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China Protests & Lockdown Left

On the Transfer of Russian Assets to the Ukraine

Great Power Rivalry: Conflicts between Stalinist Parties

The IMT's Adaptation to Pro-Russian Social-Imperialism

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Picture on the cover: Vigil outside of the Chinese Consulate in Toronto, Canada (Source: Wikipedia, https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/COVID-19-Proteste_in_China_2022#/media/Datei:Toronto_Chinese_Consulate_Protest_November_27th,_2022.jpg)

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Socialists Should Support the Transfer of Russian State and Oligarchs Assets into Ukrainian Hands!

Contribution to a discussion among socialists on how to strengthen the Ukrainian resistance against Putin's invasion without lending support to Western imperialism

By Alexey Sedov, Nao Hong (she/they) and Michael Pröbsting, *Revolutionary Communist International Tendency*, 15.12.2022

The *Revolutionary Communist International Tendency* (RCIT) and its section in Russia – *Socialist Tendency* – have supported the national war of defence of the Ukraine against Putin's invasion from the very beginning. At the same time, we emphasise the dual character of the conflict and the necessity to oppose both camps in the inter-imperialist rivalry between Russia and NATO. We have summarised this internationalist and anti-imperialist position in the slogan: "*Defend the Ukraine against Putin's invasion! Against Russian and against NATO imperialism!*"¹

On the basis of such an approach, we support the efforts of the Ukraine to acquire weapons from wherever they can such (including from Western states). At the same time, we oppose any political strings which governments of NATO states might attach to such military aid.

We apply our internationalist and anti-imperialist program also to the issue of sanctions. We support workers actions ("*workers sanctions*") against Russia as an instrument of international proletarian solidarity with the legitimate resistance of the Ukrainian people. At the same time, we oppose the policy of *imperialist sanctions* which Western powers have imposed against Russia. We do so not because of any sympathy with Putin or Russian imperialism. But we say that socialists must not support such sanctions because these are an instrument of imperialist Great Power policy in order to weaken their rival. Such sanctions aid NATO imperialism – but not the working class! – at the cost of Russia.

The RCIT's approach is based on the principle to support any practical step which strengthens the Ukrainians' war of national defence but, at the same time, to oppose any support for Western imperialists. We want to increase international working-class solidarity and raise internationalist and anti-imperialist class consciousness. At the same time, our tactic is aimed at undermining any feeling of national, cross-class solidarity of workers in Western countries with "their" ruling class. (Needless to say, that we equally oppose Russian sanctions against Western rivals.) Since we elaborated on this issue in much detail in several documents, we are content with such a brief summary at this place.²

In this article we want to focus on discussing a specific aspect of the issues of aid for the Ukraine and sanctions against Russia: what should be done with the property of the Russian state and oligarchs in Western countries which, to a large degree, has been seized by governments?

This issue has provoked discussions among socialists, particularly in Russia and the Ukraine. Furthermore, it has gained particular urgency given the dramatic social and economic conditions in the Ukraine as a result of Putin's devastating missile war against the country's infrastructure. The following article is a contribution to this discussion.

Destruction of the Ukrainian society and Russian property abroad

We shall begin by giving a brief overview about the dimensions of the destructions in the Ukraine. For a more detailed overview about the gigantic social and economic losses of the Ukraine since the beginning of the war, we refer readers to another article which we have published recently somewhere else.³

Naturally, we can only draw on the publicly available estimation, but they provide a clear approximation to the gigantic scale of devastations of the country's economy as well as of the society as a whole. The World Bank estimates that the Ukrainian economy will shrink by 35% in 2022, and other estimates predict that the contraction could be as much as 40%. About a quarter of the population is said to live in extreme poverty and this share is expected to increase to 50% by the end of next year.

As a result of the direct effects of the war as well as of the devastating deterioration of living conditions, one-third of the 44 million population has been displaced: 6.5 million within Ukraine and almost 8 million as refugees in other European countries.

No one should have any illusions: given the grim conditions of winter, the widescale destruction of the material basis of the Ukrainian society by the terror bombing of the Russian forces will endanger the lives of millions of Ukrainians!

While the exact amount of damage is difficult to assess, there can be no doubt that it is gigantic. Estimations range from at least \$349 billion (World Bank), \$700 billion (Kyiv School of Economics) or even up to \$1 trillion (Yuriy Gorodnichenko, a Ukrainian-born economist from the University of California).

Bear in mind that all these estimations are based on the level of destruction of the Ukraine until now. Every further month of Russian aggression will inevitably increase the destruction and, hence, the costs for reconstruction!

While Western imperialist governments have given some loans to the Ukraine, there is no doubt that they are using this as instruments to subjugate Kyiv by increasing its financial indebtedness. In 2021, i.e. before the start of the war, Ukraine's indebtedness was already as high as 69% of its annual GDP. This level has reached now – both because the collapse of the economy as well as new loans – about 83% and is supposed to rise to over 100% soon.

This dramatic development underlines once more why it is essential that socialists around the globe – and particularly in Western countries – campaign for the total cancellation of the Ukraine's foreign debts.⁴

At the same time, the Russian state and oligarchs store large assets abroad. As it is well-known, such capital export (and illegal money transfer) was highly welcome in Western banks and off-shore destinations for decades.

However, this has changed with the acceleration of the Great Power rivalry and the Ukraine War. The U.S. and the EU have frozen some \$300 billion in Russian central-bank assets held abroad which amounts to almost half of the bank's total reserves. In addition, the EU has frozen about \$19.6 billion in assets of Russian oligarchs.⁵

Socialist tactics on aid for the Ukraine

In such a situation, socialists are faced with the question how to deal with such Russian assets. As we stated above, the RCIT strictly opposes any support for Western sanctions against Russia as this is an instrument of the Great Power policy against an imperialist rival. We have no reason to support a policy which makes one Great Power richer at the cost of its imperialist opponent.

Of course, this does not mean that we would advocate a kind of defence of Russia. In case of imperialist sanctions against capitalist semi-colonies (e.g. Gaza, Cuba, Venezuela, Iran, North Korea) or against (petty-bourgeois or bourgeois) organisations of oppressed people (e.g. Hamas in Palestine) we advocate to break such sanctions. In the case of inter-imperialist sanctions, we don't defend one side but refuse to support such chauvinist measures of the other side.

But does this mean that we are indifferent on the question if the Russian state or the oligarchs get their frozen assets back or if these are transferred to the Ukraine? Obviously, it would be absurd to take a neutral position on this issue! Russia is an imperialist power which grabs Ukrainian lands and is currently bombing and destroying the country without mercy.⁶ The Ukraine, in contrast, is a semi-colonial capitalist country which faces a barbaric assault and imperialist super-exploitation.

In such a situation, socialists are not and can not be neutral. It is necessary to advocate tactics which aid the Ukraine and weaken the Russian aggressor without lending any support to NATO imperialists. Hence, we do not support the expropriation of Russian assets by Western imperialist governments. A socialist deputy in parliament could not support such a bill.

However, we fully support the direct transfer of Russian assets to the Ukraine without any conditions or any intermediate force. The Ukrainian state should send representatives to Western countries in order to facilitate such a transfer. A socialist deputy in parliament should put forward a bill in such a spirit.

Such assets should be used to cover the military expenses of the Ukraine as well as the costs of rebuilding the country. However, they must not be used to repay any debts. Quiet the opposite: socialists in Western countries should call for the immediate cancellation of all debts of the Ukraine.⁷

Furthermore, we call for abolishing of all protectionist measures against Ukrainian commodities. Likewise, socialists in Western countries call for direct and free aid deliveries of food, fuel, generators, necessary raw material equipment, etc. for the Ukraine without any conditions.

Of course, it would be foolish to have any trust in the bourgeois and pro-NATO government of Zelensky. Hence, we advocate that the Ukrainian workers and popular masses take all transferred assets and aid under their control. Such a demand is part of the socialist program of nation-

alisation of all key sectors of the economy (including the military-industrial complex) under workers control.

Likewise, we advocate that the workers in the Ukraine should control all military and non-military deliveries from abroad.

As long as the Zelensky government remains in power, we demand full public transparency of all financial transactions and spending so that the entire people of Ukraine can see it.

While we advocate such workers control, we don't put it as a precondition for such material support. It is preferable that a bourgeois government gets material and military support so that it is capable of defending the Ukraine against the Putin's invasion than that the country becomes a helpless victim of Russian occupation. Likewise, it is better that a bourgeois Ukraine gets access to Russian assets than such property gets back to Putin and the oligarchs or that it remains in the hands of Western imperialists.

We think such a combined tactic concerning Russian assets abroad is best placed to take into account both the necessity to strengthen the Ukraine's legitimate war of national defence against Putin's invasion as well as the principle of intransigent opposition against all imperialist powers (Russia as well as NATO).

