

# REVOLUTION

Spring 1991

**Know the Enemy**  
**A Statement on the Persian Gulf War**

*by Bob Avakian*

**Behind the U.S. War on Iraq**

*by Larry Everest*

**Lenin on War and Peace**

**All-the-Way Revolution**  
**vs. Other Strategies**

*by Carl Dix*

**After the Revolution . . .**  
**Uprooting National Oppression**

**Germany: And the Wall**  
**Came Tumbling Down**

*by Koklu Kopus*

**Bob Avakian on the**  
**Myth of Totalitarianism**

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## In this issue . . .

The recently concluded U.S.-led war against Iraq may well prove to be a signal event of the new decade. The U.S. took the lives of perhaps as many as several hundred thousand Iraqis in the cause of what George Bush has labelled the "new world order."

At the same time, the brutal and utterly unjust character of the war sparked a new generation into struggle against imperialism. The imperialists have won their blood-soaked victory, and seized some initiative for the time being. But despite their braggadocio, how history will finally write the balance sheets on this criminal war is far from determined, and the millions worldwide who for a time stormed into political life will have much to say about that. In this sense, the war is not over. Thus this issue contains several articles focusing on the U.S. war in the Gulf.

- We begin with "Know the Enemy," a statement by Bob Avakian, Chairman of the RCP, USA. Chairman Avakian's statement sets out our basic stand on the key lessons to be drawn from this war and provides a context for the other articles.
- Larry Everest wrote "Persian Gulf Power Play and the Oil Connection" before the war (it was first published in the October 21, 1990 *Revolutionary Worker*). Everest clearly exposes the real dynamics underlying the U.S. war of aggression, both immediate and longer-term.
- We are also printing excerpts from two classic works by Lenin. Lenin wrote these in the midst of World War I, and the principles that he set out and fought for played a crucial role in enabling the Bolshevik Party to lead the world-historic Russian Revolution a few

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years later. Despite obvious and important differences between World War I and the U.S.-led war against Iraq, there is still much to learn from and apply in Lenin's stance, method and viewpoint.

During the summer and fall of 1990 Carl Dix, the national spokesperson for the RCP, USA, delivered "an urgent message to the youth" on the "Fear Nothing, Be Down for the Whole Thing" tour. His speech ranged widely and challenged the youth who have increasingly taken up the struggle against the powers-that-be over the last few years.

- In this issue *Revolution* features Carl's discussion of the strategies contending over the path forward in the struggle for Black liberation in the U.S.
- At the same time, to inaugurate our feature "After the Revolution . . .," we reprint the section of the RCP's *New Programme*, "Uprooting National Oppression." Here is outlined how the future proletarian dictatorship will move to decisively end the oppression of Black and other oppressed peoples.

The events of 1989 in Eastern Europe continue to reverberate.

- Köklu Köpus analyzes what happened and why in "Germany: And the Wall Came Tumbling Down" and points to the unresolved—and increasingly explosive—contradictions that drive forward events at the faultline of Europe.

Those same events, at least in the short run, led to much imperialist crowing over the "death of communism." Phony communism may well have taken some mortal blows, but genuine communism of the Marxist-Leninist-Maoist variety remains quite well; indeed, the last issue of *Revolution* helped launch an ideological counteroffensive with our special issue by RCP Chairman Bob Avakian: *End of a Stage, Beginning of a New Stage/Mao More than Ever*.

One important, and generally unchallenged, chord of the imperialist tune has been the theory of "totalitarianism."

- In this issue we reprint Chairman Avakian's unique and pathbreaking analysis of this theory, taken from his book *Democracy—Can't We Do Better Than That?*

— Editor

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# Know the Enemy

*A Statement on the Persian Gulf War  
By Bob Avakian, Chairman of the RCP, USA*

Now the politicians, the military men and all the powers-that-be in the U.S., as well as in France, England and the rest, are celebrating their victory in war against Iraq. It is important to understand why Saddam Hussein, himself a creature of imperialism, was not able to stand up to these imperialists on the battlefield and what lessons should, and should not, be drawn from this. Other articles in this newspaper will be speaking to this, and at another time I want to come back to this question in some depth, but here let's take a good hard look at what this war has shown about the nature of these imperialist "victors."

First, this war has shown that they are exactly what we have called them all along. Anybody who says, as the rulers of the USA have said, that they are bringing a "New World Order" into being by the most massive means of destruction and death—well, they are imperialists and mass murders, and that is that.

## **GANG RAPE**

But let's look further at their "great victory" and see what it shows about them. What they are swaggering and bragging about is something like a gang rape: the U.S., with the most technologically developed war machine in the world, sacks a relatively small and poor Third World country, and all the U.S. "allies" take their turns getting in on the act.

And how fitting this image of gang rape is. After all, the "basic training" of imperialist armies involves all kinds of symbols and slogans upholding violent male domination over women, and these same imperialist

*Bob Avakian is Chairman of the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA. This article is reprinted from the Revolutionary Worker, No. 598 (24 March 1991).*

armed forces have turned whole parts of countries, all over the world, into warehouses for their soldiers. All this is crucial for the indoctrination, the "bonding," and the so-called "morale" of imperialist "troops"—it is a major part of the program of molding them into mindless and heartless killing machines for imperialism. You cannot imagine an imperialist army without the degradation of women any more than you can imagine an imperialist army without tanks, planes and bombs. And let us not forget what Bush himself has declared—that when they go to war the armed forces of the USA are fighting to protect "the American way of life"—a way of life where a woman is raped every few minutes.

### **MASS MURDER**

In this latest war, hundreds of thousands of Iraqi people, civilians as well as soldiers, children and old people as well as adults in the prime of life, have become casualties, mostly as a result of massive aerial bombardment. Here indeed is a lurid demonstration of "the American way of fighting": mass murder from a safe distance. Talk about war crimes! And talk about cowardice! There never have been war criminals more atrocious or more cowardly than the imperialist rulers of the USA.

### **THIS IS THEIR HISTORY—THIS IS THEIR NATURE**

Historically speaking, these imperialists are the same people who deliberately wiped out great numbers of native (Indian) peoples in America in order to steal their land and plunder the resources. And these imperialists have continued to commit these same kinds of crimes against the remaining Indian peoples, right down to today.

These imperialists are the same class of people who kidnapped millions and millions of Africans and enslaved them in America and who are responsible for the deaths of tens of millions more Africans who were piled into slave ships but did not survive the passage from Africa to America. And these imperialists continue to viciously oppress African-American people, for whom the so-called "American Dream" remains an American *nightmare*.

These imperialists are the "direct descendants" of the U.S. rulers who waged a dirty war of aggression to grab from Mexico huge amounts of territory—what is

now called the Southwest of the USA. Today they continue to hold Mexico in their imperialist vise and to discriminate against and brutalize immigrants from Mexico and other Latin American countries who are driven to the U.S. because U.S. control of their countries leaves them no chance for a decent life in their own homelands.

### **CRIMES WITHOUT EQUAL, CRIMES BEYOND BELIEF**

These same ruling imperialists of the USA have brutalized, murdered and massacred millions and millions of people all over the world—from the Philippines, to the Dominican Republic, Vietnam, the Congo, Nicaragua, Haiti, Panama, Guatemala, El Salvador, Mexico, Cuba, Lebanon, Iran, Korea, Indonesia—and on, and on, and on. There is no crime, no act of torture or mass destruction, that they are not guilty of—up to and including the use of nuclear weapons in war.

Next time you hear the sickening sermonizing of Bush and Co. about how they have waged a "just war," keep this picture clearly in your mind: In 1965 the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), of which George Bush was later to become head, worked with a group of officers in the armed forces of Indonesia to pull off a military coup there. They seized control of the Indonesian government and massacred communists and others opposed to U.S. domination of Indonesia. *Within weeks, 500,000 people or more were slaughtered*—rivers started to become clogged with the bodies of people who were executed and then dumped in the water! This was the direct result of the actions of the U.S. government in organizing this right-wing coup in Indonesia—the blood of all those people, and so many more all around the world, is on the hands of the U.S. imperialists.

And to "bring this up to date": In addition to the masses of Arab people the U.S. has just slaughtered, in the last ten years over 100,000 ordinary people in Central America have been bombed to death or otherwise brutally murdered by the U.S. military and other armed forces and "death squads" organized, trained, and controlled by the U.S.

Imagine these same imperialist butchers condemning somebody else for invading another country and brutalizing the people! Check this out: for ten years, from the 1960s into the 1970s, the U.S. imperialists waged a war of aggression against Vietnam, in which

they killed from 1 to 2 million people. But that was not enough for these imperialists: right in the midst of the Vietnam war, in 1965, the U.S. sent thousands of its troops to the Dominican Republic to brutally put down a rebellion in that small Caribbean country! As Malcom X said about the rulers of the USA: here they are, standing up before the world, with the blood dripping down their jaws like a bloody-jawed wolf, and they have the *nerve* to call themselves "leaders of the free world"!

When it comes to invading and aggressing against other nations, there is no country in the world that comes close to the USA. Look at the long list of countries I mentioned a few paragraphs above: *all* of these countries have been invaded or otherwise aggressed against by the U.S.—many of them have been invaded by the U.S. more than once! And I have mentioned only a small part of the total number of invasions, aggressions, and massacres the U.S. has carried out.

#### **THEIR TALK OF "JUSTICE" AND "LIBERATION" IS OBSCENITY**

When George Bush and others in his crew talk about waging a "just war" against Iraq, this is almost as obscene as the war itself. These people and the whole class of imperialists they represent are *incapable* of waging a just war. They do not and cannot stand on the side of justice—they are the greatest oppressors of the people in the entire world.

When they talk about "liberating Kuwait," this too is a sick joke. They will not and cannot liberate anything or anybody. What they mean by "liberating Kuwait" and "restoring its rightful government" is that they will put the corrupt, depraved monarchy, in the person of the Emir of Kuwait, back on the throne. They will return Kuwait to the situation that existed there before Iraq invaded.

What was that situation? The great majority of people in Kuwait were immigrant laborers, not even citizens of Kuwait: they slaved in poverty, with no rights—all to enrich the rulers of Kuwait and the im-

perialist powers who carved out Kuwait as a separate state in the first place, as part of keeping imperialist control in the Middle East. Even most of the people who are Kuwaiti citizens have had very few rights under the rule of the emir and his imperialist backers. This is what will be restored in Kuwait: even if the emir promises to make some cosmetic "democratic" reforms, there will not be any real change in the fundamental nature of Kuwait's corrupt, dictatorial government and in imperialist domination over Kuwait. *This* is what these imperialists mean by "liberation."

#### **A BITTER LESSON—LET'S LEARN IT WELL**

The military victory these imperialists have scored in the Persian Gulf leaves a bitter taste in the mouth of all oppressed people who are determined to put an end to oppression. These imperialists have driven home the truth that Mao Tsetung summed up: "Political power grows out of the barrel of a gun." This is the essence of the "New World Order" that Bush has proclaimed—raw imperialist power exercised with the gun, and the tank, the missile, the bomber and all manner of weapons of mass destruction. So long as these people have their death grip on the world, there will be no peace on earth and no justice for the masses of people. This may be a bitter lesson but it is a lesson the oppressed people of the world must learn well.

This is a lesson we must never forget, just as we must never forget and never forgive the towering crimes these imperialists have committed in this war and in countless other acts of barbaric oppression and aggression they have carried out. The oppressed people of the world must learn and will learn how to fight these imperialist monsters and how to defeat them—to carry forward the fight until all their military power is turned to ashes and dust and they are finally swept from the stage of history. Then will dawn the day of *real liberation* for the masses of oppressed people in the world and ultimately for humanity as a whole.

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# Behind the U.S. War on Iraq

by Larry Everest

Why has the U.S. dispatched over 200,000 troops, 600 planes and some 50 warships to the Persian Gulf? Why does this region today stand on the brink of a war that could take tens or hundreds of thousands of lives—or even millions if chemical and nuclear weapons are used?

We know that the government is straight-out lying when it talks about storming into the Gulf to uphold noble-sounding principles like “stopping aggression,” “protecting the people,” and “defending international law.” This is the same government that has been trampling over the Middle East—not to mention the rest of the world—for the last 40 years.

The U.S. helped start the Iran-Iraq war in 1980 by giving Iraq the green light to invade Iran, and then helped drag the war out for eight years—a million people were killed in the war—by aiding and manipulating both sides. In 1982 it backed Israel’s murderous invasion of Lebanon in which over 30,000 Palestinians and Lebanese were butchered, and it today supports Israel as it guns down Palestinians fighting for self-determination. The U.S. has installed and/or propped up dozens of tyrants throughout the region—from the Saudi royal family to the late Shah of Iran, from King Hussein of Jordan to Saddam Hussein himself.

Most of us know that America’s rulers wouldn’t be bothered by one country invading another unless their interests were threatened, and that in the Persian Gulf those interests center around oil. Sometimes they’re right up front about it. “Even a dolt understands the principle,” one Bush adviser said. “We need the oil.”

But we need to get clear on just *what* this oil connection really is—and what it isn’t. For instance, the U.S. didn’t dispatch troops to the Gulf just to create an oil price panic so a few oil companies could make a kill-

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*This article, “Persian Gulf Power Play and the Oil Connection,” is reprinted from the Revolutionary Worker, October 21, 1990.*

ing. Sure, the oil giants will jump at any opportunity to skin the people. But if that were the deal, why not let Hussein have Kuwait and do the price hiking himself? In reality the Western governments and big capitalists are deathly afraid that skyrocketing oil prices will throw their economies into a tailspin.

Second, the Persian Gulf is not on the edge of war because America's own oil supply is immediately threatened. Iraq and Kuwait only account for 5 percent of U.S. oil consumption, which could be made up from other sources. Besides, Hussein jumped into Kuwait so Iraq could sell more oil—not cut it off.

Finally, sending its death machine to Saudi Arabia is *not* a government ploy to boost Pentagon spending, cut social programs, or divert attention from the S&L crisis. The government may want to do all these things; but deploying troops and waging war in the Gulf threatens to make their budget and financial problems much worse and could trigger upheavals throughout the Middle East. America's rulers are risking a lot and aren't playing publicity games.

### **OIL, POWER, PROFITS — IMPERIALISM**

In the movie "The Little Shop of Horrors" Audrey-2, a people-eating plant with a never-ending appetite, warns Seymour, the naive, near-sighted florist who nurtures it, "You don't know what you're dealin' with, you don't know who you're messin' with." The rulers of the U.S. are never going to be that honest with us. To understand what they are up to in the Gulf today we have to first understand what kind of a system we are dealing with.

It is forbidden in the mainstream media and polite conversation to call the U.S. an imperialist power—but that is the most important truth to understand about it. And today it is preparing for war because it is an imperialist power with its oil, profits and global power on the line in the Persian Gulf.

What do we mean by imperialism? Imperialism is not a curse word—although it is a curse on humanity. Imperialism is capitalism in its highest stage. The economies of the industrialized countries are dominated by interconnected networks of giant banks and multinational corporations. Like real life Audrey-2s with a global reach, these giant concerns stretch their tentacles all over the globe, madly chasing maximum returns and strategic advantage through the export of capital, the penetration of new markets and the control of raw materials. In the process they dominate and

twist the economies of the oppressed, or Third World countries, condemning the vast majority of this planet's people to lives of degradation and misery for the benefit of a handful in the rich industrialized countries. Today the 23 percent of the world's population living in a few rich nations consume 82 percent of the world's output while the 77 percent living in the Third World are left with 17 percent. This gap between rich and poor countries is now over twice as wide as it was 30 years ago.

This dog-eat-dog system is backed up by the military and political arms of the imperialist state, the Pentagon, the State Department, the CIA, etc. This machinery of death and domination is used against rival powers, unruly clients, and especially the oppressed masses in order to subordinate whole regions of the earth, secure them for exploitation, and use them as strategic pieces in imperialism's never ceasing contest for global supremacy.

Overseas operations, especially in the oppressed countries, generate enormous profits for the imperialist countries. For example, between 1984 and 1988, Third World countries transferred \$140 billion to the rich countries in the form of loan repayments. Today the U.S. also has some \$373 billion in direct investments around the world (\$90 billion of which is in the Third World) which generate over \$53 billion in profits annually. Operating around the globe and exploiting the oppressed countries is not "icing on the cake" for U.S. capital: the system couldn't function without it. Raymond Lotta sums it up this way:

"The imperialist centers are strategically dependent on the Third World as a source of cheap labor, markets, and low-cost strategic minerals . . . this is not a question of the sheer magnitude of investments . . . the superprofits extracted in the Third World play a critical, stimulating role in the overall process of capitalist reproduction and expansion." ("The Latin American Debt Crisis in Perspective," *Revolution*, Spring 1990, p. 15)

Nowhere has this been clearer than in the Middle East. Since World War 2, domination of this region has been a key pillar of America's global power and economic functioning. Hussein's invasion of Kuwait threatened to upset this arrangement, and today the U.S. has brought the region to the brink of war to protect it.

Specifically, the U.S. is seeking to preserve its political and military predominance in the Persian Gulf. For one, this is strategically linked (for instance in protect-

ing Israel) to preserving overall U.S. influence in the Middle East, a region of critical importance in global military and political affairs.

Second, two-thirds of the world's oil reserves are located in the Gulf, and U.S. predominance in the Gulf is crucial to maintaining effective control of world oil pricing and production. For the U.S., Persian Gulf oil is a vital source of superprofits, a cheap and essential energy source for the West, and a lever for U.S. leadership of the other Western imperialist powers.

These U.S. objectives are in turn linked to bigger goals: maintaining, indeed reasserting, America's role as the world's number one imperialist power and propping up the very fragile world capitalist economy. This is why the whole capitalist class—Democrats and Republicans from Jesse Jackson to Jesse Helms—all support U.S. domination of the Persian Gulf (whatever their tactical debates over current policy), not just a few oil monopolies. And this is why they are willing to risk so much—and possibly slaughter so many—to maintain it.

#### **MID EAST OIL—FUEL FOR THE BIG POWERS**

Middle East oil has been essential to the functioning of the Western capitalist economies for over four decades in two major ways: as a source of superprofits and as a cheap source of energy and raw material for industry.

Between 1948 and 1960 Western capital earned \$12.8 billion in profits from the production, refining and sale of Middle East oil on fixed investments totaling a mere \$1.3 billion—a rate of return far beyond any available in the industrialized countries.

Today, despite the larger role played by the producing countries, oil remains extremely profitable for imperialist capital. In 1989, 52 of the world's 500 largest corporations were oil companies, with sales of a staggering \$758 billion. Seven of the 14 largest U.S. corporations are oil companies: in 1989 their \$248 billion in sales and \$14 billion in profits accounted for 37 percent of the total sales and profits of the top 14.

Globally, 22 percent of all U.S. profits from direct investment in the Third World, and an estimated 60 percent of total Third World profits accumulated by U.S. capital, come from oil. Much of this income is derived from refining and reselling oil from the Gulf. For example, on average, 30 percent of the oil imported into the U.S. by the 10 largest oil companies comes from the Persian Gulf.

These superprofits have boosted the profitability of Western capital as a whole. But that is not the only way the system has benefited from Middle East oil. Oil is far cheaper to produce in the Persian Gulf than anywhere else in the world—particularly in the developed countries. One reason is that oil workers are paid a pittance. Indian contract workers in Bahrain's oil fields, for instance, make \$75 a month.

Another is the staggering productivity of Gulf wells. The average well in the U.S. produces 12.5 barrels of oil a day, while the average well in Saudi Arabia produces 5,668 barrels a day. In other words, the U.S. has to use 700 times as many wells as Saudi Arabia to produce the same amount of oil.

Cheap oil from the Persian Gulf has lowered production costs and raised the overall efficiency and profitability of imperialist capital. Oil has become the primary source of energy for the capitalist economies of the West, which have been structured around it in a thousand ways. Today the Western powers are the world's biggest oil gluttons, with the seven largest consuming nearly one-half of the world's output. The U.S. alone, with 5 percent of the world's population, consumes 26 percent.

The importance of Persian Gulf oil has grown since the 1970s and the onset of the pervasive economic crisis that has gripped the Western imperialist-dominated world economy. This has occurred for two related reasons: high volume and low price. Because the Gulf contains two-thirds of the world's known oil reserves and produces 30 percent of the world's oil (excluding the Soviet bloc), Gulf producers are the most able to boost output to meet rising world demand and prevent price explosions.<sup>1</sup>

While sharply rising oil prices in 1973-74 and 1979-81 helped trigger global economic slowdowns, declining oil prices throughout the 1980s were one reason Western economies continued to grow and avoided severe economic and/or financial crises. In fact, prior to the Iraqi invasion, oil prices were at their lowest level in real terms since 1972.

