

**'An Open Letter On Putin's War On Ukraine';
to the website "Selected Marxist-Leninist Writings".
13 March 2022**

by Marxist-Leninist Currents Today

Introduction

We give below an open response to some of the main points of an article by **Erdogan A** with MLG, titled "*Imperialism - in Ukraine Particular*". This can be found at: <https://neodemocracy.blogspot.com/2022/03/imperialism-in-ukraine-particular.html> (March 2, 2022).

The viewpoint of '*Marxist-Leninist Currents Today*' was put in two articles, written before the open war. However they anticipated a possible – perhaps even likely - Russian invasion of Ukraine, which occurred on February 24th 2022. Our viewpoints are at: <http://ml-today.com/2022/02/11/imperialist-danse-macabre-over-the-peoples-of-ukraine/> (Feb 11 2022); and <http://ml-today.com/2022/02/06/theses-ukraine/> (Feb 6, 2022).

"Imperialism in Ukraine Particular" by Comrade Erdogan has a very different viewpoint from our own, but from within the ML-ist movement. We feel it necessary to comment purposes of mutual clarification. Erdogan defends and supports President Putin, and Russia in its current war, considering it as a progressive war. In broad terms Erdogan, argues it diminishes the power of the main imperialist world force of the USA; and that it has an anti-fascist character. We disagree with both these central matters.

While our response specifically addresses Erdogan, it is broader in scope. Admittedly, in only a quick and brief survey, the Marxist-Leninist movement seems severely split. Therefore we first briefly note different perspectives in the Marxist-Leninist movement.

Views of the Marxist-Leninist Movement on the Current War in Ukraine

Several organisations who refer to themselves as Marxist-Leninist, support the Russian invasion of Ukraine. At first blush, in general this camp appears dominated by a pro-CPC and Maoist orientation. We accept this may not be invariable.

See for example¹ the positions of the 'Russian Communist Workers Party (Bolshevik)' March 3, 2022 'Statement on Ukraine Events'; as translated by 'Red Patriot', for The League of Young Communists USA which follows the Party of Communists USA; <https://redpat.org/2022/03/russian-communist-workers-party-bolshevik-statement-on-ukraine-events/>

Also another Russian party - the Communist Party (KPRF) of Gennady Zyuganov has largely followed Putin, although as outlined below, this is contested within the party: David Broder, 'We Spoke to Russian Socialists Who Are Protesting Vladimir Putin's War'; <https://jacobinmag.com/2022/03/russian-socialists-protest-putin-war-ukraine-antiwar-dissent> (Accessed March 13)

¹ All websites and articles bar one, were accessed on 6 March 2022.

Or see groups linked to Harpal Brar (UK) such as: Lalkar (“Russia stands firm against the latest imperialist provocation over Ukraine”, January-February 2022; at: <http://www.lalkar.org/article/3852/russia-stands-firm-against-the-latest-imperialist-provocation-over-ukraine> ; or, CPGB (ML) “Russia demands security guarantees to stop NATO expansion”, Feb 1, 2022; <https://thecommunists.org/2022/02/01/news/russia-security-guarantees-stop-nato-expansion-ukraine-usa/>
CPGB (ML) ‘Kiev junta facing defeat as Russia roots out fascist militias from Ukraine’, March 1, at <https://thecommunists.org/2022/03/01/news/ukraine-kiev-junta-facing-defeat-russia-roots-out-fascist-militias/>

Also sites linked to Jose Maria Sison, February 26, 2022, “US & NATO Mastermind And Engineer Armed Conflict Between Russophobe Ukrainian Regime And Russia (Regarding Us & NATO Violations Of Original Minsk Agreement And Minsk Agreement), A Commentary by Chairperson Emeritus, International League Of Peoples’ Struggle”; at <https://neodemocracy.blogspot.com/2022/02/commentary-by-jose-maria-sison-on.html>
Or for example the views of the Communist Party of Philippines (February 23, 2022, Marco Valbuena, ‘On heightened US provocations against Russia in Ukraine and effects on oil prices’, at: <https://prwcinfo.wordpress.com/2022/02/23/on-heightened-us-provocations-against-russia-in-ukraine-and-effects-on-oil-prices/>)

Conversely, organisations who take a pro-Party of Labour Albania line appear, again in general, to condemn the invasion.

This might be exemplified in the ‘Declaration of the European Meeting of the International Conference of Marxist-Leninist Parties and Organizations - Intensify the fight against the policy of war! At: <https://pceml.info/actual/index.php/internacional/1032-intensificar-la-lucha-contra-la-politica-de-guerra> and translated at: <https://revolutionarydemocracy.org>

See also: Communist Platform – for the Communist Party of the Proletariat of Italy, ‘An imperialist and reactionary war across the board -Let us mobilize to refuse any involvement! February 26, 2022; at: <https://revolutionarydemocracy.org>
And “Ukraine: No to the reactionary imperialist war”; February 25, 2022, Communist Workers’ Party of France; translated at <https://revolutionarydemocracy.org>
And finally: American Party Of Labor, ‘We Reject Biden And Putin’s War’; February 22, 2022 at: <https://theredphoenixapl.org/2022/02/22/american-party-of-labor-we-reject-biden-and-putins-war/>

We accept this is a very brief survey. However our main purpose is to address Erdogan’s major points. We begin with how the world toilers determine whether to support a war.

1. The defining characteristic of wars in the era of the proletariat – the “class which conducts the war”.

Erdogan opens his article with this quotation from Fyodorov (*his emphasis*):

“In our time **the legitimacy and justice** of wars can be approached **only from the standpoint of the proletariat and its liberation struggle**...Marxists-Leninists adopt a concrete attitude to every war, depending on the class aims pursued by the belligerents. The champions of the pacifist ideology hold that the

preaching of peace alone leads to an abolition of wars without struggle. Therefore, the pacifist ideology is not dangerous to the militarists, it can be used by the reactionary classes to blunt the vigilance of the masses."

We are not familiar with **Fyodorov**, nonetheless that quotation is quite close to the formulations of both Lenin and Stalin. For example:

"What is required of us is the *ability* to explain to the masses that the social and political character of the war is determined not by the "good will" of individuals or groups, or even of nations, but by the position of the *class* which conducts the war, by the class *policy* of which the war is a continuation, by the *ties* of capital, which is the dominant economic force in modern society, by the *imperialist character* of international capital, by Russia's dependence in finance, banking and diplomacy upon Britain, France, and so on. To explain this skillfully in a way the people would understand *is not easy*; none of us would be able to do it at once without committing errors."²

For Lenin 'good will' cannot explain war, which depends upon underlying political relations, because:

"War is the continuation of politics. Everything depends on the system of political relations before the war and during the war."³

"War is the Continuation of Politics by Other" (i.e., Violent) "Means". This famous aphorism was uttered by one of the profoundest writers on the problems of war, Clausewitz. Marxists have always rightly regarded this thesis as the theoretical basis of views concerning the significance of every given war. It was precisely from this viewpoint that Marx and Engels always regarded different wars."⁴

We will not multiply the possible number of quotations from Lenin on this. However, the corollary is that characterising the war requires careful consideration of the **character** of the Russian state and its' current President – **Vladimir Putin**.

Therefore we explicitly ask five questions:

- (i) What is the class character of Russia and its President? ... p.3
- (ii) How did Putin seal his Presidency in Chechnya? Cutting Putin's war teeth... p.10
- (iii) What do the prior wars of the post 1991 Russian state Georgia, Syria - teach us about the current war? p.16
- (iv) Can Putin be trusted when he claims he fights against fascism in Ukraine? p.19
- (v) Finally what does the unfolding international situation hold? p. 22

Of these (i) and (ii) seem to us the most important demanding more detailed responses.

