

A MERIT PAMPHLET

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**ERNEST  
MANDEL**

**Peaceful  
Coexistence  
And World  
Revolution**

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**(1970)**

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With the revolution of October 1917, the problems of socialism were added to the problems of relations between states.

The class struggle on a world scale took a dual form: the struggle between social classes in each country, with its inevitable international repercussions, became intertwined with the relations between the USSR (and after 1945, other countries which had overthrown capitalism) and the bourgeois states.

Marxist theory, which had traditionally started from the general assumption that socialist revolution would triumph first in the most advanced countries of the world [1] had not prepared a set of guiding rules for revolutionists in these new conditions. It had paid little attention to the implications of the conquest of state power on the international conduct of revolutionary policies. Soviet and non-Soviet communist leaders had to work out ad hoc theories in this respect in the period immediately following the

October revolution. Great controversies surrounded these problems, from the early days of Soviet power to the current period. The debates about the relation between the Brest-Litovsk peace negotiations and the revolution in Central Europe; the controversies in the 1920s about the theory of permanent revolution and the possibility of building socialism in one country; the discussions at the international conferences of Communist parties in 1957 and 1960, and their explosion into the public Sino-Soviet rift around the problems of “peaceful coexistence” – these can all be traced in the last analysis to the same context.

## **World revolution and the defense of Soviet Russia in Lenin’s time**

The Bolshevik leaders had to tackle these problems amidst chaos and civil war, beset by foreign intervention by a dozen capitalist powers, and under the heavy pressure of immediate burning needs. Nevertheless, it can be said that they tried to remain as faithful as possible to their revolutionary convictions, and that in the process they evolved a certain number of rules to prevent power politics and “raison d’etat” from getting the better of their principles.

Conceptually, they affirmed the unity of the interests of the Soviet state and world revolution in such a way as to subordinate, ultimately, the first to the second; the very conquest of power in Russia was seen and justified primarily as a contribution to the development of socialist revolution in other, more advanced countries. [2] Institutionally, the newly founded Communist International was completely independent from the Soviet state and its diplomatic network or maneuvers. If there was a personal

union between the leaders of the state and the Russian representatives in the International [3], it only underlined that, in the last analysis, the Soviet section of the Communist International considered itself as part of the movement for world revolution. [4]

These elementary principles did not solve the whole complex problem. Very early, even before the foundation of the Communist International, the problem of concluding a separate peace at Brest-Litovsk projected into the debate questions of the dialectics of self-defense and the self-perpetuation of the young workers' republic in relation to the prospects of world revolution. The opponents of the Brest-Litovsk peace in the revolutionary movement outside the Bolshevik Party (the left SRs) as well as inside the Bolshevik Party, accused Lenin of betraying world revolution by strengthening the Central powers through the conclusion of a separate peace. In part nationalist rather than internationalist motives explained this opposition to the Brest-Litovsk treaty. [5] In part mistaken estimates of the *immediate* maturity of revolutionary conditions in Germany, Austria and Hungary, and erroneous evaluations as to the consequences of the Brest-Litovsk treaty upon the subsequent maturing of these conditions were at the bottom of the arguments of Lenin's opponents.

But what emerges from this whole debate is Lenin's principled conduct and his staunch adherence to the tenet of subordinating the interests of the Soviet state to those of world revolution. Not for one moment does he conceive of putting a brake upon revolutionary propaganda among German soldiers in order to receive less harsh peace conditions from the Central powers. At no time did he propose to the German revolutionists to "help" save the Soviet state by moderating their opposition to the imperialist war machinery and state of their own rulers. On the contrary, he strongly approved of Trotsky's revolutionary agitation at Brest-Litovsk, whose effects in undermining war morale in Central

Europe should not be underestimated. [6] The debate over the Brest-Litovsk separate peace treaty did not revolve around the question of whether world revolution should be sacrificed to the self-defense of the Soviet state. It revolved around the problem of whether world revolution would best be served by a desperate “revolutionary war” by the young Soviet republic against the Central powers, which would lead rapidly to the occupation of revolutionary Petrograd and Moscow, or whether by deliberately trading space for time the Bolsheviks would thereby both save Soviet Russia and hasten the outbreak of a revolution in Central Europe. [7]

History proved Lenin to be right. One of his chief imperialist opponents at that time, German Imperial Chief of Staff Ludendorff, sadly stated in his memoirs that the balance sheet of Brest-Litovsk had accelerated the disintegration of the Reich. [8] By saving their young republic, Lenin and Trotsky had not made the outbreak of the German, Austrian and Hungarian revolutions more difficult; on the contrary, they had accelerated the revolutionary process in Central Europe that came to a head less than nine months after the conclusion of the separate peace. And there are many indications that this assistance was not only moral and political, but that it also took very concrete material forms. [9]

The question of the defense of the Soviet state against foreign intervention loomed large among the innumerable political obligations which the Communist International took upon itself during the first years of its existence. This defense was conceived, in the first place, as a specific task for revolutionary action, for example, at the time of the threat of French intervention against Soviet Russia during the Polish campaign in 1920. [10] But the means suggested for that defense were solely the means of revolutionary class struggle: demonstrations, strikes by specific groups of the working class (dockers, railway workers, workers in munition factories), or general strikes. In this way, the problems of the revolutionary defense of Soviet Russia, although implying

certain specific tasks, blended harmoniously with those of preparing favorable conditions for an expansion of international revolution.

Three special aspects of Soviet foreign policy in Lenin's time exemplify this general approach to the problem of interrelating the defense of the Soviet state with the tasks of the developing world revolution. It is well known that Lenin rigidly applied his thesis of the right of all nationalities to self-determination immediately after the October revolution and accepted the independence of Finland headed by the counterrevolutionary Svinhufud government. He justified this action – which was evidently detrimental to the interests of Soviet Russia as a state, for example from the point of view of military self-defense – by the internal needs of the Finnish revolution and the communist movement in that country. [11]

It is also known that Trotsky was opposed to Tukhachevsky's quick offensive toward Warsaw in 1920, because the Polish revolution was not yet ripe and such a military move would strengthen chauvinism among the Polish workers, and thereby slow down and not hasten the revolutionary process in that country; Lenin recognized that Trotsky was right in that respect. [12] Finally, when preparing the Rapallo and Genoa conferences, and trying to create a rift in the front of imperialist states against Soviet Russia, the Bolshevik government did not let this maneuver influence the strategic or tactical tasks of the German Communist Party. The Communist International maintained its course toward a proletarian revolution in Germany; Lenin insisted on the necessity of winning a majority influence among the German workers in order to attain that goal.

Of late, an attempt has been made to present Lenin as the father of the “theory of peaceful coexistence,” and a parallel legend has been developed about Trotsky advocating “instantaneous revolution” in all countries through military interventions of the Soviet state. Neither myth has any foundation, either in the



theories or in the practices of the founders of the Soviet system and the Communist International.

Genuine misunderstandings (we don't concern ourselves with deliberate falsifications) arise from the dialectical nature of the interrelationship between the Soviet state and the world revolution. Defending the first and furthering the second cannot be conceived simply as a single process with a single logic. Both have a specific logic of their own.

The needs of defending the Soviet state by diplomatic and military means must be recognized as genuine and as a specific part of the general task of world revolution. In the same sense, the needs of furthering revolution implies specific tasks in each specific country, which must be recognized as genuine, and which cannot be confused with any of the needs of defending the USSR. Only if the special requirements of the two tasks are recognized can the unity of the movement be achieved on a higher level.

It is as wrong to advocate subordination of the strategy and tactic of the revolutionary movement in any country to the needs of defending the Soviet state as it is wrong to call upon that state to "hasten" revolution in other countries by untimely military or diplomatic moves which would threaten its own security. World revolution must be seen as a process conditioned in the first place by a maturing of favorable objective and subjective conditions for the conquest of power by the proletariat in a successive series of countries, a maturing which can be strongly influenced but not artificially decided by what happens on the international scale. Both the internal policies of the revolutionary party and the international policies of the Soviet state should be conducted in such a way as to hasten and not to slow down these maturing processes. [\[13\]](#)

It is only in this framework that the so-called theory of peaceful coexistence between states of different social natures, attributed to Lenin [\[14\]](#), can be correctly understood. What it means is simply

that the autonomy of tasks for the proletarian *state*, as long as world revolution has not triumphed in most countries, implies the necessity of accepting prolonged periods of armistice with the bourgeois states, during which all the prerequisites of inter-state relations (diplomacy, trade, etc.) should be used for strengthening its own positions. In that most general and abstract sense, the theory is of course correct.

Its negation would imply the duty of a proletarian state to maintain permanent conditions of military warfare with its hostile environment, without taking into consideration any question of resources, relationship of forces, capacity of resistance, etc.

But such a trivial “theory,” expressing the simple need of physical survival and economic growth, cannot be construed to imply any “general line” of the foreign policy of the workers’ states, or even worse, of the world revolutionary movement. [15] “Peaceful coexistence” between states of different social natures must be seen as what it is in fact: an armistice – and a temporary one – on *one* of the fronts of the international class war. This war goes on uninterruptedly on the other front, of internal class struggle in each country (which does not, of course, mean that it always takes the violent form of armed uprisings and clashes). It will periodically involve the workers state in military conflicts.