This is why U.S. dependence on cheap Middle Eastern oil has grown dramatically over the past decade, despite much talk of reducing oil imports. Production of more costly domestic oil has fallen from 9 million barrels a day in 1973 to 7.6 million barrels today (the lowest level since 1964), while imports have risen from 36 percent of U.S. consumption to 50 percent. Imports from the Persian Gulf in particular jumped during the 1980s, from 8.5 percent of total imports in 1985 to 26.6 percent in 1989.

Last January the *Petroleum Economist* wrote that the U.S. was moving "to establish closer ties with the Gulf states, particularly Saudi Arabia and Iraq," due to the "recognition that these key producers of low-cost oil will be crucial to the USA's economic viability in the 1990s."

This is *not* happening because the U.S. is running out of oil; it is happening because U.S. oil is more costly and hence less profitable to produce. Deepening crisis intensifies the compulsion faced by capital to seek the highest rate of return and makes entire branches of industry unprofitable and obsolete. U.S. oil production is a case in point; 18,000 U.S. wells are abandoned every year, most after only a third of their oil is pumped. These abandoned wells contain some 300 billion barrels of oil—12 times current reserves.

It is estimated that there is another 1.8 trillion barrels in oil-bearing shale—3 times the reserves of Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Iran and Kuwait combined. Yet the syn-fuel program started in 1980, which was designed to produce 25 percent of U.S. consumption from this shale by the 1990s, was quickly abandoned because of its \$88 billion cost, the decline in world oil prices, and the growing fragility of the U.S. economy.

### **DESPERATE STRUGGLE FOR CONTROL**

In *Imperialism, The Highest Stage of Capitalism*, the Russian revolutionary V.I. Lenin analyzed that

"The more capitalism is developed, the more strongly the shortage of raw materials is felt, the more intense the competition and the hunt for sources of raw materials throughout the whole world, the more desperate the struggle for the acquisition of colonies."

How true his words ring today! The growing importance of Middle East oil for the imperialist economies has made the struggle to control it all the more fierce, Saddam Hussein's takeover of Kuwait all the more threatening, and the U.S. reaction all the more belligerent.

U.S. power in the Middle East is exercised through a complex web of economic, political and military relations with most states in the region, along with various forms of direct intervention. This network is designed to block challenges from rival imperialist powers, keep regional clients in line and most importantly, crush mass rebellion, which has repeatedly

broken out in the region against imperialism and its local enforcers.

Two examples illustrate some of their means of control. One, even though the oil-producing states now own their production facilities and earn billions in oil revenues, they remain economically subordinated to imperialist capital. To begin with, they are overwhelmingly dependent on oil income (mainly from the West), and Western capital still controls refining and distribution. In 1981 Western multinationals controlled 82 percent of the world oil sales, along with 56 percent of world production (with the 7 biggest controlling 40 percent and 37 percent respectively).

These countries also remain dependent on the West for investment capital, industrial goods, in many cases even food. Iraq is a prime example of this economic dependence: 95 percent of its revenues are generated by oil sales and 70 percent of its food is imported.

Second, the U.S. has built up an extensive military network in the region. Israel, Egypt, Turkey, and Pakistan, key enforcers of U.S. interests, receive \$6.5 billion in U.S. military and economic aid a year—half of the U.S. world total. The U.S. also sells billions worth of arms to its regional clients. From 1977 to 1987 the U.S. delivered \$34 billion worth of arms to the region; this was more than it sold all other Third World countries put together. In addition, over 15 percent of the U.S. military budget, or roughly \$40 billion a year, is spent on U.S. forces whose mission is to intervene and wage war in the Middle East.

### **SADDAM STEPS ON US'S TOES**

The Iraqi government of Saddam Hussein is a comprador regime, tied to both Western and Soviet imperialism. The U.S. helped Iraq prevail in the Iran-Iraq war, and over the course of the war Iraq moved closer to the West. Yet the war also sowed the seeds for Iraq's invasion of Kuwait and the current crisis.

The destruction of eight years of war and deepening economic crisis, coupled with Hussein's ambition to become the Gulf's dominant regional power (along with a seeming green light from the U.S.), propelled Iraq into Kuwait. In particular, Kuwait had been producing nearly double its OPEC oil output quota, helping drive down world oil prices. This benefited the imperialists but cost Iraq billions in lost revenues. Iraq also accused Kuwait of pumping \$1.4 billion worth of Iraqi oil from wells that straddle the Iraq-Kuwait border.

This invasion, however, threatened to tear America's web of regional power and control. Through direct control of Iraq and Kuwait's 20 percent of world reserves and indirect control of another 30 percent (through military intimidation of Saudi Arabia and the Gulf oil sheikdoms), Iraq could gain considerable leverage over world oil output and prices. Even if Hussein left Kuwait but still had his army intact, the U.S. fears Iraq could intimidate Saudi Arabia for years to come (and pose a threat to Israel).

For the powers in the U.S., this not only trespassed on what they consider their sacred right to dominate the world oil market, but threatened their global standing and the world economy as well. Hussein was now an "unreliable" client that had to be dealt with.

### THE GLOBAL AGENDA

The U.S. imperialists have also seized upon Iraq's invasion of Kuwait to strengthen their global power under the banner of creating a "new world order." This has several dimensions to it. The U.S. has been working closely with the state capitalists in the Soviet Union throughout the Gulf crisis to solidify their emerging "new partnership."

This "new partnership" is not about bringing peace and justice to the world, as U.S. and Soviet leaders hypocritically contend. It is largely about *jointly* exploiting the Third World and collaborating to suppress revolution and unruly Third World regimes (even as they compete for advantage within that collaboration).

This is clear today in the Gulf. The Soviet leadership (and their apologists) claim they are trying to block U.S. "adventurism" and prevent war. The reality is just the opposite. The Soviets do have their own agenda in the Gulf and their own concerns about war breaking out on their doorstep. But for now they are more concerned with strengthening their new "partnership" with the West. Actions like backing the U.N. embargo against Iraq and issuing a joint condemnation of Iraq at the recent U.S.-Soviet Helsinki summit constitute important political cover and support for U.S. bullying and war preparations. Soviet leaders have even stated that they would join a U.S.-led military attack on Iraq if the U.N. sanctioned it—as if U.N. sanction would make such a crime any less murderous or any less imperialist.

Second, the U.S. has seized on the crisis to shore up its leadership of the Western alliance. In the post-WW2 era, that leadership has been based, in part, on

America's role first as the direct supplier of Gulf oil to Europe and Japan and more recently as the power insuring its uninterrupted flow at low cost. (Japan gets 70 percent of its oil from the Gulf; Western Europe 50 percent.)

U.S. supremacy has slipped due to rising German and Japanese economic strength, American economic weakness, and the easing (temporarily at least) of East-West tensions. Today the U.S. sees the Gulf crisis as a golden opportunity to restore American authority by defeating Iraq and demonstrating that only the U.S. military umbrella can guarantee Europe and Japan their oil lifeline and economic survival.

And America's massive intervention in the Gulf aims to intimidate any Third World challenges to imperialist domination. The "new world order" the Bush administration is crowing about is really just the same old lopsided global order that exists today—with America as the one and only superpower cop, imposing its agenda at the point of a gun from Panama to the Persian Gulf. Under this "order" 40,000 children in the oppressed countries die every day from starvation and preventable disease. In oil-rich Saudi Arabia this status quo means that a mere 12 percent of the women are literate and over one in ten children dies before their first birthday.

These cold calculations of empire, not a desire to prevent aggression or bring peace to the world, have led the U.S. to massively intervene in the Gulf and spurn repeated Iraqi offers to negotiate (including one in August deemed "serious and negotiable" by an administration Middle East expert). These calculations likewise threaten to plunge the region, perhaps the world, into a conflict that could prove to be even bloodier and more destructive than Vietnam, Afghanistan, or the Gulf war.

Some argue that it is irrational, even outright crazy, for the U.S. to go to war in the Gulf because war could destroy many oil fields, spark a global depression, and/or throw the Middle East into turmoil. All this and more could happen, and such possibilities gravely concern imperialist strategists. Yet they are even more concerned about losing control of the Persian Gulf and the erosion of their global power, and if they feel they have to go to war to protect them, they will. That is *their* logic—the logic of imperialism.

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## NOTE

1. With oil reserves of 255 billion barrels—fully one quarter of the world's total—and a small population, Saudi Arabia in particular has played a critical role as a "swing producer," able to raise and lower production according to the demands of the global capitalist economy. Saudi production went from 10 million barrels a day in 1981 when oil prices were high, to 3.3 million barrels a day in 1985 when demand was down, to 7.4 million barrels a day now. It is expected the Saudis will further increase production to 8.5 million barrels a day to make up for the current loss of oil from Iraq and Kuwait.

For more in-depth analysis of the nature of imperialism, I suggest the following:

- V.I. Lenin, *Imperialism, The Highest Stage of Capitalism*
- Raymond Lotta, *America in Decline: An Analysis of the Developments Toward War and Revolution, in the U.S. and Worldwide in the 1980s*
- Lotta, "The Latin American Debt Crisis in Perspective: The Political Economy and Strategic Implications of Global Financial Disorder," *Revolution* magazine, Spring 1990.
- Lenny Wolff, *The Science of Revolution* (chapter on imperialism).

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## Lenin on Imperialist War

*These articles were written by Lenin during the early years of World War I, which was a war between the great imperialist powers of the day over the redivision of the world. The war waged against Iraq by the U.S. and its partners, by contrast, was a war waged by a big imperialist power against an oppressed nation. On the side of Iraq, this was a just war against direct imperialist aggression and subjugation. So in this, and other ways, the recent war differed from the one Lenin deals with in the excerpts printed here.*

*However, one essential aspect was the same: on the part of the U.S., this was a war, to quote Lenin, "to fortify slavery", and specifically to strengthen the ability of the U.S. ruling class to plunder the people of the world. But certainly the questions Lenin addresses are quite current: Are all wars unjust? On what basis do Marxists analyze particular wars? What stand must revolutionaries take towards an imperialist war—why must they welcome the defeat of "their own" governments? And how can the imperialist war be "converted" into civil war?*

*At the time Lenin wrote these articles, the international movement was just beginning to split between those who took advantage of the war to step up the fight for revolution, and those who opportunistically told the proletarians to support the war. At this time, both trends were lumped under the label "Social-Democratic". Kautsky (and the Kautskyites), whom Lenin targets, headed the largest Social-Democratic party in the world at the time (in Germany); the vast majority of Social-Democratic groups either supported their governments' war policies outright or, as in Kautsky's case, supported them through equivocation.*

*In Russia, both the Bolsheviks led by Lenin and the reformist Mensheviks operated under the title of Social-Democrat. It was only in 1917 that the split was fully consummated: the revolutionary trend regrouped under the Communist banner, and left the Social-Democratic label to those who aspired to be a loyal opposition under capitalism.*

This happened first of all in Russia, where the Bolsheviks carried through the world's first successful proletarian revolution, right in the midst of the imperialist war. Lenin's stand on war and revolution proved decisive in preparing the Bolsheviks to take advantage of the problems the war caused the reactionary Russian government to enable the proletarians to seize power through insurrection and civil war.

## THE WAR PROGRAMME OF THE PROLETARIAN REVOLUTION

In Holland, Scandinavia and Switzerland, voices are heard among the revolutionary Social-Democrats who are combating the social-chauvinist lies about "defense of the fatherland" in the present imperialist war, in favour of substituting for the old point in the Social-Democratic minimum programme: "militia," or "the armed nation," a new one: "disarmament." The *Jugend-Internationale* has inaugurated a discussion on this question and has published in No. 3 an editorial article in favour of disarmament. In R. Grimm's latest theses, we regret to note, there is also a concession to the "disarmament" idea. Discussions have been started in the periodicals *Neues Leben* and *Vorbote*.

Let us examine the position of the advocates of disarmament.

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The main argument is that the demand for disarmament is the clearest, most decisive, most consistent expression of the struggle against all militarism and against all war.

But this main argument is precisely the principal error of the advocates of disarmament. Socialists cannot, without ceasing to be Socialists, be opposed to all war.

In the first place, Socialists have never been, nor can they ever be, opposed to revolutionary wars. The bourgeoisie of the "Great" imperialist Powers has become thoroughly reactionary, and we regard the war which *this* bourgeoisie is now waging as a reactionary, slave-owners' and criminal war. But what about a war *against* this bourgeoisie? For example, a war waged by people who are oppressed by and dependent upon this bourgeoisie, by colonial peoples, for their liberation? In the theses of the *Internationale* group, in §5, we read: "In the era of this unbridled imperialism there

can be no more national wars of any kind." This is obviously wrong.

The history of the twentieth century, this century of "unbridled imperialism," is replete with colonial wars. But what we Europeans, the imperialist oppressors of the majority of the peoples of the world, with our habitual, despicable European chauvinism, call "colonial wars" are often national wars, or national rebellions of those oppressed peoples. One of the main features of imperialism is that it accelerates the development of capitalism in the most backward countries, and thereby widens and intensifies the struggle against national oppression. This is a fact. It inevitably follows from this that imperialism must often give rise to national wars. *Junius*,<sup>1</sup> who in her pamphlet defends the above-quoted "theses," says that in the imperialist epoch every national war against one of the imperialist Great Powers leads to the intervention of another competing imperialist Great Power and thus, every national war is converted into an imperialist war. But this argument is also wrong. This *may* happen, but it does not always happen. Many colonial wars in the period between 1900 and 1914 did not follow this road. And it would be simply ridiculous if we declared, for instance, that after the present war, if it ends in the extreme exhaustion of all the belligerents, "there can be no" national, progressive, revolutionary wars "whatever," waged, say, by China in alliance with India, Persia, Siam, etc., against the Great Powers.

To deny all possibility of national wars under imperialism is wrong in theory, obviously mistaken historically, and in practice is tantamount to European chauvinism: we who belong to nations that oppress hundreds of millions of people in Europe, Africa, Asia, etc., must tell the oppressed peoples that it is "impossible" for them to wage war against "our" nation!

Secondly, civil wars are also wars. Whoever recognizes the class struggle cannot fail to recognize civil wars, which in every class society are the natural, and under certain conditions, inevitable continuation, development and intensification of the class struggle. All the great revolutions prove this. To repudiate civil war, or to forget about it, would mean sinking into extreme opportunism and renouncing the socialist revolution.

Thirdly, the victory of Socialism in one country does not at one stroke eliminate all war in general. On the contrary, it presupposes such wars. The development of capitalism proceeds extremely unevenly in the



various countries. It cannot be otherwise under the commodity production system. From this it follows irrefutably that Socialism cannot achieve victory simultaneously *in all* countries. It will achieve victory first in one or several countries while the others will remain bourgeois or pre-bourgeois for some time. This must not only create friction, but a direct striving on the part of the bourgeoisie of other countries to crush the victorious proletariat of the socialist state. In such cases a war on our part would be a legitimate and just war. It would be a war for Socialism, for the liberation of other nations from the bourgeoisie. Engels was perfectly right when, in his letter to Kautsky, September 12, 1882, he openly admitted that it was possible for *already victorious* Socialism to wage "defensive wars." What he had in mind was defense of the victorious proletariat against the bourgeoisie of other countries.

Only after we have overthrown, finally vanquished, and expropriated the bourgeoisie of the whole world, and not only of one country, will wars become impossible. And from a scientific point of view it would be utterly wrong and utterly unrevolutionary for us to evade or gloss over the most important thing, namely, that the most difficult task, the one demanding the greatest amount of fighting in the *transition* to Socialism, is to crush the resistance of the bourgeoisie. "Social" parsons and opportunists are always ready to dream about the future peaceful Socialism; but the very thing that distinguishes them from revolutionary Social-Democrats is that they refuse to think about and reflect on the fierce class struggle and class *war* that are necessary for the achievement of this beautiful future.

We must not allow ourselves to be led astray by words. The term "defense of the fatherland," for instance, is hateful to many, because the avowed opportunists and the Kautskyites use it to cover up and gloss over the lies of the bourgeoisie in the *present* predatory war. This is a fact. It does not follow from this, however, that we must forget to ponder over the meaning of political slogans. Recognizing "defense of the fatherland" in the present war is nothing more nor less than recognizing it as a "just" war, a war in the interests of the proletariat—nothing more nor less, we repeat, because invasions may occur in any war. It would be simply foolish to repudiate "defense of the fatherland" *on the part* of the oppressed nations in their wars *against* the imperialist Great Powers, or on the part of a victorious proletariat in *its* war against some Galliffet<sup>2</sup> of a bourgeois state.

Theoretically, it would be quite wrong to forget that every war is but the continuation of politics by other

means; the present imperialist war is the continuation of the imperialist politics of two groups of Great Powers, and these politics were engendered and fostered by the sum total of the relationships of the imperialist epoch. But this very epoch must also necessarily engender and foster the politics of struggle against national oppression and of the proletarian struggle against the bourgeoisie, and therefore, also the possibility and the inevitability, first, of revolutionary national rebellions and wars; second, of proletarian wars and rebellions *against* the bourgeoisie; and, third, of a combination of both kinds of revolutionary war, etc.

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To this must be added the following general considerations.

An oppressed class which does not strive to learn to use arms, to acquire arms, only deserves to be treated like slaves. We cannot forget, unless we become bourgeois pacifists or opportunists, that we are living in a class society, that there is no way out of this society, and there can be none, except by means of the class struggle. In every class society, whether it is based on slavery, serfdom, or, as at present, on wage labour, the oppressing class is armed. Not only the modern standing army, but even the modern militia—even in the most democratic bourgeois republics, Switzerland, for example—represent the bourgeoisie armed *against* the proletariat. This is such an elementary truth that it is hardly necessary to dwell upon it. It is sufficient to recall the use of troops against strikers in all capitalist countries.

The fact that the bourgeoisie is armed against the proletariat is one of the biggest, most fundamental, and most important facts in modern capitalist society. And in face of this fact, revolutionary Social-Democrats are urged to "demand" "disarmament"! This is tantamount to the complete abandonment of the point of view of the class struggle, the renunciation of all thought of revolution. Our slogan must be: the arming of the proletariat for the purpose of vanquishing, expropriating and disarming the bourgeoisie. These are the only tactics a revolutionary class can adopt, tactics which follow logically from the whole *objective development* of capitalist militarism, and dictated by that development. Only after the proletariat has disarmed the bourgeoisie will it be able, without betraying its world-historical mission, to throw all ar-

maments on the scrap heap; and the proletariat will undoubtedly do this, but *only when this condition has been fulfilled, certainly not before.*

If the present war rouses among the reactionary Christian Socialists, among the whimpering petty bourgeoisie, *only* horror and fright, only aversion to all use of arms, to bloodshed, death, etc., then we must say: capitalist society is always an *endless horror*. And if this most reactionary of all wars is now preparing a *horrible end* for that society, we have no reason to drop into despair. At a time when, as everyone can see, the bourgeoisie itself is paving the way for the only legitimate and revolutionary war, namely, civil war against the imperialist bourgeoisie, the "demand" for disarmament, or more correctly, the dream of disarmament, is objectively, nothing but an expression of despair.

Those who will say that this is a theory divorced from life, we will remind of two world-historical facts: the role of trusts and the employment of women in industry, on the one hand; and the Paris Commune of 1871 and the December uprising of 1905 in Russia, on the other.

The business of the bourgeoisie is to promote trusts, to drive women and children into the factories, to torture them there, to corrupt them, to condemn them to extreme poverty. We do not "demand" such a development. We do not "support" it; we fight it. But *how* do we fight? We know that trusts and the employment of women in industry are progressive. We do not want to go back to the handicraft system, to premonopolistic capitalism, to domestic drudgery for women. Forward through the trusts, etc., and beyond them to Socialism!

This argument is, with the necessary changes, applicable also to the present militarization of the people. Today the imperialist bourgeoisie militarizes not only the adults, but also the youth. Tomorrow, it may proceed to militarize the women. To this we must say: All the better! Go ahead faster! The faster it goes, the nearer we shall be to the armed uprising against capitalism. How can Social-Democrats allow themselves to be frightened by the militarization of the youth, etc., if they have not forgotten the example of the Paris Commune? This is not a "theory divorced from life," it is not a dream, but a fact. It would be very bad indeed if, notwithstanding all the economic and political facts, Social-Democrats began to doubt that the imperialist epoch and imperialist wars must in-

evitably bring about a repetition of such facts.

