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The Soviet victory over Nazism and the fight against imperialism today

This speech was given by Andrei Ritsky, a representative of the Young Guard of Bolshevik-Leninists in Russia, at the International May Day 2025 Online Rally, held Saturday, May 3.

May Day 2025 speech given by Andrei Ritsky

I would like to extend my sincere greetings and congratulations to the other speakers and listeners gathered here today.

My comrade, Bogdan Syrotiuk, was arrested a few days before last year's rally. One year later, he is still in the hands of the Ukrainian secret service, the SBU, which is trying to falsely portray him as an agent of Putin's regime. In reality, comrade Bogdan's "crime" was his consistent defense of Marxist principles, in the tradition of Lenin and Trotsky. With his arrest, the struggle for an independent policy of the working class of Russia and Ukraine against the Zelensky and Putin regimes on the basis of socialist internationalism has been declared a "criminal offense" and "treason."



Bogdan Syrotiuk at a May 9 rally in honor of the Soviet victory over Nazi Germany in World War II

The true criminals are the Zelensky regime and its imperialist backers, which cover up the crimes of Ukrainian fascism and rehabilitate Nazi criminals. They are sending Ukrainian workers to their deaths in the interests of Western imperialism and the oligarchy.

But the policy of the Putin regime is no less reactionary. It is based on the utopian illusion that it is possible to strike a deal with imperialism. Yet any deal would only serve the interests of the oligarchy and be of a temporary character. It would do nothing to fend off the existential threat facing the working class of the former Soviet Union. With its policies and nationalist propaganda, the Putin regime is playing into the hands of imperialism and preparing a gigantic catastrophe.

This year's May Day rally coincides with the 80th anniversary of the Soviet victory in the war against Nazism. This victory is being exploited by Putin's regime to give its reactionary invasion of Ukraine the appearance of a progressive struggle.



Red Army soldiers hoist the Soviet flag over the Reichstag in Berlin, May 2, 1945.

The defense of the Soviet Union against fascism came at an enormous price for the Soviet people. According to official estimates, the USSR lost about 27 million people. Among them were 14 million civilians and 9 million Red Army soldiers who died in combat on the front lines. 2 million died in captivity and in death camps; another 2 million died in the rear from starvation and disease.

To this must be added the enormous psychological and physical trauma suffered by those who were left disabled, survived concentration camps, and lost relatives, loved ones, friends and comrades.

None of this could be forgotten. In Soviet cinema, music, poetry, painting—everywhere one could find reflections of the path of the masses through their enormous heroic struggle.

Today, the Kremlin is seeking to exploit the deep-rooted memory of the war to promote nationalism and sow historical confusion. The main tactic of this avalanche of propaganda is to blur the political distinction between the Soviet Union and the Russian Federation. But despite their geographical location and the generations of people who lived in both states, the USSR and the Russian Federation have entirely different class and historical origins.



Honour guard soldiers march during a rehearsal for the Victory Day military parade, which will take place at Dvortsovaya (Palace) Square on May 9 to celebrate 80 years after the Allied victory in World War II, in St. Petersburg, Russia, Tuesday, April 22, 2025. [AP Photo/Dmitri Lovetsky]

The Soviet Union was founded in December 1922 after the victorious Civil War, in which the working class, led by the Bolsheviks, defended the gains of the October Revolution.

By expropriating the bourgeoisie and establishing nationalized property relations and a planned economy, the Bolsheviks laid the socio-economic foundations for a socialist society. They consciously linked the construction of socialism to the victory of the world revolution. But this internationalist Marxist program was betrayed by the Stalinist bureaucracy which proclaimed the reactionary program of building “socialism in one country” to defend its own privileges.

The bureaucratic degeneration of the Soviet state and the Bolshevik Party culminated in the massacre of generations of revolutionaries in the Great Terror. Yet the elementary foundation of the workers’ state were still maintained. And despite the murder of the most outstanding representatives of Marxism, a rudimentary consciousness of the traditions of the October Revolution still persisted among the masses. It was these traditions that burst forth during the war against Nazism and ensured victory for the Soviet Union.

The Russian Federation arose from the Stalinist counterrevolution against the traditions and achievements of the October Revolution. Beginning in 1985, Mikhail Gorbachev's perestroika conclusively undermined the foundations of the degenerated workers' state. In 1991, the bureaucracy liquidated the Soviet Union. From this counter-revolution emerged the oligarchic regimes of Yeltsin and then Putin. With the war in Ukraine, Putin's regime is defending not the people against imperialism, but the capitalist property of the Russian oligarchy.

The only honest tribute to the immense sacrifices of the Soviet masses in the war against Nazism is to state the truth: Putin and the Russian oligarchy are enemies of the traditions of the war against Nazism. They are enemies of the interests of the Russian, the Ukrainian and the international working class.

Today, the only way to fight against imperialism is to fight for the independent mobilization of the Russian working class, together with the Ukrainian and international working class, under the banner of the October Revolution.

- No to the war in Ukraine!
- Unite the Russian and Ukrainian working class!
- Against imperialism and bourgeois nationalism!
- For the revival of the traditions of the October Revolution!
- Freedom for Bogdan Syrotyuk!
- Build the International Committee of the Fourth International!