

MILITARY INTERVENTION AND SOCIALIST INTERNATIONALISM*

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Soviet military action in Afghanistan has once again served to underline the need for socialists to clarify their positions on the issue of military intervention by the USSR and other Communist states in other **countries**—including of course intervention against other Communist states. Before the USSR's intervention in Afghanistan, there was Vietnam's intervention in Kampuchea and its overthrow of the Pol Pot regime; and there was also China's intervention in Vietnam. Before that, there was Cuba's intervention in Angola and also in Ethiopia. Other instances from the less recent past readily come to mind—for instance Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia in 1968 and in Hungary in 1956; and so on back to the overthrow by the Red Army of the Menshevik regime in Georgia in 1921 and its abortive march on Warsaw in 1920.

These very **different** episodes—or at least some of them—have raised much more difficult questions for socialists than does American and other Western military intervention all over the world. Insofar as such Western intervention has been intended to shore up reactionary regimes against revolutionary movements of very diverse kinds, socialists have had no problem in opposing it. But Russian, Chinese, Vietnamese and Cuban military intervention has produced no such easy unanimity on the left. On the contrary, it has generated great uncertainty, confusion and division; and it has commonly led to the adoption of positions which are not based on any obvious socialist principle but rather on antecedent sympathies or antipathies, according to which a particular intervention is approved or condemned. Empirical justification comes later; and given sufficient selectivity and a strong will to believe, it comes quite easily.

That there should be much uncertainty and confusion over military intervention by Communist states is not surprising: the issues, for socialists, are often full of difficulties and dilemmas. To recognise that this is so is perhaps the first rule to be followed in discussing them. But the

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difficulties and dilemmas make it all the more necessary to clarify the principles on which judgments are made. This is what the present article tries to do.

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It may be best to begin with the one set of conditions in which military intervention poses no problem in terms of socialist principles. This is where a more or less progressive government (the use of the formula will be justified presently), enjoying a large measure of popular support, is seeking to repel a counter-revolutionary internal movement, in conditions of civil war or approximating to civil war; or where such a government is seeking to repel a military attack from abroad which is clearly designed to overthrow it. Both internal and external attack may of course be combined. Military help to a threatened government is obviously justified in such circumstances in terms of socialist internationalism. What precise form the help should take must remain for the requesting government to decide, just as states being asked for help must take many different considerations into account, including the larger international implications of the giving of help, particularly if it is to assume the form of military intervention.

Even in these circumstances, it is crucial that the requesting government should remain in charge, and that it should not surrender its destinies to another power, however friendly. This may raise problems, even serious problems, for instance of military command, or of strategic **decision-making**. But to the greatest possible extent, the requesting government must remain in charge and seek to preserve ultimate sovereignty; otherwise, there is a great danger that military intervention will soon come to bear a disturbing resemblance to military domination and even occupation.

The classic case of justified external military help is (or perhaps more accurately should have been) that of the Spanish Civil War, where a liberal-left government was faced with a military rebellion of fascist inspiration, backed by Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany. The International Brigade that was then formed, mostly at Communist initiative, was the most remarkable example of international socialist solidarity and of 'proletarian internationalism' in history. And for all the many foul features of Soviet help to the Spanish Republic, that help also falls under the rubric of international solidarity. What was wrong with Soviet intervention is that there was not enough of it; and that one of the forms it took was the liquidation of large numbers of anti-Stalinists who were **fighting** for the Republic.

Another more recent example is that of Cuban intervention in Angola. Whether initially prompted by the USSR or not, Cuban military intervention there was clearly justified on the criteria advanced earlier. For it contributed to the survival of a revolutionary government just emerging

from a long anti-colonial war against Portugal, enjoying a large measure of popular support, and faced with internal enemies backed by South Africa, the United States, Zaire, China, and so on.' In the same line of thought, Soviet and Chinese help to Vietnam was similarly justified, and there would have been every justification, in principle, for more such intervention, had the Vietnamese asked for it—although larger considerations of war and peace would obviously have had to be taken into account.

I have referred here to 'more or less progressive' governments and regimes, and use this formula in order to take some necessary distance from the rhetoric which is the usual accompaniment of discussions of intervention, where the regime which is being helped tends to be accorded every conceivable socialist virtue and is painted in the most brilliant **colours**. Yet, such governments are not, and in the circumstances cannot be, as pure and praiseworthy as they are said to be by their internal spokesmen and external apologists. Whatever they may say about themselves, and whatever may be said on their behalf, the conditions in which they have come to power and in which they function, are bound to affect adversely—often very adversely—the 'socialism' which they proclaim. One of the many blights which Stalinism cast on socialist thinking was the habit—indeed the requirement—to view favoured regimes (beginning with Stalin's own) as unblemished examples of socialist construction; and the habit at least did not die with Stalin. The craving to believe is very **strong**; but it surely ought to be resisted. Governments do not have to be perfect in order to be supported—and *critical* support is the most that **any** government ought to be accorded. The legitimacy of intervention does not rest on the (always illusory) socialist perfection of the government that is being supported: it rests rather on a judgment that its survival is in peril; and that, for **all** its imperfections and shortcomings, it deserves to survive, because of the hopes it offers and because of the reactionary nature of the forces which are threatening its survival.

A second set of conditions is where a movement of opposition or liberation, with a substantial measure of support, is waging a military struggle, from its own liberated bases, against an authoritarian and reactionary regime representing landed, commercial and financial oligarchies, foreign concerns, multi-national corporations, and backed by the United States and other Western powers. It is worth stressing that such governments and regimes **have** ever since World War II enjoyed the backing of the United States and other Western powers because, however repressive and corrupt they may be, they are part of the Free World, meaning in effect the Free Enterprise world. This being the case, defending these regimes against their own people is an intrinsic part of the logic of imperialism. This logic requires such defence for a number of different but related reasons: as long as they are part of the Free World, they are available for the operations of free

enterprise; they may also have strategic importance; and they may have resources—oil, uranium, **etc.**—**which** enhance their value to their protectors. The overthrow of reactionary and repressive regimes by popular movements, of whatever kind, is therefore unacceptable or at least unwelcome, because all the advantages which these governments offer to imperialism risk being extinguished; and there is also the risk that successor regimes may be sympathetic to Communist powers, or that they will at least be made less easy to handle than hitherto; and their success in achieving power in any case strengthens the anti-imperialist cause. The coming into being of successor regimes may not always be prevented; but in that case, they must be subverted and coopted back into the Western camp.

