

The Communists and the independence of Ukraine

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The war over the annexation of Ukraine waged between the major imperialist powers continues to murder thousands of Ukrainians and turn a sovereign country into a shattered nation with eight million refugees.

Putin's government says the goal of the invasion of Ukraine is to defend Russia threatened by nuclear missile facilities from the United States and NATO in countries near its borders. It also states that the "special military operation" aims to protect the Russian-speaking population living in eastern Ukraine, a region known as Donbass and of great economic and strategic importance. Of course, incorporating territory from a country recognized by both the UN and Russia itself, for more than 100 years, no matter how many beautiful words one uses, cannot hide the imperialist character of this act.

In turn, the United States and the European Union are supplying tanks, missiles, ammunition and billions of dollars to the corrupt government of Volodimir Zelensky and say they want the independence of Ukraine. Moreover, they are speeding up the process of entering the European Union, which in practice guarantees the dominance of the Ukrainian economy.

Thus, according to the capitalist powers, none of them have an interest in the exploitation of Ukrainian riches. But lies have short legs. Indeed, Ukraine is one of the countries with the most fertile land in the world and one of the largest producers of cereals, grains, vegetables, seeds, sugar, meat and milk, being called the great granary of Europe. In 2021, according to the International Grain Council, it was the world's fourth largest exporter of corn and the sixth largest exporter of wheat. Ukraine is rich in iron ore, coal, manganese, graphite, titanium, magnesium, oil, nickel, wood and has an important industrial base. It is therefore a country with a large consumer market for Russian, Chinese, European and North American capitalist monopolies.

DIVIDING THE WORLD AMONG THE GREAT POWERS

Regrettably, petty bourgeois historians draw up theories to hide the imperialist character of this war and despise the heroic and fearless struggle that the Ukrainian people have undertaken for centuries to be entitled to their homeland. They argue that the borders established by the Tsarist empire must be accepted, completely ignoring that the great Socialist Revolution of October guaranteed the right to self-determination of all peoples living under Russian tyranny.

What drives these masters of academia to this position is, in addition to a total lack of confidence in the proletarian revolution, the illusion that in the time of the domination of financial capital the

contradictions of capitalism diminish, which makes it impossible to imagine a revolutionary alternative towards war.

However, in the imperialist phase of capitalism the dividing of the world by the great powers not only continues to occur, but also develops even more violently, as shown by the weakening of organizations such as the United Nations (UN), the World Trade Organization (WTO), the advance of the trade war mainly between the USA and China, the so-called "deglobalization" and dozens of military conflicts. Moreover, due to the sharpening of the general crisis of capitalism, new divisions of territories and the possession of the sources of raw materials have become vital for capitalist monopolies and financial capital, as Lenin showed in his important and relevant work *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*.

Let us see: "The principal feature of the latest stage of capitalism is the domination of monopolist combines of the big capitalists. These monopolies are most firmly established when *all* the sources of raw materials are captured by one group and we have seen what zeal the international capitalist combines exert every effort to make it impossible for their rivals to compete with them by buying up, for example, iron ore fields, oil fields, etc. Colonial possession alone gives the monopolies complete guarantee against all contingencies in the struggle with competitors, including the contingency that the latter will defend themselves by means of a law establishing a state monopoly. The more capitalism is developed, the more strongly the shortage of raw materials is felt, the more intense the competition and the hunt for sources of raw materials throughout the whole world, the more desperate is the struggle for the acquisition of colonies."

Indeed, the reduction of the world market, the risks of a new recession in the US and the European Union, and the constant trade and financial crises require that, in order to continue concentrating and accumulating more capital, the capitalist class increases the exploitation of workers, but also has absolute control of the sources of raw materials and agricultural production, fuels and ores.

Well, in the face of this world of wars, unemployment, violence, hunger, which path should the working class and oppressed peoples follow both in Ukraine and in other countries?

The path of revolution, the path that led the Ukrainian people to build the Socialist Republic of Ukraine and crush Nazism and fascism in World War II.

In fact, since the 9th century, the people who inhabited Kiev, then the headquarters of the Slavic state, faced several empires whose goal was to enslave their people and exploit their lands. In the 13th century, the region was conquered by the Mongol Empire and then annexed to the Polish-Lithuanian Community. Between the 15th and 17th centuries, the Tatars built a state on the shores of the Black Sea and Ukraine suffered from invasions by the Hungarian, Ottoman, Swedish and Russian peoples. In the 18th and 19th centuries it was the turn of the Austro-Hungarian empire to take over the lands of Ukraine. Now, in the 21st century, Russia (with China's support) is waging war with the United States and the European Union to decide who will dominate Ukraine.

There was, however, a period – the period of socialism – when peace and friendship triumphed in Russia and Ukraine. Let us remember. In the first decades of the 20th century, the Russian people, led by the Bolshevik Party, fought for the end of Tsarism and for a democratic and revolutionary republic. In October of 1917, the workers and peasants, led by the communists, seized power and began the construction of the Russian Socialist Republic.

