by Hitler, but by the Stalinist bureaucracy. Today’s war serves the social interests not of workers, but of the oligarchy that emerged from this Stalinist counter-revolution.

Nevertheless, Stalin’s wartime policy appeals to Putin because even then the bureaucracy sought to shift the focus from class struggle to nationalism. The nationalism of the bureaucracy was tied to its concept of building “socialism in one country” and its struggle to preserve its privileges. It was a violation of the basic principles of internationalism that underlay the October Revolution. With his invasion of Ukraine, which triggered a fratricidal war between Russian and Ukrainian workers, the Putin regime continues this tradition of nationalist reaction.

At the May Day Rally in 2023, comrade Bogdan Syrotiuk and I called for an end to this war through the unity of the Russian and Ukrainian working class. Today, I want to reiterate this call. True determination and heroism today will find its expression in opposition to the falsification of a history and a struggle for the revival of the socialist traditions of the October Revolution in the Russian, Ukrainian and international working class.

Leon Trotsky’s struggle to defend these traditions from the perversions of Stalinism should serve as an example for us. Thanks to this struggle, we have a compass that helps us navigate the present. In defending the truth about the past, we are preparing the ground for a future worth fighting for, under the banner of the International Committee of the Fourth International.



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