Clearly, movements of opposition and liberation require and deserve international socialist solidarity and support. But military intervention is a different matter: and as a matter of fact, such movements very seldom ask for it. The reason for this is obvious, namely that, if they did, they would run the very grave risk of being swamped and taken over by the intervening power, or at least of losing effective control over the struggle they are conducting; and its leaders would at the same time be bound to incur the accusation of being puppets or agents of that power. Liberation struggles, however inspired and whatever they call themselves, have almost by definition a strong nationalist ingredient. Very often, the movement is impelled by the will to rid the country of a regime which has brought it into dependence on another state: all other aims, including the achievement of economic, social, and cultural advances, are **seen to** pass through the achievement of national independence or statehood. Given this, acceptance of foreign protection by way of foreign military intervention cuts across this national—and nationalist—emphasis, or at least runs the very great risk of doing so. This is presumably why leaders of liberation and guerilla movements do not usually seek military aid beyond the supply of weapons, or training assistance, or military advisers.

Governments are a different matter. For they can at least claim sovereign authority, and are therefore better able to control the foreign intervention they require and may ask for. A group of revolutionaries in the field is likely to find such control more difficult to achieve. Also, the intervening power, being by definition 'friendly', is likely to be more inhibited in its relations with a formally independent government, able to claim sovereign authority, than with a revolutionary movement. But even in the case of governments, the risk of being swamped, of being taken over, or of suffering a serious reduction of authority, may be considerable, and is bound to weigh in the calculations which government leaders must make whether to invoke external military help or not.

The third set of conditions is the one the left has most commonly had to confront, and which it has found the most difficult. This is where military

In Afghanistan as in Hungary and Czechoslovakia, the notion that the Russians were 'invited' in by any kind of legitimate authority is so absurd as not to require discussion. On the other hand, the question of counter revolution in Afghanistan does require it. The regime that came into being in April 1978 had declared itself to be a revolutionary one, intent upon the thorough transformation of the country in socialist directions. In immediate terms, this meant setting in motion a number of greatly-needed reforms—some measures of land reform, improvements in the position of women, some attempts at alleviating an over 90% illiteracy rate, the granting of cultural rights to national minorities, and the cancellation of debts owed by peasants to richer farmers and landlords.

From the first, the government confronted stubborn resistance and was itself undermined by acute internal dissension and factional struggles of a long-standing nature. It never had more than a very slender basis of support, concentrated in Kabul, and probably numbering no more than a few thousand people in a country of nearly seventeen million, of whom some two and a half million are town dwellers and the rest country dwellers, with a substantial number of nomads. By all accounts, the Taraki regime was fiercely repressive and thousands of people were imprisoned and many executed. This further reduced the government's base of support and fed the strength of its opponents, some of whom were supported by Iran, Pakistan, the United States and China. From the beginning of 1979 if not earlier, the Russians played an important role in the country's government and administration, and also in the military struggle against opposition forces. At the end of 1979, this turned into full scale military suppression, or attempted suppression, and this has since then assumed larger proportions.

In the case of the military interventions in Hungary and Czechoslovakia, it could be argued that Russian arms were safeguarding the economic, social and political transformations which had been brought about by the regimes which had come into being some ten years earlier in the Hungarian case and twenty years earlier in the Czech one. As I have said earlier, this argument, based on the threat of counter-revolution, is unconvincing. But even this justification is lacking in the case of Afghanistan. For the regime was new, had achieved very little, was exceedingly weak (except in the repression of those of its opponents it could reach) and did not appear to have any serious measure of popular support. There was no revolution to save in Afghanistan, only a government that proclaimed its revolutionary intentions but had extremely poor revolutionary prospects. The chances are that no government in Afghanistan resting on so slender a base as the Taraki and **Amin** regime could hope to achieve much; and that it would only be able to maintain itself—if at **all**—by continued repression and the help of foreign arms.

Here too, the question of alternatives has to be posed. It is of course convenient to argue that **no** alternative to Babrak **Karmal** existed save the

blackest kind of reactionary regime, allied to the United States, Pakistan and China. This seems very unlikely. No doubt, there would have been much turmoil if the Russians had not intervened. Probably, the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA), or rather its leaders, would have lost the monopoly of power which they achieved with the coup of April 1978. The chances are that they would have had to share power with 'outside' elements by way of a coalition; and that there would have occurred a loosening of ties with the USSR.

No option of this sort appears to have been explored, either by the leaders of the PDPA or by the Russians. The reason for this is twofold: first, because it would precisely have meant the relinquishing of monopolistic power by the PDPA leaders, which was a difficult and risky enterprise that they were naturally loath to consider; and secondly because the Soviet Union feared that a loosening of power by the PDPA leadership would indeed have meant the erosion and possibly the end of their preponderant influence in a country which had come to be in their 'sphere of influence' and control. This, incidentally, would have restored a situation which had prevailed in the years preceding the coup of 1978, when Afghanistan under the rule of Mohammed Daud was the terrain of intense competition between the United States (via Iran) and the USSR. The coup of 1978 was in this sense a major victory for the USSR, which it was not prepared to see **jeopardised** by an attempted widening of the base of the regime. The question of security, which will be taken up presently, was obviously an important consideration. But the larger question, encompassing that of security, is that the end of monopolistic power in Afghanistan would have appeared to be a retreat of Soviet power, for which the only parallel or precedent is **Tito's** 'rebellion' against Stalin in 1948. The Soviet leaders were not prepared to risk such a retreat. Instead, they opted for the installation of a puppet regime backed by military force. It is possible that such a regime can be maintained by military force. But it seems more likely that the Russians themselves will be compelled to engineer some kind of compromise solution, since the present situation involves them in a war of pacification which, in the nature of the terrain and the opposition (and the help which the opposition will be able to get from outside), they cannot conclusively win. But however this may turn out, the fact remains that the military intervention altogether lacks legitimacy and has strengthened rather than weakened the forces of counter-revolution in Afghanistan.

