

The Politics of Nuclear War and Nuclear Disarmament

by the Line of March Editorial Board

I. Introduction

Perhaps the most spectacular new feature of the present U.S. political landscape has been the rapid emergence of a broad-based mass movement for nuclear disarmament.

As recently as six months ago, U.S. political commentators were noting that the mass protests sweeping Western Europe against the U.S. plan to deploy new, advanced missiles there had not yet found their U.S. counterpart. Such is no longer the case. Intensified U.S. belligerence toward the Soviet Union and the other socialist countries combined with congressional passage of the most massive U.S. peacetime military budget ever has clearly produced a profound anxiety in the U.S. public. A groundswell of fear spurred on by a growing perception that the "unthinkable"—nuclear war—might be imminent has begun to express itself in highly visible political forms.

All of the usual barometers of mass sentiment—the opinion polls, the mass circulation magazines, the frantic scurrings of bourgeois politicians—indicate that growing numbers are seeking an end to the nuclear arms race. This sentiment has already become such a material force that no serious political force, including the bourgeoisie itself, can afford to take it lightly.

Campus-based teach-ins and church forums dealing with the dangers of nuclear war spread like wildfire during the first months of this year. These activities peaked in the myriad activities in late April called Ground Zero Week. Symbolic actions and educational meetings took place in 150 major cities, 500 smaller communities, and over 350 college campuses. Participants ranged from longtime antiwar activists to a host

of newly converted religious figures including prominent bishops of the Catholic Church and the Rev. Billy Graham. The fact that figures from almost every sector of the religious spectrum have publicly identified themselves with the anti-nuclear crusade has led one noted political commentator to point out that:

“When both the leading evangelical Protestant preacher in the U.S., the Rev. Billy Graham, and the bishops of the Roman Catholic communion in the U.S. are publically committed on the same side of a political movement—that movement is to be taken seriously.”¹

Meanwhile, a veritable barrage of books exposing the horrors of nuclear war and questioning the technical and strategic reasoning of the Reagan administration has flooded the nation's bookstores and libraries. *Publishers Weekly*, the bible of the book trade, estimates that more than 100 titles on this theme have been published in the last two years. Eight new books, including Jonathan Schell's overnight best-seller, *The Fate of the Earth*, were published this past April alone.

During this same period, some 257 New England town meetings adopted anti-nuclear weapons resolutions. In California, advocates of an immediate bilateral freeze on nuclear weapons gathered 700,000 signatures to place a similar resolution on the November ballot.

Meanwhile, leading politicians like Sen. Edward Kennedy and California's Governor Jerry Brown, both of whom have their eyes on the presidency, are trying to position themselves at the center of this movement early enough so that they cannot be accused later on of jumping on the bandwagon. This itself is an indication of how some with antenna sensitive to the popular mood are reading the events of the day. A Congressional resolution introduced by Kennedy, House Speaker “Tip” O'Neill and 189 others was narrowly defeated in the House of Representatives by a vote of 204-202 after an all-out campaign against it by the Reagan administration. Sponsors have already moved to introduce the resolution again.

And on top of this, some of the most illustrious “hawks” of Cold War as well as Vietnam war infamy—among them George Kennan, Robert McNamara, McGeorge Bundy, and General Maxwell Taylor—stepped into the spotlight with calls for a “no first-strike” pledge by the U.S.!

This mushrooming movement surged to an unprecedented mass expression on June 12 when a demonstration so huge that its numbers could hardly be estimated scientifically, but in which probably a million participated, filled the streets of New York to demand a freeze on the nuclear arms race and a redirection of the military budget to “human needs.” This gigantic outpouring was complemented by substantial demonstrations and rallies in a number of other cities, most notably Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Chicago.

A broad social movement is unmistakably in the making, a movement that all forces across the political spectrum agree has the potential to alter substantially the political climate in the United States over the next few years. Nowhere is this more vividly illustrated than by the gingerly way in which Reagan and his cohorts have approached the “anti-nuke” movement—eschewing, for the time being at least, any attempt to red bait it or suggest that it is engaged in “treasonous” activity. Even the *Wall Street Journal*, which is more than a little unhappy with the movement's sudden surge onto the political stage, has cautiously confined itself to telling the bourgeoisie not to be unduly intimidated, saying, “There's no need to get too worked up about all this. We have survived ban-the-bomb movements before.”²

Yet communists, less than any others, can afford naive optimism about the prospects of this spontaneous movement. Formidable political and ideological obstacles threaten the capacity of this movement to realize its full potential. All forces within this movement may agree on the need to convene disarmament talks between the U.S. and the Soviet Union or the demand for a “nuclear freeze.” Yet such immediate demands cannot provide the movement with a permanent political focus. Even at this early stage, the movement shows deep contradictions. For instance, a recent *New York Times*/CBS public opinion poll showed 72% of those interviewed supported a freeze in the nuclear arms race, while 21% opposed it; but a change in perspective dramatically altered this result. When asked, “what if a nuclear freeze would result in the Soviet Union having somewhat greater nuclear strength,” 60% of those interviewed *opposed* a nuclear freeze, while only 30% endorsed it!

The architects of the current U.S. imperialist offensive have been quick to grasp this political “soft spot” in the anti-nuke movement. As a consequence, they have made the main point of their counter attack the charge that a freeze at the present time would leave the Soviet Union in a better position than the U.S. Unfortunately the response of the nuclear disarmament movement thus far has been fundamentally weak, concerned mainly with refuting this charge with a mass of technical data. While such work should not be neglected, it is by no means sufficient; in the long run, the movement will remain vulnerable if it permits the debate to be waged on such terrain. A debate pegged at such a level will leave most people feeling somewhat helpless in the face of a mass of data they are not equipped to evaluate. And more importantly, this is precisely the terrain where the U.S. government is in the best position to manufacture evidence and propagate a distorted view of reality. Similarly, for the movement to demand arms talks without the political criteria to which the Reagan administration can be held accountable for meaningful negotiations with the Soviet Union, will simply enable the imperialists to use the pretense of negotiations as a device for defusing the vigilance of the movement.

Left at its present primitive political level, the anti-nuke movement will inevitably be held hostage to all kinds of bourgeois political manipulation. The struggle to transform the anxieties that broad sectors of the U.S. population feel about the dangers of nuclear warfare into an advanced political movement capable of actually realizing its legitimate objectives—objectives which are thoroughly consistent with the long term interests of the revolutionary proletariat—presents an enormous challenge to U.S. communists.

However, the objective conditions are actually quite good for diverting this spontaneous movement from its “normal” path of development—that is, from a path in which all kinds of bourgeois obfuscation can succeed in hiding the inherent class logic in the struggle for peace and nuclear disarmament. For whether or not the spontaneous movement is fully cognizant of the fact, the upsurge of the nuclear disarmament movement in Western Europe and North America is a direct response to U.S. imperialism’s escalation of the nuclear arms race, its attempts to break parity and to regain decisive superiority over the Soviet Union for the purpose of enabling it once again to use “nuclear blackmail” to shore up its sagging empire. Consequently the disarmament movement— independent of the subjective political confusion of many of its supporters—objectively serves as a significant deterrent to the aggressive militarism of U.S. imperialism.

The bourgeoisie itself certainly grasps that fact. It is such an obvious one that even some of the bourgeoisie’s mouthpieces are prepared to admit what triggered the present popular upsurge. Thus *Newsweek* pointed out:

“Why are Americans suddenly goaded to action on the issue of nuclear war? In the midst of the biggest U.S. defense build-up in peacetime history, Reagan and his top national security advisors have adopted a strikingly belligerent tone toward the Soviets while putting off strategic arms-talks. And some of their statements suggest that the Administration is entertaining the possibility of a survivable nuclear conflict. ‘People are scared,’ says Salt II negotiator Paul Warnke.”³

Of course, *Newsweek*’s portrayal, which trivializes the U.S. escalation as part of some bourgeois partisan struggle between Republicans and Democrats cannot be left unchallenged. The fact of the matter is that it wasn’t Reagan who initiated this attempt to disrupt the nuclear balance with the Soviet Union. In actual fact it was Jimmy Carter who used Afghanistan as the pretext for scuttling the SALT II agreement and who proposed the deployment of 572 new cruise and Pershing II missiles in Europe. It was also Carter who began twisting the arms of the various NATO governments to win their approval for this move. This step was consciously calculated to upset the existing global nuclear balance by placing a new generation of extraordinarily accurate, hard to detect,

nuclear-armed missiles within four minutes striking time of important Soviet military and population targets, including strategic Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM) emplacements not previously menaced by European-based tactical nuclear weapons. Every informed political observer knew full well that this move constituted a serious U.S./NATO military provocation to which the Soviets would have to respond in kind, thereby spiraling the nuclear arms race and increasing the chances of a nuclear war.

An upsurge of mass opposition in Western Europe prevented implementation of Carter’s plan. When Reagan revived it, he triggered off the current wave of protests and demonstrations which have already profoundly affected Western European politics. Reagan’s efforts have especially inflamed the nuclear disarmament movement precisely because they have been tied to a much more all-sided and vigorous revival of war-mongering, jingoism, militarism, and generally aggressive (i.e. actively counter-revolutionary) U.S. foreign policy.

In this sense, the nuclear disarmament movement has understood at a gut level what it has not yet been able to maintain consistently at a political level—namely that the real source of the nuclear war danger emanates from imperialism and its political headquarters in Washington D.C. Whether those marching in the streets, signing the petitions, or attending teach-ins came to the movement out of fear of nuclear annihilation in the context of Reagan’s general bellicosity or from the impact of the arms budget on those social programs which provide an essential prop of the workers’ standard of living, the point is that it was the actions of the Reagan administration that brought these millions into politics—many for the first time. Nor should we underestimate the legacy of the Vietnam War and Watergate which remain etched on the memory of the masses as vivid reminders of the duplicity of the bourgeois state and of the fact that the U.S. government is not to be trusted.

Unfortunately, however, this objective political basis for the nuclear disarmament movement’s existence will not automatically emerge as its dominant line. On the contrary, winning such a position will require persistent, sometimes difficult struggle. Already a number of bourgeois political forces have consciously staked out central positions in the anti-nuke movement. Though they come from different social bases and class origins, their common political aim is to prevent the nuclear disarmament movement from developing an all-sided critique of imperialism. Their efforts center on promulgating notions of the need to deal with the U.S. and the Soviet Union even-handedly, denying the distinct nature of the two opposing social systems, and on attempting to keep the focus of the movement as narrow as possible, denying in particular the domestic impact of the war build-up on the minority sections of the U.S. working class.

The anti-nuke movement is at present extremely susceptible to this form of bourgeois politics. The most active and organized section of the movement has a relatively narrow social base, being rooted principally in the white petit bourgeoisie and more stable sectors of the working class. As a result, the movement tends to hold itself accountable to the world outlook and political values of these sectors. The fact that the disarmament movement has made inroads and begun to politicize these sections of the U.S. population is, of course, a good thing and speaks to its potential breadth. However, the most reliable social base for this movement's ideological and political consistency and staying power is the deeper strata of the working class, especially in minority communities. It is precisely these strata that have the fewest illusions about the nature of capitalism/imperialism. As a consequence, it is these strata that have the best basis for fending off the demagoguery which Reagan and his ilk will inevitably turn to as the movement progresses.

While the communist movement has, for the most part, recognized the historic importance and potential of this movement, it unfortunately has not yet displayed any developed awareness of the crucial role that the conscious element must play in setting a consistent anti-imperialist pole within that movement. Nor does the collective practice of U.S. communists thus far indicate that we have firmly grasped the fact that the failure to set a firm anti-imperialist pole within this spontaneous movement will mean that it is bound to come under the sway of bourgeois ideology and politics. Instead, the dominant tendency among communists has been to tail after the spontaneous movement while conciliating its worst prejudices. On the one hand, the Maoists and the centrist placators of Maoism tend to conciliate the nuclear disarmament movement's anti-Sovietism; on the other, the revisionist (CPUSA) tends to conciliate its pacifism. Neither wages a consistent struggle for an advanced political line for the movement.

It is with these considerations in mind that we raise two inextricably connected questions for discussion among communists: the politics of nuclear war and the politics of the nuclear disarmament movement. The political stakes of such a discussion should be readily apparent. Given the relations of class forces on a world scale and the real content of U.S. imperialism's present attempt to escalate the nuclear arms race, the struggle for nuclear disarmament is a decisive battleground in the struggle against imperialism. The nuclear disarmament movement has an enormous anti-imperialist, revolutionary potential inherent in its own political logic and its efforts to stay the hands of U.S. nuclear blackmail against the socialist countries and the national liberation movements is, in essence, one of the most concentrated expressions of the class struggle on a world scale.

In addition, this discussion has a particular significance for the development of the U.S. communist movement. Our emerging Marxist-

Leninist (anti-revisionist, anti-Maoist) trend is still in the process of ridding itself of much of the ideological baggage inherited from its ultra-left origins. Rarely in the past did our trend take up the struggle for peace as a crucial political question of our epoch. Our outlook was shaped not only by a healthy appreciation for the significance of the revolutionary national liberation struggles, but also by the Maoist tendency to view the concern for peace as a somewhat suspect enterprise revealing a certain inclination towards revisionism.

In hindsight it is possible to connect up Maoism's cavalier stand toward the dangers of nuclear war with the anti-Sovietism of the Chinese Communist Party and the petit bourgeois leftism which comprised such an integral part of international Maoism. But the struggle to rid our trend of the residue of these ideas still remains an important task.

At the same time, by taking up the question of the struggle for peace, for peaceful coexistence, and for nuclear disarmament in a serious political fashion, our trend also has the opportunity to contrast its approach with that of the revisionist CPUSA. Struggling to understand this central arena of the world class struggle should help us get a healthier appreciation—and better grasp—of the demarcation our trend has drawn with right opportunism.

Viewed in this light, it is clear that the struggle for a communist line on nuclear war and nuclear disarmament is part and parcel of the struggle for a rectification of the general line of the U.S. communist movement. Our critique of the class collaboration and juvenile leftism of Maoism on this question as well as our critique of the pacifist orientation of the CPUSA brings us squarely up against one of the central questions of political strategy for the working class on a world scale today—how to effect the proletariat's seizure of state power and the transition from capitalism to socialism when the class enemy is armed with such awesome potential for mass destruction as nuclear weapons provide.

It is certainly not our intention to offer an "answer" to this question in this article. For the moment, it suffices to identify the question in a way that places it on the agenda of our movement in the sharpest and most political fashion possible. While taking note of the long-range theoretical and political consequences of this discussion for the communist movement, we will focus our attention in the pages that follow on two more immediate questions. We will first discuss the question of nuclear war and the crisis of imperialism, offering a concrete political analysis of the current U.S. nuclear policy, taking note of the historical evolution of that policy, its strategic objectives, the imperialist response to the present nuclear disarmament movement, and the current ruling class debate on this question. We will then offer a more explicit political and class analysis of the nuclear disarmament movement as it presently stands and what we see as the role of the Marxist-Leninists within it.

II. Nuclear War and the Crisis of Imperialism

The central political problem of our time stems from the fact that the historical transition from capitalism to socialism—a transition which is bound to take place through fierce class struggle—occurs under conditions in which the dying ruling class has at its disposal weapons of unprecedented capacity for mass destruction. Nuclear science in the service of weapons technology has qualitatively transformed modern warfare, investing it with the potential for destroying much of the human race and polluting the planet with radioactive fallout. The consequences of nuclear war and the tactics they dictate cannot be compared to those of conventional warfare, for never before have entire armies, indeed a nation's capacity for even waging war, and the population itself been so vulnerable to a single attack. This is the element of truth which has led to the widespread tendency in the West to view the threat of war in the nuclear age as something that transcends politics. This erroneous viewpoint is political and ideological obscurantism of the first order and it constitutes the principal shortcoming of the nuclear disarmament movement in the imperialist countries.

Granted, nuclear weapons have transformed the consequences of warfare; but they have not transformed the fundamental cause and nature of war. War remains the continuation of politics by violent means, and politics remains basically the expression of the clash of class interests. Concretely war has taken two main forms in the twentieth century: wars between rival imperialist bourgeoisies,* and, increasingly since the end of World War II, wars between imperialism and forces led by the revolutionary proletariat—which essentially represent the struggle between imperialism and socialism. Consequently, the politics of averting the danger of nuclear destruction is inextricably bound up with the question of imperialism and its deepening crisis in the last quarter of the twentieth century.