² V. I. Lenin, "The Tasks of the Proletariat in Our Revolution, '(Draft Platform for the Proletarian Party); Volume 24; at <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1917/tasks/ch05.htm>

³ V.I. Lenin, Letter to Inessa Armand; 23 December 1916; Lenin Collected Works, Progress Publishers, 1976, Moscow, Volume 35; pages 264-265; <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1916/dec/00ia.htm>

⁴ V.I.Lenin Socialism and War, The Attitude of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party Towards the War; Volume 21; p. 304; or at <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1915/s-w/ch01.htm>

2. Rebuttal to Erodgan

(i) What is the class character of Russia and its President?

We will argue that Putin played a major role in the robbing of state resources that had been built up the prior socialist state Putin never repudiated this. Instead Putin led the process and enriched himself by it. To display the intimate links of Putin with the profiteering and looting of the proletariat's state owned resources, a minimal but adequate detail is necessary. It should show the structural changes in the Soviet economy and class relations, since the Khrushchevera.

Khrushchevite revisionism and splits in the neo-capitalist class

Marxist-Leninist readers understand a dramatic class shift took place in the USSR after the death of Stalin, as the revisionist Nikita Khrushchev took control of the state. Khrushchev held the positions of First Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (1953-56) and Prime Minister (1955-64).

Khrushchev's goal was to resurrect the profit motive, and gave it a foundation. But he and other revisionists used a hidden language. Time was needed to undermine the people's support to socialism, before a 'spade could be called a spade'. Even by 2000, as Roy Medvedev put it: "hardly anyone call it a "capitalist revolution". Partly this is for tactical reasons, with intent to deceive the people".⁵ So the destruction of the socialist state of the USSR was performed retaining the facade of a 'socialist' state. The economic re-structuring Khrushchev began is described in detail by Bland.⁶

Firstly, Khrushchev moved production to being based on the profit motive. Consistent with his, his political programme was directed to the intelligentsia (e.g., 'liberalisation' of the state) and to the petty bourgeoisie (e.g., handing over of the agricultural machinery of the State Machine and Tractor Stations to the collective farms).

But Khrushchev's policies had two other major defining aspects. In the background a split in the Soviet neo-capitalist class was playing out.

Firstly, there emerged a conflict pitting neo-capitalists based in the consumer industries (including Khrushchev and Malenkov) - against those based in heavy industry (including Bulganin). Heavy industry neo-capitalists led the army and were based on armaments, largely located in the Russian Republic:

"The conflict between the (then embryonic) state capitalists involved in heavy industry and those involved in the consumer goods industries came into the open within a few months of Stalin's death. On August 8th., 1953 the now Prime Minister Georgi Malenkov told the Supreme Soviet:

"On the basis of the success achieved in the development of heavy industry, all the conditions exist for a sharp rise in the production of

⁵ Roy Medvedev, "Post-Soviet Russia. A Journey through the Yeltsin era"; New York; 2000; p. 47

⁶ W. B. Bland, 'The Restoration Of Capitalism In The Soviet Union'; 1980 Wembley UK; at <http://www.oneparty.co.uk/html/book/ussrmenu.html>; a more succinct version is to be found at: Bland WBB for Communist League; 'Compass no.92'; On Open Letter to the 'New' Communist Party'; November 1991: at: <https://www.marxists.org/history/erol/periodicals/compass/11-1991.pdf>

consumer goods... However, while the output of means of production as a whole has risen in the last 28 years by almost 55 times, the production of consumer goods during the same period has only increased 12 times, which cannot be considered satisfactory... Hitherto we have had no possibility of developing light industry and the food industry at the same rate as heavy industry. We must, therefore in the interests of ensuring a more rapid increase in the standards of life of the people, promote the development of light industry by every means".⁷

The state capitalists involved in heavy industry took eighteen months to reverse this policy and remove Malenkov. In his letter of resignation of February 8th., 1955, Malenkov humbly recanted.⁸ His successor as Prime Minister was Marshal Nikolai Bulganin, who gave full support to the principle of priority for heavy industry in the name of "defense" (*Speech of February 9th, 1955*).⁷

Secondly, Khrushchev also sought "collaboration" with United States imperialism and presented a utopian picture of a "partnership" between the USA and USSR to save the world from war.⁹

But by the early 1960s the harmful effects of the Khrushchevite foreign policy on the world position of the Soviet neo-capitalist class were obvious. This included the Cuban missile crisis and "great loss of Soviet influence in many colonial-type countries". The opposing section of the Soviet neo-capitalist class were able to:

"reorientate this foreign policy into one the cardinal point of which was collaboration with all capitalist classes and strata in the world which are in contradiction with US imperialism".¹⁰

In the disintegration of the shell of the previous Soviet USSR, these two sections of the neo-capitalist class battled against each other. Later manifestations can be traced in standard accounts¹¹. By 1966-70 Alexei Kosygin as Premier, together with General Secretary Leonid Brezhnev had regained the upper hand for the consumer industries.

But the logic that profit was the driver of society was never challenged by any of the leaders up to and including Putin.

Gorbachev to Yelstin

⁷ G. Malenkov: Speech to Supreme Soviet, August 3th., 1953, cited in: "Keesing's Contemporary Archives", Volume 9; P. 13096; cited W.B.Bland, for 'Communist League, 'The Class Basis Of Sakharov's "Liberalism"; February 1976, No.3 "Compass" London UK; at: https://ml-review.ca/aml/CommunistLeague/Sakharov_FINAL.htm

⁸ G., Malenkov: Letter of Resignation to Supreme Soviets February 8th., 1955, cited in 'Keesing's Contemporary Archives', Volume 10; p. 14033; W.B.Bland, for 'Communist League, 'The Class Basis Of Sakharov's "Liberalism"; February 1976, No.3 "Compass" London UK; at: https://ml-review.ca/aml/CommunistLeague/Sakharov_FINAL.htm

⁹ N. S. Khrushchev: Speech at the Soviet Indian Friendship Rally, September 8th., 1961; in Report of the Central Committee of the Marxist-Leninist Organisation of Britain on "Centrist" Revisionism, (March 1970; cited W.B.Bland, for 'Communist League, 'The Class Basis Of Sakharov's "Liberalism"; February 1976, No.3 "Compass" London UK; at: https://ml-review.ca/aml/CommunistLeague/Sakharov_FINAL.htm

¹⁰ CC, MLOB: Report on "Centrist" Revisionism, in: RED FRONT, March 1970; in Red front; March, 1970; p. 23; cited in Sakharov at: https://ml-review.ca/aml/CommunistLeague/Sakharov_FINAL.htm

¹¹ See for example Christian Schmidt-Hauer, 'Gorbachev - the Path to power'; London 1986; p. 130.

Further steps to dismantle vestiges of the former socialist state took place under Mikhail Gorbachev. Promoted by Yuri Andropov - he was part of the consumer industry camp. As Schmidt-Hauer says: "Gorbachev strives to give priority to light and consumer goods industries as the prime movers for economic effectiveness."¹⁰ Gorbachev became the General Secretary, and head of government, in 1985. He instituted dramatic changes with an on-going steady erosion of central controls which allowed state-owned enterprises to regulate themselves. He termed this process as '*perestroika*' or re-structuring reforms and "*glasnost*" meaning openness.

Meanwhile proponents of heavy industry inside the army moved to invade Afghanistan in 1979. But Gorbachev defeated politically one of the last key supporters of the heavy industry lobby, and the anti-Western alliances - Grigori Romanov. Thus when Gorbachev came to power, unsurprisingly he pushed to withdraw the USSR forces inside Afghanistan. Gorbachev he fostered Mohammed Najibullah - who was more compliant than Karmal had proved.¹² The effective defeat of its' troops in Afghanistan significantly contributed to the on-going crisis inside the USSR. In 1985, Yeltsin was appointed as Politburo member for Construction.

Meanwhile, living conditions deteriorated yet further for the people. Still, Boris Yeltsin and other leaders wanted even faster changes towards an openly and un-mitigated open capitalism. At the July 1990 CPSU Congress, Gorbachev and Boris Yeltsin came up with a joint programme for further privatisation contained in a 'programme for 500 days'.