'Preventing counter-revolution' and 'saving the revolution' is one argument which leads many socialists to accept the legitimacy of military intervention in such cases as Hungary or Czechoslovakia or Afghanistan. A second,

closely related argument, is not usually stated explicitly but exercises a powerful attraction and goes as follows: the revolution may or may not have been supported by a majority of the people, or even by a substantial minority. But even if it was not, it did happen; and it must therefore be maintained at all costs and if necessary by force of foreign arms, not only because the alternative is counterrevolution, or because an alternative poses a threat to Soviet security, but also because in *due course* the people will come to see the advantages of the regime which the revolution installed. They will come to accept the regime and to support it. Early progress towards 'socialism' will thus have been made more or less against the will of the people. But given the advantages of the system and what it will do for the people, later progress will be made on the basis of popular support. In this sense, what military intervention is doing is to give the revolution a breathing space and to make possible its later consolidation and successes. Military intervention buys time for the revolution and could even be said to be an extreme form of 'substitutism', with foreign armies rather than the party 'substituting' themselves for the will of the proletariat and allied classes. Of course, 'substitutism' is a deformation. It runs counter to the Marxist 'scenario' for a socialist revolution, or at least to **Marx's** view of it; and it also runs counter to Lenin's view of the party as being closely linked to, even though separate from, the working class, and as requiring a large measure of popular support to make a revolution. But, the argument goes on, circumstances impose hard choices, particularly in an international context of implacable hostility to the revolutionary cause; and theory has to be adapted to the requirements of real life, without self-defeating and dogmatic adherence to frozen formulas; and so on.

The trouble with the argument is not only that it contradicts **Marx's** 'scenario' for a socialist revolution, or Lenin's: this is hardly a conclusive objection. The trouble is rather that the projection on which the argument is based is exceedingly dubious and has in fact been shown by experience to date to be wrong.

The crucial factor here is popular support, or rather lack of popular support. The revolution which is being saved by foreign arms is one which the large—usually the overwhelming—majority of the people, including of course the working class and peasants, oppose: it is precisely because of this opposition that foreign military intervention occurs. But the intervention itself constitutes a further condemnation of the regime which depends upon it, and further adds to its already great unpopularity; and it also further alienates the mass of the people from the 'socialism' which the regime and its foreign backers claim to represent and uphold. Military intervention also fuels a powerful nationalist sentiment, itself fostered by antagonism to the regime, and nationalist sentiment is further exacerbated when intervention is carried out by the armies of a country which is viewed by the mass of the people as a secular enemy and predator, whose govern-

ment is believed to be furthering traditional aims of national aggrandisement and domination. An obvious case in point is Poland; and it probably applies also to Vietnam in Kampuchea. Whether the belief is justified or not is not very material: it is deeply held.

These are very heavy burdens for a regime to bear, in terms of its minimal legitimation. Some regimes in Eastern Europe have borne the burdens more easily than others. But nowhere has a Communist regime imposed by foreign arms upon a hostile population been able to acquire massive popular legitimation. The reasons for this include foreign intervention but go well beyond it.

Almost by definition, a regime imposed upon a hostile population by foreign arms (or for that matter without the help of foreign arms) will be strongly repressive: opposition must be put down, civil rights must be denied, and civic life must be severely controlled, and thereby impoverished. This also deeply affects economic life and activity. The regime requires the cooperation of the working class, the peasantry, and the producers in general. But the working class, officially prevented from freely expressing its demands and grievances, and from using the one weapon which is most readily and immediately available to it, namely the right to strike, fights back by non-cooperation at work and everywhere else. Other classes and strata, also alienated and unable to express themselves, do the same. The result is resistance or at best indifference, inefficiency and corruption. Poor performance and non-cooperation aggravate economic difficulties; and these in turn enhance popular dissatisfaction.

In this perspective, the notion that these regimes can eventually come to enjoy a large and growing measure of popular support must appear illusory. For not only are they deeply marked by their dependence on foreign intervention for survival (and for the most part by their origin in foreign intervention); but also by the essential nature of the regimes which military intervention (or the threat of foreign **intervention**) serves to maintain. The point is that the regimes in question are not simply monopolistic and repressive from temporary necessity and transient adverse circumstances, but by their very structure. I mean by this that they are based on a view of 'socialism' as *requiring* the existence of one 'leading' party whose leaders do exercise monopolistic power; and monopolistic power by definition means the exclusion from power of everyone else, and also the deprivation of rights—speech, association, publication—which are essential for the exercise of power or at least pressure and which are so to speak the oxygen of civil society. To speak of this as a 'Soviet-type' regime is at one level inaccurate, since the rule of the soviets was intended to establish the opposite of concentrated and monopolistic power. But history has associated this monopolistic form of regime with the Soviet Union; and it is therefore convenient to refer to it as a 'Soviet-type' regime. Its early form was the largely unintended product

of the circumstances of the Bolshevik Revolution; but it was perfected, with every deliberate intention, by Stalin. All Communist regimes which have come into being since World War II bear this stamp. Some of them are less repressive than others, with the extent of the repressiveness varying not only from country to country but over time within countries. But they are all monopolistic regimes, not excluding Yugoslavia.

Much confusion is engendered by the discussion of these regimes as 'transitional', meaning in effect 'transitional' from capitalism to socialism. Most notably, Trotskyist discussion, which has ever since Trotsky's *The Revolution Betrayed* of 1936 most probingly sought to advance the Marxist analysis of Soviet-type regimes, has also fostered much confusion about them by insisting that they were 'workers' states'; albeit 'bureaucratically deformed'; and that they were 'transitional' between capitalism and socialism. The main reason why this thesis is maintained is of course that in these regimes the private ownership of the means of production has been replaced by state ownership and control. Given this, it is argued, to my mind rightly, that the societies in question are no longer 'capitalist'; and that the description of them as 'state capitalist' does not fit any better. However, they are not 'socialist' either—hence the label 'deformed' or 'degenerate workers' states'. But this label is also defective, not only because they are obviously *not* 'workers' states', of any description, but also because the label is intended to suggest or imply that, for all their bureaucratic deformations, they are *on the way* to being socialist, in a process which, though it will not be painless, has been rendered inevitable by the abolition of the private ownership and control of the main means of production. This needs to be questioned.

