

Nuclear War ?

Since the dropping of nuclear bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki 35 years ago, the threat of nuclear destruction has hung over the world. The first nuclear weapons were supposedly used to force a quicker end to the war with Japan, but in reality it has been revealed that Japan had already surrendered. Recent documents have revealed that U.S. President Truman, in his own words, "symbolically" dropped the nuclear bombs in 1945 on the U.S.S.R. Thus, U.S. imperialism incinerated thousands of Japanese to demonstrate to the Soviet Union what U.S. imperialism was willing to do to destroy socialism.

The *New York Times* has revealed that twice in 1952 Truman threatened the Soviet Union with nuclear destruction and was actually considering doing it. Yet in 1953 Truman fired General MacArthur precisely for advocating this course in the Korean War, to use nuclear weapons against the Soviet Union and China. What had changed? Stalin and the real Bolshevik leaders in the Soviet Union and the socialist camp had been assassinated. They had been replaced by revisionists who advocated peaceful coexistence and competition with the west and peaceful, therefore no, transition to socialism in the world. The process of capitalist restoration had begun and the mortal threat the socialist camp represented to the imperialist system had been removed. Now it was time for "peace," so the U.S. and the revisionists made "peace" in Korea and settled down to "peaceful competition" in dividing up spheres of influence, colonies and semi-colonies.

Nuclear weapons are not particularly suited to imperialist wars and were not developed for that reason. The largest advances in nuclear weapons technology were first made in fascist Germany for the purpose of reversing the defeats of the German army by the socialist Soviet Union. The Red Army was in Berlin, however, before the project was completed. The fascists had hoped to leave the land of socialism a pile of radioactive dust as their lasting "contribution to civilization." The German scientists escaped to the U.S. forces and went to work on the American nuclear project that was also being developed to be used "symbolically" or in actuality on socialism, as a last-ditch effort to turn the tide of history. In

an inter-imperialist war or a war of colonial conquest, nuclear weapons destroy the very thing the war is being fought over: sources of raw materials and cheap labour and markets. Imperialism, however, was willing to consider destroying part of the world, a part that it had already lost, to prevent itself from losing it all.

Even given the contradictions between capitalism and socialism, the capitalists feared a war with socialism because it was a war that could be lost and probably meant the collapse of the world imperialist system. U.S. imperialism preferred to use the "symbolism" of Hiroshima combined with the largest campaign of subversion in history to destroy socialism from "within." The "symbolism" caused leaders in the Soviet Union to capitulate to imperialism, and this combined with the work of agents to destroy the dictatorship of the proletariat. This was the origin of "nuclear blackmail."

Imperialism preferred to integrate the socialist market back into the world capitalist market rather than destroy it. This meant a revisionist coup d'etat but also meant the consequent creation of a competing imperialist bloc. Western imperialists had to accept the Russian revisionists into the imperialist club but with their nuclear weapons, the U.S. had developed a nuclear arsenal to fight "symbolically" or otherwise against socialism. The socialist Soviet Union had developed a nuclear arsenal to protect itself from imperialism. This new military system which had come into being as a result of the struggle between the two systems now passed into the realm of inter-imperialist rivalry. Other imperialists and would-be imperialists aspired for the bomb. Britain and France developed nuclear weapons, followed by China, India and now probably Israel, South Africa, Iraq, Pakistan, Brazil and Argentina.

The potential for nuclear war became a reality of inter-imperialist contradictions but a potential that generally contradicted the purpose of imperialist war. A result was the development of the theory of "deterrence" where supposedly the "status quo" could be maintained and peace could be preserved by the mutual ability to destroy the earth as it is known with a nuclear war. This "deterrence" has in



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BOLSHEVIK LEAGUE of the U.S.

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reality been more effective in deterring centrifugal forces in the two blocs than in deterring the expansionary interests of U.S. and Russian imperialism. Both of the principal nuclear powers had an interest in promoting hysteria about the possibility of nuclear war. It is this hysteria constantly reinforced by bellicose posturing by the two main nuclear powers that has maintained the concept of nuclear umbrellas and kept alive NATO and the Warsaw Pact. As the law of uneven development has split the western alliance apart, the U.S. has used the "deterrence" against Russia as a means to deter its allies from going too far.