This provoked an attempted coup by the remnants of the heavy industry group - within what was still called the CPSU. Calling themselves the Committee State Committee for the State of Emergency (dubbed the "Gang of Eight") led by Vice-President Yanayev with Boldin, Shenin, Baklanov, and General Varennikov, they arrested Gorbachev, and the coup leaders announced a take-over.

Yeltsin, as President of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic, simply occupied the Moscow building of the Supreme Soviet known as 'The White House'. He successfully stalled the coup - which ended on 21 August, 1990. Gorbachev 'thanked' Yeltsin, and in two days time left the political stage. Gorbachev was basically elbowed to one side, and resigned as Soviet President saying "My life's work has been accomplished'. As Roy Medvedev says:

"The new rulers of the Russian federation introduced a political program that mounted to a 'revolution from above', whose aim was to transform the so-called socialist system of former Soviet Russia into a liberal capitalist system. President Boris Yeltsin ... carried out extensive measures to eliminate state owned industry and privatize the entire economic infra-structure.. and to make Russia an integral part of the worldwide "free market" economic system".¹³

The CPSU was now banned. The formal dissolution of the USSR took place in December 1991 - by the agreement of the leaders of Russia, Byelorussia and the

¹² Alliance ML, 'The Afghanistan War of 2002: Legacy of USA Imperialism and Social Imperialism'; 2002; at <https://ml-today.com/2021/09/03/the-afghanistan-war-of-2002-legacy-of-usa-imperialism-and-social-imperialism/>

¹³ Medvedev Bid; p. 4; Cited in Hari Kumar, 'Navalny and Putin – Is there a good guy here?' February 9, 2021; at: <http://ml-today.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/alexei-nalvani-putin.pdf>

Ukraine. Instead they formed the so-called 'New Commonwealth of Independent States' or CIS.¹⁴

Yeltsin's team instituted a program to make private enterprise even more profitable, removing any price controls. What was achieved by these steps of Yeltsin?

"The removal of price control and subsidies decreed by the Russian President, Boris Yeltsin, is intended to accelerate the transition to a market economy... The price reform abolishes all state controls on many consumer goods and services... Millions of Russians will be condemned to unknown poverty overnight. There is little hope that catastrophe can be avoided".¹⁵

Together with his Prime Minister Yegor Gaidar, and Anatoly Chubais of the cabinet, a new strategy was adopted - Yeltsin sold off the state. This was a departure from the prior war between the consumer based neo-capitalists and the heavy based neo-capitalists. But for a period it converted the entire economy into a comprador economy based on the USA. But it especially hit the heavy industrialists.

Yeltsin, Gaidar and Chubais had been strongly guided by the influx of USA and Western 'economists' such as Jeffrey Sachs - who urged to:

"Introduce capitalism in one fell swoop—on the advice of Western advisors, particularly Harvard University “shock therapist,” Professor Jeffrey Sachs and his capitalist provocateurs at the Harvard Institute for International Development. In 1990 and 1991, as Gorbachev’s reform program stalled and his government was collapsing, Sachs and his Institute colleagues advised Yegor Gaidar, Yeltsin’s first economic czar, to dismantle quickly most of the controls and subsidies that had structured life for Soviet citizens for most of the century. Sachs predicted a more or less smooth transition to a normal western-style capitalism, once the initial shock of price decontrol was over."¹⁶

Gaidar adopted 'standard recommendations of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the International Bank of Reconstruction and Development (IBRD). He was kind enough to advise Russians to "simply shut our eyes tightly and leap into the unknown" - into a 'shock therapy'.¹⁷ Prices shot up, and chaos, suicides, shortened life spans, alcoholism, and misery ensued. The Government Statistics Committee said:

"The national income declined by 18% ... The number of redundant, or unneeded enterprises grew. In industry the indebtedness of enterprises for products delivered came to 2.5 trillion rubles and in more than half of cases, the payment due date had expired".¹⁸

¹⁴ W.B.Bland for Compass, 'The Liquidation of the Soviet Union' London; February 1992; at: <https://www.marxists.org/history/erol/periodicals/compass/02-1992.pdf>

¹⁵ Independent', 2 January 1992; p. 1; 8; Cited in Bland Compass 1992 - see above reference 7

¹⁶ Nancy Holmstrom and Richard Smith, 'The Necessity of Gangster Capitalism - Primitive Accumulation in Russia and China'; at: <https://monthlyreview.org/2000/02/01/the-necessity-of-gangster-capitalism/>

¹⁷ Medvedev, "Post-Soviet Russia. A Journey through the Yeltsin era"; New York; 2000;p. 14

¹⁸ Medvedev, "Post-Soviet Russia"; Ibid; p. 23

To effect privatisation rapidly, the State Property Committee under Anatoly Chubais was empowered to "build capitalism in Russia and to do so in a few years of frontal assault.. accomplishing production norms that had taken the rest of the world centuries." ¹⁹

Supposedly all citizens were to receive an anonymous voucher for "an equal share" of the country's industrial enterprises. This was supposed to total ten thousand roubles - said the new President. but under a rapid inflation that set in, that value fell dramatically. In any case many people were not being paid wages, and many never received any vouchers. These vouchers ended up being sold for survival. As the mayor of Moscow Yuri Luzhkov put it: "Privatisation was like a drunkard in the street selling his belongings for a pittance".²⁰

Into this human misery, swooped those with even a little cash to buy up the vouchers to possess the former enterprises at a pittance.²¹ This is how the oligarchy in Russia was created. It was to be exemplified by the oil and gas magnate Mikhail Khodorovsky whose power was to be broken by Putin.¹²

Industrial output collapsed by 26 percent. In three years to 1995, Russia's GDP fell 42 percent and industrial production fell 46 percent. ¹⁶ In addition capital flight began, with export profits being deposited in Western banks. The savings banks of individual pensioners and families ('funeral money') was wiped out. The Russian Academy of Sciences summed up the years 1992-1993 as follows:

"The income of the 10% of the Russia's citizens most well-provided-for was ten times higher than that of the least-well-provided for 10 %. A third of the population has income below the official "subsistence minimum, and 10% or 15 million people are below the threshold of what is considered necessary for physical survival. This signals the entry of society into a phase of severe social conflict".²²

People's reaction was strongly negative of course, and Deputies in the Duma attempted to impeach and remove Yeltsin. To 'defend' his government, Yeltsin launched attacks on the Russian Congress of the People's Deputies and the Supreme Soviet. By October 1993 his vicious attack ended with an unknown number of dead in excess of 200. In December 1993, state wide elections to the Dumas were held in which Yeltsin's supporters (including Gaidar's "Russia's Choice") lost. But a referendum to alter the Constitution had also taken place by which Yeltsin was enabled to do this. Yeltsin now simply to appointed a new government.

In 1994 a new stage of privatisation was begun. By 1994 more than 50 % of all productive capacity was in private hands, and by 1995, 80% of all state-owned enterprises had been sold.

Perhaps Putin was not involved in this theft from the peoples of the USSR?

¹⁹ Chubais TV interview; cited Medvedev Ibid; p. 88

²⁰ Medvedev, "Post-Soviet Russia"; Ibid; p. 89; 90;

²¹ Catherine Belton, 'Putin's People'; New York; 2020;p.76

²² Roy Medvedev, "Post-Soviet Russia"; Ibid; p. 43

We suspect people know the answer to this question. Nonetheless, how did Putin conduct himself in those years of the formal dissolution of the USSR? What do we know about Putin's own class allegiances?

Vladimir Putin (1952-) had been a middle ranking member of the KGB in Dresden, as the GDR imploded under various pressures that cannot be detailed here. It is likely that in the GDR's last days Putin was involved in moving cash stores of the East German states' (GDR) secret police apparatus - the Stasi - into the West.²³ Nevertheless, after the final GDR collapse, Putin returned to Russia - supposedly resigning from the KGB in 1991. He emerged as a politician in St Petersburg in 1994.

Putin was quickly vaulted into senior positions in Leningrad, including as a KGB chief. But his positions included important controlling roles on financial committees. Putin also became deputy mayor of St. Petersburg to the mayor Anatoliy Sobchak.