The abolition of the private ownership and control of the main means of production is indeed a gigantic step; and it may be said to constitute an essential feature of a socialist society. But it is now very generally agreed that it is not a sufficient condition for the establishment of such a society. Even when this is readily acknowledged, however, it is also often believed that, given the 'base' which is provided by a predominant public economic sector, all other major features of a socialist society—notably democratic and egalitarian forms in economic, social and political life—must sooner or later follow. But this is much too simple and 'economistic' a reading of the 'base-superstructure' model; and an experience which is now sufficiently ample to be convincing shows that a predominantly (or for that matter an exclusively) public economic 'base' does not necessarily produce anything like democratic and egalitarian forms in economic, social and political life, or anything like a 'socialist consciousness' which would prepare the ground for them. On the contrary, such a 'base' may well produce markedly undemocratic and unequalitarian 'superstructures', with a strongly repressive state, a relatedly impoverished civic life, and general indifference and cynicism concerning the 'social good'. To be credible, the notion of

'transitionality' would need to point towards some degree of progress towards socialism in terms of socialist consciousness; for it is absurd to speak of any kind of socialism which does not involve at least popular support for it. But it would surely be rash to claim that the *idea* of socialism (never mind the actual regime) is more securely legitimated in Poland in **1980** than it was in **1970** or **1960** or 1950.

It may be that the picture is more favourable in other countries in Central and Eastern Europe, or in the USSR; but nowhere in Soviet-type societies does there appear to have occurred the *spread* of socialist consciousness which an 'economistic' reading of the 'base-superstructure' model as applied to these societies would suggest or imply. In other words, there is no good reason to think that the regimes in question, because of their public sector 'base', are likely to flower into legitimated socialist democracies, enjoying a large and growing measure of popular support, with a base of genuine popular power, and therefore able to dispense with their vast apparatus of repression and their abrogation of civic rights. On the contrary, and however varied the degree of repression which they experience at any given moment, they are all imprisoned in a very hard mould: not surprisingly, the people in charge, who exercise monopolistic power, have no wish to change in any fundamental way the system which gives them that power, and which they believe to be the only one capable of defending 'socialism'; and the forces making for *socialist* change are generally speaking weak.

On this view, the notion of Soviet-type societies as 'transitional' ones is misleading, illusory, and even vacuous. It is much more helpful to a proper assessment of these societies and their regimes to see them as specific systems, with their own particular mode of production and their own social and political structures. They lack an agreed label: but that does not detract from their reality or from their specificity. They are not capitalist systems. But they are also very far distant from anything that could be called socialism. The term is largely meaningless if it does not include a fundamental recasting of the 'relations of production' and the 'relations of life' in general in democratic and egalitarian directions: and this clearly requires the institutionalisation of the means whereby this can be achieved, or at least striven for. Merely to say this, in relation to Soviet-type societies, is to indicate how great is the distance which separates them from socialism, and how inappropriate it is to apply the notion of 'transition' to them. In the only terms that are ultimately decisive, namely in terms of the generation of socialist consciousness among the people, capitalist societies are at least as 'transitional' as Soviet-type ones.

This is in no way to suggest that these regimes do not have some very considerable achievements to their credit in the economic, social, and cultural-scientific spheres, or that they are not capable of further **achieve-**

ments. Nor is it to underestimate the enormous obstacles placed in their path by economic backwardness and imperialist hostility. Again, it is hardly necessary to say that there are any number of regimes in the world, strongly supported and greatly lauded by the Western powers, which are infinitely worse for their own people than Soviet-type regimes. But none of this turns the latter into socialist ones.

The relevance of these considerations to the question of military intervention as a form of 'substitutism' is obvious. The 'substitutist' argument is that these socialist regimes need time to establish themselves, and must be defended against 'counter-revolutionary' pressure against them. But these are not socialist regimes; and what they need to become socialist is not simply time but a fundamental transformation in their whole mode of being. In some of the most dramatic cases of military intervention in the post-war decades—Hungary, Czechoslovakia—this is precisely what a large part of what is called '**counter-revolutionary**' pressure was intended to achieve; and it is precisely what military intervention was intended to prevent. In other words, military intervention did not occur to save 'socialism', but to save monopolistic regimes that are not socialist or 'on the way' to socialism.

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A subsidiary argument, which has sometimes been used to justify some military interventions, notably the Vietnamese intervention in Kampuchea, may be considered at this point. This is the argument that, whatever may be said against military intervention in most cases, it is defensible in some exceptional cases, namely in the case of particularly tyrannical and murderous regimes, for instance the regime of Idi **Amin** in Uganda and of Pol Pot in Kampuchea. Idi **Amin**, it will be recalled, sent Ugandan troops into Tanzania and occupied a substantial area of border territory; and Tanzanian troops did not merely push Ugandan troops back into Uganda but went on to occupy the country and overthrow **Amin**. Similarly in regard to Vietnam's overthrow of Pol Pot, the Vietnamese claimed that they were faced with repeated and large-scale incursions by Cambodian troops into Vietnam; and the horrifying nature of the Pol Pot regime, it has been claimed on behalf of Vietnam, as well as imperative security considerations (of which more presently), justified Vietnam's decision to march to Phnom Penh and to make an end of the Pol Pot regime.

The argument is obviously attractive: one cannot but breathe a sigh of relief when an exceptionally vicious tyranny is overthrown. But attractive though the argument is, it is also dangerous. For who is to decide, and on what criteria, that a regime has become sufficiently tyrannical to justify overthrow by military intervention? There is no good answer to this sort of question; and acceptance of the legitimacy of military intervention on

the ground of the exceptionally tyrannical nature of a regime opens the way to even more military adventurism, predatoriness, conquest and subjugation than is already rife in the world today.

