

**I. Ivashin**

**CONTEMPORARY  
INTERNATIONAL  
RELATIONS**



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Progress Publishers  
M o s c o w



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## I. DAWN OF A NEW ERA IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

### Introduction

At the turn of the present century world capitalism entered the stage of imperialism. The capitalist world then comprised six big imperialist powers and a number of smaller imperialist countries. Although imperialism was already then rent by its inherent internal and external antagonisms, and the various countries differed significantly from one another, it was a more or less integral system embracing practically the whole world.

The monopolies, reflecting the interests of the millionaires and multi-millionaires, amassed fabulous wealth by mercilessly exploiting the workers of their own countries and brutally oppressing and openly plundering the colonial peoples.

Imperialism was in its heyday. It suppressed and robbed and bossed the world. Reaction and aggression ran rampant.

The rival imperialist powers began to repartition the world they had already divided among themselves. They entered into a struggle that culminated in a bloody shambles, the imperialist First World War of 1914-18.

Those were the years when the general crisis of capitalism set in. The main symptoms of the ripening and development of the crisis were: the revolutionary struggle of the proletariat and its class allies (primarily the exploited masses of the peasantry); the national liberation movement in the colonies and dependencies, in other words, the awakening of the peoples of Asia, Africa and other parts of the world; and massive anti-war actions by the people. The chief indication of the general crisis of capitalism was the Great October Socialist Revolution in Russia in 1917.

### **The Socialist Revolution in Russia; Its World-wide Significance**

In October 1917 a victorious socialist revolution took place in Russia. It came about as a result of the extreme aggravation of all the contradictions of the world capitalist system. Russia proved to have a social and political force capable of overthrowing the old order and blazing the trail to socialism.

The Great October Socialist Revolution in Russia had world-wide significance. It tremendously influenced the entire course of world history and the destiny of all mankind.

First of all, the October Revolution undermined imperialism's world-wide domination. It breached the hitherto solid front of world imperialism and

split the world into two opposing systems, the capitalist and the socialist. Ever since then the struggle between these two diametrically opposite systems has been the pivot of world politics and international relations.

The October Revolution took Russia's factories, railways, banks, the land and its natural resources away from the exploiting classes and made them the property of the working people. This swept away the centuries-old idea that private ownership of the means of production was "immutable" and "inviolable". It set working people all over the world an inspiring example.

The state also took possession of the factories and mines in Russia that were owned by foreign capitalists, who had been making enormous profits by exploiting the workers and rapaciously plundering the country's natural riches.

The Soviet Government annulled the foreign debts of the tsarist government and the bourgeois provisional government, amounting to the huge sum of more than 19,000 million gold rubles.

A state monopoly on foreign trade was established. Foreign countries and companies could now trade with Soviet Russia only through state bodies or co-operative societies. The foreign trade monopoly gave the young Soviet industries reliable protection against imperialist economic intervention and pressure. It played an important part in the planning of exports and imports. An integral element of Soviet economic policy, it contributed notably to the building of socialism.



With revolutionary vigour the Soviet Government annulled all the imperialist deals and agreements which Russia's former rulers had concluded in order to oppress and exploit other nations and nationalities.

The Soviet Republic became a powerful support for the world revolutionary and national liberation movement, a bright beacon lighting up the road for all the oppressed, a graphic example, a magnet for the revolutionary forces and an active and consistent champion of their interests.

### **Colonial System Enters Crisis**

The October Revolution marked the end of the "golden age" of colonialism. It ushered in a new stage in the history of the national liberation movement in the colonies and dependencies. After overthrowing the capitalists and landowners the October Revolution emancipated all the oppressed peoples of the former Russian empire, proclaimed their equality and paved the way for their fraternal co-operation and friendship. This set an example of how imperialism's colonial system could be destroyed. It started the disintegration of colonialism and opened up real possibilities of expelling the colonialists.