The Joint Stock Commercial Bank Rossiya (OAO AB Rossiya) was being established in 1990. Enormous cash transfers to outside of Russia disemboweling the CPSU were being conducted. In 1991 Putin's 'newly formed Committee for Foreign Liaison' began coordinating the Bank's activities.²⁴ That group collaborated with organised criminal elements. Putin aided Gennadiy Timchenko of Kirishi Petroleum Chemical Export, and Guvor – to gain preferential contracts for food delivery in the 'food crisis' of 1991. However that 'food purchase' never arrived, the money lost to private pockets.

Putin protected Rossiya Bank from multiple investigations of money laundering to the West. He was able to effect this as he chairman of the Committee for Foreign Liaison "responsible for encouraging, regulating, and licensing foreign investment in St. Petersburg."²⁵ No monies could leave St Petersburg without his sanction.²⁵ Amongst the many other people he protected, Putin aided the Tambow criminal gang and its leader Gennadiy Petrov move monies out of Russia. By 2014 the bank was the 17th largest bank in Russia and had over \$10 billion in assets.²⁶

Putin rapidly surrounded himself with the so-called **Siloviki** ('strong men' or 'KGB Inc') led by Igor Sechin. What was their class interest?

They had no interest in selling Russia to the West, but equally they did not want to return to socialism. Instead they wanted to keep Russian capital for themselves Including for all its various misuses, for example helping Bassar Assad of Syria. As Putin's former chief economic advisor Andrei Illarionov put it:

"Their ideology is the so-called 'nash-ism' [ours-ism]... For 'us' common laws are not applicable. Another element of their corporatist state and nash-ism is the widespread use of force and violence in various forms towards opponents and 'the others'."²⁷

²³ Belton, Ibid; p. 33-34

²⁴ Karen Dawisha, 'Putin's Kleptocracy'; New York; 2014 p.63-65

²⁵ Karen Dawisha, 'Putin's Kleptocracy' Ibid; p.80-83

²⁶ Karen Dawisha, 'Putin's Kleptocracy' Ibid; p. 70

²⁷ Martin Sixsmith, "Putin's Oil. The Yukos Affair and the Struggle for Russia"; London 2010; p.55; 49; 77

Putin's abuses - especially over the food acquisitions that went awry - were so blatant that legislators were already zoning in on him. But the St. Petersburg Commission led by legislator Marina Sal'ye was stalled by Putin repeatedly.²⁸ Sal'ye was ultimately forced into hiding. Numerous other documents and trails tied Putin into the gambling industry and simple but lucrative organised crime; real estate manipulations; fuel etc²⁸

Putin made *no* staunch communist expression against the fervent privatization. Instead Putin became part of the '**Family**' gang of Boris Yeltsin. This included the financial oligarchy, with Boris Berezovskiy for a long early period. Tatyana Dyachenko - Yeltsin's daughter - became Yeltsin's minder as the patriarch progressively became sicker from his alcoholism.

Putin moved to Moscow as things got a bit tricky in St Petersburg for him. His first job in Moscow was as deputy head of Presidential Property management Department (PPMD). Yeltsin in 1996 had seized control of all USSR and CPSU foreign property out of his Presidential office.²⁸ The PPMD became integral to Yeltsin in evading the Swiss-based company kickbacks scandal of **Mabetex**. A total of \$62.5 million embezzlement was at the heart of the scandal.

However, in 1997 Putin was appointed by President Boris Yeltsin as deputy chief of the presidential staff. By 1998 he had become Director of the Federal Security Service (FSB) the successor to the KGB. By this stage - many other anti-Putin and anti-Yeltsin had managed to begin lay charges - and both Putin and Yeltsin protected each other. By 1999 he was appointed as acting Prime Minister by President Yeltsin, whose resignation led to Putin becoming Acting President. Throughout this time, the USA imperialist were continuing to under-write the Yeltsin government - in 1996 with its biggest recorded loan to that point of USD 10.5 billion under Clinton.²⁹

Meanwhile the corruption trail was becoming ever more vivid. Felipe Turover had turned over 4,000 pages of evidence to Swiss courts and Russian prosecutors detailing the Mabatex accounts. This came to the Russian Procurator General Yuiry Skuratov - from the Swiss prosecutor general Carla Del Ponte. But 'Yeltsin-gate' was fast becoming close to being also a 'Putin-Gate' - especially as Putin was under possible indictment from charges of abuse of office in St. Petersburg. The charge was led by Skuratov. However suddenly a public exposure was made of pornographic videos showing Skuratov with two prostitutes. Despite this Skuratov persisted.²⁸

The 'Storm in Moscow' false flag was the way out. First the Chechen wars were revived inside Dagestan by paid 'militants' Shamil Basayev and Movladio Udogov. Their attacks were planned at the FSB.³⁰ But more was needed to 'justify' a Chechen war, and this was not slow in being cooked up.

2 (ii) Cutting Putin's War teeth in Chechnya to put the seal of rise to his power

²⁸ Karen Dawisha, 'Putin's Kleptocracy' Ibid; p.107-120; 126-132; 132-153;169-175;190-195

²⁹ The International Committee for the Restoration of the Soviet Union; July 1996; reprinted 'Compass'; No 125; Oct 1996 'On the Russian Presidential elections'; at <https://www.marxists.org/history/erol/periodicals/compass/10-1996.pdf>

³⁰ Dawisha K pi.200; and; Dunlop, John. The Moscow Bombings of September 1999: Examinations of Russian Terrorist Attacks at the Onset of Vladimir Putin's Rule., Ibidem Verlag, 2015

As Bland argued the Chechen Wars were launched against a nation that had declared itself as independent.³¹ After all Chechnya had declared itself to be such in 1991, following demonstrations in Grozny, the capital of Chechnya. General Dzhakhar Dudayev took over the KGB HQ with his Chechen National Congress, becoming President in October 1991. Although President Yeltsin sent in troops they were stood down after being surrounded by Chechen troops.

In March 1992, Chechnya was one of two autonomous republics within what had been the Russian Socialist Federal Soviet Republic (RSFSR) which refused to sign a federation treaty. The Russian state engineered factions based in Ingushetia to demand an Ingush Republic to remain within the Russian Federation.

By 1993 Chechnya had become bitterly divided, and Dudayev was forced into issuing emergency orders - but these were revoked by his opponents using the Chechen Constitutional Court. Yeltsin now sent special forces to attack Dudayev. By November 1994, groups were being funded by Russia to attack Grozny - and ultimately to mass troops on the border with Chechnya. As Dunlop says "It began to become apparent that the Yeltsin leadership had arrived at a firm decision to overthrow Dudaev in a "black operation".³² In the summer of 1994 Yeltsin 'instructed' 150 billion roubles be provided to actions, including funding to Umar Avturkhanov. On 11 December 1994, a full scale invasion took place - in what was "Russia's biggest military operation since the Afghanistan war".³³

Both fierce Chechen resistance, and Russian army morale disintegration - led to a massive internal Russian population discontent. As Yeltsin resorted to massive bombing, he was forced to temporarily halt this on 27 December 1994 due to anti-war sentiment inside Russia at the gruesome TV pictures. Resumption together with a massive land assault on 1 January 1995 was fought to a standstill by the Chechens.

But the temporary victory of the Chechen army was destined to last only briefly. At stake were two crucial factors:

Firstly, there were oil pipelines from Baku Azerbaijan coming in, to link with those going out to Novorossik on the Black Sea.³⁰

Secondly, the Russian masses had to be diverted from the spectacle of the governmental failures and at the same time ensuring Putin's leadership.

Achieving the second goal would also effectively stop the new attempts at impeaching Yeltsin, in which Putin's neck was also on the line.³⁴

The way forward was revealed in a telephone conversation as early as 1996:

³¹ W.B.Bland For 'The Marxist-Leninist Research Bureau' Report No. 7; January 1995; Chechenya; at <http://ml-today.com/2022/03/08/w-b-bland-on-chechnya/>

³² John B. Dunlop, 'Russia Confronts Chechnya. Roots of a separatist conflict. Cambridge, 1998; p.193-197

³³ 'Guardian', 3 December 1994; p. 15; cited in Bland 'Chechnya'; 1996.