A certain bourgeois observer of the Paris Commune, writing to an English newspaper in May 1871, said: "If the French nation consisted entirely of women, what a terrible nation it would be!" Women, and children of thirteen and upwards, fought in the Paris Commune side by side with the men. Nor can it be different in the forthcoming battles for the overthrow of the bourgeoisie. The proletarian women will not look on passively while the well-armed bourgeoisie shoot down the poorly-armed or unarmed workers. They will take to arms as they did in 1871, and from the cowed nations of today—or more correctly, from the present-day working-class movement, which is disorganized more by the opportunists than by the governments—there will undoubtedly arise, sooner or later, but with absolute certainty, an international league of the "terrible nations" of the revolutionary proletariat.

Militarism is now permeating the whole of social life. Imperialism is a fierce struggle of the Great Powers for the division and redivision of the world—therefore, it must inevitably lead to further militarization in all countries, even in the neutral and small countries. What will the proletarian women do against it? Only curse all war and everything military, only demand disarmament? The women of an oppressed class that is really revolutionary will never consent to play such a shameful role. They will say to their sons: "You will soon be a man. You will be given a gun. Take it and learn the military art. The proletarians need this knowledge not to shoot your brothers, the workers of other countries, as they are doing in the present war, and as you are being told to do by the traitors to Socialism, but to fight the bourgeoisie of your own country, to put an end to exploitation, poverty and war, not by means of good intentions, but by vanquishing the bourgeoisie and by disarming it."

If we are to refrain from conducting such propaganda, precisely such propaganda, in connection with the present war, then we had better stop using highfalutin phrases about international revolutionary Social-Democracy, about the socialist revolution, and about war against war.

### III

The advocates of disarmament oppose the point in the programme about the "armed nation" for the

reason, among others, that this demand, they allege, easily leads to concessions to opportunism. We have examined above the most important point, namely, the relation of disarmament to the class struggle and to the social revolution. We will now examine the relation between the demand for disarmament and opportunism. One of the most important reasons why this demand is unacceptable is precisely that it, and the illusions it creates, inevitably weaken and devalue our struggle against opportunism.

Undoubtedly this struggle is the main question immediately confronting the International. A struggle against imperialism that is not closely linked up with the struggle against opportunism is an idle phrase, or a fraud. One of the main defects of Zimmerwald and Kienthal, one of the main reasons why these embryos of the Third International may possibly end in a fiasco, is that the question of the struggle against opportunism was not even raised openly, much less decided in the sense of proclaiming the necessity of a rupture with the opportunists. Opportunism has triumphed—temporarily—in the European working-class movement. Two main shades of opportunism have arisen in all the big countries: first, the avowed, cynical, and therefore less dangerous social-imperialism of Messrs. Plekhanov, Scheidemann, Legien, Albert Thomas and Sembat, Vandervelde, Hyndman, Henderson, *et al*; second, the concealed, Kautskyite opportunism: Kautsky-Haase and the Social-Democratic Labour Group in Germany; Longuet, Pressmane, Mayeras, *et al*, in France; Ramsay MacDonald and the other leaders of the Independent Labour Party in England; Martov, Chkheidze and others in Russia; Treves and the other so-called Left reformists in Italy.

Avowed opportunism is openly and directly opposed to revolution and to the incipient revolutionary movements and outbursts, and is in direct alliance with the governments, varied as the forms of this alliance may be: from participation in Cabinets to participation in the War Industries Committees (in Russia).<sup>3</sup> The masked opportunists, the Kautskyites, are much more harmful and dangerous to the working-class movement, because they hide their advocacy of an alliance with the former under a cloak of plausible, pseudo-“Marxist” catchwords and pacifist slogans. The fight against both these forms of prevailing opportunism must be conducted in *all* fields of proletarian politics: parliament, trade unions, strikes, military affairs, etc. The main distinguishing feature of *both* these forms of prevailing opportunism is that the concrete question of the *connection between the present war and*

*revolution and other concrete questions of revolution* is hushed up, concealed, or treated with an eye to police prohibitions. And this is done, notwithstanding the fact that before the war the connection between precisely *this* war that was impending and the proletarian revolution was pointed to innumerable times, both unofficially, and in the Basle Manifesto officially. The main defect in the demand for disarmament is its evasion of all the concrete questions of revolution. Or do the advocates of disarmament stand for a perfectly new species of unarmed revolution?

To proceed. We are by no means opposed to the fight for reforms. We do not wish to ignore the sad possibility that humanity may—if the worst comes to the worst—go through a second imperialist war, if, in spite of the numerous outbursts of mass unrest and mass discontent, and in spite of our efforts, revolution does not come out of the present war. We are in favour of a programme of reforms which is *also* directed against the opportunists. The opportunists would be only too glad if we left the struggle for reforms entirely to them, and, saving ourselves by *flight from sad reality*, sought shelter in the heights above the clouds in some sort of “disarmament.” “Disarmament” means simply running away from unpleasant reality and not fighting against it.

In such a programme we would say something like this: “The slogan and the recognition of defense of the fatherland in the imperialist war of 1914-1916 is only a means of corrupting the working-class movement with the aid of a bourgeois lie.” Such a concrete reply to concrete questions would be theoretically more correct, much more useful to the proletariat and more unbearable to the opportunists, than the demand for disarmament and the repudiation of all “defense of the fatherland.” And we might add: “The bourgeoisie of all the imperialist Great Powers—England, France, Germany, Austria, Russia, Italy, Japan, the United States—has become so reactionary and so imbued with the striving for world domination, that *any* war conducted by *the bourgeoisie of those* countries can be nothing but reactionary. The proletariat must not only oppose all such wars, but it must also wish for the defeat of its ‘own’ government in such wars and utilize it for revolutionary insurrection, if an insurrection to prevent the war proves unsuccessful.”

On the question of a militia, we should have said: We are not in favour of a bourgeois militia; we are in favour only of a proletarian militia. Therefore, “not a penny, not a man,” not only for a standing army, but even for a bourgeois militia, even in countries like the

United States, or Switzerland, Norway, etc.; the more so that in the freest republican countries (e.g., Switzerland), we see that the militia is being more and more Prussianized, particularly in 1907 and 1911, and prostituted by being mobilized against strikers. We can demand election of officers by the people, abolition of all military law, equal rights for foreign and native-born workers (a point particularly important for those imperialist states which, like Switzerland, more and more blatantly exploit increasing numbers of foreign workers while refusing to grant them rights); further, the right of every hundred, say, of the inhabitants of the given country to form voluntary military training associations, with free election of instructors, who are to be paid by the state, etc. Only under such conditions could the proletariat acquire military training really for *itself* and not for its slave-owners; and the need for such training is imperatively dictated by the interests of the proletariat. The Russian revolution showed that every success of the revolutionary movement, even a partial success like the seizure of a certain city, a certain factory village, a certain section of the army—invariably *compels* the victorious proletariat to carry out just such a programme.

Finally, it goes without saying that opportunism cannot be fought merely by means of programmes; it can be fought only by constant vigilance to see that they are really carried out. The greatest, the fatal error the bankrupt Second International committed was that its words did not correspond to its deeds, that it acquired the habit of hypocrisy and shameless revolutionary phrase-mongering (note the present attitude of Kautsky and Co. towards the Basle Manifesto). Disarmament as a social idea, i.e., an idea that springs from a certain social environment and can affect a certain social environment—and is not merely a cranky notion of an individual—has evidently sprung from the exceptionally “tranquil” conditions of life prevailing in certain small states which for a rather long time have stood aside from the bloody world highway of war and hope to stay aside. To be convinced of this, it is sufficient, for instance, to ponder over the arguments advanced by the Norwegian advocates of disarmament. “We are a small country,” they say. “We have a small army, we can do nothing against the Great Powers” (and are, therefore, also powerless to resist being forcibly drawn into an imperialist *alliance* with one or the other group of Great Powers) . . . “We want to be left in peace in our remote corner and continue to conduct our parochial politics, to demand disarmament, compulsory courts of arbitration, permanent

neutrality, etc.” (“permanent” after the Belgian fashion, no doubt?).

The petty striving of petty states to stand aside, the petty-bourgeois desire to keep as far away as possible from the great battles of world history, to take advantage of one’s relatively monopolistic position in order to remain in hide-bound passivity—this is the *objective* social environment which may ensure the disarmament idea a certain degree of success and a certain degree of popularity in some of the small states. Of course, this striving is reactionary and entirely based on illusions; for in one way or another, imperialism draws the small states into the vortex of world economy and world politics.

In Switzerland, for example, the imperialist environment objectively prescribes *two* lines to the working-class movement: the opportunists, in alliance with the bourgeoisie, are trying to convert Switzerland into a republican-democratic monopolistic federation for obtaining profits from imperialist bourgeois tourists and to make this “tranquil” monopolistic position as profitable and as tranquil as possible.

The genuine Social-Democrats of Switzerland are striving to take advantage of the comparative freedom of Switzerland and its “international” situation to help the close alliance of the revolutionary elements of the workers’ parties in Europe to achieve victory. Switzerland, thank God, has not “a separate language of its own” but three world languages, precisely those that are spoken by the adjacent belligerent countries.

If the twenty thousand members of the Swiss party were to pay a weekly levy of two centimes as a sort of “extra war tax,” we would have about twenty thousand francs per annum, a sum more than sufficient to enable us periodically to publish in three languages and to distribute among the workers and soldiers of the belligerent countries—in spite of the ban of the General Staffs—all the material containing the truth about the incipient revolt of the workers, about their fraternizing in the trenches, about their hope to use their arms in a revolutionary manner against the imperialist bourgeoisie of their “own” countries, etc.

All this is not new. This is exactly what is being done by the best papers, like *La Sentinelle*, *Volksrecht* and the *Berner Tagwacht*, although, unfortunately, not on a sufficiently large scale. Only by such activity can the splendid decision of the Aarau Party Congress<sup>4</sup> become something more than merely a splendid decision.

The question that interests us now is: Does the demand for disarmament correspond to the revolutionary trend among the Swiss Social-Democrats? Ob-

viously not. Objectively, "disarmament" is an extremely national, a specifically national programme of small states; it is certainly not the international programme of international revolutionary Social-Democracy.

## Socialism and War (*excerpts*)

### **THE MARXISTS' SLOGAN IS THE SLOGAN OF REVOLUTIONARY SOCIAL-DEMOCRACY**

The war has undoubtedly created a most acute crisis and has increased the distress of the masses to an incredible degree. The reactionary character of this war, and the shameless lies told by the bourgeoisie of all countries in covering up their predatory aims with "national" ideology, are inevitably creating, on the basis of an objectively revolutionary situation, revolutionary moods among the masses. It is our duty to help the masses to become conscious of these moods, to deepen and formulate them. This task is correctly expressed only by the slogan: convert the imperialist war into civil war; and all consistently waged class struggles during the war, all seriously conducted "mass action" tactics inevitably lead to this. It is impossible to foretell whether a powerful revolutionary movement will flare up during the first or the second war of the great powers, whether during or after it; in any case, our bounden duty is systematically and undeviatingly to work precisely in this direction.

The Basle Manifesto refers directly to the example set by the Paris Commune, i.e., to the conversion of a war between governments into civil war. Half a century ago, the proletariat was too weak; the objective conditions for Socialism had not yet ripened; there could be no coordination and cooperation between the revolutionary movements in all the belligerent countries; the "national ideology" (the traditions of 1792), with which a section of the Parisian workers were imbued, was their petty-bourgeois weakness, which Marx noted at the time, and was one of the causes of the fall of the Commune. Half a century after it, the conditions that weakened the revolution at that time have passed away, and it is unpardonable for a Socialist at the present time to resign himself to the abandonment of activities precisely in the spirit of the Paris Communards.

### **THE EXAMPLE SHOWN BY THE FRATERNIZATION IN THE TRENCHES**

The bourgeois newspapers of all the belligerent countries have reported cases of fraternization between the soldiers of the belligerent nations even in the trenches. And the issue by the military authorities (of Germany, England) of draconic orders against such fraternization proved that the governments and the bourgeoisie attached grave importance to it. The fact that such cases of fraternization have been possible even when opportunism reigns supreme in the top ranks of the Social-Democratic parties of Western Europe, and when social-chauvinism is supported by the entire Social-Democratic press and by all the authorities of the Second International, shows us how possible it would be to shorten the present criminal, reactionary and slave-owners' war and to organize a revolutionary international movement, if systematic work were conducted in this direction, if only by the Left-wing Socialists in all the belligerent countries.

### **THE IMPORTANCE OF AN UNDERGROUND ORGANIZATION**

The most prominent Anarchists all over the world, no less than the opportunists, have disgraced themselves with social-chauvinism (in the spirit of Plekhanov and Kautsky) in this war. One of the useful results of this war will undoubtedly be that it will kill both anarchism and opportunism.

While under no circumstances or conditions refraining from utilizing all legal possibilities, however small, for the purpose of organizing the masses and of preaching socialism, the Social-Democratic parties must break with subservience to legality. "You shoot first, Messieurs the Bourgeoisie," wrote Engels, hinting precisely at civil war and at the necessity of our violating legality *after* the bourgeoisie had violated it. The crisis had shown that the bourgeoisie violate it in all countries, even the freest, and that it is impossible to lead the masses to revolution unless an underground organization is set up for the purpose of advocating, discussing, appraising and preparing revolutionary methods of struggle. In Germany, for example, all the *honest* things that Socialists are doing, are being done in spite of despicable opportunism and hypocritical "Kautskyism," and are being done secretly. In England, people are sent to penal servitude for printing appeals against joining the army.

To regard the repudiation of underground methods of propaganda, and ridiculing the latter in the legally published press, as being compatible with membership of the Social-Democratic Party is treachery to Socialism.

#### **CONCERNING DEFEAT OF "ONE'S OWN" GOVERNMENT IN THE IMPERIALIST WAR**

Both the advocates of victory for their governments in the present war and the advocates of the slogan "neither victory nor defeat," equally take the standpoint of social-chauvinism. A revolutionary class cannot but wish for the defeat of its government in a reactionary war, cannot fail to see that its military reverses facilitate its overthrow. Only a bourgeois who believes that a war started by the governments must necessarily end as a war between governments and wants it to end as such, can regard as "ridiculous" and "absurd" the idea that the Socialists of *all* the belligerent countries should wish for the defeat of *all* "their" governments and express this wish. On the contrary, it is precisely a statement of this kind that would conform to the cherished thoughts of every class-conscious worker, and would be in line with our activities towards converting the imperialist war into civil war.

Undoubtedly, the serious anti-war agitation that is being conducted by a section of the British, German and Russian Socialists has "weakened the military power" of the respective governments, but such agitation stands to the credit of the Socialists. Socialists must explain to the masses that they have no other road of salvation except the revolutionary overthrow of "their" governments, and that advantage must be taken of these governments' embarrassments in the present war precisely for this purpose.

#### **PACIFISM AND THE PEACE SLOGAN**

The sentiments of the masses in favour of peace often express incipient protest, anger and consciousness of the reactionary character of the war. It is the duty of all Social-Democrats to utilize these sentiments. They will take a most ardent part in every movement and in every demonstration on this ground; but they will not deceive the people by conceding the idea that peace without annexations, without the oppression of nations, without plunder, without the germs of new wars among the present governments and ruling classes is possible in the absence of a revolutionary move-

ment. Such a deception of the people would merely play into the hands of the secret diplomacy of the belligerent governments and facilitate their counter-revolutionary plans. Whoever wants a lasting and democratic peace must be in favour of civil war against the governments and the bourgeoisie.

#### **THE RIGHT OF NATIONS TO SELF-DETERMINATION**

The most widespread deception of the people perpetrated by the bourgeoisie in the present war is the concealment of its predatory aims with "national-liberation" ideology. The English promise the liberation of Belgium, the Germans of Poland, etc. Actually, as we have seen, this is a war waged by the oppressors of the majority of the nations of the world for the purpose of fortifying and expanding such oppression.

Socialists cannot achieve their great aim without fighting against all oppression of nations. Therefore, they must without fail demand that the Social-Democratic parties of *oppressing* countries (especially of the so-called "great" powers) should recognize and champion the right of *oppressed* nations to self-determination, precisely in the political sense of the term, i.e., the right to political secession. The Socialist of a ruling or colony-owning nation who fails to champion this right is a chauvinist.

The championing of this right, far from encouraging the formation of small states, leads, on the contrary, to the freer, fearless and therefore wider and more widespread formation of very big states and federations of states, which are more beneficial for the masses and more fully in keeping with economic development.

The Socialists of *oppressed* nations must, in their turn, unfailingly fight for the complete (including organizational) unity of the *workers* of the oppressed and oppressing nationalities. The idea of the juridical separation of one nation from another (so-called "cultural-national autonomy" advocated by Bauer and Renner) is reactionary.

Imperialism is the epoch of the constantly increasing oppression of the nations of the world by a handful of "great" powers and, therefore, it is impossible to fight for the socialist international revolution against imperialism unless the right of nations to self-determination is recognized. "No nation can be free if it oppresses other nations" (Marx and Engels). A proletariat that tolerates the slightest violence by "its" nations against other nations cannot be a socialist proletariat.

## NOTES

1. *Junius*, the pseudonym of Rosa Luxemburg (1871–1919).
2. G. A. A. *de Galliffet* (1830–1909), a French general notorious for his ruthless suppression of the Paris Commune in 1871.
3. *The War Industries Committees* were established in Russia in 1915 by the imperialist, big bourgeoisie. In an attempt to bring the workers under their influence and foster chauvinist sentiments among them, the bourgeoisie decided to organize "workers' groups" in these committees. It was to the advantage of the bourgeoisie to have on these committees representatives of the workers who would urge the working-class masses to increase productivity of labor in the war industry. The Mensheviks took an active part in this pseudo-patriotic scheme of the bourgeoisie. The Bolsheviks advocated a boycott of the War Industry Committees and, with the support of the overwhelming majority of the workers, were successful in securing this boycott (see *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union*

[*Bolsheviks*], *Short Course*, Eng. ed., FLPH, Moscow, 1951, pp. 264–65).

4. This refers to the congress of the Swiss Social-Democratic Party, held in Aarau, on November 20–21, 1915. The chief item on the agenda was the question of what attitude the Swiss Social-Democratic Party should take towards the Zimmerwald Union of internationalists. On this issue there was a conflict among the three trends in the party: (1) the anti-Zimmerwaldists, (2) the supporters of the Zimmerwald Right and (3) the supporters of the Zimmerwald Left.

Robert Grimm tabled a resolution proposing that the Swiss Social-Democratic Party should join the Zimmerwald Union and approve the political line of the Zimmerwald Right. The Left wing of the party moved an amendment to Grimm's resolution urging the necessity of launching a mass revolutionary struggle against the war and declaring that only a victorious proletarian revolution could put an end to imperialist war.

The congress carried the Left-wing amendment by a majority vote.

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# All-The-Way Revolution vs. Other Strategies

by Carl Dix

Look, we know what we're up against. It's a cold revolutionary fact that these imperialists are armed to the teeth and vicious. They will stop at nothing to defend their rotten setup. Taking them on and defeating them requires a certain attitude. You gotta be ready to pay the cost. To risk a lot to gain a lot. It's going to take a lot of sacrifice. But it's necessary and people around the world are doing it. The revolution in Peru is setting an example for us and we gotta learn from it.

In Peru, there's a for real revolution, a people's war, being led by the Communist Party of Peru (PCP). In the U.S. they usually call them the Shining Path, and they always call them terrorists and shit like that. But that ain't the deal. That's our people down there in Peru making that revolution. They jumped off the armed struggle there in 1980 and have spread it through the country in the face of everything that the government down there with backing from both the U.S. and the Soviet Union could throw at them.

I know where the PCP is coming from. I've participated with their people in conferences and forums put on by the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement, a movement that groups together Maoist parties and organizations from many different parts of the world. Well before they jumped off the people's war down there, the PCP made a strict calculation that because of the nature of the enemy, a war to really liberate Peru would cost them and the masses hundreds of thousands of lives. They knew what they were entering into. But they didn't hold back because they knew that the reactionaries who run Peru and their backers in Washington, DC, and Moscow were already killing people. And they were determined to stop this through revolution. They know the price you gotta pay to win.

The powers in this country ain't used to dealing with this kind of stuff. They know how to deal with Panama

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*This is an excerpt from Carl Dix's Urgent Message to the Youth 1990 National Speaking Tour – There Must Be A Revolution in Amerikkka: Fear Nothing, Be Down for the Whole Thing. The complete text of this speech is soon to be published in a pamphlet, available from RCP Publications.*



and Grenada, or bombing Libya. Operations that are basically over and done in a few days or weeks. But they can't handle a real people's war or determined revolutionaries like the PCP. They freak out. And that's why their plan to slip troops into Peru under the cover of their phony "War On Drugs" to try to crush the revolution in Peru is going to give them more than they bargained for. They got an ass whipping coming in Peru. I'm glad of it. And I'm ready to do whatever's needed to help see to it that they get that ass whipping that they so justly deserve brought down on 'em.