The bourgeoisie cannot help but rely on nuclear weapons now that the technical capacity for their development and use is ready to hand. The bourgeoisie's political employment of nuclear weaponry—including its actual use in war—is not confined to any particular battlefield. Now an integral part of the imperialist arsenal, nuclear weapons can be used in the pursuit of imperialist policy against any and all foes. Their use is limited only by the potential political costs involved and by the capacity of foes to retaliate in kind. The decision to use them is made using cold

*Lest we trivialize the real danger of nuclear holocaust, it is useful to remember that prior to World War I, the human race collectively could not conceive the scale of death and destruction that modern war could entail. Yet, this new standard of horror was surpassed by the devastation of World War II, culminating in the U.S.'s nuclear bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. What human beings imagine about the horrors of war is framed by experience.

political and military assessments; very little "morality" is involved. The U.S. demonstrated this point convincingly at the dawn of the nuclear era by using the world's first atomic bombs to settle its interimperialist contention with Japan—already on the verge of defeat—at the end of World War II. The U.S. atomic monopoly has likewise remained a central (if little spoken of) factor in the establishment and maintenance of U.S. hegemony within the imperialist system ever since.

The imperialists have already demonstrated that they are not loath to employ nuclear weapons in their struggles with each other. It is also abundantly clear that the increasingly acute danger of a global nuclear holocaust is bound up with the larger class struggle between the bourgeoisie and the entire international proletariat, concentrated in the struggle between imperialism and socialism and most concretely in the contention between the U.S. and the Soviet Union. To truly grapple with the underlying politics of the threat of nuclear holocaust, then, one must confront not merely the question of imperialism, but the question of socialism and the Soviet Union as well.

A. History of U.S. Nuclear Policy

Not surprisingly, the U.S. was a swaggering bully during the years it enjoyed a monopoly in nuclear bombs (1945-1949) and decisive superiority in nuclear weapons (1949-1969). Even a cursory review of the history of U.S. nuclear policy reveals that the actual use and the threat to use nuclear weapons have been the linchpin of U.S. foreign policy ever since the end of World War II.

From Berlin to Korea to Cuba, the U.S. has consistently signalled its readiness to use atomic weapons in the pursuit of very specific policy objectives in which there was not the remotest possibility of a nuclear attack on the U.S. or its allies. While the public stance of the U.S. government has always been that the nuclear arsenal was strictly "defensive," the truth of the matter is that the political strategy governing its possible use has been thoroughly aggressive. The operative nuclear weapons policy of U.S. imperialism has been stated bluntly by Eugene V. Rostow, a man who presently heads up the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency for the Reagan Administration but who also participated in the strategic discussions of a long line of previous administrations:

"The mission of our nuclear forces goes beyond making it too expensive for the Soviet Union to consider launching a nuclear attack against the United States. *They must also provide a nuclear guarantee for our interests in many parts of the world, and make it possible to defend those interests by diplomacy or by the use of theater military forces whenever such action becomes necessary.* The preceding sentence deserves underlining [which we have done—Eds.], for most

people do not yet realize the many connections between the strategic nuclear balance, on the one hand, and ordinary diplomacy and the use of conventional and other theater forces in aid of diplomacy, on the other. Behind the shield of our second-strike capability, we carry on the foreign policy of a nation with global interests, and defend them if necessary by conventional means or theater forces."⁴

Seymour Weiss, one-time director of the State Department's bureau of political-military affairs, has been equally candid:

"It is popular now to say that nuclear weapons have no practical use, that 'advantages' in such weapons are meaningless. Nuclear weapons have, in fact, been 'used' for three decades to keep the peace and help deter Soviet adventurism. In every major political confrontation, from Berlin in the early 1960s, through the 1973 Middle East war, U.S. nuclear superiority cast a shadow of restraint on potential Soviet aggression."⁵

Or as Daniel Ellsberg, for many years prior to his famous exposure of the Pentagon papers a specialist on nuclear command and control systems for the Pentagon, points out:

"The notion common to nearly all Americans that 'no nuclear weapons have been used since Nagasaki' is mistaken . . . Again and again, generally in secret from the American public, U.S. nuclear weapons *have* been used . . . in the precise way that a gun is used when you point it at someone's head in a direct confrontation, whether or not the trigger is pulled."⁶*

Obviously the essential condition for maintaining such an aggressive policy was U.S. nuclear superiority over the Soviet Union. As long as the U.S. maintained its decisive nuclear edge over the USSR, imperialism manifestly had the ability to restrict the capacity of the socialist countries to act as a strategic reserve for revolutionary struggles elsewhere in the world. However, once such U.S. superiority was lost, the tables quickly began to turn. The policy dilemma which overlooked U.S. strategic planning in the 1970s stemmed directly from the fact that by that time the Soviet Union had been able sufficiently to catch up to the U.S. so that a rough nuclear parity between the two social systems prevailed. Rostow draws out the consequences of this development:

* One of the best and most concise documentations of this record appears in Ellsberg's introduction to the book, *Protest and Survive*,⁷ which has been reprinted in the September 1981 issue of *Monthly Review*. An equally devastating exposure of U.S. nuclear strategy demonstrating that prevailing U.S. military doctrine is based on the assumption of the initiation of nuclear hostilities by the U.S. has been written by Robert C. Aldridge, an aerospace engineer who for 16 years designed submarine-launched ballistic missiles for atomic-powered submarines. His article, "First Strike: The Pentagon's Secret Strategy," appears in the May 1978 issue of *The Progressive*.

"In the early postwar years, we had a monopoly of nuclear weapons. And for a decade or so after that—until the middle or late '60s—we had overwhelming nuclear superiority . . . which determined the outcome of the Berlin airlift, the Korean war, and the Cuban missile crisis . . . In the late '60s and early '70s, our nuclear superiority was no longer so evident as it had been at the time of the Cuban missile crisis; indeed superiority had given way to stalemate. The deterioration of our nuclear advantage led to the erosion of our position (in Vietnam) and profoundly affected the final stages of the conflict."⁸

In other words, the Soviet Union's attainment of parity neutralized the U.S. nuclear threat, preventing U.S. imperialism from using its weapon of last resort in order to stave off defeat in Vietnam. This development had a significance which has gone far beyond the outcome of this one conflict. Its implications for world politics were underscored by former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, who noted:

"Our strategic doctrine has relied extraordinarily, perhaps exclusively, on our superior strategic power. . . . Therefore, even an equivalence in destructive power, even 'assured destruction' for both sides is a revolution in the strategic balance as we have known it."⁹

In sum, it is safe to say that the Soviet Union's achievement of nuclear parity with the U.S. altered the military/political balance of forces between the bourgeoisie and proletariat on an international scale more than any other single development during the past decade. The USSR's ability to checkmate the U.S. game of nuclear blackmail has ushered in a new state of affairs in the socialist camp's struggle for security as well as in the struggle of oppressed peoples against imperialism. The present political picture is a far more accurate reflection of the actual historical trend unfolding steadily in the twentieth century, a trend which had been only *briefly* (in world historic terms) obscured by the few decades in which the declining imperialist class held a military/technological superiority over the rising proletariat—the force of socialism.

Once nuclear stalemate was successfully achieved, the threat posed by imperialism's deadliest weapons could be neutralized and new prospects opened up for revolutionary forces around the world to translate their mass support into more decisive political and military strikes against imperialism. This in fact was the backdrop which threw into sharp relief the deepening crisis of imperialism by the latter half of the 1970s.

B. U.S. Imperialism at Bay

The crisis of imperialism has become particularly acute in recent years. However, its principal cause cannot be reduced to technological developments in the realm of nuclear weapons. Rather, this crisis is profoundly political and all-sided.

First of all, the ability of the Soviet Union to catch up to the U.S. and match it (qualitatively) in nuclear technology is only one expression of the overall development and consolidation of the socialist mode of production in the Soviet Union and elsewhere. Despite the recent crisis of socialism in Poland and the dangers to China's socialist system arising from the political opportunism of the Communist Party of China, the socialist camp as a whole is today much stronger than ever before. The wishful thinking and propaganda of imperialism aside, the fact of the matter is that socialism is proving itself to be a qualitatively superior and more stable social system (compared to imperialism) both economically and politically. This truth will undoubtedly become even more evident within the next decade as the contradictions inherent in the world capitalist system (i.e., recession cycles, unemployment, starvation, etc.) become more acute.

In addition, the momentum of the revolutionary struggles of oppressed peoples and nations against imperialism has become an irreversible material force shaping world politics. Here too the imperialists are in an inextricable bind since the social impact of their crisis is felt most sharply by the masses of the oppressed countries—a fuel for social revolution which has proven highly combustible. And objectively this struggle is bound to propel this section of the world's peoples toward socialism.

Finally, the fundamental class antagonisms within the imperialist countries themselves are sharply surfacing with an economic and political edge greater than any witnessed for decades. This heightening class polarization is already well underway in countries like Italy, Spain, and England and even the more stable imperialist countries of West Germany, France, Japan, and the U.S. show evidence of this trend. In the United States in particular, although nothing that Marxism-Leninism could seriously describe as a revolutionary working class movement has yet been forged, the social austerity measures imposed by the bourgeoisie in order to sustain itself are by themselves creating a political pressure cooker just waiting to find the appropriate time and place for explosion. The massive anti-nuke movement is itself an expression of this mounting social and political restiveness within the country.

These interrelated phenomena are unmistakable. Taken together, they comprise the modern-day "spectre of communism" haunting the imperialist powers. This spectre especially haunts the U.S. imperialists who, by virtue of their hegemonic position within the world imperialist system must assume the principal responsibility for the overall defense of that system.

The grim consequences of this set of developments for imperialism were spelled out graphically in the 1970s, a decade in which the imperialists suffered one defeat after another. The high point of this process, of course, was the victory of the Vietnamese people and the subsequent liberation of all Indochina in 1975. The inability of the U.S.

to defeat the liberation forces or even to wrest yet one more compromise* out of the situation reflected the intersection of all three elements of the anti-imperialist front: the socialist countries, the national liberation movements, and the mass antiwar movements in the imperialist countries.

Close on the heels of the liberation of Saigon was the total defeat of the Portuguese in southern Africa. The inability of the U.S. to prevent the victory of the MPLA in Angola in particular was another sobering demonstration of the changed balance of forces in the world. Once again, all three elements of the anti-imperialist front contributed to victory. The national liberation struggle, led by the MPLA, delivered the most decisive blows to imperialism, leading to the overthrow of the Portuguese colonial regime. But timely aid from the socialist countries, in the form of Cuban troops and Soviet arms responding to the U.S.-South Africa drive to reverse the Angolan people's triumph became the crucial element in securing this victory. Likewise, the mass antiwar sentiments of the people of the U.S., reinforced by the obvious racist implications of U.S. intervention on the side of South Africa against Angola, especially with respect to the Black community, effectively prevented the U.S. from playing a more active and open counter-revolutionary role. Ultimately, the U.S. was forced to accept a crushing defeat in Africa, a region in which previously it had been able to manage a transition from colonialism to independence that was generally acceptable to U.S. strategic interests.

In the period that followed, the pace of imperialist setbacks began to approximate the immediate post-World War II years. The overthrow of the Shah of Iran necessitated a qualitative reorganization of the U.S. imperialist strategy for the whole Middle East, since it called into question what the imperialists had seen as their "guaranteed" long term access to the region's oil. The struggle in Afghanistan to defend and consolidate the revolutionary process served to aggravate the situation further. Here the Soviet Union's proximity to the situation, which facilitated its direct action against counter-revolution in Afghanistan severely circumscribed the political/military options open to imperialism for an attempt to reverse its setbacks.

In Southeast Asia attempts to sabotage the revolutionary victories in Indochina also failed despite the assistance rendered to imperialism by China. The Pol Pot regime of Kampuchea was overthrown successfully and its counter-revolutionary brutality completely exposed. The Viet-

* The Paris peace accords of 1973 were a "compromise" of sorts; but since their terms essentially provided for the complete withdrawal of U.S. armed forces from Vietnam and permitted the liberation forces to remain in their already established positions, the arrangement was overwhelmingly favorable to the Vietnamese. Objectively, they cleared the path for the complete victory two years later.

namese revolution was able to fend off the Chinese invasion, provide the military muscle needed to consolidate the new revolutionary government in Kampuchea, and prevent the imperialist re-invasion of Indochina. Certainly the wrath the imperialists continue to direct against Vietnam stems from the fact that it represents the forward outpost of socialism and the dictatorship of the proletariat in Asia, firmly backed by the might of the socialist camp.

The same can be said of Cuba in Latin America. Finding ways to destabilize and isolate the Cuban revolution remains the centerpiece of U.S. imperialism's attempts to check the rising revolutionary tide in Central America. Of course, imperialism's problems in South America go far deeper than the effects of any political and material assistance the Cubans can extend to the revolutionary movements. The United States has tied Latin America hand and foot for over a hundred years, while plundering its resources without mercy. The misery and poverty of the masses has been intensified by a seemingly endless succession of fascist dictatorships and military juntas backed up by Yankee imperialism. The revolution in Nicaragua and the raging civil war in El Salvador are the smolderings of a much deeper social volcano.

C. Imperialism's Response:

The U.S. Bid to Regain Nuclear Superiority

Any attempt to account for the extent of the political challenge mounted against imperialism since the mid-'70s while ignoring the backdrop of Soviet nuclear parity with the U.S. constitutes a form of political myopia. But even if this fact escapes the notice of many of the "critics" of imperialism, it remains uppermost in the consciousness of the imperialists themselves—and has framed their whole response to the deepening crisis. By the late '70s the growing perception of U.S. impotence sparked stirrings of anxiety and discontent within ruling class circles. This was strikingly captured by the *Wall Street Journal's* plaintive comment that "the world order is coming unglued. . . the spiral into disorder can be averted only if the U.S. starts to assert itself again."¹⁰

Jimmy Carter tried to put the U.S. back on the offensive after the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan; but his attempts appeared too indecisive and feeble. Moreover, the U.S. was forced to stand by helplessly as the Iranians seized and held U.S. nationals prisoner in Iran for more than a year. Demands for a more vigorous imperialist counter-offensive grew louder, and the main centers of finance capital threw their weight behind such a course. Ruling class endorsement of this alteration in strategy was reflected by the fact that a panoply of imperialist luminaries from Gerald Ford to Henry Kissinger to George Bush dutifully enlisted in Reagan's electoral campaign in 1980.

Was Jimmy Carter any less committed to the interests of imperialism?

Hardly. But this new strategy required a vast expansion of the military budget—and a program of social austerity to finance it—which Carter and the Democratic Party were in a poor position to enact. For this reason, the most influential sectors of monopoly capital threw their full weight behind Reagan's candidacy in 1980—even though these same forces had effectively vetoed his presidential bid four years earlier.

The underlying premise of this new policy is that the U.S. cannot defend its shrinking empire by force unless it sends out the strong signal that it is prepared to go to war with the Soviet Union—whatever the costs might be. That this is the prevailing view among U.S. imperialist strategists is quite apparent. *Newsday* reports the shock among U.S. allies when Reagan told them "that as far as he is concerned, the Soviet Union is at war with the United States."¹¹ A European diplomat quoted Reagan as saying of the Soviet Union, "They may not be fighting us, but they certainly are at war with us."¹²

The Reagan administration's current strategy for fighting this war includes various forms of economic warfare, military assistance to China in order to keep Soviet forces tied down along the Chinese border, and the promotion of internal subversion in the socialist countries. Former Secretary of State Alexander Haig was quite explicit on this last point, saying:

"Just as the Soviet Union gives active support to Marxist-Leninist forces in the West and the South, we must give vigorous support to democratic forces wherever they are located—including countries which are now Communist."¹³

Haig went on to make explicit the "linkage" between Soviet support to national liberation movements and U.S. countermeasures aimed at fomenting *armed* insurrection in the socialist countries:

"We want the competition of democracy and Communism to be conducted in peaceful and political terms, but we will provide other means if the Soviet Union insists upon violent methods of struggle."¹⁴

But it would be a mistake to view the U.S. bourgeoisie's present assumption of a war between the U.S. and the Soviet Union as simply the politics of Ronald Reagan. The U.S. bourgeoisie has historically demonstrated a keen awareness of the fact that the antagonistic contradiction between two social systems—capitalism and socialism—frames this entire historical epoch and that this class struggle is indeed a "war" in which the forces of imperialism and the forces of socialism are two prime antagonists.

