

REFLECTIONS ON ANTI-COMMUNISM*

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Ever since the Bolshevik Revolution of October 1917, anti-communism has been a dominant theme in the political warfare waged by conservative forces against the entire left, Communist and non-Communist; and since 1945 and the onset of the Cold War in particular, anti-communism has been ceaselessly disseminated by a multitude of different sources and means—newspapers, radio, television, films, articles, pamphlets, books, speeches, sermons, official documents—in a massive enterprise of propaganda and indoctrination. No subject other than 'communism' has received anything like the same volume of criticism and denunciation. The intensity and forms of this propaganda have varied from country to country and from period to period, with the United States well in the lead among capitalist democracies in the intensity and pervasiveness of its anti-communism; but at no time since 1917 has anti-communism failed to occupy a major, even a central, place in the politics and policies of the capitalist world. Different Communist countries have at various times been the main target of attack—China at the time of the Korean war, Vietnam at the time of the Vietnam war. But it is the Soviet Union which has always been taken to be the principal and most dangerous enemy; and it is with anti-communism as it refers to the Soviet Union that we shall be mainly concerned here.

For all the diverse forms which it has assumed, anti-communism is based on two fundamental contentions: the first is that 'communism' is a supreme and unqualified evil; and the second is that it is an evil which the Soviet leaders are seeking to impose upon the rest of the world. It is these two contentions which we propose to discuss here; and we do so from an independent socialist position which, although very critical of many aspects of Soviet 'communism', is also very sharply at odds with anti-communism.

I

From the first days of the Bolshevik Revolution, anti-communism has painted Soviet 'communism' in the darkest possible colours. For their

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what might be described as functional nonsense.

But there is another assumption which accompanies this one, namely that the Soviet Union is itself desperately concerned to go into country after country, in pursuit of that 'expansionism' which, as we noted at the beginning, is the second core proposition of anti-communism. It is to this alleged 'expansionism' that we now turn.

II

Since World War II, a deafening anti-communist chorus in the West has turned into conventional wisdom. The notion that the Soviet Union was an imperialist and expansionist power, whose leaders seek world domination, and whose hegemonic designs are a threat not only to its neighbours but to the whole world. The exact terms of the indictment, and explanations of this alleged Soviet 'expansionism' vary, and so do conceptions of what ought to be done about it, but the basic point remains: the Soviet Union poses a permanent threat to all free countries—a threat even more menacing, in the eyes of many anti-communists, than did Nazism, because it is more insidious and pervasive. The least this requires is containment and deterrence by way of the military might of the United States and its partners in NATO and beyond, in vigilant awareness of the proven dangers of 'appeasement'.

Before discussing this, it is relevant to recall that violent hostility to the Soviet Union was a guiding principle of the diplomacy of the great powers long before there was any question of Soviet 'expansionism'. It was after all in the first days of the Bolshevik regime that the armies of a dozen countries and more went into Russia with the task, as Winston Churchill put it at the time, of 'strangling Bolshevism in its cradle'. Marx and Engels had proclaimed in the *Communist Manifesto* in 1848 that 'a spectre is haunting Europe—the spectre of Communism'. But here was no longer the spectre of 'communism', but its dreaded reality. For the first time in history, a state had been turned into the embodiment of 'communism'; and a state, moreover, which claimed sovereignty over the largest country in the world. No wonder that the representatives of the old order tried to destroy it; and that, having failed to do so, they should have been concerned to contain and reduce its impact in the world, without much need to invoke Soviet 'expansionism'. Anti-communism in its pure form, so to speak, was good enough.

In a book entitled *Politics and Diplomacy of Peacemaking* and subtitled *Containment and Counterrevolution at Versailles*, Professor Arno Mayer has noted that 'the Paris Peace Conference made a host of decisions, all of which in varying degrees, were designed to check Bolshevism'.⁴ This could well serve as a *leit-motiv* for British and French diplomacy in the inter-war years: at least, the diplomatic and political history of those years cannot properly be written without making this a central element

in the account. For British diplomacy in particular, the containment of 'communism' and of its spread through the British Empire remained throughout a major preoccupation, much more so than Nazism.

Similarly, it is anti-communism which dictated much of the grand strategy of the Western Allies in World War II. Scarcely a single major episode in the war from 1942 onwards can be explained without close reference to the fears which they had of social upheaval at the end of the war, and of the contribution which Soviet military successes and advances might make to revolutionary transformation in liberated countries.' Nor of course was this only a matter of saving Europe alone from 'communism': the concern was global and encompassed British, French and other colonial territories aflame with the expectation of national and social liberation.

In fact, it was not 'communism' which was then at issue at all, but radical change in which Communists were certain to play an important role, but not a monopolistic one. In Western Europe, Communist parties played a crucial stabilising role at a time of great social and political upheaval, and rejected out of hand any 'adventurist' policies, meaning any policies that might have endangered their continued participation in the bourgeois governments they had entered. This strategy was of immense help in maintaining social discipline in the working class, and it was a strategy which these Communist parties pursued in full accord with the Soviet leaders, and in the sure knowledge that any other strategy would have been fiercely opposed by these leaders.

Nor even did the Soviet Union then insist on the 'stalinisation' of Eastern Europe at the end of the war: it was not until 1947 and the aggravation of the Cold War that fully-fledged Communist regimes were installed in the countries which Stalin wanted in the Soviet sphere of influence, with the inclusion of Czechoslovakia by way of a Communist take-over in 1948. It is also noteworthy that Stalin was perfectly prepared to abandon the Greek Communist resistance to the bitter fate reserved for it by British-backed Greek reactionaries, and to see Greece come into the British, and then the American, sphere of influence.

What the Western Allies were seeking to achieve at the end of World War II was precisely what they had sought to achieve at the end of World War I, namely to restore and stabilise an old order convulsed by war and threatened by the radicalism fostered by war. This endeavour took many different forms, and it involved confrontation with the Soviet Union at many different points. It was this, and not Soviet 'expansionism', which set in motion a dialectic of escalation and counter-escalation which has defined the whole history of the post-war years.

In this perspective, the term 'Cold War' is somewhat misleading: it implies a state to state antagonism, which is indeed real enough, but which obscures the fact that what is at the core of this antagonism is the deter-

mination of the Western powers to contain revolutionary movements everywhere and even for that matter reformist movements, a purpose to which the Soviet Union, for its own reasons and in its own ways, is something of an obstacle. The notion of 'international civil war', which Professor Mayer among others also uses, is closer than 'Cold War' to the real nature of the confrontation.

