

Let's fight against Russia's aggression in Ukraine!

(Special pages for new students, from JRCL weekly *Kaihoh* No. 2763 issued on April 10th 2023.)

For over a year, Zengakuren [All-Japan Federation of Students' Self-Governing Associations] has been strenuously promoting antiwar struggles against Putin-led Russia's aggression in Ukraine. Many students stood up in this struggle. While fighting, they have been studying, discussing and thinking.

Based on such discussions among Zengakuren students, we have summarized below what we expect new students to think over, in a Q & A format in which a member of the JRCL-RMF replies to the questions of a student. — *Editors*

I. Why are the forces of Russia, a major military power, so weak?

Q It is a year and two months since the armed forces of Russia launched the invasion of Ukraine.

Since around December 2022, they have been destroying public infrastructure such as electricity, gas and water by raining missiles on the whole land of Ukraine. They have reduced to ashes apartment houses, hospitals, schools and all.

We were very much worried whether Ukrainian people would be able to survive the bitter cold of winter. What do you think is the reason why they have been able to withstand such adversity?

A They are very patient, I think, and what's more, they have a very strong spirit of giving mutual help to each other.

The more Vladimir Putin commits horrific atrocities, the more intensely Ukrainians have their hearts burning with anger, with their determination becoming stronger never to let this criminal be unpunished. According to one opinion poll, close to 90 percent of Ukrainians say they will fight until Ukraine finally wins.

Q As for the battle for Bakhmut, it was frequently reported that, due to Wagner troops' attacks, its fall was drawing near. The Russian forces have concentrated their strength to conquer this city for around eight months in a bid to make a symbol of what Putin calls the 'liberation of Donbas'. However, they have not only failed to achieve their goal but rather been suffering enormous casualties.

What do you think is the cause for the defeat of the Russian forces?

A First and foremost, this comes from the difference in the morale of troops.

Among Russian soldiers that are sent forth to Bakhmut, there are of course regular forces including airborne troops. But the main force consists of Wagner's soldiers, including prisoners who have been scraped together with words like 'Your barbarity is useful in the war'. Wagner is officially a private military company, but in fact is Putin's private army. And there are also new soldiers coercively mobilized last September — many of whom are from ethnic minorities



Zengakuren students protesting at the Russian Embassy, Mar. 17, 2022

including those of Sakha and Buryat in Siberia and of Dagestan in Caucasia.

They have no cause to fight in this war.

In contrast, the fighters of Ukraine — made up of the Ukrainian Armed forces, frontier guards, the ‘freedom battalion’ and other military organizations formed voluntarily by motivated people, Territorial Defense Forces, and so on — are engaged in the battle with high spirits.

If they retreated from Bakhmut, it would bring the same situation as in Mariupol last year, where fighters were finally obliged to surrender after months of battles over the Azovstal Ironworks. Residents would be sent to filtration camps, be tortured, with women raped, some executed and others sent to Siberia and other underpopulated regions of Russia. Moreover, children would be parted from their parents, deported to Russia and forcibly adopted into Russian families. That is why Ukrainian fighters are combating unbendingly.

Furthermore, if they withdrew from Bakhmut, that would make it hard to launch a counteroffensive in the coming spring... That’s why they are fighting in defiance of death.

Q I’m really impressed by their mutual sympathy.

A So am I. And the problems of the Russian army are not limited to its low morale. As to tactics and commands, too, the Russian army is utterly irresponsible. Commanders are forcing soldiers to plunge into battlefields in waves as cannon fodder. If one attempts an escape, he’ll be shot immediately from behind by a special unit. The survival rate of Russian soldiers is around 10 per cent. One of the worst cases was that there were only two survived out of a unit of 100. Casualties among Russian forces are reported to amount to 220,000.

Q This has something to do with Putin’s order that the two oblasti in Donbas should be brought under control by the end of March, doesn’t it?

A Yes, it does. To begin with, the Russian army operates thoroughly through a hierarchical top-down system. This is because the bureaucratism in the era of Stalinism prior to the collapse of the Soviet Union is still deeply ingrained today. For that reason, the high-ups wouldn’t gather opinions from the front lines.

Moreover, Vladimir Putin, an erstwhile KGB agent, may be a professional in conspiracy and assassination, but he knows no military strategy, nor tactics, nor military techniques. This self-styled emperor intimidates his men by saying, ‘I said “Carry it out”, not “Try hard”. This is my order.’ This is certainly another big factor in the defeat of the Russian forces.