The centerpiece of the new imperialist effort is the bourgeoisie's announced intention of re-establishing U.S. nuclear superiority over the Soviet Union.

By late 1979-80 groups like the Committee on the Present Danger and the political forces around Reagan held out hope to the bourgeoisie by

arguing that perhaps parity was not irreversible; perhaps a determined effort by the U.S.—one which would clearly require significant “sacrifices” and alteration of longstanding policies regarding “social welfare,” etc.—could restore the U.S. nuclear edge. As Rostow put it:

“This defeatism is altogether unwarranted. The American people will spend and do whatever is required to assure the safety of the nation, if their leaders tell them the truth, as President Truman did, and explain the central importance of nuclear weapons to our security and to the foreign policies we employ to protect it.”¹⁵

The initial plan to effect this policy shift was drafted by Defense Secretary Caspar W. Weinberger in August, 1981 and submitted to President Reagan at that time. Since then, of course, the U.S. has described its military effort as an attempt to overcome a supposed Soviet edge in nuclear weaponry; but at the time, U.S. officials were being far more candid. A team of *New York Times* reporters uncovered the Weinberger plan and had its main provisions confirmed by “senior Administration officials,” a euphemism generally employed to describe Cabinet-level figures which strongly suggests that Weinberger himself was the source. As the *Times* reported:

“The proposed plan, the senior officials asserted, was intended to enable the U.S. to regain nuclear superiority over the Soviet Union within this decade. The Administration intends, the officials said, to build a capacity to fight nuclear wars that range from a limited strike through a protracted conflict to an all-out exchange.”¹⁶

The crucial point is that it is U.S. imperialism which is attempting to upset the present nuclear balance and that its attempt to do so flows inexorably out of the logic of reversing the historical tide which has been steadily undermining the imperialist system. So long as the U.S. retained nuclear superiority, it could conduct wars by conventional political and military means, using the threat of nuclear war, as Rostow put it, “always the decisive factor in the background.”¹⁷ The U.S. acceded to a truce of sorts, called “detente,” when the Soviet Union first attained nuclear parity. But detente in no way ameliorated the fundamental clash between the two social systems; so the war went on, now under conditions even more unfavorable to imperialism.

The decision by the Reagan administration to resume the nuclear arms race in a more active and explicit sense, is thus not a new strategy on the part of U.S. monopoly capital, but simply the practical application of imperialism’s understanding of the military requirements it must fulfill to be able to conduct the international class struggle. As matters stand now, U.S. imperialism’s capacity to wage and win any “conventional” war is problematic since, without a technological edge in terms of weapons of mass destruction the imperialist system objectively faces the class hostility of the overwhelming majority of the earth’s population. That the

key political objective of the imperialists today is to regain a nuclear superiority over the Soviet Union should surprise no one.

D. The Ideological and Material Requirements to Regain U.S. Nuclear Superiority

Looking forward to the 1980s, the U.S. imperialists faced a serious dilemma. To accomplish the massive military build-up their strategy demanded would require a major shift in the priorities of government spending, which in turn would necessitate forging a sufficiently receptive political climate. The ruling class campaign to build such a climate should not be viewed in a mechanical fashion, simply as the work of some conspiracy. But the major contours of such a drive are already clearly in evidence and there can be no doubt that its unfolding will occupy the center stage in the drama of U.S. politics over the next decade.

Perhaps the most conscious element of this imperialist ideological campaign has been the attempt to revive the Cold War atmosphere of the 1950s. The focal point of this campaign has been anticommunism directed mainly against the Soviet Union, but also linked to attacks on Cuba and Vietnam.

Within recent years, all the main organs of bourgeois propaganda have poured forth numerous variations on the same basic theme: a Soviet menace, portrayed as a coordinated global conspiracy centered in Moscow aimed at imposing a new “totalitarian” world order on freedom-loving people everywhere. Naturally, all that stands between the world’s people and this grim prospect is the woefully weakened U.S. military establishment.*

In addition, the links between the national liberation movements and socialism are cast in the most sinister light. The gains of the national liberation struggles, especially those led by Marxist-Leninists, are portrayed as “betrayals” of the aspirations of well intentioned “dupes” or political “innocents” by nefarious communists. And the most consistent foes of imperialism are depicted as “terrorists,” enemies of civilization.

The tie between anticommunism and American jingoism is particularly deep-rooted in the national traditions of the United States. It has a spontaneous power of its own which is easily manipulated by the ideological agents of the bourgeoisie. On top of having one of the most

*Sad to say, many on the left have aided and abetted this imperialist ideological enterprise (both intentionally and unintentionally) by swallowing whole such anti-Soviet slanders and fostering them within the mass movement. The contradictions inherent in political muddleheadedness are bound to come to a head in upcoming years as it becomes increasingly clear that it is not only the communists who reject anti-Sovietism, but that even consistent “progressives” must do the same—whatever reservations concerning socialism and the dictatorship of the proletariat they may have.

classic and developed traditions of bourgeois democracy, the U.S. has been among the leading imperialist powers since the turn of the century. The material benefits produced by this towering world position have flowed far beyond the bourgeoisie. The standard of living of the U.S. petit bourgeoisie and the more stable sectors of the working class has been substantially affected over a period of a number of generations—producing a material level of culture far superior to that of the vast majority of the world.

The intersection between this developed bourgeois democratic superstructure and the material base of imperialism has become concentrated in the notion of the “American way of life”—a notion which is deeply embedded in the national consciousness of large sections of the U.S. population. This notion is thoroughly bourgeois in its ideological orientation, absolutely chauvinistic toward other peoples and cultures, and completely racist in regard to the oppressed peoples of the world whose sweat and blood have cemented much of the foundation of the “miracle” of the “American way of life.”

This particular tradition of U.S. national chauvinism is extremely susceptible to being almost completely merged with anticommunism—far more so than the cultures of other major imperialist countries. The fact is that in the post-World War II years, the challenge to U.S. imperialist hegemony (and thereby the real and perceived threat to the “American way of life”) has been thoroughly bound up with the struggle of the international proletariat, concentrated in the conscious activities of the international communist movement. Therefore, “American” nationalism is *absolutely* reactionary and bound to be virulently anti-communist.*

The growth of jingoism over the past five years is a conspicuous feature of U.S. political life. It has constituted one of the cornerstones of the New Right. It has been manifest in hostility toward a broad range of targets, from the Japanese stealing “our” markets, to the Arabs threatening “our” oil, to the immigrant workers entering the U.S. “stealing *our* jobs.” Its importance should be no less obvious; on a general level, forging a patriotic consensus is an indispensable political ingredient in the bourgeoisie’s effort to mount a massive drive for military spending to regain nuclear superiority over the USSR.

*Populist illusions in sections of the U.S. left, particularly within social democracy, which hold that the banner of “patriotism” can be taken back from the bourgeoisie and the right wing and redirected in a progressive direction are thoroughly misguided and are bound to wind up conciliating national chauvinism. Given the central role of U.S. imperialism in the world, the U.S. working class will not be able to develop a revolutionary outlook until and unless it breaks free of the illusions promoted by the political institutions, ideology and culture of U.S. “patriotism.”

But one fatal flaw in this scene counteracts the capacity of the U.S. ruling class to fully consolidate a patriotic consensus. The internal contradiction of racism within U.S. society remains the most conspicuous stratification splitting the U.S. working class, with non-white peoples occupying the most unstable and oppressed strata of the proletariat. Consequently, minority people in the U.S. are generally barred from buying fully into “American” patriotism precisely because of the discriminated positions they occupy in the “American way of life.”

And this is precisely where the *material component* to the imperialist attempt to regain the nuclear edge lies. The drive for nuclear superiority is not cheap. Therefore, the U.S. cannot increase its military expenditures without reducing expenditures in other areas. But simply effecting an across-the-board cutback in the standard of living, social services, and expectations of the entire working class could well be counter-productive to the purpose of forging an ideological consensus behind the imperialist offensive. With this consideration in mind, therefore, the bourgeoisie has calculated that it can win a *sufficient* base of support among the masses for its massive military expenditures if the accompanying program of enforced social austerity is concentrated in that sector of the working class which is politically weakest. The result has been a thoroughly racialized program of social austerity in which the gravest effects of cutbacks in services and the general standard of living are felt by the lower strata of the working class where most minority and “foreign” workers are concentrated. The convenience of enlisting the support of the white section of the population for programs designed to curb predominantly minority “welfare cheats,” and to stop “coddling” recipients of food stamps, to end aid to “free loading” illegals, etc., has, of course, not escaped the notice of bourgeois policy-makers.

In short, the attempt to revive the fortunes of U.S. imperialism by regaining nuclear superiority over the Soviet Union cannot be viewed in isolation from its broad anticommunist and national chauvinist ideological component, or from the program of racialized social austerity required to pay for it with the least possible disruption of a consensus of support rooted in the white petit bourgeoisie and the most protected sectors of the working class.

E. Actual Tactics of the U.S. Drive for Nuclear Superiority

Of course, in its crusade to save “democracy” worldwide, the U.S. bourgeoisie cannot leave matters on the level of a general shift of the country over to a war footing, because the war preparations this time are to prepare to fight a particular kind of war—nuclear war. As a consequence, additional ploys are in order. The scheme they have resorted to amounts to a classic example of the “big lie” approach, which leaves every informed critic almost speechless at the audacity and sophistication of the distortions involved.

To accomplish this public relations sleight of hand, Reagan and his

forces have actively resorted to blatant lying to convince public opinion that the Soviet Union actually has nuclear superiority over the U.S., so that the Reagan program only amounts to trying to close this gap. The *Wall Street Journal* described the President's new stance as follows:

"Going further than any American President ever has, Ronald Reagan made a startling admission of Soviet nuclear superiority. Asked if the U.S. could retaliate against Soviet nuclear attack, the President said that retaliation is possible but added, 'the Soviet's great edge is one in which they could absorb our retaliatory blows and hit us again'." ¹⁸

In a word, Ronald Reagan and other advocates of U.S. nuclear superiority have trotted out the time-tested practice of cloaking U.S. imperialism's aggressive counterrevolutionary actions in the rhetoric of a desperately needed defensive measure. Reagan's specious U.S. "window of vulnerability" to a Soviet first strike and his claim that the Soviets enjoy a "definite margin of superiority" are merely the latest in a long line of U.S. lies, fabrications, exaggerations, and distortions designed to justify a unilateral U.S. build up.*

The assertion of Soviet nuclear superiority is patently counterfeit. But the use of the "big lie" provides Reagan's propagandists with ample opportunity to confuse public opinion through the use of baffling technical language, phony comparative standards, and outright distortions of the facts. The statement of Edward Luttwak, longtime consultant to the Pentagon, to the effect that "roughly ten years ago. . . we were ahead in every single index except one—gross megatonnage. Today. . . we are only ahead in one—number of warheads," ²⁰

*It was John F. Kennedy who inaugurated this hallowed tradition when he invented a "missile gap" in favor of the Soviets during the Berlin Crisis of 1961. The hysterical fear of a Soviet nuclear attack precipitated by Kennedy's claim was so great as to give rise to such desperate civil defense measures as the daily drilling of children to hide under their desks during the imminent Soviet nuclear attack. Yet at the time of this "missile gap" scare, the U.S. had at its disposal 3000 nuclear-capable bombers, 40 intercontinental missiles, 48 Polaris missiles, and another 100 European-based missiles trained on Soviet targets while the Soviets had all told only 190 bombers and exactly 4 functional ICBMs conveniently (for the U.S.) grouped at one site that was eminently vulnerable to a small attack with conventional weapons. Daniel Ellsberg has pointed out why the truth of this matter has remained little known up to the present: "Officially, the precise figure cited for Soviet ICBMs in the period from early 1960 to early 1962—four—is guarded as a classified secret today just as it was twenty years ago... The true figure remains secret for the same reason as before: because public knowledge of the *scale* of the 'missile gap' hoax would undercut the recurrently-necessary tactic of whipping up public fears of imminent U.S. 'inferiority' to mobilize support for vastly expensive arms spending intended, in fact, to assure continued and increased—or in the present instance, regained—U.S. superiority." ¹⁹

furnishes a good example of this tactic. By using categories that are largely irrelevant to measure the actual military effectiveness of nuclear weapons—spending, throw weight, numbers of missiles, ability to strike at land-based missiles, etc.—the imperialist propagandists seek to paint a picture of Soviet nuclear superiority that will scare the U.S. people into supporting an expensive and dangerous U.S. attempt to regain nuclear superiority over the Soviets.

The most widely asserted proposition supposedly demonstrating Soviet nuclear superiority is that over the past two decades the USSR has engaged in an enormous military build-up, one that continues today on a scale far greater than that of the U.S.

Now what is certainly true is that the Soviet Union has achieved a qualitative advance in its military preparedness, especially in its nuclear capacity. But considering the enormous gap that existed between the U.S. and Soviet nuclear arsenals over the past 20 years, it obviously would require a massive commitment of funds and resources for the Soviet Union to catch up with the U.S. and achieve relative parity. Far from indicating present Soviet superiority, the Soviet build-up reflects the enormity of the gap that had to be closed for the socialist countries to be able to effectively counter the imperialist atomic arsenal.*

*The history and timing of the Soviet build-up may also throw light on certain political and ideological developments within the CPSU and the International Communist Movement. They would appear to confirm the view that the revisionist line first advanced by Nikita Khrushchev, which was obviously tied to a shift of Soviet economic priorities toward greater concentration on consumer goods and light industry ("goulash communism"), was based on the dubious assumption that the USSR could forge a relationship of peaceful coexistence with the U.S. despite the fact that it would be in a militarily weaker position. The Cuban missile crisis, among other things, seems to have shattered this illusion in the Soviet party leadership; Khrushchev was ousted and the Soviet military build-up and the abandonment of Khrushchev's various experimental economic "reforms" followed shortly thereafter, strongly suggesting that Soviet policy was no longer being framed by revisionist illusions about the peaceful prospects of coexistence with imperialism. In sharp contrast to Khrushchev, the Brezhnev/Kosygin leadership made an all-out commitment to the development of Soviet nuclear capacity, a policy which came to fruition in the '70s with the emergence of rough Soviet/U.S. parity.

This change in Soviet line and policy has not been sufficiently appreciated by many forces in the international communist movement (ourselves included). Of course one reason for this lack of appreciation is the fact that the CPSU itself chose not to comment publicly on these developments; instead they preferred to "retire" Khrushchev quietly and turn him into a historical "non-person." Despite this problem, our section of the U.S. communist movement has insufficiently appreciated the enormous sacrifices, including the distortions in the Soviet economy, which the Soviet people—and the other socialist countries—undoubtedly had to make in order to match imperialism's nuclear capacity.

But if the Soviet Union has had to reorient its economy in order to overcome the imperialist nuclear threat, it does not at all follow—as the U.S. charges—that the USSR allocates a greater percentage of its national budget and gross national product to military expenditures than the U.S. does. In fact, the various CIA studies “proving” this assertion achieve these results by using completely spurious logic and by consciously manipulating the facts. For example, the CIA bases its estimate of Soviet military expenditures not on what the Soviet Union spends but on what it would cost in the U.S. to achieve the same results. The speciousness of this line of reasoning, of course, is based on two facts: first, U.S. military expenditures have built into them enormous profits for the monopoly corporations who are the beneficiaries of war contracts; second, the Soviet military costs (in particular pay scales) are significantly lower than in the U.S.* In addition, the CIA makes its estimates of Soviet spending on the basis of the official ruble/dollar exchange rate in which the ruble is arbitrarily pegged at a high rate in order to maximize the accumulation of “hard” currency. Lastly, it drops out the significant fact that U.S. technological superiority enables the U.S. to get far more for their money than the Soviets. As one expert noted:

“Recently, for instance, the United States modified the computer guidance systems in all 550 of its Minuteman II ICBMs, doubling each missile’s accuracy. . . and thereby tripling its ability to destroy Soviet missile silos. . . The cost of this improvement: a mere \$155 million. The Soviets, meanwhile, accomplished the same improvement, but they did it by purchasing four entirely new missiles and deploying three of them. Their estimated cost: \$28.5 billion.”²¹

Another ploy used to confuse public opinion is to compare relative U.S./Soviet nuclear strength in terms of a missile count or throw weight. This is a calculated distortion of information since neither index measures the actual effectiveness of nuclear striking capacity. The USSR has about 2500 missile delivery systems as compared to 2124 for the U.S. But the advent of multiple independently targetable warheads (MIRVs) which allow a number of warheads to be mounted on a single

*In fact, Soviet military expenditures in general have to be seen in the context of actual Soviet military policies. For instance, some 35% of the Soviet military budget is allocated to troops and material deployed on the Chinese border. In addition, the Soviet army assumes major responsibility for activities such as irrigation projects and transportation which are handled, in the U.S., by private industry and hence not included in military spending. Moreover, to get the full picture, the expenditures of U.S. and Soviet allies have to be taken into account. Britain and France, for example, spend five times as much on nuclear weaponry than do all the Soviet Union’s Warsaw Pact allies. When all these factors are taken into account, the spending “gap” between the U.S. and the Soviet Union not only disappears, it reappears in reverse.

missile render the missile count of little utility in measuring comparative nuclear capacity. More accurate is the warhead count, and here the U.S. has a considerable lead over the USSR as it controls more than 9400 strategic warheads versus the Soviet’s 6000.