Both fronts constantly interact upon each other until they blend into an immediate unity (at moments) of exacerbated social and military tension on a world scale. Any other position reflects either the abandonment of the goal of world revolution, or the reformist illusion that this goal can be achieved through the peaceful and gradual elimination of capitalism, nationally and internationally – an illusion which has been cruelly contradicted by reality for more than half a century.



## **'Socialism in one country' and the 'Soviet bulwark' in Stalin's time**

After Lenin's death, a subtle transformation took place in this dialectical interrelationship between the defense of the interests of the Soviet state power and the furthering of world revolution. This transformation was so subtle that it was not recognized by most of the participants in the process, including its main author. As late as 1925, Stalin wrote in a pamphlet entitled **Questions and Answers**:

Let us come to the second danger. It is characterized by skepticism towards the proletarian world revolution and the national liberation movement of the colonies and vassal countries; by lack of understanding of the fact that, without the support of the international revolutionary movement, our country could not have resisted world imperialism; by lack of understanding of that other fact that the triumph of socialism in one country cannot be final (this country having no guarantee against an intervention) as long as the revolution has not won in the least several other countries; by a lack of that elementary internationalism which implies that the triumph of socialism in one country should not be considered an end in itself, but a means of developing and supporting the revolution in other countries.

This is the road leading to nationalism, to degeneration, to complete liquidation of the foreign policy of the proletariat, because those who are infected with this disease consider our country not as a part of the world revolutionary movement, but as the beginning and the end of that movement, as they believe that the interests of all other (revolutionary movements) must be sacrificed to those of our country. [\[16\]](#)

It would be an oversimplification to state that this process of transformation was actually initiated by Lenin's death.

Already before 1924, indications of such a change had appeared. [17] Confusedly mingled with the debate about the possibility of achieving the construction of “socialism in one country,” the change found its first theoretical expression in the **Draft Program of the Communist International** written by the unfortunate Bukharin. From unconscious and piecemeal changes, the transformation became more and more open and deliberate in the early 1930s expressing itself in the decline and fall of the Comintern, and finally its dissolution by Stalin in 1943.

The coincidence between the beginning of this process and the end of the first postwar revolutionary wave in Europe could create the impression of a causal link between these two sets of phenomena: The Bolsheviks subordinated the interests of the Soviet state to those of world revolution as long as world revolution remained a practical proposition; they moved towards a subordination of the interests of the world communist movement to the task of consolidating the Soviet state, economically, diplomatically and militarily, as soon as it appeared to them that an international expansion of the revolution had ceased to be a likely short-term perspective. Or to put it in other terms: The survival of the Soviet state could be based either on revolutionary expansion, or on a division between its enemies. If expansion of the revolution became unlikely, it would be necessary to concentrate on divisions between imperialist enemies, even to the point of sacrificing some revolutionary interests. [18]

We shall not deny that many communist leaders and militants, both inside and outside the Soviet Union, *rationalized* the fundamental turn in the Comintern’s policies in the 1920s in this way. There seems to be no point in questioning the sincerity of at least part of those who continue to cling to this kind of argument till this very day. [19] But Marxists cannot limit themselves to

examining the motivations which parties and social layers invoke for explaining their own actions. They must check these motivations against the background of objective reality and of social interests; that is, they must try to explain the objective reasons which led social forces to behave in a certain way. From this point of view, it is easy to recognize that the reasons invoked for the new policies followed by the Soviet leaders beginning in the mid-1920s, and their supporters at home and abroad, do not hold water and do not offer a really satisfactory explanation for a change in behavior which ended in a complete somersault.

First of all it must be recognized that if a temporary stabilization of capitalism indeed followed the first postwar revolutionary wave in Europe, this stabilization was only *temporary*, and the 1920s and 1930s were interlaced with grave social and political crises in several key countries. These bore testimony to the maturing of pre-revolutionary conditions – to say the least: the German crisis in 1923; the general strike in Britain in 1926; the Chinese revolution of 1925-27; the German crisis of 1930-33; the Spanish revolution of 1931; the Asturias uprising in Spain in 1934; the Spanish civil war particularly in the period 1936-37; the general strike with factory occupations in France in 1936 – just to name the most important crises, which put socialist revolution again and again upon the agenda of half a dozen major countries in Europe and Asia.

Secondly, the outcome of these crises, which ended in working class defeats and strengthened the downward trend of world revolution, cannot be separated from the actual policies of the working class parties participating in them, in the first place of the Communist parties, which were the only ones during that period with avowedly revolutionary objectives. The main contradiction in the apologetic positions adopted by those who justify Stalin's policy of subordinating the interests of the international socialist movement to the so-called interests of consolidating the Soviet state's power position in the world lies in the fact that the

“impossibility of world revolution,” far from being an objective fact, resulted to a large extent first from the political mistakes and afterwards from the deliberate political options taken by the leaders of the Soviet Union themselves. [20]

Thirdly, by counterposing in a mechanistic way the interests of furthering world revolution to those of consolidating the Soviet state, the Soviet leadership under Stalin objectively demonstrated that it was moved by social motives quite distinct from those of furthering the *genuine* interests of the Soviet Union. In the light of subsequent history it would be hard to prove, for example, that the conquest of power by Hitler was in the interests of the Soviet Union. [21] In fact, a correct policy by revolutionary parties, which would lead to the maturing of favorable internal conditions in various countries, enabling them to conquer power, could be construed in no way whatsoever to lead to a weakening of the position of the USSR on a world scale. Post-second world war history has proved this proposition to the hilt.

But, it may be asked, wouldn't the international extension of the revolution have sharpened the international class struggle and increased international tensions, including tensions on an inter-state level? Indeed it would have – but it would have sharpened these tensions, *precisely as a result of a change in the international relationship of forces favorable to the Soviet Union*. That under these conditions, such a “sharpening of tension” was not something detrimental to the interests of the Soviet Union seems rather obvious. Wouldn't the imperialists react under these conditions by unleashing war against the Soviet Union? This question cannot be answered in the abstract; it needs concrete examination, as will follow both in respect to the Spanish and Yugoslav civil wars. But what should be stressed at this point is the extreme oversimplification which is at the bottom of this kind of reasoning. In this kind of argument, the world bourgeoisie is represented as a group of conspirators who anxiously scan the skies for any “pretext” offered them to start intervention against

the Soviet Union. The *ne plus ultra* of revolutionary wisdom consists in not “offering the pretext” for such intervention. History and social conflict are degraded to a vulgar spy game, each side busily engaged in “outwitting” the other.

Is it necessary to stress that this representation of contemporary social conflict and international relations bears only the vaguest resemblance to reality? The historical reality is based upon contending forces, inside each country and internationally. What is decisive is the dynamics of the relationship between forces. In order to start an intervention against the Soviet Union, it is not enough for the bourgeoisie of one of the larger countries to be “provoked” by the extension of the revolution; it is necessary, at the very least, to have reduced its own working class to a position of political and social weakness and/or ideological disarmament, where it has become unable to react in the manner in which the European working class did react, for example, in 1920-21. It is also necessary to have at its disposal the necessary point of intervention from a purely military and geographical point of view. Internal divisions in the imperialist camp are important indeed. But they cannot take precedence over the two factors which have just been stressed. Therefore, any change in the social relationship of forces which increases the militancy and revolutionary spirit of the working class of key imperialist countries makes it more difficult and not easier for imperialism to start a war against the Soviet Union. And any victory of socialist revolution in a new country often has precisely that effect upon the workers inside the key imperialist states.

It is therefore essential to view the change in the official USSR attitude toward world revolution expressed in Stalin’s famous interview with the US journalist Roy Howard [22] as reflecting not the genuine global interests of the Soviet state or soviet society, but those of a particular social layer inside that society, characterized by a basically conservative attitude to the world situation, *by a desire to maintain the international status quo.*

Whatever may be the rationalization of this attitude by the Soviet leaders or their apologists, the social roots for this conservatism can only be discovered inside Soviet society itself, in the specific role of that leading stratum and its specific relationship to the basic classes of contemporary Soviet society, the working class and the peasantry.

It is not the purpose of this study to analyze in a detailed way the social nature and function of that upper stratum, the Soviet bureaucracy. This analysis was made before the war by Leon Trotsky, and further developed after the second world war by his followers. [23] In our opinion, it remains fundamentally valid today. From the specific place of that bureaucracy in Soviet society flows its specific role in world politics. It is not a new class, but a privileged stratum of the proletariat which has usurped exclusive exercise of political power and total control over the social surplus product within the framework of a planned socialized economy. It can appropriate its essential privileges in the means of consumption only on the dual basis of the collective property of the means of production on one hand and political passivity of the Soviet masses on the other.

