

## IMPERIALISM AND THE THIRD INTERNATIONAL

“No nation can be free if it oppresses other nations.”  
V. I. Lenin<sup>1</sup>

Without Vladimir Ulyanov Lenin, the social theories of Marx might have fared the same as those of Saint-Simon, Fourier or Owen. Marx would probably be seen today as just another social thinker whose writings could be found in a remote corner of the municipal library. Because of Lenin’s crucial contribution to communist theory, most radical thinkers see his work as a necessary prolongation or addendum to Marxist thought. In this section, we will focus on Lenin and his view of imperialism.

### I. Marxism in search of a mentor

With the death of Karl Marx in 1883 and the death of Frederick Engels in 1895, Europe’s communist movement needed a mentor who could serve as an interpreter of Marx’s writings.

#### A. Bernstein

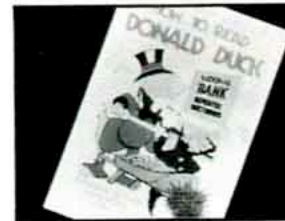
After the death of Engels, a large portion of the Social Democratic (communist) movement gravitated toward Eduard Bernstein (1850-1932). Bernstein was a German thinker who had followed Marxism since having been influenced by Engels’ *Anti-Duhring*. For several years, he had worked directly with Engels and was recognized as an expert in Marxist theory.

Bernstein, nevertheless, maintained that there were certain shortcomings in Marx’s thought. He pointed to the three laws of economic movement which Marx had observed in capitalist society:

### Imperialism and the Third International



Anti-imperialism posters in South America and Europe. The Spanish reads, “The hands of imperialism must be cut off in Vietnam.”



Marxist publication decrying the “imperialist ideology in the Disney comic.”

**Marx 1883**

**Engels 1895**

**Eduard Bernstein**

## Marx's Laws of Economic Movement

1. Centralization of Capital
2. Decrease of Profits
3. Increase of Poverty



(1) *The centralization of capital.* Marx had predicted that as time went by, capital would become more and more concentrated in the hands of a few capitalists. This would occur because of wealthy capitalists resorting to unscrupulous practices such as bribery and selling at artificially reduced prices in order to destroy their competition. Likewise only the most prosperous capitalists could purchase the latest machinery. Ultimately, all capital would be controlled by a tiny minority.

(2) *Decrease of profits.* In accord with the theory of surplus value, Marx maintained that the worker constitutes the only source of profit in the production process. Marx recognized that companies were purchasing more and more modern machinery and replacing workers. By reducing the number of workers, Marx maintained that the capitalists eliminated the only real source of profit. Therefore, the rise in machinery and the decline in workers would cause a decrease of profits.

(3) *Increase of poverty.* Marx maintained that the concentration of capital would force owners of small companies to abandon their businesses and return to the labor force. The increased use of machinery would multiply unemployment and poverty. Marx predicted that the misery of their living conditions would lead both new and old members of the working force to revolt against the capitalist system.

### Bernstein's perception

By the end of the 19th century, Bernstein concluded that Marx's predictions were not coming to pass. In fact, profits increased and the situation of the workers improved by the end of the 19th century. Bernstein, therefore, maintained that Marx's economic analysis was incorrect and unscientific. He likewise challenged Marx's view of history and even concluded that Marxism was great not because of the dialectic, but "in spite of" it. Bernstein thus denied the scientific necessity for a violent revolution and instead advocated, as expressed by the title of his book, not the need for revolutionary but *Evolutionary Socialism* (1889).<sup>2</sup>

Bernstein's theories achieved a broad level of popularity. Initially his positions were refuted by orthodox Marxists such as the German Karl Kautsky. In 1899 Kautsky attacked Bernstein in *Bernstein and the Social-Democratic Program, an Anti-Critic*. By 1910, however, Kautsky had changed his views and came to support Bernstein's revision of Marxism. Followers of Kautsky and Bernstein spoke of a "return to Kant." They concluded that society would not be transformed spontaneously through revolution. Individuals needed to undergo a moral change.

## Bernstein's Perception

### End of 19th Century

1. No Decrease of Profits
2. No Increase of Poverty

~~Marxist Economics~~

~~Dialectical Materialism~~

~~Historical Materialism~~

This perspective was naturally interpreted as being “idealistic” or “utopian” by Marxist purists as well as by Lenin, who claimed that societal transformation was contingent upon violent revolution.

As time went by, Karl Kautsky became the foremost political figure in favor of this revision of Marx. Lenin, therefore, referred to those who adopted this position as “Kautskyans.”

**B. The Communist Internationals**

By the beginning of the 20th century, the socialist movement had already proceeded through various stages which will be briefly examined here.

**1. The First International (1869-1876)**

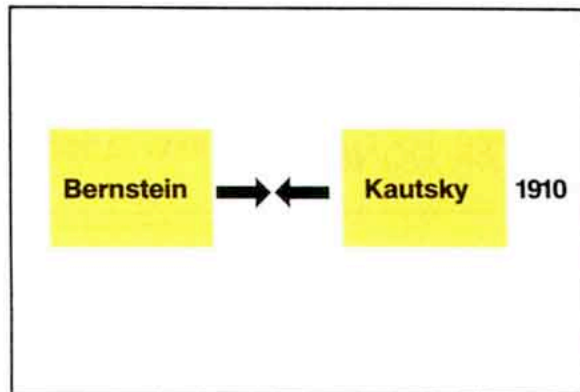
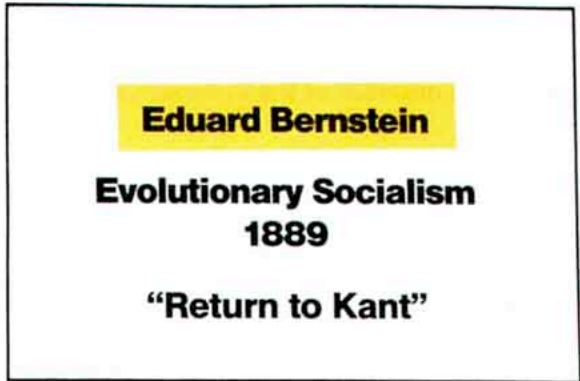
The First International was headed by Karl Marx himself. It was not at all limited to supporters of Marx’s theory; it involved various groups committed to workers’ rights. However, because of Marx’s control, the First International’s basic direction tended to reflect only Marx’s opinions in its policy-making. Marx himself was a conflictive, impulsive, and scattered personality. Marx’s sarcasm and his stubborn nature provoked the First International’s demise.

**2. The Second International (1889-1914)**

The second attempt to organize the socialist movement was far less structured. It recognized that socialism had to be related to the character of each nation. There was not a single path to socialism.

