

LENIN'S AMBIGUOUS LEGACY

This chapter deals with the following questions: What ideological legacy did Lenin leave his successors? To what extent have subsequent Soviet perspectives on East-West relations been a direct product of the concepts and doctrines advanced by Lenin? Is there a Leninist blueprint for world revolution? In attempting to answer these questions, it is argued that the conventional wisdom so often voiced in the Soviet Union and the West is incorrect. Lenin did not have a consistent and well-developed theory of East-West relations; he never elaborated a clear set of principles and concepts analyzing the nature of relations between proletarian Russia and the capitalist world, and his views varied quite considerably over the years, as he responded to changing political circumstances.

Lenin approached East-West relations with the temperament of a shrewd and flexible politician rather than as a rigorous theoretician. His voluminous speeches and writings often refer to international developments. But his pronouncements took the form of concrete political advocacy rather than careful theoretical analysis. For this reason, he left posterity a highly diffuse and ambiguous legacy. Moreover, the ambiguity of his pronouncements has left them open to politically inspired misuse. Soviet spokesmen wrap themselves in the mantle of Lenin and claim to be guided by "Leninist theory" no matter how far their policies and perspectives might stray from his. Conversely, hard-line critics of the Soviet Union in the West often cite Lenin's most militant pronouncements out of context, ignore other statements of his that are inconvenient to their arguments, and