This role reflects the fundamentally contradictory and dual nature of the Soviet bureaucracy. On the one hand, it is genuinely attached to the new social order which has emerged in the Soviet Union from the October revolution and the violent destruction of private agriculture by Stalin's forced collectivization. It tries to defend this order – the basis for its power and privileges – by means which correspond to its own narrow special interests. By defending Soviet society, it objectively serves the international extension of the revolution, independently of its own desires and motives. [24]

On the other hand it is instinctively afraid of any upsetting of the international *status quo*, not only for psychological reasons which reflect its fundamentally conservative nature in Soviet society, but also because it fears the profound transformations



which an extension of the international revolution would provoke, both in the political apathy of the Soviet working class and in the internal relationship of forces inside the world Communist movement. [25] The transformation of the Communist International into a “frontier guard” of the Soviet Union, elevated to the position of the “main bulwark” of the world proletariat, to whose diplomatic and military defense every single workers’ movement in every single country had to be subordinated, faithfully reflects the specific interests of that bureaucratic caste. [26]

At the end of this process of transformation, the initial relationship of the Soviet state to world revolution, as seen by Lenin, is completely overthrown. The Soviet Union is no longer seen as an instrument of furthering world revolution; on the contrary, the international Communist movement is viewed as an instrument to further the immediate twists and turns of Soviet diplomacy. [27] The “unity” of the Soviet Union and international revolution is degraded from the principled height where Lenin and Trotsky had placed it to the lowest level of pragmatic expediency: Communist parties have to ruthlessly sacrifice the militancy, consciousness and self-confidence of the working classes of their respective countries on the altar of the “state power interests” embodied by the Soviet government. The outcome of this process historically was a tremendous weakening of the proletarian forces, which enabled Hitler to concentrate all the resources of the European continent against the Soviet Union with very little initial resistance by the defeated and disoriented masses of Europe, and which brought the Soviet Union within an inch of military collapse.

## **The Spanish and Yugoslav examples**

The real interrelationship between the potential extension of Soviet power and the threat of imperialist intervention against the USSR can be most vividly understood if one analyzes the concrete circumstances under which the problem was posed historically. The two outstanding cases are those of the Spanish revolution in the inter-war period and the Yugoslav revolution during and immediately after the second world war.

The Spanish revolution of 1936 presented the world with one of the maturest examples of revolutionary conditions since those of Russia in 1917. [28] In answer to a fascist military putsch led by generals Sanjurjo, Mola and Franco, and notwithstanding the notorious lack of preparation, understanding and initiative of their official leaderships, the Spanish workers and poor peasants rose with an admirable revolutionary ardor, stormed military barracks and in a few days had crushed the uprising in all the large cities with the exception of Seville, had seized the factories and landed estates and started to build their own armed militia, which drove the fascist armies away from one province after another. With a minimum of revolutionary audacity and organization, the revolution could have crushed the uprising in a few months time, among other things by promising the independence of Spanish Morocco to Franco's Moorish troops, by starting to divide up the land, by calling upon Franco's Spanish troops to desert in order to receive their property in the villages, and generally by consolidating the new socialist order born from the heroism of the July-August-September 1936 days.

The Communist International, assisted by the social democracy and by the significant reformist illusions of the main Spanish anarchist leaders, crushed these prospects within a few months' time. Under the pretext of not "alienating" the sympathy of the British and French bourgeoisie, they prevented the revolution

from reaching its climax in the clear establishment of a socialist federation. They used the Soviet arms deliveries to Spain in order to impose their ruthless leadership first on the International Brigades, then on the Spanish government itself. One after another, the revolutionary conquests of the summer of 1936 were torn away from the workers and poor peasants in the name of reestablishing “republican,” (that is, bourgeois) “law and order.” A regular bourgeois army with a “regular” officer corps, took the place of the militias. Factories and landed estates were restored to their former owners. When the Barcelona workers rose in defense of their conquests, in answer to an open provocation [29], they were first severely repressed and then abandoned by their own leaders. The Soviet leadership went so far as to attempt to export the infamous technique of the Moscow trials to Spain, with results which would appear grotesque were it not that hundreds of honest revolutionaries were killed in the process. [30]

The outcome was easily foreseen. The comedy of “non-intervention” was not observed by the fascist governments, which generally respect only strength, not diplomatic agreements. But it was scrupulously respected by the social democrat French prime minister, Leon Blum, supported by the CP, and eventually even the International Brigades were dissolved. Having been deprived of an early victory and pushed onto the defensive (which is always fatal in a revolution), the Spanish masses became more and more disoriented and dispirited when they saw that they were called upon to defend, not revolutionary conquests, but the same old “law and order” that they had been rising against since 1934. Final defeat was only a question of time. The admirable spirit of resistance that the workers of the great cities showed for nearly three years under these extremely adverse conditions only underlines the favorable conditions for a rapid victory in 1936. Having completed the revolution they would have won the war. Instead, the CP called upon them to win the war first, and then to

complete the revolution. This led to the crushing of the revolution, which could only produce defeat in the war.

The justification offered again and again by the apologists of Moscow's Spanish policies is that any alternative policy would have led to an "imperialist united front" and an immediate threat of victorious intervention against the Soviet Union. But a responsible analysis of the concrete conditions prevailing at that time does not in the least warrant such a conclusion.

In the first place, we know today that Nazi rearmament in 1936 was only in its first infant stage; in the spring of 1936 the Nazis had only one armored division; in fact, they trembled lest the French general staff answer the remilitarization of the Rhine valley with an immediate invasion of Germany, against which they had no force to mobilize. [31] Britain's situation was no different; it had no striking force to intervene in Europe. [32] The United States had not even started the preliminary stages of rearmament.

The only strong army on the European continent which could be considered a threat to the Red Army – at that time probably the main military power in Europe – was the French army. But France was in the throes of a tremendous rise of workers' militancy. One million workers had just risen to occupy the factories and had voted Blum into power, with the support of a greatly strengthened Communist Party. So scared were the upper classes that they were ready to adopt any measure of social reform in order at least to recover their main property. [33] It is completely ludicrous to think that, under such conditions, these workers would have permitted themselves to be mobilized to fall on the backs of their victorious Spanish brothers, not to speak of an attempt to have them travel over thousands of miles in order to attack the Soviet Union – in alliance with Hitler and Mussolini! It is absolutely certain that the attempt by any French government to push through such a policy would have proved suicidal, and would have been answered by an immediate uprising of the French working class.

On the other hand, it is also unrealistic, to say the least, to compare the internal situation in Nazi Germany or fascist Italy in 1936 with that prevailing in these countries in 1940 or 1941. Internal resistance was still fairly strong. Any foreign defeat would have meant immediate trouble for these governments. [34] Already the small military reverses suffered by the fascist Italian legion at Guadalajara led to increased anti-fascist activities inside Italy. A victorious Spanish and French revolution would have completely changed the relationship of forces inside Germany and Italy, and decisively weakened, if not overthrown, the dictatorship in at least one of these two countries.

It is probable that such a development would have strengthened the sympathies with Hitler and fascism inside the British and American bourgeoisie. But one should not forget that the year 1936 was the year of the great sit-down strikes in the United States and of a strong leftward trend inside Great Britain. The outcome of these tendencies would have been deeply modified in the event of socialist victories in Spain and France, not to speak of a collapse of fascism in Italy. Even if one supposes that eventually the right-wing bourgeois forces would have had the upper hand in these countries, it would have required many years and many changes in the world situation before Washington and London could threaten a war in alliance with Hitler, against the Soviet Union. It is much more probable that such a threat of war, even if it materialized, would not have been directed against the Soviet Union alone, but against a socialist Europe. We would have had a situation similar to the one emerging from the second world war, but with the proletarian forces geographically, socially, politically and morally much stronger than they are today.

As pointed out above, the Spanish revolution was sacrificed to the idea that the attitude of world capitalism toward the Soviet state and world revolution depends in the last analysis upon the ability of the Soviet leadership to avoid “provoking” its united hostility, and to “placate” and “divide” it instead. This conception

radically discounts the real class struggle going on in the capitalist countries themselves.

Still clearer was the case of Yugoslavia, although the outcome there was, happily, more favorable than in the case of Spain.

From its inception, the Yugoslav revolution encountered distrust and attempts at strangulation by Stalin and his collaborators.. Its attempts to organize proletarian brigades were severely reprimanded by Moscow; it was starved of military aid; and behind its back Stalin divided up the Balkans with Churchill in October 1944, imposing a “fifty-fifty” solution on Yugoslavia. [35] In this way, a coalition government was formed in which bourgeois politicians acquired a certain weight.

The leadership of the Yugoslav Communist Party, however, did not follow the injunctions of the Moscow leadership. It pushed the revolution through to victory. In a referendum, the decision in favor of the republic and against the monarchy was imposed through huge mass mobilizations and tremendous propaganda. [36] The socialist transformation of the economy was quickly achieved. The remnants of the old bourgeois state apparatus and army, already reduced to a shadow of their former strength during the civil war that was superimposed upon the resistance struggle against Nazi occupation, were completely eliminated. Nothing was left of the coalition government decided at Teheran and Yalta. Socialist revolution triumphed.

During this whole process, Stalin did not cease to express his misgivings and criticisms of the YCP’s revolutionary orientation. He feared lest the “great coalition” of the second world war would be broken through this “Yugoslav adventurism.” He saw a military showdown looming ahead.