Khrushchev beat the whole international communist movement into submission to the fear of nuclear war and to abandon the class struggles and the national liberation struggles under the banner of "peace" and preserving the human race from imminent and total destruction. The Russian revisionists identified certain "policy makers" in Washington as bent on destroying the world (and Washington was always willing to provide a few powerless advocates of this). This in turn justified any kind of class collaboration with any state or even forces in the U.S. who opposed this "policy." The international communist movement had to abandon revolution and the countries of the socialist camp had to accept Russia's nuclear umbrella to defend themselves from the U.S. warmongers who for some inexplicable reason were compelled to destroy their source of profits.

The policy of "deterrence" has also been useful to both the U.S. and Russia to try to woo away forces from the other. In the same way, Russia uses its nuclear might in Europe to try to promote contradictions between the U.S. and Western Europe, where Western Europe can preserve "peace" and prevent the world from disappearing by allowing the Russians to make this or that nibble on the U.S. empire. The threat of nuclear terrorism by the U.S. and Russia has been useful to compete for spheres of influence, but the actual use of nuclear weapons on a massive scale would be counterproductive.

It was possible for the U.S. to launch a nuclear attack on the Soviet Union when the latter was socialist and when the U.S. thought the Soviet Union had the advantage of a monopoly on nuclear weapons. The potential was not there for total victory, and there was the potential for total defeat by the socialist camp. But the victory of revisionism in the Soviet Union removed the principal reason tempting the imperialists to drastic action. The withdrawal of not only the Soviet Union but also parts of Europe and Asia from the capitalist world market was causing a tremendous crisis in the capitalist world market because of its reduced size. This in turn intensified contradictions among the imperialists and increased the inevitability of war between the imperialists. The imperialist camp faced its deteriorating situation in the face of a socialist camp that was consolidating its strength. And the growing crisis in the advanced countries, and the growing national liberation struggles in the backward countries, gave every prospect that the socialist camp would continue to grow. The imperialist camp faced the prospect of shrinking. This might have been stopped by trying to eliminate the socialist camp from existence with nuclear weapons, but the far more necessary solution for the imperialists was to reintegrate this part of the earth into the world market. The experience of Hitler made it abundantly clear that this was not an easy thing to do by means of invasion and conquest. So hundreds of millions of dollars were spent on subversion, and when the revisionists reintegrated the socialist camp into the world capitalist market there was a relative stabilization of the market and potential for growth that attenuated the contradictions in the imperialist system. This led to a certain period of relative "peace," among the imperialists, and prosperity, for the imperialists.

The markets provided by the demise of the socialist camp have been essentially saturated and have reached their limits. The Russian bloc is in debt more than \$50 billion to western

banks and there is a limit that is being approached where the banks face collapse. The market for goods has been saturated but limited by the impoverishment of the working class that cannot afford to buy many more western goods. The imperialists had high hopes for a greater opening of the China market, but they did not realize how impoverished Mao's regime had really kept one-quarter of the human race. This, combined with the growth of all the other contradictions in the world, is necessitating a redivision among the imperialists. This redivision has to be carried out by force, by military means, which means a war between two imperialist alliances. But this reality brings the imperialists face to face with the mammoth nuclear arsenals they have built to terrorize the world and to make sure the other bloc does not acquire a tempting decisive advantage.

This has necessitated a shift in nuclear strategy. It is not possible to redivide the world by destroying it or the very part of it which one imperialist alliance seeks as a means of alleviating its growing contradictions. Information about this shift in strategy has recently come to light as a result of U.S. presidential elections. Although the impression given is that this change in U.S. strategy is something new to combat the growing "Russian threat," it is quietly admitted that this is an evolving strategy that has been in development for many years. The essence of this "new" strategy is to find an acceptable means to use nuclear weapons in a war that is compatible with the imperialist objectives for which it is being fought. First of all, a means needs to exist for the two blocs to go to war with each other without triggering off a counterproductive nuclear exchange. This is accomplished by the disengagement of conventional (non-nuclear) war from all-out nuclear war. One important means of doing this, beyond agreement, is to have a phased-in method of employing nuclear weapons. This means that if, because of loss on the battlefield, one side is tempted to use nuclear weapons, they be used in a limited way and be able to be responded to in a limited way, i.e., tactical nuclear warfare instead of strategic nuclear warfare, to use the parlance of the imperialist militaries.