Since 1939, the Soviet Union has absorbed Eastern Poland, the Baltic states, the western part of the Ukraine and Byelorussia. These territories were of course part of the Czarist empire before 1917. This is no justification for the absorption of countries which, as in the case of Lithuania, Latvia and Esthonia, had achieved independence as a result of the downfall of Czarism. But it is a fact which is nevertheless relevant to a judgment of the kind of considerations which determine the actions of the Soviet leaders—in this instance, a mixture of nationalism, a particular view of what Soviet security requires, a complete indifference to what the people concerned may or may not want, possibly combined with a belief that they must eventually come to see the benefits of their return to a Russian state that is now a Soviet commonwealth.

Since 1945, the Soviet Union has also brought Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria, East Germany and Czechoslovakia within its sphere of domination. Its relationship with Rumania is more ambiguous, and amounts to a great deal less than control. In 1979, it met by force of arms the threat to its control of Afghanistan, as it had done in Hungary in 1956 and in Czechoslovakia in 1968. It has close ties with Vietnam and Cuba. On the other hand, its relations with other Communist states are uncertain, and range from the more or less friendly, as in the case of North Korea and Yugoslavia, to the frankly hostile, as in the case of China and Albania. Its relations with other self-proclaimed 'Marxist-Leninist' states, such as South Yemen, Ethiopia, Mozambique and Angola, are good but do not give it anything like control over these countries.

What does this tell us about the dynamic of Soviet foreign policy? For anti-communism, the answer is blindingly simple and obvious: it tells us of a Soviet imperialism combined with traditional Russian imperialism; of relentless totalitarian expansionism, of Communist aggression and of an implacable will to achieve world domination. But there is a different view, which is altogether more realistic and grounded in actual history rather than ideological fantasies, namely that Soviet foreign and defence policies are dominated by the will on the part of Soviet leaders to ensure the security of the Soviet Union in what they conceive to be a profoundly hostile and threatening context.

This-Soviet belief in the existence of a hostile and threatening capitalist world is often deplored and derided in the West as 'neurotic', 'pathological' and totally unwarranted, but the record says otherwise, and does tell of

the unremitting hostility which all capitalist powers have displayed towards the Soviet Union ever since the Bolshevik Revolution. That hostility is at times more pronounced, and at other times less: but it is never absent from the West's dealings with Russia. Different capitalist powers have relayed each other, so to speak, in assuming the leadership of the anti-communist camp—first Britain and France, then Nazi Germany, then the United States. But it is not very remarkable that the Russians should remember much more clearly than people in the West the fact that this hostility has found extremely costly expression for them on at least two occasions: one of them was the wars of intervention which capitalist powers waged against the Bolshevik regime in the first years of the revolution; the other, much more traumatic, was the war which Germany and its allies waged against the Soviet Union. Britain and the United States were then Russia's allies, more or less. But it was nevertheless the Soviet Union which was left to bear the brunt of Germany's military might from 1941 until 1944, and it was upon the Soviet Union that devolved the main task of destroying the German war machine, a task which was only accomplished at horrendous human and material cost.⁶ On this record alone, the notion of capitalist hostility—and Nazi Germany was a capitalist power, which enjoyed quite friendly relations with other capitalist powers until its expansionist appetites grew too large—is not some kind of paranoid phantasm, but a simple reality. And that hostility has not only been expressed in episodic military terms, but in terms of consistently hostile economic, diplomatic and strategic policies as well. It is only in anti-communist propaganda that the adverse attitudes towards the Soviet Union which have been the guiding thread of Western policies since World War II, and particularly of American policies, have all been 'the fault of the Russians'. The hostility was there from the start: what can be laid at the door of the Russians, apart from their repressive actions within their own domain, is that what they conceived to be required for their security led them to act in ways which made it easier for American and other Western leaders to convince their populations that the hostility was justified; and the grossly rebarbative aspects of Soviet-type regimes have made this easier still. A great and dangerous *non sequitur* is in this latter respect at work here. Because the Soviet regime is repressive, it is widely believed and even taken for granted that it must also be imperialist and 'expansionist'. This, however, does not at all follow. It is perfectly possible for a regime to be tyrannical and free from any imperialist ambitions. On the other hand, the fact that the United States is a capitalist democracy, and in the eyes of its own leaders and people a democracy *tout court*, easily generates the view that it cannot have imperialist and hegemonic designs. This does not follow either. The most that can be said about capitalist democracy in the late 20th century on this score is that it makes the pursuit of imperialist designs rather more difficult than it used

to be, because of the internal opposition they generate. Unfortunately, it does not make their pursuit impossible.

The Soviet actions which have most usefully served to buttress the thesis of Soviet 'expansionism'—the stalinisation of the East European regimes, and the invasion of Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Afghanistan—are in fact much more reasonably explained by the Soviet leaders' concern for security. The same goes for the rash actions in which Soviet leaders have occasionally engaged since World War II, for instance the Berlin blockade of 1948 and the installation of Soviet missiles in Cuba in 1962.

It is also significant in the present context that Stalin acted with a good deal of caution when confronted with the 'defection' of Yugoslavia from the Communist bloc in 1948, and that the Soviet response was confined to the denunciation of the Yugoslavs by Communist parties throughout the world as renegades, fascists and agents of Western imperialism, and to some attempts at the 'destabilisation' of the Tito regime. Similarly, the Soviet leaders accepted the 'loss' of China when the Sino-Soviet dispute erupted, and also confined their response to the abrupt cutting off of aid, to attempts at 'destabilisation', and to denunciations which were richly reciprocated by the Chinese themselves.

