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Russia/Ukraine

# Putin's new weapon

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**On Thursday 21 November, Russian president Vladimir Putin 'unveiled' a new weapon in his arsenal by ordering the launch of the hypersonic 'Oreshnik' (hazelnut) intermediate-range missile. Was this a successful 'test' or a demonstration of the impasse in his 'special military operation'?**

The United States had been informed 30 minutes before the launch of this missile, which had no nuclear warhead but was capable of carrying one. It did little damage, hitting a former Dnipro factory. For Putin, it was a multi-faceted theatrical operation aimed at a variety of audiences: to frighten Ukraine and the public opinion of the countries that support it, by taking the nuclear rhetoric of his threats to the West a notch higher, by amending a decree to state that any aid given to Ukraine would signal the country concerned as a 'co-belligerent' and liable to nuclear retaliation.

At the same time, Putin wanted to reassure the Russian people about the country's defence capabilities. The Russian leader welcomed the success of a 'test' - enabling the production of other missiles of this type to be launched. Except that, according to experts, it would cost 100 to 200 times more than the missiles fired at Ukraine every day (and massively intercepted). What's more, Ukraine has already had to deal with Russian hypersonic missiles that Putin had previously described as invincible. This was the case in May 2023, when Kiev used an American Patriot anti-missile system to destroy a Kh-47M2 Kinjal missile (launched at Ukraine from a Russian MiG-31) which, according to Putin, as he repeated for his 'Oreshnik', could not be intercepted.

## The difficulties of the Putin regime

But above all, Putin accompanied his presentation of Operation Oreshnik with a significant measure for his soldiers: the cancellation of their debts - in addition to several budgetary measures already taken to find volunteers - and to help their families when they die at the front, which is the rule.

At the beginning of November, according to US security services, Russia had trained North Korean soldiers who could go to the front. This would mark both a turning point in the war and an admission. Until now, there has been no recourse to foreign troops to fight alongside Kiev or Moscow - but such recourse would underline the difficulty of recruiting soldiers - which is also true in Ukraine, but in a different context. Putin has turned his attention to the poorest people in the farthest reaches of the Russian Federation and has offered wages well above those offered by industry, creating labour shortages there too. The Russian war economy is firing on all cylinders and paying out wages - but it's not enough to 'live on' or produce what the population needs. And inflation is likely to exacerbate tensions.

Overall, the 'military operation' launched by Putin in February 2022 was supposed to bring about the fall of the Zelensky government and the submission of Ukraine to the 'Russian world' in a matter of days. For almost three years now, Ukrainians have been resisting (to the surprise of Biden and other NATO forces), demanding the means to repel the invader.

## Ukraine is fighting in self-defence

## Putin's new weapon

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In anticipation of negotiations that would be catalysed by Trump after his inauguration, both parties are seeking to consolidate their positions. According to the US press, President Biden has authorised Kiev, under his supervision, to carry out attacks on Russian territory using missiles with a range of 300 km capable of reaching the Kursk region, where North Korean forces are believed to be stationed. The aim would be to dissuade the North Korean forces from intervening and targeting the military sites from which the repeated attacks on Ukraine's infrastructure and population have been launched for months - resulting in thousands of deaths and hundreds of thousands of injuries.

This war has transformed the Russian regime in a fascist direction - killing its opponents, imprisoning them or forcing them into exile. It has also deepened 'anti-Russian' hatred even in the Russian-speaking regions of Ukraine. This has not stopped the blindness of some of the world's leftists, whose only possible imperial enemy was NATO - and who, for some, see Putin as a progressive alternative to the West.

The Trump era opens up great uncertainties. Our role is to help the popular resistance in Ukraine - armed and unarmed, and independent of the rulers - and the Russian opponents of war by building internationalist alternatives.

*28 November 2024*

Translated by **International Viewpoint** from [l'Anticapitaliste](#).

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