With the birth of the Russian Socialist Republic, there was recognition of independence and the Ukrainian State, as Lenin's Manifesto of December 1917 shows, on behalf of the People's Commissars to the Ukrainian people: "We, the Council of People Commissars, recognize the People's Ukrainian Republic, and its right to secede from Russia.... We... recognize at once, unconditionally and without reservations everything that pertains to the Ukrainian people's national rights and national independence."

It is, moreover, this proclamation of Lenin recognizing the creation of Ukraine that Vladimir Putin uses to affirm that "Modern Ukraine was total and completely created by Bolshevik Russia, communist Russia".

Let us continue. Also, in 1917, the Ukrainian Central Rada a union of bourgeois and petty-bourgeois parties, took over the government of Ukraine, which refused to recognize Soviet power and kept the wealth of the people in the hands of the bourgeoisie and landowners. In February 1919, with the support of Socialist Russia, Ukrainian workers and peasants overthrow the Rada government. As soon as this battle had ended, Germany invaded Ukraine, carried out a coup d'état and put in government a Cossack chief under direct order of the German Army. In November 1919, after months of fighting, the Red Army and the Ukrainian people expelled the German invaders and established the Socialist Republic of Ukraine.

In the early 1920s, Ukraine and the North Caucasus were completely liberated from the power of the white guards. However, in April 1920, Polish troops invaded Ukraine and occupied the city of Kiev. The Soldiers of the Red Army launched a counteroffensive, liberated Kiev and drove the Poles out of Ukraine (*History of the Communist Party Bolshevik, Manoel Lisboa Publishers*).

On January 4, 1920, V.I. Lenin wrote the *Letter to the Workers and Peasants of the Ukraine*, which stated: "The independence of the Ukraine has been recognized both by the All-Russia Central Executive Committee of the R.S.F.S.R. (Russian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic) and by the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks). It is therefore self-evident and generally recognized that only the Ukrainian workers and peasants themselves can and will decide... whether the Ukraine shall amalgamate with Russia, or whether she shall remain a separate and independent republic, and, in the latter case, what federal ties shall be established between that republic and Russia....

"We want a *voluntary* union of nations – a union which precludes any coercion of one nation by another – a union founded on complete confidence, on a clear recognition of brotherly unity, on absolutely voluntary consent. Such a union cannot be effected at one stroke; we have to work towards it with the greatest patience and circumspection, so as not to spoil matters and not to arouse distrust, and so that the distrust inherited from centuries of landowner and capitalist oppression, centuries of private property and the enmity caused by its divisions and redivisions may have a chance to wear off." (*Collected Works, Volume 30, Progress Publishers, 1974*)

With the creation of the Soviet Union in December 1922, a new era of great friendship and cooperation between the peoples of Russia and Ukraine began. The USSR was founded on the principle of self-determination of the peoples, respect for cultural differences and for the purpose of suppressing private property of the means of production, liquidating classes and building socialism, aiming to continuously improve the material and spiritual conditions of all the peoples.

After decades of building socialism, in 1941, the Germans invaded Ukraine and Russia to try to take over their lands and riches. Hitler orders the destruction of socialism and the murder of Communists and received the support of what was left of the Ukrainian bourgeoisie. However, the Bolshevik army and the Ukrainian workers' army united and fought to defeat the German invaders, historic battles were fought and again the red flag triumphed.

As it turned out, the Communists, in addition to being the first to recognize Ukraine's independence, fought and shed their blood to drive German and foreign troops out of that country and helped the Ukrainians to build a prosperous nation. During the existence of the Soviet Union, not a single city was bombed, invaded or annexed by Socialist Russia. On the contrary, the Russian and Ukrainian armies fought together and together defeated the foreign invaders and sealed a deep commitment to the sovereignty of both peoples. To make any comparison between the position of socialist Russia and Lenin with Putin's bourgeois government is, at the very least, a historical falsehood.

SOCIALISM OR CAPITALISM IS THE QUESTION

Put another way, the enmity between Russians and Ukrainians spurred on today by the governments of Russia, the United States and the European Union aims to hide the fact that the real enemy is the capitalist system. Indeed, private ownership of the means of production and capital in the hands of a minority of billionaires produces wars and hatred between peoples and nations. Such a rivalry never existed in the USSR; on the contrary, what prevailed was collaboration between the peoples that formed the Soviet Union.

To be a socialist, therefore, is not to capitulate before one of the capitalist blocs, but to defend the principle of self-determination of peoples and denounce all imperialist wars. To be revolutionary is to believe that true peace will only be possible with a new victory of the socialist revolution in the world, the end of the capitalist system and private property. It is to work to develop class consciousness and the organization of workers and youth, it is to spread the truth, that is, that there are only two paths for humanity: socialism or barbarism!