This has been admitted strategy for some time, but it is not enough. There has to be use of limited nuclear warfare that is compatible with the imperialist objectives of the war, so that even the escalation of the nuclear conflict to a less and less limited basis does not prove counterproductive. This first implies limitations on the use of tactical nuclear weapons (small and short-range ones) to military objectives. These armaments have been developed to use against the advance or to advance upon other conventional forces. There are agreements to not use them on industry and civilian population centers. But if there is an escalation to strategic weapons for the imperialists, there must be a means to use them in a certain way. Thus, we have had the revelation, for political campaign reasons, that the strategic weapons (long-range missiles and bombers with large megatonnage) are targeted not on large population and industrial centers but on military and command targets. This principally refers to the nuclear weapons of the opposing power and on their military and political command centers. For years these have been built principally in desolate, sparsely populated areas of the U.S. and Russia, where the worst damage will be some agricultural production. And the battlefield in which missiles and bombers can be shot down over the sky is Northern Canada, where there are large desolate areas for them to fall in an uncontrolled way. Even this kind of exchange is planned to be carried out at first in a limited way, allowing for increasing escalation. The objective on both sides is to knock out the other's means of response, forcing a settlement of the war that will give the "winning" side a favourable redivision of the world. Another objective can be the elimination of the political and military power structure that would make a conventional invasion by and large unop-

posed. Thus would be realized not only the gain of the opponent's colonies, semi-colonies and spheres of influence, but also the actual subjugation of the opponent.

Another character of this strategy is for each side to develop the means to strike and knock out the other's nuclear arsenal in one blow and then dictate the result of the war. This preserves the objectives of a war but presents many risks because of the retaliation that comes as a result of failure. Inherent in this situation is the probability that the other side will be able to retaliate in some significant manner to a pre-emptive strike. Even if one side or the other attempts this and gains a significant advantage, there will still have to be a period of conventional war to establish the precise nature of a redivision of the world.

There is, of course, a danger of mistakes and miscalculations by the imperialists which can lead to considerably more destruction than might be desirable to the imperialists, but there is no need to fall victim to the pacifist hysteria that any war leads to the destruction of the world or that limited nuclear war inevitably will lead to nuclear holocaust. This view is predicated on a denial of the nature of imperialism and, therefore, imperialist war. Lenin said of imperialism: **"It has developed the productive forces to such an extent that humanity must either pass over to Socialism, or for years, nay, decades, witness armed conflicts of the 'great' nations for an artificial maintenance of capitalism by means of colonies, monopolies, privileges, and all sorts of national oppression."**¹ In the view of modern-day pacifists, **"armed conflicts of the 'great' nations"** can only lead to the destruction of the world. So how then can capitalism be maintained? Has imperialism changed its nature because of the invention of a new weapon? It is the economic laws of capitalism and the intensification of contradictions in the imperialist era that force wars between the imperialists. None of these things have changed since the introduction of nuclear weapons.

Nor have we entered a Kautskyite era of "ultra-imperialism" where the imperialists maintain the peace by agreement and where the danger of war derives only from the "bad policy" of certain "bad leaders." The objective development of capitalism makes maintenance of the "status quo" impossible. The law of uneven development and maximum profit forces the imperialists to redivide the world. There is no way to "stay the hand of the imperialists" because they cannot change the nature of capitalism nor refrain from **"armed conflicts of the 'great' nations for an artificial maintenance of capitalism."** As Stalin said after the emergence of nuclear weapons, **"the inevitability of wars between capitalists remains in force."**² All the feverish activity of the imperialists today to prepare the war proves that Kautsky's dream is as fallacious today as it was when he expounded it in the very month that World War I started.

But this fact has unfortunately led to a situation of despondency and despair in the proletariat, which sees the imperialists preparing for war but which has been inundated with years of pacifist propaganda about the destructiveness of modern weapons; propaganda which holds that any **"armed conflicts of the 'great' nations"** will lead to nuclear holocaust. This leads the proletariat to pacifist actions that will not prevent war or to despondency rather than to preparations to transform the war into a civil war.