In fact, the development of the Yugoslav revolution was accompanied by strong international tension, especially in the Trieste area, in the same way as the victory of every single revolution since 1945, or even the victory of the October



revolution, increased international tension. It is one of the facts of political life, that civil war has the tendency to spill over national frontiers. But in no case did an actual world war arise out of the international tensions provoked by internal revolutionary victories. Tito's achievement of a socialist revolution no more "provoked world war" than the victory of Mao Tse-tung in 1949, Ho Chi Minh in 1954, or Castro in 1959. [37]

In order to understand the reasons for this astonishingly constant factor, it is sufficient to state that world capitalism – and especially the leading layers of the American ruling class – react to the world situation as a whole, and not to each separate country or event, isolating it from the overall context. If it is true that each victorious revolution modifies the world relationship of forces at the expense of capitalism, it is also true that the reactions of world capitalism against such a revolution must then follow in a general context unfavorable for capitalism and for imperialist intervention. The capitalist leadership is therefore torn between conflicting needs – the need to stop currents going against its interests, and the need to take into consideration the deteriorated overall situation which is highly unfavorable for a general counteroffensive.

For this reason, the relationship between victorious revolution and war after 1917, and again after 1945, has been one of limited counterrevolutionary military interventions following upon each new victory of the revolution, rather than general world war. By trying to achieve a few limited victories which neutralize the effects of the previous defeat, imperialism reacts to new extensions of the revolution first by attempting to restore a favorable balance of power, before it considers launching a general counteroffensive, including a possible war of intervention against the USSR.

We shall come back to this point in trying to draw up a general balance sheet of the international developments of the last twenty years. But we can already arrive at a seemingly paradoxical

conclusion: It is not revolutionary victories but, up to a certain point, defeats of the revolutionary forces, which hasten the evolution towards world war. This certainly was so in the period 1936-39.

It was not because the Spanish revolution was victorious, but because it was lost, and because the tide therefore turned sharply towards the right and towards the disenchantment and passivity of the masses in France, Britain, Czechoslovakia, etc., that Munich became possible, and as a result of Munich, the occupation of the Sudeten-land, the preparation of the liquidation of Poland and the beginning of the world war by Hitler. During the eighteen months between the revolutionary upsurge of the French and Spanish workers in June-July 1936, and the rape of Austria in the beginning of 1938, the relationship of forces in Europe was decisively changed in favor of German imperialism. Surely, the defeat of the Spanish revolution had something to do with this change! Surely, at the end of this phase there occurred precisely what the Stalin leadership had so desperately tried to avoid: the “ganging up” of all great European powers against the USSR (between Munich and the occupation of Prague). If this front of imperialists was broken, it was not because Stalin had made enough sacrifices in order to gain the good graces of the stock exchanges of Paris and London, but because Hitler proved too greedy, and the Western imperialists convinced themselves that he wanted to crush them completely in his proposed embrace.

In the same way, one has to view the immediate postwar developments in Europe in 1944-45. The Atlantic Pact was not concluded to “punish” the Soviet Union for having let Tito make a revolution in Yugoslavia. On the contrary, imperialism was fully aware of the use it had made of the moderating influence which Stalin, through the local Communist party leaderships, had exercised upon the situations in Greece, Italy and France when they came dangerously near to revolution. [38] The North Atlantic Pact was concluded, and imperialism could establish its first

worldwide military alliance against the USSR (NATO), after the revolutionary situations in Greece, France and Italy ended in a restoration and consolidation of capitalism, with the help of local CP leaderships and with the full consent of Stalin. In this sense it is correct to say that not the victory of the revolution in Yugoslavia, but its defeats in Greece, Italy and France, brought about a worldwide alliance against the USSR.

There is an apparent element of paradox in this reasoning. After all, one could argue, the Western powers had divided Europe with Stalin at Yalta, and to a large extent, both sides had respected the actual line of division, which reflected a given balance of power. The conclusion of the North Atlantic Treaty could be viewed as an imperialist measure to consolidate “its own” sphere of influence, in the same way as the elimination of bourgeois politicians, bourgeois democracy and private property in Eastern Europe could be viewed as a similar move by Stalin to consolidate the Soviet sphere of influence.

The flaw in this kind of argument is its completely static conception, which forgets that every defensive move always contains the germs of a future offensive. Behind NATO was not only “containment” but also the hope of a future “roll back.” “Containment” was facilitated by the fact that in Italy and France the potential socialist revolution was nipped in the bud by the CP leaderships. This again facilitated the possibility of a “roll back.” The hope that “containment” would not occur because Stalin deliberately intervened to block the spread of revolution to the West proved to be an illusion. In fact, if one examined the concrete motivation which led to the establishment of NATO, one would have to conclude that the victory of the Yugoslav revolution, or the fear of a victorious revolution in France or Italy, played a much lesser role than the actual military conquests of the Red Army, the events in countries where there was no revolution, like Poland and Eastern Germany, and the strengthening of the strategic positions of the USSR. [39] What “provokes”

imperialism is not only the extension of the revolution; it is its very existence, or rather the consolidation of its power base in the USSR itself. [40] In the long run, the only way not to “provoke” the capitalists is to consolidate and restore capitalism everywhere, including the Soviet Union. If one is not ready to pay *that* price, any other move then becomes simply a matter of calculation as to its effects, not upon the imperialists being “provoked” – which they always are – but upon the overall balance of forces.

We see here the basic reformist fallacy [41] in the strategies of “peaceful coexistence” and “socialism in one country.” Underlying both is the hope that somehow, in some way, world imperialism will reconcile itself to the existence of the USSR, and “let it alone,” if only the USSR lets world imperialism alone also. Ironically, the same people who base themselves upon this illusion also state that “in the long run” the world relationship of forces will be decisively changed by the economic and military strengthening of the USSR. [42] But surely, imperialists recognize this also, and must therefore strive, in the long run, not only to “contain” revolution but also to destroy the USSR. Therefore, the main question is whether this test of strength is unavoidable in the long run. Once one agrees on this unavoidability, one will then concentrate on achieving the best possible relationship of forces for that moment. Military and economic strengthening of the USSR, attempts to divide the imperialist camp and victorious extensions of the revolution (especially in the main fortresses of imperialism) are then seen not as conflicting, but parallel, developments, tending to create a more favorable relationship of forces for that test of strength. The history of Europe from 1933 to 1941 bears this analysis out to the hilt. And there is every indication that since 1945, imperialism, above all US imperialism, has not ceased for one minute to prepare for World War III. [43]

## **The Chinese revolution and the nuclear threat to mankind's existence**

Two developments of world-shaking importance after the second world war might be thought to modify the general framework of the relationship between the international expansion of revolution and the continuing “armistice” between the great state powers sketched above: the victory of the Chinese revolution in 1949, and the beginning of the nuclear arms race in the early fifties. [44] The establishment of the People's Republic of China broke the capitalist encirclement around the Soviet Union and thereby created an entirely new strategic world situation, in which the workers states enjoyed a tremendous superiority in “conventional” armies and weapons on the continents of Europe and Asia. The rapid progress of the USSR's nuclear industry destroyed the American monopoly of nuclear weapons, and Washington's illusion of being able to depend on “nuclear diplomacy,” to offset the advantages of the “socialist camp” by threatening nuclear destruction of the Soviet Union. The nuclear stalemate achieved in the late 1950s and maintained ever since implies a potential nuclear destruction of the United States as well as of the USSR in the event of a nuclear war. [45]

The victory of the Chinese revolution gave a tremendous impetus to the colonial revolution, which had started with the July 1942 uprising in India and the substantial weakening of the old imperialist powers – Britain, France, the Netherlands, Belgium, Japan, Portugal – [in] Asia and Africa, during and after the second world war. In order to save its essential economic positions, imperialism tried to switch progressively from direct to indirect rule, from outright colonialism to “neo-colonialism.”

But the colonial revolution was difficult to canalize in channels controlled by imperialism; it had the tendency to grow over into anti- *[a line is missing in the printed version because it has been overprinted by this repeated line from the last paragraph “ – in*

*Asia and Africa, during and after the Second World War. In order”]* Morocco, Kenya, Algeria, Cuba, the Congo, Bolivia and Santo Domingo. In some cases, like South Korea, Malaya and Santo Domingo, strong imperialist intervention in the form of full-scale colonial war succeeded in momentarily defeating the revolution. In other cases, the colonial wars ended with imperialism handing over political power to the bourgeois-nationalist or petty-bourgeois leaderships of the liberation movements, in the hope of saving at least some of its property (Indonesia, Morocco, Kenya, Algeria). In other cases the revolution has gone through a series of vicissitudes but is still in progress, after having suffered partial but not final defeats. In North Vietnam and Cuba, the liberation movement triumphed and the anti-imperialist revolution transformed itself into a socialist revolution and established new workers states. The Arab countries present a complex picture, but the tendency towards permanent revolution became clear at least in Egypt and Syria, and manifested itself embryonically in Iraq, Yemen and South Arabia.

