The resurrection of Russian Imperialism

International Executive Committee Fri, 07/11/2014 - 14:36
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The restoration of capitalism after the collapse of the USSR posed the questions - what kind of capitalist state was the new Russia, and what was its role in the imperialist system. This resolution, passed by the International Executive Committee of the LFI in June 2014 examines the development of Russia?s economy and its relations with the West and the other former USSR countries to answer these questions.

In characterising Russia as an imperialist power, we base our analysis on Lenin?s theoretical model of imperialism as the ?highest stage of capitalism?. Within this simple formulation lies a rich and complex elaboration of Marx?s own analysis of capitalism.

Imperialism is the highest stage because the process of monopolisation has led to its domination by finance capital, which is the closest concrete expression possible of the abstract concept of capital itself: accumulated value that is available for investment anywhere and in any sphere of the economy because it is itself not tied to any specific sector or, indeed, territory. It is, so to speak, the ?purest? form of actually existing capital; there cannot be a ?higher? form of capital.

Inherently, imperialism is a global system, because that is the highest possible development of capitalism, which has always been an international system but only came to dominate the entire world in this epoch.

Clearly, there can be no expansion beyond a global system, which is why Lenin concluded that, insofar as there was further capitalist development in the imperialist epoch, it would entail the re-division of the world between the rival imperialisms or ?Great Powers? as they were often called at that time.

The synonymous use of ?imperialism?, ?Great Powers? and ?imperialists? was, in Lenin?s time, and is now of particular importance in assessing the character of Russia. Confusion has arisen because ?imperialism? can be used to denote either a particular state, that is, a Great Power, or the totality of the global system. As a result, many have assumed that Lenin?s famous five-point list of the defining features of the global system can serve as a checklist of the features that an individual power must exhibit in order to qualify as an ?imperialist? state. This is wrong. Lenin himself emphasised, in his preface to the French and German editions in 1920, that what he presented in his pamphlet was a ?composite picture? of imperialism as a totality, not a description of any one specific imperialist power. That this must be the case is immediately obvious as soon as one considers the implications of his inclusion of Tsarist Russia among the ?imperialist powers?.

Russia, at that time, certainly lacked several of the supposedly defining features of an ?imperialism?; its own capitalist development was still weak and had not yet transformed itself into finance capital; far from exporting capital, Russia was a major importer of foreign capital while being a major exporter of commodities, primarily foodstuffs, which Lenin said declined in importance within imperialism. Clearly, the aspect of the ?composite picture? that predominated in Russia was the ability to take part in the fifth of Lenin?s features, the territorial division of the world.
At the same time, that ability did not exist independently of Russia’s internal economic development. As Trotsky had made clear in his own account of the unique pattern of Russian history, the country’s relationship to other powers had a crucial impact; the need to establish and maintain a strong state machine resulted in a greater state involvement in economic modernisation and a correspondingly weaker role for a national bourgeoisie.

Nonetheless, the economic measures adopted by the Tsarist state were those of the imperialist epoch, particularly the large-scale industrial centres characteristic of monopolies.

Many of these considerations retain their full force and applicability today when we assess the character of contemporary Russia. As we shall see, since the collapse of the Soviet Union as a degenerated workers’ state, the interactions between Russia’s international role and status and its internal development, economic, social and political, show many parallels and analogies to its earlier history. Of course, the world itself is a very different place now but we remain in the epoch of imperialism, an epoch in which the contradictions between nationally-based capitals and the dynamics of the global economy drive today’s Great Powers into rivalry and, ultimately, conflict. Within that, Russia is guaranteed to be a principal protagonist and revolutionaries, therefore, must have a clear understanding of its character if they are to develop a strategy for a politically independent working class party that can oppose all imperialist powers while taking advantage of the conflicts between them.

Russia’s role in the world order

Russia re-emerged as an independent state from the collapse of the Soviet Union. This collapse was the consequence of two dynamics in particular. The decisive one was the destruction of the degenerated workers’ state as the result of the growing pressure of US imperialism on its stagnating economy in the 1980s and the decision of the main forces of the Stalinist bureaucracy to complete the task it had begun in the counter-revolution in the 1920s. The second was the creation of national states out of the former Union. Some of these were based on a previous existence as a state or a nation or on a historic national struggle against Great Russian domination, which had been continued by the Stalinist bureaucracy, as was the case for the Baltic states; others, such as Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Belarus, came into existence for the first time or did not relate to a ?people? or a patriotic movement, as in Moldova.

These two aspects are connected. Even though Great Russian domination existed to a certain extent within the USSR, the Stalinist bureaucracy as such was not nationally Russian. However, the bourgeoisie is by definition a national class. So to maintain the borders of the USSR as a capitalist state would have meant a much stronger national oppression against the non-Russian republics than before. This was an impossible task in a country where a ruling class had yet to be formed.

Because Russia, and Slavic Russians had always played a dominant role in the Soviet Union, in the disintegration process it, and they inherited ?superpower? status, although one that had just been defeated. This would have been a heavy burden for any ruling class but in Russia such a class did not exist; the Russian bourgeoisie had still to be created.

In the aftermath of restoration, Russia’s rulers therefore had the task, like their Tsarist predecessors, of establishing and then maintaining the country’s role in the world. Not to fight to become (again) and remain an imperialist country would have meant degradation to the status of a semi-colony. This would almost certainly have led to disintegration under the pressure of foreign forces, primarily the imperialist powers, and the dissolution of the large military apparatus and state bureaucracy.1

Their task has been made all the more difficult by a historical crisis of capitalism. The leading imperialist
force, the USA has lost ground; Germany’s ambitions to rival the US, backed up by a homogenised EU, have been set back as the EU was driven deeper into crisis by the very means that the German government had taken to strengthen itself in the crisis; China has emerged as a leading manufacturer, gaining ground not only at the expense of the EU and Japan but even of the USA, and Japan has been forced to reconsider all its options if it is not to be marginalised.

On the economic front, Russia cannot go on forever relying on the extraction of oil, gas and minerals, even if, at the moment, this guarantees a high export rate and even an export surplus higher than that of China. Ultimately, it would mean restricting itself to the role of a semi-colony, albeit a very large one. The challenges are very great, perhaps insurmountable; competing in industry, that is, in the production of surplus value, would require Russian manufacturing to be more effective than Japanese or German production or supplying cheaper labour than China. To compete in finance would mean being strong enough to make others provide credit at favourable rates or to accept credits on Russia’s terms. Also no easy task.

The very least that Russia has to achieve is to establish an industry that is capable of serving the domestic market (plus the former USSR republics as its backyard3). Even though the products might not be competitive on the world market, Russia’s military and political strength could probably protect such a market to a certain degree. To date, however, the Russian bourgeoisie has proven incapable of achieving even this.

On the other hand, other imperialist states are not willing to let Russia take a strong position in the imperialist world order. The US and EU mainly want their share of the profits, especially from oil and gas, and they want to contain Russia’s military power, which is the principal base of its political and diplomatic strength in the world. However, Russia’s new imperialist neighbour, China, faces many of the same challenges at the international level, so a potential exists for a rival bloc.