Footnotes

1 We refer readers to a special page on our website where more than 150 RCIT documents on the Ukraine War and the current NATO-Russia conflict are compiled: <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/compilation-of-documents-on-nato-russia-conflict/>. In particular we refer to the RCIT Manifesto: Ukraine War: A Turning Point of World Historic Significance. Socialists must combine the revolutionary defense of the Ukraine against Putin's invasion with the internationalist struggle against Russian as well as NATO and EU imperialism, 1 March 2022, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/manifesto-ukraine-war-a-turning-point-of-world-historic-significance/>

2 In addition to the above-mentioned RCIT Manifesto see the following articles by Michael Pröbsting: Ukraine War: Supporting Western Sanctions Is Impermissible for Socialists! Support for the Ukrainian resistance must be combined with consistent anti-imperialism (a comradely critique of LIT-CI), 1 June 2022, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/ukraine-war-supporting-western-sanctions-is-impermissible-for-socialists/>; Why Socialists Should Not Support Imperialist Sanctions or the United Nations. A comradely critique of a joint statement of Russian and Ukrainian socialists, 17 April 2022, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/europe/why-socialists-should-not-support-imperialist-sanctions-or-un/>; No to Workers Boycott against Russia but Yes to Boycotting the Ukraine? On the support of the PTS/FT for boycott actions against arms shipments for the Ukraine, 26 March 2022, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/pts-ft-workers-sanctions-against-ukraine/>; Can Socialists Support Imperialist Sanctions? The "Fourth International" in the tradition of Pablo and Mandel supports Western sanctions against Russia, 4 March 2022, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/can-socialists-support-imperialist-sanctions/>

3 See on this Michael Pröbsting: The Gigantic Destruction of the Ukrainian Society, 12 December 2022, <http://links.org.au/gigantic-destruction-ukrainian-society>. In this article, readers will find the sources for the figures of the destruction in the Ukraine.

4 We have dealt with this issue already some months ago. See Michael Pröbsting: The Ukraine in the Imperialist Debt Trap.

The international workers and popular movements must campaign for the total cancellation of the Ukraine's foreign debts, 9 July 2022, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/europe/ukraine-in-imperialist-debt-trap/>

5 Figures on Russian property abroad are taken from Laurence Norman: EU Says It Can't Seize Frozen Russian Central-Bank Assets for Ukraine, Wall Street Journal, 30 November 2022, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/eu-says-it-cant-seize-frozen-russian-central-bank-assets-for-ukraine-11669827828>

6 The RCIT has published numerous documents about capitalism in Russia and its rise to an imperialist power. See on this e.g. several pamphlets by Michael Pröbsting: The Peculiar Features of Russian Imperialism. A Study of Russia's Monopolies, Capital Export and Super-Exploitation in the Light of Marxist Theory, 10 August 2021, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/the-peculiar-features-of-russian-imperialism/>; by the same author: Lenin's Theory of Imperialism and the Rise of Russia as a Great Power. On the Understanding and Misunderstanding of Today's Inter-Imperialist Rivalry in the Light of Lenin's Theory of Imperialism. Another Reply to Our Critics Who Deny Russia's Imperialist Character, August 2014, <http://www.thecommunists.net/theory/imperialism-theory-and-russia/>; Russia as a Great Imperialist Power. The formation of Russian Monopoly Capital and its Empire – A Reply to our Critics, 18 March 2014, in:

Revolutionary Communism No. 21, <http://www.thecommunists.net/theory/imperialist-russia/>; Russia: An Imperialist Power or a "Non-Hegemonic Empire in Gestation"? (Reply to Claudio Katz), New Politics, <https://newpol.org/russia-an-imperialist-power-or-a-non-hegemonic-empire-in-gestation-a-reply-to-the-argentinean-economist-claudio-katz-an-essay-with-8-tables/>; Russian Imperialism and Its Monopolies, in: New Politics Vol. XVIII No. 4, Whole Number 72, Winter 2022, https://newpol.org/issue_post/russian-imperialism-and-its-monopolies/ (the same essay has been republished by International Viewpoint, 21. April 2022, <https://internationalviewpoint.org/spip.php?article7618>); Once Again on Russian Imperialism (Reply to Critics). A rebuttal of a theory which claims that Russia is not an imperialist state but would be rather "comparable to Brazil and Iran", 30 March 2022, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/once-again-on-russian-imperialism-reply-to-critics/>. See various other RCIT documents on this issue at a special sub-page on the RCIT's website: <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/china-russia-as-imperialist-powers/>

7 See on this e.g. Michael Pröbsting: The Ukraine in the Imperialist Debt Trap. The international workers and popular movements must campaign for the total cancellation of the Ukraine's foreign debts, 9 July 2022, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/europe/ukraine-in-imperialist-debt-trap/>

Books of the RCIT

Michael Pröbsting: Anti-Imperialism in the Age of Great Power Rivalry

The Factors behind the Accelerating Rivalry between the U.S., China, Russia, EU and Japan.
A Critique of the Left's Analysis and an Outline of the Marxist Perspective

In *Anti-Imperialism in the Age of Great Power Rivalry* Michael Pröbsting analyses the accelerating rivalry between the imperialist Great Powers – the U.S., China, EU, Russia, and Japan. He shows that the diplomatic rows, sanctions, trade wars, and military tensions between these Great Powers are not accidental or caused by a mad man in the White House. They are rather rooted in the fundamental contradictions of the capitalist system. This rivalry is a key feature of the current historic period and could, ultimately, result in major wars between these Great Powers.

Anti-Imperialism in the Age of Great Power Rivalry demonstrates the validity of the Marxist analysis of modern imperialism. Using comprehensive material (including 61 Tables and Figures), Michael Pröbsting elaborates that a correct understanding of the rise of China and Russia as new Great Powers is crucial for assessing the character of the current inter-imperialist rivalry.

In *Anti-Imperialism in the Age of Great Power Rivalry* Michael Pröbsting critically discusses the analysis of modern imperialism by a number of left-wing parties (left social democrats, Stalinists, Trotskyists and others). He demon-

strates that most of these organizations fail to understand the nature of the Great Power rivalry and, consequently, are not able to take an internationalist and revolutionary stance.

The author elaborates the approach of leading Marxist figures like Lenin, Trotsky and Luxemburg to the problems of Great Power rivalry and imperialist aggression against oppressed peoples. He outlines a Marxist program for the current period which is essential for anyone who wants to change the world and bring about a socialist future.

The book contains an introduction and 29 chapters plus an appendix (412 pages) and includes 61 figures and tables. The author of the book is Michael Pröbsting who serves as the International Secretary of the RCIT.

Anti-Imperialism in the Age of Great Power Rivalry

The Factors behind the Accelerating Rivalry
between the U.S., China, Russia, EU and Japan
A Critique of the Left's Analysis and
an Outline of the Marxist Perspective



By Michael Pröbsting

Published by the Revolutionary Communist International of Theory

Nothing Learned and Nothing Forgotten

The theory and practice of Alan Woods' IMT demonstrates its continuing adaptation to pro-Russian social-imperialism

By Michael Pröbsting, *International Secretary of the Revolutionary Communist International Tendency (RCIT)*, 15.10.2022

Talleyrand, the famous diplomat in the epoch of the French Revolution, said about the House of Bourbon that *"they learned nothing and forgot nothing."* A similar statement could be made about the *"International Marxist Tendency"* (IMT) – an organisation led by Alan Woods.

Since years, they deny the imperialist character of Russia. Likewise, they have repeatedly failed to defend oppressed people against the aggression of one or the other Great Power. The IMT's failure to do so in the Ukraine War is just the latest example, as we demonstrated in several articles.¹

It seems that the words *"international"* and *"Marxist"* did find their way into this organisations' name only because of a big misunderstanding, caused by the vulgar empiricist tradition of royal *"socialism"* in the Anglo-Saxon world.

The latest article on Russia's imperialist war against the Ukraine fully confirms that this organisation has not only learnt nothing – in fact it increasingly adapts to the Putinist world view as it is promoted by the Kremlin and its spokesperson Dmitry Peskov. Effectively, Jorge Martín – the author of the article and a key leader of the IMT – presents semi-Putinist ideas in semi-Putinist terminology.²

Inspired by *"Russia Today"*, Jorge Peskov calls the recent strike against the Kerch bridge, which killed four people, a *"Ukrainian terrorist attack"*. However, one will not find such a damning characterisation for the daily missile strikes which Russia has launched against the Ukraine since then and which have already killed dozens of civilians!

Russian people – "particularly workers" – support Putin and his war?

Likewise, the article denigrates the anti-war movement in Russia as *"negligible and completely dominated by pro-Western liberal forces which are out of touch with the general public."* Why is it *"out of touch"*? The Kremlin's Press Service – pardon, the IMT website – knows the answer: *"The increasing involvement of NATO in the war, western sanctions on Russia and very provocative statements by opinion makers in the west, to the extent that Russia should be broken up, have helped solidify public opinion support for the war. Large sections of public opinion in Russia, particularly amongst the working class, now see the war as an existential threat to the country."*

Let us first note in passing that the IMT's author abhorrence for the *"negligible"* anti-war movement is so strong that he can not even utter a single word of solidarity with the thousands of activists who are victims of the regime's repression.

Anyway, the IMT seems to be uninformed – maybe their Russian comrades don't tell them? – that the Putin regime fully controls the media since many years and brutally suppresses any anti-war activities since 24 February. People can be thrown into prison even for calling the war by its name instead of using the official terminology *"special military operation."* Hence, it is hardly surprising that sec-

tors of the masses passively accept the official propaganda. Everyone with some knowledge of history knows that this was usually the case in the first period of large wars – not only in the case of the two World Wars but also the Vietnam War, the Afghanistan War or the Iraq War.

