

Russian authorities step-up anti-immigrant measures and propaganda

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Recently, Russian authorities have been increasingly calling for greater restrictions on the rights of immigrants. On September 4, Vyacheslav Volodin, chairman of the State Duma (the lower house of the Russian parliament), proposed banning low-skilled migrant workers from bringing their families to Russia. The next day, Dmitry Medvedev (former prime minister and president of Russia), deputy chairman of the Russian Security Council, proposed something similar. He called for the families of migrants who are coming for seasonal labor to be banned from entering Russia. “We, of course, will not be able to overcome individual trends there, but what can be done: if a person comes to us for seasonal work—why the hell does he drag his family with him?” Medvedev said.

At the same time, the pro-Kremlin *Komsomolskaya Pravda* online newspaper reported that the State Duma is planning to pass a bill from the far-right Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR), which provides for restrictions on the entry and stay of families of low-skilled workers.

In addition, LDPR deputies have proposed to abolish free education for immigrant children and introduce fees, claiming that there is a serious shortage of places in schools because of foreign children, as well as low school performance because foreign children have a poor command of the Russian language.

Several deputies from the New People party also made a number of proposals regarding migrants in Russia. Vladislav Davankov (one of the leaders of New People, a member of the State Duma and the party’s candidate for the March presidential election) proposed raising by 2.5 times the fee for a labor permit, which allows migrants who are in Russia visa-free to work in the country, to 250,000 rubles a year (US\$2,800), an extremely large sum for any worker in the former Soviet Union. Currently, a

labor permit costs 8,000 rubles (US\$90) per month.

Another New People MP, Sardana Avksentyeva, sent a request to the Interior Ministry with two proposals. One of them concerns the mandatory submission of biometric data for all foreign citizens. Previously, only those citizens who arrived for a period of at least 90 days have been required to submit biometric data. Another proposal concerns the obligation for all migrants staying for more than 90 days to obtain a document on their command of the Russian language, knowledge of Russian history and the basics of Russian legislation. Presently, only those who are going to obtain a labor permit are obliged to obtain a document on their knowledge of the Russian language. This applies not only to those who are already in Russia, but also to those who are only planning to travel to the country. If the language proficiency test is not passed, deportation from the country will follow without the possibility of re-entry. In many regions of Russia, this threatens thousands of immigrant workers who are playing an essential role in the economy.

It is worth noting that Avksentyeva, in proposing to toughen the Russian language exam for immigrants, made nine punctuation, stylistic and semantic errors in her request to the ministry.

There are an estimated 12 million immigrants in Russia, almost 8 percent of the total population. Most immigrant workers come from the Central Asian republics of the former Soviet Union, extremely poor countries that suffered even greater social disasters than other regions of the former Soviet Union as a result of the Stalinist bureaucracy’s restoration of capitalism. Tajikistan, the poorest of the former Soviet republics, experienced a civil war in the 1990s. Half of the country’s GDP is derived from remittances by immigrant workers, the

overwhelming majority of them in Russia. In Russia, they are subject to brutal conditions of exploitation, which in turn serves to intensify attacks on the working class as a whole.

As in other countries, Russian politicians combine these attacks on the democratic rights of immigrants with xenophobic rhetoric, pointing to an allegedly increasing number of crimes on the part of migrants, their low qualifications and their poor command of the Russian language.

By attacking the democratic rights of migrant workers, the oligarchy is attacking the democratic rights of the entire working class. In the context of the ongoing war, any movement of the working class, whether of an economic or, particularly, a political nature, poses a huge danger to Putin's regime.

With the promotion of anti-immigrant chauvinism, the oligarchy seeks to divert such a movement of the working class, which they fear most of all. By dividing workers along national, racial, linguistic, religious or other lines, they seek to shift their responsibility for social disasters (unemployment, low wages, etc.) onto immigrants and undermine the class consciousness of workers.

The Russian bourgeoisie significantly intensified its anti-immigrant witch-hunt in the wake of the March terrorist attack on Moscow's Crocus City Hall. The terrorist attack bears the imprints of Washington and Ukraine all over it. The imperialist powers and NATO-backed sections of the Russian elites also organized antisemitic protests at Makhachkala airport in October 2023 and terrorist attacks in Makhachkala and Derbent at the end of June this year. Through such terrorist attacks and provocations, the imperialist powers are seeking to utilize and deepen splits within layers of the Russian elites, which are divided into pro-NATO and nationalist camps. There are also significant tensions between regional elites and the dominant oligarchs in Moscow. At the same time, US imperialism is seeking to destabilize the country, by whipping up ethnic and religious tensions. Russia is home to over a hundred different nationalities, and 26 million Muslims, roughly 15 percent of the population.

Fully aware of their destabilizing impact, the Putin regime has not fully adopted the most extreme xenophobic policies of the far-right nationalist faction of the oligarchy. As a Bonapartist regime, it is maneuvering between the different strata of capitalists. In contemporary Russia, the regime maneuvers between the openly NATO-backing section of the Russian elite and the far-right,

between the working class and the bourgeoisie, and between the national interests of Russian capitalists and the interests of Western imperialism.

However, especially in the wake of the terrorist attack in Moscow, the Putin regime has increasingly legitimized and adopted this anti-immigrant rhetoric as part of its efforts to whip up Russian chauvinism and divide the working class. Having emerged out of the Stalinist bureaucracy's nationalist betrayal of the October Revolution of 1917, the Putin regime is very conscious of the danger posed by a united movement of the working class against war.

The growing attacks on immigrants are an international trend. In the US, the Republican Party is engaging in fascist attacks on immigrants, which are not countered by the Democratic Party in any way, highlighting their bankruptcy in the face of the threat of fascism in the US. In Germany, the anti-immigrant policies are supported by all the major capitalist parties, with the Social Democratic Party (SPD), the Greens and the Christian Democrats (CDU) adapting ever-more openly to the rhetoric and policies of the neo-fascist Alternative for Germany (AfD).

These threats to the working class can only be countered by the united action of the working class itself. The oligarchy has corrupt media and propaganda, and all kinds of weapons that the ruling class is ready to use against its own population to wage a full-fledged war against the working class. The working class has only one means by which it can oppose the entire bourgeois apparatus of oppression and exploitation: the international unity of its class and the unity of its vanguard, embodied in its own party and international movement. The defense of immigrants is one of the most important duties of proletarian internationalism. Only based on its international unification can the working class truly oppose the bourgeoisie, as history confirmed with the October Revolution.



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