³⁴ Dawisha K Ibid; p, 190

"On 30 November 1996, the late Sergei Yushenkov, then chairman of the parliamentary Defense Committee, telephoned Oleg Lobov, the secretary of Yeltsin's Russian Security Council.

Lobov told him that there would be no state of emergency. But then he added that, yes, there would be a war. On the telephone [Yushenkov related] Lobov used the phrase that: 'It is not only a question of the integrity of Russia. We need a small victorious war to raise the president's ratings.'"³⁵

Putin was to become the hit-man for the attacks on Chechnya. To make this "acceptable" to a Russian population who had soured on Chechen wars by the debacles of the 1993-6 war, a two-pronged attack was launched.

Most importantly false flags operations of terror were launched. They served as justification an emergency act to enable special powers.

As early as June 1999, warning of "the preparation of a series of terrorist acts in Russia which had the goal of canceling the future elections", and "'terror bombings in Moscow which could be blamed on the Chechens.'" were being published in the Swedish newspaper Svenska Dagbladet, and the Italian newspaper Stampa.³⁶ The journalist

Giulietto Chiesa, the long-serving chief correspondent for the Moscow bureau of Stampa pointed to the market town explosion:

"in Vladikavkaz, North Osetiya, on 19 March 1999, which killed a reported seventy persons... "That criminal act," he pointed out, "was conceived and carried out not simply by a group of criminals. As a rule the question here concerns broad-scale and multiple actions, the goal of which is to sow panic and fear among citizens." ³⁷

In the Yeltsin Family the forthcoming vents were own as "Storm in Moscow":

"A Russian journalist, Aleksandr Zhilin... reported in the 22 July 1999 issue of the newspaper Moskovskaya Pravda:

"From trustworthy sources in the Kremlin," Zhilin wrote, "the following has become known. The Administration of the President has drafted and adopted (... reported to Yeltsin) a broad plan for discrediting [the mayor of Moscow Yurii] Luzhkov with the aid of provocations, intended to destabilize the sociopsychological situation in Moscow. In circles close to Tatyana Dyachenko [Yeltsin's younger daughter], the given plan is being referred to as 'Storm in Moscow... the city awaits great shocks. The conducting of loud terrorist acts (or attempts at terrorist acts) is being planned in relation to a number of government establishments: the buildings of the FSB, MVD, Council of Federation, Moscow City Court, Moscow Arbitration Court, and a number of editorial boards of anti-

³⁵ Dunlop, John. The Moscow Bombings of September 1999 : Examinations of Russian Terrorist Attacks at the Onset of Vladimir Putin's Rule., Ibidem Verlag, 2015. p.14

³⁶ Dunlop, John. The Moscow Bombings' Ibid;p.19

³⁷ Dunlop, John. The Moscow Bombings' Ibid; p.19

Luzhkov publications. Also foreseen is the kidnapping of a number of well-known people and average citizens by 'Chechen rebels' who with great pomp will then be 'freed' and brought to Moscow".³⁸

By early July 1999 raids in Chechnya invading helicopter gunships began the plan to 'foment violence in the Caucasus to create an excuse for cancelling upcoming parliamentary and presidential elections".³⁸ The oligarch Boris Berezovski had been at one stage close to Yeltsin and Putin, and was part of 'the family'.

Berezovski was known to have funded "extremist elements among the Chechen separatists with millions of dollars in funds."³⁹ For example, the Chechen wahhabi leader Arbi Baraev, had:

"close ties to the Russian power ministries. Baraev "moved freely about the [Chechen] republic showing at federal checkpoints the documents of an officer of the Russian MVD."³⁹

Details of sponsoring the internecine conflicts within Chechen forces, show huge bribes and monies for funding militia involve the oligarch. These fostered divisions between warlords including a central role for Shamil Basaev. After falling out with the Yeltsin Family and Putin, the oligarch was scapegoated, but:

"Vladimir Putin," journalist Valerii Yakov has written, "director of the FSB at the time, was friendly with Berezovskii then. Being what he was, Putin must have known about all (all!) the oligarch's contacts with the Chechens. These contacts did not worry the chekist Putin, the policeman Rushailo, or prime minister Stepashin back then. The businessman is an enemy now, and those contacts are labeled criminal."³⁹

The timing of events showed the liaison between Putin and his predecessor Prime Minister Sergei Stepashin, and Berezovskii. On 16 August 1999, Putin was narrowly confirmed by the State Duma as chairman of the government of the Russian Federation. As the mathematician Andrei Piontkovskii, wrote:

"On the threshold of the [parliamentary and presidential] elections," he wrote, "Stepashin, Putin and Berezovskii discussed with the international terrorist Shamil Basaev a plan for a campaign by the latter into Dagestan. That plan was carried out and, as a result, there perished hundreds of Russian soldiers and hundreds of peaceful Dagestanis and a bloodbath was unleashed in which tens of thousands of people have perished."⁴⁰

Stepashin was ousted as Prime Minister in August of 1999 to make room for the election of Putin as Russian president in March of 2000. Stepashin was quite candid to the German periodical Frankfurter Rundschau in an interview in February 2000:

"Q: When did the preparations for the second war begin?

³⁸ Dunlop, John. The Moscow Bombings p.20; 52

³⁹ Dunlop, John. The Moscow Bombings; Ibid; p.54-56

⁴⁰ Dunlop, John. The Moscow Bombings of September 1999; p. 76

Stepashin: In March 1999 after the abduction of General Shpigun it became clear to us that Chechen President Aslan Maskhadov was not capable of fighting terrorism independently (...) We decided to close the border, create a sanitary cordon around Chechnya— like the Berlin wall. We bolstered the MVD divisions in the border regions.

Q: But an invasion of Chechnya was not on the table?

Stepashin: Yes [it was]. In the summer, in July [1999], we decided to seize territory [in Chechnya] north of the Terek."⁴¹

Stepashin acknowledged that: "having provoked a war, it is difficult in that region to quickly gain a victory". He however said that the plan was "to destabilize the situation and to bring it under Emergency Rule, "to permit the Yeltsin regime to declare Emergency Rule in Russia and thus to postpone the parliamentary and presidential elections scheduled for December 1999 and March 2000."⁴²

"On 8-9 September 1999, shortly after midnight, making use of a homemade explosive device, a criminal group blew up a nine-story, six-entry apartment building located at House No. 19 on Guryanov Street in Moscow. As a result of this blast, one hundred persons died, while six hundred and ninety received wounds of various severity. Four days later, on 13 September, at approximately 5:00 a.m., once again using a powerful home-made detonator, the same group bombed an eight-story apartment house located at House No. 6, wing 3 on Kashirskii Highway in Moscow. This explosion proved to be significantly more "efficient" than had the first, killing 124 and wounding only seven. ... these two bombings which, as is well known, paved the way for a full-scale Russian military invasion of Chechnya less than three weeks after the second explosion occurred. They also served to propel a little-known retired lieutenant colonel in the secret police, who had been appointed by President Boris Yeltsin to the post of acting prime minister a month previously, into the Russian presidency. Vladimir Putin became acting Russian president three-and-a-half months after the Moscow bombings and was then elected president of the country in March of 2000."⁴³

After Putin turned on Berezovskii and forced him into exile, the latter admitted the machinations of 'Operation Successor':

"these explosions [in Moscow] were the work not of Chechens but of the Russian authorities.... he omitted to mention who was effectively ruling Russia in the autumn of 1999. The highest authority in the land was the team in charge of Operation Successor (Berezovskii, [Aleksandr] Voloshin, [Valentin] Yumashev, [Tatyana] Dyachenko) who were acting on behalf of an incapable Boris Yeltsin... The aim was to avert a takeover of the Kremlin by the rival clan of Luzhkov and Primakov, which threatened their business interests.... The shameful secret of how the Putin regime was conceived binds Putin and Berezovskii together with a single chain." (Mathematician Andrei Piontkovskii, April 2007)."⁴⁴