These do not seem to be the responses of rulers driven by an irresistible impulse to territorial expansion and military adventure. They suggest rather a generally cautious approach to international relations, a good deal less 'ideological' and interventionist, in fact, than the approach which the United States has brought to world affairs since 1945. Since the end of World War II, the United States has intervened in every part of the globe to defeat revolutionary movements and to maintain a status quo favourable to its own purposes. Indeed, it has intervened not only against revolutionary movements and regimes, but against moderately reformist ones as well, as in the case of Guatemala in 1954 and of Chile between 1970 and 1973, when it did everything it could to 'destabilise' and bring down a constitutional and 'pluralist' government in favour of a military junta which it has supported unswervingly ever since—all in the name of national security, freedom, democracy, etc. Nicaragua's reforming regime is the latest to bear the brunt of United States hostility; but it will not be the last. In the light of this consistent record of anti-revolutionary intervention in the name of American security, it cannot be said that there is anything very abnormal in the Soviet leaders' own preoccupation with 'security'—however much one may disapprove of their conception of it or of the paths in which it leads. All in all, the record shows that Soviet leaders have been a great deal less reckless than American ones in invoking 'national security' in the defence of what they took to be their interests. They have in fact, often displayed a remarkable degree of restraint in times of crisis] their actions, or non-actions, in the crisis provoked by the Israeli invasion of the Lebanon in the summer of 1982, illustrate the point, and contrast

markedly with American military intervention in the area. Nor is it to be overlooked that the Russians have on occasion accepted quite meekly what amounted to a 'reversal of alliances' on the part of countries from which they found themselves humiliatingly expelled, notwithstanding all the aid they had given them: Egypt is the best case in point. Somalia is another.

Of course, Soviet leaders do seek to win friends and gain influence wherever they can, and view the establishment of revolutionary regimes—anywhere as of advantage to themselves. whether these regimes proclaim themselves to be 'Marxist-Leninist' or not. The main reason for this is clear, and has already been suggested earlier, namely that all such **revolutionary** regimes, whatever their ideological dispositions, have it as one of their main aims to **remove their** country from the American sphere of influence, more properly described, for many countries, as the American sphere of domination. Inevitably, any such weakening of American global power is viewed by Soviet leaders as a net gain.

In this perspective, the really remarkable thing is not that the Soviet Union should extend aid to revolutionary movements and to **newly-established** revolutionary regimes, but that it is quite cautious in what it does in this respect. **However,** it does voice support and extend aid to such regimes, and provides an important counterweight to American power and purpose by virtue of its presence on the international scene. On occasion, this has quite decisive consequences. It is for instance very likely that the Cuban regime would have gone under without Soviet support and material help. **Similarly,** Cuban military intervention in Angola was decisive at a critical point for the revolutionary forces. Whether Cuba was acting on its own initiative or at the behest of the Soviet Union is not here very important: for it could not have acted at all if it had not itself received support from the Soviet Union.

In this light, it is perfectly true that the existence of the Soviet Union and its active presence on the international scene is or can be 'subversive', and that it often does run counter to the anti-revolutionary purposes of the United States and its allies. It is a naive illusion of the more primitive devotees of anti-communism that all revolutionary movements would cease, or would cease to be revolutionary, if the Soviet Union did not exercise its baleful and sinister influence in the world. But it is true that such movements would, generally speaking, be easier to deal with if the Soviet Union did not exist or could somehow be prevented from extending any help to revolutionary movements. In this sense at least, and from a conservative perspective, anti-communism does have a point.

Any attempt to redress the 'balance of blame' is naturally anathema to anti-communism, and is automatically denounced as an apologia for the repression of dissidents, the Gulag Archipelago, Stalinism and every-

thing else that is wrong with the Soviet regime. This is a form of moral terrorism and political blackmail that must be resisted. Quite apart from pointing to the actual as opposed to the mythical record, a simple question may be asked from those who have made subscription to the belief in Soviet 'expansionism' an article of political intelligence, decency, morality, etc: what reasons can anti-communism advance to justify the view that everything which the Soviet leaders do is motivated by 'expansionist' ambitions and purposes? What, in other words, are the reasons which can be invoked to explain these 'expansionist' ambitions?

On examination, the reasons advanced turn out to be exceedingly flimsy. One of them is that the Soviet leaders have an insatiable desire for power. But the question is not whether the Soviet leaders want power. This may be taken for granted, though it can hardly be said to be a trait unique to them. All leaders everywhere want power: otherwise, they would not be leaders. But Soviet leaders already have all the power they can handle, and more; and there is nothing in the record to suggest that this kind of pseudo-psychological construction has anything to offer by way of a plausible explanation of Soviet foreign policy.

Indeed, as has already been noted, there have been many occasions when Soviet leaders, far from supporting revolutionary developments which might have been favourable to an increase in their power abroad, have in fact been opposed to what they viewed as revolutionary 'adventurism', and as running counter to their view of what Soviet security demanded. It should be recalled, in this connection, that both the Yugoslav and the Chinese revolutions would have been stalled at the end of World War II if their leaders had accepted Soviet advice, which was for Tito and Mao to enter into coalition with their enemies. Had the advice been taken, the result would have been a curbing not an extension of Communist power; and Stalin was as willing to accept this as he was willing to see another such Communist retreat which we noted earlier, namely that of the Greek Communists.

Nor was this suspicion of revolutionary movements and the fear of 'adventurism' peculiar to Stalin. It has also been exhibited by his successors, as was shown, for instance, by the extreme reserve observed by the Soviet leaders in regard to the 'May events' in France in 1968, and their approval of the French Communist Party's own rejection of 'adventurist' policies.

These instances also serve to undermine another reason advanced to justify the notion of Soviet 'expansionism', namely that the Soviet leaders are driven by a compelling ideological proselytism, and that they will not rest until the whole world has been convened, by force if necessary, to their particular brand of 'Marxism-Leninism'. Here too, the record gives no support to any such view. Soviet leaders may welcome the proclamation by this or that revolutionary regime of its 'Marxist-Leninist' con-

victions. But we have already noted that their approval is based, not on any great ideological zeal, but on the more mundane consideration that such proclamations, whether they betoken good relations with the Soviet Union or not (and they may not) almost certainly betoken bad relations with the United States. 'Marxism-Leninism' may sustain Soviet leaders, just as 'democracy' or 'freedom' or whatever may sustain Western leaders. But ideological considerations have nevertheless always played a very secondary role in Soviet foreign policy; and such considerations have never prevented Soviet leaders from actions inspired by the starkest notions of *realpolitik*: the Hitler-Stalin alliance, which lasted from 1939 until Hitler attacked the Soviet Union in 1941 is the most spectacular illustration of the point; but there have been many others.