The proponents of the theories that conventional war is impossible without nuclear weapons, or a limited use of nuclear weapons, do the greatest disservice to the proletariat. This view denies that the imperialists are capable of waging a war **"for an artificial maintenance of capitalism by means of colonies, monopolies, privileges, and all sorts of national oppression."** The view that nothing can "prevent" a limited nuclear

war from becoming a nuclear holocaust is a view that imperialists are incapable of waging an imperialist war for imperialist objectives. It is the quest for **"colonies, monopolies, privileges"** that prevents the imperialists from incinerating the **"colonies, monopolies, privileges"** with nuclear weapons. It is the basic law of modern capitalism that determines the behaviour of capitalism. It is not the actions of an individual with his finger on a button that determines the development of capitalism. Stalin described this law in the following way: **"the securing of the maximum capitalist profit through the exploitation, ruin and impoverishment of the majority of the population of the given country, through the enslavement and systematic robbery of the peoples of other countries, especially backward countries, and lastly, through wars and militarization of the national economy, which are utilized for the obtaining of the highest profits."**³

If imperialist wars are inevitable, it is also inevitable that they be waged on the basis of this law. How is it possible that **"wars and militarization of the national economy"** be **"utilized for the obtaining of the highest profits"** if the means of making those profits are totally destroyed? There cannot be **"the securing of the maximum capitalist profit through the exploitation, ruin and impoverishment of the majority of the population of the given country"** if the majority of the population is destroyed with nuclear bombs. These profits cannot be secured **"through the enslavement and systematic robbery of the peoples of other countries"** if these peoples are totally destroyed by nuclear weapons. Indeed imperialist war will mean the destruction of millions, but in such a way that can be **"utilized for the obtaining of the highest profits."** Imperialists engage in war and militarization precisely to obtain the highest profits. This necessitates that the war be executed in a means capable of achieving that objective, even though only one side may actually obtain it.

This is why the imperialists negotiate with each other over the means of waging war. Right now the U.S., Russian and other imperialists are engaging in negotiations on the "rules of war." Their latest agreement is to refrain from using napalm on opposing armies in areas of high concentration of civilian populations. In the wars in colonies and semi-colonies, the imperialists drop napalm on the civilian population to terrorize it, as the U.S. did in Vietnam and as Russia is doing today in Afghanistan. But the imperialists can agree to not do it to "civilized" people because it endangers exploitable labour and can cause civilian unrest during a war. This stands in contrast to the semi-colonies, where the peoples are already in unrest against imperialism and where control of natural resources and markets is more important than the easily replaced unskilled labour. It is true that the imperialists do not always follow these agreements, but history proves that they generally do. It was agreed during World War I to stop using chemical and biological warfare. This agreement was maintained during World War II, except for the German violations of it against the socialist Soviet Union and certain oppressed peoples. These weapons were not used by Germany even when it was going down to total defeat. The German revanchists knew that there would be another time, they knew that capitalism went on and that there were profits to be made after the war.

The whole purpose of the "SALT II" negotiations and all the other negotiations and treaties on wars between the imperialists is to see that **"wars and militarization of the national economy . . . are utilized for the obtaining of the highest profits."** If they are not conducted for this purpose, then for what purpose are they conducted?

In the present international situation it seems most likely that war will break out in the semi-colonies, fought by proxies for the imperialist powers, as is now happening in the Iraq-Iran war. A war of this type will widen to include direct involvement

of the great powers, and this could lead to an inter-imperialist war of world magnitude. Somewhere in this process it is quite possible that nuclear weapons will be used in some phase of the war, particularly as the war drags on and the losing side is tempted to employ some nuclear weapons to reverse some of its losses.

The use of nuclear weapons in the next imperialist war is only "inevitable" to the degree that nationalism and pacifism hold sway over the proletariat. The best means with which to prevent the use of nuclear weapons is not pious declarations, petitions and anti-nuclear demonstrations. The imperialists will use nuclear weapons if they can be "**utilized for obtaining the highest profits,**" independently of the will and action of petty-bourgeois pacifists. The only way to prevent the use of nuclear weapons is to turn the imperialist war into a civil war. *The only way the imperialists can be disarmed is by the armed proletariat.* The best way to ensure that a limited nuclear war will not become larger is to use it to rouse the masses into revolutionary action against the imperialists. To the degree that there is a movement building to turn the war into a civil war against the bourgeoisie, to that degree the bourgeoisie will be reluctant to use nuclear weapons, because of the reaction of the masses to their use and because any attempt to destroy the military and political structure of an opposing power when there is a revolutionary movement against the war could aid a victorious civil war by the proletariat which in turn would inspire the proletariat of all the belligerent countries to put an end to the carnage of the war by the same means.