The Second International split, first, because of disputes about membership and again later due to different socialists’ attitudes toward World War I. Kautsky’s supporters wanted a very broad definition of membership. Kautsky felt that essentially anyone who supported the basic worker movement could be viewed as a social democrat or communist. Vladimir Lenin, on the other hand, had a far more restricted view of membership. He wanted membership restricted to a highly disciplined revolutionary core who could educate and raise cadres in that same tradition. Basically the debate was quantity vs. quality.

Individuals such as Lenin also advocated international socialist solidarity in opposing World War I because of its “imperialist” nature, whereas Karl Kautsky and most other principal leaders of the Second International opted to support their respective nations during that conflict.



The spread of Christianity

**What is a member of the Communist Party?**

**Lenin's View— Disciplined, totally dedicated individual**

**Kautsky's View— Any sympathizers**

**3. The Third International (1919)—  
An Affirmation of Lenin's Views**

The Third International served basically as an affirmation of Lenin's principles and his particular interpretation and application of Marxism. Almost all the participants at the Third International were Russians. Lenin sardonically denounced the Second International, referring to it as the "Yellow" International.<sup>3</sup>

**C. Lenin**

Born in 1870, Vladimir Ulyanov (Lenin) had acquainted himself with the basic writings of Marx by the age of 18. By his early 20s, Lenin acted as the coordinating point for most communist activity within Russia. A survey of several of his key revolutionary writings reveals the particular character of Lenin's interpretation of Marx (as affirmed by the Third International). Here we will just briefly touch on a few of the major themes:

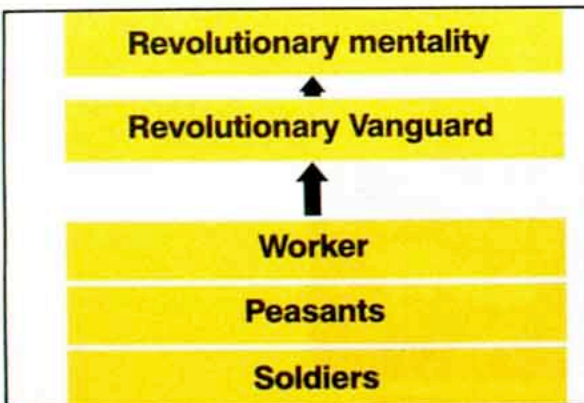
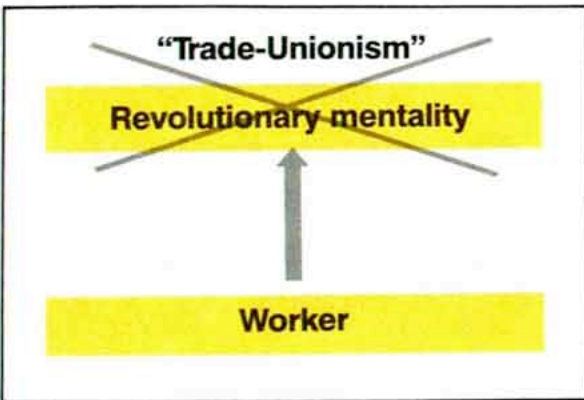
(1) *What is to be Done?* (1902) In this text, Lenin concludes that workers by themselves cannot achieve a proletarian consciousness. They need a professional revolutionary vanguard to educate and prepare them for revolution. The vanguard should have a restricted membership and operate on the basis of absolute secrecy. In his text Lenin also advocates jumping from feudalism to socialism. For Lenin there was no need to pass through the stage of capitalism prior to advancing to socialism.

(2) *State and Revolution* (1917) This text was written just prior to the October Revolution during Lenin's exile in Finland. Here Lenin speaks of the process by which society moves from a bourgeois state to communism. Lenin maintains that the state which has served as a special repressive force benefitting the bourgeoisie must now be replaced by a state with a special repressive force committed to benefitting the proletariat. This constitutes what Marx and Lenin defined as the "dictatorship of the proletariat."

This dictatorship, Lenin insisted, will remain during the socialist stages and gradually the state, in accord with Marxist principles, would wither away. During this process, the communist party would serve as the vanguard leading the whole people to socialism.

(3) *"Left Wing" Communism, an Infantile Disorder* (1920) Here Lenin clarifies the nature of Marxist morality. Lenin called for iron discipline in the party and for an attempt to win the proletariat of all nations. Lenin emphasized that communists must work on two levels, one being legal or parlia-

V. I. LENIN <b>WHAT IS TO BE DONE?</b>	V. I. LENIN THE STATE AND REVOLUTION



mentary, the other illegal and employing subversive or underground methods aimed at advancing the cause. He advocated compromise with the bourgeoisie if it permits communism to advance. Statesmen should measure and prepare the appropriate moment for the proletariat to seize power. Lenin maintains that the right time was a moment when the ruling class is in a state of governmental crisis. Likewise at the same moment the "exploited" would find themselves in a state of crisis.

## II. Lenin's view of imperialism

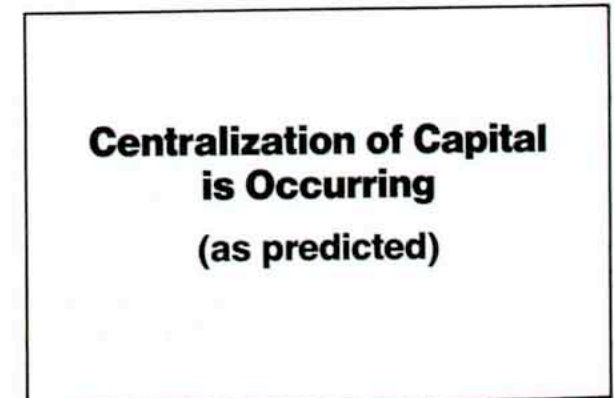
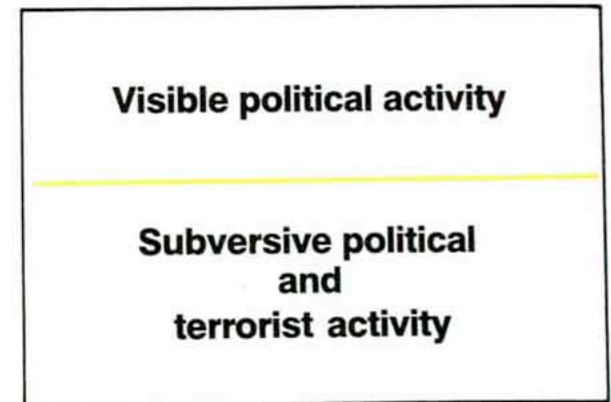
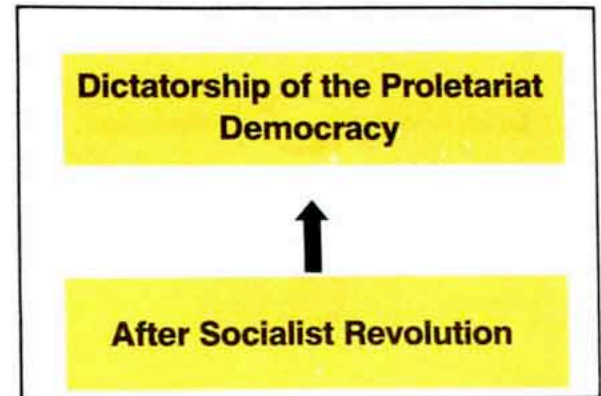
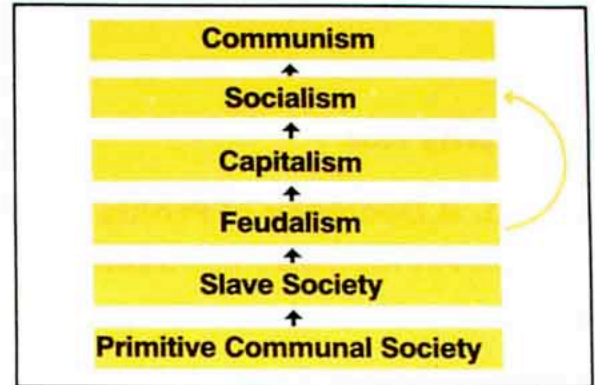
"National liberation," "self-determination," and "imperialism" are terms frequently encountered within socialist and revolutionary circles. This terminology and these concepts are found in Lenin's view of imperialism, particularly as developed in the text *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*. Lenin wrote this book in 1916 with a very controlled style. In that way, he succeeded in having it accepted by the Czarist censors. We should not, therefore, feel that *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism* is an exhaustive presentation of Lenin's views.