In the mid-1950s, the illusion was created that a politically powerful “third world” had emerged. Although it was generally recognized that the countries newly liberated from direct colonial rule were economically weak and faced grave inner social contradictions, many people thought that the sheer weight of their hundreds of millions of inhabitants, united around the idea of “non-alignment” and of “positive neutrality,” would serve as a buffer between the imperialist and “socialist” camps, and thereby gradually reduce world tensions. The Bandung conference of 1955 epitomized these hopes, embodied in the personalities of Nehru and Sukarno. [46]

But these illusions were quickly destroyed. The economic weakness of the colonial bourgeoisie appeared more and more pronounced, and led it to become more and more dependent upon foreign (i.e., essentially imperialist) “aid.” [47] The inner social contradictions slowly eroded whatever prestige the Nehrus,



Sukarno and Kenyatta had acquired during the national liberation struggle. Mass agitation and mass uprisings also led them to lean more and more upon imperialist aid and support. Instead of a “buffer zone” between the “two camps,” the “third world” became a gigantic arena of social and political polarization, in which violent clashes and civil wars progressively multiplied. On the agenda was not the stabilization of any “state of national democracy” as Moscow indicated [48], but a struggle between bourgeois states and pauperized masses striving to establish proletarian states.

This was the general framework in which the Sino-Soviet dispute (preceded by the compromises arrived at during the 1957 and 1960 international conferences of Communist parties) exploded. Some of the questions raised by that dispute appear to be of a conjunctural nature. The People’s Republic of China’s de facto relations with imperialism are of a different nature than those of the Soviet Union. US imperialism has no diplomatic relations with China. It keeps that great country outside the United Nations and deprives it of its rightful seat in the Security Council. It maintains an economic blockade of China. It finances and props up the Chiang Kai-shek puppet regime in Taiwan, symbol of the fact that the Chinese civil war is not yet completely finished and that imperialism continues to intervene in this civil war against the mass of Chinese workers and peasants. It has encircled China with missile, air and naval bases with the acknowledged purpose of military (including nuclear) aggression against China. This situation is obviously different from the relations between Washington and Moscow, which are not only based upon normal diplomatic recognition and exchange, but even upon repeated, and partially successful, attempts at periodic collaboration in many fields.

In that delicate situation the Soviet bureaucracy, guided by its basically conservative motives in international affairs, committed the unforgivable mistake (nay, crime, from the point of view of the

interests of world socialism) of joining the blockade and attempted *quarantine* of the Chinese revolution. After 1960, Moscow cut off all its economic aid to the Chinese, at a moment when the Chinese economy was going through the severe strains of the failure of the second phase of the “great leap forward.” It thereby brutally arrested industrial development in China in several key fields. It refused China assistance in the development of nuclear weapons, thereby objectively contributing towards the imperialist nuclear blackmail of China. It went so far as to give military aid to the Indian bourgeoisie, at a moment when it was undeniable that these weapons could be used against the People’s Republic of China and even against the Indian masses.

Whatever may be our criticism of the sectarian attitude and polemics which the Maoist leadership has developed in recent years against the USSR and the pro-Moscow Communist parties; and whatever may be our refusal to accept as valid and in conformity with socialist principles a whole series of measures and trends (along with more healthy ones) appearing inside China in the course of the “great proletarian cultural revolution,” it seems to us undeniable that at the bottom of the Sino-Soviet rift lies the detrimental attitude of the Soviet bureaucracy to the Chinese revolution, which we have sketched in the preceding paragraphs. [49] We therefore say that Moscow bears the main responsibility for the negative results of the Sino-Soviet rift, that is the rift on a *state* level which weakens the whole of the anti-capitalist forces on a world scale. (This should not be confused with the public *ideological debate*, in itself a welcome departure from the monolithism of Stalin’s time.)

We define, nevertheless, as conjunctural all those aspects of the debate on revolutionary global strategy which flow from specific attitudes and actions of the Soviet bureaucracy and its Chinese counterpart. For even if these actions had not occurred, and if the Soviet and Chinese leaders had been glowing representatives of soviet democracy and proletarian internationalism [50], so the new

world situation which emerged from the victory of the Chinese revolution and from the nuclear arms race would have posed new problems of revolutionary strategy.

The attempt to deny that the nuclear arms race has introduced a new factor into the discussions on the relationship of war, peace and revolution has been undertaken by Maoist and pro-Maoist forces. [51] It is not very serious and rather irresponsible. We are, of course, no experts on nuclear physics and biophysics. But if scientists warn us that a global nuclear war, with a general utilization of the nuclear weapons which are today stockpiled, could lead to a complete destruction of human civilization or even to a planet on which all life would be destroyed, we have to take these warnings very seriously and examine them on their scientific merit – and not from the viewpoint of whether they tend to “stimulate” or to “dampen” revolutionary enthusiasm in certain circles. Scientific socialism cannot base itself upon myths, illusions and blind faith in man’s destiny. It has to start from an objective and critical appraisal of reality and its evolution. And there seems to be no doubt that the nuclear stockpiles have reached such a terrifying degree of destructive capacity that even if humanity were to survive a nuclear world war, the problem of physical survival would be posed under entirely different circumstances than under present conditions, not to speak of the prospects of socialism.

A classical revolutionary “guide to action” was the rule: Go into the army, learn the use of weapons and turn them against you own ruling class. But nuclear weapons obviously cannot be turned into weapons for civil war, because they destroy workers and capitalists indiscriminately and alike. This example alone is sufficient to prove that the nuclear arms race has indeed changed something in the world. Indeed, if one takes the scientists’ warnings seriously, one should conclude that to prevent nuclear world war must become one of the major strategic goals of the world revolutionary movement.

But by posing the problem in this way, one has not at all concluded in favor of the travesty of “peaceful coexistence” which has been the guiding line of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and most of the parties which follow its orientation during the last period. The question remains one of *the most effective way* to avoid nuclear world war. The question basically boils down to this: whether or not imperialism will reconcile itself to the existence and economic-military strengthening of the “socialist camp” (including China), provided these countries in no way whatsoever “assist” the international extension of revolution. We have already recalled the answers given by the Eisenhower and Kennedy administrations in the Sputnik period, which clearly recognized in the growing economic and military strength of the “socialist” camp alone, a mortal threat to the survival of world capitalism. This is the basic reason why disarmament, including nuclear disarmament, under conditions of surviving capitalism, surviving class struggle on a world scale, is and remains an illusion. [52] Even if international expansion of the revolution were to completely fade away, there would be no “peaceful coexistence” in any meaningful sense, but just an uneasy armistice combined with a constant jockeying for better positions in the inevitable future showdown.

But international revolution cannot “fade away,” because it is by no means “provoked,” “initiated” or “triggered off” by “foreign aggression,” but springs from the deep inner social conflicts and contradictions in capitalist society, in the colonial and semi-colonial countries and in the “advanced” countries themselves. [53] To hope for a disappearance of “violent revolution” from this world is to hope for a reconciliation of the vast majority of mankind with unbearable and inhuman social, economic, political and cultural conditions. Such a hope is illusory, irrational, and not very ethical at that.

Once this is recognized as one of the basic truths of our time, the next question which arises is this: Will imperialism “reconcile”

itself to a gradual spread of world revolution, a gradual shrinking of its own socio-economic domain, or will it try to oppose this process by force, armed interventions and counterrevolutionary aggressions? One should, of course, greatly prefer that imperialism stay passive in the face of world revolution. One could even hope that certain weaker and demoralized sectors of the world bourgeoisie would eventually swing over to such a passive attitude. But to expect such a gradual surrender from the strongest, most aggressive and most vital sectors of world capitalism, the leading circles of US imperialism, at the pinnacle of their economic and military power, is again an utter illusion. Experience has borne out during the last seven years that imperialism has decided to oppose by every means at its disposal, above all armed intervention, any threat of a new victorious revolution.

There remains but one question to be answered: Which attitude on the part of the Soviet Union would in the long run best contribute to avoiding nuclear world war: a gradual retreat before imperialist aggression and blackmail, or a resolute intervention on the side of the various revolutionary peoples and movements attacked by imperialism? If past experience can offer any guidance, the answer would be obvious. Retreat or hesitation in the face of aggression does not “appease” the aggressor. It only makes him bolder and leads him to escalate his aggression, which will eventually provoke a test of strength at a point so near to the vital interests of both contending powers, that world war will be much more unavoidable than if the test of strength had taken place at the periphery, during the first stage of the aggression.

But it is precisely the “nuclear stalemate” which gives this argument much greater force than it had in the past. Nuclear world war is nuclear suicide, for the American bourgeois class as well as for the whole of mankind. Under present conditions, when this class is at the pinnacle of its power, it would be ludicrous to assume that it is ready to commit suicide for the sake of “saving

Vietnam from Communism.” It will continue its aggression only so long as the risks incurred are relatively small compared with the potential loss. The higher the risks become, the smaller will be the danger of escalation. It therefore follows that the stronger the “socialist” camps’ “counter-escalation” in face of any imperialist aggression, at any point of the globe, the smaller will be the risk of new aggressions and of new “escalations.”

We do not advocate any irresponsible actions on behalf of the Soviet Union. *If* there existed a democratically united command of all anti-capitalist forces on a world scale; and *if* it moved to coordinate its actions in an efficient way, surely such a “counter-escalation” could take a dozen different forms, from those proposed by Ernesto “Che” Guevara of creating “two, three, many Vietnams,” to those of prudent military moves forcing the imperialists to send their reserves to various points of the globe. Surely, the logic of such a “counter-escalation” is obvious: Instead of allowing the enemy to concentrate his tremendous forces upon each small country and each revolution separately, thereby enabling him to crush these revolutions successively, to force him, rather, to disperse and spread his forces over a wider and wider range of countries and continents, and to tackle half a dozen uprisings, revolutions and military maneuvers simultaneously.

