**Headline:** Russian Communists Rally Progressive Forces at Second International Anti-Fascist Forum in Moscow

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**[Article Body:]**

On 22 April, the 155th birthday of Vladimir Lenin, 164 delegations from 91 countries gathered at Red Square, each with a red carnation in hand. One by one, the delegations, representing communist and workers’ parties from around the world, laid these flowers at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in tribute to the sacrifice of Soviet soldiers killed in World War II. From there, they proceeded to Lenin’s Mausoleum to pay their respects to the Russian revolutionary.

These delegates were in Moscow for the second International Anti-Fascist Forum organised by the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (CPRF) from 22–24 April – a few weeks ahead of the eightieth anniversary of the Red Army’s victory over Nazi Germany, which falls on 9 May.

The forum took place in the context of the rise of the [far-right of a special type](https://thetricontinental.org/newsletterissue/ten-theses-on-the-far-right-of-a-special-type/) across the world and the ongoing conflict in Ukraine, where NATO has sought to expand through support of a right-wing government and neo-Nazi groups.

The forum was declared open by a speech by General Secretary of the CPRF Gennady Zyuganov. He said that Nazism would not have been defeated without the leadership of Lenin and Stalin, who helped unify diverse peoples, build up an independent industrial base, and create a party whose members were among the first to volunteer and sacrifice their lives on the frontlines of World War II.

Russian President Vladimir Putin also sent greetings to the conference, in which he stressed the importance of preserving the historical memory of the Red Army’s defeat of fascism and the need for joint efforts to ‘prevent the spread of racism, Nazism, fascism, Russophobia, antisemitism, and other aggressive ideologies based on inciting hatred, intolerance, and propaganda of national exceptionalism’.

Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Belarus P.S. Petrovsky stressed that fascism was not defeated in World War II by material force alone, but by a ‘system of values’ which emphasised social justice, equality of opportunity, humanism, and the friendship of peoples.

Ambassador of China to Russia Zhang Hanhui said that ‘the remnants of colonialism and fascism continue to poison the world’, often taking the form of foreign meddling in domestic affairs, external imposition of political systems, and the use of unilateral sanctions. He added that China was committed to real multilateralism and the democratisation of international relations.

**Manifestations of Fascism Across the World**

Around ninety speeches were made by various delegates during the forum. Many of these speeches discussed the manifestations of contemporary fascism in specific national and regional contexts.

R. Arun Kumar, a Politburo member of the Communist Party of India (Marxist), raised concerns about the ‘fascification’ of Indian society under the eleven-year rule of the Bharatiya Janata Party. He described the situation in India as a ‘Hindutva-corporate authoritarian regime’, adding that neo-fascists use elections to advance their project and do not necessarily suspend bourgeois democracy.

Mwaivu Kaluka, National Chairperson of the Communist Party Marxist Kenya, said fascist tendencies have manifested in Kenyan society through the use of paramilitary groups and private security firms that are used to police the poor and suppress workers’ organisations. Kaluka added that fascist tendencies in Kenya were cloaked in ethnic chauvinism that pits the masses against each other.

C.J. Atkins, National Board member of the Communist Party of the United States of America, said that the second administration of President Donald Trump was ‘accelerating the rush towards fascism’. Citing the disappearance of student protestors, deportation of migrants to camps, mass firings of public workers, and attacks on education and the judiciary, Atkins said that the remains of bourgeois democracy were being trampled on in the US.

**The Position of the Russian Communists**

The CPRF is in a complex and difficult position in the Russian Federation. As a successor party to the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, it struggles to keep alive the memory of Soviet socialism in a Russia characterised by the rule of oligarchs. The party faces difficulties in involving a younger generation born after the fall of the Soviet Union (USSR) and the resulting deterioration of social and economic conditions.