As for throw weight (or megatonnage), the simple fact of the matter—well known to U.S. experts—is that the heavier weight of Soviet missiles is a sign of their relative technological inferiority, and not at all a nuclear striking superiority. For example, the Soviet SS-18 has twice the throw weight of the new U.S. MX ICBM. However, both missiles carry ten warheads; the MX is more accurate than the Soviet SS-18; and their destructive power is about the same. Measuring nuclear striking capacity by throw weight is as useful as measuring racing cars by weight: all other things being equal, the greater the weight, the more expensive and less effective they are.

The other red herring the Administration has publicized heavily is the claim that the Soviets have a superior capacity to destroy U.S. land-based ICBMs, thus opening the “window of vulnerability” to a Soviet first strike on the U.S. Thus they contend that the Soviets can effectively destroy some 90% of such U.S. missiles, enabling them to emerge the victor in a nuclear exchange.

First of all, estimates of the accuracy of intercontinental missiles are highly dubious, since innumerable untested and untestable factors would interfere with their actual flight. Second, this notion of U.S. vulnerability is based on the preposterous suggestion that, upon learning of a Soviet attack, the U.S. would simply leave its missiles in their silos waiting to be destroyed. It is far more likely that the U.S. would fire them at the Soviet Union in the twenty minutes before Soviet missiles could arrive, leaving them to hit empty holes in the ground—even provided they are accurate. Third, the vulnerability of U.S. land-based ICBMs may be largely irrelevant anyway. Such missiles account for only 22% of the U.S. strategic arsenal and the trend is to further shift the center of gravity of U.S. power to submarines, bombers, satellites—and to Europe. The U.S. has a major advantage over the Soviets in nuclear capable submarines which are completely invulnerable to a counterforce attack. As one observer noted:

“Even if the Soviets could execute a splendid first strike against the American ICBM force, they would still be faced with roughly 5000 strategic nuclear warheads that could thoroughly blast away the foundations of twentieth century Soviet society, or destroy political, economic and military targets with flexibility and selectivity.”²²

In fact, the Soviets face a far greater counterforce peril from the U.S. than vice versa. The U.S. has forward based nuclear missiles in Europe and other friendly countries that can hit Soviet targets in minutes, while Soviet strategic missiles are deployed only in the Soviet Union itself. Moreover, while land-based ICBMs account for only 22% of the U.S.

strategic arsenal, such missiles make up 70% of Soviet strategic weaponry. If the U.S. is successful in its plan to deploy the new cruise and Pershing II missiles in Europe, the danger to Soviet ICBMs will be clear and present.*

What emerges from an objective assessment of the present nuclear balance is a clear picture of *parity* between the two great powers. Both sides have the capacity to absorb an all-out attack and still launch a positively devastating attack on the other. And neither side presently has the capacity to incapacitate the other without itself risking destruction.

Within this overall parity, though, it is clear that the U.S. still has a slight edge. In particular, its submarine and missile technology is more advanced, and it has the great advantage of launching sites on the very borders of the Soviet Union. The Soviets have more land-based ICBMs than does the U.S., but this is more likely a sign of its weaknesses rather than its strengths. The U.S. strategic force is more diverse, flexible, and better located. It is upon these advantages that the Reagan administration hopes to build a credible first strike capacity, a subject to which we now turn our attention briefly.

As Daniel Ellsberg has pointed out:

"The current dilemma [of U.S./Soviet nuclear parity]. . . merely highlights the historical legacy of an earlier generation in which strategic nuclear monopoly permitted and encouraged the U.S. to claim rights to intervention in what amounted to a sphere of predominant influence that ran right up to the border of Soviet or Chinese occupation everywhere in the world. Now a decade after that monopoly has vanished, U.S. commanders-in-chief still feel compelled to defend and assure U.S. influence within that same immense, global sphere. They believe, and they are right to believe, they cannot

*Not surprisingly, this sleight of hand of using missile count, throw weight, counterforce capacity, etc. is the centerpiece of Reagan's most recent nuclear arms proposal. This proposal is an insidious attempt to outflank the nuclear freeze movement with a phony proposal for arms reductions that in reality only furthers the U.S. drive for nuclear superiority over the Soviets. Stage one of the Reagan proposal sets limits on the number of warheads and missile launchers that each country could deploy on land. In light of the fact that 70% of the Soviet strategic arsenal is land-based while only 22% of U.S. weaponry is similarly situated, it is obvious that it would result in a serious weakening of the Soviet Union while having a negligible effect on the U.S. The second stage of the Reagan plan proposes to reduce the total missile throw weight of both powers. Since Soviet missiles are much heavier than their U.S. counterparts of equal destructive capacity, this proposal would also work strictly to the advantage of the U.S. Finally, the proposal is completely silent on the cutting edge of the U.S. drive for nuclear superiority: the development of the cruise missile, the Pershing IIs, etc. and their deployment in Europe where they could strike Soviet targets in minutes. Is it any wonder that President Brezhnev denounced the proposal as an unacceptable demand for Soviet surrender?

do so everywhere without being ready to ignite thermonuclear war whenever 'necessary'." ²³

The point here is that the bourgeoisie is dead serious about regaining a modicum of politically and militarily usable nuclear superiority over the Soviets that will enable them to revert to the earlier policy of nuclear blackmail that worked so effectively. They are convinced that nuclear superiority is an indispensable weapon for the defense of the imperialist empire and for withstanding the turbulent class struggles of the future. The centerpiece of this program is the development of new weapons and their deployment to sites that will give the U.S. a capacity to launch a first strike on the Soviet Union, or threaten credibly to do so. Although obviously the re-establishment of a nuclear monopoly is out of the question, U.S. planners feel that the U.S. technological edge will enable them to restore a lightning counterforce capacity that can knock out or at least render inadvisable Soviet retaliation.

Their scenario runs something like this: A military confrontation breaks out somewhere in the world, say the Middle East, that threatens "vital U.S. interests" but which the imperialists assess they cannot win through conventional warfare. It therefore dispatches the Rapid Deployment Force to the scene, a force which cannot by itself repel a serious military adversary but whose "major function," Ellsberg suggests, "would be as an instrument of real and visible commitment to the possible first-use of nuclear weapons by the United States." ²⁴

If this bit of nuclear blackmail fails to achieve the intended purpose of forcing the adversary to back down, the U.S. would drop a "limited, tactical" nuclear bomb on them. The U.S. is emphasizing the development of the neutron bomb and the cruise missiles for use in precisely such situations, as their extraordinary accuracy and limited killing zone make them ideal for "limited nuclear warfare." Such weapons could undoubtedly turn the military tide, at least temporarily, in such local confrontations.

But what is to guarantee, or at least actively discourage, the Soviets from responding in kind? Indeed, what might give the U.S. the boldness to initiate theater nuclear warfare in the first place?

The key here is the development of the Pershing II and cruise missiles, and their deployment in Europe. These new missiles are more accurate by an order of magnitude than anything presently available to either side, and can hit vital Soviet targets within four minutes from Europe. Programmed by computer to fly just above the ground, cruise missiles can escape the Soviet detection systems and then home in on their targets automatically. Ellsberg draws out the implications of these advances:

"Thus, the theory goes, the Russians might be deterred from retaliating against a U.S. carrier that had just destroyed their forward units in Iran, by the fact that the U.S. would then use the unique capabilities of its Pershings to eliminate 'surgically' all the bases,

depots, command posts, and reserves in Eastern Europe and western Russia that support Soviet Middle Eastern theater operations. . . thus daring the Soviets to *start* an all-out city-busting exchange by replying with their large yield 'indiscriminate' warheads. . . This they might not do, even in retaliation limited regionally to Europe, for fear the U.S. might then take out their ICBMs and a good deal more, with the MX, Trident III, and air-launched cruise missiles newly bought for this purpose."²⁵

In short, the U.S. imperialists are gambling that their technical edge over the Soviets can produce a U.S. first strike capacity so that nuclear blackmail can once again become a powerful force in world politics in favor of imperialism. The grave danger of nuclear war—with its potential for unforeseen destruction and perhaps even human extinction—stems from a system of exploitation that is obliged and hence prepared to rely on nuclear weapons as its last resort. The danger is as real as imperialism is aggressive.

F. The Debate Within the Bourgeoisie

However there is not complete unanimity within the bourgeoisie on this course of action. Prominent imperialist intellectuals and strategists are increasingly expressing doubts as to the wisdom of this course, and a major ruling class debate on the subject is shaping up.

The reasoning of these imperialist "dissidents" revolves around two points:

1. Reagan's plan won't work. The assumption that the Soviet Union either will be unable to match a U.S. escalation of the arms race or will ruin its economy in its attempts to keep up is fallacious. Bourgeois political and ideological considerations may require propagating the view among the masses that socialism is a disastrous failure and the Soviet system in particular is on the verge of economic collapse; but it would be the height of folly for the chieftains of imperialism to base their strategic planning on such dubious and shallow assessments. In other words, nuclear parity is irreversible and imperialism should look to other ways to defeat socialism.

2. The political cost to the U.S. in pursuing the course outlined by Reagan may be more than the system can presently sustain. The strains on the inter-imperialist alliances (with Western Europe and Japan), already sharp as the result of economic contradictions, will intensify. So long as alliance policy remains tied to nuclear blackmail, U.S. allies—dubious at the prospects for regaining nuclear superiority and fearful that atomic hostilities will devastate their own countries—will become increasingly restive and vulnerable to separate arrangements with the USSR. Similarly, the economic burden of the Reagan course will undercut the material basis for maintaining the system's ideological consensus among the U.S. masses, exacerbating the "class struggle from within," so to speak.

No single group of ruling class ideologists spell out their concerns in precisely these terms. But such is the essence of their arguments.

The most serious assertion of this general point of view appeared, appropriately enough, in the form of an article entitled *Nuclear Weapons and the Atlantic Alliance*, in the Spring 1982 issue of *Foreign Affairs*, the influential ruling class journal which has frequently served as an arena for ruling class debates on foreign policy. The authors, four of the most distinguished shapers of U.S. foreign policy over the course of two decades, enjoy direct links to the main centers of finance capital and clearly speak for more than themselves. They are: McGeorge Bundy, Special Assistant to Presidents Kennedy and Johnson for National Security Affairs (1961-1966) and President of the Ford Foundation (1966-1979); Robert S. McNamara, Secretary of Defense (1961-1968) and President of the World Bank (1968-1981); George F. Kennan, one-time U.S. Ambassador to the Soviet Union and long considered the single most influential adviser on U.S.-Soviet relations; and Gerard Smith, Chief of the U.S. Delegation to SALT I talks (1969-1972), Director of Policy Planning for the State Department (1957-1961), and Ambassador at Large and Special Presidential Representative for non-proliferation matters (1977-1980).*

The main point of this U.S. "Gang of Four" is a call to re-examine U.S. reliance on the use of nuclear weapons "to repel aggression from the East." They say:

"For 33 years now, the Atlantic Alliance has relied on the asserted readiness of the U.S. to use nuclear weapons . . . to deter Soviet aggression and keep the peace by maintaining a credible connection between any large-scale assault, *whether conventional or nuclear*, and the engagement of the strategic nuclear forces of the U.S. A major element in every doctrine has been that the U.S. has asserted its willingness to be the first—*has indeed made plans to be the first if necessary—to use nuclear weapons* to defend against aggression in Europe. *It is this element that needs re-examination now.* Both its cost to the coherence of the Alliance and its threat to the safety of the world are rising while its deterrent credibility declines. This policy was first established when the American nuclear advantage was overwhelming, *but that advantage has long since gone and cannot be recaptured.*"²⁷
(Emphasis added)

The article goes on to dismiss the notion that "any use of nuclear weapons, even on the smallest scale, could reliably be expected to

*Another powerful voice enlisted since is that of strategic planner Herman Kahn, director of the Hudson Institute, a think-tank whose scenarios for imperialist strategy have had a profound impact on U.S. policy. In an important article entitled *Thinking About Nuclear Morality*,²⁶ Kahn lines himself up with the "advocates of no-first-use" of atomic weapons.

remain limited”²⁸ and directly challenges Reagan’s “window of vulnerability” argument, stating: “All four of us are wholly unpersuaded by the argument advanced in recent years that the Soviet Union could ever rationally expect to gain from such a wild effort as a massive first strike on land-based American strategic missiles.”²⁹ The authors also criticize “a seeming callousness in some quarters in Washington toward nuclear dangers” which, they say, “may be partly responsible for some of the recent unrest in Europe.”³⁰

Their “modest” proposal is for the U.S. to reconsider its policy of reliance on nuclear weapons except in response to the use of nuclear weapons by others; in other words, to adopt a policy of no first use of nuclear weapons. Such a policy would obviously have to be more than a moral pronouncement. *It means nothing less than an abandonment of the attempt to regain nuclear superiority over the Soviet Union.*

Now there is no doubt that on one level, Bundy & Co. are making a much more “realistic” appraisal of the world than Reagan is. Quite correctly, they are highly dubious that the U.S. *can* regain the nuclear edge simply because the Soviet Union will not sit idly by and allow that to happen. Nor are they impressed with the argument that the Soviet economy will collapse under the strain of trying to keep pace with the U.S. They are wise enough not to base their analysis on the wishful thinking of anticommunist ideologues; they know all too well what has happened to others who did so in the past.

Likewise, their concerns with the strains this program will place both on U.S. relations with the other imperialist powers as well as the dangers to the social peace at home are clearly well-founded.

Nevertheless, from the imperialist point of view this more “realistic” appraisal of the world has built into it an insurmountable flaw: namely, that as recent history has demonstrated, nuclear parity does in fact work to the disadvantage of U.S. imperialism and to the advantage of the forces of socialism and national liberation. This is the lesson of Vietnam, Angola, etc. Stated simply, and pretty much the way imperialist strategists must discuss it among themselves: nuclear parity with the Soviet Union is an unacceptable arrangement for U.S. imperialism because wherever the Soviet “nuclear umbrella” extends, the U.S. policy of using nuclear blackmail as the weapon of last resort in its counter-revolutionary arsenal is significantly undermined.

So, if one were inclined to sympathize with the historical predicament the imperialists find themselves in today, one would have to admit that both arguments have their “merits.” Clearly the bourgeoisie finds itself in a difficult position. No clear cut answers to their problems exist; hence they have a pressing need for all-out debate among themselves to be able to find a resolution in their own interests.

That such differences within the ranks of the U.S. bourgeoisie exist should surprise no one. That they have surfaced publicly, though, is an

important development. It serves to highlight the underlying dilemma of the imperialist system and helps to identify a contradiction within the ruling class which, properly understood and handled, can be a strategic reserve for the proletariat. So let us explore it a bit further.

First, the dissent registered by the U.S. “Gang of Four” does not at this time represent the dominant imperialist consensus. Impressive and well informed though the arguments of these eminent critics may be, the prospect that the U.S. might be able to regain the nuclear edge is too appealing to the dominant centers of finance capital so that until and unless the political cost of pursuing this course becomes excessive they are more than willing to give Reagan a chance to accomplish it.

Second, the alternative offered by the dissenters in no way imagines any weakening of the imperialist system or voluntary surrender of any of its positions. In that sense, it too is essentially reactionary. As far as the U.S. “Gang of Four” is concerned the maintainance of large-scale nuclear weapons systems and a build-up in conventional arms are essential components of any policy that does not rely on a U.S. “first strike” policy. Indeed, the long-run utility of this debate to the U.S. ruling class may well be that it will legitimize or at least make acceptable among the masses a massive build-up in non-nuclear conventional weaponry as the seemingly “rational” alternative to a nuclear build-up, and a “preferable” form of death and destruction over the prospects of nuclear holocaust.