The rejection of military intervention on this score is not meant to claim immunity and protection for tyrannical regimes. Nor does it. For there are other forms of intervention than military ones: for instance economic pressure by way of sanctions, boycott and even blockade. Tyrannical regimes make opposition extremely difficult: but they do not make it impossible. And the point is to help internal opposition rather than engage in military 'substitutism'. As noted earlier, there are rare and extreme circumstances where nothing else may be possible—for instance the war against Nazism. Hitler's Third Reich was not only a tyranny. Nor was it merely guilty of border incursions against other states. It was quite clearly bent on war and the subjugation of Europe. But neither Uganda nor Kampuchea are in this order of circumstances. In socialist terms, the overthrow of a regime from outside, by military intervention, and without any measure of popular involvement, must always be an exceedingly doubtful enterprise, of the very last resort.

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'Security' is perhaps the reason most commonly invoked to justify military intervention. In the case of Afghanistan, for instance, it has been said that the country has a 1,000 mile border with the USSR, that it is in its 'sphere of influence', and that the USSR could not therefore accept a regime in Kabul that was hostile to it, and liable to come under American influence. The same argument was used, *inter alia*, to defend military intervention in Hungary in 1956 and in Czechoslovakia in 1968; and it has been used to justify Vietnam's overthrow of the Pol Pot regime in Kampuchea.

In considering this argument, much confusion may be avoided if a clear distinction is made between two essentially different propositions. The **first** of these is that it is useful and desirable for any given country to have uncontentious, cooperative and friendly neighbours. This is indisputable. The second proposition is that the requirements of security do not only make it useful and desirable for this or that country to have such **neigh-**bourhoods, but essential, to the point, where possible, of justifying military intervention when the requirements threaten to be no longer met. I think that this second proposition is dangerous and unacceptable from a socialist standpoint, and that it rests on shortsighted and mistaken calculations.

In the case of Afghanistan, it is worth repeating that the USSR found no difficulty in accommodating itself, before the coup of April 1978, to not having a preponderant influence there, and that the alleged security

problem did not then appear in the least critical. It has been said that the USSR intervened at the end of 1979 because it feared a Khomeini-style revolution (or counter-revolution), which would have had a subversive effect on the Muslim populations of the USSR living in proximity to Afghanistan. But there is no evidence that such a **revolution/counter-revolution** was brewing in Afghanistan, or that the Russians were concerned with possible contagion. In **short**, security may well have been a consideration in the decision to intervene: but it is unlikely to have been decisive and compelling. As I have suggested earlier, there is a better explanation, namely the Soviet leadership's determination not to accept a loosening of the control it had been able to acquire since the coup of April 1978. Such a loosening of control would have represented a definite setback for them, and was unacceptable for a mixture of reasons—prestige, security, fear of repercussions, and so on.

In any case, security by virtue of occupation, and the maintenance of power of a puppet regime must be set against a number of contrary considerations. One of these is the fierce hostility which military intervention generates and the nationalist upsurge it produces. 'Security' is here turned into a mockery by the massive unpopularity of the occupier and his puppet government; and it is further degraded by the war of pacification which has been forced upon the Soviet Union, with all its attendant horrors. What kind of security is this?

The same question may be asked in regard to other countries upon which an unwanted regime has been imposed, for instance Poland. The Soviet Union believed at the end of World War II that a subservient regime in Warsaw was essential to its security. But here too, 'security' is turned into its opposite by the implacable hostility which a Soviet-imposed regime engendered and by the consequent inability of that regime to achieve a genuine measure of legitimation.

As against this, the argument is counterposed that the international context and the hostility of the United States and other Western powers at the end of World War II forced the USSR into the policies it pursued in Eastern Europe: faced with this hostility, it had no option but to create a cordon *sanitaire* for itself, and to prevent its erstwhile allies from using Eastern Europe as a potential advanced base against the USSR. This required the establishment of friendly regimes; and the only regimes that could be trusted to be truly 'friendly' were regimes firmly under Communist control. Soviet security required no less, particularly after the Cold War had got properly under way.

The argument not only leaves out of account the hostility engendered by the external imposition of a Communist regime, particularly one of a Stalinist kind: it also ignores other possibilities, such as are suggested by the case of Finland. 'Finlandisation' is often used by Cold War propagandists to suggest a state of virtual subjection to the USSR. But this is inaccurate.

It means in fact what the Finns describe as 'active neutrality' ; and it involves the acceptance of powerful constraints upon the country's external policies. But Finland has remained internally independent. No country could be geographically more important to Soviet 'security'. But Stalin, no doubt influenced by the experience of the Soviet-Finnish war of 1939-40, decided in 1945 not to try and foist a Communist-controlled regime upon Finland, which had fought on the German side and had a long record of bitter enmity to the USSR and Communism. It does not seem unreasonable to suggest that Soviet security would have been at least as well served—to put it no higher—if the same kind of arrangements that were made in regard to Finland had been made in regard to Eastern Europe. Nor is it immediately obvious, on the grounds advanced earlier, that the cause of socialism has been better served and is further advanced in Eastern Europe than it is in Finland.

The major dimension which the argument from 'security' tends to ignore is that of popular **support**; and the question of popular support does not only relate to the countries concerned, but more widely. 'Revisionist' historians in the United States have been perfectly right to claim that there were very powerful forces in the United States and in Western Europe at the end of World War II which were determined to replace a shaky and conflict-ridden war-time alliance with the Russians by outright antagonism. But there were also masses of people in the United States, not least in the ranks of American labour, who appreciated the immense contribution which the Soviet armies had made to the defeat of Germany, and who wanted friendship with the USSR; and there were even more such people in West European labour movements, and beyond labour movements. It is possible that these sentiments would not have prevailed against the barrage of anti-Soviet and anti-Communist propaganda that was launched after 1945 by reactionary forces backed by vast resources and influence. But the least that can be said about this is that these forces would not have had such an easy time of it, and would not have been able to mount such a powerful **crusade**, had not the Russians given that crusade valuable ammunition by the manner of the settlement which they imposed in Eastern Europe in the post-war years. That settlement was totally Stalinist in inspiration and character; and it was a typical Stalinist perspective which interpreted 'security' in the narrowest and most constricted terms, and which recklessly underestimated the impact of Stalinist infamies on working class and other opinion in Western countries. The search for 'security', interpreted as the establishment of 'reliable' governments and regimes in what Stalin regarded as strategic areas, produced the strengthening of the very forces whose policies posed the major external threat to Soviet security; and the weakening of those forces in capitalist countries, notably their labour movements, which were most likely to oppose anti-Soviet and 'hardline' policies. The same is true of

Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan: this has obviously provided a very powerful reinforcement to the worst reactionaries in the Western camp.