In contrast, Ukrainians have taken the opposite way. In the battle of Bakhmut, they must have been pressed into making a life-or-death judgment as to whether they should retain their military strength for counterattacks in spring or strike a heavy blow against the enemy on this site for the sake of the next victory, even if it would involve certain sacrifices in their ranks. But you see, it is not Kyiv but those commanders at the site of the battle who made the judgment. The Zelensky government is said to have followed the consensus of the commanders in the actual battlefield. It is reported that as many as 28,000 volunteer soldiers, including women and those from abroad, rushed to Bakhmut.

One more thing. Battles cannot be fought without logistics. One soldier needs a continuous supply of 200 kilograms a day, which includes water, food, arms and ammunition, and fuel. It must be noted that these supplies were supported by many Ukrainian volunteers. This must also be a reason for the victory of Ukraine.

Thus, once again, Putin has suffered a defeat.

II. How should we face up to this world-historical event?

Q Incidentally, a few days ago, I saw a TV documentary aired by NHK titled ‘Military invasion: the

tense 72 hours in the Executive Office of the Ukrainian President'. Then, I read over again the JRCL statement 'No to Aggression in Ukraine!', issued on February 27th, 2022, three days after the launch of Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

A Oh, did you?

Q I was really amazed to find out that the statement had already described the same things that were disclosed in the NHK documentary a year after the invasion.

For instance, the statement says that Putin's designs lie in conquering the whole land of Ukraine, decapitating its current regime and setting up a puppet government, thereby annexing Ukraine or making it a vassal state. Another thing is that rulers of Western countries were unable to understand the meaning of Putin's remark that the 'disintegration of the Soviet Union, followed by NATO's eastward expansion' was the 'greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the twentieth century', and so they went pale when he actually launched an invasion. And further, the statement calls on workers and toiling people of Ukraine to put up resistance, and so on and on.

A That's right. Putin's aim was to assassinate President Zelensky, together with his family, and put forward a pro-Russian opposition party leader as president, thereby setting up a puppet government.

When faced with this, both US President Joe Biden and EU rulers urged Zelensky time and again to flee to seek refuge in a foreign country, but Zelensky turned this down. He said, 'We need no plane (for exile); we want arms.'

Ukrainian people stood up in response. On seeing that, Western rulers came around to giving military aids to Ukraine.

Some say it was Western rulers that instigated the Ukrainian government to start the war. But this is mistaken as a matter of fact. Based on information collected from spy satellites, the Biden administration was well aware that Russia was aiming at Kyiv. And yet, as early as the end of 2021, Biden notified the Putin government that, if Russia invaded Ukraine, it would apply economic sanctions on Russia but would not resort to armed intervention. In this sense, it can even be said that Biden gave Putin the go-ahead for an invasion.

Anyway, if Ukrainian people had not risen in resistance, the situation would have been totally different.

Q Today, a year since Russia invaded Ukraine, some people say that both sides should lay down arms and cease fire immediately. What is your opinion of it? Also, there are those who say 'No' to supplying arms for Ukraine. What do you think about this?

A Calling for an immediate cease-fire at this moment in time is tantamount to approving Putin's annexation of the four oblasts. Such a proposition would only please Putin.

To those who clamour 'No to the sending of arms to Ukraine', I would say they should listen to a real outcry of the Ukrainians in resistance:

'The Ukrainian people want to fight but they don't have the necessary weapons to destroy Russian artillery and planes, so it is a matter of life and death that the Ukrainian people get the weapons they need.'

'This is why the most important method of supporting the Ukrainian resistance is by demanding the unconditional supply of heavy weapons to Ukraine. That is the only way they will be able to win the war.'

This passage is taken from an appeal issued by the Youth for Ukrainian Resistance, a group of young people and students who belong to militant leftists in Ukraine. To tell those Ukrainians to fight with only Molotov cocktails and antiquated guns in fierce, life-risking battles means to tell them to be killed!

It's quite clear for us from the beginning that imperialist rulers of the West have their own national

interests. As we have mentioned many times since May 2022, Western rulers are not only fearful of the victory of Russia headed by Putin ambitious to retake the lost territories of the former USSR but also afraid of Ukraine's 'excessive' victory. This is because Putin, cornered in a dead end, could resort to a nuclear attack.