Viewed this way, we can see why both sides in the current debate are, in essence, attempts by the imperialist system to devise the most practical and effective response to the realities of the international class struggle as they are actually being encountered today. It would be foolish for the proletariat to attach any other long-range significance to the controversy or to tie its political fortunes to the success of either side.

In a more immediate sense, however, the proletariat has a vital stake in the controversy. In the first place, this debate undoubtedly presents the working class with additional ammunition in the struggle to counter the present imperialist offensive *as it is currently being unfolded in actual political life*. In addition, the internal logic of the attempt to regain nuclear superiority for the U.S. ultimately would require a militarization of U.S. life and the absolute imposition of an anticommunist, racist and national chauvinist ideology that could only be accomplished by major steps in the direction of fascism. This process will take on a political momentum of its own; should the Reagan forces prevail in the current debate they will be powerfully positioned to pursue such a fascist course even if—or, we should say, precisely because—the goal of achieving U.S. nuclear superiority will remain so elusive.

Consequently, to the extent that Bundy, McNamara, et al.—obviously no friends of the proletariat—objectively buttress the interests of the working class, we are obliged to make the most effective use of the roles

they play. But it is just as essential that in the process we learn the crucial difference between skillfully exploiting contradictions within the ruling class and indulging in any illusions about forging any stable alliances with a sector of finance capital who are ultimately trying to find a more effective way to defend the imperialist system in the end. In short, although we may find a section of the U.S. ruling class willing to oppose the drive to regain nuclear superiority over the USSR, they will certainly not oppose imperialism which is the actual underlying politics that frame the nuclear war issue.

III. The Nuclear Disarmament Movement

A. The Struggle for Peace

The emergence of a mass nuclear disarmament movement in the U.S. and the other imperialist countries reflects a growing perception among the masses that a crucial historical juncture is now approaching in which the antagonisms of international politics may well develop into nuclear war. The *spontaneous* impulse of this movement has been to focus on the nuclear weapons themselves in an attempt to check the nuclear option should war break out. In accordance with this objective, the movement's principal call has been for a bilateral freeze at present levels on the further development of nuclear weapons, hopefully leading to a process of step-by-step disarmament.

As we have indicated above, this movement has an *objectively* progressive content. First, it has taken on its present dimensions in direct response to the ambitious and aggressive U.S. maneuver to re-establish its nuclear superiority over the Soviet Union. Second, its call for a "freeze at present levels" takes place under circumstances in which the prevailing nuclear parity works to the advantage of the struggle of the international proletariat by placing a significant political check on imperialism's capacity to launch a new world war in order to prevent revolution and threaten socialism.

Nevertheless, while the spontaneous movement's focus on nuclear weapons is objectively progressive *under present circumstances*, its political outlook is still fundamentally flawed and it is liable to diversion and manipulation because it invests the source of the present nuclear danger in the instruments of war rather than in the class forces who control those instruments. Marxist-Leninists and the working class in general can ill afford to coddle such illusions. At the same time, we must recognize the value of the nuclear disarmament movement as the most concentrated spontaneous expression of the struggle for peace in this period.

Unfortunately, in large sections of the international communist movement, the importance of and correct approach to the struggle for peace has been seriously distorted by both revisionism and Maoism.

This is pre-eminently the case among U.S. communists where the struggle for peace has in the main been rejected out of hand by the ultra-lefts, engaged in apologetically by the centrists, or promoted one-sidedly as the strategic centerpiece of communist practice by the revisionists. The political confusion inherent in such diversity is a reflection of the sorry state of the U.S. communist movement—of our pragmatism, political immaturity, and fragmentation. This problem is not confined to our theory, but has a direct negative bearing on the effectiveness of our practice in the broad peace and nuclear disarmament movement.

In an earlier historical period, before the existence of socialism in the world, from the point of view of the revolutionary proletariat there was only one way to wage the struggle for peace consistently—by linking it up with the struggle to win the workers of the various imperialist countries to refuse to slaughter each other on behalf of their bourgeois masters; as such, this struggle was bound up with the prospects for civil insurrection directed against the imperialist system. This, for example, was the actual content of the demand for peace advanced by the Bolsheviks in the course of the Russian Revolution. Today, however, the struggle for peace has a new dimension—it has become primarily the struggle to prevent imperialist counter-revolution directed against wars of national liberation and the socialist countries.

In this sense, the struggle for peace today is a democratic question inseparably bound up with the question of the success of the revolution in the long run. Yet it remains distinct from the struggle to actually overthrow imperialism, seize state power and defend the revolution in any particular country. Although this dialectic may be difficult to understand initially, every communist and revolutionary worker attempting to understand the international politics of the peace movement in the last quarter of the twentieth century must grasp it fully.

As Le Duan formulated it:

"The possibility of preventing a world war being a real one, unlike formerly, peace is now considered by us a practical goal which we must struggle with might and main to reach, and not a mere fighting slogan put forward to mobilize the masses and make them advance forward and destroy imperialism. In this connection, the maintenance and consolidation of peace is a democratic task aimed at a concrete goal, which is the prevention of a new world war, and not yet aimed directly at eliminating imperialism. But from another point of view, that task is closely related to the annihilation of imperialism. For to defend peace and oppose a world war means to oppose the present fundamental policy of the imperialists. Staving off a new world war started by imperialism will cause imperialism many more difficulties which will sharpen its contradictions and create favourable conditions for the development of anti-imperialist revolution and the strengthening of the forces of the socialist countries in every respect. As the struggle against

the imperialist policy of war preparation is one directed against imperialism in an issue which concerns all nations, it can rally the broadest masses of the people; in the course of this struggle, we can gradually raise the consciousness of many people and turn their hatred for war into a hatred for imperialism, thereby creating conditions to advance toward the destruction of imperialism. . . . However, the opposition to aggressive war and the safeguarding of peace cannot by themselves eliminate imperialism. To wipe out imperialism still requires a revolutionary struggle of the world's people."³¹

With the emergence of the socialist camp the issue of peace between the socialist and imperialist countries (peaceful coexistence) objectively benefits socialism and the proletariat. Time is on the side of socialism. In each country in which the revolutionary proletariat firmly holds power, each passing year serves to strengthen the foundations of socialism. And taken as an international camp, the objective superiority of the socialist system in the material, scientific, and cultural realms becomes clearer with each passing decade.

In addition the shift in the world political balance of forces provides the basis to successfully prevent the imperialists from launching a third world war, since it is increasingly likely they would not win. The advent of nuclear weapons only underscores the urgency of preventing such a war, considering the enormous risks and expense to the world's working people even in the wake of a socialist victory.*

Last, and most important, the world's revolutionary forces do not require a world war to accomplish their goal of overthrowing imperialism step by step, in one country after another. In fact, as the political/military balance shifts *decisively* in favor of the international proletariat, some revolutions may be accomplished peacefully—without warfare.

The key particularity about the struggle for peace, however, is that, although linked to the revolutionary struggle to overthrow imperialism, it is a distinct and extremely pressing task facing the people of the world. It is essentially a broad, democratic struggle to oppose the most aggressive, adventurist elements of imperialist policy. This struggle, through the forging of the broadest possible, multi-class popular front, may make it possible to successfully maintain world peace even while imperialism still exists. Therefore the aim of the struggle for peace cannot be mechanically equated to the struggle against imperialism—even though it is only through the revolutionary overthrow of imperialism worldwide that a lasting peace can be guaranteed.

*Although a full-scale world war can be averted, the very nature of the struggle against imperialism means that more limited forms of war (civil war, wars of national liberation, etc.) cannot. This is one of the nagging and persistent "shades of difference" separating Marxism-Leninism from revisionism.

B. The Socialist Countries, the National Liberation Movements, and the Struggle for Nuclear Disarmament

While it is true that the mass movement in opposition to nuclear weapons which has re-emerged recently in the major capitalist countries plays an important role in the world struggle for peace, it is unfortunate—although not surprising—that a significant portion of this movement labors under the ethnocentric misconception that it is the lone standard-bearer for nuclear disarmament. Sad to say, much of the communist movement conciliates (or, what is the same thing, refuses to challenge) this chauvinistic, narrow and provincial viewpoint.

Therefore, any all sided analysis of the nuclear disarmament movement, should begin with a historical appreciation for the actual political role the national liberation movements and the socialist countries have consistently played in the struggle against the nuclear weapons build-up.

The national liberation movements have an obvious stake in nuclear disarmament. Imperialism's backing of repressive and colonial regimes remains one of the principal impediments to national liberation. In those areas of the world where the imperialist system is actually being dismembered, the threat of nuclear retaliation has been employed time and again—Korea, Cuba, Vietnam, the Middle East, etc.

But the nuclear disarmament movement in the imperialist countries has largely missed this point because its own generally pacifist orientation has not viewed the armed revolutions of oppressed peoples against imperialism as part of the "peace" forces. Pacifism, of course, is a luxury which the national liberation movements cannot afford. Imperialist violence, in both the forms of open warfare and day to day violence of the merciless oppression of the masses of the colonial and neo-colonial world, can only be countered by revolutionary violence. Any serious reflection makes clear the inescapable logic of the need for revolutionary armed struggle against imperialism. Yet many of the "peace forces" in the imperialist countries, sitting in hypocritical judgment against such "excesses," tend to view the national liberation movements as an illegitimate component of the peace movement.

Another thing which tends to bias the peace movement in the West against the liberation movements (besides the fact that they bear arms) is that they have taken sides between the U.S. and the USSR. Again the national liberation movements do not have the same political blind spot which allows for an "even-handed," "plague on both your houses" approach to the dangers of nuclear war. The nuclear weapons they face today, and have always faced, are those in the imperialist arsenal. Whatever protection against imperialism's nuclear blackmail they have enjoyed has come from the socialist, i.e., Soviet, nuclear arsenal. As a result, the national liberation movements conspicuously lack the "neu-

tral" approach to the question of nuclear weapons which characterizes the movement in the imperialist countries. The concrete situation the national liberation movements face provides them with a profoundly political approach to all questions relating to nuclear war, nuclear weapons, and nuclear disarmament. They know in the harshest terms where the real danger of war comes from.

For this reason, the encouragement of closer association between the mass nuclear disarmament movement in the developed capitalist countries and the national liberation movements will prove to be an important element in the political maturation of the former, however much its present leaders and spokespeople protest.

Similarly, the Soviet Union and the other socialist countries have an overwhelming stake in the nuclear disarmament movement and hence play a crucial role in it. It is the socialist countries, after all, who have been and continue to be the principal target of U.S. nuclear blackmail since the end of World War II—and none more than the Soviet Union. In this sense, the bourgeoisie's hysterical charge that ban-the-bomb movements objectively aid the Soviet Union is not completely without merit.

But it has been very difficult for the nuclear disarmament movement in the imperialist countries to grasp this point. The movement has been blinded not only by its pacifism, but also by its anti-Sovietism. Pacifism simply refuses to distinguish between offensive and defensive violence, and therefore can not get past the superficial fact that both the U.S. and the Soviet Union have atomic weapons. It therefore holds it only morally proper to target both nuclear powers with their demands for disarmament as though both were equally responsible for the threat of their use.

It is not hard to illustrate that in fact nuclear disarmament is disadvantageous to imperialism and advantageous to socialism, since imperialists have always enjoyed a nuclear edge and outlawing nuclear weapons clearly would have worked to the advantage of socialism. Of course, the Soviet leaders were not so foolish as to place the fate of socialism in the hoped for capacity of the mass disarmament movements in the imperialist countries to put a stop to the U.S. nuclear build-up. Instead, they took the much more realistic course of developing the Soviet Union's own nuclear capacity as a means of deterrence, recognizing that only when the USSR reached a point of rough nuclear parity with the U.S. could the U.S. imperialists be qualitatively checked from using nuclear weapons—by threat or in actuality.

The historical facts of the matter should be common knowledge within the ranks of the nuclear disarmament movement—which is unfortunately not the case. Nonetheless, if the anti-Sovietism prevalent in this movement stemmed merely from ignorance of the facts, our task would be relatively easy. However, the problem of recurring anti-Sovietism is rooted more deeply, politically and ideologically, in the failure to deal squarely with the fundamental nature and character of the socialist

system. Only when the internal logic of the socialist system is juxtaposed against that of imperialism does the essential role of the Soviet Union in relation to nuclear arms and nuclear war begin to come into focus. It is precisely because neither the basic class relations in the Soviet Union nor its relations with other countries are based on exploitation that it has no material basis in its economic life for launching wars of imperialist aggrandizement or of making use of nuclear weapons except to counter the nuclear threats of the imperialists.*

Today, Soviet policy on nuclear weapons is an affirmation of the basic Leninist understanding of the relation between war and politics. Present Soviet theory holds:

"... neither the nature of the modern era nor nuclear weapons have changed the position that *nuclear war, if the imperialists were able to unleash one, would be an extension of policy.* Those individuals who deny this are confusing the causes, essence, and social nature of the phenomenon with the expediency of using it as a means of achieving a political goal. . . .

"So long as there exist the economic bases for wars and a policy which is capable of generating a war, we cannot abandon a class evaluation of the functions of such a war, even though it exists only as a possibility. The great threat of war on the part of anti-socialist, primarily anti-Soviet, forces is an extension of reactionary imperialist policy and a war would be an extension of this policy, if a nuclear conflict were to break out."³²

Soviet policy proceeds from the view that nuclear war, as any other kind, will be launched only as an extension of politics. It is therefore based on the premise that so long as imperialism exists and has nuclear weapons, nuclear war is a distinct possibility for which adequate preparations must be made. Ultimately, imperialism's ability to maintain its rule depends on its capacity to maintain military superiority. In the present age, this means nuclear superiority. The international proletariat, in contrast, does not require nuclear weapons to achieve its class aims; in fact its political superiority over imperialism is not based principally on technologically superior weaponry.**

*Those who claim to be in the communist movement, and who accept in words the fact that the Soviet Union is a socialist country, but still insist on targetting both the U.S. and the USSR in the nuclear disarmament movement, either have failed to comprehend the nature of the socialist system or are opportunistically conciliating anti-Soviet and pacifist prejudices in order to "stay close" to (meaning tail behind) the masses.

**The strategic significance of high levels of technology cannot be denied. The class struggle will not be won simply with bare hands. But simply neutralizing the technological edge with which the imperialists enter the struggle is more than sufficient to tip the scales in favor of the proletariat. This was clearly the case in

(cont.)

From this point of view, Soviet nuclear strategy is fundamentally *defensive*—it aims to prevent the imperialists from launching a nuclear war. The political expression of this strategy is the policy of peaceful coexistence between states with different social systems. But peaceful coexistence is not a relation into which the imperialists enter willingly. In this sense, the material foundation for peaceful coexistence rests completely in the capacity of the socialist countries to match imperialism's military strength: in short, a state of nuclear parity.

Thus, for the Soviets nuclear parity is the absolutely necessary foundation for the struggle with the imperialists for nuclear disarmament. It would be foolhardy to expect success under any conditions short of such a state. Once we grasp this fact we can understand why the Soviet Union and other socialist countries struggle to be in the forefront of the international movement for nuclear disarmament and why they must be viewed as an integral part of that movement.

The Soviet position has been matched in practice by its history of proposals for a program of mutually balanced, verifiable reductions of nuclear arsenals. Throughout the 1970s, after the USSR had achieved nuclear parity with the U.S. *and long before the imperialists were advancing phony claims of U.S. inferiority or "windows of vulnerability,"* the Soviet Union time and again put forward concrete plans for nuclear disarmament.

At almost every session of the UN General Assembly, in public speeches, and in direct bilateral proposals to the U.S., the Soviet Union has proposed mutual bans on the testing of nuclear weapons, mutual bans on the development and manufacture of new nuclear weapons, mutual reductions of stockpiles of nuclear warheads and their means of delivery, and mutual reductions in military budgets.