⁴¹ Dunlop, John. The Moscow Bombings of September 1999; Ibid; p. 62

⁴² Dunlop, John. The Moscow Bombings of September 1999; Ibid p.65

⁴³ Dunlop, John. The Moscow Bombings of September 1999 p.78

The protagonist - Putin - acknowledged his own role:

"In his so-called autobiography, Putin conceded that he had "to a large degree" taken responsibility for the entire war effort."⁴⁴

The Russian national neo-capitalist class reasserts itself

Undoubtedly Putin and his Siloviki re-engineered Yel'tin's and Chubais's purely gangster compradorism. There should be no illusions that Putin had any sympathy for socialism or communism. Putin vividly said in an interview:

"the Bolsheviks "destroyed what glues, molds the people of civilized countries – market relationships. They destroyed the market, emerging capitalism. The only thing that they did to keep the country together within common borders – was a barb wire."⁴⁵

They closed off routes for foreign capital, and tried to regain the high points of the lucrative oil and gas industries. The first target they went after was that section of the oligarchs who were the entry point for foreign capitalists into the Russian economy. This especially applied to Khodorkovsky, who had been lauded by 'Business Week'. Khodorovsky had appointed prominent Western people to the board of Yukos Oil including Henry Kissinger and David Owen, and was paying dividends to non-Russians. Khodorovsky openly flaunted his course:

"We now have a lot of American shareholders in Yukos. In Russia we are a sort of poster-child company, a symbol of where the Russian economy and business culture is headed."⁴⁶

Yukos oil was on the point of an 50-50 partnership with ExxonMobil in 2003. Putin abruptly broke Yukos by first imprisoning the executives including Khodorovsky and seizing the assets of Yukos. While pretending to be 'anti-oligarchy', Putin enriched and formed his own clique. While Khodorovsky was released into exile after 10 years, the faction that he represented had suffered a major setback. Khodorovsky had also started a movement in social life as well, which was called 'Open Russia Foundation' in 2001, modelled on George Soros' 'Open Society'.⁴⁷

The project of the Russian neo-capitalist class continued on. Even recently it was at its most aggressive against Alexei Navalny.⁴⁸

⁴⁴ Dunlop, John. The Moscow Bombings of September 1999; p.76-77

⁴⁵ Gordon M. Hahn, 'Report: Towards a Political Biography of Vladimir Putin: From Commissar to Accidental Revolutionary From Above, 1975-2003': Russian & Eurasian Politics; November 12, 2020; at

<https://gordonhahn.com/2020/11/12/report-towards-a-political-biography-of-vladimir-putin-from-commissar-to-accidentalrevolutionary-from-above-1975-2003/>

⁴⁶ Marshall I Goldman, 'Putin Power and the New Russia'; Oxford 2008; p.62

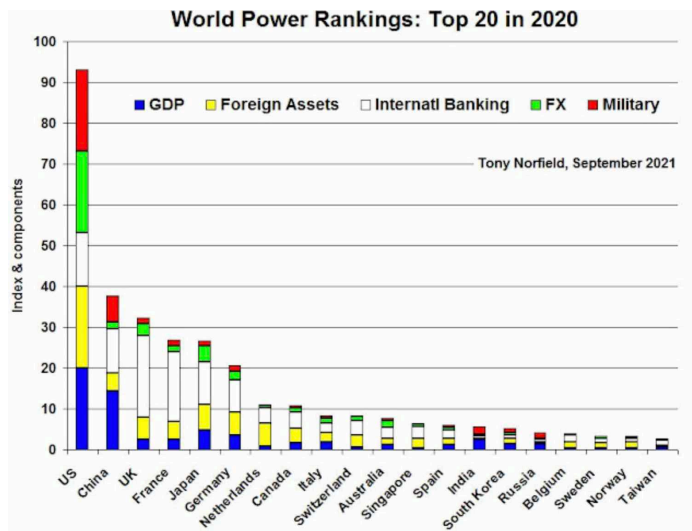
⁴⁷ Martin Sixsmith, 'Putin's Oil. The Yukos Affair and the Struggle for Russia'; London 2010; p.55; 49; 77

⁴⁸ Hari Kumar, 'Navalny and Putin – Is there a good guy here?'; 31 January 2021, Marxism-Leninism Currents Today at <http://www.ml-today.com>

A word about the likely current fiscal balances of the man himself:

“The Kremlin claims that Putin earns an annual salary of \$140,000. His publicly disclosed assets include an 800-square foot apartment, a trailer, and three cars. But according to some experts, he may be the wealthiest man in the world with assets totaling up to \$200 billion. While that is a ridiculous amount of money for anyone to have, this figure may not be so far-fetched for Putin.”⁴⁹

In conclusion to this point, the state of Russia is ruled by the nationalist Russian neo-imperialist state. We will not here re-tread in great detail the reasons we consider Russia is an imperialist state (see <http://ml-today.com/2022/02/06/theses-ukraine/> for the fuller explanation). However two points will be made here. Firstly overall Russia ranks by an index of power as number 16.⁵⁰



But this under-estimates Russia's position as an imperialist nation. Since its power has been projected towards Eurasia. Moreover the role of covert 'mirror' financing and ownership also tends to under-estimate Russia's imperialist power.

To conclude we do not see any convincing argument from Marxist-Leninists that Russia is **not an imperialist nation.**

Putin was integrally involved in the developing Khrushchev's initial moves into building the shape and power of the current Russian imperialist state.

The internal rule in Russia is one of brutal repression of worker and citizen rights characteristic of a neo-fascist state. It is not easy to see this state as 'fighting fascism' as is proposed by Erdogan.

These are the central points of our Open Reply to Erdogan. We intend to be far shorter in our remaining points.

⁴⁹ Mahnoor Khan; 'Putin claims he makes \$140,000 and has an 800-square foot apartment. His actual net worth is a mystery no one can solve'; March 2, 2022 'Fortune'; at: <https://fortune.com/2022/03/02/vladimir-putin-net-worth-2022/>

⁵⁰ Tony Norfield; 'Economics of imperialism'; 14 September 2021; at: <https://economicsofimperialism.blogspot.com/2021/09/world-power.html>

2 (iii) What do the prior wars of the Russian state Georgia and Syria - teach us about the current war?

Our main argument to condemn the war launched by Putin rests as we have said on the evident reality that the Russian state is a capitalist imperialist state; and that Putin is an anti-working class dictator. Do his prior war actions - beyond Chechnya which we examined above - help to justify his war today in Ukraine? We believe not.

Georgia

Erdogan twice quotes an interesting article by the late Armenian-Turkish ML-ist **Garbis Altinoglu**'s on Georgia. [*We have placed Altinoglu's article first published on his 'Facebook' pages, in a translated version at 'Marxist-Leninist Currents Today'*.⁵¹]

The quotations cited by Erdogan are quoted below. We take the liberty here to also place two portions – in italics – for our own emphasis:

"The revolutionary vanguard of the working class and consistent democrats and internationalists cannot in principle take sides in this inter-imperialist conflict for spheres of influence, raw materials, markets and military-political supremacy. They know that war is inherent in capitalism and imperialism, and that real and lasting peace can only be achieved by the world-wide victory of proletarian revolutions and the overthrow of the capitalist-imperialist system.

And they know that the crisis in the Caucasus can only be resolved with the progress and victory of a struggle to be waged under the leadership of the revolutionary parties of the working class and under the banner of proletarian internationalism.

On the other hand, they (Marxist Leninists) say that the USA and NATO, or to put it more clearly, the neo-fascist axis of the USA-Israel-Britain constitute the most aggressive bloc and that this bloc, which is the main enemy of the working class and peoples of the world, is the main instigator and executive of the wars of aggression. And therefore, they (Marxist Leninists) can never ignore the fact that it is the main task of the working class and the peoples to weaken, isolate and neutralize this axis.