Security considerations have also been invoked to justify the Vietnamese intervention in Kampuchea and its overthrow of the Pol Pot regime. It has been said that, with Chinese encouragement, the Cambodians mounted massive incursions into Vietnamese territory, which were intended to 'destabilise' Vietnam: 'the attacks from Cambodia threatened the whole process of peaceful unification and the integrity of the revolution in the South'.⁴ Nothing less would therefore do than the overthrow of the Pol Pot regime.

This is a weak case. Border incidents opposing Kampuchea to Vietnam had occurred long before the Pol Pot regime came to power; and the later incursions were part of a pattern of deteriorating relations for which the Pol Pot regime cannot be held to be the sole culprit. The two regimes had maintained more or less 'normal' relations for some two and a half years after their victory in April 1975—it was only later that Vietnam discovered that the Kampuchean leadership was made up of 'fascists', and vice-versa. Not only is it inherently implausible to suggest that the overthrow of the Pol Pot regime was the only possible course open to the Vietnamese: it is also by no means certain that their security had thereby been much enhanced. No doubt, a pliant regime now exists in Phnom Penh. But it lacks legitimacy and requires the support of a Vietnamese army of occupation. The enterprise has reinforced secular suspicions of Vietnamese designs upon Kampuchea. Like the Russians in Afghanistan, the Vietnamese have been drawn into a permanent struggle with Kampuchean guerillas, with the usual accompaniment of repression and the killing of innocent civilians. The invasion has also weakened Vietnam's international position, and strengthened reactionary forces in the region and beyond. Here too, it does not seem unreasonable to ask 'What kind of security is this?'

It has also been said that the conflict between Vietnam and Kampuchea is only an expression of the wider Sino-Soviet conflict. If so, it is difficult to see how the invasion of Kampuchea and its occupation helps the Vietnamese to cope with the dangers the Chinese pose to them. A hostile Kampuchean regime, allied to China, has been eliminated, but at very considerable cost. And this elimination leaves the main threat precisely where it was. The Chinese launched a major attack upon Vietnam after the latter invaded Kampuchea, in order to 'teach Vietnam a lesson', to quote the infamous justification invoked for the action by Deng Xiaoping and others. Thousands upon thousands of soldiers, Chinese and Vietnamese, as well as civilians—men, women and children—have died to satisfy the Chinese leaders' pedagogic ambitions. The Chinese armies were repelled.

But Chinese hostility endures, and has hardly been diminished by the Vietnamese enterprises in Kampuchea.

It was in relation to American military strategists that C. Wright Mills coined the phrase 'crackpot realism'. But it applies as well to the leadership of Soviet-type **regimes**, so the record amply suggests. 'Crackpot realism' is here sustained by a narrow, Stalinist, interpretation of 'security' according to which what matters is territory not people. But the strategies which proceed from this not only tend to defeat their own purposes; they also have much larger implications for war and peace.

6

The USSR is not subject to the logic of imperialism; and the charge that it is bent on territorial conquest to the point of 'world conquest' is no more than reactionary ideological warfare. But the USSR does seek 'security', and its interpretation of the concept has led it, and continues to lead it, to seek the defence, consolidation, and, wherever possible, the extension of its 'sphere of influence', particularly but not exclusively in areas which it regards as being of strategic importance. This search for security has one specific feature which is of extreme importance, namely that it is best served when traditional structures in the countries concerned are revolutionised. This is why Soviet help is readily extended to revolutionary movements in the Third World: revolutionary strivings there and the Soviet search for security are roughly congruent. On the other hand, such movements and strivings are opposed by the United States and other Western powers. This is the fundamental source of tension and conflict in the world today: it is somewhere here that 'Sarajevo' is located.

It is obvious that an immense 'mutation', of global dimensions, is now proceeding. The Brandt Commission Report is quite right to stress the terrible poverty in which most countries of the Third World are plunged. However, it is not the poverty which is new, but the revolutionary stirrings in these countries. This is surely one of the most remarkable and inspiring features of the present epoch. For everywhere in the world, and in areas where passivity and resignation in the face of poverty and oppression have tended to be the rule, with only episodic outbursts of rebellion, there is now sustained resistance and struggle, both against local oppressors and their foreign backers and paymasters.

Quite certainly, this will continue to develop in the eighties and beyond. The movements concerned are ideologically very varied; but they are all nationalist and, to a greater or lesser extent, on the left. It must be taken for granted that the United States and other Western powers will seek to counter these movements and to prevent revolutionary upheavals (at least outside Soviet-type and Soviet-oriented regimes); or, if such upheavals do occur, that they will try to ensure that the new regimes, whatever they call

themselves, do remain firmly in the 'Western' orbit. The means to be used for the purpose will differ greatly, according to circumstances, and range from economic pressure to military intervention. Conversely, it may also be taken for granted that many movements struggling for their country's independence from imperialist oppression and for social renovation, and that many regimes born of these movements' successes, will seek help from the Soviet Union, in the form of economic assistance, or military material, or technical and military advisers, and so on; and that the Soviet Union will answer such calls for help, as a means of weakening Western influence and extending its own, in the hope of thereby strengthening its security.

Whatever the Soviet Union's motives may be, the help it accords to revolutionary movements and regimes is something that socialists cannot but welcome and support. The Cuban regime is now a repressive dictatorship of the Soviet-type model. But in comparison with other regimes in the **Third World**—many of them murderous dictatorships of an incomparably worse kind, yet completely supported by the United States and other capitalist powers—it is also a progressive regime. The point about it, and about other such regimes, is precisely that they have these two sides—a progressive side as well as a repressive one. Apologists only highlight the first, detractors the second, but both are part of one and the same reality. It is wrong, in a socialist perspective, to ignore the dark side of the Cuban regime; but it would be equally wrong, from the same perspective, not to acknowledge and welcome the help from the USSR which has kept Cuba afloat. Soviet help is by no means given everywhere in a good cause; and there can be no socialist justification whatever for an unqualified endorsement of its policies in their or any other area. But where it does help serve progressive purposes, it has to be supported.