However, what is far more remarkable is the fact that opposition against the war and mass protests are already increasing – despite the severe repression and state control of media! As a result, thousands of activists have been arrested. It is estimated that about 700,000 Russians have fled since Putin declared partial mobilization on 21 September. In areas which are most affected by the mobilisation – North Caucasus, Yakutia, Buryatia and other regions populated by oppressed national minorities – large rallies, street blockades and clashes with the police have already taken place.³ Again, the IMT article tries to denigrate these protests by claiming that Dagestan is *"the only place where significant protests against mobilisation"* have happened.

Looking at reality via the Kremlin's glasses, Jorge Peskov claims that the regime is under no pressure of the increasing popular opposition against the war. No, since the war is – at least in the imaginary universe of the IMT – so popular amongst the masses, Putin can only come under pressure from those who demand an even more ferocious and deadly war! *"In terms of public opinion, as a result of the Ukrainian advances in September, Putin has been under pressure, not from the anti-war camp, but rather from the pro-war Russian nationalist right, which was demanding harsher action, including the use of tactical nuclear weapons!"*

One wonders why federal and regional authorities have been repeatedly forced to publicly apologize for mobilising all kind of people irrespectively if they fit to the official criteria of Putin's *"partial mobilization"* or not. And why was Putin forced to publicly announce a decree emphasising that a number of groups are exempted from the mobilisation? Does the regime fear that too many people volunteer for the war against the Ukraine?! Or could it be the case that a growing number of workers and middle-class people don't want to join the war and become increasingly suspicious or even hostile to its goals?! The IMT leaders in London should know a bit about Sherlock Holmes – they might get some inspiration from him to find out if the Putin regime suffers from too much opposition to the war or from too much enthusiasm for the war!

In fact, it is not the anti-war movement but rather the IMT and the leaders of its Russian section who are *"out of touch!"* However, the problem is not so much a lack of intelligence but rather the political method of this organisation. Incapable to understand the nature of imperialism and national oppression, they orientate to the backward sectors of the masses, those who still believe in the regime propaganda. In contrast, Marxists – i.e. authentic Marxists, not those who are still not out of the Woods – orientate to the advanced, progressive sectors of the masses, those who oppose the reactionary war of aggression and

who do not trust any longer the bonapartist regime.

True, the IMT leadership is not without criticism of the bonapartist Putin regime. But it has clearly more sympathies for Moscow than for Washington and Brussels. Hence, it claims that *“Putin is not wrong in his criticism of the west, though even these are partially couched in terms of harping back to Russia’s Czarist past.”* However, you would not find a similar notion saying something like: *“Biden is not wrong in his criticism of Russia, though even these are partially couched in terms of Cold War rhetoric.”*

Russia is (still) not imperialist?

However, the problems of the IMT article are not limited to its one-sidedness and its semi-Putinista terminology. Since the leaders of this organisation have nothing learned and nothing forgotten, they repeat the dogmatic pillars of their position on the Ukraine War. These are, first, that *“the conflict is fundamentally a proxy war between NATO and Russia.”* And, secondly, it denies the imperialist character of Russia.⁴

As we have explained in numerous documents, the conflict which opened on 24 February has *dual character*. It is an imperialist, colonial war waged by Russia against the Ukraine. At the same time, it is combined with the rivalry between the Great Powers of West and East. From such a *dual character* of the conflict follows the *dual tactic* which the RCIT and its comrades in *Socialist Tendency* (Russia) have advocated since the beginning of the war: *Defend the Ukraine against Putin’s invasion! Against Russian and against NATO imperialism!*⁵

This has been the method which Leon Trotsky and the Fourth International applied in similar conflicts in the 1930s and 1940s (for example, the Italo-Ethiopia War, the Sino-Chinese War or various national struggles within World War II).⁶

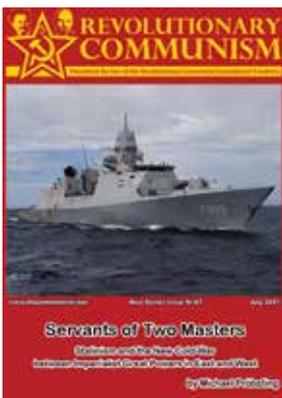
Unfortunately, the IMT understands neither one nor the other. They refuse to recognise the reactionary war of oppression which Putin has waged against the Ukrainian people. (Dis)armed with such ignorance, they repeat their failure to defend nations oppressed or attacked by imperialist powers. They did so already in the Malvinas War in 1982 when Britain sent its navy against Argentina, and they have repeated such a policy of adaptation to social-imperialism since then.⁷

At the same time, Alan Woods and his clique who run the IMT since decades stubbornly deny the imperialist character of Russia. They are ready to admit it is *“a power”*, that it has *“imperialist ambitions”* – banal insights which you can hear from some vanilla commentator at a news TV show. However, Marxism requires a bit more and, in particular, it demands the ability to make a scientific analysis of the major states and the relations between these. In other words, Marxists have to be able to analyse imperialism in the 21st century. However, this is impossible without recognising the imperialist character of Russia and China and without understanding the inter-imperialist character of the rivalry between the Great Powers of West and East. Surely, it will do no harm to the IMT leaders if they spend less time watching *“Russia Today”* and, instead, read some modern Marxist literature on these issues!

But since the IMT leaders seem to have a phobia of these books, they repeat – like Jorge Peskov does in the article under discussion – their dogma that Russia is *“a regional power with imperialist ambitions of its own.”* In other words, it has ambitions to become imperialist but is not imperialist.

From this follows logically, that Russia is the *“lesser evil”* in the Great Power conflict.⁸ Hence, the IMT leadership has sympathies for the Kremlin as a kind of opposition to the one and only *“real”* imperialist camp, i.e. NATO.

Sometimes, supporters of the IMT leadership reply to



PUBLICATIONS OF THE RCIT

Servants of Two Masters

Stalinism and the New Cold War

between Imperialist Great Powers in East and West

by Michael Pröbsting

A RCIT Pamphlet, 24 pages, A4 Format

Introduction * The New Inter-Imperialist Cold War * A View on the Military Strength of the Great Powers * The Main Point of both Statements: Siding with Chinese and Russian Imperialism * Stalinist Fantasies Shredded in the Light of Reality: The Rise of Chinese Imperialism * The KKE’s “criticism” and its fraternal bonds with the Chinese CP * Beside the Servants of Assad the Butcher - Who Signed the KKE-initiated Joint Statement? * The Xi Fan Club: Signatories of the CPUSA-initiated Joint Statement * The Concept of Multilateralism and Peaceful Coexistence: A Reactionary Illusion * “Socialism in One Country”: The Historical Roots of the Stalinist Concept of “Peaceful Coexistence” * Serving Two Masters: The Eastern Imperialists as well as Sectors of the Domestic Bourgeoisie * A Note on the tight-lipped “Trotskyists” (CWI, IMT, ISA) * Conclusions * Footnotes

our critique that there exist one or the other document in which the IMT occasionally mentions “Russian imperialism.” However, as we demonstrated in various articles, such exceptions have been the result of internal pressure by sectors of the Russian members of the IMT which forced the international leadership to make some concessions. However, one swallow does not make a summer and a few words mentioned in passing do not replace a clear Marxist analysis and characterisation. No, as a matter of fact, the IMT leadership considers Russia a) not as an imperialist power and b) as the lesser evil in the Great Power rivalry. Critical members in the IMT need to overcome any illusions in the political method of its leadership!

The IMT’s policy in practice: support for the Stalinist KPRF, a champion of Great Russian chauvinism

The IMT’s ignorance or downplay of Russia’s imperialist character is not only a “theoretical mistake”. It has a very concrete and practical purpose as it serves as an excuse for its orientation to the Stalinist milieu. This is most relevant for Russia itself where the IMT’s section leadership has been looking for alliances with the Stalinist KPRF since many years.

This has become a particularly scandalous enterprise since the very beginning of the war as Zyuganov and his KPRF have played the role of an ultra-reactionary whip! It was Zyuganov and his party which initiated the chauvinist bill in the Duma calling for the recognition of the so-called “Donbass Republics”.⁹ And it was Zyuganov and his party which played a major role in pushing for Putin’s “mobilisation” so that Russia could accomplish its imperialist goals in the Ukraine.¹⁰ And it was this party which unanimously supported the laws in the Duma which formally annexed the four occupied regions of eastern and southern Ukraine (Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson and Zaporizhia).

However, the arch-reactionary policy of the social-imperialist KPRF did not stop the IMT section in Russia to support this party at the regional elections taking place in early September. Worse, several of its leaders participated on the KPRF’s electoral list in a district in Moscow. One of them was elected and represents now this war-mongering party in a municipal council!

In short, while the IMT leadership in Russia formally rejects Putin’s invasion, it is in bed with a Great Russian chauvinist party which has unconditionally supported this war since the very beginning! What an outstanding example for political hypocrisy!