So obvious is this logic and so elementary the political and military truth which it reflects, that one cannot believe the Soviet leaders to be so naive as to be blind to these rules, in their “total devotion to the cause of peace.” Peace, after all, is more and more threatened by their constant withdrawal in face of aggression. The only possible conclusion, again, is that their pathetic adherence to the myth of “peaceful coexistence,” in the face of blatant imperialist aggression, can only be explained by their specific *social interest*, by their fundamental conservatism, which clashes not only with the interests of world revolution but also with those of the Soviet peoples and the Soviet Union itself.



## The examples of Cuba and Vietnam

The examples of Cuba and Vietnam underline the importance of this analysis. In the Western press, the 1962 Caribbean crisis is often interpreted as a Kennedy “masterstroke.” Kennedy “called Khrushchev’s bluff.” [54] We are far from approving all the tactical moves of the Soviet government on that occasion, especially the somewhat highhanded manner in which the sovereignty of revolutionary Cuba was treated. But one should not forget that after the failure of the “Bay of Pigs” invasion, the pressure on the Kennedy administration to start a new aggression against Cuba was constantly growing. In fact, prior to the shipping of Soviet missiles to Cuba, rumors of a new incipient invasion of Cuba were numerous. [55] The balance sheet of Khrushchev’s somewhat erratic dispatching and withdrawing of nuclear weapons to Cuba is, after all, that no such invasion took place. Soviet protection insulated the Cuban revolution from the kind of counterrevolutionary aggression which struck down the revolution in the Dominican Republic three years later.

Ever since the victory and the consolidation of the Cuban revolution, Washington has made clear its resolution to oppose by every means at its disposal any new extension of the revolution. It did so by numerous military coups, in the Congo, Brazil and Indonesia, just to name the most important ones. It did so by open military intervention in the Dominican Republic, Vietnam and Thailand. But it did not act in a reckless way. It prudently probed each step. First came the increase of military advisers in South Vietnam, then a large-scale invasion of South Vietnam with the

building of huge military bases. Then came a swift but limited air attack against the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, allegedly in retaliation for an attack against an American vessel in the Bay of Tonkin. Only when each of these successive steps was not followed, on behalf of the Soviet Union, by anything else but verbal protests and a certain limited increase of material help to Hanoi, did Washington decide to generalize uninterrupted bombing of North Vietnamese territory, first making exceptions of “sanctuaries” in and around Hanoi and Haiphong, and later not even sparing these any more.

Can there be any doubt that, should these aggressions be marked with success and be answered with further retreats by the Soviet leadership, a mortal danger would loom ahead for all workers states which lie in the immediate shooting distance of imperialist power, that is, China, North Korea, Cuba, and in a certain sense, also the German Democratic Republic? And can there be any doubt that, at some point in this chain of aggression, the Soviet leadership will have to intervene, for reasons of military self-defense, and that the danger of a nuclear world war will be much greater then than today, given the fact that both aggression and Soviet retaliation would be located around “targets” much nearer to the nerve centers of the USSR?

One could argue that the strategy of “counter-escalation” to neutralize imperialist aggression involves a certain element of risk, and hinges dangerously on the assumption of rational behavior by the leaders of American imperialism. We do not deny the validity of this objection. The only point we stress is the fact that the myth of “peaceful coexistence” in the face of growing imperialist aggression involves a much greater risk and hinges upon the assumption that the aggressor will become “appeased” by a few peripheral victories – an assumption that flies in the face of all historical experience.

Precisely because nuclear world war is nuclear suicide, it is logical to assume that imperialism will answer the spread of world

revolution not by such a war, but by limited local wars. The more it gets away with them, the more it will multiply them. The more it is defeated in them the more it will be deterred from renewing the experience. Only when the international situation has changed so much that the leading circles of American imperialism have become desperate and certain of defeat, like Hitler in 1944, can there be a real threat that they would risk collective suicide by nuclear war rather than accept defeat.

We do not underestimate this threat – as it is underestimated by many of those who justify the hoax of “peaceful coexistence” with the argument of avoiding nuclear war. We believe that as long as capitalism survives, this threat will be there, and will even grow stronger, because it is a function not of the strength but of the weakness of the surviving imperialist fortress. But such an analysis leads to a reappraisal of the decisive historic importance of the revolution inside the imperialist countries – not only for solving the economic problems which victorious revolutions in relatively backward countries have such difficulties in solving, but also for ensuring mankind’s survival. For this survival depends in the last analysis upon the possibility of a nuclear *disarming* of the US monopolists, and this disarming cannot be achieved from without, that is, by any force outside the United States. It is the task of the progressive and socialist forces *inside* the United States itself.

We seem far from our starting point: the connections between world revolution and inter-state relations. And yet, in a certain sense, we have arrived back at our point of departure. The alternative to the illusions of “socialism in one country” and “peaceful coexistence” is not “revolutionary war” launched by Moscow, “preventive nuclear war,” or “ simultaneous revolution” everywhere which is irresponsible adventurism. It is a comprehensive and coordinated strategy of world revolution, which is based upon support for revolutionary uprisings in a successive and growing number of countries, as a function of the

maturing of favorable conditions for these uprisings inside the respective countries. It is, in a word, class struggle united in a dialectical way, on a world scale. And in the long run, the class struggle and the socialist revolution in the imperialist countries themselves will play the key role in the final test of strength globally.

For a whole historical period, the center of world revolution has passed to the underdeveloped countries. But it is in Japan, in Western Europe and in the United States, that the fate of mankind will be decided in the last analysis. And the struggle between the opposing class forces inside the United States itself will decide whether there will or won't be nuclear world war, i.e., will decide the life-and-death question facing mankind in our epoch.

[Top of the page](#)

## Notes

1. “Empirically, communism is possible only as an act of the leading peoples, ‘all at once’ or simultaneously, because it presupposes universal development of the productive forces and world trade linked with it.” Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, **Die Deutsche Ideologie**. (Berlin, Dietz Verlag, 1953), p.32.

2. As late as November 6, 1920, Lenin stated in a speech for the third anniversary of the October revolution: “We knew at that time: our victory will only be a victory if our cause triumphs in the whole world, for we had started our work exclusively in the expectation of world revolution.” Lenin, **Sämtliche Werke**, 2nd edition. (Berlin, Verlag für Literatur und Politik, 1930), Vol. XXV, p.590.

3. The Soviet delegation to the first congress of the Communist International was composed of Lenin, Trotsky, Zinoviev, Stalin, Bukharin and Chicherin, as voting delegates, and Obolenski and

Vorovsky as consultative delegates. It is significant that the People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs was included in this delegation.

4. In a speech on foreign policy presented to a common session of the central committee of the All-Russian Soviet Congress and Moscow Soviet, Lenin stated on May 14, 1918: "We do not fight for power privileges ... we do not defend national interests, we state that the interests of socialism, the interests of socialism in the whole world, come before the national interests, before "the interests of the state." Lenine, **Oeuvres Completes**, 5e edition. (Paris, Editions Sociales, 1961), tome 27, p.396.

In a speech delivered at a trade union congress on June 27, 1918, Lenin proudly cited the fact that the newly nominated ambassador to Britain, Litvinov, as soon as he was freed by the police, designated the Scottish revolutionary socialist MacLean as Soviet consul, and that the Scottish workers greeted that fact with enthusiasm. Lenine, **Oeuvres Completes**, tome 27, p.515.

5. This was notoriously expressed in the argument used by "left," and even by some Bolshevik opponents, to the signing of the peace treaty, that the Soviet government would "dishonor" itself by "delivering" Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, etc., to Germany.

6. "I have to speak on the position of Comrade Trotsky. In his activity, two aspects must be distinguished: When he started negotiations at Brest-Litovsk, by using them perfectly for agitation, we were all in agreement with Comrade Trotsky." Lenine, **Oeuvres Completes**, tome 27, p.110. "When it finally came to the Brest-Litovsk treaties, Comrade Trotsky has made revelations before the entire world, and is it not thanks to this attitude that, in a hostile country continuing a terrifying imperialist war with other governments, our policy, far from provoking the anger of the popular masses, on the contrary received their support?" **Ibid.**, p.511.

7. **Ibid.**, pp.67, 68. See also the following statement by Lenin: "The bourgeoisie is more international than small owners. This is what we stumbled on at the moment of the Brest-Litovsk peace, when the Soviet power placed the world dictatorship of the proletariat and world revolution above all national sacrifices, however cruel they may be." **Ibid.**, tome 29, p.145.

8. Erich Ludendorff, **Meine Kriegserinnerungen 1914-1918**. (Berlin, Ernst Siegfried Mittler und Sohn, 1919), pp.519, 517, 407, etc.

9. On the eve of the German November 1918 revolution, the Imperial Government broke off diplomatic relations with Soviet Russia, using as a pretext the fact that an accident at a Berlin railway station had revealed that diplomatic boxes sent to the Soviet embassy contained large quantities of communist propaganda in the German language.