In terms of impact on the international scene, however, and quite apart from the question of socialist principle which has been discussed here, there is an enormous difference between help solicited by and given to revolutionary movements and regimes, and military intervention designed to maintain or instal a deeply unpopular, unwanted and repressive regime. Even 'ordinary' help to revolutionary movements and regimes produces Western accusations of interference, subversion, expansionism, etc.; and it naturally comes up against American and other endeavours in 'counter-insurgency'. Even here, there are many possibilities for escalation of international tension and for the occurrence of explosive 'incidents'. But this is nevertheless very different from the impact produced by actual military intervention, even when that intervention occurs in a country like Afghanistan, which had already come earlier into the Soviet 'sphere of influence'. If it should occur outside that 'sphere of influence', in any circumstances, it must push the world to the brink of war, and quite conceivably over the brink.

The world of the eighties is in any case bound to be uniquely dangerous,

not because of Soviet 'expansionism', but because there are certain to be many terrains on which the 'super-powers' will find themselves directly or indirectly engaged in competition and conflict. Independently of the Soviet Union or anybody else, revolutionary movements in the Third World and elsewhere will continue their efforts to destroy the local and international web of backwardness and oppression in which their countries are enmeshed; and some of these upheavals at least will occur in countries of high 'strategic' importance—for instance Pakistan, Thailand, the Phillipines, countries in Latin America, Saudi Arabia, the Gulf States, South Africa and other countries in Africa. The gigantic paradox of the epoch is that these upheavals, which spell hope for oppressed peoples, are also fraught with great perils of clash and confrontation between one 'super-power' bent on 'counter-insurgency' and the other bent on 'security'.

Nor will the process of radical change, or at least the attempt to effect radical change, be confined to the Third World. It would be extremely surprising if one country or other of the 'Soviet bloc' did not experience the kind of upheaval that has episodically been known there. Hungary 1956 and Czechoslovakia 1968 are much more likely to be repeated than not. And it is also very likely that the pressure, now so greatly slackened, for radical changes in Western capitalist countries, will grow again, in the shadow of economic crisis. But this means that there will be innumerable opportunities in the coming years for clash and confrontation between the United States and the USSR. Revolutionary stirrings and 'super-power' strivings here come together in a dangerously explosive package.

Military intervention, as in Afghanistan, adds to the danger; and opposing such intervention is therefore all the more necessary. Socialists have in the past been, and often are still now, inhibited in voicing opposition to unacceptable actions by the Soviet Union and other Soviet-type regimes by the very legitimate fear of finding their voice merged in that of a loud reactionary chorus. But it should be possible for socialist opposition to be voiced in its own terms, on its own premises, and with its own concerns: what this requires, among other things, is that it should be coupled with the insistence, which opposition to Soviet actions should never be allowed to dim, that the fundamental source of tension and danger lies in the determination of the United States and other capitalist powers to stem and reverse the tide of revolutionary change in the world.

NOTES

1. On the other hand, the Cubans had no business helping Ethiopia against Somalia, and their intervention in the conflict between the two countries is a very different matter from that in Angola. The point gains particular force by reference to the fact that Ethiopia is seeking to crush a legitimate movement of independence, namely the Eritrean one. Eritrea was annexed to Ethiopia

by a purely arbitrary act of defiance of the United Nations, The country does not 'belong' to Ethiopia and is entitled to independence.

2. R. Luxemburg, 'The Junius Pamphlet: The Crisis in the German Social Democracy', in M.-A. Waters, Ed., *Rosa Luxemburg Speaks* (New York, 1970) p. 304.
3. For some recent documentation, see N. Chomsky and E.S. Herman, *The Washington Connection and Third World Fascism* and *After the Cataclysm. Post War Indochina and the Reconstruction of Imperial Ideology*, these being Vol. I and II of *The Political Economy of Human Rights*, Spokesman Press, Nottingham, 1979.
4. A. Barnett, 'Inter-Communist Conflicts and Vietnam', in *Marxism Today*, August 1979, pp. 247-8.

intervention has occurred without it being requested by a government enjoying any measure of popular support, or indeed by anyone at all except some individuals without authority (Hungary, 1956; Afghanistan, 1979); or where military intervention has occurred against a government enjoying a large measure of popular **support**, and at the behest of some individuals again without authority or support (Czechoslovakia, 1968). A rather different case which falls however within the same spectrum is that of Vietnam's intervention in Kampuchea: what might be called a frontier war between the two countries was taken further by Vietnam, to the point of overthrowing the Pol Pot regime and installing another regime in Phnom Penh, acceptable to the Vietnamese. The military intervention of China against Vietnam is of a different order, and must be treated separately.

In such cases as Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Kampuchea and Afghanistan, the claim that foreign armies had some legitimate ground for intervention because they were 'invited' to come in is evidently spurious; and it is only in bad faith that it can be advanced. But this is not of course the only ground on which intervention is defended. It is in fact defended on one or other of three different grounds (or on all three), each of which requires consideration: unlike the claim about intervention being 'invited', these other arguments raise precisely the issues which socialists have to confront.

One such argument is that, in case after case, there existed a grave and imminent threat of counter-revolution, backed by Western imperialism and indeed instigated by it, against a socialist regime and its revolutionary achievements. Even in Czechoslovakia in 1968, it was claimed, and still is, that whatever the intentions of Alexander **Dubček** and the Czech Government might have been, there was a clear and immediate threat of 'things getting out of control', of the 'restoration of capitalism', or 'counter-revolution', of Czechoslovakia pulling out of the Warsaw Pact, and so on.