In 1976, the Soviet Union submitted to the UN a memorandum on "Questions of Ending the Arms Race and of Disarmament" which stated:

"The Soviet Union has always favored the banning of nuclear weapons and their exclusion from the arsenals of States. . . It worked for this when nuclear weapons had just appeared. . . Now that nuclear weapons have grown into a huge complex of types. . . the problem of eliminating them has become much more difficult. But it can be solved in the present situation. The first thing necessary for this purpose is to stop the arms race, that is to stop manufacturing nuclear weapons. . . developing and constructing new models and types of such weapons. At the same time. . . reductions in the stockpiles of nuclear weapons should commence."³³

Vietnam where the U.S. certainly had more advanced weapons than did the Vietnamese. On the other hand, thanks to aid from the socialist countries, the technological gap was not insurmountable and the superior *political* forces of the Vietnamese were able to prevail.

In November, 1977, on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the Bolshevik revolution, *long before U.S. imperialism was promoting its myth of Soviet nuclear superiority,* Soviet President Leonid Brezhnev declared in a speech to the 25th congress of the CPSU:

"The Soviet Union proposes a radical step: that agreement be reached on a simultaneous halt in the production of nuclear weapons. This could apply to all such weapons—whether atomic, hydrogen or neutron bombs or missiles. At the same time, the nuclear powers could undertake to start the gradual reduction of existing stockpiles of such weapons and move towards their complete, total destruction."³⁴

Similarly, it is only necessary to recall that it was the U.S. and not the Soviet Union which refused to ratify the SALT II agreement and that it was the Soviet Union which less than three months ago (June 15, 1982) publicly pledged at the UN special Session on Disarmament that it would not be the first to initiate the use of nuclear weapons, a pledge which the U.S. explicitly refused to match.

Whether the imperialists will be forced to accept parity (and ultimately a process of nuclear disarmament) or will instead proceed with their desperate attempt to upset the nuclear balance is not yet a settled question. Until it is settled, though, the Soviet Union must at the very least keep pace with all efforts by the U.S. to break parity. Nor can the Soviet Union assume that parity alone will guarantee that the imperialists will never gamble with nuclear war. As a result, the Soviet Union cannot view "parity" as a *state of rest*. On the contrary, maintaining parity requires ongoing scientific/technological research and development, combined with the utmost military vigilance and foresight.*

This point was underscored by Soviet defense Minister Ustinov who warned the U.S.:

*Socialism, of course, has no inherent need for nuclear weapons, nor for war technology more generally. Rather, its military requirements are imposed by the class struggle with the imperialists who are of necessity armed to the teeth with the most sophisticated and deadly weapons available. Since the scientific and technical work needed to develop such weapons unfolds according to its own distinct laws, the Soviet Union is forced to maintain active research and development efforts simply to keep up with imperialist advances in this field. After all, the U.S. imperialists obviously have no intention of sharing their scientific findings in nuclear weapons technology with the USSR. They jealously guard such information even from their own allies! Should the imperialists manage to gain advantage even for a short period the effect on socialism would be devastating. Knowing their edge could never last too long, the imperialists would be under intense pressure to take full advantage of their superior weaponry to wipe as much of socialism as possible off the face of the earth. With such stakes, it is in no way surprising that the USSR continues to direct a substantial portion of its resources into research and development which will keep it at the frontiers of weapons development.

“... the pre-emptive use of nuclear weapons would not insure victory. With modern detection systems and the combat readiness of the Soviet Union's strategic nuclear forces, the U.S. would not be able to deal a crippling blow to the socialist countries. The aggressor will not be able to evade an all-crushing retaliatory strike.”³⁵

The phenomenon of a seemingly “aggressive” Soviet program to maintain parity is a difficult riddle for the nuclear disarmament movement in the West to understand. And in fact it is impossible to get at the truth without grasping the underlying nature of imperialism and the brutal historical record of death and destruction associated with its long, long list of wars. Only when the essential politics of the nuclear war question are clear does it become possible to grasp the dialectic behind the superficial contradictions in Soviet practice. Appearances might lead one to ask, how the Soviets can be firm about their intention to maintain parity with the U.S. in the development of nuclear weapons, while at the same time be sincere in their proposals and intentions to engage in nuclear disarmament? How the Soviet Union can engage in an ambitious program of weapons development and at the same time maintain that it has neither the need nor the intention of ever using these weapons unless in self-defense? In short, how can the Soviet “war machine” be one of the most decisive elements in the struggle for peace!

Of course, many of the liberal figures active in the nuclear disarmament movement in the imperialist countries may never be able to completely solve the riddle of the role of the Soviet Union. But if this broad popular front for peace is to effectively accomplish its goals, the working class component must constitute its backbone. And the revolutionary core of this class must be absolutely clear and firm on the role of the Soviet Union. If it is not, it will prove unable to assume political leadership of the nuclear disarmament front and to transform it into an effective instrument for peace.

C. The Mass Nuclear Disarmament Movement in the U.S.

With millions of people marching behind its banners, the anti-nuke movement seems broad and mighty indeed. The obvious strength of the broad disarmament movement makes it quite easy for the relatively small and weak U.S. communist movement to stand in awe of it. The temptation to put the anti-nuke movement on a pedestal is further strengthened by the fact this movement arose in direct response to the drive of U.S. imperialism to upset the present nuclear balance. Since the disarmament movement is trying to halt this U.S. nuclear build-up, it objectively plays a progressive role.

We undoubtedly have much to learn from this movement; yet we have even more to bring to it. Left to its own spontaneous path of development, the nuclear disarmament movement is bound to come more and more under the sway of bourgeois politics. It will take conscious political

activity to push it off this path, and unfortunately such work is well beyond the present capacity of the U.S. communist movement. But surely half the battle is a sober, frank, and thoroughgoing analysis of the political tasks before us.

The dominant politics which presently lead the U.S. anti-nuke movement are thoroughly bourgeois and politically backward. As a result, although the front is broad, it is unstable and extremely vulnerable to political confusion and manipulation by the bourgeoisie. The essence of the bourgeois line is a denial of the inseparable link between the threat of nuclear war and the crisis of the imperialist system. This set of politics is crystalized in three prominent positions within the movement: first, the insistence on targetting the Soviet Union as an equal source of the peril of nuclear war; second, the refusal to link demands for nuclear disarmament with the overall U.S. war build-up and intervention in other countries, especially (at the moment) El Salvador; third, the resistance to drawing political links between the massive war preparations and attacks on the working class, especially the racist assault on its minority sections.

The net effect of this set of politics is successfully to hide the class contradictions which frame the nuclear war question. As a result, it serves the class interests of the bourgeoisie and renders the anti-nuke movement “manageable” and harmless in any fundamental political sense.

Because these lines have such serious implications for the future of the broad disarmament movement, it is essential that we examine the various guises they appear in and the specific ways they affect the movement's politics.

The first major issue is the role of the USSR. The failure of the leading forces in this movement to see the Soviet Union as a political force whose nuclear arsenal is qualitatively different from that of U.S. imperialism is not a simple “oversight” which can be corrected easily by a short discussion of historical facts. On the contrary, it is fundamentally the reflection of a bourgeois class view which ultimately has little concern for the struggle against imperialism or for the defense of socialism.

There are some who have managed to concoct relatively sophisticated rationalizations of this backward line. They may argue, for example, that targetting both the Soviet Union and the U.S. has the supposed virtue of “evenhandedness.” It can surely do no harm, they might add, since the USSR already favors a freeze and nuclear disarmament. But in the long run such a line still leads to the same place politically as the more blatant denial of the inherently aggressive nature of imperialism. Moreover, it sets the stage for the political disorientation of the mass movement since every imperialist explanation to justify its nuclear arms build-up is ultimately based on the ideological assumption of the legitimacy of checking Soviet initiative. Such a line thus leaves the movement

politically defenseless against imperialist claims that its build-up is purely defensive, caused by a Soviet threat. It leaves the masses prone to the confusion generated by the bourgeoisie's use of irrelevant technical arguments. In sum, it surrenders the task of training the masses to understand why the real danger of nuclear war emanates from U.S. imperialism. Worse, such a line may actually fuel the very program of militarization and nuclear build-up that it ostensibly opposes, insofar as it contributes to the imperialist ideological assault on the Soviet Union.

The second major issue is the question of whether or not the U.S. nuclear build-up is an integral aspect of broader imperialist policy. In general, the dominant outlook of the nuclear disarmament movement is to avoid introducing such "extraneous" and potentially "divisive" positions regarding U.S. intervention abroad since certain supporters of a nuclear freeze or disarmament may not be prepared to oppose U.S. policies in various parts of the world. Hence this position narrows the movement's scope to opposition to a very specific type of war, i.e. nuclear war. But to separate the threat of nuclear war from the very policies it is designed to enforce, or to make no political distinction between U.S. military intervention in defense of imperialism and counter-revolution on the one hand and Soviet intervention in defense of socialism and proletarian revolution on the other, is once again a bourgeois view of the political realities which frame the nuclear issue.

A more sophisticated version of the same line is to oppose "intervention" *in general*. This version equates U.S. military support for counter-revolution and neocolonialism in the Middle East or El Salvador with the Soviet Union's support of national liberation and socialism in Afghanistan and Poland. The ultimate liberal version of this position drops out this question altogether. Instead, it adopts a political agnosticism which conveniently skirts these knotty questions by arguing simply (or simplistically) that we should target U.S. intervention *because we live in the U.S.!*

This backward political line totally obscures the historical fact that virtually every incident of U.S. nuclear blackmail against the socialist camp has been linked to U.S. intervention against the efforts of proletarian-led forces to wrench their country out of the imperialist orbit and to build and consolidate the socialist system. Frankly, the real problem facing the imperialists is that the "Iron Curtain" of socialism keeps expanding and thus constricting their field of operation.

An even more insidious aspect of this political line is its potential for compromising the movement should the imperialists shift a good part of their military build-up from nuclear to conventional weapons. Here the appeals to racism and national chauvinism are particularly significant, since nuclear holocaust would destroy the "civilized" countries, whereas the blood-stained streets of Beirut or napalmed villages in El Salvador are easier to objectify on the evening news (in a comfortable chair and

with a full stomach). Besides, a conventional military build-up will create more jobs for Americans than will the high-technology nuclear weapons programs.

The third major issue is whether or not the present nuclear arms build-up will be separated from the domestic social austerity program conspicuously directed against people of color in the United States. The leading forces of the nuclear disarmament movement argue that the campaign against nuclear weapons cannot undertake to be an all-purpose political effort that takes up all of the various interests of its respective constituencies. If we take up the struggle against racism, they say, we should by the same logic take up the demands of the women's movement, of gays, of the trade union movement, etc.

On one level, this argument is alluring. Mass movements and political campaigns must focus their attention on particular questions and cannot become eclectic catch-alls for addressing every political, economic, and social cause in the spectrum. But there is a *particularity* to the struggle against racism which is unmistakably linked to the general imperialist offensive, and in particular to the drive to escalate the arms race and regain nuclear superiority for U.S. imperialism. What the nuclear disarmament movement must ask itself is this: Upon whose backs do the imperialists intend to mainly foist their new war machine? What sections of the U.S. population can make the clearest links between their current hardships and the expansion of the imperialist war preparations? Looked at in this light, the racist, anti-working class edge to the politics of the current U.S. military build-up can hardly be equated to a long list of diverse political concerns which may be legitimate in their own right (such as ecological issues, consumer rights, etc.) but which are extraneous to the struggle for nuclear disarmament.

The political obscurantism which surrounds this particular issue is at root thoroughly racist and bourgeois. It reflects the unwillingness of the non-proletarian elements (a few bourgeois, but mainly petit bourgeois) within the anti-nuke movement to deal squarely with the political fact that not all classes of U.S. society pay equally for the imperialist war machine which for generations has periodically swept up hundreds of thousands of working class youth who have provided the cannon fodder for imperialism's wars while the rest of the class makes the requisite sacrifices to provide the means of their destruction. Nor do these bourgeois elements grasp that the prospects for that "life" which nuclear war would destroy, are far less bright for the working class than for themselves.

Insensitive as these bourgeois elements may be to the real conditions of the working class as a whole, however, they are even more blinded to the fact that attacks on the U.S. working class are thoroughly "color coded," with the harshest blows being reserved for the minority sections. Even so, if the racism within the nuclear disarmament movement

is without basis. The elimination of private property and the large scale socialization of production which provides the material basis for the socialist mode of production just as surely undermines the class position of the petit bourgeoisie as it destroys that of the bourgeoisie. Not surprisingly, socialism tends not to be viewed as an attractive alternative. As a result, this class finds great difficulty in distinguishing socialism from imperialism and the Soviet Union from the United States.

Historically, the most progressive expression of the politics of the petit bourgeoisie in the nuclear disarmament and peace movements has been pacifism. The pacifist movement is long on morality and short on grasping the harsh political realities that frame the issues with which it concerns itself. On the issue of nuclear war, it fetishizes the weapons regardless of who holds them. Tactically, it relies on moral outrage and symbolic protest. Such an orientation is the hallmark of the petit bourgeoisie and is, in many ways, a political luxury stemming from its class position in society.

Nor does the working class come into the nuclear disarmament movement united behind a single ideology or political perspective. In fact, and at the risk of making what might appear to some to be a heretical admission for a communist journal, a number of the most influential political forces standing at the right hand of the bourgeoisie in the nuclear disarmament movement come from the ranks of the working class, in particular, most of those who function as official representatives of the trade union movement.

To be sure, these union leaders must be distinguished from the top echelon of the AFL-CIO, which firmly backs the bourgeoisie's efforts to regain nuclear superiority over the Soviet Union. On the other hand, the social base of most of these anti-nuke trade union officials is not qualitatively different from the social base of the AFL-CIO generally. They, too, function as the representatives of the labor aristocracy and have not, by and large, broken from the U.S. trade union movement's legacy of defense of imperialism and the politics of anticommunism and anti-Sovietism. They, too, aspire to be seen as the "patriotic" spokesmen for U.S. labor while representing the more liberal wing of the reactionary, social-imperialist trend which dominates the politics of the U.S. working class.

While Lane Kirkland and other leading figures in the AFL-CIO function as the direct allies of the formulators of Reagan's foreign policy,*most anti-nuke trade union leaders are more closely aligned with the politics represented by Kennedy, Mondale and Bundy & Co. They also function thoroughly within the framework of bourgeois ideology and share with the liberal bourgeoisie the perspective of reviving the fortunes

*Kirkland is a founding member and co-chair of the Committee on the Present Danger, the foremost foreign policy lobbying organization which has promoted the U.S. attempt to regain nuclear superiority.

of the Democratic Party as the political instrument through which "their" section of the working class can continue to negotiate the best possible terms for its support to the imperialist system overall. As such, they tend to view the commotion around nuclear weapons as a useful means for building political momentum toward that goal.*

Closely associated with this sector of the trade union movement is modern social democracy, a relatively coherent political trend in the nuclear disarmament movement which intersects both the labor movement and a number of the other movements and sectors from the petit bourgeoisie. Modern social democracy, represented in the U.S. particularly by the newly formed Democratic Socialist Alliance (DSA) headed by Michael Harrington and such trade union leaders as William Winpisinger of the International Association of Machinists, has attempted to distinguish itself from the thoroughly compromised old-line social democrats who backed the U.S. war in Vietnam and who today are among the supporters of the most reactionary sectors of the bourgeoisie. As such, they have begun to challenge, with some measure of success, the CPUSA's claim to be the "left wing of labor."

Without losing sight of this tendency's political differences with more orthodox expressions of social democracy and with the main leaders of the AFL-CIO, modern social democracy can be viewed as left wing only in the most relative sense—that is, relative to the dominant political line of the trade union movement and to the weakness of the communists. Under a left "socialist" cover, this tendency conciliates the more blatant expressions of the social-imperialist trend in the organized labor movement. It comes into the nuclear disarmament movement consolidated around anticommunism (which it sometimes describes as anti-Leninism or anti-Stalinism) and consistently lines up with those forces who refuse to defend the socialist camp or the Soviet Union on the nuclear war issue—or any other issue, for that matter.

Its attempts to get socialism (reasonable, "democratic" socialism) into the mainstream of U.S. life are characterized by watering socialism down to the point where the word means little more than a "socialist perspective" toward cautious reform work. Far from setting an anti-imperialist pole in the nuclear disarmament movement, our erstwhile "socialists" remain silent on the question of imperialism, preferring to prattle on about the so-called "legitimate" vital defense needs of the United States! No sacrifice of the proletariat's interests is great enough to hinder the pursuit of their elusive goal of "recapturing" patriotism from the New Right and "redirecting" it toward the left. In addition,

* For a full theoretical and political elaboration of the material base and political expression of the labor aristocracy, see *The Labor Aristocracy: The Material Basis for Opportunism in the Labor Movement*, in *Line of March* #11 and in this issue.

social democracy's base within the petit bourgeoisie and more stable, aristocratic layers of the working class makes it an extremely vacillating and unreliable "socialist" ally in the struggle against racism and the need to link the present war build-up to the assault upon minority communities.

