

danger of nuclear war, impeded revolution by heightening repression within the capitalist countries, enhanced the political fortune of bellicose elements within Western ruling circles, and fuelled a wasteful arms race.

Stalin's pessimistic determinism was replaced by a new sense of optimistic voluntarism. Acute tension was viewed not as an unavoidable consequence of the international class struggle, but as an unnecessary legacy of the Cold War. International tension was blamed on such potentially reversible factors as bad communication, mistrust, and the relative lack of commercial and political contact between the East and the West.<sup>42</sup> Thus, the need to lessen mistrust and to reduce international tension was seen as one of the reasons why the Soviet Union should carry out an active foreign policy and strive to increase East-West interchange in the realms of economics and politics.

In this context, one of Khrushchev's most significant ideological innovations — one that has often not been sufficiently appreciated in the West — was to provide a fundamentally new basis for the conceptualization of Soviet-American relations. Lenin and Stalin automatically regarded the most powerful capitalist state as the leader of the imperialist forces hostile to the Soviet Union, and hence they saw it as the Soviet Union's main enemy. For them, the central task of Soviet diplomacy was to utilize the contradictions that existed within the imperialist camp so as to turn the other capitalist states against whichever country headed the forces of imperialism at any given moment. In the 1920s, Great Britain was considered the dominant world power, and for this reason the Soviet Union sought to capitalize upon tensions within the British Empire and to fuel Anglo-German antagonism by encouraging German resentment

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<sup>42</sup> Khrushchev's ideologists even went so far as to substitute a form of optimistic determinism for Stalin's pessimism by declaring that: "... the U.S. imperialists are powerless to halt the relaxation of tension which is a result of objective development." "The Communists are Stepping Up the Struggle for Peace," (editorial), *World Marxist Review* III, No. 7, 1960, pp. 4-5.