

Rejecting both these extremes, I would argue that Lenin can best be understood not as an enthusiastic champion of East-West cooperation nor as a wild-eyed fanatic, but as a pragmatic revolutionary. Despite the claims of Soviet spokesmen — claims which are often made by Western revisionist scholars as well — Lenin's hostility to the capitalist governments of the world was not simply a reaction to the policies of the West during the period of the Civil War and its intervention in 1918-1919. Lenin was a dedicated revolutionary who had committed his life to the revolutionary cause decades earlier. He viewed the world in class terms and dreamed of the eventual demise of capitalism, not just in Russia, but in all the advanced nations of the world. He firmly believed that the Russian proletariat, like the workers of Germany or France, had an obligation to work for revolution not just in their own country but throughout the world. A formal resolution which was adopted by the Bolsheviks in August 1917, months before they came to power and thus well before Western hostility to the Soviet regime had been demonstrated, stated quite clearly:

The liquidation of imperialist domination puts before the working class of that country which shall first achieve the dictatorship of the proletarians and semiproletarians the task of supporting by every means (including armed force) the struggling proletariat of the other countries.<sup>15</sup>

On numerous occasions, Lenin unequivocally declared that it was not only permissible for Soviet Russia to intervene politically and militarily to assist the struggling proletariat of another nation, but *obligatory* for it to do so if this would facilitate the overthrow of capitalist regimes. Lenin allowed only one reason for not fulfilling this sacred revolutionary obligation: if the Russian Revolution was so weak and unstable that it could not render effective assistance to other nations without jeopardizing its own existence.

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<sup>15</sup> KPSS v rezoliutsiakh, Moscow: Gospolitizdat, 1954, 7th ed., I, pp. 373-374.