As indicated earlier, the nuclear disarmament issue has not yet become a burning question among the deeper, less stable sections of the working class and minority communities, to the same extent that it has among the white, middle class sections of the population. One important cause of this phenomenon is the weight of more immediate problems, especially among the Black and minority sectors of the working class. As a result, these sectors are currently under-represented within the active anti-nuke movement, both in numbers and political influence.

The greatest promise for shifting the politics of the nuclear disarmament movement in a left, anti-imperialist direction lies in the more active participation of forces from the Black community. This section of the U.S. population has the material basis to make all the necessary political linkages between the threat of nuclear war and imperialism; it has the fewest illusions about U.S. imperialism's capacity for brutality and aggression at home and abroad; it comprehends most clearly who is paying the most, in human terms, for the current U.S. military build-up; and it is the most open-minded about re-examining and challenging the myths and ignorance among the U.S. masses concerning socialism and the Soviet Union.

This assertion is not simply a theoretical proposition. It has already been evidenced in the political motion internal to the nuclear disarmament movement. Within the broad coalition organizing the massive June 12 demonstration, it was the largely minority Third World and Progressive Peoples Coalition (TWPPC) which advanced the most consistent anti-imperialist politics targetting the U.S. as the source of the war danger and linking the demand for nuclear disarmament with opposition to U.S. intervention and the struggle against racism. As well, certain trade union forces who played a progressive role within the June 12 Rally Committee, such as Local 1199 of the Hospital Workers and District 65 (retail and warehouse workers affiliated with the UAW), have their chief organizational base among minority workers.*

Much remains to be done. The social base most receptive to an anti-imperialist line on the question of nuclear disarmament has yet to be drawn fully into this movement. In fact, the dialectic of the political line struggle between a bourgeois/pacifist approach and a more pronounced anti-imperialist approach within the anti-nuke movement will determine in many ways how consciously and successfully the nuclear dis-

*Of course, these unions come out of a left tradition, reflecting the lasting legacy of communist influence in the trade union movement and the weaker base for anticommunism among minority workers.

armament movement directs its attention toward the U.S. working class in general and minority communities in particular.

Setting a firm anti-imperialist pole in the nuclear disarmament movement is a responsibility first and foremost of the conscious element—the communist vanguard—to which we now turn our attention.

The Task and Role of Communists Within the Nuclear Disarmament Movement

In a spiral fashion, we return to where we began this analysis with the following assertion: the success or failure of the nuclear disarmament movement will be determined by whether the working class, *firmly united on anti-imperialist politics*, is able, step by step, to move to the center, maintain the political initiative and take the leadership of this broad front. This assertion would be self-evident to a mature communist movement. Unfortunately, it is not nearly so obvious to our movement, particularly in view of our negative legacy of sterile dogmatism, which has all too often substituted assertion for concrete analysis. Let us, then, explicitly trace its political logic.

The laws of development of the nuclear disarmament movement flow from the fact that it is fundamentally a spontaneously generated popular front of different class forces united in the struggle to maintain peace and prevent a nuclear world war. Obviously, this is a pressing concern that goes beyond the working class; the stakes are high for all of humanity. However, the differing perceptions of how this goal can be achieved reflect the different class interests and outlooks of the forces who comprise this popular front. Each class represented within the front tries to unfold a line and program for the achievement of this limited and concrete political goal consistent with its more long range class interests. The nuclear disarmament movement, therefore, is not automatically an anti-imperialist movement. Indeed, there is nothing in the logic of the movement that precludes supporters of imperialism from being part of it.

Yet not all classes are equal in their capacity to grasp the objective historical trend unfolding in the twentieth century. The politics beneath the threat of nuclear warfare are completely bound up with the fundamental antagonism of our epoch—the struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, crystalized in the struggle between imperialism and socialism worldwide. As we have demonstrated, the nuclear disarmament movement will be built on political quicksand if it does not come to grasp this point; it will be open to the manipulation of the bourgeoisie, at the real risk of a nuclear catastrophe. Therefore, the long term strength of this broad popular front must be gauged by the extent to which anti-imperialist politics gain influence within it.

This is why the assertion that the working class *must* become the leading core of this popular front is not merely a restatement of some abstract communist "principle." Rather it is the concrete political

analysis that only the working class has the objective material basis to *fully embrace* anti-imperialist politics. Consequently, any substantial growth of an anti-imperialist orientation within the anti-nuke movement will be linked to the increased prominence of the working class within that movement.

Working class leadership is not defined sociologically. Essentially it is defined by political line—in this instance, a consistent and thoroughgoing line on the question of the threat of nuclear war. As has been proven time and again (especially in the U.S.), representatives from the working class at the helm of a struggle in no way guarantee that proletarian politics are in command. Certainly today, the official representatives of the U.S. labor movement, taken as a whole, do not bring to the nuclear disarmament movement anything that could be remotely considered thoroughgoing anti-imperialist politics. Therefore, precisely stated, setting an anti-imperialist pole within the nuclear disarmament movement is the political activity which objectively expresses the class interest of the working class and thereby serves as a political magnet for working class elements.

Thus identifying the essence of what constitutes proletarian politics in this movement brings us to the decisive role of communists. Although spontaneous anti-imperialist sentiments abound in the mass movement, they are scattered and fragmented—not systematic and all-sided. (This of course is not to deny the fact that presently in the United States the anti-imperialist intuitions and “common sense” of many non-communists often put to shame the frequently muddled and vacillating “communists” who labor under a variety of opportunist lines and trot them out in the mass movements.) However, only the science of Marxism-Leninism, meticulously brought to bear on the complex motion of politics—internationally and domestically—can unearth the central struggle against imperialism which lies beneath the controversies surrounding the nuclear disarmament question. The working class will *not* arrive at such an analysis spontaneously. This is precisely the contribution of communists, our essential historical function and significance.

The communist movement is not in any direct sense the outgrowth of the spontaneous class struggle. It is rather the conscious theoretical and practical expression of the proletariat's historical impulse to organize society's economic and social life on the basis of its own class interests—an impulse which, left at the level of spontaneity, cannot be realized. The struggle to seize political power from the international bourgeoisie and consciously establish a distinct mode of production can only succeed when it is informed and guided by the most advanced scientific outlook and method. In short, the communist movement in any particular country comes into being (and ultimately matures into a vanguard party)

on the basis of the international proletariat's need for theory, leadership, and organization in the course of its struggle for power.

Unfortunately, this dialectic between the communist movement and the working class has become seriously distorted among U.S. communists. A combination of pragmatism and theoretical stagnation reflected variously in reformism and infantile leftism has damaged the mass perception of communists and their role in the class struggle. This problem, and its rectification, is first and foremost internal to the communist movement. Yet the basic dialectic remains; the mass movements in the U.S. will continue to be politically and ideologically hampered and retarded to the extent the communist movement fails to rectify its theory, political line and practice.

Obviously the task facing U.S. Marxist-Leninists in setting a clear anti-imperialist pole within the nuclear disarmament movement would be urgent and difficult enough even if our communist movement were relatively strong and united. But this challenge is doubly difficult in light of the sorry state of our movement today, yet another vivid demonstration of the fact that everywhere we turn there is no escaping the party building task—the struggle to reunite U.S. Marxist-Leninists on the basis of an advanced political line. Ironically, therefore, our effort to unite as communists must begin with a struggle among ourselves. This phenomenon, which non-communists often find puzzling in the practice of communists, is the hallmark of the Leninist conception that the conscious element can only function as a revolutionary vanguard when it is united around revolutionary politics rooted in the most advanced scientific theory. This approach to communist unity, which inevitably requires sharp struggle among the revolutionary forces, must be renewed in our movement—though of course not in the caricatured, infantile Maoist form so familiar to us from the recent past. The various political lines advanced by communists in the nuclear disarmament movement certainly bear this out.

Undoubtedly, the most reactionary line presently advanced under the banner of communism is the Maoist analysis. Anti-Sovietism is so central to the Maoist worldview that its followers can barely participate in the nuclear disarmament movement. But when they do they can be counted on to conciliate the anti-Sovietism of the most backward forces, supporting all attempts to divert the movement from targetting U.S. imperialism as the source of the war danger by equating (or even emphasizing) the mounting “threat”—whether of nuclear arms or “intervention”—posed by the Soviet Union. Thus, the Maoists classically fulfill the role of opportunism by bringing the politics of the bourgeoisie into the heart of the workers' movement, where the imperialists have a difficult time representing themselves directly.*

*At this point, little more need be said to or about the Maoists. The class collaboration of diehard Maoists has effectively placed them outside the
(cont.)

A more formidable opportunism entering the mass movement under the guise of Marxism-Leninism takes the form of centrism. Our centrists have become the main standard bearers of "left" opportunism within the anti-nuke movement. Although they have broken with the grossest political expressions of Maoism's class collaboration, they have retained its fundamental assumptions and prejudices—especially about the Soviet Union and the socialist camp. In the formal political sense, these forces support the line of directing the movement's demands at U.S. imperialism. Yet at the same time, they completely surrender the ideological struggle against anticommunism and anti-Sovietism in the movement. Consequently they prove incapable of setting a firm and consistent anti-imperialist pole, but in fact conciliate the movement's more backward forces by basing their anti-U.S. position solely on technical data, empirical arguments, and other politically trivial justifications—*anything* to avoid placing squarely before the mass movement the fact that the aggressive role of the U.S. cannot be separated from the question of imperialism and the struggle for socialism. The struggle against imperialism cannot be fully understood apart from the worldwide struggle for socialism, nor can this international class struggle be analyzed concretely in historical materialist terms without dealing with the central role of the Soviet Union—most especially on this question of the threat of nuclear war.

We would expect political backwardness and ideological vacillation to exist in the mass movement on this question. However, when such equivocation dresses itself up as Marxism we must pursue the differences relentlessly. Probably the most widely broadcast version of this centrist line is advanced by the *Guardian* newspaper.

In a special issue published and distributed at the mass nuclear disarmament demonstration on June 12, the *Guardian* advanced its politics this way:

"Because the U.S. has been the main instigator of the nuclear arms race, has threatened to use nuclear weapons and developed plans for prolonged nuclear war, and has a technological edge over the Soviet Union in nuclear weapons technology, we argue that the aim of left and progressive forces should be unilateral U.S. disarmament as the first step in reversing the arms race. While the Soviet Union has intervened militarily against neighboring countries, and at times has placed its own narrow national interests above the interests of progressive forces, it is the U.S. that is far more likely to instigate a nuclear war."³⁷

communist movement, without a sufficient basis of unity with Marxism-Leninism even to conduct struggle. And in a practical sense their political prospects are not bright. Their trend has collapsed internationally and is in an advanced stage of fratricidal war and demoralization in the U.S. Even the U.S. bourgeoisie is not using them for the political "services" they are willing to render—the imperialists have far more skillful and influential anti-Soviet ideologists at their command.

A few points are particularly important to underscore in this comment because it helps to illustrate concretely how centrism functions to keep opportunism alive in the communist movement and the mass movement even while adopting a formally correct political line. First is the characterization of the U.S. as "the *main* instigator of the nuclear arms race," a formulation which immediately raises the question of another, *secondary* instigator besides the U.S. Given the main thrust of imperialist propaganda, the identity of that "other" instigator, of course, is hardly a secret even if the *Guardian* diplomatically chooses not to name names. So to begin with, the *Guardian* surrenders the central ideological struggle without a fight. And even by straightforward factual standards, the *Guardian's* implication is completely inaccurate. U.S. imperialism, flanked by its imperialist allies, has always been the *only* instigator of the nuclear arms race.

More importantly, our Marxist-Leninist colleagues at the *Guardian* have failed to link the threat of nuclear war to the clash of social systems. Nowhere in the entire article does the *Guardian* identify the Soviet Union as a socialist country, much less do they venture forth with the provocative notion that socialism operates under distinct internal laws of development different from capitalism and has no objective basis for war and aggression—including nuclear war. As a result, the *Guardian's* vacillation on this central question forces it to obscure the fact (though generally they hold "the facts" so dear) that the Soviet Union for the past 35 years has consistently advanced the most serious proposals for curbing nuclear testing and reducing nuclear arsenals.

The real problem, of course, is that the *Guardian* still refuses to surrender the Maoist category of "Soviet social-imperialism," although it has judiciously chosen to drop it officially from its printed vocabulary. The Soviet Union is merely viewed as the inconvenient sparring partner of the U.S. imperialist heavyweight—just as much a bully but not quite as much a force to be dealt with directly. These politics are contained in the *Guardian's* off-hand and superficial assertion that the Soviet Union, like the U.S., invades neighboring countries and tramples on their national interests. (This clearly refers to events in Poland and Afghanistan, the concrete analyses of which we have disputed with the *Guardian* on a number of occasions in the past.)*

*Another, more curious example of where the blinders of anti-Sovietism can lead is provided by the *Theoretical Review (TR)* which boldly argues that nuclear parity is a myth and that "the U.S. has overwhelming superiority in weapons systems."³⁸ Much like Trotskyism in the 1930s, *TR* is locked into this misassessment by its view that "Stalinism" has so crippled scientific and intellectual life in the Soviet Union that the USSR is simply incapable of matching the U.S. technologically. The Soviet Union's own assertion (and the imperialist's implicit admission) that approximate parity exists is airily dismissed by our Althusserian scholars as little more than Soviet "propaganda for

Another opportunist expression of centrism in the communist movement is the line which holds that the *real* U.S. nuclear threat is aimed at the peoples of the "third world" and not the Soviet Union and the socialist camp. This is the position advanced by the Communist Workers Party (CWP), which, despite its abandonment of the capitalist restoration thesis, remains wedded to Maoism and the "two superpowers" framework. What the CWP and the *Guardian* have in common is the tendency to drop the Soviet Union out of the picture and to see the anti-imperialist struggle solely in the framework of the anti-colonial national liberation movements. The CWP agrees that the U.S. should be the main target of the U.S. nuclear disarmament movement, but on the narrow ground that this is the particular "responsibility" of the people of this country, thus surrendering the struggle against anti-Sovietism. The CWP completes the logic of its centrist position with the assertion that "For minorities in the U.S. the question of nuclear disarmament has a special dimension, for the U.S. has used or threatened the use of nuclear weapons almost exclusively at third world countries." (*Workers Viewpoint*, June 10, 1982)

internal consumption." The need for such a propaganda trick is explained this way: "The Soviet party is, after all, caught in the economist trap of promoting the idea that the road to communism is through the development of productive forces. Thus a wide-scale knowledge of the degree of Soviet inferiority in most areas of high technology could threaten the legitimacy of the regime." This viewpoint's departure from reality is further demonstrated by the convoluted argument that "successive [U.S.] administrations have been maintaining a clear advantage in strategic weapons as a way of forcing the Soviets to ratify, through negotiations, the existing U.S. superiority in military and political power. Both this strategy and U.S. technological superiority appear to be permanent features of the arms race."

Who is forcing whom to do what? Have the U.S. maneuvers around SALT I and II really been from a position of unquestionable strength? Are the Soviets really being held hostage to U.S. nuclear superiority in the 1980s? More pointedly, why is it that it was the U.S., not the Soviet Union, that rejected SALT II if such negotiated treaties are designed to "ratify" an already existing Soviet inferiority in weapons? Must the mass movement, in addition to the distortions of the bourgeois press, also suffer "Marxists" spreading such confusion and double talk?

What the *Theoretical Review* seems to have forgotten is that there is an imperialist crisis flowing directly from the shift in the world balance of forces, of which the Soviet achievement of nuclear parity is a central component. The inability of U.S. imperialism to shape the course of world events throughout the 1970s simply makes no sense if U.S. military and political superiority over the Soviet Union has characterized the international relation of forces in the past decade. How ironic that these staunch opponents of "dogmatism" should become prisoners of their own dogmatic anti-Sovietism which prevents them from making even the most basic objective assessment of the Soviet Union and therefore of the political realities of the world!