We've got the same attitude as the comrades from the PCP—Fear Nothing, Be Down For The Whole Thing! This is our Party's stand, this is the stand of the RCYB. Take up this stand, sisters and brothers, so together we can give the enemy a lot more than it can handle.

#### **SERIOUS ABOUT WINNING AND WHY YOU NEED A REVOLUTIONARY MILITARY STRATEGY**

Our military strategy is based on our political line. It's based on who we represent—the propertyless proletarians, and what our goal is—classless, communist society. There are other approaches to taking the powers on politically and militarily that are based on other political lines and on other goals, on non-revolutionary goals.

You got approaches like that of Nelson Mandela and the African National Congress (ANC) in South Africa. I'm going to say some negative stuff about him, not because he has no principles but because he has the wrong principles. When Mandela was here, all the powers' mouthpieces in the media were asking him when he was gonna renounce their armed struggle. Well, that's not our question to him. Our question around South Africa was when is somebody gonna develop and carry out a real revolutionary armed struggle, one that's based on unleashing the people who have already showed clearly that they are ready to fight and die for liberation? When is somebody gonna put guns in their hands? And when is somebody gonna do that from the perspective of smashing the apartheid regime and wiping out everything left over from white domination and imperialist control?

'Cause for Mandela and the ANC, armed struggle meant slipping a few guerrillas into the country to blow up something here or attack a police station

there, until they had caused enough trouble to force the white rulers to sit down and talk with them. This was tied to their overall demand of "one man, one vote." As if having elections and even Black governments has stopped the U.S. from dominating other countries in Africa. In other words, armed struggle was for them a bargaining chip to get cut in on the deal. It don't matter that they have recently decided to suspend this kind of armed struggle in order for their talks with the apartheid rulers to go forward, because their armed struggle wasn't about liberating anybody anyway.

This ain't a revolutionary line in South Africa, and it ain't a revolutionary line here. It won't lead to liberation there, and it damn sure won't lead to liberation here.

Now we've seen people here in the U.S. coming up with variations on this kind of nonrevolutionary military strategy. Usually it's along the lines of what's called urban guerrilla warfare. And this had a lot of currency at different times since the 1960s. In fact, when you talk about armed struggle this is what a lot of people think it must mean. Urban guerrilla warfare is the strategy of having a revolutionary hard core jump off the armed struggle now and engage the enemy in military operations carried out by small groups. The idea is that this would go on for a protracted period of time and keep going on until the ruling class had no choice but to make some concessions. This approach is a substitute for the only correct military strategy in a highly developed country like this, and that is to launch a mass armed insurrection in the urban centers when the political conditions are ripe, and on that basis to establish a revolutionary power which can fight a civil war against the imperialists and defeat them militarily.

You see, what's wrong with this urban guerrilla warfare strategy is that at the best it could make some trouble for the enemy, deal them some blows here and there, but *it can never overthrow them*. And, at worst, like the ANC strategy, it could be part of a strategy that aims at using armed struggle and people's sacrifice to get the enemy to come to the bargaining table and cut some of the oppressed in for a piece of the rotten set up.

Maybe people saw this movie from 1970 called *The Spook Who Sat by the Door*. It was about the first Black FBI agent who worked for them. And he got all this training and came back to the ghetto and organized some street gangs into a disciplined guerrilla army which started military actions against the U.S. govern-

ment. As a movie this made for some exciting viewing. The sight of oppressed people taking out the man's cops and military forces lights up my eyes. But it wasn't a winning strategy. No matter how heroically the Spook and his forces fought—and they had a lot of commitment, that wasn't the problem—the best that they could do with this strategy was to cause the enemy major disruptions. But they couldn't defeat the powers. In fact, their leader came to that conclusion and limited their goals to getting the man to agree to some demands.

We can't leave things at fucking things up for them to get them to agree to some demands. Because concessions aren't enough, and even when we get the enemy to give in to any of our demands, as long as they're still in power, they just take them back later.

As I said, like the PCP in Peru, we're serious about winning. Which means we're serious about winning the military struggle. And that's why we reject this urban guerrilla warfare as our basic strategy and base ourselves on the strategy of people's war adapted to the conditions of imperialist society.

#### **LET'S NOT BE PLAYED FOR FOOLS**

I know that a lot of people tell us that there other ways to solve our problems. And that some of these ways might seem better because they involve less sacrifice and hardship than going for revolution. But none of them can solve the problems we face, and many of the people who try to sell these approaches to us are like the snake oil men from the old west movies who would sell you a bottle of poison and tell you, "it's good for what ails you." And you got people saying that their dead end political paths are good for what ails you.

We gotta get clear on this or else we'll never have a chance to get out from under all of this mess. This is something we learned from V.I. Lenin, the leader of the Russian revolution and one of the baddest leaders the proletariat has ever had. What he said was basically that people are going to keep on being suckered by the powers that be until they learn to figure out the class interests behind developments in society.

You see, different classes have their own nature. They have different interests around major questions and events and they put forward their own programs and ways to control or deal with things.

Look at how the capitalist rulers try to sucker us on their elections. They tell us that voting is a precious right and a great equalizer that allows even the poor to

influence things. Then they tell you that the Democrats are the party that is most sensitive to the plight of poor and oppressed people. And when you stop falling for that, they trot out their Black faces and say that this is the way for Black people to change things.

Let me put it to you straight. How many more Democrats are you going to elect for this system? How many more Black faces are you going to put into high places hoping that they going to work for you when actually they work only as front men for the powers and their setup? How many more chances are you going to give this setup to prove what it has been proving to the oppressed for the last 400 years? That it is built on oppression, thrives on oppression and counts on the victims of oppression to swallow its lies and promises?

I could see you maybe falling for it the first time you voted for one of the powers' Black front men. Maybe even the next time, too. But come on, in the last 25 years the number of Black elected officials has skyrocketed from almost none to over 7,000. But the conditions of the majority of Black people have remained stagnant or gotten worse, on virtually every front! By now can't we see that nobody benefits from that road, except for the powers and the handful of Black people who get positions in the system by helping the powers hold the majority of the oppressed down? How many more Tom Bradleys, Coleman Youngs or David Dinkins do you need in order to realize this? Why do we still go for these puny politics and sorry slave vision? Why let them reduce us to this when we got a chance to get clear on what needs to be done and to start acting on it? Especially now, when this system, on account of its own troubles and crises, may give us the only chance we really need, the chance to rise up and do it in through revolution.

Back in the 60's Malcolm X said, by any means necessary. Well, this is the 90's, and I'm saying that the only means that can deal with all the problems we face is all-the-way, liberating revolution, people's war.

#### **THE REAL DEAL — ONLY ALL-THE-WAY REVOLUTION CAN SOLVE THE PROBLEM**

Also, you got people who say economics is the key to freedom. They say that building up Black businesses, buying Black and boycotting businesses that don't treat Black people right will change things.

First off, let's get clear on the real deal. This is America in the 90's and the economic setup we're dealing with ain't mom and pop stores on the corner

but global imperialists who have monopolized whole industries and who have a stranglehold on everything in the U.S. and in much of the world. And you ain't going to nickel and dime your way to the point where you can break that stranglehold.

But what is possible is that some Black capitalists and wannabe capitalists can get themselves in a better position to compete for a slice of the market for themselves and to get cut in as junior partners in the foul setup that is Amerika by appealing to racial loyalty to get themselves built up. What the Black masses get out of this is maybe a slight change in the color of who exploits you.

I know it might sound good to talk about Black people owning their own, especially after centuries of being squeezed and bled dry by brutal white profiteers. But what does it really come down to? Which Black people are going to own these Black businesses that we're supposed to support? And how is sponsoring a few more Black capitalists going to liberate anybody?

I mean, you tell me. How is someone selling you some deodorant and shampoo going to move us closer to getting out from under all this mess, even if it's Minister Farrakhan and he calls it Clean and Fresh? And for those people who want to focus our attention on pushing some Korean or Arab stores out of the Black community, that shit is way off the mark, too. That approach don't deal blows to the real enemy. In fact, this approach has allowed the enemy to divert attention away from the vicious and brutal attacks the system was dealing out to Black people. And it sharpened up divisions among the people oppressed by this system.

This is another example of what Lenin said, of what I was talking about before, about how different classes, and right now I'm talking about different classes among Black people, have their own natures and interests and organize around these interests, and how we gotta see through this to our own interests.

Check it out. This past May, in New York City, while the trial of several of the murderers of Yusef Hawkins was going down, the powers and their media "discovered" a boycott of two Korean stores that had been initiated by Black activists several months earlier. The media made it front page news. That same month, speaking for the RCP, I issued a call for people of all nationalities to come down to the courthouse in Brooklyn to fight for Justice for Yusef.

Look at the outlooks behind these two battles. On

the one side, you have the fight for Justice for Yusef guided by the spirit of, "Proletarians and oppressed peoples of the world, unite! You have nothing to lose but your chains!" But with this boycott you have something else going on. You got some class forces in the Black community who are resentful of the fact that Koreans and other nationalities are running stores and shops that they think that THEY should be running. It's like this is their turf and their market. And this boycott that's being organized is guided by this kind of class outlook. You might say their slogan is "Shopkeepers of the world, cut each other's throats, you have nothing to gain but each other's markets."

If this kind of line leads the struggle, we won't get anywhere. When I say this, I don't mean that the proletariat can't unite with people who got this kind of class outlook and program in the struggle against the powers. We can, because the powers are coming down on them, too. But if we're going to be able to unite everybody who can be united against the real enemy and deal them some powerful blows, our class, the proletariat, and its program have to lead the way.

If we give up leadership to other class forces, things get taken down dead end roads or stopped short of what's needed. The best you can do with this kind of Black capitalist grabbing the Black market approach is to forge some kind of neo-colony under the thumb of this system. Countries in Africa and South America have that kind of setup today, and the people there desperately need revolution to get rid of it. You got that in the Bantustans in South Africa. Shit, we even had that here among Black people back in segregation days. This won't even gain equality for Black capitalists under this setup. Even more, it won't emancipate the masses of Black people or proletarians and oppressed people of all nationalities. Only the proletarian line and proletarian leadership can lead the way to real, sweet liberation. Check it out, and get down with it, sisters and brothers.

You also got some people telling you that whether you're an immigrant, a Puerto Rican, a Chicano, or a Black youth—that without an education you might as well be dead. Our party is here to tell you that under this system, whether you have an education or not, if you're a proletarian, it's living death for you. We gotta bring on the death of this system so we can all live free!

Going for anything short of revolution is just playing around, promoting reformist pipe dreams and illusions. Only all-the-way revolution can deal with all this mess.

# Uprooting National Oppression

*from THE NEW PROGRAMME  
of the Revolutionary Communist Party, U.S.A.*

Since the history of the development of capitalism in the U.S. is a history of the most savage oppression of the Black, Native American, Mexican-American, Puerto Rican, Asian and other oppressed peoples, taking up this question for solution is crucial for the U.S. proletarian revolution.

Discrimination, the denial of democratic rights, violent police repression, suppression and mutilation of their cultures and languages, exploitation and oppression as members of the working class, with the lowest positions, constantly high unemployment, the lowest paid jobs, the worst housing, the worst of bad health care and other social services—all this and more is daily life for the masses of these nationalities in the U.S. today. And it is these conditions that the proletariat in power must and will eliminate.

All this, of course, cannot be done in a minute. But much of it can and will be. This is not only because of greater moral determination on the part of the proletariat. The capitalists today have thousands of laws on paper outlawing discrimination, but still discrimination thrives and even worsens. This is because they have a greater law in command—the law of maximizing profit—and under this law all of society is maintained in a twisted state. Such deformities fully conform to their interests. The proletariat, on the other hand, has no such interest and every interest, in fact, in eliminating all these inequalities which are both left-overs from the old society and festering grounds for overall capitalist restoration. Discrimination, for example, will be immediately and forcefully banned in employment, housing and all other spheres. As part of this general process in society, the army of police which enforces all this through systematic terror in the ghettos and barrios and other areas where oppressed

*This excerpt from the New Programme of the RCP, USA inaugurates "After the Revolution . . ." which will be a regular feature in future issues of Revolution.*

nationalities are concentrated will have been destroyed, just punishment handed out to its hired thugs, and in its place will be armed and organized militia made up of the masses in these neighborhoods and areas.

Segregation in neighborhoods, schools and the like will be banned and integration promoted. Segregationist groups will be broken up, and the demagogues who have initiated attacks on oppressed nationalities will be immediately crushed. And if, for example, somebody in a factory jumps up and starts some racist mouthing off, although he will probably not be jailed unless he is really organizing a reactionary movement, the masses of workers will be mobi-

*“Over the long-term, the state will give preference in resources and assistance to the less developed and backward areas, of course in coordination with and on the basis of the overall development of society . . .*

lized right then and there to wage a sharp struggle against all this and to isolate and defeat such reactionary poison. This method generally will be spread throughout society as the basic means for dealing with all aspects of reactionary ideology among the people.

The new proletarian state will take immediate and special measures to change the situation of all-around social inequality. This will require struggle to win the masses of all nationalities to see the absolute necessity for these measures in order to develop—and even to keep—the victories of the new society. For example, the question will be posed about what to do to rebuild the neighborhoods after the seizure of power. There will be a lot of destruction generally after the civil war and most likely in the wake of a world war. But it will still be the case that the ghettos and slums where mostly the oppressed peoples were forced to live, will be the most run down and broken down. Everybody is going to have an urgent feeling that their own conditions must be improved from this ugly devastation of capitalism. But Party members and other class-conscious people are going to have to go out and struggle with the rest and set an example in practice, in self-sacrifice and voluntary labor, to see that the neighbor-

hoods at the very bottom are rebuilt—and improved—first, while people in other areas will have to be given second priority, and in some cases even to largely live with what they’ve got for a time until the resources can be devoted to that problem too. If the proletarian state does not apply this policy, then the basis for proletarian power will be seriously undermined, because the oppressed people would rightly say, “How is this different from before? We’re still on the bottom.” And the basis for new or old capitalists to “divide and conquer” and establish power over society would be greatly strengthened. Over the long-term, the state will give preference in resources and assistance to the less developed and backward areas, of course in coordination with and on the basis of the overall development of society; and in the immediate situation after the seizure of power, the policy of “raising up the bottom” will be applied across the board.

There are many different oppressed nationalities in the U.S. and each has its own particular features and problems that must be solved: the Native American peoples have a long history of lands being stolen and their cultures suppressed; the oppression of the Puerto Rican people within the U.S. is closely linked with the colonial status of their homeland, which must be freed; the Black people have the history of slavery and of the historical process of their formation as an oppressed

*. . . and in the immediate situation after the seizure of power, the policy of ‘raising up the bottom’ will be applied across the board.”*

nation in the Black Belt areas of the South; the Chicanos have the particular history of U.S. oppression of Mexico, the theft of its land and the maintaining of large parts of the Southwest as a backward area, and the continued persecution of “illegals.” Such particularities exist in the case of each of the oppressed nationalities. But, at the same time, there are certain broad features common to many or all of the oppressed peoples that must be grasped and dealt with by the proletariat in power by mobilizing the masses of people of these nationalities and at the same time mobilizing the whole proletariat to take up these questions.

The proletarian revolution in the U.S. will not be a simple affair. It will involve many complex

phenomena and varied social movements, many led—even at the time of revolution—by different class forces and mobilized under different programs. This will be true particularly, though not exclusively, of the oppressed nationalities. There will likely be a number of actual armies in the field and while there is only one overall and fundamental revolutionary solution to the contradictions of society, this solution has many varied aspects, each or many of which will propel different social forces into motion. Upon victory, and in fact in order to achieve victory, the Party will have to lead the class-conscious workers in assessing these different forces, establishing principled unity with them whenever possible, struggling with them for the revolutionary program of the proletariat, while seeking ways to resolve differences non-antagonistically.

The question of land is an important one in the history of a number of the oppressed peoples of this country. While this question is not today the central question for most of them, it is one that has continued to give rise to struggle and will certainly do so in the future, particularly in the context of civil war. The borders of the U.S. are not sacred to the class-conscious proletariat in this country—forged as they were in the blood of oppressed peoples and through outright robbery by the ruling class. The question of borders and land will not be approached by the proletariat on the basis of U.S. history—that is, on the basis of chauvinism. Instead it will be approached on the basis of winning as much as possible for the international proletarian revolution and on the basis of equality and liberation for the oppressed peoples within the present U.S. borders. The aim of the proletariat is not for secession and small separate states. Instead it will be important to strive for a country united under a single proletarian state. But for this unity to be real, not forced, and for the legitimate rights of various oppressed people to be honored, the proletarian state will also seek to establish various forms of autonomy in areas of sizeable historic concentrations of these peoples.

For the Black people, who were historically oppressed as a nation in the Black Belt South, there continues to be the right of self-determination there, up to and including secession, but again the proletariat does not favor this under now foreseeable circumstances. Upon achieving power, or in the armed struggle to win it, if there are indeed significant forces based among Black people raising this demand, the proletariat will have to take this into account, in the light of the overall situation and the principle of weakening the enemy

and strengthening the proletarian revolutionary forces. Whether to support a particular move for a separate state among Black people or to oppose it will depend on all this, but the proletarian state—and the proletarian forces nearing power—cannot rely on force against the people to resolve this question but must rely on the masses, especially in this case the masses of Black people, and work to resolve the question non-antagonistically.

Native Americans, too, have special conditions and history in regard to the land question. They have been repeatedly forced off their land into concentration camps which are euphemistically called “reservations.” In undoing this long-standing atrocity the

***“ The borders of the U.S. are not sacred to the class-conscious proletariat in this country — forged as they were in the blood of oppressed peoples and through outright robbery by the ruling class. . . ”***

proletariat will, through consultation with the masses of the Indian peoples, establish large areas of land where they can live and work and will provide special assistance to the Indian peoples in developing these areas. Here autonomy will be the policy of the proletarian state—the various Indian peoples will have the right to self-government within the larger socialist state, under certain overall guiding principles. The overall guiding principles referred to are that practices and customs must tend to promote equality, not inequality, unity not division between different peoples, and eliminate, not foster, exploitation. The Indian peoples themselves will be mobilized and relied on to struggle through and enforce these principles. This will mean that policies related to local affairs as well as customs, culture and language will be under autonomous control, while at the same time the Indian peoples will be encouraged as well to take a full part in the overall affairs of society as a whole. Local customs and practices—such as medicine—usually dismissed (or occasionally “glorified” in all cynicism) by the capitalists today as “pure mysticism” will be studied for those aspects that have an underlying scientific content and those aspects will be promoted and applied generally by the proletariat. These kinds of principles, with different particulars in different

cases, will apply in all cases of autonomy within the proletarian state.

Many will apply to the Mexican-American (Chicano) people, particularly in the Southwest, the area of their largest historic concentration. As part of this, the proletarian state will uphold the right of the masses of the Chicano people to land denied them through violation of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which, as it sealed the U.S. rip-off of land from Mexico in 1848, supposedly "in return" guaranteed Chicanos certain basic—and soon trampled—rights.

While Hawaii, too, is part of the U.S. and the proletariat will fight to win control of it as part of its new state, this state will establish some forms of autonomy of the peoples there—particularly the native Hawaiian people, but also the other oppressed nationalities.

These land and autonomy policies of the proletarian state will not mean that the oppressed peoples will have to live in these areas—which would amount to a new form of segregation. In particular, this will most definitely not be a new chapter in the history of oppression of the Indian peoples—forcing them onto reservations and treating them like special "wards of the state." Instead the new proletarian state, while favoring and encouraging unity and integration, will ensure these formerly oppressed peoples' right to autonomy as part of the policy of promoting real equality between nations and peoples.

In opposition to the blatantly chauvinist policies of the bourgeoisie on the question of the languages and cultures of the oppressed nationalities, the proletarian state will uphold genuine equality. In areas, for example, where many people have Spanish as their first language, both English and Spanish will be taught in the schools, including to white and Black students, and this will be promoted among the workers as well. Both languages will be spoken, so that neither—in particular the language of the minority nationality—is in fact treated as inferior.

A flowering of the cultures of the minority nationalities will be promoted. Only far in the future, when communism has been achieved, including through the struggle for national equality, will nations be superseded and will the national differences, including in the area of cultures, be transcended.

In the U.S. today the influence of the cultural forms and creations of different nationalities do get spread among many others, and this is favorable for and will be built on by the proletariat when it wins political power. But still, the proletariat will encourage and

support the development of separate national forms of culture, all serving the proletarian revolution in their content. Culture whose content is counter-revolutionary, no matter of what national form, will be opposed and suppressed. The state will pay special attention to supporting models within all the various national forms of cultures, models which will combine the best in artistic techniques in these forms with proletarian revolutionary political content.