However, the absolute criterion for our class-based judgment vis-à-vis *Putin's war* must be the defense and protection of the real interests of the oppressed working class.

Q That's exactly it. My senior colleagues, too, said to me, 'Proletarian humanism is realistic humanism.'

A Vladimir Putin, who poses as the 'tsar' of Russia, a major nuclear power, must have been convinced that it would be as easy as twisting a baby's arm to make Ukraine capitulate.

But that was a miscalculation that the arrogance of this devotee of military power made. For the past one year, everything he did went wrong. The most serious miscalculation was that Ukrainian people rose up in unity.

Q Why was it possible for the JRCL to predict so properly what is going on in Ukraine, though the information was very limited?

A Well, that's not really a prediction. To read a situation means to 'read other people's minds', so to speak. To put it plainly, when we say 'to analyse the present situation', it means to grasp the dynamics of political forces or substances with their respective class interests reacting to each other, i.e. dynamics of their behaviour or praxes conflicting with each other. Of course we change the reality. In order to change it, we must first grasp the reality as it is.

To grasp the reality 'as it is' does not mean, of course, that we capture only its phenomena superficially. Unless we go into the minds of others as the objects of our analysis, we won't be able to grasp essentially the situation that has been produced.

Q I see... I think I understand. Come to think of it, when university authorities engineer attacks to infringe the autonomy of students' activities, we, Zengakuren try to get the point of the intentions of the authorities by presupposing the university authorities, the Education Ministry behind them, and the students.

A So you see, if you were looking out absentmindedly on the proceedings or merely interpreting its outcomes, you'd be caught up in the sliding tide. If you are to fight in earnest to change the present situation, you must first of all hold your ground with fighting spirit like *Nioh* [Buddhist guardian devas].

Q That statement of the JRCL was written 72 hours after the launch of Russia's aggression. It was calling on working people in Ukraine to 'put up resistance in unity'. Today, it looks as if the prediction came true. Does this have something to do with what you said about the 'reading of other people's minds'?

A Yes, it does. To take an example, within three days after the launch of Russia's aggression, the Ukrainian government issued an instruction to its people that males aged 18 to 60 must stay in their home country, while at the same time, a Molotov cocktail production method was televised.

The approval rating for President Zelensky, a comedian by background, was not so high at that point, or rather, said to be floundering near the bottom. To add, there was no western country at that time that had expressed support for Ukraine. And yet, he was able to issue such an instruction. This is because the people of Ukraine would surely agree to this instruction. And then, the leaders of the Ukrainian government appeared in front of the Ukrainian people, wearing khaki combat uniforms.

That's about all, from which we derived our inference. We were able to conjecture the approximate content of what was aired on NHK.

Q That's amazing! You talked a little while ago about 'holding your ground like *Nioh*'. Could you explain that in more detail?

A For us to ‘hold our ground like *Nioh*’ means in this context that, with burning anger against the Russian invaders, we turn our thoughts to the innermost feelings of the Ukrainians who have suddenly been thrown into war, think very hard about what we ought to do here in Japan, and fight in praxis. As the anti-Stalinist revolutionary Left, what should we appeal to Ukrainian working people? What should we appeal to Russian working people? And what antiwar mass movement should we create?

If you fail to base yourself on this standpoint of praxis, you would never feel any surprise or indignation at the atrocious war; you could never have any passion nor fighting spirit that impels you to do whatever to change the situation. In the end, you’d only find yourself responding spiritlessly to the event.

Q There are many sensible people who are worrying about the cruelty of Putin’s war. They are anxious about the anguished life of Ukrainians. They say, ‘We hope this war will end as soon as possible’, while they feel a bit of gratitude for their being able to lead a quiet, peaceful life. Well, I must say those sensible people are not really leading a life as an active Subject in this historical reality.

Let me go back to the previous topic. When Putin’s military aggression against Ukraine broke out, the JRCL did not perceive it as a mere territorial dispute but judged it as a momentous historical event. What makes it possible to have such an insight?