In any case, it must also be said that there is nothing in 'Marxism-Leninism', not to speak of Marxism, which requires their disciples to proselytise at the point of bayonets. On the contrary, it is one of the firmest tenets of Marxism revolutionary theory that revolutions are not for export and must be made at home. Proletarian internationalism demands that revolutionary movements should be supported; but that is hardly the same thing as the export of revolution. Anti-communists often speak as if the Soviet leaders were passionate converts to the Trotskyist doctrine of 'permanent revolution'. They are not. The support they do give to revolutionary movements is based upon very different considerations, paramount among which is what they take to be the Soviet 'national interest' and Soviet security. None of these perceptions entails the kind of global 'expansionism' which anti-communism proclaims to be at the core of Soviet purposes.

III

We have so far referred to anti-communism as if there was only one version of it. There are in fact a good many; and it may be useful to point to distinct positions, emphases and nuances within a common framework of anti-communism.

There is, to begin with, an absolutist position, which finds many different expressions, but whose common denominator is a total, unqualified and vehement rejection of 'communism' as the embodiment of evil, the work of Satan, the product of the darkest and most sinister impulses of the human spirit, the negation of civilisation and enlightenment, and much else of the same kind. This anti-communism, couched in extreme moralistic terms, often with strongly religious connotations, sees the Soviet Union as the material incarnation of evil and as the main source of the dissemination of evil. Consequently, its disappearance from the face of the earth is a prime condition of human regeneration and salvation, and something to be prayed and worked for, fought and died for.

The beauty of this position is that it admits and indeed invites every

kind of hyperbole and does not require validation by way of evidence, analysis or anything else. It is enough that it should be expressed, preferably in a suitably exalted rhetoric. Nor is it encumbered by any notion of prudence, compromise, negotiation and accommodation. Any such notion is itself a token of corruption, weakness and perversity. How can one seek accommodation with ultimate evil?

This absolutist position is held by very diverse people, from the primitive anti-communists of the John Birch Society and other such ultra-right organisations in the United States and other capitalist countries, to sophisticated American and European intellectuals, many of them ex-Stalinists, ex-Maoists, former ultra-left revolutionaries or would-be revolutionaries of one sort or another, who now bring to their present commitments the same unrestrained and apocalyptic ardour which they brought to the old ones. Their ranks are constantly added to by Soviet and East European emigres whose understandable bitterness and hatred brings valuable support to this section of the anti-communist camp.

The absolutist position has of course very strong political resonances. But it is not a position which Western conservatism can readily adopt, save for the purposes of ideological warfare, on the lines of President Reagan's reference to the Soviet Union as the 'empire of evil'; and even such rhetoric has normally to be used sparingly by politicians, lest it should frighten an electorate which does not want dangerous and expensive crusades. Western conservatism is not less anti-communist than the ultras of the Right, but its leaders must perforce seek to deal with the Soviet Union in less inflamed terms, from which negotiation and even compromise cannot be excluded.

A range of positions is to be found here, whose occupants all want to achieve the containment of revolutionary movements everywhere, and the curtailment or stoppage of Soviet help to such movements. At one end of this conservative spectrum, there lurks the hope—even the belief—that rather more than containment may eventually become possible, and that 'communism' may be rolled back in a number of countries where it has come to prevail, and even that this may yet come to be possible in the Soviet Union itself. At the other end of the spectrum, the 'liberal' end, there is the belief, entirely justified, that such aspirations must generate policies and actions which make war, up to and including nuclear war, more rather than less likely; and there is also at this end the hope that the Soviet Union might be induced to play a 'moderate' (and moderating) role in the world, on terms which would be economically and politically advantageous to it. The Soviet Union must be 'deterred': but it is from extending help to revolutionary movements that it must be 'deterred', rather than from launching a military attack on the West, an eventuality in which no serious politician truly believes.

Alongside conservative anti-communism, there has existed from the

first days of the Bolshevik Revolution a fierce social democratic anti-communism, which has been of great political consequence. The divisions between right and left in the labour movements of capitalist societies were bitter and profound long before Lenin was ever heard of. But the victory of the Bolsheviks deepened them much further and gave them new institutional forms; and the repressive nature of the Soviet regime, combined with Communist attacks on social democratic leaders, served to reinforce in these leaders tendencies that were already well developed towards a 'socialism' which held no threat to the established order. Anti-communism was a major factor in the insertion of social democratic movements into that established order, and provided a powerful ideological basis of agreement between social democratic leaders and their conservative opponents. From 1945 onwards, it also provided the basis for a broad consensus between them on foreign and defence policies; and social democratic leaders played a major role in the legitimisation of the Cold War and in the mobilisation of labour movements behind the banner of anti-communism.

In many countries, anti-communism has also been a valuable weapon in the hands of social democratic trade union and political leaders in their struggles inside unions and parties against Communists, and also against left activists who sought to challenge their positions. It has often been very convenient to meet the challenge with anti-communist denunciations, supplemented in many cases by measures of exclusion of the critics from positions of power and influence, and by expulsion from party membership.

It is, however, to conservative forces in capitalist countries that anti-communism has been of the greatest value in their struggle against the whole left, social democracy included. It has in fact been their favourite weapon: in no legislative or presidential election in a capitalist-democratic regime since 1918 (not to speak of 'elections' in capitalist-authoritarian ones) have conservatives failed to exploit the Communist and Soviet 'menace', even though 'communism' has usually been totally irrelevant to the issues in contention, with Communists very often, as in the United States, virtually or totally absent from the scene. Once 'communism' could be turned into the issue, however implausibly, argument could be laid aside and invective and denunciation could take over, and be directed against anyone who did not wholly subscribe to the basic tenets of anti-communism, or to whatever notions and policies anti-communists chose to propound. However much social democrats and liberals might vie with their conservative opponents in their anti-communist proclamations, the latter were virtually unbeatable on this terrain.

Moreover, the fact that 'communism' could be identified with the Soviet Union, and that the Soviet Union was after 1945 proclaimed to be a dire and urgent threat to 'national security' made it possible for anti-communists to denounce anyone who opposed them not only as godless,

part, Communists and many other people on the Left sought, from 1917 until the 20th Soviet Communist Party Congress of 1956 and Khrushchev's 'secret speech', to paint the regime in the brightest possible colours, and resolutely dismissed all criticism of the Soviet Union as mere bourgeois propaganda, inventions and lies. A great deal of it undoubtedly was: anti-communism has always relied on, and has itself produced, much false and tendentious information about the Soviet Union. But a lot of the adverse information and comment, even of an extreme kind, was not lies and inventions at all; and it was grievously misguided for the defenders of the Soviet Union to give total and unqualified endorsement to everything that the Soviet regime did, if only because no regime, whatever its intentions and even its achievements, should ever be given this sort of endorsement. The point is valid at all times, but has exceptional force in relation to the years of Stalin's rule, from the late twenties to his death in 1953, when immense crimes were committed by the regime.