As for all the ideological poison on the national question—the national chauvinism, racist thinking (as well as the overall secondary problem of narrow nationalism), all these things which the bourgeoisie insists are "everlasting human nature"—the proletariat will deal with these too. Obviously this is a protracted process, but the first and the major qualitative step will have been taken when the capitalist system that is the source of this sewer, and in turn thrives off it, is swept away. A major part of the material base for this among the masses, which includes the fact that capitalism throws them into a dog-eat-dog existence, including competition for a mere livelihood, will be demolished and the struggle will continue to be waged to finally, thoroughly uproot it altogether both in the material and ideological spheres.

Those who use the chauvinist banner to organize any kind of reactionary, racist movement and attacks on minority nationalities will be ruthlessly crushed. The KKK, Nazis and the like will be wiped out and their members forcefully dealt with, beginning with the leaders, who will be given the ultimate punishment.

More broadly in society, the proletariat will deal with this problem by promoting education and struggle among the people. Education about the lives, cultures, history of oppression and resistance of all the formerly oppressed nationalities will be widely and deeply carried out. The capitalist source of the problems of all different sections of the oppressed will be constantly unveiled and hit again and again. The common myths among the people will be discussed and debunked, in large part by relying on organized exchange between the masses themselves, and the lies of the bourgeoisie will be ruthlessly and thoroughly exposed. All this will be greatly aided by the constantly closer contact between people of different nationalities as the policies of integrating the workplaces, neighborhoods and schools are carried out, thus breaking down the ignorance-breeding separation in which bourgeoisie ideology generally feeds.

As indicated earlier, while all these measures are necessary to deal with the special forms of national oppression and its whole historical basis, it certainly does not mean that the masses of minority nationalities will be only or mainly concerned with ending their own oppression. In fact, they are overwhelmingly workers, part of the single multinational working class in this country, and many will be in the front ranks of the overall struggle to revolutionize society and change the world.

And in all this, as with all the measures outlined above, the overriding thing will be that the proletariat and the broad masses of people, even while there are many backward ideas left and much ideological struggle to be waged, will be at last living and struggling in a social system which allows and requires them to consciously unite for the common goal, for a bright and classless future where the oppression of one people by another or one part of society by another will be buried in the prehistoric past.



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# Germany: And the Wall Came Tumbling Down

*by Köklü Köpus*

Germany has rested on a faultline of interimperialist conflict for years, and that is no less the case today. However, the sudden collapse of the entire state of East Germany and its absorption into West Germany has changed fundamentally how this gets expressed. What all observers agreed was virtually impossible, short of major war between the U.S. and Soviet blocs, has now happened; virtually overnight the East German regime went from the linchpin of the Soviet alliance to a part of a newly triumphant unified Germany. What happened, and how did it go down so fast and so unexpectedly? By looking more deeply into the causes of this dizzyingly rapid shift and analyzing the motivations of the powers involved—including the Soviet Union, the U.S., Germany itself and other European powers—we hope to indicate how world contradictions have actually heightened and what this could mean for revolutionary possibilities.

To do that, we must first of all look at this in light of the shift of Gorbachev to the strategies of “glasnost”, “perestroika”, and “new thinking” internationally. While we cannot do that in depth here,<sup>1</sup> in brief these initiatives are part of a package to reconfigure a bloc in crisis to better contend with its imperialist rivals. And Germany plays a very large role in the thinking of this strategy.

On the economic level, Gorbachev aims to reorganize the financial linkages and relations within the Soviet-led bloc and between it and the western imperialists. Western capital and technology—and especially West German capital—are seen as playing a decisive role in reenergizing the process of capital reproduction in the Soviet empire (“joint-ventures” is

one current buzzword for this). The West German imperialists are being offered unprecedented access to Eastern European markets and fields of investment (including in the Soviet Union itself).

### SOVIET STRATEGIC AIMS

On the strategic level Gorbachev hopes to loosen West Germany's ties to NATO and to bring about significant reductions in the number of the U.S. troops stationed there (including the removal of U.S. nuclear and chemical weapons). Along with the economic enticements already mentioned, the Soviet Union had also intended to use the prospect of eventual German reunification. Whether the Soviets actually anticipated the speed with which events would assume their own momentum in late 1989 is, of course, open to question—but their strategy all along carried this as an implicit risk. This is the famous "German card" from the point of view of the Soviet imperialists.

Short term, the Soviet rulers aim to use these changes as a means to confront and at least contain the escalating all-around crisis they are facing. Their longer range hope is to alter the balance of world imperialist power, to somehow bring out of the crisis and chaos in their bloc an alignment qualitatively more conducive to their interests and ambitions. In effect, they are attempting to manage an avalanche.

As this new course unfolded in 1988-90, the Soviet imperialists themselves began to say that "real existing socialism" (their code word for their brand of capitalism and imperialism) had failed and that open "western-style market capitalism" and some form of western-style pluralist democracy were the only answers to the mounting expressions of crisis emerging throughout their bloc. They were certainly aware that dumping "Goulash-socialism" and their "Marxism-as-state-religion" would further exacerbate the legitimacy crisis faced by the regimes throughout Eastern Europe. In fact, they were probably counting on this as one means to pressure these ruling classes into going along with the changes they had planned. It was certain that at least a section of these classes would resist these changes since they were bound to bring a loss of power for those whose positions depended on the state-capitalist setup with the capitalist ruling class headquartered in the party bureaucracy. It was in this context that East German ruler Erich Honecker was faced with the choice of either getting on the perestroika-train and getting in step with the Soviet

Union's new strategy or else losing his head.

The intensifying crisis faced by the East German ruling class was more than an abstract concept. The threat of economic and political collapse, accompanied by mass upheaval, was very real. Further, given its level of integration into the Soviet-led bloc as a whole, it was not possible for the East German imperialists to realistically pursue some kind of independent course that had any hope of success. Honecker and others in the leadership who wanted to cling to the old set-up (or could not change direction because they were too closely identified with the old system) were able to hold on for a while and thumb their noses at "perestroika", so to speak. But in the end, the bulk of the East German ruling class was forced to both recognize and act upon the necessity they were increasingly being faced with.

Honecker's actual fall had two specific elements. First, Gorbachev worked to undermine him. During the summer of '89 East Germans vacationing in other East Bloc countries sought to go to the West. A full-blown crisis erupted as Hungary and then Czechoslovakia broke treaties with the GDR (German Democratic Republic—East Germany) and allowed large numbers of East Germans to leave. *This could not have happened without explicit or at least tacit approval from the Kremlin.* Second, Gorbachev's actions had the effect of igniting a genuine mass movement aimed principally at the established order in East Germany. Although this movement was strongly influenced by reformism and nationalism, getting it under control was easier said than done.

When Gorbachev visited East Berlin in early October 1989 for the GDR's 40th Anniversary celebration, he reportedly told the Politburo that no Soviet troops would be used to protect the regime against internal opposition. A few days later Honecker and some other elements of the East German leadership ordered the army to carry out a Tienanmen-style solution and forcibly put down the mounting mass demonstrations. According to press accounts, Soviet officers countermanded these orders and the troops returned to their barracks. This was a decisive event. The armed forces are the key component of the bourgeois state. Once it became clear that the East German army would not intervene to save the Honecker regime the die was cast. Within a few days Honecker, almost the entire politburo and government were gone.

This, however, was still not enough to quell the surging mass unrest. On November 9th, the East German rulers reached for the last non-violent safety

valve at their disposal and opened the Berlin Wall (and the German/German border generally). (Little reported in the press is the fact that during all this, U.S. and other NATO troops were put on various stages of heightened alert as crisis contingency plans were put into effect. This is but another sign of just how out of control events had become.)

In sum, Gorbachev himself unleashed and at key points pushed forward the course of events that blew down the wall. At the same time, these events also assumed an out-of-control character as masses came into political life and as other powers as well began to maneuver and angle within the new openings provided.

### THE IMPERIALISTS' CONFLICTING INTERESTS AND STRATEGIES

"[I]n the realities of the capitalist system... (imperialist) alliances, no matter what form they may assume, whether of one imperialist coalition against another, or of a general alliance embracing *all* the imperialist powers, are *inevitably* nothing more than a 'truce' in periods between wars. Peaceful alliances prepare the ground for wars, and in their turn grow out of wars; the one conditions the other, producing alternating forms of peaceful and non-peaceful struggle on *one and the same* basis of imperialist connections and relations within world economics and world politics." (Lenin, *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, LSW, Vol. I, pp.760-1)

Since the all-around restoration of capitalism in the Soviet Union in the mid-50's and the emergence of two rival imperialist blocs, both Germanys had played a very crucial economic, political and military role for their respective alliances. The border between East and West Germany marked the inter-imperialist faultline in Europe. This created a push/pull kind of situation for both sides. Each bloc had to deal with the question of how to give play to its respective German junior-partner's desire to push East/West—to be able to use it as a spearhead—and at the same time not have one's spearhead *pulled* out from under. Whether this "German card" turns out to be an ace in the hole or a joker was, and is, an important unknown in the murderous calculations of the major imperialist powers.

In both East and West Germany the ruling classes had among their key strategic goals regaining as much

of the territory of the 1937 nation-state as possible (for the W. Germans this has also meant regaining its traditional areas of influence to the east, in Poland, the Balkans, and what was earlier the Austro-Hungarian Empire, etc.). The large increase in their national economic base that reunification would bring has been an important element in their (up until now) conflicting plans for rising to a more dominant position in the world imperialist order.

But neither Germany, and this is also true of all major imperialist powers, could pursue its goals alone. This could and can only be done in and through their respective blocs. While both Germanys played key roles in their blocs, their interests were *never identical* with those of the leaders or other members of their blocs. Imperialist alliances are *always* both a form of collusion and contention among the various powers that make them up.

The U.S., as leader of its bloc, confronts the problem of pursuing its own interests while at the same time managing the conflicting economic, political and strategic interests of the other bloc members and holding the bloc together as a whole. The terms on which this is done are, as Lenin said, "a calculation of the *strength* of those participating". Furthermore, he pointed out that "the strength of these participants in the division does not change to an equal degree, for the *even* development of different undertakings, trusts, branches of industry or countries is impossible under capitalism." (*Imperialism*) One key change since NATO was formed in the 1950's is that today West Germany stands second only to the U.S. in economic power, but continues to rank behind England and France in military/strategic "say-so".

Since its founding, NATO had been formally committed to the goal of German reunification. But especially France and England feared that such a development would only increase German power relative to their own and give rise to German demands that its interests be given preference in both Common Market and NATO decisions and planning. This contradiction had been NATO's *dirty little secret* for 30 years. As long as the Soviet Union continued to oppose German reunification (or would only agree to it on terms unacceptable to the West German imperialists) this "secret" could be kept in the closet.

The current imperialist conjuncture—the heightening of the underlying contradictions of imperialism on a world scale—has created a deadly dilemma for the imperialists. On the one hand, they find themselves confronted with crisis of massive dimension which

brings with it the specter of their revolutionary overthrow. On the other hand they face the uncertain results of nuclear world war (which could also result in their revolutionary overthrow or mutual destruction). This found especially acute and open expression during the early and mid-80's, when Reagan and the Brezhnev group both actively and openly prepared for the nuclear war. But while events and maneuvers have partially and temporarily mitigated the intensity of the inter-imperialist contradiction, they have not eliminated it by any means. The "assertion of nationality", the pursuit of imperialist national interest together with the intensification of imperialist crisis have now created a situation in which the bonds of imperialist alliance have been made malleable in a way hardly imaginable just a few years ago.

The lure of the Soviet Union's inducements is a powerful magnet in the West German imperialists' current eastward drift. After all, the Soviets seem to be offering the West Germans the chance to achieve many of their strategic objectives without the world war that would have very likely meant the nuclear devastation of Central Europe. But there was a "push" to go along with this "pull"; the reaction of the U.S. imperialists to the Soviet Union's sudden change of course. And in particular as it was concentrated in the signing of the treaty on Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces (the INF Treaty) and the military/strategic changes that accompanied this treaty.

The West Germans had just weathered the most serious political crisis in their history in order to station INF missiles in Germany when the U.S., with no consultation, suddenly announced in 1987 an agreement to eliminate them. This called into question the U.S. "nuclear umbrella" over Germany—that is, the more or less guaranteed assurance that any attack on Germany would automatically involve the U.S. Further maneuverings within the U.S. bloc would have had the effect of making the only ground-based NATO nuclear weapons left in Europe those which had a range limiting them to targets in greater Germany. An imperialist war of redivision, no matter what the outcome for NATO as a whole, began to look to the West Germans like it could only mean national suicide for them.

The U.S. had risked German displeasure because the Soviet offer had both posed it a certain necessity (to refuse the agreement meant a tremendous Soviet propaganda victory) and a certain opportunity (the elimination of a category of weapons in which the Soviets had a clear advantage, and the changes in force

structure that came with the treaty offered the U.S. greater flexibility in its use of strategic weapons).

But whatever the calculations and/or miscalculations of the ruling classes involved, by the end of 1987 there was no mistaking the fact that relations between the U.S. (along with France and England) and West Germany had taken a decisive turn. The West German ruling class viewed the INF Treaty as an act of betrayal on the part of the U.S. If this was how the U.S. lived up to its commitments in "peacetime", what would it do in time of international crisis or war? This was strong incentive to begin looking for alternatives to the old strategy and to view in a favorable light the new and interesting offers being made by a powerful European neighbor.

#### **IMPERIALIST ILLUSION AND THE REALITIES OF THE IMPERIALIST SYSTEM**

The West German ruling class believes that the chance to achieve its long sought "place in the sun" has come. It is time to act, because, as German Foreign Minister Genscher is fond of saying, "History does not repeat its offers." Until now they have enjoyed a privileged position in the U.S.-led bloc. But the price was high, living on the faultline and being the military staging area for World War III. Now they see the opportunity to gain a privileged position in what was formerly the rival bloc as well; to straddle both camps instead of the faultline. This decision calls for some basic changes in the role and position of a reunited Germany in the imperialist world order.

This new order as they see it has a reunited Germany achieving dominant status in Central Europe. The addition of the GDR makes for a GNP equal to that of France and Great Britain combined. West Germany has been the Soviet Union's largest western trading partner. This has amounted to only 1.8% of West Germany's total foreign trade. But East Germany is the Soviet Union's most important East Bloc trading partner (relying heavily on East Germany for computers and specialized machinery). At present levels a reunited Germany would be the Soviet's largest single trading partner by far with 15% of all Soviet foreign trade. In addition, the West Germans hope to gain strategic advantage by taking over East Germany's connections to markets and areas of investment (and, as one London banker put it, "cheap labor") throughout Eastern Europe.

To cash in on these perceived opportunities the West Germans pushed for reunification of Germany at as fast a pace as possible, while attempting to avoid a sudden rush that would bring with it the risk of serious economic and social dislocation (this too is easier said than done).

Down the line, Germany will push for significant reductions in the numbers of foreign troops stationed in Germany (if not their complete removal). And they will insist on the removal of all foreign nuclear and chemical weapons from German territory. From the German point of view, what is the purpose of the European component of the U.S. nuclear umbrella if that mainly means weapons designed to go off in Germany? And what is the point of all the NATO troops on its soil if Germany has already achieved its main strategic goals and its former enemy is now also offering to guarantee its new *expanded borders and access to eastern markets and areas of investment*?! Reduction of foreign troops will give Germany greater freedom of action in international affairs.

All this requires a new *modus operandi* with the Soviet Union. In February 1990 West German Chancellor Kohl and Foreign Minister Genscher made a surprise visit to Moscow. This meeting laid the basis for the arrangement that emerged from Kohl's July meeting with Gorbachev in the Caucasus. There Kohl agreed to five key things: 1. after reunification no foreign NATO troops or nuclear, biological or chemical weapons will be stationed on what was formerly GDR territory; 2. reunited Germany will recognize the present western border of Poland; 3. reunited Germany will fulfill all current contracts between East Germany and the Soviet Union for the delivery of key industrial goods to Russia; 4. reunited Germany will bear a major portion of the costs for the maintenance and withdrawal of Soviet troops now stationed on German territory and guarantee their rights of movement in a new status of forces treaty; and, 5. the combined active duty armed forces of reunited Germany will not exceed 370,000 and Germany will not produce its own nuclear, biological or chemical weapons. Beyond these five points, the West Germans agreed to pursue an aggressive policy of economic cooperation and assistance to the Soviet Union.

For all intents and purposes these developments constitute the beginnings of a "special relationship" between Germany and the Soviet Union. On the basis of these agreements, Gorbachev gave his final approval for reunification to move ahead and for reunited Germany to remain in NATO. In addition he

pledged that all Soviet troops would be withdrawn from German soil by the end of 1994. The U.S. could hardly hide its surprise (if not shock) at the suddenness with which this agreement was reached and the fact that West Germany had made this deal with apparently little or no consultation with Washington.

The race of events has repeatedly knocked the U.S. rulers off balance. Up until Modrow's late January '90 trip to Moscow from which he returned chanting "Deutschland einig, Vaterland" ("Germany one fatherland"), the U.S. rulers seemed convinced that the Soviet Union would veto any German reunification in the short-term. Many predicted that the "loss" of East Germany would mean the unraveling of the Soviet-led bloc. They did not anticipate how the Soviet Union planned to use the fear that a reunited and eastward looking Germany evokes among the countries of Eastern Europe as a force for holding them in line. (The statements by the Solidarity government in Poland that German reunification required assurances from Moscow that its troops would *not* be pulled out of Poland without the agreement of the Polish government are an example of this.)

As recently as February of 1990 the *New York Times* crowed about the Soviet Union's "strategic weakness" and that "for months now, President Mikhail S. Gorbachev has been playing a poor hand so deftly that it has often looked like a good one." There is a great deal of truth to this. Gorbachev has done fairly well to date in turning imperialist necessity into freedom. His problem is that there is no way to turn imperialism—and its underlying laws of operation—into something that is not based on the contradictions inherent to capital.

At the same time the U.S.'s own position has been challenged as well. Gorbachev is prepared to pull all Soviet troops—along with their nuclear weapons—out of Eastern Europe. In such a situation, it will be extremely difficult for the U.S. to keep from having to pull the bulk of its troops and nuclear weapons out of Germany (France and England face a similar problem). The U.S. is now maneuvering to prevent this.

The U.S. troops and installations in West Germany are the heart and soul of its military presence in Europe. They help enable the U.S. to project its power and influence events in Europe and throughout the Mediterranean and Middle East through to the Persian Gulf. Loss of these positions would represent a blow of major proportions to the U.S. strategic position in the world. If Soviet troops go back to Russia, they are still in Europe and are no farther from the Middle East. If U.S. troops must go home, they are an ocean away.

This may well not be acceptable to the U.S. rulers under any circumstances; attempts to force the U.S.'s hand on this could even lead to a showdown. (Similarly, an effort to force Soviet troops out of Eastern Europe on terms unacceptable to the Soviet rulers could have the same result.)

Some U.S. strategists claim that the Soviet Union wants a major U.S. troop presence in Europe to continue. This is more wishful thinking. They want them there only for now. The Soviet rulers, like all other ruling classes East and West, have a tremendous fear of renewed sudden changes that might further destabilize the situation and lead to events getting out of hand, including the emergence of mass revolutionary risings. A negotiated, stable, staged U.S. withdrawal is what they want.

Gorbachev's earlier statements that the Soviet Union would not accept a reunited Germany in NATO have revealed themselves to be a bargaining position and nothing more. He used this as a means to apply pressure to gain important concessions in exchange for the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Germany. Not the least of these concessions was German agreement to limit the active troop strength of a reunited Germany to 370,000. This is approximately 60% of the current combined active strength of the East and West German armies (and 120,000 below the FRG's current "peacetime" commitment to NATO).

Germany alone lacks the nuclear arsenal to pose a strategic threat to the Soviet Union. But with the Soviet army pulling out of Eastern Europe, an altered balance of power is created. New conflicts are bound to arise, old contradictions will again emerge. The threat of armed force (and its actual use) remains the basis for imperialist diplomacy. In this new situation, a large German army (even without strategic nuclear weapons) would present unwelcome competition to the Soviet Union's leadership position in Eastern Europe. This takes on added importance in light of the fact that an integral element of the Soviet Union's present strategy is to dramatically increase Germany's economic influence in the region. On the other hand, such limitations on Germany's armed forces over any longer period of time are certain to provide the basis for international tension and conflict.

To calm U.S. and West European fears, the West Germans swear that they have no desire to become "neutral". These are word games. They want a foot in both blocs. Remaining in NATO on a new basis is not in contradiction to their aims. In fact, continued NATO membership right now is essential to their strategy and

strengthens their bargaining position *vis a vis* the Soviet Union.