Despite the reactionary and imperialist nature of their regimes, Russia and China are already on the defensive, and their attempts and counterattacks against the efforts of the US-NATO axis to encircle, regress and isolate them serve to preserve the current peace in today's tactical phase and complicate (make it difficult) the outbreak of a new world war in which nuclear weapons will also be used.

Therefore, the revolutionary vanguard of the working class and consistent democrats and internationalists, *while condemning their imperialist and expansionist policies, they welcome Russia's repelling of the attack by the US-Israel-Georgia axis.*"

⁵¹ at Link MLC Today

We have drawn attention to two sentences:

The very first sentence quoted from Altinoglu, *italicised* - is clearly a line derived directly from Lenin. It is important enough to put alone:

“The revolutionary vanguard of the working class and consistent democrats and internationalists cannot in principle take sides in this inter-imperialist conflict for spheres of influence, raw materials, markets and military-political supremacy.”

We believe that Erdogan misinterprets Altinoglu, whose article aims to provide an overview of the Russo-Georgian war. It appears to us that Erdogan highlights Altinoglu's final sentence:

“While condemning their imperialist and expansionist policies, they welcome Russia's repelling of the attack by the US-Israel-Georgia axis.”

This is the sentence that is 'cherry-picked' by Erdogan. Of course Altinoglu here correctly assessed the result of the Georgian conflict. But his conclusions, have already and first emphasised that we: "cannot in principle take sides in this inter-imperialist conflict".

That first sentence of Altinoglu's conclusion correctly reiterates Lenin's view that war is an extension of politics. Georgian intervention was a war launched by the Georgian state with the presence of 1,000 US troops - on the portions of Georgia that were calling for separation - namely South Ossetia and Abkhazia. As Altinoglu says:

“As of 16 July 2008, the Georgian army started a joint military exercise with approximately 1,000 US soldiers ⁽³⁾. Undoubtedly the US was aware of small-scale clashes between Georgian and South Ossetian forces throughout July and early August. Therefore, it would not be wrong to consider the Georgian attack as a covert attack by the USA-Israel-NATO on Russia's historical sphere of influence.”

Georgia was a *defence*, or a '*repelling*' of the open attack by Russia as Altinoglu called it. This is different from that of the current war of an invasion launched by Russia.

The case of Syria

We have discussed previously the example of Russia's intervention into Syria. ⁵² We characterised the Assad regime as fascists. We have also discussed the role of the PKK, which was also denounced:

"The third leading Kurdish party, the Workers' Party of Kurdistan (PKK), fell into an early opportunism, and then most recently plunged into anarcho-naivete... we discuss the early history of the PKK. This is a preface to the episode of the Rojava Republic in Syria. The Syrian Civil War and the most recent events in Iraq will be separately covered in a third and final part. Suffice a summary statement

⁵² Douma, February 11, 2021; at: <http://ml-today.com/2021/02/11/douma/>

for now, that in Syria the Kurdish protagonists came to be the warriors for USA imperialism, yet again." ⁵³

It is evasive in our view to defend Russia's actions in Syria in suppressing the remains of the Syrian Revolution - as having been simply against Islamic fundamentalism; or anti-Rojava pro-USA Kurdish forces.

2 (iv) Can Putin be trusted when he claims he fights against fascism in Ukraine?

As Putin himself threatened in his earlier "history speech" on February 21:

"Do you want decommunization? Well, that suits us just fine. But it is unnecessary, as they say, to stop halfway. We are ready to show you what real decommunization means for Ukraine." ⁵⁴

We accept fully that Putin is an expert on decommunization. But on what grounds can we trust the words of Putin - when he says he enters Ukraine to 'fight fascism'? In his later speech of Feb 24th, attempting to justify launching the Russian invasion, Putin says this:

"This brings me to the situation in Donbass. We can see that the forces that staged the coup in Ukraine in 2014 have seized power, are keeping it with the help of ornamental election procedures and have abandoned the path of a peaceful conflict settlement. For eight years, for eight endless years we have been doing everything possible to settle the situation by peaceful political means. Everything was in vain."

"We had to stop that atrocity, that genocide of the millions of people who live there and who pinned their hopes on Russia, on all of us. It is their aspirations, the feelings and pain of these people that were the main motivating force behind our decision to recognise the independence of the Donbass people's republics. I would like to additionally emphasise the following. Focused on their own goals, the leading NATO countries are supporting the far-right nationalists and neo-Nazis in Ukraine, those who will never forgive the people of Crimea and Sevastopol for freely making a choice to reunite with Russia." ⁵⁵

There is **no doubt** that in the Maidan so-called Orange Revolution, the USA was promoting fascists in Ukraine and the coup leadership. Indeed we wrote clearly on this:

"in the Maidan events of 2006 and 2013 the Ukrainian state was splintered. Tymoshenko (and a later successor Petro Poroshenko) adopted racist and restrictive policies against Ukrainian Russian speakers. In an interregnum the

⁵³ Kurdistan – A Marxist-Leninist Framework, Part Two; January 1, 2020; at: <http://ml-today.com/2020/01/01/kurdistan-a-marxist-leninist-framework-part-two/>

⁵⁴ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W57I2mzAr9c>

⁵⁵ Transcript: Vladimir Putin's Televised Address on Ukraine; <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-02-24/full-transcript-vladimir-putin-s-televised-address-to-russia-on-ukraine-feb-24> Bloomberg News, February 24, 2022, 7:07 AM EST

pro-Russian Donetsk gangster Yanukovich became PM. However his government balked at ever more egregious demands of the IMF and the EU. Tymoshenko, brought down Yankuovich's government, in tandem with the US Assistant Secretary of State Victoria Nuland (whose recorded indiscretions ("Fuck the EU") spoke volumes). Maidan 2.0 was a coup, that was clearly fueled by the USA and the EU. Nuland openly boasted that "the US had invested over \$5 billion USD in Ukranian democracy". Moreover both the USA and the EU were setting up several 'NGO's. These poured money into the Orange supporters, led by George Soros (110 million between 2004- 2014; and the EU gave 1.3 billion Euros 2007-2014." ⁵⁶

In 'realpolitik' terms this process, and the Eastward expansion of NATO - was denigrated even by the high priests of the Western Cold war such as George Kennan:

On May 2, 1998, immediately after the Senate ratified NATO expansion, I called George Kennan, the architect of America's successful containment of the Soviet Union. Having joined the State Department in 1926 and served as U.S. ambassador to Moscow in 1952, Kennan was arguably America's greatest expert on Russia. Though 94 at the time and frail of voice, he was sharp of mind when I asked for his opinion of NATO expansion. I am going to share Kennan's whole answer:

"I think it is the beginning of a new cold war. I think the Russians will gradually react quite adversely and it will affect their policies. I think it is a tragic mistake. There was no reason for this whatsoever. No one was threatening anybody else. This expansion would make the founding fathers of this country turn over in their graves.

"We have signed up to protect a whole series of countries, even though we have neither the resources nor the intention to do so in any serious way. [NATO expansion] was simply a lighthearted action by a Senate that has no real interest in foreign affairs. What bothers me is how superficial and ill informed the whole Senate debate was. I was particularly bothered by the references to Russia as a country dying to attack Western Europe.

"Don't people understand? Our differences in the Cold War were with the Soviet Communist regime. And now we are turning our backs on the very people who mounted the greatest bloodless revolution in history to remove that Soviet regime. And Russia's democracy is as far advanced, if not farther, as any of these countries we've just signed up to defend from Russia. Of course there is going to be a bad reaction from Russia, and then [the NATO expanders] will say that we always told you that is how the Russians are — but this is just wrong." ⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Hari Kumar, 'Imperialist Danse Macabre over the Peoples of Ukraine ML Currents Today, February 10, 2022 <http://ml-today.com/2022/02/11/imperialist-danse-macabre-over-the-peoples-of-ukraine/>

⁵⁷ George Kenna Interview May 2, 1998 - by phone with Thomas L. Friedman, 'This Is Putin's War. But America and NATO Aren't Innocent Bystanders'; Feb 21 2022; Opinion NYT.