The Marxist-Leninist solution of the nationalities problem in Soviet Russia set the world an inspiring example. Men and women everywhere saw that formerly oppressed peoples had become

truly free and equal for the first time in history. The October Revolution greatly stimulated the further awakening of the peoples in the colonies and dependencies; it drew them into a general struggle (together with the socialist state and with the workers and their class allies in the capitalist countries) against world imperialism. The example of Russia's outlying regions inhabited by many different non-Russian nationalities demonstrated that it was fully possible for Eastern and African countries to put an end to backwardness, poverty, disease and ignorance, and to rise to the level of the industrialised countries in the lifetime of a single generation.

To sum up, the Great October Socialist Revolution opened up a new era in the history of mankind.

The period of nearly half a century since 1917 convincingly shows that our era, whose main content is the transition from capitalism to socialism that was begun by the Great October Socialist Revolution, is an era of struggle between the two opposing systems; an era of socialist revolutions and national liberation revolutions; an era of the collapse of imperialism and the abolition of the colonial system; an era in which more and more peoples are taking the road to socialism; an era of the triumph of socialism on a world-wide scale.

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## II. FROM THE REVOLUTION OF 1917 TO THE RISE OF SOCIALISM IN OTHER COUNTRIES

### New Principles Are Proclaimed

One of the epoch-making results of the Great October Socialist Revolution was that it created the first state in history which really and truly advocated peace and carried out new principles in international relations. Mankind now acquired a reliable bulwark against wars of conquest and a champion of peace and security.

Before that a fight for peace and against imperialist aggression had been propounded in books, pamphlets and articles written by proletarian leaders, in Marxist study groups and at workers' meetings and rallies. Now this became the general foreign policy line of the great Soviet Union.

The fundamental Soviet foreign policy line and its main principles—peaceful coexistence of countries with different social systems, and proletarian internationalism—were set forth in Lenin's Decree on Peace, adopted by the Second Congress of Soviets on November 8, 1917. This was the first legislative act in history to condemn predatory wars as a heinous crime against mankind.

Addressing all the belligerent countries and their governments, the Decree proposed immediate negotiations for a general, just and democratic peace.

The Decree gave an exhaustive definition of annexation as any act by which a large or strong country forcibly joins to itself a small or weak nationality without the latter's agreement or wish having been precisely, clearly and voluntarily expressed, regardless of when this act takes place, what the annexed nation's level of development is, or which part of the world it inhabits. The definition had tremendous significance, for it laid bare the foundations and main objectives of imperialist foreign policy, the foundations of colonialism. Furthermore, the Decree on Peace showed that from its very birth the Soviet Republic championed the interests of oppressed peoples.

The new supreme governing body declared that the peoples of the Land of Soviets wanted peace and friendship with all the peoples of the world.

Lenin's Decree aroused a wave of enthusiastic approval all over the world. It opened up a new era in the battle for peace and the security of the peoples.

Thanks to the Great October Socialist Revolution, which Lenin called an uprising of workers and peasants to emancipate the nations from imperialism and "put an end to wars among nations", people's anti-war sentiments were embodied, for the first time, in a clear and precise programme of effective action by the millions under

the leadership of the proletariat. As Lenin put it, this was "the first victory for the cause of abolishing war".

Immediately after the revolution Lenin called on the working people to promote peaceful economic and cultural development. Carrying out this policy, the Soviet people expressed their desire to establish business-like co-operation with other countries.

### **Imperialists Try to Strangle the Young Soviet Republic**

Co-operation was not what the imperialist circles in the capitalist countries wanted, however. Their aim was to destroy the young Soviet system.

The German imperialists were the first to invade the Soviet Republic. Next the governments of Britain, France, Japan and the United States began armed intervention against it after having defeated Germany and her allies in the First World War. The Soviet people, inspired and led by the Communist Party, showed the world that it was impossible to conquer a nation whose workers and peasants realised they were defending the rule of the working people.

By their militant solidarity the proletariat and the rest of the working population in the capitalist countries, the colonies and the dependencies greatly helped Soviet Russia. Inspired by the Great October Socialist Revolution and the Soviet people's heroic fight against the interventionists,

the oppressed Asian and African peoples intensified their struggle against the imperialist colonialists. This helped Soviet Russia and undermined imperialism still further.