The same is true for the Common Market. Many western "thinkers" say the key to controlling Germany is "binding it in the Common Market". Germany's goal is not to leave the Common Market, but to become its leading power based on new found strength in the East. At the same time, Germany remains tied in very concrete ways to the U.S.-led bloc. Indeed, its principal orientation and strategic position remains there. But the Germans' greatly increased leverage and even early maneuverings are already putting a strain on the bloc's arrangements and could, given the right mix, explode these decades-old arrangements.

#### **DREAMS OF A "NEW MIRACLE"**

The West Germans see this new found strength coming from their renewed penetration into and exploitation of East European markets and through a "Wirtschaftswunder" ("economic miracle") that will supposedly take place in the GDR after reunification. This is a reference to West Germany's own rise from the ashes of defeat in WWII to the world's largest exporting nation and the highest standard of living among Europe's major powers. This is more illusion. There is the *promise* of decisive gains for the West German imperialists through reunification. But there is great risk as well.

This is not 1950. The world does not stand before an unprecedented round of imperialist expansion based on a thorough restructuring like that following WWII. This was the backdrop for West Germany's first "Wirtschaftswunder". To be sure, the West Germans profited at the expense of the U.S. and some of the other imperialists in the '80's and built some reserves. But growth in the '80's was based on a foundation of international debt of unprecedented proportion. Unlike 1950, the leader of the western imperialist bloc, the U.S., is the world's largest debtor, not creditor. The Third World debt crisis continues to loom. World financial markets have not been able to regain any lasting stability in the wake of the Crash of '87. The West Germans inherit a country with a population of 16 million, a foreign debt of \$20 billion, and a labor productivity rate estimated to be 40% of their own.

The integration of the GDR could result in an additional one million or more unemployed in the space of weeks or months. Massive disruptions could take

place in the area of social services, in transport and communications as new unforeseen problems emerge. Reunification will accelerate the current process of social polarization in both East and West Germany.

Already, the hundreds of billions that will be needed to manage this integration and bring the GDR infrastructure, plant and equipment up to West German standards threaten to unleash a round of runaway inflation. Since the beginning of 1990 this danger has driven West German interest rates to new highs. An international "interest war" could result as the U.S. and Japan move to defend their currencies. Continued high interest rates could plunge the world into recession or worse. A similar breakdown in international interest rate coordination was one of the catalysts for the stock market crash in 1987.

Finally, Germany's new open borders to the East and its new economic linkages to the Soviet-led bloc make it vulnerable to dislocations whose epicenter lies in what is today one of the world's most serious regions of crisis. Reunification means that economic and/or political upheaval in Eastern Europe could send millions more refugees seeking food and shelter in the rich German room of the European House. This would only further fuel domestic contradictions already heightened by the arrival of over a million East European refugees in the last two years. Collapse in the East could drag Germany down with it.

The talk in West Germany and the Soviet Union of a "united Europe" entering an era of perpetual peace guaranteed by some kind of new "collective security" agreement that would supersede the present blocs reflects their interests in reshaping and realigning international relations in Europe (as does Bush's neo-fascist prattle of a "New World Order"). It cannot resolve the question of who will be the master of this new house. European history in the imperialist era is replete with such agreements—before, during and after the previous two imperialist world wars. Regarding the slogan "For a United States of Europe," Lenin had the following to say:

From the standpoint of the economic conditions of imperialism—i.e., the export of capital and the division of the world by the 'advanced' and 'civilized' colonial powers—a United States of Europe, under capitalism, is either impossible or reactionary. . . . A United States of Europe under capitalism is tantamount to an agreement on the partition of colonies. Under capitalism, however, no other basis and no other principle of division

are possible except force. (Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 22, p.663)

Whatever the current opportunities for the German imperialists, in this spiral of imperialist development there is no going back to 1933 or 1912. Unless (or until!) revolutionary uprisings should change things, in today's world only two countries have the economic, diplomatic and *military* power necessary to head their own blocs: the U.S. and U.S.S.R. A reunited Germany cannot successfully contest for the leadership of either of these blocs, nor can it form its own third bloc. As Lenin pointed out, under imperialism "force" is the only principle for dividing the world. No matter what illusions the various ruling classes involved may have, this is the *REALITY* of the imperialist system.

## CONCLUSIONS

The Soviet Union's new strategy—including the playing of the German card—and the West German imperialists' decision to join the game have opened the door for unexpected change in Europe and elsewhere. Many of the contradictions that were typical of imperialist Europe before WWII, but had been subsumed by the East-West division and conflict, have begun to reemerge. The West Germans see a unique window of opportunity to play one side off against the other and force everyone to watch as they make gains at others' expense. After all, the last time they expanded their territory to the East like this, England and France (joined later by the Soviet Union and the U.S.!) declared war on them. Right now all these countries can do is grit their teeth.

This is a dangerous plan. Eastern Europe today is a minefield, not the promised land. Present realities dictate that whatever new strength it may find, Germany cannot peacefully risk "leaving" the West, nor can any agreements it may reach with the Soviet Union replace the necessity that all the imperialists face for an international restructuring of capital and redivision on a world scale. Achieving even their short-range objectives will require that the Germans engage in a delicate balancing act, advancing in measured steps and being careful not to get caught out on a limb. A sudden derailment could itself at any time throw the world balance of imperialist power into dangerous disequilibrium. An "inherently unstable" situation has been made even more precarious.

All this has important implications for revolutionaries in West Germany, Europe and around the world. To counter Soviet moves, the U.S. imperialists are scrambling to "come to terms" with a more powerful and independent Germany and they are working hard to bring England and France into line with new realities. Overall they are trying to find a way to use Germany's eastward thrust to seriously weaken the Soviet bloc. Any development which threatens to bring decisive advantage to one side or the other could force things over the edge. West and East Germany (and a reunited Germany), long reliable pillars of stability, have become a source of dislocation and unpredictability. A weakening link in the chain of world imperialism.

The removal of U.S. and Soviet troops and their nuclear weapons from Central and Eastern Europe and the creation of a nuclear-free zone in what was the GDR will further weaken the hold on power of all the regimes in this region and foster more instability. A lower level of U.S. and Soviet presence will mean that the contradictions between these ruling classes will be more likely to lead to open conflict. Without Soviet and U.S. troops on hand to back them up these ruling classes will be more vulnerable to revolutionary attempts at power from below. Heightened conflicts among them make revolutionary opportunities more likely. The emergence of a revolutionary crisis in any one of these countries could result in a revolutionary civil war becoming more generalized and spreading over a larger area of Central and Eastern Europe.

Revolutionary strategy in Europe today must begin to take these possibilities into account. In West Germany, and Germany as a whole, the further playing out of the German card opens up myriad possibilities for events being wrenched out of the control of the ruling class. Serious splits could develop among the West German imperialists over how to respond to unfolding developments and heightening contradictions. Any new East/West crisis could push things to the breaking point. A chain reaction could be set off sparking similar splits and conflicts in the ruling classes of other countries as well. In Germany there is the real potential of a constitutional crisis arising as the ruling class attempts to reshape its relations to the

world imperialist order and swallow all that it is now trying to bite off. Such a constitutional crisis could become—or be turned into—a revolutionary crisis. In such a tremendously complex and fluid situation it is possible that the proletariat—under the leadership of its party—could give *its* answer to the German Question and launch a bid for power. The revolutionary communists and class conscious proletarians must begin now to prepare for such a turn of events and do all they can to help bring them about. And all of this would, of course, be conditioned by and react upon events unfolding on the international level (crisis, war and revolutionary outbreaks).

### **A Final Word**

Things develop in leaps. This is a basic tenet of Maoist thinking and analysis. The events unfolding today in Central and Eastern Europe are a powerful confirmation of this truth. On November 9, 1989 the contradictions inherent in the imperialist system brought the Berlin Wall tumbling down. In the midst of the turmoil that surrounded this particular leap, a banner appeared with the following words: "Not Just the Wall, But the Whole System of Imperialism—East and West—Will Fall!"

In light of all that has happened in the world and Europe in the last weeks and months, it is increasingly clear that these words are not just a high-minded hope, but a real possibility. And they are an urgent call to class conscious action. There is much work to be done to take advantage of the world historic opportunities that are presently unfolding.

### **NOTE**

1. For more in-depth analysis of these questions, see "Why Gorbachev Needs to Remake an Empire, and Why the Masses need to Make a Revolution—Crisis in Eastern Europe and Collapse of Old-Style Revisionism," by Raymond Lotta (published as a special pull-out section in the *Revolutionary Worker*, February 5, 1990), and "New Twist in the Imperialist Knot," by the Revolutionary Communist Party, U.S.A., in *A World to Win*, 15, 1990.



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## Bob Avakian on The Myth of Totalitarianism

*The following analysis of the myth of totalitarianism is taken from Democracy: Can't We Do Better Than That? by Bob Avakian. Chairman Avakian's work was published in 1986, at a time when the U.S. and Soviet Union appeared directly headed for an all-out nuclear war and when the Soviet Union had not yet implemented the various shifts and reforms embodied in glasnost, perestroika and "new thinking."*

*Since then, the use of the theory of totalitarianism is more often used by the U.S. and Western European imperialists as part of its "death of communism" campaign, designed to discredit or disorient the revolutionary aspirations of people worldwide, rather than as justification for direct attack on the Soviet bloc (although this aspect has not disappeared).*

*The theory of totalitarianism remains nonetheless an article of faith in Western intellectual life and has gone virtually unchallenged. As that theory is today more used against the forces of genuine revolution than the Soviet imperialists, Chairman Avakian's unique and pathbreaking analysis has become in many ways yet more relevant and more important.*

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The notion — or accusation — of totalitarianism is, as everybody knows, one of the main weapons in the ideological arsenal of Western imperialism in its conflict with the Soviet bloc. In recent times, with the ever-increasing intensity of the rivalry between these two imperialist blocs, and with the revival of some of the more virulent denunciations of the Soviet system

as part of this — not as a reversion to the Cold War but as ideological preparation for literal, all-out confrontation between the two sides in what would be the most devastating of all wars in human history — the theme of Soviet totalitarianism has become much more prominent in the West. Like all ideological weapons, of course, this requires its theoretical justification; and while it is the more open — and often the more openly reactionary — spokesmen for Western imperialism who broadcast this denunciation for the broadest public consumption, it would be remiss not to recognize the important role of social-democratic (and generally bourgeois socialist) apologists of Western imperialism as purveyors of the concept of Soviet totalitarianism. Indeed, perhaps the two most influential works on the theme of totalitarianism are by people of this general political persuasion: *1984*, a popularly written novel by George Orwell, and *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, an abstruse attempt at scholarly dissertation by Hannah Arendt.

Before examining a number of the main arguments in these works — and in particular Arendt's, which, as its title implies, is an attempt to provide a theoretical analysis of the origins and nature of totalitarianism — it is worthwhile to briefly summarize what seem to be the basic premises of the theory of totalitarianism and to point to the origins and nature, that is, the political role, of this theory. This is not a scientific theory (at least not a scientifically correct one) but is a distortion of reality in the service of definite class interests and specific political objectives; it lacks even internal, logical consistency in the final analysis and is therefore difficult to summarize systematically. But a few major themes are identifiable. The totalitarian state is just that — the total state — which means that the division between the state and private society (or the world of individuals) is obliterated. The totalitarian state reaches into and seeks to — it must — control every sphere, even the most personal. There can be no room for personal initiative, or even personal inclinations that are not manipulated by the state. The totalitarian state is not merely a one-party dictatorship, but the party itself is personified in the Leader, who is infallible. Terror, even terror utilized when there is no real threat to the regime, is an integral part of the totalitarian state; but equally important (and equally, if not more, terrifying to the antitotalitarian theorists) is ideology — that is, the systematic indoctrination of the populace with the official ideology and the absolute impermissibility of deviation from that ideology (at least among those groups in society that are

considered worthy of concern). World domination and an apocalyptic vision of remaking not just society but people themselves, in their very nature, is seen as the ultimate goal of the totalitarians.

A few passages from Arendt's *Totalitarianism* should help to illustrate this:

... Totalitarianism is never content to rule by external means, namely, through the state and a machinery of violence; thanks to its peculiar ideology and the role assigned to it in this apparatus of coercion, totalitarianism has discovered a means of dominating and terrorizing human beings from within.

... Total domination does not allow for free initiative in any field of life, for any activity that is not entirely predictable. Totalitarianism in power invariably replaces all first-rate talents, regardless of their sympathies, with those crackpots and fools whose lack of intelligence and creativity is still the best guarantee of their loyalty.

... The chief qualification of a mass leader has become unending infallibility; he can never admit an error.

... Totalitarian domination, however, aims at abolishing freedom, even at eliminating human spontaneity in general, and by no means at a restriction of freedom no matter how tyrannical.

... The fanaticism of the elite cadres, absolutely essential for the functioning of the [totalitarian] movement, abolishes systematically all genuine interest in specific jobs and produces a mentality which sees every conceivable action as an instrument for something entirely different. And this mentality is not confined to the elite but gradually pervades the entire population, the most intimate details of whose life and death depend upon political decisions — that is, upon causes and ulterior motives which have nothing to do with performance.

... Total domination, which strives to organize the infinite plurality and differentiation of human beings as if all of humanity were just one individual, is possible only if each and every person can be reduced to a never-changing identity of reactions, so that each of these bundles of reactions can be exchanged at random for any

other.

... Total terror is so easily mistaken for a symptom of tyrannical government because totalitarian government in its initial stages must behave like a tyranny and raze the boundaries of man-made law. But total terror leaves no arbitrary lawlessness behind it and does not rage for the sake of some arbitrary will or for the sake of despotic power of one man against all, least of all for the sake of a war of all against all. It substitutes for the boundaries and channels of communication between individual men a band of iron which holds them so tightly together that it is as though their plurality had disappeared into One Man of gigantic dimensions. To abolish the fences of laws between men — as tyranny does — means to take away man's liberties and destroy freedom as a living political reality; for the space between men as it is hedged in by laws, is the living space of freedom. Total terror uses this old instrument of tyranny but destroys at the same time also the lawless, fenceless wilderness of fear and suspicion which tyranny leaves behind. This desert, to be sure, is no longer a living space of freedom, but it still provides some room for the fear-guided movements and suspicion-ridden actions of its inhabitants.

... The struggle for total domination of the total population of the earth, the elimination of every competing nontotalitarian reality, is inherent in the totalitarian regimes themselves; if they do not pursue global rule as their ultimate goal, they are only too likely to lose whatever power they have already seized. Even a single individual can be absolutely and reliably dominated only under global totalitarian conditions. (Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* [New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1973], pp. 325, 339, 348-49, 405, 409, 438, 465-66, and 392.)

And so on.

As will become clear, central to the whole outlook and methodology of the antitotalitarian theorists is the recasting and reinterpretation of events according to the a priori notions of their theory. This is a Procrustean outlook and methodology: anything which does not fit the theory, any event of world history which does not conform to and confirm its assumptions, is bent and mutilated to make it fit. These theorists are every bit as fanatical about this as the totalitarians

portrayed in their writings. Perhaps a petty example will, ironically, help to give an inkling of this. You may think that the gimmicks and deceptions practiced by advertisers are explained by what they appear to be — the effort to promote the sale of products to realize profit (and to promote certain ideological objectives). But to the theoretician obsessed with totalitarianism, there is something far more sinister involved — a totalitarian urge — “there is a certain element of violence in the imaginative exaggerations of publicity men, that behind the assertion that girls who do not use this particular brand of soap may go through life with pimples and without a husband, lies the wild dream of monopoly, the dream that one day the manufacturer of the ‘only soap that prevents pimples’ may have the power to deprive of husbands all girls who do not use this soap.” (Arendt, *Totalitarianism*, p. 345)

**“... when we look at the historical circumstances in which this theory has arisen and examine its main tenets in that light, it becomes clear that the target is really not Nazism (or Bolshevism, for that matter) but the Soviet bloc. . . .”**

There is, however, a method to such madness, as Arendt displays here, and a deeper design. These antitotalitarians claim on the surface that traditional political distinctions of Left and Right are pushed into the background — indeed basically rendered irrelevant — by totalitarianism: “Practically speaking, it will make little difference whether totalitarian movements adopt the pattern of Nazism or Bolshevism, organize the masses in the name of race or class, pretend to follow the laws of life and nature or of dialectics and economics.” (Arendt, *Totalitarianism*, p. 313) But when we look at the historical circumstances in which this theory has arisen and examine its main tenets in that light, it becomes clear that the target is really not Nazism (or Bolshevism, for that matter) but the Soviet bloc. This theory was developed in the context of World War 2, including the events of the late 1930s leading up to it and above all the situation that arose in its aftermath. It was not widely promoted (or the Soviet Union was not targeted in the same way it is now) during the period 1941-45, when the Soviet Union was allied with the “Western democracies”

against the fascist Axis (that is, German, Italian, and Japanese imperialism and their allies).<sup>1</sup> It was after the war that this theory was fully fertilized and blossomed forth. For the Soviet Union — and what was then a large and potentially very powerful socialist camp under its leadership — had emerged as the direct antagonist to imperialism in the West. (This became all the more the case, and this socialist camp was seen as all the more dangerous, after the victory of the Chinese Revolution in 1949.)

Thus, although theoretically the analysis of totalitarianism focused on the Soviet Union on the one hand, and Nazi Germany on the other, as the two embodiments of a whole new kind of state posing an unprecedented threat to democracy, in reality the Soviet Union (and its bloc) were the targets of this analysis for the simple reason that Nazi Germany no longer existed — it had been defeated and had been born again, in the western part of Germany, as a democracy. It is in this light that one can understand the significance of Arendt's insistence on strictly distinguishing totalitarianism from other regimes that she generally describes as tyrannical or despotic dictatorships.

According to Arendt, fascist Italy was never really fully totalitarian. (Arendt, *Totalitarianism*, pp. 308-309) Even in the case of Nazi Germany — and Arendt contrasts this with the Soviet Union — she says that at the start of World War 2 it "was not yet completely totalitarianized" and that "only if Germany had won the war would she have known a fully developed totalitarian rulership." (Arendt, *Totalitarianism*, pp. 409, 310) It is in this light as well that the significance of the following central argument by Arendt can be fully grasped: "Thus the fear of concentration camps and the resulting insight into the nature of total domination might serve to invalidate all obsolete political differentiations from right to left and to introduce beside and above them the *politically most important yardstick for judging events in our time, namely: whether they serve totalitarian domination or not.*" (Arendt, *Totalitarianism*, p. 442, emphasis added.) Given that this statement was made in 1950 — and keeping in mind Arendt's precise distinctions, as indicated just above — this "yardstick" serves as the basis to single out the Soviet Union: it is "the focus of evil in the modern world," to use the contemporary phrase. At the same time, this "yardstick" serves to apologize for the many not-so-democratic regimes that make up such a big part of the "free world," and, of course, it also serves to prettify, and distract attention from, the

criminal nature of the Western imperialist democracies themselves. This is the real content and political role of this theory of "totalitarianism."

Let's turn, then, to some of the major pillars of this theory. Right off, it must be observed that they are grounded in air: this theory is based on idealist assumptions that ignore, deny, and/or distort objective reality, and in particular the material foundation of society and the state. To take the question of the state first, it is important to recall what was discussed at some length earlier: that the state is never some neutral force, nor can it ever insure democracy for everyone — the state always represents one kind of dictatorship or another. But it represents the dictatorship of a *class*, not of a particular individual, group,

***“. . . totalitarianism, as defined by these anti-totalitarian theorists . . . is above all the openly proclaimed and seriously intended objective of controlling and remaking the whole world . . .***

party, or movement that stands aside from — or above — class interest or is somehow detached from the economic basis of society in which class relations are rooted. To quote again from Raymond Lotta's concise summation on this point (made, significantly, in the course of a debate on the nature of Soviet society today),

the state is not some neutral instrument up for grabs, which can be forced or pressured to act in the interests of this or that class. . . . The state is an objective structure of society whose character is determined not by the class origins of its leading personnel but *by the specific social division of labor of which it is an extension and the production relations which it must ultimately serve and reproduce.* (Lotta, "Realities of Social-Imperialism," pp. 40-41, emphasis added.)

