

Lenin also placed great value on the preservation of the Russian Revolution, and he was not willing to put it at risk by launching a revolutionary crusade into Western Europe. He was highly pragmatic, and to enhance Soviet security he eagerly sought improved relations with capitalist governments. He was willing to establish formal diplomatic relations with them and to expand trade. He even endorsed the idea of political and military co-operation with bourgeois nations.

His approach was very different from that advocated in the early years of Soviet power by Nikolai Bukharin and the so-called "Left Communists" within the Bolshevik Party. During the intra-party debate on the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk in 1918, the Left Communists argued that it was totally impermissible for a proletarian government to conclude agreements or treaties with capitalist governments. They advanced two main arguments on behalf of this firm stand, one based primarily on moral considerations and the other on political calculations.

On moral grounds, they argued that it was a direct violation of socialist principles and ideals to traffic with the capitalist enemy. No matter how noble the ends, certain means were automatically excluded on grounds of principle. An agreement with the imperialist governments of Germany or France was as inconceivable to them as a pact with the Tsar. Both would dishonor and discredit the cause of socialism. If a socialist government were to strike a deal with the imperialist powers, it would be aiding the enemy and acquiescing in the perpetuation of an immoral political order. The only acceptable posture for the true revolutionary was one of total hostility to international capitalism.

This irreconcilable opposition to any dealings with the capitalist world was also buttressed by a second, more pragmatic argument. The Left Communists concluded that it would be impossible for the Soviet government to adhere to a principled and revolutionary foreign policy once it initiated relations with capitalist governments. With time, increased value was bound to be placed on the security of