The views of the Russian communists on the war in Ukraine are diverse, complex, and nuanced. In 2022, shortly after Putin declared the ‘special military operation’ in Ukraine, CPRF member of the State Duma, Denis Parfenov, [wrote](https://kprf.ru/dep/gosduma/activities/208962.html) that Russian sentiment on the conflict was mixed, ranging from jingoism to pacifism. He argued that the conflict in Ukraine had signs of both an imperialist war and a war of national liberation.

Parfenov wrote that the struggle in Ukraine was between an imperialist United States and a capitalist Russia. According to him, the collective West, led by the United States, had long sought to expand influence into Ukraine by buying up media and indulging in Nazi glorification (including the rehabilitation of Nazi collaborators like Ukrainian nationalist Stepan Bandera). For him, Russia’s foreign policy was a failure due to its sole focus on attempting to win over Ukraine’s oligarchs and negotiate with Banderovite neo-Nazis.

If there was a progressive element to the war, it was the struggle of the people of the Donbass against genocidal actions conducted by the Ukrainian military and with the support of the US. Parfenov noted that political developments in the Donbass from 2014 initially took on the form of a ‘people's revolution with a socialist tinge’. However, this character has been subdued by the Kremlin, and the Communist Party was not allowed to contest elections. The CPRF has sent many humanitarian convoys to the region and called for the recognition of the Donetsk People’s Republic and Luhansk People’s Republic since 2014.

One party member I spoke to on the fringes of the conference said that the great tragedy of the conflict in Ukraine is that it is a war between two Slavonic nations that benefits none other than the interests of Anglo-American imperialism. She remained sceptical about the Trump administration's true intentions in pushing for a ceasefire without addressing the root causes of the conflict, which related to the collapse of the USSR and the subsequent rise of oligarchy and ethnic chauvinism.

Despite finding themselves broadly aligned with Putin on the question of fighting NATO expansionism and neo-Nazism in Ukraine, the Russian Communists maintain a distinct line: socialism has to be restored in order to fight fascism and win. This position was made clear during Zyuganov’s opening speech at the forum, where he emphasised the need for working-class and communist leadership in the anti-fascist and anti-imperialist struggle.

An [appeal](https://kprf.ru/party-live/cknews/233919.html) drafted by the CPRF and adopted at the forum emphasised four main demands with regard to Ukraine:

1. Lifting the ban on the Communist Party of Ukraine, whose members and supporters have faced severe repression;
2. Reinstating free use of the Russian language in the country;
3. Banning the glorification of the fascist Stepan Bandera; and
4. Restoring monuments to anti-fascist fighters, which were torn down after the Maidan colour revolution in 2013.

**Contradictions of Post-Soviet Russia**

Moscow does not look like a city virtually blockaded by the United States (over 28,000 sanctions have been applied to Russian companies and individuals). The city is clean, safe, and orderly, especially as compared to the state of many Western European capitals. There are no homeless people to be seen. The city also retains the magnificent infrastructure built during the Soviet era, including its impressive metro system, which CPRF members will insist is still the best in the world.

However, beyond cities like Moscow and St. Petersburg, the situation is much different. Over 80% of the country’s population lives outside of these two major cities. CPRF members say that these regions are the real Russia, where around a third live in poverty and sometimes lack access to essential services like water, gas, and even proper sewerage systems.

Much of the labour force in Moscow consists of temporary migrant workers from former Soviet republics that experienced the harshest deindustrialisation after the disintegration of the USSR. These workers in the service sector are often much harder to organise as compared to the industrial proletariat concentrated around large industries that the Russian communists were familiar with.

In the lead-up to 9 May, buildings and shop fronts around Moscow are decorated with evocative Soviet-style posters commemorating the victory of the Soviet Red Army against fascism and Nazism. While Putin’s speeches often bash Lenin and blame the Bolsheviks for Russia’s contemporary geopolitical issues, it is clear that his government is compelled to selectively appropriate red symbols to retain legitimacy.

When I asked one communist why this was the case, she responded bluntly, ‘because the oligarchs have failed to build a single thing beyond the Soviets’. Their ultimate aim is quite different from that of the Soviets – private profit at the expense of the working people.