This, then, is the context of the world in which Russia’s rulers, Russian capitalism, and Russian capitalists have to act and within which we have to understand Russia’s development.

The Russian bourgeoisie

The character of the Russian bourgeoisie is determined by historic facts:

? Russia was already a Great Power when capitalism became the dominant economic system (social relation) in the country, but the Russian bourgeoisie was excluded from political power.

? Subsequently, the Russian bourgeoisie was liquidated in the Great Revolution and ceased to exist for some 70 years.

? Therefore it had, effectively, to be created anew from 1990 onwards.

Two things can be concluded from this; the Russian bourgeoisie is extremely weak especially as the ruling class of an imperialist country; it is different from all other imperialist bourgeoisies.

The Russian bourgeoisie today lacks historical continuity as a class. It was in large part formed from certain sectors of the Stalinist bureaucracy. Trotsky already predicted this: ?If a bourgeois party were to overthrow the ruling Soviet caste, it would find no small number of ready servants among the present bureaucrats, administrators, technicians, directors, party secretaries and privileged upper circles in general.?4
The most dynamic force in the transition process?, which started in the late 1980s with Gorbachov?s perestroika, was quite naturally the sector of the bureaucracy associated with economic administration. They had direct, decision-making control over the production of wealth. Of course, the bureaucracy as a whole was very experienced at channelling parts of the social property into its own hands, even if this involved conflict within its own ranks, but the economic administration, that is, the company directors, sat at the source.5

A second component with a strong ambition to elevate itself into a ruling class, were parts of the intelligentsia, which can be considered as a subordinated stratum within the bureaucracy.

Generally forced to behave, and to be treated as workers, certain professions that in most countries form the wage earning middle classes felt that they could do better than serving the old, crisis-ridden system. The economic stagnation of the 1980s, and a bureaucracy less and less able to chart any way forward, brought movement into these layers. Just as the left of the intelligentsia started to come out for civic democratic rights, the right wing of the intelligentsia started to set its sights on a market economy?. There was less need for this sector to publicise itself because this tendency was perfectly expressed by stronger forces within the Stalinist bureaucracy around Gorbachev and close ties existed between these two strata.

The third component was the criminal scene that had emerged from the black markets and was based also in the gulags. Its role was, of course, a necessary complement to the inability of the Stalinist bureaucracy to satisfy the needs of the people or, indeed, the whole of the bureaucracy either. Trotsky described this layer in Revolution Betrayed. During the restoration process, there was some argument among political and economic strategists over whether criminal capital should be legalised. Especially the western advisers insisted that it should, claiming that during Soviet times the black market was the only place where entrepreneurial abilities could be developed.8 This, of course, does not now keep western democratic capitalists or politicians from accusing their Russian counterparts of roughness, criminal methods and oligarchism, features that do have a material base in the specific way in which state assets were plundered and privatised but which already had a long tradition in this third component.

The Russian bourgeoisie in history

The difficulties involved in developing a new ruling class in Russia out of these elements can be compared to those of the Russian bourgeoisie as it struggled to become a dominant factor prior to 1917. It had been unable to develop its own ideology or religion which could express its will to become the ruling class. Far from being able to overthrow the autocratic system, the Russian bourgeoisie effectively gave up all attacks on the Tsarist regime after the unsuccessful Decembrist upheaval of 1825. As a class they feared the potential revolt of the exploited classes more than they desired to take over political power and responsibility. In 1905 and 1917, it was only the proletariat which attacked the Tsarist autocracy. The bourgeoisie was unable either to formulate a possible compromise with the Tsar or to use the power that the February Revolution handed it. The Russian bourgeoisie has a tradition as a loser.

When Lenin predicted that the chain of world imperialism would break at its weakest point, he not only expressed his view of capitalism as a world system, he also said something about the relationship between Russia?s economic weakness and its relationship to the system as a whole.

Trotsky describes this historic weakness, which had its origin in a combination of specific national factors and capitalism as a world system, with the following words:

?The meagreness not only of Russian feudalism, but of all the old Russian history, finds its most depressing expression in the absence of real mediaeval cities as centres of commerce and craft.
Handicraft did not succeed in Russia in separating itself from agriculture, but preserved its character of home industry. The old Russian cities were commercial, administrative, military and manorial; centres of consumption, consequently, not of production. Even Novgorod, similar to Hansa and not subdued by the Tartars, was only a commercial, and not an industrial city. True, the distribution of the peasant industries over various districts created a demand for trade mediation on a large scale. But nomad traders could not possibly occupy that place in social life which belonged in the West to the craft-guild and merchant-industrial petty and middle bourgeoisie, inseparably bound up with its peasant environment. The chief roads of Russian trade, moreover, led across the border, thus, from time immemorial, giving the leadership to foreign commercial capital, and imparting a semi-colonial character to the whole process, in which the Russian trader was a mediator between the Western cities and the Russian villages. This kind of economic relation developed further during the epoch of Russian capitalism and found its extreme expression in the imperialist war.

The insignificance of the Russian cities, which more than anything else promoted the development of an Asiatic state, also made impossible a Reformation, that is, a replacement of the feudal-bureaucratic orthodoxy by some sort of modernised kind of Christianity adapted to the demands of a bourgeois society. The struggle against the state church did not go farther than the creation of peasant sects, the faction of the Old Believers being the most powerful among them.11

He also compared the Russian bourgeoisie with its European brothers: ?The English and French bourgeoisie created a new society in their own image. The Germans came later, and they were compelled to live for a long time on the pale gruel of philosophy. The Germans invented the phrase ?Weltanschauung? which does not exist in English or French. While these nations were creating a new world, the Germans were thinking one up. But the German bourgeoisie, although poor in political activity, created the classical philosophy, and that is no small achievement. Russia came much later. To be sure, she translated the German phrase ?Weltanschauung? into Russian, and that with several variations, but this only the more clearly exposed both her political impotence and her deadly philosophical poverty. She imported ideas as well as machines, establishing high tariffs for the latter, and for the former a quarantine of fear.12

Against the background of this heritage, industry was developed in a shorter time and on a more concentrated scale. As the whole historic epoch of craft production was skipped, industry was quickly developed in large factories without a wider base of manufacturing and little workshops. This was accomplished in large measure with foreign credits. This also made the Russian bourgeoisie weaker in relation both to its economic base and to other Imperialists. It also produced an industrial proletariat directly from peasantry without a tradition in crafts and guilds. This made the bourgeoisie relatively weak in relation to the proletariat. Taken together, these factors made it a class with no self-confidence. The new Russian bourgeoisie, therefore, does not have much to reclaim from history. It has nothing positive to learn from its historic precedents, while the proletariat, on the other hand, has a great deal. If the Russian bourgeoisie could not overcome its weaknesses in 1917, why should it be able to overcome them after 1990? The only material fact that has changed is the wealth of the modern Russian capitalists, which is definitely much larger than in 1917. All capitalist wealth is taken in the end from the proletariat but, if this is done through the organisation of surplus production, capitalists appear as the ?producers?. Today?s Russian bourgeoisie does not appear to be so much a ?producing class? as an ?appropriating class?.