Lenin's writings between 1913 and 1917 constitute the basis for a new theory of world revolution. Lenin frequently wrote on imperialism, and his views can be seen developing in such diverse writings as *Backward Europe and Advanced Asia* (1913), *Theses on War* (1914), *On the Slogan for a United States of Europe* (1915), and *The Socialist Revolution and the Right of Nations to Self-Determination* (1916).

Lenin's views contradicted Marxist orthodoxy and maintained that revolution would not first occur in the developed industrial nations but in backward countries such as Russia.

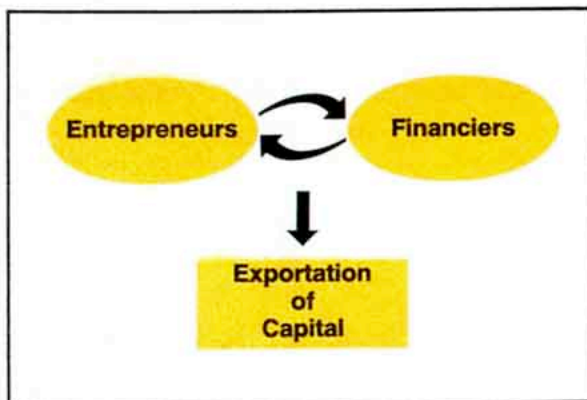
Lenin's writings on imperialism were influenced by German Marxist Rudolf Hilferding's *Finance Capital*, written in 1910, and by J.A. Hobson's *Imperialism*, written in 1902. Interestingly, Hobson was a Christian reformer and Hilferding eventually allied himself with Kautsky.

Lenin's analysis of imperialism justifies the failure of Marx's predictions to come to pass. Lenin maintains that a delay in profits decreasing and poverty increasing is to be expected. In *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, Lenin shows that there is in fact a centralization of capital, or what he refers to as a "concentration of production." He gives U.S. Steel, Rhine-Westphalen Coal Company, General Electric, and others as examples to show that step-by-step



## Why Not

1. A Decrease of Profits
2. An Increase of Poverty



## Effects of Imperialism:

1. High Interest Rates
2. Exorbitant Prices
3. Robbery of Raw Materials

**Capitalism + Imperialism = Delay for Socialist Revolution**

**Delay of:**  
 a) Decrease of Profits  
 b) Increase of Poverty

various corporations are forming monopolies.

Lenin agrees that the other two laws of economic movement mentioned above — the decrease of profits and an increase of poverty — have not been occurring as predicted by Marx. This is because, Lenin asserts, a new strategy has been developed between financiers and entrepreneurs. Through their collaboration, Lenin maintains that a new financial strategy has been formulated focusing on the “exportation of capital.” Lenin notes that the great capital needs of the developing world are being met by the financiers of the developed world. They are able to charge high interest rates and also dictate what the borrowing nations can purchase with the funds they receive. Furthermore, Lenin maintains that a theft of raw material is occurring because the imperialist powers, such as the United States, Britain, and France are not giving a just remuneration for the raw materials they receive from the developing nations.<sup>4</sup>

Lenin presents his observation that the world has been divided into colonized spheres of control. For instance, Britain controls a certain sector of the world and its market. Britain determines what can be imported from those colonies and what can be exported to them. France also has its sector. The world has been divided among imperialist powers. Lenin maintains that the only way the markets of the world can be changed is by means of war. For that reason, Lenin defines World War I as an imperialist war. The purpose motivating the war is that certain nations are trying to extend their colonial influence, thereby enhancing their economies.<sup>5</sup>

By exporting capital into these nations, exorbitant profits reach the developed world, according to Lenin. The workers of the developed world receive a small portion of those profits, as a kind of bribe. It is this bonus that is preventing these workers from awakening to their exploited condition.<sup>6</sup> Likewise, they remain indifferent to the condition of their fellow workers in the developing world. Leninism concludes that the only way to awaken the workers of the developed world is to end imperialist domination of the Third World.<sup>7</sup> As Che Guevara said:

American workers... cannot gain clear consciousness of their exploitation as long as they continue to get the crumbs which North American imperialism tosses to them from the feast.<sup>8</sup>

To awaken the workers of the developed world, national liberation movements must, therefore, succeed in cutting off the Third World markets of capitalist nations such as the United States.<sup>9</sup> Leninism maintains that it is the responsibil-

ity of the communists to defend the self-determination of all peoples.

Although colonialism has largely disappeared since World War II, communists maintain that the Third World still finds itself in a state of de facto imperialism.<sup>10</sup> For example, the United States controls the economy of much of Latin America. For that reason communists want to support national liberation movements throughout Latin America — their ultimate target being the United States.

Che Guevara insisted that national liberation militants need not be taught Marxism until after their nations have been “liberated.”<sup>11</sup> In the examples of Nicaragua, Cuba, or even Vietnam, one can see that this has indeed been the case. For example, in Cuba, people such as Huber Matos and William Morgan fought for “national liberation.” They did not fight for communism. Yet that is what they received due to Castro’s application of Leninist strategy.