Recently, we noted in an article: *“The cycle of the IMT’s social-imperialist opportunism has come to its end and the chain of connection is simple and clear: Zyuganov’s KPRF acts as a servant of Putin and the IMT Russia acts as a servant of the KPRF. The centrist opportunist serves the social-imperialist and the social-imperialist serves the imperialist.”* There is nothing left to be added.

We repeat our appeal to authentic Marxists that they need to decisively break from those who collaborate with the “*Ruskij Mir*” social-chauvinists in the name of Trotskyism! Supporters of “*Socialist Tendency*” – the RCIT section in Russia – have published an “*Open Letter to Russian Socialists*” in which they call revolutionaries to join us in the struggle against social-imperialism and chauvinist patri-

otism.¹¹ This is the only way forward for authentic revolutionaries!

Footnotes

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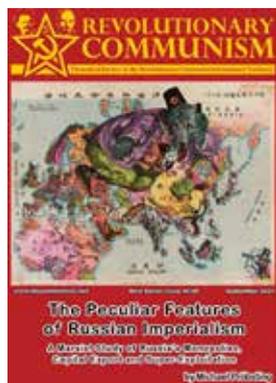
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Publications of the RCIT

The Peculiar Features of Russian Imperialism

A Study of Russia's Monopolies, Capital Export and Super-Exploitation in the Light of Marxist Theory

By Michael Pröbsting, August 2021

Introduction * Another Denial of Russia's Imperialist Character * The Methodological Failure of our Critics * Russia's Economy: Dominated by Domestic, not Foreign, Monopolies * Capital Export and the Problem of “Round-Tripping” Foreign Direct Investments * “Phantom FDI”: No Russian Peculiarity but a Global Phenomenon * Russia's Leading Multinational Corporations and their Foreign Investments * Imperialist Super-Exploitation via Capital Export * Imperialist Super-Exploitation via Migration * Conclusions * Footnotes

A RCIT Pamphlet, 20 pages, A4 Format

Anti-Imperialism: The “Right to Resist” ... and the Duty of Marxists

The centrist sophistry of CWI/IMT/ISA

By Michael Pröbsting, International Secretary of the Revolutionary Communist International Tendency (RCIT), 26.11.2022

The “Socialist Party” – the English mother section of Peter Taaffe’s CWI – recently published an article about “Ukraine and the anti-war movement”.¹ The article, written by Hannah Sell – the general secretary of the Socialist Party – basically defends the policy of this organisation on the Ukraine War. Similar to the approach of other organisations which split from the CWI in the past – e.g. Alan Woods’ IMT² or the ISA³ – it refuses to defend the Ukraine against Russian imperialism and characterises the conflict as a “proxy war” with no side to support.

The article is basically a critique of the Cillfite SWP/IST – another Britain-centred centrist organisation. This polemic is not of much interest. Both accuse each other of opportunism ... and both are right. Basically, this is a fight between two blindfolded people desperately trying to hit each other.

However, the article contains an interesting argument which demonstrates very well the sophistry of centrism. It is therefore useful for Marxists to understand such arguments as it reveals the real class position of such forces.

The CWI author criticises the Clifftites for their support for the Iraqi resistance against the invasion and occupation by U.S. and British imperialism. “This approach was sometimes reflected in Stop the War material. One press statement that ended up being circulated, despite attempts by the Socialist Party to get it withdrawn, called for ‘unconditional support for the Iraqi resistance’. The Socialist Party fully supported the right of the Iraqi people to resist, including with arms, the US and British invasion of their country, just as we support the right of the Ukrainian people to do so against Putin’s invasion. But that does not equate to giving unconditional support to all the forces – which included Al Qaida – that made up the resistance in Iraq, any more than it means giving support to the Ukrainian government today.”

These sentences demonstrate how centrists – in this case from the CWI/IMT/ISA tradition – conceal their total failure to take an anti-imperialist position behind pseudo-“anti-imperialist” phrases. Read the lines carefully.

The CWI supports “the right of the Iraqi (or Ukrainian)

people to resist”. However, the author immediately makes clear that supporting such “right” does not mean siding with the resistance which actually takes place as this “does not equate to giving unconditional support to all the forces – which included Al Qaida – that made up the resistance in Iraq, any more than it means giving support to the Ukrainian government today.”

As a matter of fact, the concrete national resistance which did take place in Iraq after 2003 against the U.S./UK occupation forces was led by petty-bourgeois nationalist and Islamist forces. Likewise, the only concrete resistance which currently takes place in the Ukraine against the Russian invasion is led by the bourgeois Zelensky government and its army command.

Supporting the “right to defend” is a non-binding, abstract statement if it does not mean supporting the concrete resistance which takes place on the ground. Supporting the “right to defend” in such an abstract way has the same meaning as someone hailing abstentionism in principle but getting drunk every other Saturday night.

As a matter of fact, centrists like the CWI, the IMT or the ISA have a long-standing tradition of refusing to side with the struggles of the oppressed people. As we demonstrated at various occasions, they did not side with Argentina against British imperialism in the Malvinas War in 1982, with the Afghan forces against the imperialist invasion in 2001, or with Hamas against the Zionist state in several wars.⁴

Of course, Marxists must combine their support for the military struggle of the oppressed people with unambiguous political independence. Hence, the RCIT never lends any political support to (petty-)bourgeois forces leading such national liberation struggles.

However, the CWI/IMT/ISA centrism refuses to lend any support to the military struggle of the oppressed as it concretely takes place. In effect, these centrists conceal behind phrases like “supporting the right to resist” their actual refusal to support the real resistance struggle of the oppressed people. In the case of the CWI/IMT/ISA, “the

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right to resist“ hides their anti-Marxist position of neutrality in confrontations between imperialist Great Powers and oppressed peoples.

The RCIT's approach is based on the Marxist tradition as it was elaborated by Lenin and the Bolsheviks and, later, applied by Trotsky and the Fourth International in the 1930s and 1940s.⁵ Hence, in contrast to the centrist hypocrites, we have always sided with the struggle of the oppressed peoples – in Argentina against Britain, in Afghanistan against the Western powers, in Iraq against the U.S., in Chechnya and Syria against Russia, to name only a few examples.⁶

Likewise, we strongly oppose a reactionary abstentionist position in the Ukraine War. Recognising the *dual character* of the current conflict, we advocate a dual tactic. We support the resistance of the Ukrainian people against imperialist Russia as a progressive and legitimate national war of defence.

At the same time, we also recognize the reactionary character of the inter-imperialist rivalry between the Great Powers. In this conflict, socialists oppose *both* camps – Russia as well as NATO. We summarize the RCIT's position in the following slogan: *Defend the Ukraine against Putin's invasion! Against Russian and against NATO imperialism!*⁷

Authentic socialists who want to serve the liberation struggles of the workers and oppressed need to break with centrist organisations like the CWI, the IMT or the ISA and join the RCIT!

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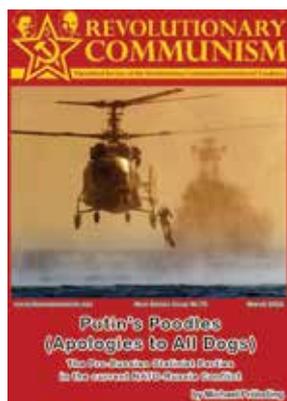
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PUBLICATIONS OF THE RCIT

Putin's Poodles (Apologies to All Dogs)

*The pro-Russian Stalinist parties and
their arguments in the current NATO-Russia Conflict*

by Michael Pröbsting, February 2022

Introduction * 1. NATO is the sole aggressor! Really? * Is it relevant for Marxists who is the aggressor? * What is causing the escalation of tensions between Great Powers: the party of warmongers or the imperialist system? * Can socialists defend "legitimate spheres of influence" of Great Powers? * Putin and Great Russian Chauvinism claim that the Ukraine is not an independent nation * Stalinism versus Bolshevism: The Ukraine and the right of national self-determination * From Kazakhstan to Syria: Stalinism is siding with the counterrevolution * Is Russian imperialism a "force of social progress"? Discussion of a remarkable Stalinist document * Stalinism and social-imperialism: concluding remarks * Footnotes

A RCIT Pamphlet, 20 pages, A4 Format

Great Power Rivalry: Deepening of Differences between Stalinist Parties

Notes on the XXII International Meeting of Communist and Workers' Parties in Havana (and the so-called "Paris Declaration")

By Michael Pröbsting, International Secretary of the Revolutionary Communist International Tendency (RCIT), 10.11.2022

145 representatives of 78 Stalinist parties of 60 countries participated at the 22nd "International Meeting of Communist and Workers' Parties" (IMCWP) which was held in Havana (Cuba) on 27-29 October 2022. These annual conferences have been initiated by the Greek KKE and are the most important global gatherings of Stalinist parties.

While many parties are small and insignificant, there were also a number of important participants.¹ Among the latter are parties which dominate a state since decades (Cuba, Vietnam, North Korea and Laos) or which are part of national governments of capitalist states (Brazil, Spain, South Africa, Syria) respectively of regional governments of large countries (India).