The same applies to the military power. Tsarist Russia?s military strength lay in the great number of soldiers and the vast dimensions of the country, which forced even Napoleon, who had beaten all the others, to retreat. In 1905, Russia lost against Japan and Turkey. In 1917, it lost against the Central
Powers, Germany, Austria and Romania, with Germany only acting with less than half of its forces. Nowadays, Russian military power is based on the wealth, the knowledge and the technique developed under bureaucratic command in the degenerated workers? state, now many decades ago.

The Russian bourgeoisie has no bourgeois leader or hero to connect to the victory of the ?Great Patriotic War? as the Stalinists called it. The era in world history when Russia, as the main component of the USSR, had its greatest role in the global arena was an era in which the Russian bourgeoisie did not exist.

The Stalinist bureaucracy and the Russian bourgeoisie

The October Revolution had taken the power from the bourgeoisie, but of course in the transitional period that followed, bourgeois elements survived as traders or kulaks. The New Economic Policy, NEP, even had to support this stratum again. With the counter-revolutionary destruction of the Communist Party as a revolutionary party after Lenin?s death, it was true that bourgeois elements could enter the Party, but the necessary material base for their persistence as a class, private property in the means of production, was gone.

This was the situation that Trotsky was later to characterise as a ?degenerated workers? state?, rejecting the argument that the political counter-revolution by which the Stalin faction eliminated all the means by which the working class could have exercised political power constituted a social counter-revolution that had eliminated all of the gains made by the revolution, as well as the official line that the Soviet Union was advancing towards socialism. In his analysis, he characterised the bureaucracy as ?the agent of imperialism within the workers? state? meaning not that it took orders from imperialist powers but that its primary objective, the eradication of all vestiges of the revolutionary working class movement, was also the primary objective of the imperialists.

On a global scale, the main task of the Stalinist bureaucracy was to prevent the world revolution. As well as stopping any revolutionary progress within the Soviet Union, it also misled all revolutionary upheavals globally, by controlling and disorienting the fighting masses. After the defeat of German imperialism in 1945, it ensured the defeat of all potentially revolutionary developments in the areas under its control by first restoring a functioning bourgeois state and, later, under pressure from the Western imperialists, imposed essentially its own forms of bureaucratic rule.

In the continued suppression of the workers in the USSR, the Stalinist bureaucracy continued to act not only in the interests of global capital but also as an ?agent of the Russian bourgeoisie? in absentia.13

As it was this agent of imperialism that organised and completed the counter-revolution that created the conditions for the rebirth of a Russian bourgeoisie, we should recognise that world imperialism played a role, as the midwife, but a midwife who, while assisting at the birth, did not want the new child to grow too strong.

The collapse of the Soviet Union as a workers? state, albeit a counter-revolutionary and degenerated one, gave the imperialists, with the US as front runner, every opportunity to equip the fledgling bourgeoisie with the fully developed political ideology of neoliberalism. Of course, the ideology alone was not sufficient, but it legitimised an entire political programme which, crucially, centred on the privatisation of all the state assets produced under planning. Unsurprisingly, this wholesale plunder of social property was accompanied by bribery, nepotism, corruption and murder.

?The scale of the subsidy to the private sector can be gauged from the fact that the privatisations yielded the government less than 5 per cent of the market price of its own property.?14
This all was done with the aim of creating a possessing class that would defend the new property relations. The new class learned quickly how to appropriate and how to be possessive, but it did not learn how to behave as a ruling class. In Marx’s words, it was a class in itself? but not a class for itself?.17

As such, it did not develop a plan for the future of the country. It exploited it in the manner of a foreign plunderer of occupied territories, from which it might be expelled at any moment. The members of this class quickly felt more at home in London, St. Moritz and Baden-Baden; the Russian bourgeoisie mistrusted its own leadership so much that it withdrew as much capital as possible from the country.

The first decade of restoration

The wild privatisation frenzy led to the appearance of ?oligarchs?, that is, people who owned huge amounts of capital and controlled it through ?clans? of friends and relatives, exerting direct pressure on the state to pursue their personal interests. At the same time, these clans stood in a fierce competition to each other.

As a result, the country fell into a pitiful state; life expectancy fell by more than 5 years within a space 5 years. The average life expectancy of men fell from 63.8 years in 1990 to 57.6 years in 1994.

The first wave of privatisation led to a sharp decline in production, growing social differentiation within the population and a dramatic reduction in wages; up to the year 2000, they declined steadily: between 1991 and 1992, by 33 per cent, and in the following three years by a further 33 per cent. By 2000, real wages were 2.3 times less than in 1991.18 Living standards obviously fell dramatically and people were forced to live from whatever savings they might have, thereby transferring that reserve of social resources to the oligarchs as well.

Unemployment rose to 13 per cent, a relatively smaller number compared to other restoration countries. The reason for this apparent anomaly was that many workers formally kept their jobs, on much reduced hours because lay-offs were prohibited by law at that time. However, workers received their wages according to the reduced working hours and often the payment of wages was delayed.

This development culminated in the crisis of 1997-98. Different groups of capitalists were deeply engaged in fighting each other. None of them was paying taxes and state finances broke down. GDP had fallen by about 40 per cent. Yeltsin replaced Chernomyrdin with Kirilenko as prime minister, only to sack him five month later for ineffectiveness. After Chernomyrdin was briefly re-installed, Primakov became prime minister.

The IMF then intervened, demanding cuts in public spending as the pre-condition for credit. The resistance of the State Duma was broken by repeated threats from the IMF not to pay the money, until the crisis was resolved by the implementation of the cuts and the devaluation of the rouble.

The working class had to pay the bill in several ways: Wage-cuts and non-payment of wages, devaluation of wages and savings, loss of jobs, cuts in the social welfare system. However, it did not remain silent: there were strikes by the miners and public employees such as teachers, medical personnel, soldiers and pensioners. Thus, it was the working-class, despite the consequences of the historic defeat of 1990, that finally threatened the survival of the government.

The economic crisis of 1998 also severely hit economic relations with the other former SU-republics. The separatism in Chechnya showed that Russia was starting to lose its capacity to regulate and dominate the region.
The rise of Bonapartism

In this situation, forces within the state apparatus took the initiative. They stopped the undermining of the state in favour of the ‘market’, re-established a degree of state control over the economy and re-enforced the repressive functions of the state. Of course, these forces also represented a faction of the bourgeoisie and it is no surprise that they had their roots in a special wing of the bureaucracy; not those who got the biggest slice of the cake, but those trained to keep an eye on the question of control. Not so much the ‘economic’ layer as the ‘security’ layer.22

This can only be understood as the state acting as the ideal ‘general capitalist’. Of course, this coup had to be undertaken in the name of the country, the people and even the working-class, to whom some benefits had to be delivered. This was, and is, the classical role of Bonapartism and this Bonaparte’s name is Putin.

As a general rule, Bonapartism is possible (and necessary) in a situation where there exists a stalemate in the class struggle. A single person can then seem to stand above the class struggle and be independent of the classes. This generally goes together with populism.