There are many reasons to account for the wholehearted support which Communists and others on the left gave to Stalinist policies and actions; and it is worth dwelling on them, since they are usually ignored by anti-communists. One such reason is that alongside massive repression and murder, there was also great construction and advance; and the latter served to occlude the former. So did the derelictions and crimes of western capitalism and imperialism strengthen the will to believe that the Soviet Union, poor, beleaguered and vilified, was a land where socialism was being built: on no account must its endeavours be weakened and its enemies strengthened by adverse comment. The rise of Nazism enormously encouraged this view; so did the appeasement of the fascist dictators by Britain, France and other capitalist regimes. The Soviet Union and Communist parties at its command played their own considerable part by insisting that anyone on the left who did criticise the Soviet Union was 'objectively' allied to reactionaries and fascists, and must be mercilessly denounced. After World War II, there was also the appreciation of the immense contribution which the Soviet Union had made to the defeat of Nazism; and there was also the resumption of the old ideological and political warfare in the Cold War, and the determination of the West to stem the radical pressures generated by the war.

All such reasons—and the list could easily be extended—only serve to explain rather than justify the tragic submission to Stalinism of a vast army of activists in labour movements everywhere who were among the most dedicated and courageous participants in the class struggles of their times; and it needs to be said, given the denigration to which they have been subjected, not least by people who were themselves Stalinists, and by others who never lifted a finger on behalf of any decent cause, that these were the people everywhere who fought hardest against conservative, reactionary and fascist forces, with no thought of personal gain or **advance-**

immoral, unpatriotic and subversive (that had been said since 1917, and for that matter long before then as well), but also as supporters, allies or agents of their country's greatest enemy. Some anti-communists generously conceded that all those they denounced might not actually be 'traitors', but only weak and naive dupes; but that did not diminish the need to denounce them and their views.

(The identification of 'Communists' with the Soviet enemy has also been of the greatest value in legitimating witchhunting at the level of the state. The existence of witches requires efficient witchhunters, and this requirement has greatly helped to justify the vast enlargement of the control and surveillance functions of the state, and the vast increase in the scope and powers of the security services.) Anti-communism and the 'strong state' are closely linked: the more pervasive and extreme the former, the stronger the movement towards the latter. Once 'communism' is proclaimed to constitute a clear and present danger of subversion at home and of military aggression from abroad, it is much easier to argue that the times do not admit the luxury of libertarian squeamishness.

The same reasoning goes for society at large. Faced with the Communist threat, it is not only the state which must be strong and vigilant, but all institutions in society where subversion is most insidious and dangerous—the media, schools, universities, firms engaged in work related to defence, or even unrelated to it. Exclusion of people deemed politically 'unreliable', 'unsound', potentially subversive, in other words too far to the left, need not always be explicit; the important thing, from the anti-communist perspective, is that exclusion should be practised, and that it should serve as a warning to others. The extent to which this occurs also varies, depending on the country and the period; but even if the more spectacular forms of **McCarthyism** are now discredited, a creeping version of it has come to form part of the life of many if not most capitalist countries.

Anti-communism has in recent years made great use of a rhetoric which assigns a very large place to human rights, political and civic freedoms, and so forth. These are indeed precious values, which is why they are at the very heart of the socialist project. Anti-communists, on the other hand, cannot, as such, be taken to be true defenders of these values. We have already noted the selectivity which they bring to their defence of human rights and political freedoms, and the indulgence which they are willing to extend to the most repressive regimes, provided they are not 'communist'. It may be noted in addition that it is among these same defenders of freedom and human rights in Communist regimes that are to be found the most dedicated advocates of the curtailment of civic and political freedoms in their own countries, and the most ardent supporters of interventionist policies designed to shore up tyrannical regimes.

There is, however, something else to be noted about the ways in which anti-communists view human rights, quite apart from the selectivity with which their concern for these rights is usually manifested. This is the extremely circumscribed meaning which they attach to human rights. These rights are taken—quite rightly—to be violated when people are deprived of the chance to exercise elementary civic and political rights, and are persecuted for their opposition to their government **or regime**. But human rights are also violated, and dreadfully violated, **when men, women and children** are denied the elementary requirements of life, as they are in the 'Third World', and not only in the 'Third World'. Hunger, disease induced by destitution, the lack of clean water, early death, are great violations of human **rights**.⁷ But these are not the violations which anti-communist defenders of human rights are much given to attack, or even to acknowledge. On **the contrary**, their anti-communism leads them to acquiesce in, and even **to support**, the social order which is responsible for these violations, and to oppose the movements which seek to undo the status quo. These crusaders purport to fight for human rights; but their crusade in fact entails support for everything that makes for the denial of such **rights**.

In the anti-communist crusade, we also suggested earlier, the bogey of a Soviet military threat of world-wide dimensions plays an absolutely essential part. For it serves to legitimate American and other interventionist enterprises in every part of the world against revolutionary and even reformist movements, on the principle that these movements, if allowed to grow and to succeed, are bound to 'let the Russians in', that they must produce a 'domino effect', and **that they must inevitably** threaten vital economic and strategic Western interests. **Everything** is permissible to prevent this from happening, including the **massacre** in military operations of large numbers of men, women and **children**.⁸

The Soviet bogey also has a uniquely important role in legitimating the arms race. Nothing else could possibly persuade the populations of capitalist countries to support the expense, the waste and the risks of that race. Arms themselves do not produce wars. **But** the need to justify the arms race generates campaigns of **anti-communist** propaganda which contribute to a tense and fraught international climate; in that climate, confrontation between the United States and the **Soviet Union** becomes more likely and more dangerous.

The danger of such a confrontation is in any case already high. For in a world astir with challenge to the status quo, anti-communist insistence that any such challenge must be opposed by the United States and met by American intervention means in effect that the avoidance of confrontation between the 'super-powers' depends on the Soviet Union's acquiescence in American intervention. wherever it may occur. This is not a safe basis on which to rest the maintenance of peace.