At this place, we want to focus on a process which seems to us being the most important political outcome of this conference: the deepening of differences between these Stalinist parties. We did already point to this process in several other works and, therefore, we will limit ourselves to discuss the latest statements adopted at the 22nd IMCWP.²

It is not surprising that the process of political differentiation takes place around the issues of the Ukraine War and the accelerating Great Power rivalry. These are the dominating issues of the current world situation and, hence, these are the political axes around which political forces develop their political positions.

The 22nd IMCWP conference reflected the formation of two camps within the Stalinist milieu with clearly contrasting views. Let us first present the two statements which reflect the positions of these currents.

The Pro-Russian Social-Imperialists

One statement reflects the views of the most reactionary parties which can be characterized as *pro-Russian social-imperialists*.³ They view only the U.S. and its allies as imperialist. The Ukraine, in the imaginary world of these simpletons, is a country of Nazis, aiding Washington to spread fascism around the world.

*"Imperialism is becoming ever more dangerous for humankind. It resorts ever more often to provocations and conflicts. Its actions threaten a new world war and the use of nuclear weapons. In fact the war, as armed struggle of classes, nations or states, has been waged since 2014 when the Kiev Nazis launched a punitive operation against the population of Donbass. (...) Today more than fifty predator-countries, organized and directed by US-led NATO, are using Ukrainian followers of Banderaites, allies of Hitler, to pursue a policy of Fascist expansion vis-à-vis Russia. (...) The aim is to establish world hegemony of the USA in the 21st century with active and overt use of Fascism."*⁴

While these Stalinist parties might have disagreements about the concrete class character of Russia and China, they certainly share the view that these states are not im-

perialist. Worse, they claim that Russia is waging a "just anti-fascist war" against the "Ukrainian Nazis" which are only "proxies of NATO". Consequently, they openly side with Russia and its allies and call for support Putin's war efforts.

"The Communist and Workers' Parties support the just anti-Fascist struggle of the working people of Donbass backed by the Russian Armed Forces. We come out against the US imperialism which is using Fascist methods in its foreign policy and, with direct participation of NATO, is in fact waging a war aimed at defeating Russia with the hands of the puppet bourgeois-nationalist Ukrainian regime. We declare that we will do all we can to prevent Russia from repeating the fate of Yugoslavia, Iraq or Libya, which is starkly at odds with the interests of the world workers' movement. (...) Russia cannot afford to lose the war against Nazism."

The pro-Russian social-imperialist character of this statement is furthermore confirmed if one looks at the list of the signatories. Among the most important of these is Zyuganov's KPRF – a Great Russian chauvinist party which has unconditionally supported Putin's imperialist war at every stage.⁵ Other important signatories are the RKRPF (a smaller Stalinist party in Russia⁶), the Brazilian PC-doB (part of Lula's popular front alliance), and the Syrian Communist Party – Unified (part of Assad's dictatorship). It is noteworthy that the German DKP, the Italian PC and the Hungarian *Munkáspárt* also signed this "Putinista" statement.

Clearly, these parties can be characterized as political supporters of the imperialist camp which is led by Russia and China.

The Paris Declaration: The Ultra-Stalinist Knights of Xi, Kim and Putin

At this point, we shall briefly deal with another joint statement of a number of Stalinist parties – the so-called "Paris Declaration". This document, adopted at a conference in October 2022 in France's capital, focuses not only on the Ukraine War. It is rather a more general declaration of support and solidarity with China and Russia since these two powers "represent a serious threat to the imperialists' world hegemony."⁷

Hence, the signatory parties claim that "the Russian side, in its alliance with the peoples of the Donbass, is engaged in a war of self-defence and national liberation against imperialist attack."

Likewise, they say that any conflict between the U.S. and China, "no matter who fires the first shot (...) will likewise be [a] war of anti-imperialist self-defence and national liberation waged by the (...) Chinese people."

Hence, it is only consequential that these parties see Russia and China as their hope for the anti-imperialist struggle. "The growing alliance between Russia and China offers

hope to the people of the world: hope of an alternative to US domination and imperialist superexploitation. A strong anti-imperialist camp is our peoples' best defence against the aggressive plans of the bloodthirsty Nato alliance – our best defence against the looming threat of nuclear war."

Two of the signatories of the above-mentioned Putinista Havana statement did also sign the *Paris Declaration* (the Italian PC and the Hungarian *Munkáspárt*). Other supporters include the Ultra-Stalinist CPGB(ML) in Britain,⁸ the South Korean *People's Democracy Party* (supporters of the North Korean regime of Kim Jong-un), the *Communist Party of Kyrgyzstan*, the PCI (Italy), and the two French organizations – the *National Association of Communists* and the *Pole of Communist Revival in France*.

Looking at the list of signatories, the *Paris Declaration* does not seem to be significant. However, these forces reflect a broader current within the Stalinist and Bolivarian camp. This is also indicated by the list of forces which were present and made speeches at the Paris conference. Among these are the Ambassador of Venezuela, the *Czech Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia*, the *Party for Socialism and Liberation* (U.S.) and the Russian RKR.

Like the above-mentioned Havana Putinistas, these parties are political supporters of Russian and Chinese imperialism. However, the *Paris Declaration* provides a stronger and more generalized ideological basis for such reactionary social-imperialism.

An emerging trend of Stalinist parties opposed to both imperialist camps

As we noted already in other works published in the recent past, one of the most interesting developments in the Stalinist camp is the growing differentiation and the emergence of a group of parties which oppose not only the Great Power policy of NATO but also that of Russia and China. In fact, they recognize (or are close to recognize) the imperialist character not only of NATO but also of Russia and China.⁹

"We condemn all the criminal actions of the representatives of the world capital: the USA, imperialist alliances and blocs, the Russian Federation and the ruling circles of Ukraine itself, who have used the last means to resolve their contradictions in the age of imperialism - war - on the territory of Ukraine."¹⁰

Hence, they support anti-war actions not only in the Western countries but also in Russia. "We support anti-militarist sentiments and actions within Ukraine and the Russian Federation as a struggle of the exploited class against the exploiting class. Not only the logic of Marxist analysis, but also the eight months of ongoing war show the falsity of the goals declared by the Russian government as their implementation obviously leads to directly opposite results: humanitarian disaster, thousands of civilian deaths, militarization of Ukraine alongside with the destruction of its industrial enterprises and cities, increase in anti-Russian sentiment and the numbers of fascist militants. Thus, as before in history, the ruling elites of both countries are manipulating the slogans of a "just war" for their political points, economic gain and the mobilization of the deceived peoples to achieve goals alien to them."

These parties also demarcate themselves from the above-mentioned pro-Russian Stalinists by stating: "We strongly disclaim any involvement of the Russian government policy in the anti-fascist movement or, even more so, in the "pro-Soviet"

sentiment. The Russian Federation, being a bourgeois state, is only nominally, in the framework of bourgeois law, the inheritor of the USSR, while it has nothing in common with the USSR either in its basis or superstructure."

While they share various illusions about the character of the so-called "Donbass Republics" in the years after 2014, they have a much more sober view about the current nature of these proxy-entities of the Kremlin.¹¹ "The proxies of the bourgeois ruling circles of the Russian Federation have seized power in the people's republics of Lugansk and Donetsk, the red field commanders - the people's nominees - have been eliminated, and the political activities of communist organizations have been banned. All the goals stated by Putin and the official authorities of the Russian Federation regarding the "special military operation" failed. This "special operation" is not only false but also criminal which is confirmed by the humanitarian catastrophe affecting the civilian population of Ukraine."

Consequently, these left Stalinist parties take a dual-defeatist position in the Ukraine War, i.e. they oppose both camps. "We are certain that it is only the Ukrainian working class united with the Russian proletariat and supported by the world labor that is able of stopping the imperialist slaughter. Ukraine's, Russia's and world bourgeoisie mobilized and armed workers. It is necessary that these armaments be aimed at the governments of war, to convert the imperialist war between the peoples into a civil war between classes."

Of course, we do think that this position is mistaken since it ignores the legitimate character of the national war of defense of the Ukrainian people. But before elaborating more on this, we want to point to another trenchant demarcation of these parties from their "Putinista" siblings.

"It is shameful and criminal for communists all over the world to trail behind the governments of bourgeois countries and work for the interests of their national bourgeoisie, to support one or another bloc of bourgeois countries. Our immutable task is to help workers all over the world realize that imperialist wars do not lead to the emancipation of labor, on the contrary, they enslave it even more; that in the imperialist conflict the working class has no allies among the ruling circles, only enemies; that their friends are only the proletarians, no matter what nationality they may be."

The driving force behind this statement is the Greek KKE – a party which has influence in the trade unions and which usually gains about 5-7% at national elections.¹² Most other signatories are small parties except the *South African Communist Party*. We have no idea why on earth the SACP signed this statement as this is an arch-opportunist and corrupted force which has been part of the neo-liberal ANC government since nearly three decades. A bureaucratic misunderstanding or a signature provided late at night at a Havana barroom? (It should be noted that the *Palestinian Communist Party* managed to sign both contradicting statements! So, not everyone attending this conference is the brightest bulb in the box!)