In fact, Putin undertook certain hard measures against the bourgeoisie or, rather, against certain sectors of it. The political goal was to give the Russian bourgeoisie a leadership, to unify it politically, hence the name of his party, ‘United Russia’ and to make it fit for its task.23 The political means for that was to employ the state bureaucracy for this task.

Does the characterisation of Bonapartism mean that the working class was, or is, strong enough to fight the bourgeoisie to a standstill? Not directly, it is better understood as a potential opponent, waiting in the wings as it were, should the bourgeoisie utterly fail to fulfil its task. That task was primarily to secure a place in the imperialist world order and to reconfigure the Russian economy and, therefore, society accordingly. The security sector of the state apparatus recognised that the bourgeoisie was coming perilously close to such utter failure because it was itself divided and paralysed. Since it had proved itself unable to constitute a leadership through economic competition or democratic processes, it had to be given one by the coup of one of its components. An example had to be made of certain capitalists, such as Chodorkovsky, who were capable of challenging Putin. Thus it was the political impotence of the bourgeoisie, its inability to take a leading role in the class struggle or to understand the results of its actions correctly and the consequent danger of working class rebellion that created the need for a Bonaparte.

The second decade of restoration

Like most Bonapartes, Putin relies politically on populism, in his case combining Russian/Slavic/Orthodox chauvinism with male hetero chauvinism. To establish his Bonapartist system, Putin had, above all, to complete two tasks: re-centralising the state and forcing the oligarchs to accept the primacy of politics and their subordination to the state. The Russian Federation consisted of 85 ‘federal subjects’, that is, republics, autonomous regions, oblasts etc. Under Yeltsin, these had been virtually privatised under the control of local or regional oligarchs who had often ceased to pay any revenues to the central state or even developed secessionist tendencies, as in the Caucasus Region. Putin declared a ‘vertical power’ and brought these regional structures again under the more central control of the Kremlin. The governors of the regions were no longer to be elected by the regional parliaments but only proposed; the final decision was to be the President’s.

Putin then went on to eliminate, and largely expropriate, several oligarchs: Gussinsky, Beresovky and Khodorkovsky. In general, the bourgeoisie has had to accept that the state bureaucracy has to be financed and that taxes have to be paid to run the state.
To control the working class and integrate it into the state, Putin directed a certain part of the GDP to pensions and wages. From 2000 to 2010, wages rose by 142 per cent, pensions by 231 per cent although, of course, from an all-time lowest standard. This was financed through the super-profits from oil and gas. Putin also reformed ?triplartism?, that is, the relationship between employers, trade unions and the state, formally recognising trade unions. The traditional, and tame, bureaucratically controlled, trade unions have been allowed to continue, but the state deals with independent trade unions and strikes with a heavy hand.

Since 2000, the economy has stabilised and is growing. The political weight of the Russian Federation on the global level has increased and the internal opposition, although it took to the streets again in 2012, has effectively been silenced. This regime is not at all a welfare state as some reformists make believe.

Re-nationalisation only meant that the state owns shares but the companies are still run under capitalist profit rules. Privatisation is continued.

The ?Putin system? is not a personal construct but an expression of the state of the Russian bourgeoisie. The bourgeoisie in imperialist countries have parties, employers? associations and think tanks, universities, institutes and foundations. The Russian bourgeoisie has a state administration and bureaucracy and its leader. This administration dominates the President?s Party. The other bourgeois parties are either also tied to the state or are recognisably agents of foreign capital. The employers? association, which plays a role only in the annual meeting of the tripartite commission, is run by state bureaucrats. Russian oligarchs do not invest in research institutes but in football clubs. Universities do not feel so much an obligation to capital as to the state bureaucracy.

So, what we see in Russia is more than the usual relationship of an imperialist bourgeoisie to its state. Usually, the different factions of capital compete in influencing political decisions. They try to implement certain laws, install certain politicians. In Russia, the state installs the managers, just as it staffs the employers? association. The role of the state as the ?ideal collective capitalist? has reached a higher level.

The Bonapartist regime cannot resolve all contradictions and is creating new ones.

The working class

The working class of what was the Soviet Union has undoubtedly suffered a historic defeat. The counterrevolution that exterminated its cadres and abolished the Bolshevik Party as a revolutionary workers? party happened in the twenties of last century, but it was not completed until Gorbachev?s Perestroika. Until then, the working class still had achievements such as job security, stable income, free medical treatment, a very high level of free education and social recognition. This has now been largely destroyed and this alone can be seen as a historic defeat. But the strategic defeat, of course, lies in the restoration of capitalist ownership and the production of surplus value.

The working class is still huge in numbers, although it has shrunk. It is hard to find figures, because the Stalinist bureaucracy counted themselves as members of the working class and the statistics of the bourgeois state do not talk about classes. In addition the workers in a degenerated workers? state are something different from surplus value producing workers.

The ?workable part of the population? is given as around 75 to 77 million people and we can gain some idea of how it has been recomposed since 1990 by considering the restructuring of the economy of the Russian Federation since then.

From Table 1 of ?production indices? it is clear that certain industries have never recovered since 1991:
textiles, leather and wood but also machinery and equipment and the manufacturing of transport equipment, which would include cars, HGVs and trains. The decline in the production of machinery also indicates how dependent Russia is today on imported production equipment. On the other hand, the production in mining has risen, as has the production in electrical equipment and plastics, sectors that were underdeveloped under Stalinism. Still, we can assume that there has been a serious shift from employment in ‘classical’ workplaces in heavy and light industry towards other workplaces and a small shift within the industrial sector towards modern industries such as plastics and electronics. Any rationalisation must be added to this.

If we look at the development of those sectors that were hard hit in 1990, we can see that some of them have remained at that low level while others have recovered but not reached the old figures. This shows that a certain amount of investment has taken place. This is most obvious in the ‘manufacturing of transport equipment’. After a more or less steady decline till 2007 to 37.5 per cent of the production of 1990, it has risen to 69.6 per cent in 2012. This is probably largely connected to foreign capital, but in any case it is not possible without a strong rise in employment. The same is true to a lesser extent for the production of food, beverages and tobacco, which was down to 54.6 per cent in 2000 and has steadily built up to 98.2 per cent in 2012.

So, industrial production, as covered in Table 2, still makes up a large part of the Russian economy. Very likely we will find a younger workforce in the new or newly built industries such as plastics, electronics and the car industry. Perhaps also in the food industry, but as this probably mostly located in rural areas, it is not so central in the regeneration of the working class.

So manufacturing, extraction of raw materials, production of living necessities and construction make up about 35 per cent of the GDP. The rise of retail, transport and hotels as main components of the ‘third’ sector to about 30 per cent of GDP shows where the workforce went. It is, therefore, in this sector, which also includes Information Technology, transport and logistics, that we will find a ‘new’ working class. There was also, of course, a move towards banking and other financial sectors, of which only a small part can be considered as working class.