Anti-communism has to be fought. The struggle against it is made much harder by the nature of the Soviet regime and by many of its policies and actions, from the treatment of Sakharov and other 'dissidents' at one level, to the invasion of Afghanistan at another. But it is nevertheless a struggle that must not be shunned, for the sake of peace, of democratic rights, and of socialist advance.

NOTES

For a self-critical analysis by an ex-Stalinist, notable for its dignity and sobriety, see M. Rodinson, *Cult, Ghetto and State* (London, 1983), Ch. 2.

See J.J. Kirkpatrick, *Dictatorships and Double Standards*, (New York, 1982), Ch. 1.

3. *The Times*, 30 December, 1983.

4. A.J. Mayer, *Politics and Diplomacy of Peacemaking. Containment and Counter-revolution at Versailles, 1918-1919*, (New York, 1967), p. 9.

These fears, in relation to the Far East and the projected entry of the Soviet Union in the war against Japan, may not have been the only reason for the decision to drop atom bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. But they were part of the calculations which went into the making of that decision.

It is well known that the Russians lost up to twenty million people killed in the war. But the material damage which they sustained was also immense, with, according to official Soviet statements, the total or partial destruction of fifteen large cities, 1,710 towns and 70,000 villages, six million buildings, more than 30,000 enterprises, etc., etc. (D. Horowitz, *The Free World Colossus*, (London, 1964), p. 51, fn. 3.

Thus, Norman Geras notes that '40,000 children die every day; that of the 122 million born in 1979, 17 million (nearly 14 per cent) will die before they are five; that between 350 and 500 million people are disabled, the major cause of this being poverty: about 100 million have been disabled by malnutrition; that 180 million children are not getting enough food to sustain health and minimal physical activity: protein deficiency, which can lead to mental retardation, affects 100 million under five in developing countries. . . over half the people in the third world have no access to safe water and that water-borne diseases kill some 30,000 people every day and account for about 80 per cent of all illnesses: every year 400 to 500 million are affected by trachoma and six million children die of diarrhoea. . . that in the tin mines of Bolivia a miner's life expectancy is reduced to 35 because of silicosis and tuberculosis; that 375,000 or more people in the third world will this year be poisoned by pesticides. . .' (N. Geras, *Marx and Human Nature: Refutation of a Legend*, (London, 1983), p. 105).

Thus, the French in Indochina and Algeria, the British in Malaya and Kenya, and the Americans in Korea and Vietnam. The devastation which the United States inflicted on Vietnam and Cambodia is not yet quite forgotten. On the other hand, the devastation inflicted on Korea by bombing is seldom remembered. The head of Bomber Command in the Far East described it in the following terms: 'I would say that the entire, almost the entire Korean peninsula is just a terrible mess. Everything is destroyed. There is nothing standing worthy of the name. . . Just before the Chinese came in we were grounded. There were no more targets in Korea', (Horowitz, *op. cit.*, p. 135).

ment, but on the contrary at great cost to themselves, often at the sacrifice of liberty and life.'

These defensive reflexes about the Soviet Union have by no means disappeared. But the reality of Stalinist rule has long been acknowledged on the left; and there has also been a wide measure of recognition that the post-Stalinist regime, while immeasurably less tyrannical than its predecessor, has remained exceedingly intolerant of dissent, and that its actions in this area as well as any other should be subject to intransigent socialist criticism. The extent of criticism varies greatly from one part of the left to another, but there is at least no disposition now to take the Soviet regime as a 'model' of socialism: indeed, there is now a widespread disposition on the left to think of the Soviet regime as an 'anti-model'. How could it be otherwise, given some of the most pronounced features of that regime? The socialist project means, and certainly meant for Marx, the subordination of the state to society. Precisely the reverse characterises the Soviet system. Moreover, the domination of the state in that system is assured by an extremely hierarchical, tightly controlled and fiercely monopolistic party aided by a formidable police apparatus. Outside the Party, there is no political life; and inside the Party, such political life as there exists is narrowly circumscribed by what the Party leadership permits or ordains—which means that there is not much political life in the Party either. Essential personal, civic and political freedoms are limited and insecure. Intellectual freedom in any meaningful sense is virtually non-existent; and the treatment of 'dissidents' of every kind is a scandal and a disgrace for a country which proclaims its dedication to socialism and Marxism. Much the same, with greater or lesser emphasis, is also true of all other Communist regimes. To call this 'socialism' is to degrade the concept to the level assigned to it by its enemies.

There have been people on the left, belonging to different and conflicting tendencies, groups and parties, who have ever since the first years of the Soviet regime been extremely critical of it. It is in fact from within the Marxist left that has been produced some of the most cogent critiques of the Soviet regime, notably from different strands in the Trotskyist tradition, beginning with Trotsky himself. But these critics have also very firmly rejected, as we do, any assimilation of their position to that of anti-communism; and we must now turn to the grounds on which our rejection of it is based.

One of these grounds is that anti-communism is an essentially conservative stance, which uses the experience of Soviet-type regimes as a further means—there are many others—of combating as utopian, absurd, dangerous and sinister any transformative project which goes beyond the most modest attempts at 'piecemeal social engineering'. Socialists are well aware by now of the difficulties of every kind which are bound to attend the creation of a cooperative, democratic and egalitarian commonwealth.

But this does not make them renounce their commitment to it; and the experience of the Soviet regime, or of China or Cambodia or anywhere else cannot be taken as of decisive relevance elsewhere, least of all in countries whose economic, social, political and cultural circumstances are vastly different from those in which Communist regimes have been implanted. Nor would most socialists want to divorce the communist project envisioned by Marx from the meaning of socialism. On the contrary, they see it rather as representing the fulfillment, however distant, of the promise of socialism.

Anti-communism is also grossly selective in its view of Communist regimes, and systematically presents a highly distorted picture of their reality. In particular, it casts into deep shadow or ignores altogether their positive side and their economic, social and cultural achievements. The two-sided nature of Soviet-type regimes is an intrinsic part of their being. As in the case of the Stalinist era in the Soviet Union, there is, in most if not all Soviet-type regimes, advance and progress as well as dictators & repression.