A Well, let me see. Remember, for instance, that Putin said, ‘The disintegration of the Soviet Union, followed by NATO’s eastward expansion, was the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the twentieth century’. We should think it over intensively. Why did he say ‘the disintegration of the Soviet Union ... was a catastrophe’? So-called USSR socialism had even become another name for ‘oppression, repression and poverty’. This was the reason why the people of the erstwhile East European ‘socialist’ countries as well as many constituent republics of the former Soviet Union — touched off by Gorbachev’s perestroika — longed for Western ‘freedom and democracy’, as if to say ‘We’ve had enough of socialism’, and fled like an avalanche to the West. And thus ‘socialism’ of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe underwent dramatic implosion.

However, Putin does not sense the fact that ‘socialism’ became the object of fear and hatred to those people, though he used to be a KGB resident agent in East Germany. Probably, to his eyes, it only appeared as if people were deceived, by Western rock singers’ voices coming from beyond the Berlin Wall, into breaking down the wall to flee.

Moreover, he uses the adjective ‘geopolitical’ to modify ‘catastrophe’. What does this mean? Doesn’t it mean that Putin possesses an ambition to recover the Russian territories lost when the USSR collapsed?

Next, we should look back on what Putin-led Russia has done in reality all this while. For instance, the annexation of Crimea...

Furthermore, we should recollect that, every time a revolt occurred in its satellite states, the Stalinist USSR sent tanks and troops, suppressed the uprisings and set up a puppet government — in Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Afghanistan ...

It’s like this. If we try to step into and make a conjecture about Putin’s inner world from his ‘words’ and ‘deeds’, it will give us a fairly good grasp of the meaning of what’s going on. The quality and depth of reasoning is more important than the quantity of information, I think.

Q Hmm. ... Ah, this is what Kan’ichi Kuroda terms the ‘analysis of actuality in the descending direction’, isn’t it?

A Right you are! It’s not that easy to do it in reality, though. But since you, Zengakuren comrades, have a lot of friends, you can talk to each other and discuss livelily and frankly — like, for instance, ‘Do you think so?’ ‘But I’m thinking a bit differently.’ ‘I rather think that...’ etc. etc.

Q ‘Two heads are better than one.’ Ten heads might possibly come up to Comrade Kuroda’s head...

Ha ha ha!

A And remember, if we are to analyze a certain figure or substance — Vladimir Putin, for instance — the important thing is to presuppose Putin, the active Subject, and the real situation or topos in which he exists. Otherwise, our analysis will end in an objectivistic interpretation, at times groundless assumption. And then we should put ourselves in his shoes in analysing him.

Q A senior comrade of mine once taught me the same thing. I told my friends about it, upon which one of them said, ‘I can’t put myself in the shoes of such a villain like Putin. I hate such a thing!’

A Aha, I can well understand how he feels. But, you see, whether in taking part in a sport or playing chess, you must first grasp what your opponent has in mind; otherwise, you won’t win. ‘If you know your enemy and yourself, you are sure to win’ goes the proverb. So ... I guess we can deliver a hard blow to that villain later on.

III. *Putin’s war and its meaning*

A We often hear the expression ‘Putin’s war’. It seems to be used with implications such as a ‘brutal war’, a ‘war that Putin started at his personal discretion’ and therefore ‘will end if he decides’.

We, too, use the same expression, *Putin’s war*. Will you tell me its meaning a bit precisely?

A Well, let’s recollect at first what Vladimir Putin said on various occasions last year.

‘No one could imagine the creation of an “anti-Russia” in Ukraine, historical Russian territory. We simply cannot allow this to happen.’ (in April)

‘The state of Ukraine, its sovereignty and territories can only be secured by Russia, which created today’s Ukraine.’ (in October)

‘For decades, Ukrainian people have been brainwashed by neo-Nazis’ (in December)

All these were remarks that he made in the last twelve months. They eloquently speak of what he thinks — ‘We only allow Ukraine to exist as a subject state of Russia; otherwise, the state of Ukraine and its nation shall be liquidated altogether.’

It’s likely that Putin really believes in his own fabrication, an absurd story that this is a ‘just war to relieve Ukrainians from brainwashing’.

Q Since when has he been harbouring such a crazy idea? Why does he bear such an inveterate, constant enmity against Ukraine?

A Well, let’s go back into history a bit. Following the domino-like collapse of East-European ‘socialist states’ starting in 1989, the USSR itself disintegrated into fifteen republics in 1991. This dissolution was decided by the power holders of three states — Russia, Belarus and Ukraine — under the initiative of Yeltsin in their meeting at a villa in a Belarusian forest. In this meeting, they also decided that all the nuclear weapons of the former USSR should be under the control of Russia and that the Crimea should belong to Ukraine.