Thirdly, we have to look at those layers that have been degraded by privatisation. These are, as in most countries of the world, the education and health sectors. In 2011, a ‘reform’ in the shape of a new ‘Law of commercialisation of the budgetary sphere’ changed the legal status of state and municipal organisations. Its formal aim was to provide a rationale for the redistribution of financial means within this sphere, but the actual purpose was to put education, medicine and culture on a commercial basis. It meant that municipal schools, hospitals and cultural institutions would not get direct finance from the state anymore. Although regional governments can support them, there is no obligation. While wages of the personnel are still paid by the state, the other necessities have to be covered from their own ‘commercial’ activities, like renting out accommodation, requiring payment for some lessons or services etc. Most of the public administration itself has not yet been touched because of the role of the state in the Bonapartist regime.

The privatisation of agriculture has produced a new land question, although the privatisation process was slower than in industry. ‘Communal property’ still exists as it is necessary for stability, but it is disappearing. This results in great capitalist latifundia (Eko-invest) and a large rural population dependent on small plots of land, whether owned or rented, and using inefficient methods to eke out a low standard of living. The average monthly wage in agriculture in 2012 was R14,017, only two-thirds of that in food processing (R21,074) and an even smaller proportion of the average income of R26,822.32
The rural population in general has suffered a large setback. The closure of light industry hit the small towns harder than the large ones. No new factories have opened or will open, except for a few in food processing. The rationalisation in agriculture has already driven many out of work and more job losses are likely. Public transport has been cut in the country districts and cultural centres are closed down.

To fully establish which parts of the class belong to the labour aristocracy it is not sufficient to look only at wages but also to look at the relationship of the organisation of the class, their history of struggles, etc. However, from the monthly wages we can already assume that workers in the oil and gas sector can be seen as part of the labour aristocracy. In 2012, the monthly income of workers in the "mining of energy producing minerals" (R57,267) and in "manufacturing of coke and refined petroleum products" (R56,576) was more than twice the average monthly income of R26,822 for all employees. Similar wages were only paid in "financial intermediation" (R59070), a sector that is socially quite separate from the rest of the working class.

The worst paid are legal or illegal immigrant workers, mainly from the central Asian, ex-soviet republics. In the Soviet Union, internal migration was largely controlled and planned, but brought already an additional 9 million inhabitants to Russia. From 1990 onwards, millions more journeyed to Russia either to escape wars and serious conflicts inside the former USSR republics or to find work. This migration fluctuates according to the season and economic development, and figures for "illegal" immigration are rather problematic. However, a figure of around 10 to 12 million for immigrant workers would account for 15 per cent of the working population and an even higher proportion of the working class. As usual, migrant workers are concentrated in construction, seasonal agriculture, logistics and retail. They are the object of anti-Islamic, anti-Asian and anti-Caucasian chauvinism.

Women workers have suffered even more from the restructuring of the economy than men. They have generally been pushed out from the better paid jobs, and the gender pay gap widened as the general differentiation of wages hit the lower tiers, where already from soviet times women were more numerous, hardest. The closure of childcare facilities in the workplaces excluded even more women from full-time and permanent jobs. Discrimination on the job market is marked and frankly overt. Women will play an important role in any movement against attacks on public services and in the unionisation of retail and lower paid industries.

Organisations of the working class

As early as 1991, in response to the growing number of strikes, especially in the mining industry, the Russian government initiated "Social Partnership". It was promoted as a principle for settling labour conflicts at the federal level. In particular, in the Presidential Decree "On social partnership and labour disputes" the chief activities of social partnership included:

? Signing of annual general agreements between the Government of the Russian Federation, authorised representatives of the republican associations of trade unions and employers


"Social partnership" is, on the one hand, a hollow phrase to integrate the trade union bureaucracy into the state and to align them with the goals of imperialism and the needs of capital. It can have a material base where a labour aristocracy can in fact be bribed to serve the imperialist goals of its ruling class. However, in the early 1990s, there was not much labour aristocracy around and the imperialist project had yet to be
Participation in the privatisation process allowed the trade union bureaucrats to continue as co-managers. In general, they continued their collaboration with the new capitalist owners as they had done with the party leaders and directors, all being members of the nomenklatura. The FNPR as official successor of the VZSPS still accounts for 23 million members of the 37 million trade unionists in 1990.

Other significant union organisations include the KTR, a fusion of the VTK and the KTR in 2006, represents 2.4 million workers, and is in general the more militant federation, while the MPRA is a militant trade union in the transnational car industry (Ford, VW, Benteler) founded in 2006. It has established itself through militant strikes. Their leaders have again and again been subjected to repression by state organs, local administration, company security and unidentified thugs. Some of its leaders are associated with socialist and communist ideas.

The Communist Party (KPRF) is not a bourgeois workers' party in the classical sense. It represents that part of the Stalinist bureaucracy that was unable to become bourgeois. As such, it reflects the anger of those not profiting from privatisation and capitalist development. Under the Putin regime, it accepts the basic elements of policy regarding its imperialist strategy, nationalism and chauvinism. It is not impossible that it could be transformed into a bourgeois workers' party under changed conditions where it is obliged to move into open opposition and attracts significant numbers of workers into its ranks without fundamentally changing its politics.

There are several groups that originated in splits from the KPRF, such as the All Russian Communist Party of the Future, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, the All-union Communist Party (Bolsheviks), the Russian Communist Workers’ Party of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (RCWP-CPSU) or the Communists of Russia. In general they all look back to Stalinism as an answer to the nationalism and opportunism of the KPRF.

The Left Front was an attempt to unify left groups and its origins lie in the Russian Social Forum. It was later joined by the Vanguard of the Red Youth, whose leader, Sergei Udaltsov, became the central person of Left Front. In practice it has an unclear attitude towards the liberals. It is one thing to organise common protests over democratic issues, quite another to accept bans on social issues or engage in joint political platforms, or even coalitions, with Kasparov’s ?Other Russia?. The Left Front formed an official party ROT Front together with other organisations. This did not prevent Udaltsov from serving as campaign manager for Zhuganov in the presidential elections of 2012.

Russian capitalism today

The political weakness of the bourgeoisie has its counterpart, as well as its origin in the mode of accumulation. It is difficult to find figures to determine a quota, but a large part of capitalist rent is derived from rent and not from the production of surplus value. This obviously is the case in oil and gas production, where the low costs of production and high prices on the world market allow for a large part of the profit to be redistributed as rent.

There is also what Dzarasov calls Insider rent. Insiders in this context are managers or shareholders in a position to control the money circulation for their own advantage or that of allies. In this way a part of the profit (or potential profit as this might also take place in loss-making companies) is diverted. These insiders are not, or not so much, interested in the general development of the company as their benefits are more or less independent of that.
This way of generating profit is very prevalent in Russia for two reasons. The general one is that this way of generating profit is expanding in the decay period of imperialism. With the tendency of the rate of profit to fall, capital owners seek other ways to make money outside of value production. One method, quite similar to insider rent, is the way hedge funds take over middle-sized companies. The assets are immediately sold or externalised into a separate company from which the production company has to rent. The liquid money is transferred to the hedge fund and the company has to borrow it again. This allows the allocation of profits independently of the profit rate the business generates in reality.

The second is the technique of channelling public money into certain private hands and it has proliferated in privatisation processes all over the world: the Public Private Partnership (PPP) in Britain and the privatisation of the railways in Germany are prominent examples.

The dominant forms of creating insider rent in Russia are of course closely related to the methods the Stalinist bureaucracy used to extract its privileges.