Anti-communism not only understates or ignores altogether the advances that are made, but also pays very little if any attention to the conditions and circumstances in which they have been made. Communist regimes have generally come to power in countries the vast majority of whose population has traditionally suffered from varying degrees of economic under-development, in some cases of an extreme kind, from fierce local and foreign exploitation; and from one form or other of authoritarian rule, including colonial rule. Moreover, many of these countries were ravaged by civil war and foreign intervention before or after coming under Communist rule, as in the case of the Soviet Union, China, Korea, Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia; and their regimes were also subjected to economic warfare, waged under the leadership of the United States, as in the case of Cuba. In other words, all Communist regimes have started out with fearsome handicaps and burdens. This combination of under-development and exploitation on the one hand and of capitalist hostility and destruction on the other, does not annul or explain away the negative aspects of these regimes. But it is highly relevant to any serious assessment of their nature and dynamic; and it makes their advances and achievements all the more noteworthy.

Anti-communism is also tendentiously selective in another respect. It condemns the political and human abuses of Communist dictatorships, but very often condones or simply ignores the abuses and crimes of right-wing regimes. Such regimes, however tyrannical and criminal they may be, can count on the steadfast support of the United States and other capitalist states, all of course in the name of the defence of democracy and freedom. At most, perfunctory and general regrets may be expressed at the evil deeds which right-wing regimes may commit (though this is

not how it is put), with pious hopes also being voiced that the time may soon arrive when such abuses as occur may cease. But the contrast between this indulgence and the fierce denunciation of abuses in Communist regimes is very striking, and says much about the genuineness of anti-communist concern for human rights, democracy and the rest. We will return to the point later.

Mrs Jeanne Kirkpatrick, formerly a professor of Political Science and at present chief US delegate to the United Nations, has sought to justify this difference of attitude to right-wing dictatorships and Communist regimes with the argument, *inter alia*, that the former were only 'authoritarian', whereas the latter were 'totalitarian'. Authoritarian dictatorships of the right are capable of reform and change in the direction of 'democracy', whereas Communist and left 'totalitarian' regimes are not. These notions warrant some comment.

First, 'authoritarian' regimes supported by the West only become less repressive and more 'democratic' under the impact of extreme crisis and challenge. The crisis itself is the result of pressure and struggle, including armed struggle, against the regime in question; and it is a challenge which the regime, with the full support of the United States, seeks to defeat, usually by savage repression. It is only when it is unable to achieve the obliteration of challenge that reform may follow. The grim irony of this scenario is that it is not the successes of the policies of the United States, but American inability to shore up a tyrannical regime, which produces concessions.

Secondly, these concessions usually leave intact the repressive structures of the regimes, their police and military apparatus, and all the forces which sustained the authoritarian regime in the first place. Death squads, systematic and extensive torture, the imprisonment and killing of opponents may no longer be in fashion; and that is indeed a great gain. But most of the people responsible for the crimes of the regime remain in positions of power and influence and continue to be an important force in public affairs. There is no very good reason why their turn should not come again.

Thirdly, and relatedly, the changes that are made in the political realm, such as they are, leave quite intact the economic and social structures which form the permanent source of 'social oppression' for the vast majority of the population; and they also leave intact the predominant position of foreign interests and international capital in these countries. For the vast majority, exploitation, subjection, hunger and malnutrition, chronic disease and early death, all remain largely or wholly unaffected by the 'democratic' changes which may have occurred in a remote and alien capital; and attempts to resist and reduce 'social oppression' on the part of those subjected-to it are not much less liable to harsh suppression than they were under the dictatorship. The only real hope of significant progress

lies in the revolutionary transformation of the economic, social and political system, and in the overthrow of the conservative forces in society and the state which have been dominant hitherto; and this of course must include powerful foreign capitalist interests. This is not a sufficient condition of progress; but it is nevertheless an essential one.

It is precisely the purpose of local oligarchies and their foreign protectors to prevent, **contain**, neutralise or crush attempts at revolutionary change: 'democratic' reforms, reluctantly conceded when outright repression has failed, is viewed as a means of maintaining the status quo, not in the least of transforming it.

It is the revolutionary transformation which occurred in Cuba that makes possible the kind of Reuter report from Havana which the London *Times* carried at the end of **1983** under the headline 'How Castro has created a welfare state to be envied', and which is worth quoting at length:

Even Fidel Castro's harshest critics would have difficulty in belittling the progress made by Cuba's revolution, twenty five years old on January 1, in creating a welfare state worthy of a much richer country.

A guarantee to free education and public health services has been one of the main goals of Cuba's Communist Government which inherited a far different society when Dr Castro's guerilla army took power in 1959.

Official statistics, backed by United Nations specialists working here, illustrate the transformation that has taken place in this tropical, largely agricultural island.

The average life expectancy of a **Cuban born** in the 1950s was around 50 compared with 73 today, while infant mortality has been slashed from about 60 per 1,000 births to 16. Inoculation campaigns and improved diet, sanitation and living conditions have all but eliminated diseases which still wreak havoc in most Third World countries. No cases of polio, malaria, diphtheria or infantile tetanus, ailments which once killed thousands of Cuban youngsters, have been registered in the past decade.

Cradle-to-grave social benefits ensure that even the poorest **families** do not go hungry and have equal access to medical treatment and schooling. Government spending on education and health takes up more than 20 per cent of the national budget. The number of hospitals and doctors has tripled and the new **Hermanos Ameijeiras** hospital in central Havana is symbolic of the new authorities' near obsession with providing the best in medical **treatment**.

Of no comparable capitalist country in the 'Third World' could such a report be written; but it concerns an aspect of Communist reality which anti-communism chooses to occlude.

Also, the 'totalitarian' label which is attached to Communist regimes is more useful as denunciation than as description. For whatever the intentions of their leaders may be, the notion of total domination which the term conveys is belied in actual experience. Not only do these regimes have to cope with diverse oppositions, but, repressive though they are, they do have elaborate mechanisms of participation and consultation which make possible the expression of a multitude of demands, **prompt-**

ings, grievances and discontents at the grassroots. Some of these are heard and heeded, others are not. But the picture which anti-communism seeks to convey of an Orwellian world of 1984 is inaccurate. For those people who transgress the shifting bounds of orthodoxy imposed by the Party and the state, life is likely to be bitter and cruel, and this is a standing indictment of the regimes in question. All the same, they are not, generally speaking, regimes in which crushed populations live as Orwellian 'proles' under effective 'totalitarian' control. The notion that they are is part of ideological warfare, in which truth, as in all wars, is an early casualty. One of the purposes of this propaganda is the celebration, in C. Wright Mills's formulation, of capitalist democracy, better known as democracy, and the blurring of the pressures in these capitalist democratic regimes towards enforced conformity.