### III. Critique of Lenin’s view of imperialism

In many parts of the world, young men and women have dedicated their lives to revolution. Many of them have died for their cause. If we study the cases of Nicaragua, El Salvador, Vietnam or Angola, we can recognize that people were stimulated to participate in revolution, not because the workers were being deprived of “surplus value” (Karl Marx’s view), but because of a commitment to “national liberation.” This view largely has its origins in the writings of Lenin.

It is important, therefore, to determine whether or not Lenin was justified in his position. Let us consider the matter, point by point.

#### A. Centralization of capital?

If we observe the phenomenon occurring in the developed world, we find that instead of a centralization of capital, a distribution of capital is occurring. Today many major United States corporations such as General Motors, IBM and U.S. Steel have literally millions of stockholders. Many of those stockholders are workers who participate in profit-sharing programs. In fact, the number of “capitalists,” instead of decreasing, is multiplying. Lenin emphasized that to control a corporation, a single shareholder needed at least 40 percent of the stocks.<sup>12</sup> Today there are many corporations, such as the Chase Manhattan Bank or General Electric, where there is no one who controls anywhere near that amount of stock.

**The Third World has been colonized for the economic survival of Europe and the United States**

**Self-determination for all peoples**

**WARS OF NATIONAL LIBERATION**



### Critique of Lenin’s Theory of Imperialism

- 1. Centralization of Capital?**
- 2. Exportation of Capital?**
- 3. Bribery of Workers of Developed World?**

**Clayton Anti-Trust Act**

Marx predicted that centralization of capital would occur through various unethical business practices. In his analysis of history, he saw government as a superstructure to protect capitalist interests. However, by 1914, the United States had enacted the Clayton Anti-Trust Act in order to discourage monopolies. Similar measures were taken in Europe. Marx's and Lenin's affirmations are, therefore, denied first by the tendency towards distribution of capital, and secondly, by government measures aimed at blocking the formation of monopolies.

### **B. Export of capital?**

Although the concept of export of capital is a key aspect of Lenin's theory of imperialism, it cannot be justified historically. Specifically, in contrast to Lenin's claims, export of capital cannot be shown to be characteristic of a late stage of capitalism.<sup>13</sup>

Lenin maintained that the export of capital correlated with a capitalism that had become "over-ripe." Tied in with the concentration of capital and the control of the domestic markets was the concept that the profitable areas in the domestic market become saturated. This stagnation leads to the imperialistic export of capital abroad, and a consequent struggle for territories. However, there is not any reason that export of capital cannot correlate with, and be the result of, a booming domestic market.<sup>14</sup> One can note that:

More than 40 percent of the capital exported from Britain in the hundred years before 1914 was used to finance railway investment overseas. British-financed railways abroad was not only the result of booming conditions at home, but also the cause of further domestic expansion.<sup>15</sup>

It is notable that the greatest amount of foreign investment for Britain and other developed countries, at the height of their colonization, went actually to developed countries, and not their colonies or underdeveloped countries.<sup>16</sup>

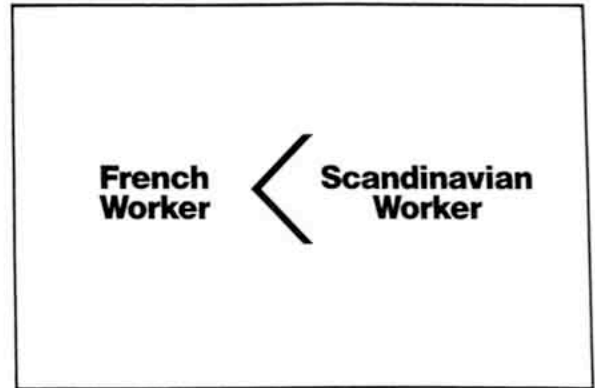
Historically, export of capital has actually been a feature of capitalism at all stages, even where the least tendency toward any monopoly has been seen,<sup>17</sup> and several free market countries that were acquiring territories were actually capital importers. In addition, imperialism is not limited to capitalism. It is found in feudal societies such as the Roman Empire and it is also practiced in socialist societies such as the Soviet Union.<sup>18</sup>

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**C. Bribery of the workers of the developed world?**

Was there in fact a bribery of the workers as Lenin maintained? It is interesting to note the case of France and Scandinavia. At the turn of the century, the standard of living of the worker in France (a nation allegedly with colonies enough to provide bribes for its workers), was inferior to that of the Scandinavian worker (Scandinavia meaning the nation existing prior to the division of Sweden and Norway, which did not have colonies). This suggests inaccuracies in Lenin's analyses.

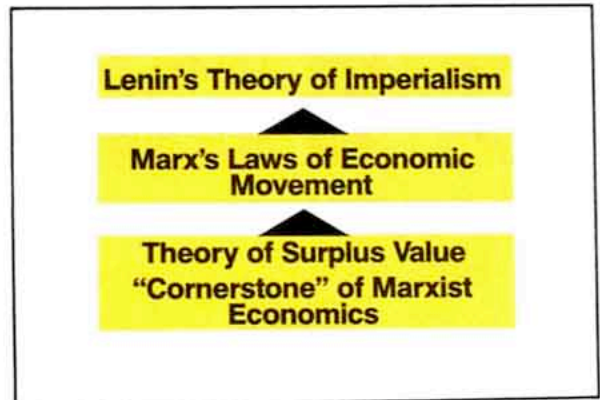


**D. World markets controlled by developed nations?**

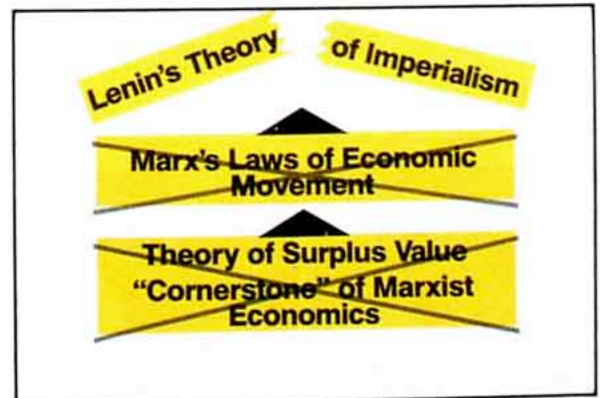
The theory that more world markets are controlled by more developed nations is basically not true in the Free World. For example, prior to World War II, Japan had many colonies. Because of the war, Japan lost all of those colonies, yet today Japan is flourishing. The overriding factors in the Free World are not "control" or domination, they are factors such as quality and demand.

**E. The false foundation of Marxist economics**

Lenin constructed a theory, but his theory was built on Marx's theory of surplus value, a faulty foundation. The Soviets maintain that Lenin's economic theories are a logical extension of Marx's economic theory. Lenin's theory of imperialism, in fact, served to defend Marx's three laws of economic movement. As we know, Marx's three laws of economic movement are based on his theory of surplus value, a theory that Lenin maintained was "the *cornerstone* of Marxist economics."<sup>19</sup> However, we have seen that this theory of surplus value is false. Lenin constructed his thesis on this faulty "cornerstone." Because Marx's three laws of economic movement, based on the theory of surplus value, are false, Lenin's view of imperialism (a defense of these three laws) must also be false.