The social-chauvinist line of supporting one's "own" bourgeoisie in the war against the opposing bourgeoisies can only encourage the use of nuclear weapons. But likewise, so does the social-pacifist line of trying to prevent the war with pacifist demagogy promote both false hopes about preventing the war and despondency that if the war breaks out the world will be incinerated. This serves to cover up the real preparations of the imperialists for war, like their changes in nuclear strategy, and it sabotages the preparation of the proletariat for the only real means to stop the use of nuclear weapons—to turn the war into a civil war against the bourgeoisie.

The Communist International in 1928 laid stress on the struggle against pacifism, particularly "revolutionary" pacifism, and this maintains its validity all the more in the "nuclear era." The Comintern exposed "**radical' or 'revolutionary' pacifism, advocated by certain 'Left' Socialists who admit the danger of war, but strive to combat this danger frequently by meaningless phrases against war. These pacifists lay excessive stress upon the destructiveness of modern weapons of war in order, either to prove that protracted wars are impossible, or else to demonstrate that it is impossible to transform**

imperialist war into civil war."⁴ The line that war means nuclear war and that limited nuclear war means all-out nuclear war is a line that tries "**to prove that protracted wars are impossible**" and it is therefore, "**impossible to transform imperialist war into civil war**" because the world will be destroyed. This pacifist line promotes the idea that the only task is to "prevent" the war by "staying the hand of the imperialists" and to convince them to maintain the "status quo"—an impossible task in the imperialist era.

The Party of Labour of Albania is a party of this type of "revolutionary" pacifists, i.e., social-pacifists. The PLA maintains: "The Marxist-Leninist communists are against that road of the triumph of the revolution which goes through imperialist war, because such a war and more so in the present-day conditions of a thermo-nuclear war, would be fraught with devastating consequences for the peoples, for the present and future of mankind."⁵ But this war is inevitable and there will be devastating consequences for the peoples whether or not there is the use of nuclear weapons. If we reject the "road of the triumph of the revolution which goes through imperialist war" we only condemn the peoples of the world to suffer these devastating consequences as long as the imperialists are obtaining the highest profits from it, and we only condemn the peoples to an endless series of such wars. Then if not in this war, in the next one nuclear weapons will probably be used and their devastating consequences will be suffered by the peoples as long as the imperialists are obtaining the highest profits from their use.

The international proletariat must learn again that there is only one way to escape the inferno of imperialist wars, there is only one way to escape the possible nuclear infernos in those wars. As Lenin said: "**The millions who are pondering over the causes of the recent war and of the approaching future war are more and more clearly realizing the grim and inexorable truth that it is impossible to escape imperialist war and the imperialist peace . . . which inevitably engenders imperialist war, that it is impossible to escape that inferno, except by a Bolshevik struggle and a Bolshevik revolution.**"⁶

Notes

1. *Socialism and War: The Present War is an Imperialist War, Collected Works* (1930), vol. 18, p. 221.
2. *Economic Problems of Socialism in the U.S.S.R.*, ch. 6.
3. *Ibid.*, ch. 7.
4. *The Struggle Against Imperialist War and the Tasks of Communists, Resolution of the Sixth World Congress of the Communist International—1928*, Article 12(c), pp. 12-13.
5. "The Marxist-Leninist Stand of the PLA on the Problems of War and Peace," *Albania Today*, no. 2, 1979, p. 7.
6. "The Fourth Anniversary of the October Revolution" (Oct. 14, 1921), LCW 33:56.

by the Bolshevik Union of Canada

reprinted from *Proletarian Revolution* No. 25

APPEAL TO ALL REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNISTS!

An appeal to begin the preparations needed in order to be able to transform the approaching imperialist war into a civil war against the bourgeoisie. See the second issue of **International Correspondence**.