It is also inaccurate to say that Soviet-type regimes, being 'totalitarian', are incapable of change. They are all 'modernising' regimes; indeed, some of their major problems have been produced by a 'productivist' megalomania, aggravated by the lack of effective political checks. At any rate, the dynamic that carries them forward requires them to experiment, change and adapt. Here too, nothing could be further from the stagnant world of 1984. It is true, on the other hand, that the many reforms that are undertaken do not extend to the erosion, let alone the abrogation, of the monopolistic role of the Communist Party, translated as its 'leading role'. But even this needs some qualification. For erosion of this 'leading role' of the Party has on occasion occurred, notwithstanding the resistance of its leadership. Czechoslovakia in the Spring of 1968 showed how much change could be forced from within upon a system that has been a byword for rigidity; and Poland in 1980 and after also has shown that change was both possible and extremely difficult to sustain in the face of Soviet opposition. The Czech Spring was stopped by Soviet tanks, and the Polish stirrings by a novel form of Communist Bonapartism, induced by Soviet pressure, and made possible, it is important to add, by Soviet contiguity. This does not, however, diminish the significance of these experiences in terms of what they betoken for the future.

Nor even should the extent of the changes which have occurred in the Soviet Union itself since Stalin's death be underestimated. There is a crucial sense in which the system has not changed; but within an outwardly rigid framework, much in its functioning has indeed been transformed from the days of unbridled tyranny, so much so that it is not at all unrealistic or 'utopian' to think that 'Czech' and 'Polish' experiences will, in due course and in their own way, make themselves felt in the Soviet Union itself.

The 'totalitarian' label is part of ideological warfare in another way as well—in so far as it covers both Communist and Fascist regimes, and is thereby intended to suggest that they are very similar systems. More

specifically, the suggestion is that Communism and Nazism are more or less identical. This may be good propaganda but it is very poor political analysis. There were similarities between Stalinism and Nazism in the use of mass terror and mass murder. But there were also enormous differences between them. Stalinism was a 'revolution from above', which was intended to modernise Russia from top to bottom, on the basis of the state ownership of the means of production (most of those 'means of production' being themselves produced as part of the 'revolution from above'); and Russia was indeed transformed, at immense cost. Nazism, on the other hand, was, for all its transformative rhetoric, a counter-revolutionary movement and regime, which consolidated capitalist ownership and the economic and social structures which Hitler had inherited from Weimar. As has often been observed, twelve years of absolute Nazi rule did not fundamentally change, and never sought to change fundamentally, the social system which had existed when Hitler came to power. To assimilate Nazism and Stalinism, and equate them as similarly 'totalitarian' movements and regimes of the extreme right and the extreme left is to render impossible a proper understanding of their nature, content and purpose.

Two further points need to be made about the movements which have been the prime targets of anti-communist attack and denunciation. The first is that the revolutionary movements which have come to prominence in the years since World War II have not been Communist-led or dominated. A profound difference has in this respect come upon the revolutionary scene from the first half of the twentieth century to the second. In the first half, at least after 1917, revolutionary movements of the left across the world were mostly Communist-led; and those who led them accepted allegiance to the Communist International, meaning in effect its Russian leadership, and believed this to be synonymous with, or at least in no way opposed to, their allegiance to their own national struggles. Those who did not take this view did not long remain leaders.

In the second half of the century, on the other hand, revolutionary movements have not been of this type at all, even though Communists have often been one of their constituent elements. The Cuban revolutionaries, for instance, were not Communists when they set out on the road which ultimately led them to Havana in 1959. Nor are the Sandinistas in Nicaragua, or the liberation forces in El Salvador.

Furthermore, no revolutionary movement anywhere in the world, whether it calls itself 'Marxist-Leninist' or not, believes that it owes any particular allegiance to Moscow, or that the interests which it defends are necessarily synonymous with those of the Soviet Union. All such movements are imbued with very strong nationalist sentiments; and one of the strongest impulses which animates them is precisely the desire to free their country from foreign domination, notably that of the United States. The idea that they are willing to exchange one form of foreign domina-

tion and dependence for another is absurd, and is not least derived from a rather racist view that hitherto dominated people in the 'Third World' cannot really be as keen to be free from foreign domination as the people of the United States or Britain, and that their governments, for their own good, require tutelage, whether they want it or not. Revolutionary movements and regimes may be forced by Western hostility and intervention to seek Soviet support, and to enter into close relations with the Soviet Union. Cuba is an excellent example of this process: there is every reason to suppose that its ties with the Soviet Union would not have become nearly so close if the Cuban revolutionary regime had not been faced with the implacable determination of the United States to inflict whatever damage it could upon the country and ultimately to bring down its government. The same applies to other revolutionary movements and regimes driven to seek support from the Soviet Union by American hostility.

The second point concerns Communist parties in advanced capitalist countries. There is a weak sense in which these remain 'revolutionary' parties—in the sense that they remain committed to the fundamental transformation of their countries in socialist directions. In this sense, however, a good many social democratic parties can also claim to be 'revolutionary'. Communist parties further stress their commitment to class struggle, use its language much more emphatically than do their social democratic counterparts, and proclaim their attachment to 'Marxism-Leninism', or at least to Marxism. But they are also thoroughly committed to working within a strictly constitutionalist framework, and in terms of a strategy which accords priority to electoral and parliamentary gains. As noted earlier, most of them have moreover ceased to accept dictation from the Soviet Union; and they are greatly concerned to emphasise that they will follow their own road to socialism, in accordance with their own national traditions, circumstances and needs. Notwithstanding such proclamations, most of these parties retain close and even intimate links with the Soviet Union and its allies. But it is nevertheless only in the haunted world of anti-communism that these parties appear as mere outposts of Soviet power, burning with the desire to bring their countries into the Soviet fold.

This view, however, applied on a world scale, is essential for the purpose of legitimating anti-revolutionary action against revolutionary movements and regimes; and these do not have to be 'officially' Communist to be denounced as Trojan horses or fifth columns. Any kind of revolutionary movement or regime of the left will do. This is the basis on which the United States seeks to justify the claim that, say, Nicaragua under the Sandinistas poses a direct threat to the security of the United States. The claim can only be taken out of the realm of pure fantasy on the assumption that the Sandinistas want to bring the Soviet Union into their country. This assumption, however, itself belongs to the realm of