It is precisely the point underlined above that the theory of totalitarianism is (or pretends to be) ignorant of. Thus, certain formal similarities between Germany under Hitler and the Soviet Union in the period of Stalin's leadership are seized on to concoct a theory of a whole new kind of state, profoundly different not only from democracy but even from heretofore known kinds of open dictatorships (tyrannies, despotisms,

autocracies, and so on). As we have seen, it is not merely the open declaration of authority by one party, nor even just the personification of party rule in the infallible Leader, nor yet the open suppression of enemies in the name of the ideals of the party and the will of the Leader, that is the essence of totalitarianism, as defined by these antitotalitarian theorists; it is above all the openly proclaimed and seriously intended objective of controlling and remaking the whole world, but more than that the people who make up human society — to change them in their very essence — not only in their social relations but also in their thinking, values, morals . . . even in their feelings and emotions.

Before speaking to the profound differences between "Hitler Germany" and "Stalinist Russia," it first seems necessary to indicate what of real substance was similar between them, in opposition to other world powers, in the crucial period in world history in which these two states existed — and which forms the world-historical matrix for the theory of totalitarianism: the period leading up to and extending through World War 2. This essential similarity is not just that both

*... but more than that, the people who make up human society — to change them in their very essence not only in their social relations, but also in their thinking, values, morals . . . even in their feelings and emotions. . . ."*

were in extremely difficult situations and driven to extreme measures — this was, or would become during this period, true of every world power — but that both were in a position to drastically alter the whole structure of power relations involving the European states (and the USA) — power relations in which Anglo-French (and American) interests dominated — and thereby to drastically alter the whole structure of power relations in the world in a way highly detrimental to Anglo-French-American interests. But there the similarity ends. Throughout this period, Germany was and remained nothing other than a bourgeois imperialist state, though it ruled at home not in the "classical" form of bourgeois democracy but through a fascist — an openly terroristic — form of bourgeois dictatorship. And, on the other hand, throughout this period the Soviet Union was and remained a socialist state, a dictatorship of the

proletariat, although serious errors — it is not an exaggeration (or gratuitous) to say grievous errors — were made in how this dictatorship was carried out and the socialist system defended and extended.

This takes us back to the fundamental point underscored earlier: with all the peculiarities of Nazi Germany (including the "deviations" from "classical" capitalist economic policies), the underlying production relations, the division of labor, and the dynamics of accumulation were all those of capitalism, particularly capitalism in its imperialist stage; whereas in the Soviet Union in this same period, with all the difficulties encountered and mistakes made in carrying out and carrying forward the socialist transformation of society, the underlying production relations, the division of labor, and the accumulation process were those of socialism. While it must be stressed that socialism is a society *in transition* to communism and is still marked by many remnants and "defects" inherited from the old society, and, moreover, is a society fighting for its life against the forces of capitalist restoration, in the socialist country itself and internationally — all of which found very acute expression in the Soviet Union in the period leading up to and during World War 2 — this in no way eliminates the fundamental, qualitative difference between socialism and capitalism. Nor should certain secondary similarities obscure the fundamental, qualitative difference between the socialist Soviet Union under Stalin on the one hand and imperialist Nazi Germany (and, for that matter, England, France, and the United States, as well as other imperialist states — including the Soviet Union itself, after Stalin) on the other hand.

And this, in turn, takes us to another decisive dimension in which the antitotalitarians fly in the face of a scientific, materialist method and analysis of society. One of the most striking things about their concept of totalitarianism is how it almost entirely (if not literally and completely) eliminates any sense of contradiction and dynamic tension in the economic base in the alleged totalitarian society (whether it is capitalist or socialist, on the Right or the Left). This is very clear in Orwell's *1984*, where the ruling party elite (headed by or personified as Big Brother) has everything absolutely in hand and under control, including in the economic sphere. The wars it carries on (or the appearance of these wars — it is never completely clear whether these wars really take place or not, or whether it really matters) do not stem from any underlying contradictions in the economic system — as in fact all wars ultimately do in the real world — but are

merely manufactured as part of manipulating and controlling the populace, down to their very emotions. In a certain sense, Orwell may perhaps be excused in this, because he does not claim to be presenting a scientific analysis but is writing literary fiction. However, no such excuse can be made for Arendt, who declares in all seriousness that, with the rise of totalitarianism,

We are indeed at the end of the bourgeois era of profits and power, as well as at the end of imperialism and expansion. The aggressiveness of totalitarianism springs not from lust for power, and if it feverishly seeks to expand, it does so neither for expansion's sake nor for profit, but only for ideological reasons: to make the world consistent, to prove that its respective super-sense has been right. (Arendt, *Totalitarianism*, p.458)

It is not possible here to thoroughly dissect and refute such a statement or to thoroughly examine Arendt's political economy, as it can be gleaned from *Totalitarianism*. But, fortunately, that is not really necessary here either: an extensive analysis of the actual dynamics and compulsions of the imperialist states in today's world — including the Soviet Union — has been made elsewhere;<sup>2</sup> and, moreover, life itself — and an examination of events occurring right around us these days — provides a rich source of refutation of Arendt's argument. But it is relevant, and revealing, to note that Arendt's analysis of imperialism is heavily influenced by the theories of Rosa Luxemburg, as can be seen in the following passage, in which Arendt quotes from Luxemburg:

The ensuing crises and depressions during the decades preceding the era of imperialism had impressed upon the capitalists the thought that their whole economic system of production depended upon a supply and demand that from now on must come from "outside of capitalist society." Such supply and demand came from inside the nation, so long as the capitalist system did not control all its classes together with its entire productive capacity. When capitalism had pervaded the entire economic structure and all social strata had come into the orbit of its production and consumption system, capitalists clearly had to decide either to see the whole system collapse or to find new markets, that is, to penetrate new countries which were not yet sub-

ject to capitalism and therefore could provide a new noncapitalistic supply and demand. (Arendt, *Totalitarianism*, p. 148; Arendt's citation for the statement from Luxemburg is *Die Akkumulation des Kapitals* [Berlin: 1923], p. 273.)

Luxemburg was a revolutionary, "a founder of the Communist Party of Germany, who was murdered in 1919 by the military authorities acting under the auspices of the Social Democratic Party." (Lotta, *America in Decline*, 1, p. 259.) But her outlook and political line were also characterized by reformist tendencies. And the basis for this can be seen in her erroneous political-economic theory.

As explained in *America in Decline*,

Luxemburg failed to comprehend the specificity of the imperialist stage of capitalist development, in particular the contradiction between monopoly and competition. For Luxemburg, capitalism's international thrust was mainly a question of increasing and extending the scope of its trade with the rest of the world. . . .

**“. . . the idea that Hitler had nothing against Bolshevism, that his rabid anticommunism was merely a charade, is ridiculous;**

In 1913, Luxemburg published her major theoretical work, *The Accumulation of Capital*. There and in her subsequent *Anti-Critique* she put forward a schema based on a chronic shortfall of demand. . . . Closing this demand gap required, according to Luxemburg, a class of buyers outside of capitalist society who could absorb this output without adding to it — and these consumers were to be found in pre- or non-capitalist sectors, mainly in the colonies. Eventually, however, these layers would be incorporated into the process of capitalist production and no one would be left to realize this commodity product. Hence, the capitalists would not be able to realize surplus value and underwrite further expansion. (Lotta, *America in Decline*, 1, pp. 259-60.)

It is not difficult to see how such an analysis — with

its implications that capitalism will, out of its own dynamic, reach its final limits — could be accompanied by gradualist political tendencies, by the resistance to attempts to accelerate the proletarian revolution through “pushing on” the workers from “outside” or “above” their ranks — which, of course, is what Lenin essentially, and very correctly, urged (as can be seen especially in *What Is To Be Done?*).<sup>3</sup> And it is also not difficult to see how such Luxemburgist analysis, when taken up by Arendt (who was a Social Democrat and, to put it extremely mildly, a counter-revolutionary), could be incorporated into a line that said capitalism and imperialism have basically run their limits and have been superseded by totalitarianism. On one level, this is another instance of first time, tragedy; second time, farce. But in this case, the farcical theories of totalitarianism, particularly in their thrust against genuine communism and against Soviet social-imperialism today, play a deadly serious role as weapons in the hands of the Western imperialists.

Hence, it becomes especially necessary to answer some of the main slanders against Stalin and distortions of events in “Stalinist Russia” that are found in Arendt’s *Totalitarianism*. Stalin, in his positive aspect (which, overall, was his principal aspect) represents the firm exercise of the dictatorship of the proletariat and the first profound steps in carrying out socialist transformation; in his secondary (though not insignificant) negative aspect, he shared certain features with the revisionists who rose to power after his death

*... that someone could actually argue this in a book that is taken seriously by many people is remarkable.”*

and who restored capitalism in the Soviet Union, turning the world’s first socialist state into a social-imperialist world predator. It is in both aspects — distorted almost beyond recognition and then combined and magnified in distorted form into a grotesque monstrosity — that Stalin constitutes the object of antitotalitarian attack.<sup>4</sup>

In her attack on Stalin, Arendt does not content herself with seizing on certain real errors committed in “the Stalin period”: a too extensive reliance on the secret police, rather than primary reliance on the conscious activism of the masses, to identify and suppress

counter-revolutionaries; the mixing up of two fundamentally different types of contradictions (those between the people and the enemy and those among the people themselves), so that the target of repression became too broad and a certain “chill” set in among the people, actually undermining their ability to carry forward the class struggle against the old, and particularly against newborn, exploiters; some excesses in the struggle for the collectivization of agriculture; and, along with this — and particularly as part of the inner-party struggles that were a crucial aspect of the overall struggle in society — some rather crude rewriting of history. Nor is Arendt satisfied with inventing, or repeating, horror stories of millions upon millions of entirely innocent people subjected to terror and/or executed. Still less, of course, does she criticize Stalin — where criticism can and should be made — for covering over, to a considerable extent, the imperialist and reactionary nature of the Western democracies that were in conflict with Germany and with which Stalin sought alliance, in the late 1930s and again after the Soviet Union was attacked by Germany and entered World War 2. Rather, Arendt exaggerates and refashions not only real errors but slanderous fabrications, so that everything that was done (along with much that was never done) is ripped away from any real material basis or actual political context and is reinterpreted as the expression of a transcendental totalitarian will. Put more simply, it is all a plot by totalitarians — with Stalin the totalitarian supreme. There is no real class struggle, no imperialist encirclement of the Soviet Union, no danger to the socialist system from within or without, indeed no socialism — or to whatever degree these things do exist, they are only convenient pretexts or covers for the real motive: the totalitarian drive for complete domination. A few examples will help make this clear.

Many people have long recognized the fact that after Lenin’s death there was a real struggle, involving Stalin, Trotsky, and others in the leadership of the Soviet Communist Party, over what direction Soviet society must take in the context of an international situation dominated by Britain, the USA, and France, with Germany crushed as a result of World War 1, but the attempts at revolution in Germany also crushed and the prospects for successful revolution elsewhere not immediate. *But this is mere illusion*, Arendt would have us believe. According to her, the whole thing — and specifically the whole conflict between Stalin’s line on the possibility of socialism in one country and Trotsky’s theory of “permanent revolution,” which

denied the possibility of socialism in one country — was merely an invention, a device utilized by Stalin as part of his totalitarian urge for absolute power. I'm not joking — this is actually what she says: "Stalin likewise reckoned with both Russian public opinion and the non-Russian world when he invented his theory of 'socialism in one country' and threw the onus of world revolution on Trotsky." (Arendt, *Totalitarianism*, p. 413.)

And so it was, Arendt tells us, with the collectivization of agriculture in the Soviet Union. Arendt treats the whole thing as an unmitigated disaster. She seems to suggest that the New Economic Policy, initiated by Lenin, after the Civil War in the early 1920s, as a temporary measure — which he openly called a retreat — should have been continued, more or less indefinitely. Stalin, however, broke with this and brought on forced collectivization with its calamitous results, according to Arendt, not because of the desperate struggle between socialism and capitalism in the Soviet Union at that time — a struggle in which the countryside was a concentration point and a decisive arena — but because of . . . (do I have to say it again?) . . . his totalitarian urge for absolute power. Thus Arendt can write that when, in the early 1930s, Stalin's regime "proceeded to the liquidation of classes," it began,

*for ideological and propaganda reasons, with the property-owning classes, the new middle class in the cities, and the peasants in the country. Because of the combination of numbers and property, the peasants up to then had been potentially the most powerful class in the Union; their liquidation, consequently, was more thorough and more cruel than that of any other group and was carried through by artificial famine and deportation under the pretext of expropriation of the kulaks and collectivization. (Arendt, *Totalitarianism*, p. 320, emphasis added.)*

It is difficult to know whether to feel more anger or amazement at statements such as this. One gets absolutely no sense from Arendt of the sharp class polarization among the peasantry at that time in the Soviet Union, nor specifically that these kulaks (rich peasants) repeatedly and ruthlessly took advantage of the difficult, often extremely desperate, conditions in the countryside to profiteer and generally to further enrich themselves, even withholding grain to jack up the price while many people were starving or on the

edge of starvation. (Arendt almost treats the kulaks as mythical creatures invented by the Stalinist Ministry of Totalitarian Propaganda — the Ministry of Truth in Orwell's 1984.) Yes, mistakes were made in the struggle for collectivization of agriculture in the late 1920s to early 1930s — the pace of collectivization was sometimes too fast, force was used in some situations where persuasion should have been relied on, middle peasants were sometimes made the target of attack along with the kulaks themselves, and other mistakes were made (and Stalin himself called attention to and worked to correct many of these errors<sup>5</sup>). But, really, Arendt and other "anti-Stalinists" notwithstanding, the kulaks were not heroic fighters for some pristine agrarian way of life — they were grasping, profiteering exploiters.

But the most outrageous, and at the same time most essential, aspect of Arendt's rewriting of history in accordance with anti-totalitarian mythology is her attempt to deny that there was any fundamental antagonism between "Stalinist Russia" and "Nazi Germany" or between the Soviet communists and the Nazis. In fact, these two parties, and Hitler and Stalin personally, actually had the greatest respect and mutual admiration for each other, Arendt says, because after all they could recognize a kindred soul. In the attempt to substantiate this — and carry it to its fullest extreme — Arendt not only cites statements of respect by each side for the other (which can be as readily dismissed as they can be supplied, for what serious adversaries have not, in one way or another, expressed respect for each other?); she even goes so far as to claim that "contrary to certain postwar legends, Hitler never intended to defend 'the West' against Bolshevism but always remained ready to join 'the Reds' for the destruction of the West, even in the middle of the struggle against Soviet Russia." (Arendt, *Totalitarianism*, p. 309.) While it is obviously true that Hitler never intended to defend the West against Bolshevism, in the sense that he always did intend to defeat other powers in the West himself, the idea that Hitler had nothing against Bolshevism, that his rabid anticommunism was merely a charade, is ridiculous; that someone could actually argue this in a book that is taken seriously by many people is remarkable. And as for the assertion that Hitler was always ready to make common cause with "the Reds" for the destruction of the West, even during the bitter, grinding war (notice how Arendt refers to it here merely as a "struggle") with the Soviet Union — well, that only serves to illustrate again the old adage that paper will



put up with whatever is written on it. What are we supposed to believe — that the whole war between Germany and the Soviet Union, lasting over four years and constituting the decisive front of the overall war in Europe, on which Hitler staked everything, ultimately, and lost, while the Soviet people underwent tremendous sacrifice to vanquish the powerful military machine under Hitler's command — that this whole war was the result of some whim on the part of Hitler, or Stalin, that for some silly reason, or perhaps because of the clash of totalitarian wills, they just couldn't get together, despite Hitler's inclinations, as Arendt alleges them (was it Stalin's "fault")? This, it seems, is how such antitotalitarian theorists write (or rewrite) history.

The real history of these crucial events, together with a basic analysis of their underlying causes and motive forces, is summarized very concisely in *America in Decline*, and given the depths of fabrication and obfuscation Arendt descends to in distorting all this — and a great deal of confusion and misinformation generally concerning it — it is worthwhile quoting at length from this summary in *America in Decline*:

The roots of the Second World War lay in the redivision of the world in 1918. The interwar period was just that — a truce which would, of necessity, be broken. Britain had defeated its rivals, but found its international position greatly weakened. The U.S. emerged stronger, consolidating its position in Latin America where the most developed colonies were located. But dislodging the other imperialist powers from their most profitable or strategically key positions in Asia and Africa still required arduous struggle. The U.S. had designs on Britain's Far East colonies and spheres of influence — designs which became imperative with the onset and continuation of profound crisis throughout the 1930s. Japan's need to expand its empire had been met only partially as a result of the first interimperialist war and reasserted itself more powerfully. The German bourgeoisie could not break out of the strangling vise of defeat in the last war and gain new spheres of influence without coming into direct confrontation with both Britain and, especially, France.

On its western border, Germany faced France and Belgium; in the east it faced a set of defense alliances among smaller states, most of which were backed by France; at sea in the European

theater, Germany faced a still-dominant British navy. The opening stages of the war saw Germany attack Poland in order to smash one flank of the Anglo-French imperialist front and turn it to their advantage in the larger contest to follow. British and French aid to Poland was extended to fortify that flank as part of their contention with Germany. . . .

. . . The British strategy for dealing with Germany found initial expression in Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain's "appeasement" policy. The purpose of Chamberlain's 1938 Munich agreement to give the Sudetenland to Germany was, in fact, to push the Germans to the east and into confrontation with the Soviet Union. . . . There was, however, never any question, either on the part of Britain or the U.S., of letting the German imperialists swallow the Soviet Union: they wanted the Germans to choke on it. The Soviet Union, quite rightly, was determined neither to be swallowed nor to be shattered. Owing to the Soviet need to buy time and the German need to first establish a tenable western periphery before it lay siege to the Soviet Union, the two countries signed a mutual nonaggression pact in August 1939. . . .

For its part, Germany recognized that bursting through the confines of the existing division of the world and displacing Britain as the dominant imperialist power (and ultimately absorbing its colonial empire) could not be accomplished without obtaining overwhelming political and military superiority over Britain. As far as the German imperialists were concerned, the key to forcing Britain to its knees was the defeat of the Soviet Union. The plunder of the USSR's industry, agriculture, and abundant mineral resources, such as its southern oil fields, while valuable in itself, was essential in order to prepare Germany for further battle. Germany could then once again shift the bulk of its military weight toward the West, now backed by the resources of all of continental Europe. . . .

. . . As it turned out, the main way that the U.S. and British allies worked to defeat Germany was through the Soviet Red Army. Military history here is very clear. Even Winston Churchill admitted in March 1943 that for the next six months Great Britain and the United States would be

"playing about" with half a dozen German divisions while Stalin was facing 185 divisions. Overall, the Soviet Union suffered 20 million war-related deaths, including 7.5 million who died directly in battle. By contrast, the combined British, French, and U.S. battle deaths totalled under 750,000 — less than 10 percent of the Soviet figure. Simply put, the Soviet Union was responsible for the defeat of Germany. What neither the Germans nor, for that matter, the U.S. imperialists banked on was the force and tenacity with which, once the initial German advance was halted at Stalingrad, the Soviet army would push back the German invaders; nor, of course, had they anticipated the political reverberations this would have. (Lotta, *America in Decline*, pp. 208-212.)

One of the most glaring things in Arendt's *Totalitarianism* is how she glosses over (even virtually ignores) the whole attempt by Stalin, from the mid-'30s until the end of the decade, to get the "Western democracies" to enter into an alliance with the Soviet Union against Germany — a policy whose rebuff by those "Western democracies" was signified by the 1938 Munich Pact referred to earlier, among other things. Now, as indicated before, criticism can and should be made of this policy of Stalin's, from the standpoint that it was accompanied by a certain covering over of the imperialist and reactionary nature of these "Western democracies," a blurring over of the class content of democracy itself, and a skewing of the international communist movement in accordance with the exigencies of this attempted alliance. But the important point here is that the pact between the Soviet Union and Germany in 1939 was entered into by Stalin only after his repeated attempts to draw the "Western democracies" into an alliance against Germany were just as repeatedly rebuffed; and, as explained in *America in Decline*, this pact with Germany was then signed "owing to the Soviet need to buy time and the German need to first establish a tenable western periphery before it lay siege to the Soviet Union." But, of course, Arendt deals with none of this — or none of it in its true light (she makes a number of references to sudden and dramatic turns in Soviet foreign policy, but she never comes close to examining the real basis for these, treating them instead as . . . yet other examples of totalitarian chicanery).