These ways of creating bourgeois revenue are not only economically favoured by a capitalist system in crisis, but also reproduced by the Russian bourgeoisie itself, whose dominating force is still the state bureaucracy. This reproduction takes place very practically. Companies focusing on production are forced to seek state protection and to deliver rent. So they integrate into the system. On the other hand, they do so unwillingly. The wave of protests in 2012 was partly fuelled by the dissatisfaction of the liberal, entrepreneurial layer of the Russian bourgeoisie. It does not want to deliver insider-rent; rather it seeks its own share of the rent from oil and gas extraction.

On the other hand, the Putin administration has to support the development of value producing capitalists. It has done so with some success with billions of subsidies in the agrarian and food sector, in which about 50 giant holdings have been established. Manufacturing industry has to follow and attempts are being made in the car industry. If successful, this could give the Russian bourgeoisie more weight and self-esteem, but investment in these sectors will also strengthen the influence of foreign capital.

The two wings of the Russian bourgeoisie in general cannot do without each other. The Bonapartist state machine has to develop the economy and thus has to strengthen the private sector. The liberals, whose base is in the private sector, of course blame Putin but have to thank him for saving Russian capitalism and its role in the world. This conflict is not as deep as the comparable one in China, but it opens up chances for the working class to take up the struggle for democratic rights in its own way just the same. Such a struggle would provide an excellent opportunity for the working class to reorganise. The mass demonstrations in 2012 have shown that, when the left and workers’ organisations were able to break the ban of the liberals on social demands and organised separate demonstration columns.

The general dependence of the liberal, entrepreneurial wing of the Russian bourgeoisie on the state for the maintenance of law and order reduces its conflict with Putin and his apparatus to a struggle over its share of the mass of profits. While the liberal bourgeoisie does not want to be reduced to lower profit rates than the rent taken out of gas and oil, like its counterparts a century ago, it is a weak and cowardly class that will not itself generate a revolutionary movement to overthrow Putin’s autocratic regime. However, that is not to say that it, or its allies in the intelligentsia could not provide the figureheads for a foreign-inspired, and financed democratic colour revolution.

The solution to the democratic question, so widely alluded to by western imperialism and its media, will, therefore, ultimately lie in the hands of the Russian proletariat again. It will include the fight for democratic rights, for women’s and LGBT rights, the right of separation and self-determination for the national minorities and republics and the solution of a resurrected land question.
Russia and its neighbours

The collapse of the Soviet Union was referred to as ?independence? not only in the newly formed republics, but also in the Russian Federation. The CIS, the Commonwealth of Independent States, was formed by 11 post-USSR republics. Georgia joined in 1993, but left in 2008. Turkmenistan reduced itself to associated membership in 2005. Ukraine had been wavering over its membership for many years and finally terminated its membership after the departure of Crimea in 2014.

As a means to keep Russian domination, this project was a failure and had to be. Pre-occupied with establishing itself as a ruling class, the Russian bourgeoisie was not fit for the task of establishing imperialist domination of the neighbouring countries. Of course, the CIS did not work as a brotherly community either. There is no such thing in an imperialist world order. Immediately, the US and EU set their eyes on the surrounding states. In the wars and conflicts between Azerbaijan and Armenia, Russia and Georgia, and Crimea joining Russia against Ukraine?s will, the organisation did not play a role in either restricting Russia or the influence of US or EU imperialism. The latter also engaged six of the CIS states in the ?East European Partnership? in 2009 despite Russia?s protests.47

Some of the CIS states, however, do stand under the clear domination of Russia today. Belarus does not develop much foreign policy of its own and is economically closely connected to Russia. Kazakhstan gets 36 per cent of its imports from Russia (with China coming in second with 18 per cent48 and other imperialists way behind). Both countries are members of the same international treaty organisations as Russia, such as the Euroasian Free Trade Zone and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO).

Although the integration of Ukraine into this bloc was always a goal for Russia, extensive economic ties to Russia, exports and imports, were more and more replaced by links to the EU. Compared to Belarus and Kazakhstan, Ukraine is a relatively highly developed industrial country exporting not only raw materials and energy, like Kazakhstan and Russia itself, but also high technology products such as armaments, aircraft, ships and power plants. Armenia, Azerbaijan, Moldova, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan are, to a great extent, labour reserves for Russia. In 2011, of the more than 9 million immigrant workers in Russia there were approximately 2 million Uzbeks, 1 million Tajiks and 500,000 Kyrgyz.49 Some of these countries are highly dependent on this emigrant workforce. In 2009, the money transfer from Russia to Tajikistan made up some 30 per cent of its GDP, to Moldova about 20 per cent.50

The economic weakness of Russia makes its control over the other former Soviet republics vulnerable as the offers of the EU show. In all European statistics on GDP per capita, or average income, Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova come near the bottom. The difficulties facing Russia in developing a ruling class and of this class in developing a national economy in the context of the global crisis of capitalism are multiplied in the satellite states. The offer of a Eurasian Free Trade Zone is not the most enticing. The US, and even more the EU, can offer higher wages for migrant workers, posts in the EU bureaucracy for the intelligentsia and jobs as sales representatives for imported products.

The economic ties of Russia to its neighbours, then, are mainly the export of energy and the import of migrant workers. On the other hand, Russia was in a position to intervene into the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict, to send troops to Abkhazia and South Ossetia against Georgia, to Transnistria against Moldova and to Crimea against the will of Ukraine. The fact that in these cases the local populations supported these interventions certainly made them easier for Russia but nevertheless they prove which is the imperialist power and which are the semi-colonies.

Where this support is not forthcoming, such as in Chechnya, none of the Caucasus states were able to
intervene, even had any wished to do so. In fact, Chechnya can be considered a colony, because this republic declared its autonomy and even had a recognised government before it was occupied by Russian troops again. This also proves the imperialist nature of the Russian state; it has the military power as well as the economic reserves to keep this powder keg under control, a control which has significantly improved under Putin?s Bonapartism. This conflict can even be seen as a measure of Russia?s imperialist potential and its development.

**Russia and the EU**

Under Putin, Russia has so far shown a clear preference to collaborate with the EU especially with its dominant force, German imperialism. This might also be supported by a widespread anti-Americanism in Russia, as a result of the Cold War and the experience of the 1990s, when the US quickly spoiled the credit it had gained initially in public opinion. In any event, the preference has a material base in the fact that this is an important economic combination; Russia sends gas and oil; EU/Germany delivers technology.

In 2013, 13.3 per cent of Russia?s exports went to the Netherlands, 7.5 per cent to Italy, 7 per cent to Germany but only 2.1 per cent to the US. Poland (3.7 per cent), UK (3.4 per cent) and Finland (2.4 per cent) were all ahead of the US, with Latvia (2 per cent) not much behind. In 2012, 52.9 per cent of the exports went to the EU, 6.8 per cent to China, 3 per cent to Japan and just 2.5 per cent to the USA. From the EU, came 41.9 per cent of all imports, with 16.3 per cent from China and 4.9 per cent each from the US and Japan. The Total Trade Value between the EU and Russia has tripled between 2003 (€108 billion) and 2013 (€326 billion).