10. See the appeals made to the workers of all countries at the second world congress of the Communist International. **Der zweite Kongress der Kommunistischen Internationale: Protokoll der Verhandlungen**. (Hamburg, Verlag der Kommunistischen Internationale, 1921), pp.46-56.

11. See Lenin's report on the party program delivered to the eighth party congress (March 1919). Lenine, **Oeuvres Completes**, tome 29, pp.169-70.

12. For a detailed analysis of these discussions, see Isaac Deutscher, **The Prophet Armed**. (London, Oxford University Press, 1954), pp.459-473.

13. Typical in this respect were the appeals and statements of the first congresses of the Communist International, in which the Red Army was presented as "the army of the international working class," and in which it was stated that "the moment is coming nearer in which the international red army will be created."

14. We say the "so-called theory" because Lenin nowhere formulated it in these words. The only statements which the defenders of that theory today use to support themselves (for example, E. Kardelj, **Le Communisme et la Guerre**, pp.66-71), are statements concerning the need of normal diplomatic or commercial relations between Soviet Russia and the capitalist countries. That the Soviet state and the Communist International were right to struggle to break the imperialist blockade against the workers state seems rather a truism. To transform that concrete struggle, at a concrete historical juncture, into a "strategic line of the world communist movement" seems ludicrous.

15. In the *Open Letter of CPSU Central Committee to All Party Organizations and All Communists of the Soviet Union*, of July 14, 1963, the "Leninist principle of peaceful coexistence" is said to have

been “proclaimed the general line of the Soviet foreign policy” by that party.

16. J. Staline, **Questions et Reponses**. (Paris, Librairie de l’Humanité, 1925), pp.17-18.

17. Radek’s policy of “national communism,” his opportunist maneuvering with the followers of extreme chauvinists like Schlagetter, was a significant departure from genuine internationalism. See Ruth Fischer, **Stalin and German Communism: A Study in the Origins of the State Party**, (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1948); and Ypsilon (pseudonym for Johann Rindl and Julian Gumperz), **Pattern for World Revolution**, (New York, Ziff-Davis, 1947).

18. What is involved here is not the question of the legitimacy of maneuvers between enemies, of exploiting inter-imperialist conflicts, etc. What is involved is the question of whether maneuvers, compromises, etc., have no limits, and whether the crossing of these limits does not endanger the objective fruits of these compromises. In this sense, a comparison between the Brest-Litovsk treaty and the Hitler-Stalin pact is very instructive: In the first case, a maximum propaganda use was made of the negotiations, in order to further international revolution. In the second case, the world Communist movement was degraded to the point of “defending” the Hitler-Stalin pact, and German Communists wrote that “German imperialism” (presumably Hitler) was no longer to be considered the main enemy. **Die Welt**, October 18, 1939.

19. Some people explain the USSR’s survival in the second world war as a result of these maneuvers. This is an obvious mistake in reasoning. If the imperialists didn’t unite against the Soviet Union, but continued to fight against each other, one camp allying itself with the USSR, it is because inner-imperialist contradictions were stronger, under the immediate circumstances, than the common hostility against the USSR. This was largely independent of the USSR’s propaganda or foreign policy. Lenin made a similar point after 1918 when he said that notwithstanding all their hatred for Bolshevism, the imperialists didn’t succeed in uniting against it. And this at a time when the Bolsheviks continued the circulation of revolutionary propaganda!

20. The wrong policies of the Comintern certainly played a key role in the defeat of the Chinese revolution in 1927, in Hitler’s coming to power in 1933 and in the defeat of the Spanish revolution of 1936-37.

21. Some people who are obsessed by the idea of “all capitalists ganging up against the USSR” go so far as to say that Stalin was right to enable Hitler to come to power, because as a result of this, the Anglo-Saxon imperialists allied themselves to the USSR in the second world war! The absurdity of such reasoning does not need to be elaborated, especially if one knows that Hitler’s aggression against the USSR brought the Soviet Union within an inch of military defeat in 1941.

22. On March 1, 1935, Stalin told the president of the Scripps-Howard newspapers that it was a “tragi-comic misunderstanding” to attribute to the Soviet Union “plans and intentions of world revolution.” **The Stalin-Howard Interview.** (New York, International Publishers, 1936).

23. See Leon Trotsky, **The Revolution Betrayed**, (New York, Merit Publishers (now Pathfinder Press, Inc.), 1965); and **In Defense of Marxism**, (New York, Merit Publishers (now Pathfinder Press, Inc.), 1965. See also the theses of the fifth world congress of the Fourth International: *Montée et déclin du stalinisme, Déclin et chute du stalinisme*, **Quatrième Internationale**, Decembre 1957, pp.59 and 82.

24. The existence of the Soviet Union has objectively facilitated the victory of the Yugoslav, Chinese, Vietnamese and Cuban revolutions, even if the subjective policies of Stalin, Khrushchev and their followers tried to prevent the victories of these revolutions.

25. Experience has fully borne out the rationality of these fears: The victory of the Yugoslav as well as the victory of the Chinese and of the Cuban revolutions has created deep rifts, if not *de facto* splits, in the world Communist movement, on which the Soviet bureaucracy has now a much more limited hold than before or during the second world war.

26. Extreme examples of such ruthless submission are: the opposition of the Indian Communist Party to the great uprising of the Indian people of July 1942; the opposition of the French Communist Party to the Algerian national movement in the spring and summer of 1945 (going as far as to approve the imperialist repression of the rising people who were condemned as “fascist”); the attempts of French CP cabinet ministers to force their comrade, Ho Chi Minh, to stay within the French colonial empire, rebaptised the “French Union,” and the fact that these ministers remained in the imperialist government even after the colonial war of reconquest had been started against the Vietnamese revolution in early 1946!



27. Walter Duranty cabled from Moscow that the first reaction to the outbreak of revolution in Spain in 1931 was “a melancholic editorial in **Pravda** ... in the first place because the USSR is excessively and perhaps unjustly nervous in relation to the war danger, and views with alarm any attempt to upset, anywhere, the European status quo ... In addition, the policy of the Kremlin is based today more on the success of socialist construction in Russia than on world revolution” (**New York Times**, April 18, 1931). Already in 1931!

28. The best analyses of the Spanish revolution are those of Felix Morrow, **Revolution and Counterrevolution in Spain**, (London, New Park Publications) and Pierre Broué et Tamine, **La Guerre civile d’Espagne**, (Paris, Editions de Minuit).

29. The regular army attempted to take away from the workers militias the Central Telephone Office, which the militias had occupied in July 1936 when they won it from the fascists after great sacrifices.

30. The sentence pronounced by the “Central Espionage Tribunal” of the Spanish Republic against the executive committee of the POUM, dated October 29, 1938, a verdict which, far from condemning the members of that committee, called for the suspension, “temporarily,” of the struggle for their specific goals, that is, the socialization of the economy and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat, while participating in the general people’s struggle against the fascist military uprising (a participation which the Tribunal does nowhere deny or denigrate!).

31. William L. Shirer, **Aufstieg und Fall des Dritten Reiches**. (München, Knauer, 1963), Band I, p.324. The German generals confirmed this during the Nuremberg Trials. Many other sources can be quoted to the same effect, among them Walter Görlitz, **Der deutsche Generalstab**. (Frankfurt, Verlag der Frankfurter Hefte), p.440.

32. See Winston Churchill, **The Gathering Storm**. (Penguin Books, 1966), pp.601-606.

33. During his testimony before the Riom trial, conducted against him by the Petain regime, Blum proudly recalled that the employers’ organizations came to beg him to become prime minister “because the workers had confidence in him,” and he could become the intermediary between the workers and the employers “to stop this terrible movement [the occupation of the factories – *E.M.*].” Here are some characteristic

expressions of Blum's: "As early as Friday morning, M. Lambert-Ribot, who had been my colleague for long years in the Council of Ministers, before he, like a great many representatives of high public bodies and the universities, entered the service of the employers' organizations, M. Lambert-Ribot, with whom I had always maintained friendly relations, pressed me through two friends, through two different intermediaries, appealing to me to endeavor to establish a contract between the top employers' organizations such as the Comité des Forges and the Confederation Generale du Travail on the other." Leon Blum, **L'Histoire Jugera**. (Paris, Editions Diderot, 1945), pp.277-78. "The employers not only did not ask him to use force but beseeched him not to use it. They told him, 'in the present state of things, that could only lead to a bloody conflict.'" **Ibid.** p.279. "But I must tell you that at that moment in the bourgeoisie, and in particular in the management world, I was considered a savior, I was awaited and expected as a savior." **Ibid.** p.28.

34. Walter Görlitz relates that even pilots of the "Condor Legion," which Hitler sent to Spain, deserted to the side of the Spanish workers. **Der Deutsche Generalstab**, p.442. H.B. Gisevius notes that popular opposition remained strong in the years 1936-37, although these were the "calmest" years of the Nazi regime. **Bis zum bittern Ende**, (Darmstadt, Claassen and Wurth, 1947) p.266. A strong underground Communist Party organization in Berlin, counting several thousand active members, had been rebuilt in 1934-36 and was dismantled by the Gestapo only in the beginning of 1937, using the "spy scare" spread by the Moscow trials and Stalin purges in the USSR.