While Lenin uses imperialism in support of Marx's three laws of economic movement, it is very interesting to note the divergence of Marx and Lenin in their views of imperialism. Lenin effectively reversed the traditional Marxist view in that he considered imperialism to be an unwelcome, reactionary force. Marx and Engels, and even Lenin in his earlier days, considered imperialistic expansion to serve a valuable, progressive role in expanding economic advancement throughout the world.<sup>20</sup> According to Bill Warren, himself a Marxist:



... the proposition that imperialism was reactionary, in Marxist terms, could be sustained only by clouding

the issues in ambiguity, by distorting history and rejecting some fundamental precepts of Marxist economics.<sup>21</sup>

## F. Imperialism and exploitation of developing nations

There is not any clear reason why imperialism and exploitation of the Third World should necessarily correlate with capitalism. More likely, any such exploitation can be considered to coincide with selfishness of nations or the greed of the people in power. Capitalistic nations may or may not act imperialistically, depending upon their greed. Not only capitalistic but any kind of powerful government can act imperialistically and can exploit other countries.<sup>22</sup> History has been replete with examples of strong nations subjugating weaker ones. In fact, perhaps the most imperialistic nation exploiting the Third World today may well be the totalitarian USSR, a nation which ironically decries "imperialism." This will be elaborated upon in the following section.

## G. National liberation

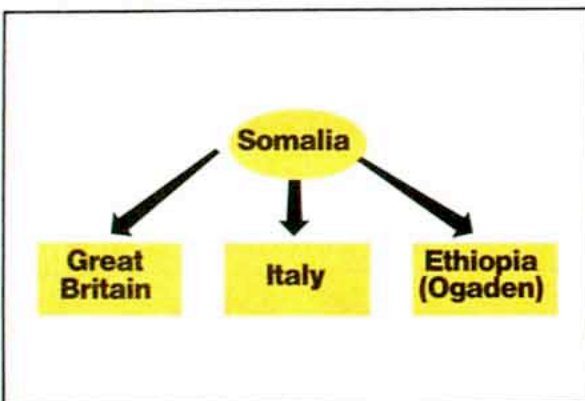
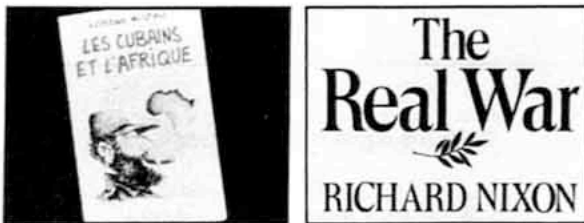
The kind of national liberation which Lenin called for, and which present-day Marxists support, often appears directed less toward the "freeing" of countries than towards sovietizing them.

At the time of the Bolshevik revolution, Vladimir Lenin advocated an end to Russian imperialism. Lenin maintained that each nation has the right to determine its own destiny. Today we recognize that this is not the phenomenon which is occurring in our world. The classic example for this is the case of Somalia.

In 1960, Somalia gained its independence. It had been divided among Italy, Britain and Ethiopia. Britain and Italy gave independence to Somalia, but the Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia decided to keep Ogaden, which was the Ethiopian-controlled part of Somalia. In 1974, Somalia became a communist country. Somalia then proceeded in a war against Ethiopia in order to regain Ogaden.

Somalia called for outside help. The Soviet Union responded by sending to Somalia nearly 5,000 Cuban soldiers. This war of "liberation" went relatively well, as did similar operations in Angola, Mozambique, and elsewhere. The Soviet Union and Cuba were truly seen as champions of the oppressed.

In 1975, however, a coup d'etat occurred in Ethiopia. Emperor Haile Selassie was overthrown. For the next three



*Cuban troops were transferred from Somalia to Ethiopia in the war for the liberation of Ogaden.*

years there was an internal battle for control of Ethiopia. It ended when Colonel Haile Mengistu Meriam seized control in 1977. Mengistu soon afterwards proclaimed himself a Marxist-Leninist.

Even after the start of the Mengistu presidency, communist Somalia continued in its efforts to liberate Ogaden from Ethiopia. Mengistu therefore asked help from the Soviets, who were still assisting Somalia.

Considering that the Soviets are practical, and considering that Ethiopia with its 30 million inhabitants was a more important country than Somalia (with a population of four million), they simply chose to withdraw the 5,000 Cuban troops from Somalia.

A short time later, Cuban troops arrived in Ethiopia. In May 1978, those Cubans, with the help of East Germany and the Ethiopian military, attacked Somalia with napalm.<sup>23</sup>

Today the Communist Party of the Soviet Union maintains that, at a certain stage in the development of a nation, movements of national liberation are, in fact, "historically justified."<sup>24</sup> It is manifestly clear through cases such as Ogaden and Afghanistan that they are only "historically justified" until nations have been sovietized. We therefore are speaking not of national liberation but national sovietization.

#### IV. Is the Soviet Union revolutionary or imperialist, socialist or capitalist?

Lenin supposedly wanted to end capitalism and imperialism. Today the Soviet Union proclaims a solution to the problems in these systems. They clamor for national liberation. But as one assesses the Soviet Union, one is confronted with the question: With its occupation of Afghanistan, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary, is the Soviet Union an imperialist power? Furthermore, is the Soviet Union socialistic or in reality capitalistic?

##### A. The USSR as imperialist

Through both political and economic imperialism, the Soviet Union has dominated and exploited other regions of the world.

Before the Bolshevik revolution, Lenin warned about the dangerous ambitions of the Russian empire. In 1916, Lenin warned that Czarist Russia's aim was to bring Afghanistan under control of the Russian empire.<sup>25</sup> Ironically, what Lenin denounced, his successors accomplished in 1980.