Arendt cannot recognize the real dynamics involved in all this — in particular the real necessity

faced by the Soviet Union, and its policies in response to that necessity (with the mistakes that can and must be identified from a scientific, revolutionary communist standpoint). She cannot recognize this because it is a central tenet of her whole antitotalitarian theory and convictions — a central tenet without which the whole thing falls to the ground — that totalitarianism has a logic and dynamic all of its own, which transcends and supersedes distinctions of Left and Right. Everything, all reality, must be observed through the prism of this theory and these convictions, however much reality may be bent in the process. Thus, in Arendt's eyes, Marx's scientific methodology — the dialectical and historical materialism with which he penetrated beneath the superficial, and often inverted, appearance of things to reveal the real mainsprings of human social organization and its historical development — becomes "Marx's great attempt to rewrite world history in terms of class struggles." (Arendt, *Totalitarianism*, p. 333.) For if it is true — and a scientific truth of central and far-reaching significance — that "class struggle is the immediate driving power of history,"<sup>6</sup> then how can one hope to substantiate such interpretations as the following by Arendt:

Underlying the Nazis' belief in race laws as the expression of the law of nature in man, is Darwin's idea of man as the product of a natural development which does not necessarily stop with the present species of human beings, just as under the Bolsheviks' belief in class-struggle as the expression of the law of history lies Marx's notion of society as the product of a gigantic historical movement which races according to its own law of motion to the end of historical times when it will abolish itself. (Arendt, *Totalitarianism*, p. 463, emphasis added.)

What is noteworthy here is not only Arendt's obscurantist distortion of Marxism (and her obscurantist attitude toward Darwinism) but the notion that the Marxist theory of class struggle is of the same nature as the Nazi theory of race, with its genocidal conclusions. Thus, she can, without embarrassment, write such things as this:

It cannot be doubted either that the Nazi leadership actually believed in, and did not merely use as propaganda, such doctrines as the following: "The more accurately we recognize and observe the laws of nature and life, . . . so much the more

do we conform to the will of the Almighty. The more insight we have into the will of the Almighty, the greater will be our successes." It is quite apparent that very few changes are needed to express Stalin's creed in two sentences which might run as follows: "The more accurately we recognize and observe the laws of history and class struggle, so much the more do we conform to dialectic materialism. The more insight we have into dialectic materialism, the greater will be our success." Stalin's notion of "correct leadership," at any rate, could hardly be better illustrated. (Arendt, *Totalitarianism*, pp. 345-46, ellipses in original.)

Even if we allow that there were certain tendencies under Stalin's leadership to treat aspects of Marxism-Leninism somewhat mechanically and to reduce certain of its tenets to dogma, can any person in his/her right mind — or whose outlook and vision have not been totally obscured by antitotalitarian apriorism and class bias — really not recognize the profound difference between even Arendt's "paraphrase" of "Stalin's creed" and the words of the Nazi leader Martin Bormann which Arendt quotes just before this "paraphrase"? Just because two people profess their adherence to a comprehensive worldview, and insist moreover that adherence to this worldview is directly relevant to changing the world in a desired way, does that make their worldviews essentially the same, or render irrelevant any differences between them? Is there really no difference between dialectical materialism and reactionary idealism, between belief in the "will of the Almighty" — especially as conceived of by a Nazi — and an understanding of the "laws of history and class struggle"?

By now it should be clear that what guides Arendt — and this is generally true, it seems, of especially the social-democratic anti-totalitarians — is not so much a theory as an obsession.<sup>7</sup> And it should be noted that there is, along with a maniacal anti-communism (conceived of and presented as "anti-Stalinism"), a very definite reactionary, obscurantist streak in Arendt. This comes out, for example, in her treatment of Darwin. It is one thing to expose and denounce the distortion and misuse of Darwin's theories to justify such things as eugenics — to say nothing of Nazi extermination policies — but it is quite another to make remarks such as the following: "Almost a century before evolutionism had donned the cloak of science, warning voices foretold the inherent consequences of

a madness that was then merely in the stage of pure imagination." (Arendt, *Totalitarianism*, p. 179, emphasis added.) Similarly, the understanding that the human species is capable of great flexibility, that it possesses great plasticity in terms of its response to the rest of nature, and that with the change in their circumstances — above all their social system — people are capable of great changes in their outlook and beliefs . . . yes, even their feelings . . . all this is tremendously liberating to those without a vested interest in the present order of things. Of course, it is as necessary as it is difficult to correctly handle the dialectic between changing people's circumstances and changing their outlook and values — and it is extremely important to sum up errors, and positive experience as well, in this regard — but to people like Arendt the mere attempt to do this is itself horrifying. Hence we hear the following dark existential ruminations: "Since the Greeks, we have known that highly developed political life breeds a deep-rooted suspicion of this private sphere, a deep resentment against the disturbing miracle contained in the fact that each of us is made as he is — *single, unique, unchangeable.*" (Arendt, *Totalitarianism*, p. 301, emphasis added.) And, she says, "Nineteenth-century positivism and progressivism perverted this purpose of human equality when they set out to demonstrate what cannot be demonstrated, namely, that men are equal by nature and different only by history and circumstances, so that they can be equalized not by rights, but by circumstances and education." (Arendt, *Totalitarianism*, p. 234.) Here Arendt reveals both the bourgeois — and more specifically, bourgeois-democratic — essence of her outlook, and at the same time the reactionary essence of the bourgeois-democratic ideal in this era: the notion, and insistence, that on the one hand equality is the highest principle but that on the other hand human "equality is an equality of rights only." (Arendt, *Totalitarianism*, p. 234.)

It should not surprise us, then, that although she obviously regarded Nazism (and other variants of fascism) as anathema and worked actively against them,<sup>8</sup> Arendt's overriding obsession is with "Stalinism." When she insists that the driving force of totalitarianism — beyond any state or territory it controls at any given time, beyond even the party or the Leader — is the movement of totalitarianism towards its ultimate goal of world conquest and absolute domination over everyone, (See, for example, Arendt, *Totalitarianism*, pp. 411-12.) Arendt has in mind, above all, "Stalinist" totalitarianism. Keeping in focus the

context in which *The Origins of Totalitarianism* appeared (it was first published in 1951), as well as the distinction Arendt drew even between Nazi Germany and "Stalinist Russia" (that the former was never fully totalitarianized, while the latter definitely was), then not only her general political orientation but a more specific political purpose becomes very apparent. This is especially so when she insists that among "the most conspicuous" of the "errors of the nontotalitarian world in its diplomatic dealings with totalitarian governments" is not only "the Munich pact with Hitler" but also "the Yalta agreements with Stalin." (Arendt, *Totalitarianism*, p. 393.) Again, Arendt is making such a summation at a time when Hitler is long gone and there is only one totalitarian bloc around (you haven't been paying attention if you don't know which one). And it is very significant that today, as part of their intense ideological and political preparation for world war with the Soviet bloc — a war they will cast as the apocalyptic confrontation between democracy, Western civilization, and the Judeo-Christian tradition on one side, and godless atheistic, communistic totalitarianism on the other side — representatives of Western imperialism are now openly calling the Yalta Agreement into question. By the same token, when Arendt says of totalitarianism that the victory of this "concentration-camp system would mean the same inexorable doom for human beings as the use of the hydrogen bomb would mean the doom of the human race," (Arendt, *Totalitarianism*, p. 443) she is voicing a viewpoint very similar to the rationale of the Western imperialist spokesmen today who insist that, horrible as a nuclear war may be, there is one thing worse . . . and that is enslavement by totalitarianism.

It is perhaps an irony of history that Arendt's attempts, in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, to provide a theoretical underpinning for the notion — and denunciation — of totalitarianism can play a more important role for Western imperialism now than when the book was originally written. This irony is heightened by the fact that, strictly speaking, the Soviet Union and its bloc today do not fit Arendt's definition of totalitarianism (something more or less acknowledged by Arendt in her 1967 preface to the work).<sup>9</sup> But this only underscores, once more, that the concept of totalitarianism is not merely lacking in any scientific validity, nor is it merely bourgeois-democratic mania: it is a weapon in the ideological arsenal of Western imperialism whose function, especially now, is to help prepare for the launching of the actual military

weapons that are the only real "argument" of substance of such reactionary forces.

In concluding this specific discussion of the theory of totalitarianism, it is important to recall that the dictatorship of the proletariat — which is what existed under and was upheld by Stalin, notwithstanding his mistakes — does not differ from other forms of the state in that it is a dictatorship: all states are class dictatorships. It differs fundamentally in that it is the dictatorship of the nonexploiting majority over the exploiting minority; it aims at, and serves as a vehicle for, carrying forward the struggle for the abolition of all systems of exploitation and all bases for class divisions throughout the world. It is as an expression of this that the leaders of this state openly proclaim that it is a dictatorship and what its aims are as such. But it is also important to state here that in "Stalinist Russia" the masses of people experienced far greater freedom and had a far greater understanding of the truth than has ever been the case in any bourgeois-democratic country, without exception. To really grasp the profound truth and significance of this statement, it is necessary to realize not only that all bourgeois-democratic societies rest on a foundation of capitalist exploitation, while in the Soviet Union, until after Stalin's death, relations of exploitation had been overthrown and no longer dominated (though they were not yet completely eliminated). It is also necessary to realize that, however much it may have been marred by mechanical materialist tendencies and pragmatic adulterations, there was a serious attempt under Stalin's leadership to educate people in the scientific standpoint and method of Marxism-Leninism, while in all bourgeois-democratic countries — and this is no exaggeration — from the very earliest age, through the educational system, the mass media and in other ways, *the people are systematically misinformed and lied to about every significant question of current political and world affairs and of world history and are systematically indoctrinated and imbued with an upside-down worldview and errant methodology.* And this takes place, not through the kind of extreme, and exotic, measures of the totalitarian state of Orwell's 1984, but through the "normal," oh-so-democratic functioning of bourgeois-democratic society and its state.

## NOTES

1. There was, of course, a period when the imperialists of the USA, England, and France were trying to create a situation in which Germany would attack the Soviet Union and the two of them would fight it out while the "democratic states" sat it out — and then move in to clean up at the appropriate time (and this, by the way, was the real intent, and is the real lesson, of the Munich Pact entered into by England and France with Germany in 1938). In the U.S. such a strategy had adherents even after England (and, before its early defeat, France) were at war with Germany, beginning in the fall of 1939, but before the U.S. entered the war. Had it been possible for such a strategy to be fully and openly implemented throughout World War 2, then the totalitarianism theories would very likely have been given much greater promotion throughout that war.
2. For such an analysis the reader is strongly urged to study *America in Decline* and Parts I and II of *The Soviet Union: Socialist or Social-Imperialist?*
3. Luxemburg herself was critical of Lenin on this point; and attacking *What Is To Be Done?* has become a *sine qua non* and a veritable *profession de foi* of all good antitotalitarians. Arendt makes her obligatory attack (though she somewhat "moderates" it) in a footnote of *Totalitarianism* (p. 365). For a fuller discussion of the questions concentrated in *What Is To Be Done?* and the controversy surrounding it, see Avakian, *For a Harvest of Dragons*, pp. 74-84.
4. An extensive analysis of Stalin's role as leader of the Soviet Union over three decisive decades is beyond the scope of this book. I have elsewhere undertaken analysis of some important aspects of this, focusing in particular on Stalin's mistakes — in the context of upholding Stalin overall, as the leader of the world's first socialist state who, despite his mistakes, made important contributions to the international communist movement — viewing these mistakes from the standpoint of how to draw the appropriate lessons for carrying forward the struggle to overthrow the bourgeoisie, establish and exercise the dictatorship of the proletariat, and continue the advance to world communism. See, for example, *Conquer the World*, pp. 3-28; and "Outline of Views on the Historical Experience of the International Communist Movement and the Lessons for Today," in *Revolution*, No. 49 (June 1981), pp. 4-9. Analysis of important aspects of this question is also contained in *The Declaration of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement*, particularly pp. 15-21.
5. This can be seen in a number of articles and speeches by Stalin in this period, including "Dizzy With Success," written in 1930 (in *Problems of Leninism* [Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1976], pp. 483-91), although, of course, this will be dismissed as merely more deception and falsification by those, like Arendt, who are obsessed with totalitarian Stalinist demons.
6. Marx and Engels, "Letter to August Bebel, Wilhelm Leibknecht, Wilhelm Bracke and Others," (17-18 September 1879), in *Selected Letters (MESL)* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1977), p. 69.
7. At times the dimensions of this obsession become almost comical. For instance, Arendt seriously — and approvingly — cites a comment by Boris Souvarine (contemporary, and adversary, of Lenin as well as Stalin) that Stalin "took care always" — he literally says *always* — "to say the opposite of what he did, and to do the opposite of what he said" (cited in *Totalitarianism*, p. 362). Can anyone really imagine a person, let alone a whole society, actually functioning while being governed by the principle of always saying the opposite of what you did and doing the opposite of what you said? Such a statement goes beyond the boundaries of the zany and approaches the limits of the lunatic.  
Or another example: In seeking to portray to his readers the sense of the outrages committed by wealthy and powerful interests against poor people in Appalachia, Michael Harrington, an American social democrat, begins with these words: "Fantasize a neo-Stalinist regime in an advanced Western country" (Michael Harrington, *Decade of Decision* [New York: Simon & Schuster, 1980], p. 178). Further comment here seems unnecessary — except to observe again that while such people include Hitler and Nazism in their denunciations, the real obsession is with Stalin and "Stalinism."
8. Arendt, a German Jew, became an active Zionist in 1930 and helped Jews escape from Germany. She was, however, a social-democratic Zionist, and while she regarded the creation of the state of Israel as necessary for the restoration of the national and moreover the human rights of the Jewish people (see *Totalitarianism*, p. 299,) she raised appropriately liberal objections to some of the more outrageous ways in which the national (and human) rights of the Palestinian people were trampled on in the process.  
Having fled to Paris in 1933, Arendt came to the U.S. and lived there until she died in 1975. Generally speaking, she was on the liberal end of the bourgeois political spectrum in the U.S. She was also what has been described as a "cosmopolitan Zionist" — that is, she attacked what she regarded as the false notion of the non-European character of the Jews. Her apologetics for Western imperialism (and its historical development) were often quite remarkable and also quite extensive. For

example, she claims that

even slavery, though actually established on a strict racial basis, did not make the slave-holding peoples race-conscious before the nineteenth century. Throughout the eighteenth century, American slaveholders themselves considered it a temporary institution and wanted to abolish it gradually. Most of them probably would have said with Jefferson: "I tremble when I think that God is just." (*Totalitarianism*, p. 177)

And she can write, apparently with a straight face:

The happy fact is that although British imperialist rule sank to some level of vulgarity, cruelty played a lesser role between the two World Wars than ever before and a minimum of human rights was always safeguarded. It is this moderation in the midst of plain insanity that paved the way for what Churchill has called "the liquidation of His Majesty's Empire" and that eventually may turn out to mean the transformation of the English nation into a Commonwealth of English peoples. (*Totalitarianism*, p. 221)

9. See, Arendt, *Totalitarianism*, p. XVII-XXII.

In this light the exchange between E.P. Thompson and Václav Racek, a Czechoslovakian "dissident," is interesting and enlightening. For one thing, it brings out once more that as a general rule those who might be called the "mainstream dissidents" in the Soviet bloc — who are more or less unabashedly pro-West — are among the most despicable people in the world. True, the Soviet-bloc revisionist rulers must bear much of the responsibility for this, but this truth does not make these "dissidents" any less despicable. If anyone is inclined to think this is unfair, listen to what Thompson feels compelled to say, in order to instruct such "dissidents" in the need for more sophistication in upholding the Western imperialist alliance against the Soviet bloc. He writes that, in his discussions with such "dissidents,"

I have been told — to give one example — that Allende was a "Communist dictator," overthrown by a popular general strike. This is not true. Allende was a democratically-elected President, with reformist policies, who was first "de-stabilized" and then murdered in a military coup. The appalling tyranny,

executions, tortures, and purging of all intellectual life in Chile in the years which followed this coup out-rival anything to be seen in Eastern Europe in the past decade. (Thompson, *Cold War*, p. 88)

Imagine what kind of people it is — and we are not talking about people without knowledge of politics and world affairs, these are "dissident" intellectuals, overwhelmingly — with whom one has to argue something like this!

Still, through it all, Thompson makes clear that he knows where his bread is buttered. Thus, in responding to Racek's accusations that Thompson has been duped by the Soviet-bloc rulers — accusations that Racek seeks to substantiate by reference to *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, among other things — Thompson not only says that not everything Arendt wrote in that book about the Soviet bloc strictly applies today, but he specifically insists:

You even suppose that you have to persuade me that the social system you live under is "essentially different" from my own, and you say that it may sound "odd" to me to learn that my public criticism of the British political system is itself a proof of the continuing reality of our democratic process.

And why should I have to be persuaded of these things? I have written about them myself, again and again. Much of my work as a historian has involved me in the examination of the sources, the realities, and the limits of our democratic process. It is because this process is now threatened, under the pressure of militarization, that I write so sharply today. (Thompson, *Cold War*, p. 87)

What is striking in this entire exchange is that, whatever the differences between them, both Thompson and Racek conduct this argument on the classical terms of the bourgeois democrat in the service of Western imperialism, who knows that when push comes to shove and the "pressure of militarization" is supplanted by the reality of outright warfare, there is after all one side which, whatever its faults may be, is "essentially different" and whose triumph is worthy of support — indeed in large part precisely because it can be publicly criticized, from an openly bourgeois-democratic point of view.

"In political discussion, 'democracy' is normally treated as a simple, unquestioned, timeless good against which all forms of political life can be objectively tested. Avakian attempts to go to the root of democratic theory and practice by a detailed examination of its sources and history, and, as a result, to show whose class interests are served by democratic institutions that only *appear* to serve everyone's interests. Avakian presents incisive critiques of the standard arguments for democracy in such classics as de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America* and Arendt's *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. In addition, the author engages radical and socialist reinterpretations of democracy which he finds still tied to the prevailing bourgeois theories. Avakian argues his position on the decisive limitations of democracy in such a way that careful readers are compelled to clarify and rethink their own views. Avakian has written a serious and demanding work of political philosophy and political practice."

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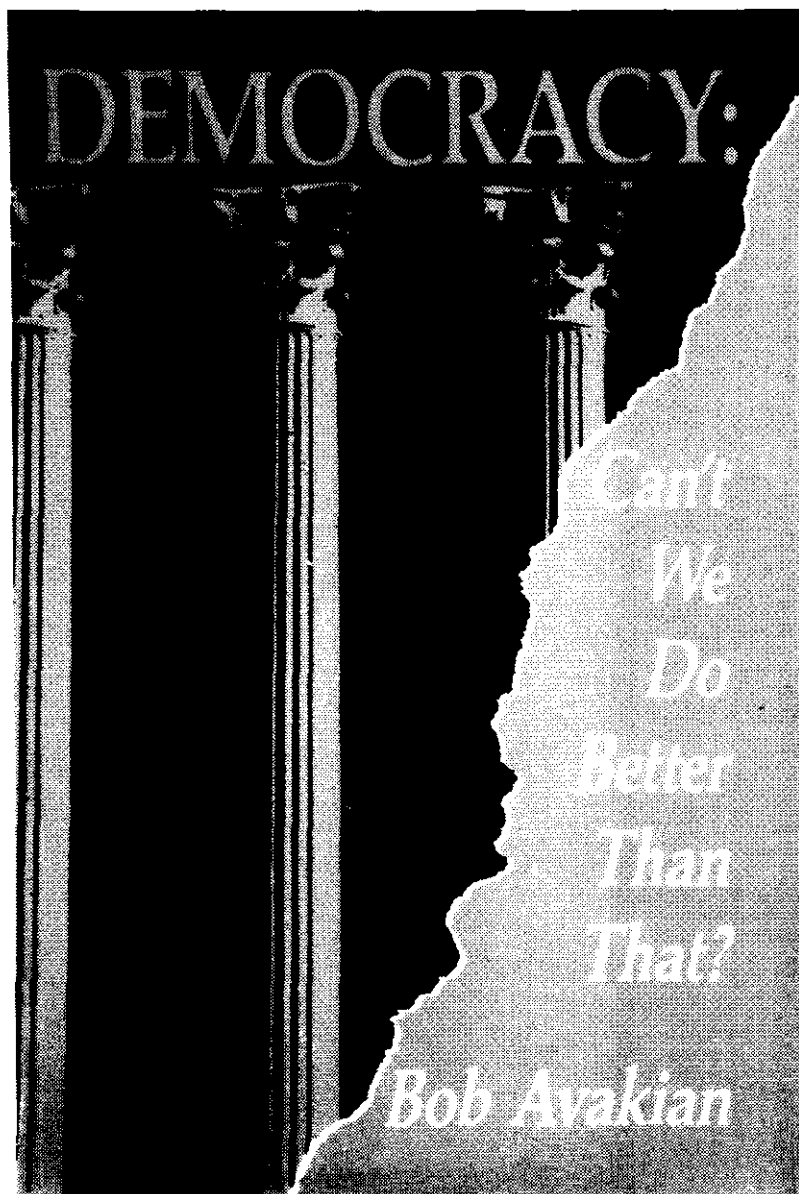
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