

Letter from a reader on Lenin and globalisation

15 March 2000

RE: Marxist internationalism vs. the perspective of radical protest. A reply to Professor Chossudovsky's critique of globalisation—By Nick Beams (21 February 2000).

In your article you stated: “But this does not at all mean that globalisation as such must be opposed. Capitalism, at every stage in its historical development, and above all in this latest phase, is a system of class exploitation. But more than that, it is also a form of organisation of production, involving the continuous development of the productive forces, both through technological advances and through the development of the international division of labour. It is upon consideration of these issues that fundamental questions of perspective arise.”

Globalisation is, in fact, a euphemism for imperialism, and represents not so much an accomplished fact as it does a desired goal (or “quest,” to use imperialist new-speak terminology). Imperialism came about during the closing years of the 19th century, an inevitable consequence of the productive forces within an industrially advanced nation-state reaching the level of development whereby the working class within that state simply cannot afford to buy back all that it has produced, the result being that the capitalists must look beyond its national borders for new markets. Faced with international competition it must also seek out cheap sources of labor and natural resources.

Leninists understand that imperialism represents not only the highest stage of capitalism, but is devoid of any progressive role because far from being able to solve the national question, it exacerbates national tensions to the boiling point, thereby perpetuating the national question and thus preventing the class question from coming to the forefront. Leninists embrace the principal of national self-determination not because we

wish to perpetuate the nation-state, but, rather, because the national question obscures the class question.

Your article appears to imply that “globalisation” has a progressive aspect, but as “globalisation” is just another word for imperialism, what you are saying is that there is a progressive aspect to imperialism. Leninists would disagree with such a characterization, be it either explicit or implicit.

The reason behind imperialism's eastward “quest” is not the Internet or other advances in computer technology (they are, in fact, imperialism's tools), but rather that there is no longer any Soviet Union to stand in the way of imperialism's century-old expansionist appetites. To embrace the concept that imperialism has a progressive mission—to develop the productive forces on a world scale—is to abandon the Leninist position that imperialism can only PERPETUATE the existence of nation-states through the exacerbation of nationalistic passions. Ultimately the ICFI will find itself supporting imperialism as a “lesser evil” than nationalism. It will argue that imperialism's mission is to unify the world under a single capitalist order, thereby facilitating the overthrow of world capitalism by the international proletariat. The ICFI's position on “Globalisation” will lead it down the path to the support of its “own” bourgeoisie against all those “reactionary nation-states.”

ML



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