**"The nationalization of an oppressed nation contains a general democratic element...and communists support it because they consider it historically justified at a given stage."**

**Communist Party of the USSR**

**USSR**

**Revolutionary or Imperialist?**

**Socialist or Capitalist?**

**"No nation can be free if it oppresses another nation."**

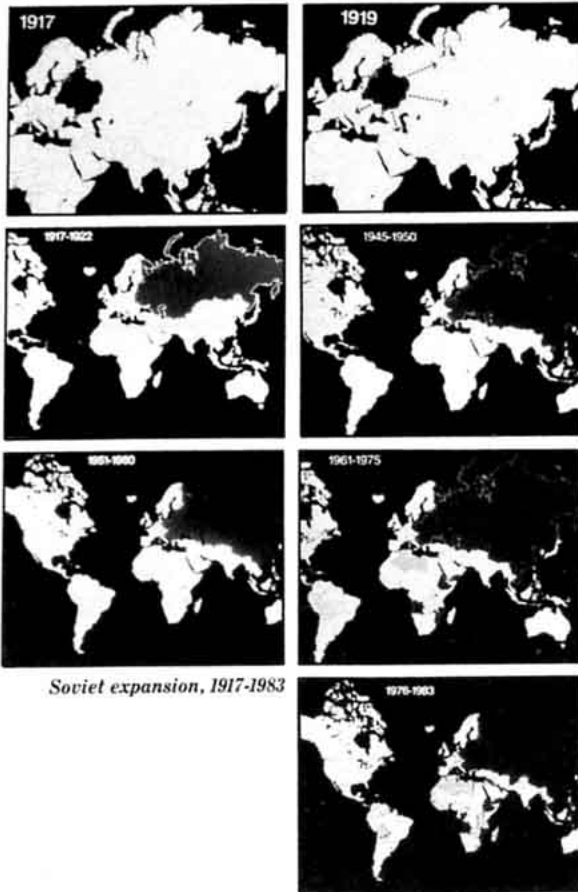
Lenin, 1916

**"The Russian people do not want to become Poland's oppressor again."**

Lenin, 1918

**"All those who...back the right of nations to self-determination must stand for the right of the Ukraine to secede from Russia."**

Lenin, 1916



Soviet expansion, 1917-1983



Angolan coffee workers



Indian steel mill



Lenin said, "The Russian people do not want to become Poland's oppressor again."<sup>26</sup> He spoke about the need for Poland to be able to choose its own direction, and yet the Soviets denounced Lech Walesa and forced the Polish leadership to suppress Solidarity. Furthermore, Lenin stated that "all those who back the right of nations to self-determination, must stand for the right of the Ukraine to secede from Russia."<sup>27</sup> He called for and defended the right of all nations that were a part of the Russian empire to become independent. Yet, by 1919, Lenin himself had dispatched troops to win back the whole of the former Russian empire. Lenin then joked that former Russian colonies had "the right" to secede from the Soviet Union, but that they would not have "the opportunity" to do so.<sup>28</sup>

The Soviet Union still maintains that these colonies have the right to secede from the Soviet Union. Yet in the Soviet constitution, there is no procedural means to secede from the USSR.

Through economic imperialism, the USSR has dominated and exploited large sectors of the world. According to the magazine *Peking Review*, between 1955 and 1973 the Soviet Union siphoned off \$11 billion in unjust profits from the Third World.<sup>29</sup> The Soviet Union pays only 38 percent of the world's price for Angolan coffee. It pays only one-half of the world's market price for Afghan natural gas. It lends money to India but specifies that it must only be used to buy Soviet products, or build factories managed by Soviet personnel. The USSR gets back a 560 percent return on its Indian loans.<sup>30</sup>

In his text, *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, Lenin attacked the socialist Kautsky and warned against a phenomenon which could occur. Kautsky had defended the participation of Germany in World War I and supported Germany's right to have colonies. Lenin referred to Kautsky's position as "social imperialism." Lenin defined the social imperialists as those who are "socialistic in words" and "imperialistic in deeds."<sup>31</sup> The Soviet Union ironically corresponds to this definition.

## B. The USSR as capitalist

According to both Marx and Lenin, capitalism, in its final days, would be transformed into state-monopoly capitalism. In other words, in the ultimate stage of capitalism, all industry, all factories, and all banks would be controlled by the state. This, of course, is the situation of the Soviet Union today.

Lenin also maintained that the state is an instrument of the ruling class. Now, if the Soviet Union, with its state

monopoly capitalism, has a ruling class, then it is definitely capitalistic.

To know whether there is a ruling class, one must ask: "Who benefits from the income of the Soviet Union?" Is it the worker who benefits from this income? According to *Forbes* magazine, the Moscow worker receives 171 rubles per month, while he needs 210 rubles in order to survive. The situation outside of the capital is even more grim. In other words, the worker in the Soviet Union is clearly receiving a subsistence level salary of the type that Marx mentioned in *Capital*.

On the other hand, there is another group of people which has many privileges. In 1980, the official magazine *Moscow News* proclaimed, "Yes, one can become a millionaire here."<sup>32</sup> Supposedly, the Soviet Union has 13,000 millionaires. These individuals are part of the Soviet "nomenklatura." The members of the nomenklatura avail themselves of all important posts in the government. Their children attend special schools. They themselves have access to foreign exchange privileges and special shops where they can buy the most recent products from Paris and New York. The books that they write are assured of publication and of royalties, sometimes totalling hundreds of thousands of dollars.

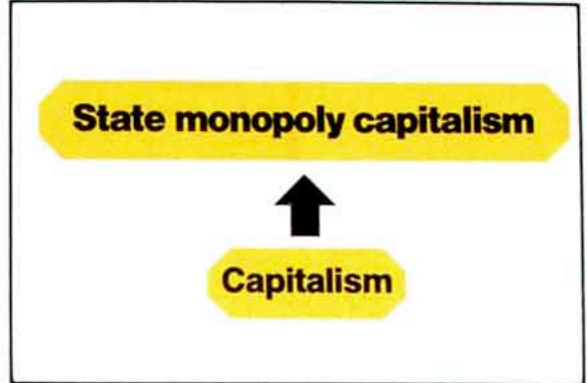
In his text, *La Nomenklatura*, former Soviet official Michael Voslensky makes a very strong attack on the Soviet leadership, maintaining that they live on a parasitic basis. The nomenklatura protects its own interests at the expense of the workers whom they supposedly represent and defend. Because of the nomenklatura, one must conclude that today in the USSR, there is a ruling class.

Who is the Soviet state serving? Let us consider the Soviet collective farms. Alienation, according to Marx, results from the fact that an individual works on a certain product only to see that product taken away from him by a capitalist. This actually is what occurs in the Soviet collective farm system. The farmers work only to have what they produce taken away. Do the farmers themselves decide what to do with their products? Do they decide to take it to the market? Do they decide when and to whom to sell it? Do they decide how to use that food? Not at all. That is all determined by the ruling class. The nomenklatura always makes sure that it has what it needs. Trotsky warned about the danger of the emergence of a new aristocracy and yet it is apparent that this is what has occurred.

This phenomenon is not limited to agriculture. In November 1917, industry and factories were placed under



Leonid Brezhnev and Fidel Castro



Protestors placed in prisons or psychiatric hospitals.



Long lines are common under Marxist economies.



the direct control of Soviet laborers. They were to determine their own hours, their own production, etc. This lasted until the summer of 1918 at which time Soviet bureaucrats took control of industry. It has remained the same since then. The situation of the Soviet laborer is as alienated as ever.