Q Although Russia itself decided the dissolution, Putin says today, thirty years after that, that the dissolution was wrong and that Ukraine is historically part of Russia. No one could be persuaded. Ukrainians would never accept it.

A No, they won’t. Under the rule of the USSR during the era of Stalin, Ukraine particularly underwent great miseries, too many to mention, which included ‘Holodomor’.

Q Putin has no idea how deeply the ‘socialism of the Soviet Union’ was abhorred or detested by the people of the Soviet Union and East European countries.

A He reiterates that the main culprit is the eastward expansion of NATO, which is followed by some scholars, commentators and self-styled leftists. But this is too selfish.

I say so because ... Before its dismantlement, the USSR had its industrial structure divided by

republic and region. For this reason, after its dismantlement, each of the republics, now independent, needed to form something like a federation to secure mutual economic relationships, while keeping its independence. That is why those rulers of the former USSR managed to set up something with a chimera-like name, the Commonwealth of Independent States.

But, in this attempt, there was no negation of or reflection on the Stalinist system of the union of republics, i.e. bureaucratic centralism, which was established on the basis of the destruction of Lenin's principles, 'separation then federation'. So, it's quite natural that the CIS had to be seen as a 'revival of Great Russian chauvinism'. That is why it dispersed immediately after its formation.

Q What attitude did Ukraine take towards that?

A Ukraine then stood in the van of 'defiance' towards Moscow. In opposition to the Yeltsin-led Russian Federation, which emphasized the need to create 'united forces of the CIS', Ukraine insisted that it would establish its 'independent forces', that the Black Sea Fleet should come under control of Ukraine, and so on.

To the Kremlin rulers, therefore, Ukraine is a hateful entity which is a brother and yet growls at them.

After the collapse of the USSR, Ukraine sometimes got along with Russia and at other times approached Western Europe. In any event, the 'Maidan (square) revolution' of 2014, also called 'revolution of dignity', was a decisive turning point. Surrounded by people's anger, the pro-Russian government led by the then president Yanukovich broke down, with the president fleeing to Moscow. This man, a former Stalinist bureaucrat who rose from the ranks of government officials in Donbas, was corruption-ridden to such an extent that he had a zoo in his private residence. It is said that there's something called a museum of corruption in Kyiv.

To add, in Ukraine, there are a number of oligarchs working in collusion with Russia. Some of them control main TV networks. Partly for lack of a sufficient legal system, corruption is rampant with impunity. The Zelensky government is therefore still intent on exposing bribery.

Q I see ... that's why the 'Maidan revolution' looks to Putin, an erstwhile spy, to be a conspiratorial incident that was caused by the people of Ukraine who were brainwashed and manipulated by Western spies.

I've heard that Putin was fascinated with Richard Sorge, dubbed the 'greatest spy of the twentieth century', and that he went into the KGB, believing that, if he became a spy, he would be able to manipulate the world.

A So it seems. It is reported that, for these past few years in Russia, under Putin's presidency, Sorge has been deified. A new subway station in Moscow was given the name of 'Sorge station'. The state-run TV station broadcasted a serial drama with Sorge as the hero. And so on and so forth.

Q After the Maidan revolution, Russia annexed Crimea.

A Exactly. After the collapse of the USSR, Russian rulers attempted to bring the seceded, independent republics back to the Russian sphere, or to keep ties with them, by resettling Russians in those countries with the aim of controlling non-Russians. The instances were the three Baltic states and Moldova, as well as Donbas and Crimea in Ukraine. And either by inciting a civil war or by cooking up a fake referendum, they tried to incorporate them in Russian territory.

Faced with Russia's forcible annexation of Crimea, Western governments took an ambiguous attitude and made a compromise. And when the Ukrainian



Zengakuren and Antiwar Youths marching on the Russian Embassy, Feb. 24th 2023

government applied its accession to NATO in order to protect itself from the menace of Putin's Russia, Western governments, particularly Germany and France, bitterly opposed it.

Based on this experience of 'success', Putin now has resorted to a brutal act with the aim of controlling the whole land of Ukraine and subordinating or annexing it to Russia.