Other noteworthy signatories are the *Communist Party of Turkey* and the *Socialist Movement of Kazakhstan* (a party originally coming from a Trotskyist tradition which played a role in the workers uprising in 2011).¹³

Ignoring the national just war of the Ukrainian people

As readers of our publications will know, we disagree with the characterization of the Ukraine War as a proxy

war between two imperialist camps. This does not mean that such a feature would not exist to a certain degree. We have emphasized since the beginning of the war that this conflict has a *dual character*. It is an imperialist war waged by Russia against the Ukraine. At the same time, it is combined with the rivalry between the Great Powers of West and East. From such a *dual character* of the conflict follows the *dual tactic* which the RCIT and its comrades in *Socialist Tendency* (Russia) have advocated since the beginning of the war and which we summarised in the slogan: *Defend the Ukraine against Putin's invasion! Against Russian and against NATO imperialism!*¹⁴

In discussions with Stalinist comrades, we have pointed to the fact that such a complex character of a conflict – a combination of legitimate national war of liberation as well as inter-imperialist rivalry – is not a unique case. In fact, several similar conflicts took place in the 1930s and 1940 (e.g. the Italo-Ethiopian War in 1935 or the Sino-Chinese War in 1937-45). Such a combined character did not stop communists from defending the oppressed people.¹⁵

In such discussions, we have also raised the following questions to these comrades:¹⁶

1. Why did the Ukrainian people energetically resist Putin's invasion from the very first day? Did they fight because NATO told them to do so or because they don't want to be occupied by the Russian army?

2. Do the Ukrainian people continue resisting the Russian invasion because of Zelensky and NATO? Or is it not rather the case that they would defend themselves in any case (true, with less modern weapons if NATO would not support them)?

3. Would the Ukrainian people agree to the occupation of their country or to the annexation of parts of their country if NATO would not support them?

4. What would the Ukrainian people do differently if NATO would not support them? Surely, they would be weaker militarily. May be their form of resistance would have more the character of a guerilla war like in Afghanistan and Iraq against the U.S. But don't you think that they would wage a national liberation struggle in any case?!

5. Furthermore, is it not the case that this war has first and foremost "internal" causes, i.e. that it was caused by Putin's desire to subjugate the Ukraine because of the imperialist, Great Russian nature of his policy and his regime? One just has to remember his essay of summer 2021 in which he denied the very existence of a Ukrainian nation, combined with a rant against Lenin and the Bolshevik policy of national self-determination. Hence, it is wrong to explain Russia's invasion only by the Great Power rivalry. Great Russian chauvinism is an old policy rooted in the feudal and capitalist tradition of Russia. It is first and foremost not a reaction to Western provocations as many Stalinists claim. It is primarily the result of the imperialist nature of Russia – like the U.S. attack on Afghanistan and Iraq or France's military intervention in Mali reflected the imperialist character of these powers.

6. Finally, we appreciate if we agree on the analysis of Russia as imperialist. But what is the class character of the Ukraine? Is it a semi-colonial or an imperialist country? We think that the Ukraine is the former – hence, the war has the character of an attack by an imperialist power (Russia) against a semi-colonial Ukraine. It is well-known among Marxists that in principle, all other factors being

equal, one has to defend the latter against the imperialist aggressor.

Conclusions

In summary, we consider it as wrong – as the KKE-inspired statement does – to ignore the legitimate character of the Ukrainian national war of defense. Nevertheless, in politics it is important to recognize not only the correctness or non-correctness of a position, but also which direction of political movement does such a position reflect.

In the case of the KKE-led camp of Stalinists we can speak about a shift to the left by these parties as they are in a process of recognizing the imperialist character of Russia (and China). This is even more the case as – in contrast, for example, to the Russian RKR – they also oppose the policy of the Eastern imperialist powers and refuse to defend them against the Western rivals. True, these parties have still a long way to go. It is also quite possible that they get stuck in this process or retreat. Nevertheless, let us note that a first and important step has been made. It would be foolish to ignore this.

Footnotes

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14 We refer readers to a special page on our website where more than 120 RCIT documents on the Ukraine War and the current NATO-Russia conflict are compiled: <https://www.thecommu-nists.net/worldwide/global/compilation-of-docu-ments-on-nato-russia-conflict/>. In particular we refer to the RCIT Manifesto: Ukraine War: A Turning Point of World Historic Significance. Socialists must combine the revolutionary defense of the Ukraine against Putin’s invasion with the internationalist struggle against Russian as well as NATO and EU imperialism, 1 March 2022, <https://www.thecommu-nists.net/worldwide/global/manifesto-ukraine-war-a-turning-point-of-world-historic-signif-icance/>

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Protests against “Zero COVID” in China: An Embarrassment for the Lockdown Left

The popular rebellion against the COVID Counterrevolution refutes the analysis and program of the opportunist left (with Alan Woods’ IMT as an example)

By Michael Pröbsting, International Secretary of the Revolutionary Communist International Tendency (RCIT), 30.11.2022

The popular rebellion against the reactionary Lockdown and “Zero COVID” policy of the Xi regime is a crucial event in the international class struggle. At this juncture we can not know if these protests will escalate and open a revolutionary crisis similar to the events in summer 1989 or if the Stalinist-capitalist regime will succeed in brutally crushing this movement. However, it is beyond dispute that these protests are the largest and most serious threat for the dictatorship in more than three decades.¹

These mass protests contain a number of important lessons. They destroy, among others, the Stalinist myth about the Chinese “model”.² As we noted in our statement on this event, “the current mass protests are a powerful blow against the Stalinist, reformist and left-populist parties around the world which support the Stalinist-capitalist regime in Beijing as a “progressive”, an “anti-imperialist” or even “socialist” force.”

Another important lesson, and on which we will focus at this place, is that the popular rebellion also ridicules the idea that China would be a model for combatting the pandemic. As it has become now evident for everyone, the Lockdown and “Zero COVID” policy can neither eradicate the virus nor create a popular consensus about such a policy. In fact, as we demonstrated in several articles, the regime dramatically increased the surveillance and repression of people. At the same time, China’s death rate increased, and its birth rate dropped.³

Related to this is another crucial lesson. The mass protests in China also demonstrate the reactionary nature of the policy of large sectors of the Stalinist, reformist, populist and pseudo-Trotskyist left around the world. These forces have supported since spring 2020 the reactionary Lockdown policy with all its essential characteristics which we called *chauvinist state bonapartism*: forcing the whole population to stay at home in isolation, massive restrictions of crossing the borders, deployment of police and army on the streets, imposing surveillance of the whole population, the “Green Pass” system, (semi-)compulsory vaccination campaigns, etc.

As we pointed out repeatedly, this policy was an unprecedented political repressive approach of the capitalist state to a health crisis – and not a health-focused policy.⁴ In all the previous pandemics in the 20th century – which also caused millions of deaths – governments never applied such a policy of mass repression against the whole population. Needless to say, that the Bolshevik government in Soviet Russia in the time of Lenin and Trotsky also opposed such a policy of draconic restrictions against the population.⁵

The Revolutionary Communist International Tendency (RCIT) characterized the reactionary Lockdown policy as *COVID Counterrevolution* and opposed it from early February 2020

onwards.⁶ We advocated a health-orientated socialist response to the pandemic⁷ and advocated a strategy of popular uprising in defence of social and democratic rights.⁸

The Lockdown Left lapses into silence

Most “left-wing” parties took a contrary position and supported (“critically” or not so critically) the bourgeois Lockdown policy – which is why we call them *Lockdown Left*. In some cases, reformist parties helped to implement these repressive measures as part of a capitalist government coalition (e.g. in Spain, Italy, South Africa). Various self-proclaimed Trotskyist organizations (like e.g. LIT-CI⁹, UIT-CI, both factions of the PO in Argentina¹⁰, PTS/FT¹¹) supported the policy of long-lasting mass quarantine of the population and only demanded better financial compensation.¹² In many cases, they criticized the bourgeois governments not for their anti-democratic Lockdown policy but for not imposing it more draconically and longer!¹³

Worse, in many cases, these “Trotskyist” groups denounced mass protests against the Lockdown and Green Pass policy as “reactionary”¹⁴ – like e.g. the spontaneous mass demonstrations in Europe and other regions or the dockers strike against the “Green Pass” system in Italy in autumn 2021.¹⁵ As we did explain on the basis our concrete experience, while it is true that reactionary forces tried to mingle with these protests, they usually did not dominate such mass rallies which were often spontaneous and heterogenous in nature.¹⁶

A sector of the Lockdown Left – various Stalinist and pseudo-Trotskyist organizations (like the Clifflite SWP/IST or the L5I) – even went so far to praise China and its ultra-bonapartist “Zero COVID” policy as a model. They called – following the lead of their star Xi Jinping – for a “full and indefinite lockdown”¹⁷ Consequently, they demanded from the bourgeois governments to implement the “Zero COVID” in all countries around the globe!¹⁸

Tellingly, the organisers of the “Zero COVID” campaign named those countries as their models for a Lockdown strategy which are ruled by dictatorships resp. right-wing governments, or which have a strong tradition of authoritarian regimes. “There is a simple alternative to this chaotic policy of ‘living with the virus’, with its on-off lockdowns, ineffectual testing programme and constant economic insecurity. The alternative is the strategy currently in place in Australia, China, New Zealand, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan and Vietnam, who have almost entirely eliminated the virus and whose citizens enjoy life without the need for draconian lockdown restrictions. This means full lockdown and safe working conditions in essential workplaces until community transmission is near to zero, then suppression of small outbreaks via local public sector Find, Test, Trace, Isolate and Support, and 100% protection of livelihoods.”¹⁹

It is not surprising that all these supporters of the Lockdown policy and “Zero COVID” have become pretty silent in the past 9 months or so. The mass protests in Europe and other regions have forced most capitalist governments to beat a retreat and to lift, at least temporarily, the most draconic measures.²⁰ As a result, the capitalist media in most countries do no longer whip-up the COVID hysteria. So, without support among the workers and the oppressed or among the bourgeois public opinion, the reformist and centrist Lockdown supporters prefer to shut up and to ignore this issue.