While a very small class in each communist country lives very well, the rest of the population remains in misery. In his book, *La Corruption en Union Soviétique*, former Russian functionary Ilja Zemtsov speaks of the living conditions in Azerbaijan near the Iranian border. The majority of the citizens of Azerbaijan are of Islamic origin. Thirty-two percent of them live in communal residences where each person has only three square meters of living space. The author says that even today, there are countless thousands of illiterate people along with many children who have never even been to school. To express the misery of the people, Zemtsov gives the example of one report which came across his desk:

On the 13th of February, 1970, a resident of Kirovobade, Mrs. Roubaba Gouseinova, 42 years of age, with a primary school education, divorced, with three children, two boys and a girl, covered herself with oil and burned herself alive.

She had lived for 13 years in a cave and had asked the city's executive committee 19 times to find her a dwelling place. This, the 20th time, she chose a different direction. She left a letter on which could be read the words, "This time they will give us one."<sup>33</sup>

Zemtsov maintains that not only in Azerbaijan but in many other places in the Soviet Union, many people still live in caves. They have no running water; they have no heat. Is this the grand promise of communism?

It is said that communism will liberate us, that it will bring us to a new level of technological superiority. But what kind of technological superiority is this if after 60 years, there are still millions of people living in absolute misery?

## V. The nature of Soviet imperialism

As we have seen, Marx predicted that certain phenomena were to occur in the capitalist world. These included:

- (1) A centralization of capital
- (2) An increase of poverty
- (3) A decrease of profits

These phenomena did not occur in the West. As we have seen, even a "centralization of capital" did not occur.



The new "nomenklatura" in Nicaragua

**"The leaders of the present-day, so-called 'Social Democratic' Party of Germany are justly called 'social-imperialists,' that is, socialists in words and imperialists in deeds..."**

More and more, a distribution of capital has taken place.

While these three processes did not occur in the free market system of the West, these processes *are* occurring in the totalitarian system of the USSR.

### A. Centralization of capital

First of all, there is a centralization of capital. Marx predicted:

Today, therefore, the forces of attraction, drawing together individual capitals, and the tendency to centralization are stronger than ever before... In a given society the limit would be reached only when the entire social capital was united in the hands of either a single capitalist or a single capitalized company.<sup>34</sup>

In the case of the Soviet Union, that single company is the state. However, the profits are not distributed on an equitable basis. Instead, the leadership class benefits the most from any economic surplus.

### B. Decrease in profits

Marx predicted a decrease in profits. Although the West has sporadically experienced recessions and other economic setbacks, the overall tendency of development has been positive. On the other hand, as various sovietologists such as Besancon have indicated, the Soviet Union survives largely on the basis of a parasitic relationship with the West. The West continues to pump in aid and encourage certain trade policies which extend the economic life-span of the Soviet Union.

### C. Increase in poverty

Increasing poverty is also a phenomenon which is occurring in the Soviet Union. As we already mentioned, in the past 20 years, the Soviet male life expectancy decreased from 67 to 62. The infant mortality rate more than doubled over the past 10 years.<sup>35</sup> From being an exporter of wheat, the Soviet Union has become an importer of wheat. Instead of a new prosperity and the formation of a communist state by 1980 (as Khrushchev promised) we notice that the Soviet Union remains in a condition of deprivation. In most respects, instead of improving, these conditions continue to worsen.

Lenin foresaw the occurrence of these three phenomena in the West, but in fact, a typical case of their occurrence is manifested in the present situation of the USSR. Lenin

## Conclusion

### Centralization of Capital

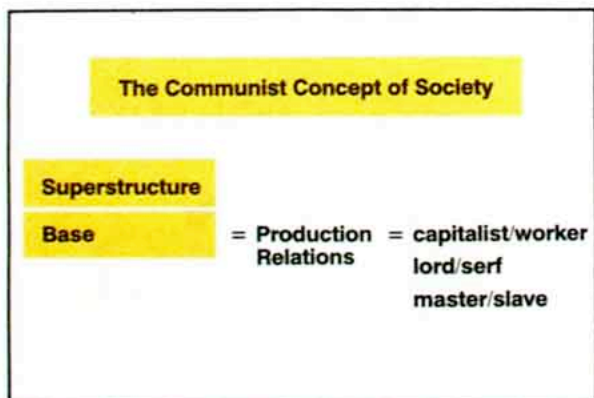
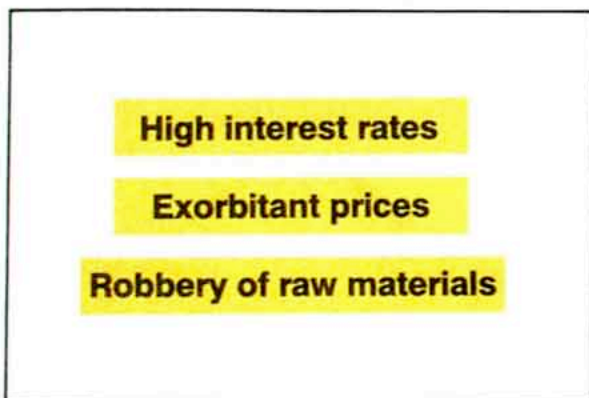
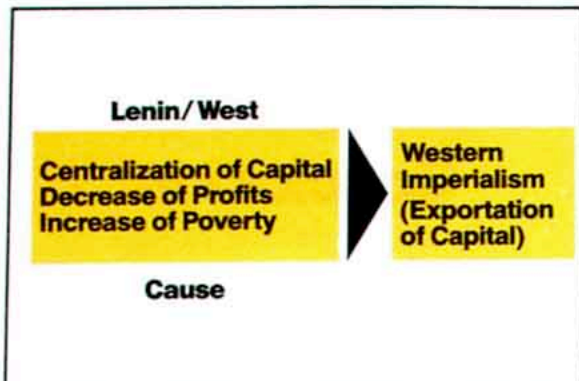


### Decrease of Profits



### Increase of Poverty





asserted that the capitalists had delayed this process through an exportation of capital and goods to the developing world.

In fact, this is the phenomenon which is occurring today in the Soviet Union. It is the Soviet Union which attempts to distract the Soviet citizens from seeing the true state of affairs by constantly emphasizing the "threat from without" as a justification for its brand of imperialism. In the case of the Soviet Union, imperialism is advanced not only by an exportation of capital but also by an exportation of revolution. Each day the Soviet Union provides Cuba with at least \$9 million of economic aid. In return, Castro lends Cuban soldiers and advisers to the cause of Soviet imperialism. The results of Soviet imperialism are always the same, yet little attention is paid to it. While the world was appalled by the human rights violations of certain rightist, authoritarian regimes, virtually nothing was said when Soviet surrogates murdered 150,000 Angolans after the communist takeover of that country. Because the Soviets lend lip service to a better society, we fail to examine the real results of the extension of their influence in nation after nation.