IV. The grave crime of Stalinism, which we must still confront

Q I'm becoming aware that the collapse of the USSR, a major historical incident that happened thirty years ago, is still not simply an event of the past. A senior member of Zengakuren said the same thing to me.

A Yes. That's the point. 'Stalinism of the Soviet Union' collapsed as a system and disappeared from the centre stage of history, certainly. But, like a zombie, it's still alive, doing harm to and tormenting working people.

Its gravest crime is the following.

The cruelties of 'USSR socialism', which were long veiled in the previous century, have become a matter of common knowledge. Now that they have become common knowledge, many working people across the world have a fixed image and say, 'We've had enough of socialism'.

Shockwaves from the collapse of 'USSR Stalinism' caused a terrible retreat of class struggles and labour movements in the world. That's because the leaderships of class struggles lost their sense of direction and thus made an ideological conversion as a whole. This is also the reason why the bourgeois governments and the ruling class all over the world, which were freed from the West-East confrontation and were intoxicated with the 'victory of capitalism', started to relentlessly impose poverty and oppression on the working class.

Our organization of the anti-Stalinist communist movement kept fighting by holding up 'anti-imperialism, anti-Stalinism' ever higher. We fought, of course, arm in arm with you, comrades of Zengakuren.

Q I see that Stalinism is false Marxism-Leninism and that it went bankrupt of necessity. Will you discuss this point more closely?

A The capitalist system of wage slavery is the dead end of the class rule, which is concealed under the fig leaf of 'freedom and equality', so that the working class as the ruled class must unite beyond borders and carve out a future society, that is communism. — This is what Marx and Engels clarified. And it is Lenin and the Bolsheviks he led that realized this thought in the form of proletarian revolution in Russia and actually opened the door to a future society.

Notwithstanding this, after Lenin's death, Iosif Stalin, who forced his way to the top and became the supreme leader of the Party and the State, betrayed Marxism-Leninism and oppressed the struggles for the liberation of the world working class on the basis of his fake theory, i.e the theory of 'socialism in one country (socialist revolution and construction in a single country)', while at home he oppressed the toiling masses under an autocratic rule and perpetrated wanton expropriation against them. This is not all. In the Second World War, the Stalin-led Soviet Union allied with imperialist states that he dubbed 'democratic imperialism' to counter Nazi Germany, and thereafter fabricated the autocratic states of Stalinist bureaucracy, with the name of 'People's Democracies', in war-devastated East European countries by means of armed forces.

Thus, in the latter half of the twentieth century, the whole world was divided and ruled by imperialism and Stalinism.

Q On these points, we studied very hard last year. Then the Stalinist USSR got bogged down in the quagmire of a competitive arms expansion race, as in the case of the imperialist state of America, thus

completely exhausting its domestic economy and driving the militarized economy of the USSR into peril.

A But, while the USSR verged on defeat in the confrontation with US imperialism, Mikhail Gorbachev, the last Chief Secretary of the Communist Party of the USSR, started to wriggle out of the complete dead end of ‘Stalin-type socialism’, represented by an authoritarian rule based on bureaucratic centralism, the bureaucratic planned economy, hard-line foreign policies aimed to defend and construct socialism in one country, and so on.

Heaping abusive words, such as that socialism envisaged by Marx and Lenin was an infantile utopia, Gorbachev declared a departure from Marxism-Leninism. He thus attempted to reform ‘Stalin-type socialism’ in the direction of Western-type social-democracy by introducing the concepts of ‘democracy’ and ‘market economy’ separated from their class nature.

Q Now I’ve come to understand that, with the impetus of the Gorbachev-led ‘perestroika’ in all areas including politics, economy, international relations and the party itself, East European countries ran into the West at first, and then the Soviet Union itself fell apart.

A That’s right. Then, following Gorbachev, Boris Yeltsin started restoring capitalist Russia.

They rejected bankrupt Stalinism, regarding it as an inevitable result of Leninism, and, by superimposing it upon Marx’s concept of class dictatorship, abandoned Marxism itself. Gorbachev perpetrated the historic venture of *dismantling the Soviet Union*, while Yeltsin restored *capitalist Russia* in the end of the twentieth century. These two are the criminals of the century!

Q I’ve heard about the extreme miseries of the Russian economy after the collapse of the USSR ...