35. Vladimir Dedijer, **Tito Parle**. (Paris, Gallimard, 1953), p.231. The decisive historic steps on the road to the Yugoslav revolution, which were the decisions of the second session of the Antifascist People's Liberation Council of Jajce in the autumn of 1943, were considered "a stab in the back of the Soviet Union" by the Moscow leadership, which continued its efforts to arrive at a compromise between the Communist-led resistance movement and the Royal Yugoslav Government in emigration. Mosa Pijade, **La Fable de l'aide soviétique a l'insurrection nationale yougoslave**. (Paris, Le Livre Yougoslave, 1950), p.69 etc.

36. Even today, one can see on the walls of small towns and villages many remnants of the intense propaganda campaign which was

conducted in Yugoslavia at that time.

37. Stalin was convinced that his alliance with Britain and the United States would be put to a terrible test by the victorious socialist revolution in Yugoslavia. Only when he saw, to his surprise, that the Western imperialists weren't gravely shocked by Tito's successes, did he partially change his attitude. Mosa Pijade, **op. cit.**, p.69.

38. See Charles de Gaulle, **Memoires de Guerre**, Vol.3, Le Salut, (Plon, 1959): "Their (the masses') aversion to the former structures was exasperated by poverty, concentrated by the Resistance, and exalted by the liberation. Here, then, was an extraordinary occasion for the 'party.' By deliberately mixing up the insurrection against the enemy with the class struggle and posing as the champion of both kinds of revolt, the 'party' had every opportunity of taking the leadership of the country by social fraud, even if it could not do it through the Conseil de la Resistance, the committees, and the militias." pp.112-13. "Taking into account the events which have occurred since, and today's needs, I judge that the return of Maurice Thorez to the leadership of the Communist Party at present offers more advantages than disadvantages. This will be the case as long as I am at the head of the state and nation. To be sure, day after day the Communists will shower us with frauds and invectives. However, they will not attempt any insurrectional movement. Still better, as long as I govern, there will not be a single strike ... As for Thorez, while trying to advance the interests of Communism, he was, on several occasions, to render service to the public interest. Immediately following his return to France, he helped eliminate the last vestiges of the 'patriotic militias' that some of his people were trying to maintain in a new clandestinity. To the extent that the grim and harsh rigidity of his party permitted, he opposed the encroachments of the Comites de Liberation and the acts of violence which some overexcited teams sought to undertake. To many workers, in particular miners, who listened to his harangues he continually gave the order to work to their utmost and to produce no matter what the cost. Was this out of a political tactic? There is no reason for me to try to unravel it. It is enough for me that France was served." pp.118-19.

39. Harry S. Truman, **Years of Trial and Hope**. (New York, Doubleday and Co., 1956), Vol.II, pp.240-43. In fact, in the whole chapter

concerning the creation of the Atlantic Pact, Yugoslavia isn't even mentioned; nor is the fear of "subversion" in France and Italy.

40. This was quite apparent throughout the Kennedy era, when the apprehension of bourgeois public opinion in the United States was not centered less around the "world spread of Communism," than around the "sputnik," the "missile gap," the USSR's advances in space technology, scientific education, etc.

41. There is an obvious parallel between social democratic reformism inside a capitalist country and Stalinist or Khrushchevist reformism in the world capitalist framework. In both cases we are confronted with the reified dialectic of *partial conquests*, the defense of which becomes a goal in itself, which takes precedence over the overall goal. This expresses the particular interests of a bureaucratic stratum which parasitically lives upon these conquests, but can only live on them insofar as they remain partial.

42. This is the line taken by the program of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union adopted at the twenty-second congress.

43. The question could be posed, why didn't US imperialism immediately launch an attack against the Soviet Union in the summer and autumn of 1946, when it enjoyed an overwhelming military and economic superiority and a monopoly of nuclear arms? Three subjective, socio-political obstacles prevented such a course from being realistic. In the first place, the peoples of Western Europe were not ready to accept this turn, which consequently would have most probably led to victorious anti-capitalist revolutions in these countries. Secondly, public opinion was not ready for it in the United States, and it would have created a grave internal crisis, much graver even than the crisis created by the present Vietnam war. See **The Forrestal Diaries**. (New York, The Viking Press, 1951), pp.100-29. Thirdly, and this was paramount in the minds of the military leaders, the American soldiers were not ready to continue the war, and certainly not against a former ally. They wanted to go home immediately, and even revolted against postwar occupation of Europe and the Far East. See Harry S. Truman, **op. cit.**, pp.506-510; Mary-Alice Waters, **GIs and the Fight Against War**. (New York, Merit Publishers (now Pathfinder Press, Inc.), 1967).

44. A UPI dispatch from Washington, dated October 23, 1951, for the first time mentions the fact that "American specialists on nuclear

matters” consider that Soviet nuclear tests could profoundly modify the relationship of forces. Malenkov announced on August 8, 1953, that the Soviet Union had manufactured an H-bomb.

45. An Agence-France Press release of October 9, 1953, carried a statement by President Eisenhower of the same date that the USSR was able to conduct a nuclear attack against the United States.

46. Malek Bennabi, an Egyptian ideologue, published a book in 1956 which summarizes all these hopes and illusions. **L’Afro-Asiatisme**. (Le Caire, Imprimerie Misr). Many echoes of them can be found in official Soviet and Communist literature of the period.

47. For the period 1960-66, the average annual “aid” of imperialist countries to underdeveloped countries amounted to \$9 billion; during the same period, the average annual aid of “socialist” countries to underdeveloped countries was less than \$500 million. These figures are net, that is, after deduction of repayments of underdeveloped nations.

48. This formulation was used in the program of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union adopted at the twenty-second congress to describe those states of the underdeveloped world which are supposed to be “neither capitalist nor socialist.”

49. In **The Unfinished Revolution**, Isaac Deutscher recalls how Lenin, in one of his final writings, denouncing the brutal repression which Stalin and his cronies had unleashed in Georgia, expressed his fear that the “great-Russian, chauvinistic scoundrel and oppressor” would cause infinite damage to the communist cause by his arrogant behavior toward Asian peoples. Lenin, in notes written on December 31, 1922, expressed the historic warning that such behavior could cause suspicions as to the sincerity of the Russian Communists’ adherence to internationalist principles among the awakening peoples of the East. **Oeuvres Completes**, tome 36, pp.623-24.

50. One should stress the fact that the Chinese leaders are also responsible for peddling the myth of “peaceful coexistence” for many years; that they opportunistically supported the disastrous right-wing line of the leadership of the Indonesian Communist Party, leading to the catastrophic defeat of October 1965 (Mao Tse-tung sent a public letter to Aidit on the fortieth anniversary of the Communist Party of Indonesia, approving the “correct” line of the party!); that they even today instruct

the Pakistan Communists to soft-pedal revolutionary struggles in East Pakistan, because the reactionary Pakistan military dictatorship is the only bourgeois government in Asia which keeps very friendly relations with Peking.

51. **Debat sur la ligne generale du mouvement communiste international.** (Pékin, Editions en Langues étrangères, 1965), pp.247-261. However, one should add that it is a slanderous accusation to say that the Chinese want to provoke a war between the United States and Russia, or that they desire nuclear war.

52. In addition, one has to consider the tremendous importance of armament production in the “countercyclical” economic strategy of “mature” monopoly capitalism and the impossibility of that capitalism finding “peaceful” outlets of a similar magnitude without endangering the whole logic of production for private profit.

53. In the case of Vietnam, it can easily be documented that civil war broke out in the South as a result of Diem’s terrorism against left-wing and progressive circles of the population, after the Geneva agreements, *years* before the North decided to intervene in order to support the Southern guerrillas. See Nguyen Kien, **Le Sud-Vietnam depuis Dien-Bien-Phu**, (Paris, Maspero, 1963); Hans Henle, **Chinas Schatten über Südost-Asien**, (Hamburg, 1964); a summary of many sources can be found in Jürgen Harlemann and Peter Gang, **Vietnam Genesis eines Konflikts**, (Frankfurt, Edition Suhrkamp, 1966).

54. For example, **The Economist**, June 10, 1967.

55. A few weeks before the October 1962 Caribbean crisis, **The Economist** published an editorial in its October 6 issue entitled, *Obsessed by Cuba*, which started with the following paragraph: “There are plenty of good reasons for being worried about Cuba, and it may seem odd to put the correspondence columns of **Time** magazine and the **New York Herald Tribune** at the top of the list. But in fact the most disturbing thing about recent developments in Cuba is the effect they have had on the American state of mind; these two papers in particular (though not only they) convey the furious impatience – and the reluctance to see Cuba in context – that seem to mark the current mood in the United States. The widespread demand for President Kennedy to “do something and damn the consequences, has reached a point where an outsider can fairly say what he thinks.” The Russians always insisted

on the fact that, before sending missiles to Cuba, they had reliable information that Washington had prepared a new invasion of that island. See *Open Letter of CPSU Central Committee to All Party Organizations and All Communists of the Soviet Union*, July 14, 1963.

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