“Silence is gold”

The mass protests in China are another devastating blow for the Lockdown Left since China is the last bastion of the bonapartist COVID policy. What shall the Stalinists say about their “socialist” wonderland which must rely on police batons and concentration camps to remind the people about the brilliance of their lider maximo Xi Jinping? Will they denounce the protests as “colour revolution” or will they keep with the motto “silence is golden”?

Some pseudo-“Trotskyists” have a similar problem. True, they have refrained from praising the Stalinist-capitalist regime as “socialist”. Hence, they see no problem in criticising the *Gang of One* led by Xi. Likewise, they can welcome the protests as an anti-dictatorial rebellion.

However, they are trapped within a dilemma. It was not all that long ago that they praised the Lockdown policy of China and demanded that other countries copy it. They claimed that such a policy of massive repression against the people is the way forward to overcome the pandemic.

Unfortunately for them, the regime itself can not claim any longer to have overcome the pandemic. Contrary, its lockdown policy becomes more and more widespread and brutal. Worse (for the Lockdown Left), the workers and oppressed – the Xinjiang province, a centre of the protests, is home of the oppressed minority of Muslim Uyghurs – are protesting in the streets despite massive state repression. Why are the people in China not happy about the supposedly successful and public-health serving “Zero COVID” policy? That’s a tricky question for the Lockdown Left or, more precisely, it is a contradiction impossible to solve.

So, there are only two alternatives for the Lockdown Leftists: either deafening silence on the protests in China or hoping that people forget what these people, who now support the protests, wrote about China’s “Zero COVID” policy one or two years ago.

IMT: a revealing example of hypocrisy

The IMT, a pseudo-Trotskyist organisation in the tradition of Ted Grant (like the CWI and ISA²¹) and currently led by Alan Woods, has chosen the second option. They say no word about their support for China’s Lockdown policy in the past and hope that their members don’t ask embarrassing questions. In a recently published article, the IMT welcomes the protests in China. They say that the masses are no longer willing to accept the “Zero COVID” policy. “*The Chinese masses have had to endure a heavy price in terms of harsh lockdown measures, massively disrupting daily lives and leading to job losses. The regime has extended such measures far longer than other countries. Now it has tried to*

*change direction somewhat, but the bureaucratic character of the regime has meant that this is only aggravating the suffering of the masses. (...) And as the cases of COVID-19 started rising as travel restrictions were eased, local bureaucrats – following diktats from on high to keep cases at zero – responded with new rounds of ever-more draconian and frantic lockdowns, reproducing ever-greater disruption in the lives of the masses. The bureaucracy expected the masses to simply comply with their orders. Little did they understand that the masses had reached the end of their tether. (...) People have been driven to the limit, but COVID-19 has not been eliminated.”*²²

Obviously, the IMT hopes that readers do not remember what the leaders of this organisation said about China’s Lockdown policy one or two years ago. As a matter of fact, they praised the brutal repression policy of the Stalinist-capitalist regime as a model. They even claimed that China had already “*practically eliminated the virus*”. They even claimed hilariously that China is experiencing growth, when in fact it had entered its worst economic crisis since the late 1970s! “*By contrast, China, Taiwan, Australia, New Zealand, Vietnam, etc. – which all focused on quick coronavirus suppression and mandatory social distancing – have practically eliminated the virus within their borders (for now), and are seeing economic growth again.*”²³

Since the very beginning of the COVID crisis, the IMT leadership has praised the draconic lockdown policy of the Stalinist-capitalist regime in China and criticized other governments for not following the model of Xi Jinping! Such they wrote in their central statement on the COVID-19 crisis: “*The emergency efforts must be organised by neighbourhood and workplace committees, which must be connected on a local and national level to organise a fully effective lockdown as the fastest means of dealing with the virus. (...) China today is undoubtedly a capitalist country. But it is a peculiar form of capitalism, which still retains some of the elements of central planning and state-controlled industries that it inherited from the past. It is precisely these elements that gave China a colossal advantage in combating the present pandemic, with quite remarkable results. This fact has been commented on by people who would not be normally sympathetic to socialism. The advantages China had in facing the Wuhan outbreak was that it could lockdown a huge area with around 50 million people, while using the resources of the rest of the country to come to the aid of the people in lockdown. They could send in nurses and doctors from other parts of the country; they could send resources from all around the country. Italy faced a very different situation. It received no help from the rest of Europe. In fact, countries like Germany blocked the export of face masks for instance, thinking in very short-term national terms. Had there been an internationally coordinated operation, things could have been very different. Here it is worth noting what Chinese doctors presently in Italy are saying needs doing. They have observed the situation in the country and from their experience of how they combatted the virus in Wuhan, they are of the opinion that there is still too much movement of people on the streets. This confirms what we have been saying ever since this new virus broke out: all non-essential production must be stopped. Italy could have been totally locked down, with the rest of Europe sending material and human resources to combat the initial spread of the virus. By doing so, the period of lockdown could have been shorter and more effective. Instead we had each national member state of the European Union acting in different ways and at different speeds.*”²⁴

Later, they called for longer and “*properly enforced*” lock-

downs in European countries. They also stated their support for a British Labour MP who advocated the Zero COVID policy for his country.²⁵

It is also worth mentioning that when the crisis started, the IMT's section in Austria publicly called people to follow the state-imposed restrictions. *"It is necessary to follow the instructions of the health authorities to isolate oneself physically. We support these provisions in content and practice."* They even called youth to volunteer to the alternative military service! *"People are now conscripted to the civil service in order to manage the foreseeable health emergency situation. We appeal to the conscripted age groups to quickly follow the draft, to volunteer and to put themselves into service to fight the catastrophe."*²⁶

Obviously, the IMT leadership is now in a highly embarrassing situation. They claimed that China's Zero COVID policy is a successful instrument against the pandemic. Now, it is evident that this is not the case – as authentic Marxists predicted in contrast to the insane imagination of the IMT. They also called for the implementation of such a draconic Lockdown policy in other countries, claiming that this would serve the working class. However, we saw last year that the masses in Europe and other regions despise and protest against this policy. And now the people in China do the same.

In short, reality has been cruel to the IMT and its opportunist support for chauvinist state bonapartism. They have now no alternative than praying that people have forgotten what these people said 10 or 20 months ago. Well, we have not forgotten!

Conclusions

We shall conclude this article with two remarks. First, it is crucial that comrades in organisations which have supported the Lockdown policy in the past three years start to rethink this strategy and demand a critical discussion within their groups. As the saying goes: *"Those who do not learn history are doomed to repeat it."* There can be no doubt that capitalist government will again use catastrophes (such as the COVID pandemic) as a pretext for imposing bonapartist repression policy. Those left-wing organisations which fail to self-critically correct their support for the Lockdown policy are doomed to repeat their support for similar counterrevolutionary attacks of the ruling class in the future.

Secondly, the current events in China (as well as the anti-lockdown mass protests in Europe and other regions last year) are a powerful confirmation of our analysis and program. They show that authentic Marxists were right to defend democratic and socialist principles not only in times when such are popular but also in periods when they are isolated and have to swim against the stream.

The RCIT was nearly alone in spring 2020 in opposing the COVID Counterrevolution. The whole world seemed to agree that this is an unprecedented pandemic, that a totalitarian Lockdown policy is the only way to combat the pandemic, that mass surveillance is a necessary price to pay, etc. It is less than 12 months ago that the Lockdown Left still attacked our positions and called us "crazy" and "sectarians". Today, governments and the bourgeois public opinion have "forgotten" their policy (except in China, of course) and the Lockdown Left hopes that people have

also forgotten that they supported this reactionary policy.

Last year, hundreds of thousands of people demonstrated in Europe and other regions against the Lockdown policy. Today, the Chinese masses rise up with similar demands. Of course, the consciousness of the workers and oppressed is often raw and confused. How can it be otherwise given the lack of revolutionary leadership?! But the masses know the elementary truth that the regime's policy is contrary to their fundamental interests and that they will not accept repression and Lockdown any longer. Spontaneously, they adopt elements of the revolutionary program against chauvinist state bonapartism. The program which a group of Beijing students has raised a few days ago and which contains consistent democratic demands against the Lockdown and surveillance policy, is an example for such.²⁷

Today, it is no longer the authentic Marxists who are isolated but rather the pathetic and coward Lockdown Left. They have certainly deserved their fate!