## VI. The solution to imperialism and exploitation

Communism, while decrying imperialism and social injustice, has not solved these problems. In fact, communism itself has become a problem which must be solved along with the problems it sought to correct. The question still remains as to what is the solution to imperialism and social injustice.

Communism has been unable to stop social injustice because of its distorted world view, founded on wrong principles. It ignores the basis of injustice — selfishness. The communist view of society is a distorted view. It stresses two dimensions — the base and the superstructure. The essence of the base for the Marxists is the production relations, or class relations. For the Marxist, all other aspects of society, such as religion, law, philosophy, politics, etc. are built upon this foundation. However, Marxist theory fails to recognize relationships which are actually more basic than economic ones: (1) the family (informal education), and (2) the school (formal education).

Family and school relationships are central to forming a person's character. The importance of the family, especially the parent, in the development of the child's personality is widely recognized. Likewise, the teacher, acting in the role of parent, is very important. Certainly these two aspects precede



the employer-employee relationship. Parents and teachers must have moral values and communicate these to the child. If children do not properly develop, then this will be reflected at a higher level as they take their place in society. The real bases of any society are its moral principles and their application.

Marxists have not solved the problems of imperialism and social injustice because they have not understood the source, selfishness. Any system, whether free-market, feudalist, socialist, or whatever, has the potential to act imperialistically toward other nations because of greed on a national level. It is not inherent to capitalism, as most Marxists would like us to believe. Destruction of capitalism will not lead to an end of imperialism and social injustice. Marxism, based on an illogical and empty ideology, seems to have resorted to attacking imperialism and social injustice more as a strategy for expansion than as a real attempt to solve social ills. The ultimate irony is that the USSR can decry imperialism and social injustice, and yet exhibit the worst forms of both.

That exploitation and injustice exist in free market societies we cannot deny. However, we can deny that it *must* exist (as Marx and Lenin maintained). Economic or social injustices are not a result of the economic structures of Western society; they are a result of human greed.

The Soviet exploitation of nations such as Angola and Afghanistan and likewise the Soviet Union's exploitation of its own people prove that while Lenin may have made cosmetic changes in the economic structure of Russia, he did not eradicate selfishness or corruption. To bring about that kind of change, Lenin needed not a political but a moral revolution. His adherence to Marxist principles made that impossible.

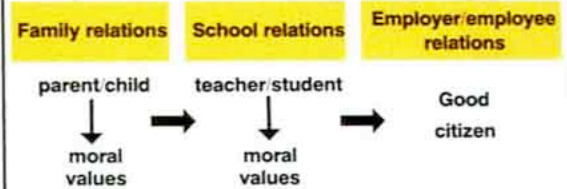
CHAPTER FIVE NOTES

1. V.I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Moscow, Progress Publishers, 1980, Vol. 22, p.343.
2. Pierre et Monique Favre, *Les Marxismes Apres Marx*, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1980, pp.18-25.
3. *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 1983, Vol. 16, pp.965-973.
4. Vladimir Lenin, *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, New York, International Publishers, 1974, pp.65-66.
5. Pierre et Monique Favre, pp.39-42.
6. *Ibid.*, p.107.
7. Andrei Melvil, "La Concepción Leninista de la Política Exterior," in *Ciencias Sociales*, Moscow, Academia de Ciencias, 1981, pp.171-185.
8. Che Guevara in ed. George Lavan's *Che Guevara Speaks*, New York, Grove Press, 1968, p.105.
9. *Documents on Major European Governments*, ed. Randolph L. Braham, New York, Alfred Knopf, 1966, pp. 191-206.
10. *Ibid.*

"This concern with the individual soul is the all-important missing element in Marxism and it is this giving something to the individual that explains the hold of the traditional religions and philosophies on human beings."

"...To be told that the socialist state has the right to claim the individual's whole attention and all his loyalties because it is a higher form of existence is irrelevant to the individual's personal problems."

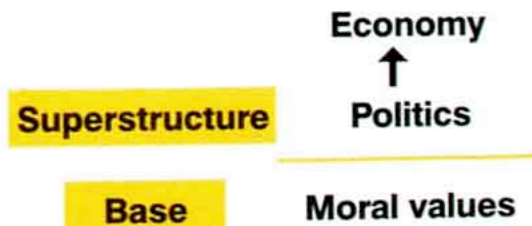
**Arnold Toynbee**  
Toynbee on Toynbee  
 1974



Revolution must begin from the base



The Base is the Individual



11. Che Guevara in ed. George Lavan's *Che Guevara Speaks*, p.18.
  12. Lenin, *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, p.48.
  13. Bill Warren, *Imperialism: Pioneer of Capitalism*, London, Verso, 1980, p.57.
  14. Ibid.
  15. Ibid.
  16. Ibid., p.46.
  17. Ibid., pp.60-64.
  18. Ibid., p.67.
  19. Michael Voslensky, *La Nomenklatura*, Paris, Belfond, 1980, p.182.
  20. Warren, p.46.
  21. Warren, Ibid., p.48.
  22. Note that imperialism can be defined as "the policy, practice, or advocacy of extending the power and dominion of a nation, especially by direct territorial acquisition, or by gaining indirect control over the political or economic life of other areas." (*Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary*). This is the common, broader definition, and not the narrow Marxist definition which strives to restrict the term to capitalism. (Such as the definition given by Lenin that "... imperialism is the monopoly stage of capitalism," from *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*.)
  23. See Ezzedrine Mestiri, *Les Cubains et L'Afrique*, Paris, Editions Karthala, 224p. The case of Soviet duplicity with regard to both Ogaden and Eritrea is also discussed in Richard Nixon's *The Real War*, New York, Warner Books, 1980, pp.25-27.
  24. *Documents on Major European Governments*, ed. Randolph Brahan, New York, Alfred Knopf, 1966, pp.191-206.
  25. V. I. Lenin, "Notebook Imperialism," in *Collected Works*, Vol. 39, p.676.
  26. Lenin, "Peace without Annexations," in *Collected Works*, Vol. 22, p.139.
  27. Ibid., p.140.
  28. Voslensky, p.403.
  29. *Peking Review*, March 29, 1975.
  30. *Is the Soviet Union Socialist or Capitalist*, Oakland, The New Voice, 1980, pp.4-72.
  31. Vladimir Lenin, *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, New York, International Publishers, 1972, p.109.
  32. Quoted by Patrick Meney of Agence France-Presse, *San Francisco Chronicle*, May 8, 1980, p.28.
  33. I. Zemtsov, *La Corruption en Union Sovietique*, Paris, Hachette, 1976, p.128.
  34. Marx, *Capital*, New York, International Publishers, Vol. I, pp.626-627.
  35. Cullen Murphy, "Watching the Russians," *The Atlantic*, February 1983, pp. 33-52.
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