Russia has tried to deepen these ties to the EU, for example, trying to achieve an easier visa regulation. This is frequently demanded by Western business partners as well as by the Russian population. From the side of the EU the talks were postponed again and again. Although this shows that the EU is in a somewhat stronger position, at the same time, Russia is not ready to give EU citizens easier access to Russia than the EU gives to Russians, as weak states like Ukraine or Serbia are forced to do.

**Russia and US Imperialism**

The agreement Gorbachev made, that Nato would not seek to extend its reach ?one inch to the East?, was surely never taken seriously by US imperialism itself. The accompanying offer, for Russia to join NATO, probably also not meant very seriously; if it meant anything, it meant that Russia could become a semi-colony, or maybe a regional power, under the control of the US.

The US started to put their feet on the ground immediately after the break-up of the Soviet Union. Their focus was on Central Asia, and they were engaged already in Iraq. To gain control over Georgia and Azerbaijan would mean having a direct connection from the Black Sea to the Caspian, thereby blocking Russia?s ambition to the south. This ?Silk Road? strategy was even adopted as a Bill by the House of Representatives in 1999. The intervention in Georgia with the ?Rose Revolution? of 2003 underlined these ambitions. The US effectively could use the tensions between Georgia and Russia (Abkhazia, Ossetia) and between Azerbaijan and Russia as well as supporting Armenia in the conflict over Nagorno Karabach.

A strong attack on Russia?s position was, and is the US policy in Ukraine. Already in 2004, with the staging of the Orange ?Revolution?, this attack was on the cards. However, with the elections in 2008 replacing Timoshenko with Yanukovich, Russia regained ground. The Maidan movement and the consequent activities ? sending military experts, mercenaries and the attempts to take over the country?s most valuable assets ? were well prepared.
For the US, the intervention in Ukraine as well as the Georgian provocation of attacking South Ossetia in 2008 also served to disrupt relations between Russia and EU/Germany. They were combined with political pressure on European countries to confront Russia and with the call for economic sanctions. These, of course, have almost no practical consequences for the US economy at all, but could be a heavy blow to the EU.

On the other hand, Russia has effectively opposed US ambitions in Syria. Here, both states had influence: Russia was granted a seaport and Bashar Assad had given way to US demands for economic access and privatisation. When the Syrian people’s revolution started in 2010, the US strategy was to finance and equip counter-revolutionary Islamic forces to take over the leadership of the struggle, thereby undermining its progressive potential, and to pressurising Assad or even forcing him out of power. Of course, this also had the aim of weakening the position of Russia. Russia’s equally counter-revolutionary strategy was to support the Assad regime with arms, which has saved the regime so far and checked US ambitions.

Russia’s place in the world today

In the global imperialist system today there are no stable camps as there were during the Second World War or the Cold War. Confrontation in one part of the world can go along with cooperation in another, very similar to the competition that exists between capitalist monopolies, which might also cooperate in one project or market and fiercely attack each other in another one. The simple logic lies in the fact that cooperation might bring immediate profits that can be used for other projects or conflicts. Also co-operation does not necessarily that both partners share the profit equally or even that there is profit at all.55

Despite its substantial economic weakness, which was partly balanced by the crisis that hit the old imperialist powers more than the new ones, Russia successfully conquered and defended a place among the leading imperialist powers. Its strong cards are its long time influence in the neighbouring countries, its natural resources and its military power.

The changes in the global imperialist system of the last 25 years were only possible through the final defeat of the degenerated workers’ states, a historic defeat for the working class, and the global crisis of capitalism that had been building up for decades, but was, in historical terms, temporarily postponed by the defeat of the workers’ states. Both factors allowed Russia to become an imperialist power and occupy a place, though a weak one, among the global imperialist players.

Of course, the US, which accepted, or had to accept and even support the rise of China as an imperialist rival, did not see anything positive in Russia gaining power. Therefore, Washington is more opposed to Russia than to the EU and China, which are forced to play the game of cooperation/confrontation among the imperialist powers in order to maintain their status.

REFERENCES

1 This danger is expressed in a fear of China taking Siberia or Russia’s far East, or the US invading Southern Russia. Both scenarios are displayed in movies, articles or in nationalist propaganda.
2 This is the goal of the Euro-Asiatic Free-trade Zone
3 (Revolution Betrayed) ?Würde dagegen die herrschende Sowjetkaste von einer bürgerlichen Partei gestürzt, so fände letztere unter den heutigen Bürokraten, Administratoren, Technikern, Direktoren, Parteisekretären, ?erhaupt privilegierten Spitzen, nicht wenig willige Diener.?
4 The fact that some of the most ugly oligarchs as Anatoli Chubais or Khodorkovsky were members of a
group of high ranking members of the Komsomol who were trained as capitalists does not contradict this. It just shows that they were obviously able to play according to new rules better than the old bureaucrats. Gorbachov’s young guards were not a social force, just its tool.

6 To point at the intelligentsia is done by Dzarasov in Russian Dzarasov (2011): Werewolves of Stalinism: Russia's Capitalists and their System, Debatte: Journal of Contemporary Central and Eastern Europe, 19:1-2, 473. Dzarasov himself cites Lane and Menshikov: ?Lane speaks of two main social groupings which aided in the downfall of the Soviet system and its transition to capitalism. These were the ?administrative class?, consisting of people who exercised bureaucratic control over production, education and science, and the ?appropriating class?, made up of the intelligentsia who had an interest in using market mechanisms as a way to benefit from their professional knowledge. To these two social categories can be added the black-market entrepreneurs who had gradually developed within the pores of the Soviet system (Men?shikov ).

7 We should look closer at this phenomenon: for example in Germany this layer produced rather many politicians.

8 Dzarasov, 474

9 That the oligarch Khodorkovsky, probably the most effective accumulator of stolen public property is now presented as a hero of democratic liberation struggle only shows the flexibility of western bourgeois moral political standards.

10 Dakar is Russian for December

11 Leon Trotsky, The History of the Russian Revolution, Volume One: The Overthrow of Tsarism, Chapter 1, Peculiarities of Russian Development.


13 This is a difference from the Chinese Bureaucracy: There has always remained a Chinese bourgeoisie in Taiwan and Hong Kong, as whose agent the Chinese Bureaucracy can be seen.

14? (Menshikov 61?2) quoted from Dzarasov

15 Dzarasov, 475: The most important task, according to this view, was establishing as quickly as possible and at any cost a class of private property owners, who would rule out any possibility of a so-called ?communist revenge?.

16 In the article on Russia 2000 M.Pröbsting calls this a process of primary accumulation. I think this term is misleading as the primary accumulation in the youth of capitalism served to collect funds to invest into the production of surplus value. This is exactly the feature of Russian capitalism that is grossly underdeveloped. The more appropriate term would be ?final extraction?, before the situation or even the system would change again.