All socialist militants need to learn the following lesson: don't be afraid to defend an intransigent revolutionary program even if results in political isolation for some time! This was the case in 1914 at the beginning of World War I and this happened in spring 2020 too. But those who refuse to capitulate to the pressure of the bourgeois public opinion (and the parroting opportunist left), those who have a correct analysis and fight for a revolutionary program, such authentic socialists will be confirmed by events – if not today, then tomorrow and if not tomorrow, it will be the day after! Endurance is one of the most important characteristics of a revolutionary! It will help revolutionaries to gain authority among the masses – in contrast to the professional opportunists and unprincipled weathervanes! Without revolutionary endurance, one is condemned to end up without political compass and without an independent policy in defence of the interest of the working class!

Footnotes

1 RCIT: China: Popular Rebellion against Lockdowns and "Zero COVID", 28 November 2022, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/asia/china-popular-rebellion-against-lockdowns-and-zero-covid/>; see also Juan Giglio: Defensores de cuarentenas y pases sanitarios apoyan la lucha de chinos contra cuarentenas ¿Doble vara o una realidad que liquidó sus argumentos? <https://convergenciadecombate.blogspot.com/2022/11/defensores-de-cuarentenas-y-pases.html>

2 The RCIT has published numerous documents about capitalism in China and its transformation into a Great Power. See on this e.g. the book by Michael Pröbsting: Anti-Imperialism in the Age of Great Power Rivalry. The Factors behind the Accelerating Rivalry between the U.S., China, Russia, EU and Japan. A Critique of the Left's Analysis and an Outline of the Marxist Perspective, RCIT Books, Vienna 2019, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/anti-imperialism-in-the-age-of-great-power-rivalry/>; see also by the same author: "Chinese Imperialism and the World Economy", an essay published in the second edition of *The Palgrave Encyclopedia of Imperialism and Anti-Imperialism* (edited by Immanuel Ness and Zak Cope), Palgrave Macmillan, Cham, 2020, https://link.springer.com/referenceworkentry/10.1007%2F978-3-319-91206-6_179-1; China: An Imperialist Power ... Or Not Yet? A Theoretical Question with Very Practical Consequences! Continuing the Debate with Esteban Mercatante and the PTS/FT on China's class character and consequences for the revolutionary strategy, 22 January 2022, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/china-imperialist-power-or-not-yet/>; China's transformation into an imperialist power. A study of the economic, political and military aspects of China as a Great Power (2012), in: *Revolutionary Communism* No. 4, <http://www.thecommunists.net/publications/revcom-number-4>; How is it possible that some Marxists still Doubt that China has Become Capitalist? (A Critique of the PTS/FT), An analysis of the capitalist character of China's State-Owned Enterprises and its political consequences, 18 September 2020, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/pts-ft-and-chinese-imperialism-2/>; Unable to See the Wood for the Trees (PTS/FT and China). Eclectic empiricism and the failure of the PTS/FT to recognize the imperialist character of China, 13 August 2020, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/pts-ft->

[and-chinese-imperialism/](#); China's Emergence as an Imperialist Power (Article in the US journal 'New Politics'), in: "New Politics", Summer 2014 (Vol:XV-1, Whole #: 57). See many more RCIT documents at a special sub-page on the RCIT's website: <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/china-russia-as-imperialist-powers/>. See also RCIT: China: Solidarity with the Mass Protests in Hubei! Thousands of Chinese workers clash with the police in protest against the state repression under the cover of COVID-19, 28 March 2020, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/asia/china-solidarity-with-the-mass-protests-in-hubei/>

3 See e.g. Michael Pröbsting: China's Demographic Development and the Zero COVID Policy. The latest official reports about China's birth and death rates destroy the reactionary conception of the Lockdown Left, 18 January 2022, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/asia/china-s-demographic-development-and-the-zero-covid-policy/>; by the same author: "Big Brother" in China: The "Personal Health Index" App, 27 May 2020, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/asia/big-brother-in-china-the-personal-health-index-app/>

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5 See on this chapter "Famine and epidemics: some lessons from Lenin and the Bolsheviks" in our book by Michael Pröbsting: The COVID-19 Global Counterrevolution: What It Is and How to Fight It. A Marxist analysis and strategy for the revolutionary struggle, RCIT Books, April 2020, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/the-covid-19-global-counterrevolution/>.

6 See Almedina Gunić: Coronavirus: "I am not a Virus"... but WE will be the Cure! The chauvinist campaign behind the "Wuhan Coronavirus" hysteria and the revolutionary answer, 02 February 2020, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/wuhan-virus/>; RCIT: 2019 Corona Virus: Oppose the Global Wave of Chauvinist Hysteria! Workers and oppressed: Do not trust the ruling class and its media! 05.02.2020, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/2019-corona-virus-oppose-the-global-wave-of-chauvinist-hysteria/>

7 RCIT: A Revolutionary Action Program to fight COVID-19! Workers and Oppressed: Don't trust the State of the Rich and Powerful! Trust only Yourselves! April 2020, <https://www.thecommunists.net/rcit/health-program-covid19/>; see also: ALS: A Marxist approach to the international mobilizations against the authoritarian health restrictions, February 2022, https://www.thecommunists.net/home/espaa%3CB10l/una-aproximaci%C3%B3n-marxista-a-las-movilizaciones-internacionales-contra-las-restricciones-sanitarias-autoritarias/#anker_1

8 The RCIT has published more than 100 pamphlets, essays, articles and statements plus a book on the COVID Counterrevolution which are all compiled at a special sub-page on our website: <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/collection-of-articles-on-the-2019-corona-virus/>. In particular we refer readers to two RCIT Manifestos: COVID-19: A Cover for a Major Global Counterrevolutionary Offensive. We are at a turning point in the world situation as the ruling classes provoke a war-like atmosphere in order to legitimize the build-up of chauvinist state-bonapartist regimes, 21 March 2020, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/covid-19-a-cover-for-a-major-global-counterrevolutionary-offensive/>; "Green Pass" & Compulsory Vaccinations: A New Stage in the COVID Counterrevolution. Down with the chauvinist-bonapartist police & surveillance state – defend democratic rights! No to health policy in the service of the capitalist monopolies – expand the public health sector under workers and popular control! 29 July 2021, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/green-pass-compulsory-vaccinations-a-new-stage-in-the-covid-counterrevolution/>; In addition, we draw attention to our book by Michael Pröbsting: The COVID-19 Global Counterrevolution: What It Is and How to Fight It. A Marxist analysis and strategy for the revolutionary struggle, RCIT Books, April 2020, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/the-covid-19-global-counterrevolution/>.

9 See e.g. Michael Pröbsting: Brazil: Social-Bonapartism of the Lockdown Left in Practice. How the leaderships of the trade unions, PT, PCdoB, the pseudo-Trotskyist PSTU and PSOL sabotage the struggle against the Bolsonaro government, 10 June 2020, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/latin-america/brazil-social-bonapartism-of-the-lockdown-left-in-practice/>; by the same author: chapter "The shameful example of the PSTU/LIT-CI" in the pamphlet: The Second Wave of the COVID-19 Counterrevolution. On the ruling class strategy in the current conjuncture, its inner contradictions and the perspectives of the workers and popular resistance, 20 July 2020, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/the-second-wave-of-the-covid-19-counterrevolution/>

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14 See e.g. Michael Pröbsting: Why Do Some Socialists Refuse to Support the Mass Struggle against the "Green Pass"? PTS/FT, PSTU/LIT, IMT and PCL in the face of the latest stage of the COVID Counterrevolution, 15 October 2021, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/why-do-some-socialists-refuse-to-support-the-mass-struggle-against-the-green-pass/>.

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19 ZERO COVID: The campaign to beat the pandemic, Model Motion, <https://zerocovid.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/ZC-Model-Motion-v2.docx>

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24 IMT: COVID-19 pandemic: the threatening catastrophe and how to combat it, 20 March 2020, <https://www.marxist.com/covid-19-pandemic-the-threatening-catastrophe-and-how-to-combat-it.htm>

25 "It is now going to take a longer period of lockdown, combined with vaccinations, to bring the number of cases in Britain down to a level where new ones can be effectively traced. This is why it is all the more important not to end the current lockdown early. (...) Indeed, we fully agree with Burgon's proposals: for free and widespread testing; real wage sick pay to encourage people to stay at home with no financial detriment; widespread and free COVID-19 tests; free internet provision so children can attend online classes from home; and properly enforced lockdowns combined with contact tracing." (Joe Attard: Permanent pandemic? Mutations, market failures and Zero COVID, IMT, 20 February 2021, <https://www.marxist.com/permanent-pandemic-mutations-market-failures-zero-covid.htm>)

26 For these and other quotes from the IMT (and their sources) see chapter V. "The Lockdown Left: A Critique" in the above-mentioned book by Michael Pröbsting: The COVID-19 Global Counterrevolution: What It Is and How to Fight It.

27 See on this e.g. Michael Pröbsting: China Protests: The Anti-Lockdown Program of the University Students in Beijing. A Strong Confirmation of the Marxists' Opposition against the Lockdown Policy, 30 November 2022, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/asia/china-protests-university-students-against-lockdowns/>