Putin's speech at the Munich Security Conference in 2007, ("Well, ensuring one's own security is the right of any sovereign state. We are not arguing against this... But why is it necessary to put military infrastructure on our borders during this expansion?" quoted ⁵⁶); and his subsequent speeches ⁵⁴⁻⁵⁵ and actions - certainly show a push-back against USA imperialism.

Isn't this inevitable? Of course it is only an unfolding of the law of uneven development of capitalism as Lenin pointed out:

"Uneven economic and political development is an absolute law of capitalism." ⁵⁸

Putin claims to be leading an anti-fascist war. Can this be in any sense correct?

Firstly:

Putin had himself been instrumental in protecting the oligarchs in the Russian areas of Ukraine as we have pointed out. He directly supported as vile a character as any that Nuland did in the 'Western' part of Ukraine - namely Yanukovych. ⁵⁶ We have described in adequate detail for now these events and do not dwell on them here any further. Putin did not launch movements inside the Russian parts of Ukraine for social and national liberty. Instead he sponsored movements for narrow Russian aspirational goals, and to enrich 'his' oligarchs inside Ukraine.

Secondly:

How can Marxist-Leninists take seriously Putin's remark that all he is doing is attacking Nazism and fascism in the Ukraine? Several of the European fascist right have clearly identified with Putin. There are several variations of the saying "You can tell a person's stripes by the company they keep". Consider for example Matteo Salvini of Italy's near-far-right - labels do become confused in these times – let us just call him a fascist. ⁵⁹



Matteo Salvini

⁵⁸ V.I.Lenin 'On the Slogan for a United States of Europe'; 1915. CW Vol 21; Moscow, 1964; p. 342; and at: <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1915/aug/23.htm>

⁵⁹ Eklat um Putin-T-Shirt – Wie Salvini seine alte Kremlnahe uberspielen will.

<https://www.spiegel.de/ausland/ukraine-krieg-wie-matteo-salvini-seine-alte-kreml-naehe-ueberspielen-will-a-2ed49d79-381e-4726-838c-213e447acb0b>

Or how about "the major conservative and nationalist and populist movements in Europe:

"including France's National Front, Britain's U.K. Independence Party, Germany's Alternative for Germany, the Netherlands's Party for Freedom, Austria's Freedom Party, and Hungary's Jobbik... the National Front's Marine Le Pen, who borrowed from a Russian bank to help fund the party's 2014 electoral campaign, or the Freedom Party, which recently signed a "cooperation agreement" with Putin's United Russia party....

"The model that is defended by Vladimir Putin is radically different to that of Mr. Obama," Le Pen told a British television interviewer last November. "As for me, the model that is defended by Vladimir Putin, which is one of reasoned protectionism, looking after the interests of his own country, defending his identity, is one that I like, as long as I can defend this model in my own country."
60

Putin has claimed that he ordered the invasion of Ukraine to "denazify" its government. However despite the truth of Nazi elements in the Western group of Ukrainian nationalists, his invasion has, and will 'further empower' them:

"The reality behind the propaganda is that the West and its Ukrainian allies have opportunistically exploited and empowered the extreme right in Ukraine, first to pull off the 2014 coup and then by redirecting it to fight separatists in eastern Ukraine. And far from "denazifying" Ukraine, the Russian invasion is likely to further empower Ukrainian and international neo-Nazis, as it attracts fighters from around the world and provides them with weapons, military training and the combat experience that many of them are hungry for."
61

2. (v) What does the unfolding international situation hold?

To conclude, we cannot see anything other than an on-going re-division of the world between two great blocs that are in opposition.

The USA and NATO - and now completely on side is the European Union. Germany is in especial the 'swing' state inside the EU - but has now come fully on board. The former junior partners in imperialism in the First and Second World War - Canada and Australia - are fully on side. The recent AKUS alliance has welded components of these together specifically targeting China.
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⁶⁰ Ronald Brownstein, 'Putin and the Populists - The roots of Russia's political appeal in Europe and the United States', January 6, 2017; <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2017/01/putin-trump-le-pen-hungary-france-populist-bannon/512303/>

⁶¹ Medea Benjamin - Nicolas J.S. Davies Are there really neo-Nazis fighting for Ukraine? Well, yes — but it's a long story'; March 10, 2022; Salon; <https://www.salon.com/2022/03/10/are-there-really-neo-nazis-fighting-for-ukraine-well-yes--but-its-a-long-story/>

⁶² Julian Borger Dan Sabbagh, 'US, UK and Australia forge military alliance to counter China' Guardian; 16 Sep 2021; Guardian; <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2021/sep/15/australia-nuclear-powered-submarines-us-uk-security-partnership-aukus>

In opposition is an evolving block led by Russia and China - but it seems with India, at times and South Africa. The status of the so-called *BRICS* (including also Brazil and South Africa) are still being defined.

The fact that one side - the first is at the moment apparently so much stronger, does not indicate automatic support for the second. Indeed Lenin vividly put it this way:

"it is not the business of socialists to help the younger and stronger robber (Germany) to plunder the older and overgorged robbers. Socialists must take advantage of the struggle between robbers to overthrow all of them. To do this, socialists must first tell the people the truth".⁶³

What has Putin's miscalculation in this invasion led to, even as we enter only the third week of the war? A simple catalogue would have to include - at minimum - these major effects:

- i) Extraordinary further suffering, and deaths of the civilian population and most vulnerable sections of the Russian-Ukrainian and Western Ukraine population by a devastating war;
- ii) A naturally and only to be expected outpouring of a nationalists drive of the Ukraine - potentiating the hold of extreme right-wing nationalism in Ukraine - and heightening the popularity of pro-Western manipulators such as Zelensky. Even if Putin succeeds in short term goals of occupying even a part of Ukraine, there will be an on-going guerrilla war. Massive arms inputs into Ukraine will be used against the Russian soldiers.
- iii) By an unwarranted and false equation between Putin's Russia and the Former Soviet socialist state of the USSR - the anti-socialist rhetoric and mythologies. have been heightened.
- iv) Welded the USA EU and NATO forces to an even greater and dangerous extent than had been possible before;
- v) A key swing state in EU - the locomotive of European economies, Germany - has come off the fence and put its heft behind the USA and NATO - at least for now. Its cancelling of NORDSTREAM 2 - marks a major step. Its embrace of funding at massive levels for its army in support of NATO - is a new dramatic reactionary milestone.
- vi) Ensured the financial and trading isolation of the Russian state - with huge effects upon the Russian people. these will take more time to unfold into effects, but will have the potential forward advance of the Russian people in their own struggle against Putinite dictatorship and oligarchy.

The struggle goes on. However - most alarmingly - it goes on without any of the relevant countries having a united and strong Marxist-Leninist party. This reflect terribly on the whole Marxist-Leninist movement.

⁶³ V.I.Lenin, 'Socialism and War'; 1915; VIL CW Vol 21 Moscow 1964; p. 303;

We think it is appropriate simply re-state our last two points in our Theses:

"9. Not explicitly recognising the actions of Russian leaders and oligarchs, as having caused the problems in Ukraine ('privatising' of state owned enterprises, corruption at state level, funding of criminal leaders etc.11) is dangerous. It results in some calling themselves Marxists exculpating or denying crimes of Russian capitalists and Putin - as were conducted by Russia in Syria. There the Russian forces defended a corrupt Assad Government and participated in vicious actions against the Syrian people. Marxists in several countries proffered excuses that the war-crimes either did not occur, or were perpetrated by 'the Syrian people themselves'.

10. In this current crisis over the Ukraine – Marxists should recall Lenin's words that show Marxist that they have more than one enemy alone:

"It is the duty of the socialists of every country to wage an unrelenting struggle against the chauvinism and patriotism of their own country (and not only of the enemy)".⁶⁴

⁶⁴ 'Theses at a time of an obvious attempted re-division of world 'spheres of interest' – What support should Marxists give to Russia? What support should Marxists give to Russia? February 5th 2022. <http://ml-today.com/2022/02/06/theses-ukraine/>