17 ?To hand over control and ownership of productive assets is one thing; to make the owners act as agents of capital and force the workers to submit to being a surplus value producing, exploited class is quite another.? Keith Harvey 1997


20 Trotz des starken Transformationsschocks nach dem Ende der Sowjetunion, in dessen Verlauf das Bruttoinlandsprodukt in den 1990er Jahren um bis zu 40% einbrach, hatte Russland im Vergleich zu anderen Transformationsländern stets eine relativ niedrige Arbeitslosenquote. Ihren Höchstwert erreichte die Arbeitslosigkeit im Kriegenahr 1998 mit 13% per, während sie in der Transformationsphase in vielen anderen Ländern, darunter Polen, Slowakei und Bulgarien bei fast 20% lag.

Der Grund, warum die Arbeitslosigkeit in Russland trotz der extremen Wirtschaftskrise relativ niedrig ausfiel, liegt im russischen Arbeitsmarktmodell. Der russische Arbeitsmarkt reagierte auf die Wirtschaftstransformation nicht mit einem Anstieg der Arbeitslosigkeit, sondern mit starken Einbußen für die beschäftigten durch gewaltige Arbeitszeitverkürzungen, starke Einschläfte bei den Realöhnen, riesige Rückstände bei den Lohnzahlungen, verbreiteten Zwangsurlaub und eine unzureichende Durchsetzung des Arbeitsrechts. Hinzu kam eine umfangreiche Umverteilung der Arbeitskräfte.

HTTP://WWW.LAENDER-ANALYSEN.DE/RUSSLAND/PDF/ [1]

Russlandanalyse200.pdf

21 See M. Pröbsting

22 On the contrary, the specific feature of the Russian transition has been the enormous contradiction between the form of property ownership and the content of the social relations of production and exchange that lay behind the legal form. This was due to the combined, and hence compromised, character of the transition process. The process has relied on an uneasy compromise between the forces of bourgeois counter-revolution representing interests outside the ruling Stalinist strata and those within it who are seeking to convert themselves into an important section of the new capitalist class. (Harvey)

23 In the process of capitalist restoration the state is the dynamo of transition. The state has to destroy the old apparatus of economic administration and create the legal and political framework within which capitalist social relations of production emerge. This framework has to define relations between the working class and the new exploiting class and impose the costs of restoration upon the workers. This is the first and most fundamental task of the state machine during the restoration of capitalism. At the same time the new administration has to establish the ground rules for inter-capitalist competition. The state must act as a general executive of the capitalist class, raising itself above and over the competing capitalists. It has to enforce the general logic of capitalist accumulation against individual capitalists and against blocs of capital owned by the state itself. This second, specifically capitalist function of the state apparatus generally takes longer to become fully operative (Harvey)

Harvey concludes in his article, that Russia is still a ?moribund workers state? as neither task has been fully accomplished. The League has since then corrected the wrong definition of a ?moribund workers state? as in a transition period (revolutionary or counterrevolutionary) the character of a state is not determined by the social relations as in ?normal times?, but by the political aim of the political power. This correction does not devaluate the correct assessment of the article that the destruction of a planned economy even a bureaucratic one and replacing it by a functioning capitalist system is a huge task and the Russian bourgeoisie has for many years not been up to it.

24 Zahlen inflationsbereinigt nach Rosstat.

25 Average wages in US dollars

HTTP://WWW.LAENDER-ANALYSEN.DE/RUSSLAND/ [2]
Anm.: Für 2012 ist der Wert vom März des Jahres angegeben.

26 As ?Just Russia? or the KPRF?
27 There exists in Russia a feature that can normally be found in semi-colonies, where a pro-imperialist party will compete with a more patriotic one.
28 RSPP -- Russian Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs ( ?????????? ???? ????????????????? ? ? ???????????????)
29 RTK - Russian Tri lateral Commission for the Regulation of Social and Labour Relations ( ?????????? ??????? ?? ?????????????????? ?????????-?????????? ????????)
30 Russia in figures, 2013 Copyright ?????????? ????? ????????????????? ???????????? Rosstat - Also the following tables.
31 Federal Law number 83 from 1.1.2011. It was greeted with demonstrations of the left against it.
32 Rosstat. One has to note though that the ratio has improved since 2000, where it was 985 : 2183 : 2223

INFOLGE DES MIGRATIONSRÜCKFLUSSES NACH RUSSLAND IN DER ERSTEN HÄLFTE DER 1990ER JAHRE VERLORE KASACHSTAN 12 per cent SEINER BEVÖLKERUNG, KIRGISTAN 10 per cent, TADSHIKISTAN 9 per cent, USBEKISTAN UND TURKMENISTAN JEWEILS 5 per cent. UNTER DEN LÄNDERN DES SÜDLICHEN KAUKASUS HATTEN ARMENIEN MIT 10 per cent UND GEORGIEN MIT 8 per cent DIE GRÖßTEN VERLUSTE ZU VERZEICHNEN.

ASERBAIDSCHAN VERLORE 7 per cent SEINER BEVÖLKERUNG. BELARUS WAR DAS EINZIGE LAND, DESSEN BEVÖLKERUNG INFOLGE DER MIGRATION AUS RUSSLAND UM 0,2 per cent WUCHS.

RUSSLAND-ANALYSEN NR. 236, 23.03.2012 DIE ETHNISIERUNG DER MIGRATIONSPROZESSE IN RUSSLAND VON OLGA VENDINA, MOSKAU

34 ?Illegal? means that in most cases that no work permission is given. Entrance into the Russian Federation is still without restrictions for most of the former USSR republics.
35 USSR/Russia is seen as a prove against the theory that the gender pay gap has something to do with less qualification of women as the formal education has always been higher for women.
36 The legislation was adopted in June 1992 after a struggle between the Presidential executive, local administration and the enterprise managers who had a strong voice in a Parliament still made up of unelected deputies from the Gorbachev era. The power of the ministries was first diluted by making all state enterprises self-governing joint stock companies under the control of a board of directors, prior to being privatised. The board consisted of four members: the director, a trade union official and one representative each from national and local government. The ministries were thus sidelined (Harvey)
37 FNPR- Federation of Independent Trade Unions ????????? ???????????
            ????????? ???????????
38 VZSPS - All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions ?????????? ????????????????? ?????
            ????????????????? ????? - ?????)
Compared to many other countries these figures seem to be quite reliable as they are the base for the union representation in the Tripartite Commission. Also the membership fees are still commonly deducted by the company.

ROT stands for Russian United Labour (Front), but of course the name also refers to the ?Red-Front?, the military organisation of the KPD.

The creation of surplus value is the determining, dominating and overriding purpose of the capitalist; it is the absolute motive and content of his activity. K Marx, Capital Vol 1, Harmondsworth 1976, p990

The total amount of subsidies in the year 2009 were $3.7 billion, in 2010 $5.5 billion. The goal of the government is to raise the quota of self-sufficiency from 60 per cent to 85 per cent (Handelsblatt: Russlands Landwirtschaft: Die Erben der Kolchosen von Regine Palm und Florian Willershausen 13.06.2010)

In contrast the Great Patriotic War was not against the Germans as it was in World War II in the US-American narrative, but against the fascists.

According to their own sources, US institutions invested $5 billion.

This is the case for instance when the talk is of ?taking over responsibilities?, that is, sending in troops to repress any unwanted movement or conflict.

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