A Terribly miserable, indeed. The dream of reviving Russia through capitalist restoration crumbled in an instant. What appeared in ruinous Russia instead was an appalling political and economic anarchy.

Those who had worked as Stalinist party bureaucrats up until yesterday started to conduct new business as capitalist entrepreneurs by buying state property cheap as dirt, or to filch part of state funds and foreign aids for deals on the black market. Such parvenu, bureaucrat-turned capitalists and the commercial mafia were rampant. The mafia-led ‘shadow economy’ came to occupy 40 per cent of the national economy, while the rise of prices skyrocketed to 1,000 per cent and the number of the unemployed reached 30 million. Production spirally dropped with distribution plunging into chaos, where a barter economy came in.

Q Why was it that the ‘introduction of a market economy’ didn’t go smoothly in Russia?

A Well ... Speaking in historical terms, the general form prevalent in tsarist Russia was the serf economy based on communities called *mir*. In the era of Stalin, a bureaucratically planned economy was adopted. That is why the so-called commodity economy did not thrive in Russia. So, even though they forcibly tried to introduce a ‘market economy’ by considering it as if it were a magical staff, it could only give rise to something like merchant capital of ‘buying cheap and selling dear’. It only resulted in the rampancy of a mafia economy, far from a market economy.

Capitalist production operates in an anarchic way, to begin with, based on the commoditization of labour-power, where this anarchy is ‘regulated’ in the form of the penetration of the law of value. Here lies the historical uniqueness of the commodity economy. And, today’s capitalism takes the economic form of state monopoly capitalism, which was created to survive economic crises in the imperialist stage. With no knowledge about all these, those bureaucrats just simply, superficially imitated the liberal form of the capitalist economy in the nineteenth century in the name of the ‘introduction of market mechanisms’, in a bid to reform the bankrupt bureaucratic planned economy. This in itself was an idealistic daydream.

In fact, even today, Russia has yet to develop any industry, except for energy and resource-related industries and the munitions industries operated by military-industrial complexes.

True the Stalinist system has collapsed as a system, but as long as its remains exist, it's impossible that capitalist production develops to give rise to an economy in which the law of value functions and penetrates. Such an economy can only be called a 'quasi capitalist economy', which is a capitalist economy and yet not a capitalist economy. For a deeper understanding, see Kan'ichi Kuroda's *Praxis and Topos*, Volume 1, Section 57 and elsewhere.

V. Let us change the world in a deepening crisis!

Q It seems to me that Putin has a sense of inferiority to Western Europe about Russia lagging behind in economic development while he has a sense of superiority about its advantage in nuclear military capabilities. Such ambivalence is rooted in those realities that you have just referred to, I surmise.

A I think so. This ruler, who is ignorant of economic matters, is said to have once wanted to join the European Community; however, now he probably thinks that Western capital does not flow in because of Westerners' 'harassments of Russia'. Therefore, if he suffers a miserable defeat in the aggression in Ukraine, it could drive him to touch the button of 'usable nuclear weapons'.

Q What are Russian working people thinking about their country after the collapse of the Soviet Union?

A That is the question. Because of the economic and political anarchy after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Russian toiling masses, who had long experienced terrible sufferings under the autocratic rule of the Stalinist party, must have harboured a nihilistic sentiment all the more.

Russian people had kept a pride in being the people of the Soviet Union as a superpower while groaning under bureaucratic oppression; and amid the chaos, they felt their pride bitterly hurt. Because of this, their national emotions must have welled up inside. They must at the same time have their self-respect in having endured those sufferings of 1990s with the Russian spirit of perseverance.

Putin has been using such sentiments for driving the people to the 'revival of great Russia'.

In 1999, Putin took over the presidency from Yeltsin in return for promising not to accuse Yeltsin of bribery. Early in the twenty-first century, when energy prices skyrocketed due to 'Bush's war' on Afghanistan and Iraq, Putin took advantage of this to start advertising himself, still an unknown then, as Savior of ruinous Russia.

In the first place, he perpetrated conspiracies to frame up 'terrorist attacks' and thereby sank Chechen people in seas of blood; further, he assassinated and jailed disobedient oligarchs and opposition leaders, and thereby expelled his opponents. After he won an overwhelming victory in the parliamentary elections in 2003, he established an authoritarian ruling system with the FSB (Federal Security Service) at the top and grasped oil and gas sectors vital for the Russian economy by sending his henchmen, dubbed Siloviks, into their managements, thus dashing to Russian-type state capitalism. Siloviks refers to people involved in the FSB and other organizations concerned with security, intelligence and national defense.