Therefore, when the imperialist rulers of the countries that had won the First World War (Britain, France, the United States, Italy and Japan), called the Conference of Paris in 1919 to divide the plunder and establish a postwar order, they devoted a great deal of attention to the "Russian question" (that is, the question of how to subjugate Soviet Russia). They also discussed what to do with Germany's African and Far Eastern colonies and Turkey's African and East Mediterranean possessions.

The Conference of Paris was actually not a peace conference but a world centre of anti-Soviet intrigue and intervention. Here the imperialist powers decided to set up an economic blockade of Soviet Russia and to surround her with a system of what they called "sanitary cordons".

Bitter wrangling broke out among the imperialist vultures while dividing the former German and Turkish possessions. This did not divert them, however, from their efforts to combat the national liberation movement in the colonies and dependencies and the revolutionary movement at home.

#### **Versailles System: Anti-Soviet and Colonialist**

In 1919-20 the countries that had won the war drafted and then signed peace treaties with vanquished Germany and her allies. The system of

international relations formulated in the treaties came to be known as the Versailles system, after the name of the treaty with Germany, which was signed in the Hall of Mirrors of the Versailles Palace.

This imperialist system of international relations could not be a stable one. As Lenin remarked, it stood on the edge of a volcano.

The League of Nations, which was created by the Paris Conference, formed an integral part of the system. The imperialists called the League an instrument of international peace and security, but actually it was an instrument to preserve and strengthen capitalism, an instrument to combat the revolutionary and national liberation movements and the Soviet Republic. The League of Nations, Lenin said, was "marked by the absence of anything resembling the establishment of the real equality of rights between nations, anything resembling a real chance of their peaceful coexistence".

The imperialists used the League of Nations and the mandate system as a screen for colonial plunder and oppression. Like brigands, they divided the world among themselves and then, in the name of the League of Nations, gave one another "mandates" to govern the former German colonies and Turkish possessions.

The main part of former German East Africa (Tanganyika) went to Britain, Ruanda-Urundi to Belgium, Kionga to Portugal, and the Cameroons

and Togo to Britain and France. Former German South-West Africa was handed over to the Union of South Africa, a British Dominion.

Germany's Pacific possessions north of the equator (the Marianna, Marshall and Caroline islands) were put under Japanese control. New Guinea went to the British Dominion of New Zealand, while the former German naval base in Tsingtao on Chinese territory and the concession in Shantung were given to Japan, who had seized them during the war.

Under the Treaty with Turkey, Britain laid hands on Palestine, Transjordan and Iraq, while France took Syria and the Lebanon. Turkey officially renounced the rights she had earlier lost in Egypt, the Sudan and Cyprus in favour of Britain, her rights in Morocco and Tunisia in favour of France, and her rights in Libya in favour of Italy.

That was how the imperialists redivided the colonies and spheres of influence among themselves. The people of many countries found themselves under the heel of new masters.

The imperialists failed to settle the "Russian question", however, for this was not within their powers. The Soviet people repulsed all their efforts to do so.

Desirous of regulating its relations with the capitalist countries by peaceful means and of establishing broad business ties with them, on October 28, 1921, the Soviet Government addressed a note to a number of governments in



which it stressed the possibility and desirability of peaceful coexistence and co-operation between states belonging to the two social systems. The Soviet Government proposed an international conference to settle the outstanding issues. At this conference Soviet Russia would hear out the claims of the capitalist countries and the latter would hear out Soviet Russia's claims on them. In other words, it proposed negotiations and agreements on equal terms.

### **Plans of the Imperialists at the Genoa Conference**

Meeting in the French town of Cannes on January 6, 1922, representatives of Britain, France, Italy, Japan and Belgium took a decision to call an international conference with the participation of Soviet Russia.

While professing to recognise the sovereign rights of all peoples (having in mind, first and foremost, the peoples of Soviet Russia), the representatives of the capitalist powers emphasised that the peoples which had chosen a new social economic and political system should return foreign-owned property, pay all the debts of the governments that had been overthrown, abolish the monopoly on foreign trade, restore all the privileges formerly enjoyed by foreign capitalists and give the latter a free hand in their countries once again.