When this line is held by those posturing as "communists," it is usually at the service of the most despicable opportunism, for it is intended to conciliate nationalist sentiments among Blacks and other minority anti-imperialists who tend to view the national liberation movements of Africa, Asia, and Latin America as the only *real* revolutionary struggles in the world. The nationalist outlook resists grappling with the historical fact that the underlying *universal* struggle for socialism determines which of these liberation movements actually succeed, consolidate, and advance; even when nationalists accept the notion of socialism, they insist on searching for some kind of "African" socialism, "Asian" socialism or "Latin American" socialism. The net effect of this set of politics is to deny the integral practical and theoretical link between the national liberation struggles and existing socialism, thereby obscuring the political realities which frame the struggle against imperialism in Africa, Asia and Latin America today. This particular line is held by a large number of non-communists within the anti-imperialist ranks and is difficult to struggle against—a struggle which is doubly compounded when the same incorrect line attempts to announce itself as some version of "Marxism-Leninism."

Of course, there were very real phenomena which will continue to reproduce this erroneous line within the mass movement. Certainly the system of imperialism presses down hardest on the peoples of Africa, Asia, and Latin America, where its brutality can be seen most clearly in the eyes of the malnourished children, heard most clearly in the groans of the workers and peasants. And certainly the struggle against imperialism continues to be the fiercest in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, demonstrating that the colonial and neo-colonial world has been the weak link in the world capitalist system over the past decades. Finally, it is undoubtedly true that the imperialists have threatened and will continue to pose the possible use of nuclear weapons and nuclear war, precisely at those junctures when other sections of Africa, Asia, or Latin America appear to be successfully breaking out of the imperialist orbit.

However, this reality should not be invoked to obscure or trivialize in the slightest the very real danger of nuclear war facing the other two detachments of the international proletariat—in the socialist and imperialist countries.

Virtually the entire U.S. nuclear arsenal is aimed at the socialist camp, the Soviet Union in particular. This is no accident or idle threat, nor can it be reduced to the level of a mere tactic designed to divert world attention while imperialism directs its "real" attacks against national liberation struggles. No, the imperialists are dead serious about their threat and absolutely clearheaded about their choice of targets. The U.S. nuclear threat to the Soviet Union is imperialism's bottom line in the international class struggle. Its aim is to prevent, where possible, Soviet military aid to revolutionary struggles that might result in an expansion

of the socialist camp, as well as to tie up a substantial portion of the Soviet national surplus into weapons and defense, thereby distorting and slowing down its own internal development and narrowing its capacity to extend economic assistance in the development of other socialist and non-aligned nations.

Clearly the U.S. does not require an expansion of its present nuclear arsenal merely to intimidate national liberation movements. It already has ample weaponry for that purpose. But unless it can gain nuclear superiority over the Soviet Union so that it retains the *ultimate* edge in every confrontation, the entire imperialist strategy for defense of the system as a whole will be built on quicksand.

The nuclear threat to the revolutionary proletariat of imperialist countries also goes beyond the obvious danger of total annihilation in the event of a full blown nuclear war. This is particularly difficult to grasp when only the U.S. working class is looked at, but comes into much sharper focus in relation to the proletariat of Western Europe. The U.S. has used the threat of a nuclear attack on the Soviet Union in connection with the Berlin crisis and the revolutionary struggles in the Balkans immediately after World War II. And this continues right up to today with the ongoing U.S. pledge to use nuclear arms to "defend" Western Europe from a Soviet "attack." This is nothing but an attempt to cut the proletariat of Western Europe off from their natural allies. It is an indirect but nonetheless naked threat to the revolutionary proletariat that any serious bid for power on their part could very well trigger a nuclear holocaust in which "all would be lost." Undoubtedly this is also the backdrop against which the revisionist phenomenon of Eurocommunism must be analyzed.

The revisionist wing of our movement presents us with opportunism of a different, but no less insidious, variety. Our erstwhile vanguard party, the CPUSA, continues to demonstrate how tailism can be confused for leadership and economism for anti-imperialism.

Of course, the CPUSA cannot be accused of advancing an anti-Soviet line—although, we dare say, their struggle against anti-Sovietism and for a straightforward defense of socialism leaves a lot to be desired. The CPUSA undoubtedly justifies its "tolerance" of anti-Sovietism by the pragmatic view that no real immediate harm is being done since the movement objectively stands as an impediment to U.S. imperialist plans for regaining the nuclear edge and pursuing policies of war and aggression. Opportunism within communist ranks will often announce itself as "broadmindedness" and "realism."

The CPUSA's tailism is most apparent in the mass line it brings to the nuclear disarmament movement and, indeed, to its mass propaganda on the questions of war and peace in general. The *main thrust* of its line and propaganda is to pose the struggle for peace as one directed against the nuclear "madmen." Not only the CPUSA's mass propaganda but its

own theoretical analysis are laced with the terminology of psychosis. Terms like "insane," "lunatic," and "demented" are the invariable way in which the actions of the imperialists are described.

Closely tied to this "psychiatric" analysis of the ruling class is the party's view that "the dramatic increase in worldwide fears over U.S. nuclear sabre rattling is related to increased public awareness of the actual effects of nuclear weapons, largely due to the long-term effects of the peace movement."³⁹ Thus the thoroughly pacifist orientation of viewing war as madness, and the equally pacifist assumption that a graphic depiction of the horrors of nuclear war will be the principal goad for forging a mass antiwar movement, constitute the main thrust of the supposedly communist analysis that the revisionists bring to the mass movement. A more revealing demonstration of the CPUSA's abandonment of the task of training the working class in revolutionary politics can hardly be imagined! Its net effect is to bolster and simplify the pacifist political pole in the nuclear disarmament movement.

Undoubtedly, pacifism and pacifist propaganda have an important place within the nuclear disarmament movement. Nor can the communists airily dismiss in their propaganda the massive life-threatening consequences of nuclear war. But we want to emphasize the point that the spontaneous movement is more than capable of advancing such views on its own. In fact, there exists a distinct class stratum that can be relied upon to continue to do precisely this. To be blunt, the movement has no particular need for communists to take on the tasks which the pacifists can perform quite well and convincingly with all the heartfelt moral enthusiasm required.

But the same cannot be said of developing a consistent and thoroughgoing anti-imperialist pole within the mass nuclear disarmament movement. This line will not emerge spontaneously even from the working class itself! This is precisely the task of communists, to go beyond what the movement is already capable of doing for itself—to unearth the underlying property relations, the class question, as clearly as possible. Concretely in the anti-nuke movement this means drawing out the connection between the threat of nuclear war and the crisis of the imperialist *system*. This must be done not in some perfunctory fashion, but in the most active, tit-for-tat struggle with the myriad of obscurantist lines advanced by both the bourgeoisie and the conscious opportunists within the mass movement.

The CPUSA has conspicuously failed to carry out this responsibility thus far (except in the most shallow, perfunctory fashion), and there is little evidence to suggest that it will be capable of setting a firm, anti-imperialist pole in the future. In fact, all too often it requires the most erudite of political observers to even detect the difference between the politics of the CPUSA and the politics of liberals within the nuclear disarmament movement.

Now such charges against the CPUSA are not new. On one level, they will appear to be similar to attacks which have usually been a cover for "left" opportunism and a sectarian splintering of the communist movement. And the revisionists have long since perfected the defense of dismissing such criticism as ultra-leftism. Let us, therefore, pursue the critique of the line of the CPUSA within the nuclear disarmament movement more carefully and concretely.

The most prominent expression of the line that the CPUSA advances is captured in the slogan: "The labor movement must lead." The deceptive quality of this line is that at first glance it does not appear to be substantially different from the call for the working class to lead the popular front. But the "shade of difference" between "labor movement" and "working class" is actually wide enough to permit the massive introduction of opportunist politics into the movement.

As we have previously drawn out, to say that the working class must lead the popular front is essentially a call for a proletarian *line* to lead the nuclear disarmament movement—an anti-imperialist line. But the call for the "labor movement" to lead does not necessarily mean the same thing, especially in the United States today where the labor movement is, in the main, pro-imperialist in its politics and ideological assumptions. Even if we give our revisionist comrades the best possible interpretation of their call—that the "pro-peace" forces in the trade union movement should constitute the political leadership of the nuclear disarmament movement—we would still disagree!

Who are these "pro-peace" forces in labor? At their best, they range across a continuum from liberal democrats to the left wing of social democracy.*

Undoubtedly, the social democrats and "pro-peace" forces in the trade union movement have an important role to play in the nuclear disarmament movement. But the line that says "the labor movement

*It is difficult to distinguish, from the outside, self-deception from conscious distortion of the facts within the CPUSA and its analysis of the U.S. labor movement. From our partial vantage point, however, we dare to say that the communists in the U.S. are hardly near the center, much less in firm control, of the U.S. organized labor movement, or even significant portions of it. Given the present weakness of the communist movement, it is not surprising that the progressive non-communists within the labor movement, center forces, definitely do not march behind the banner of the communists. In the main, they have independent politics and strategies of their own and objectively their notions of "socialism" are variants of social democracy, whether or not they are ideologically motivated social democrats. Given this, it is astounding that the CPUSA would get mesmerized by its own demagogic rhetoric and advocate turning over the nuclear disarmament movement to such a politically "mixed bag" of forces completely incapable of asserting a consistent and thoroughgoing anti-imperialist line.

must lead" goes far beyond this. In effect, it calls for turning over to labor "officialdom" the political leadership of the movement. At this point in the U.S., we would argue, such a demagogic appeal amounts to surrender of the struggle to make a firm anti-imperialist perspective the dominant line of the nuclear disarmament movement.

This line also gets the CPUSA into a compromised position in an area it has long considered key—the struggle against racism. Any orientation which so enshrines the present organized labor movement in the U.S. is bound to conciliate the labor aristocracy (which is largely white), and objectively to gloss over the plight of the lower strata of the working class and its relative lack of presence and influence within the trade union movement. The CPUSA knows full well (and in the past has been more forthright in admitting) that this stratification falls largely along the color line.

Yet the CPUSA has developed and advanced openly the ludicrous position that it is the "labor movement" that rightfully represents the interest of Black and other minority workers. Not only does this line fly in the face of U.S. history and the current experiences of most minority workers in the U.S.; it also obscures the very real struggles within the trade union movement over blatant racial discrimination, organizing the unorganized, defending immigrant and undocumented workers, etc.—issues which belie the simplistic assertion that "organized labor" speaks for the interests of minority workers.

Shackled with such a line, the CPUSA is incapable of combatting the racism (some of it blatant) that surfaces within the nuclear disarmament movement—in fact, it conciliates it with a line which holds as "illegitimate" any distinct political and organizational expression of the interests of minorities within the broader anti-nuke front.

Of course, the vacillation and opportunism in the line and practice of the CPUSA within the nuclear disarmament movement is rationalized as a concern over maintaining the breadth of the popular front against the sabotage and splitting activities of the ultra-left. Therefore it is instructive to turn our attention and criticism to their attempts to conduct independent communist work within this broad front they are so very conscientious in maintaining, almost at any cost.

The CPUSA takes a stab at its "independent work" by linking the danger of nuclear war to the military-industrial complex based on the "war related industries, oil, electronics, chemical, automobile and aircraft, and of course banking and insurance—[which] came to dominate the economy and consequently the government" after World War II when "the Pentagon emerged as the largest sector of the government and was run by board chairmen of these industries or their political proxies."⁴⁰

Unfortunately, we must continue to "split hairs" with our revisionist comrades on this matter too. The problem with this line of reasoning is

that it attributes the war danger to the *direct economic profits* that the military-industrial sector of the U.S. bourgeoisie makes from war and war production while dropping out the fact that the military industrial complex is inherent in the overall system of imperialism itself in order to protect the global system of exploitation. The entire capitalist class—military related or not—benefits from and will defend this arrangement. By obscuring this fact, the “military-industrial complex” line blurs the fundamental class question that underlies the war danger, and conciliates the social democratic/pacifist point of view by replacing Marxism with an economist populism.*

Of course, the problem of positing a non-military section of monopoly capital with a strategic interest in the struggle against imperialist aggression and for peace—leading to the view that the solution to the war danger consists in mobilizing a mass movement to unseat the militarists and put these more “rational” monopoly capitalists at the helm of the bourgeois state—is rooted in the CPUSA’s “grand illusion,” the strategy of the Anti-Monopoly Coalition. From this perspective, the *Main Political Resolution* of the CPUSA in 1975 detected a positive shift taking place in U.S. foreign policy and argued that “large sections of monopoly capital support the shift because of their own economic interests.” Of course, this shift was nothing but the fleeting and temporary political adjustment of the imperialist system to its defeat in Vietnam. But as usual, the CPUSA missed the real point and instead concluded that “because of this strong support, even though for varying class reasons, *the shift in foreign policy can be made irreversible.*” (Emphasis added.)

It is hard to imagine a more blatant tampering with the fundamentals of Marxism-Leninism than this view which continues to be the outlook of this revisionist party. With such a perspective, the CPUSA is hardly in a position to set an anti-imperialist pole in the nuclear disarmament movement.

*Adding intellectual insult to political injury, the CPUSA’s leading economist, Victor Perlo, asserts: “This poses a new task for Marxist economists, to develop the political economy of militarism and the arms race, of disarmament and the reconversion of industry. This field of economic science involves polemical battle with the ideologists and theoreticians of the military-industrial complex. . . . Marxist economists must prove the harmful effects of militarism and the outsize military budgets, the economic advantages of disarmament. . . .”⁴¹

The fantastic illusion underlying this point of view is that the monopoly capitalists can and should be convinced that imperialism will function better without militarism! What Perlo has forgotten, but which the imperialists never forget, is that without militarism the system of imperialism would soon be overthrown by the masses of exploited and oppressed that suffer daily from this system.

Once again we are brought to the seemingly immodest conclusion that the initiative for rectifying the political line (and step by step the practice) of communists within the peace and nuclear disarmament movement lies with our emerging Marxist-Leninist trend. Unfortunately, our trend is still at a relatively early stage of its development, while the demands of the mass movement are mounting and sharpening with each passing day.

Here (as in other arenas of the class struggle) is where the laws of motion of the communist movement must be taken into account in making a sober assessment of the immediate prospects for directing the nuclear disarmament movement in an anti-imperialist direction. In this sense, our practical role within the mass, spontaneous movement is intricately linked to the centrality of the party building task—to push forward a thoroughgoing rectification movement and reunite U.S. Marxist-Leninists on that basis. In this sense, by beginning to project a political line and strategic orientation for the nuclear disarmament movement, the communist movement is also struggling to resume its responsibility for the political direction of the spontaneous movement in the context of its more long range historical function of leading the working class in the struggle for power.

What does this mean more concretely in the nuclear disarmament movement?

First, it means that communists take active responsibility to help build this movement because under present circumstances its stated political aim of a freeze on nuclear arms production and reduction of nuclear weapons objectively aids the worldwide struggle for socialism and national liberation.

Second, it means that the communists strive to maintain the movement’s cross-class, popular front character in order to bring into political motion the broadest array of class forces who, by virtue of their numbers, influence and visibility, will be able to help achieve the movement’s political aims.

Third, it means that communists wage a conscious and determined struggle to bring this popular front under working class leadership. This means advancing a political line which identifies and represents the class interests of the proletariat both internationally and in the U.S. To set a firm anti-imperialist line within the nuclear disarmament movement requires continually linking and refocusing the threat of nuclear war to the crisis of imperialism. This in turn requires attention to a few key points: challenging the incorrect lines and prejudices about socialism which abound in the mass movement; insisting on the pivotal role of socialism in the struggle against imperialism, and in particular the role of the Soviet Union; struggling to assure that the nuclear war threat not be fetishized to the exclusion of more general war preparations and weapons build-up; making sure that the anti-nuke movement recognizes the political links between the nuclear issue and U.S. intervention and

aggression in El Salvador, the Middle East, etc.; and, finally, not allowing the domestic social impact of the war build-up to be dropped out of the political picture—the massive social austerity program being forced on the U.S. working class, in particular on the less stable, minority sectors of the class.

The task of winning the nuclear disarmament movement to such a perspective poses a gigantic challenge for our relatively weak and fragmented communist movement. Therefore, we cannot entertain any illusions that the mere statement of an advanced line will enable us overnight to bring it to bear as a material force on the nuclear disarmament movement. On the other hand, the projection of an advanced line is the *necessary starting point*. For although this point has been distorted and caricatured numerous times within our movement, we will continue to defend it as one of the cornerstones of Marxism-Leninism: advanced line is the basis for advanced practice. In the present circumstances, it is also the basis for beginning to re-establish the communist movement as the only consistent political expression of proletarian politics.

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