In this way, he now reigns over the country on the basis of the FSB-helmed authoritarian ruling system, while exercising wanton tyranny and expropriation, as if he were Peter the Great.

We must therefore call on the working people of Russia, 'Overthrow the Putin regime!' And at the same time we say from the depth of our heart.

Russian working people! Where is the starting point to which you should go back? Is it 1991, the year when the Soviet Union collapsed and to which Putin refers deplorably as the year of 'the catastrophe of the twentieth century'? Or is it that dark, gruesome era of Stalin? Or otherwise, is it the age of tsarist Russia, when poverty-stricken people had to let out groans and cries for 'Bread, Land and Peace'?

None of them. The only starting point to which you should go back is precisely the year of 1917, the

year of the revolution that shook the bourgeois ruling class throughout the world and gave boundless hope and courage to the oppressed working class all over the world.

The event that took place on Russian soil in 1917 is the one that realized in actuality what had been announced in 1848 by Marx in his *Communist Manifesto*, i.e. the essential conversion from the modern to the contemporary age. This event realized it through the revolutionary praxis of the Russian working class. It is an epochal event that ushered a new age called the 'contemporary age' in which we live. Even though revolutionary Russia underwent Stalinist degeneration so that the Stalinist USSR itself collapsed at last, and no matter how loudly the bourgeois ruling class raised songs of triumph, saying, 'The grand experimentation of communism in the twentieth century ended in failure', it is absolutely impossible to erase the significance of the year '1917' as the starting point of contemporary history in which we live.

We call on the Russian proletariat! Besiege the Kremlin and bring down Tsar Putin!

We call on soldiers of the invading Russian army! Join in this battle by turning your guns on the opposite, as Russian soldiers of 1917 did!

And we call on Ukrainian working people! Shatter *Putin's war* by all means, and make a step forward on a grand road to the reestablishment of a workers' state in the Eurasian continent!

— This is an appeal we address from the bottom of our heart as the anti-Stalinist revolutionary Left. Since the Hungarian revolution of 1956, which was cruelly trampled down by the tanks of the USSR, we have been fighting consistently under the banner that proclaims, along with the overthrow of imperialism, that of Stalinism.

We are eager to extend the revolutionary Marxist movement of anti-Stalinism over to Ukraine, to Russia, and to the whole world, and to revive the struggle of proletarians to liberate themselves. We ardently hope that you, Zengakuren comrades, will sympathize with this call we address as a proletarian party and go on fighting to create and develop antiwar struggles to resolutely oppose *Putin's war* while overcoming all the existing lackadaisical movements.

Q Surely, yes. We, too, are resolved to go on fighting further. I have many more questions to ask you.

About neo-Stalinism of China. About the decline of the militarist empire of America as the 'sole superpower'. About the US-China confrontation, or a new cold war between the East and the West. About the danger of the outbreak of nuclear warfare, or a Third World War. About the relationship of the nineteenth century-like poverty now rampant in capitalist countries to the collapse of the Stalinist Soviet Union. About the reason why present-day Hitlers and mini Hitlers are so rampant today in many countries. And about global warming, and so on and so forth.

I have another question. Kan'ichi Kuroda and you, the Revolutionary Marxist Faction, have *read* structural changes of the world five years, ten years or twenty years earlier than anyone else. I wonder what makes it possible for you to do so. I'm eager to know that.

But time does not allow us. I hope we'll have a chance to talk some day.

A All the questions you just raised are, in fact, related to the question of Stalinism. Concluding, from the collapse of the Soviet Union, that Marxism-Leninism has ended is nothing short of a capitalist-class view of history. In other words, when you become aware that what collapsed is Stalinism, which was totally against the working class, you should find Marxism-Leninism shining radiantly, discover that all the questions are closely related to each other and come to see the world assuming a totally different aspect. And in the depth of this disastrous, miserable world, you should also find something stirring.

I ardently hope young comrades will join with us in revolutionary praxis to carve out a new future in the history of the world.

Let's fight together, comrades!

Japan Revolutionary Communist League (Revolutionary Marxist Faction)