Such claims cannot by definition be conclusively proved or disproved, which is why it is possible for endless controversy to go on about them, without anyone's positions being much affected either way. It may be that a better way to proceed is to ask first of all what some of the key **terms**—notably counterrevolution—actually mean in this context. Misunderstanding of what the argument is about may thereby be avoided. For some, 'counter-revolution' is more or less synonymous with the replacement of a government wholly subservient to the USSR by a government not thus subservient. But this—typically Stalinist—definition is clearly not adequate. When **Tito** broke with Moscow in 1948, Communist parties everywhere—not to speak of the Soviet government—denounced him as an 'authentic Fascist' and as, in the terminology of the French Communist Party at the time, a 'Hitlero-Trotskyist', who was indeed leading a counter-revolution. Without a doubt, if Russian armies had intervened in Yugoslavia then, had succeeded in overthrowing **Tito**, and had installed a 'pro-Soviet' **govern-**

ment in Belgrade, there would have been many to say that the Soviet Union had rescued the Yugoslav people from counter-revolution. This should perhaps serve to induce some caution in the making of statements about what would have happened in this country or that if the Russians had not intervened. For whatever else may be said about **Tito's** rule after 1948, it can hardly be said that he pushed through a 'counter-revolution' in Yugoslavia; and it is now said that the denunciation of him as a 'Fascist', 'counter-revolutionary', 'agent of the West', etc., were part of the history of Stalinist aberrations and are best forgotten. But the aberrations ought not to be forgotten, for they have important lessons to teach, and there is much evidence that the danger of repeating these aberrations or similar ones is still very much alive. Less dramatically than Yugoslavia by far, Rumania has managed to achieve a considerable degree of independence from the USSR in regard to both internal but particularly external affairs (which does not prevent the regime from being as repressive as any in Eastern Europe); but no one has so far claimed that President Ceacescu has engineered a 'counter-revolution' in his country.

Properly speaking, a **counter-revolution** may be said to have occurred when a regime of the left, Communist or not, has been overthrown (or for that matter replaced by legal means) and where the successor regime pushes through a series of economic, social and political measures designed to assure or restore the power, property and privileges of landlords, capitalists and other segments of the ruling class who have been threatened with dispossession or who have actually been dispossessed by the regime which the **counter-revolution** has replaced. This involves the return to landlords and capitalists of their land and factories and banks, and of property in general, where it has been taken from them. It also involves the re-affirmation of their power and preponderance by the suppression of the defence organisations of the subordinate classes—parties, trade unions, cooperatives, clubs and associations. It further involves the suppression or drastic curtailment of civil rights; the physical suppression of opposition leaders, of agitators, subversives and enemies of the state; and the political restructuring of the state in authoritarian directions.

Many counter-revolutions of this kind have occurred throughout Europe since 1918, sometimes against a newly-implanted Communist regime, but also against non-Communist left ones, or even against liberal and conservative ones when they were thought to be inadequate in opposing the left: Hungary in 1919, Italy in 1921 and after, Germany in 1933, Spain in 1936, France with the Vichy regime in 1940, and outside Europe Chile in 1973 are examples of such counter-revolutions and the list could easily be stretched out. It is not essential for a revolution actually to have occurred for a counter-revolution to be mounted: the apparent illogicality is purely in the semantics, not in the reality.

If counter-revolution is taken to involve the sort of changes which have

been mentioned here, it would seem reasonable to say that in none of the cases where Soviet armies have intervened since World War II, with the doubtful exception of Afghanistan, has there been a clear and compelling threat of counter-revolution. As noted earlier, this is not susceptible to proof; but neither in the case of Hungary in 1956 nor certainly of Czechoslovakia in 1968, to take two major instances of Soviet intervention, is there evidence that counter-revolution was about to succeed, or likely eventually to succeed. Of course, there were, particularly in Hungary, people who had counter-revolutionary intentions: but that is obviously not the same thing. Nor is it my argument that the Communist monopoly of power would have been maintained intact in either country: on the contrary, it would have been loosened, and the process had already gone some way in Czechoslovakia. In both countries, there might well have come into being a coalition regime in which the Communist Party would not have been assured of an automatic preponderance; and other such variations can easily be conceived. The point is that, whatever may be thought of these possibilities, they cannot, on any reasonable assessment, be equated with 'counter-revolution', or anything like it.

This must be taken a little further. Had the processes at work in Hungary and Czechoslovakia not been crushed out of existence by military intervention, it is likely that there would have occurred a measure of 'liberalisation' of economic life in both countries—something like the New Economic Policy which Lenin and the Bolsheviks were forced to adopt in the Soviet Union in 1921, with a greater emphasis on the market and a redevelopment of artisan and small scale enterprise in manufacturing, retail trade, and so on. The evocation of such 'liberalisation' in economic activity tends to generate the cry of 'Restoration of Capitalism' among many purists. But this is a misconception. For the 'commanding heights' of the economy would have remained in the public sector, and the public sector would have remained massively predominant. It would surely have been exceedingly difficult to unscramble long-nationalised property and to restore factories, mines, land, etc., to their former owners. And there is one measure of 'liberalisation' which would have been of enormous socialist significance, namely the restoration of the right to strike. Purists make much too little of the grievous dereliction, in socialist terms, which the suppression of that right in Communist regimes represents. Not only would the reaffirmation of the right to strike have been proper in itself: it would also have strengthened the credentials of the regime in the eyes of the working class, and made all the less likely the 'restoration of capitalism'. Moreover, this reaffirmation would have been one element among many to mark the loosening of the grip of the monopolistic state over civil society; other such elements would have included the reaffirmation of a whole range of civil rights suppressed earlier. And there would also have occurred a substantial and possibly a major reorientation

of the foreign relations of both countries; and this raises the question of Soviet 'security', which will be discussed presently. **Tito's** foreign policy, it may be said here, may well afford an example of what might have been the most likely course of events in this realm.

The fundamental question which socialists have to confront is not whether the kind of regime that would have emerged from the convulsions of **1956** and **1968** would have been the most absolutely desirable; but whether it would have been a worse alternative than the imposition by Russian arms of a regime altogether lacking in popular support and whose most distinctive characteristic is the tight monopoly of power exercised by a Communist leadership acceptable to Moscow. I suggest that the answer—again leaving out for the moment the question of Soviet 'security'—is that, in socialist terms, it would not have been a worse alternative. The reason for saying so is simply that there can be no good socialist warrant for the imposition by foreign arms of a 'socialist' regime which the overwhelming majority of people resent and reject.

This is no more than the affirmation of a principle akin to that of national self-determination. 'Self-determination' means the right to national independence, expressed by independent statehood. It is a very old principle to which most if not all strands of the socialist movement have always declared allegiance. Admittedly, there was a current of thought in the international socialist movement, most notably represented by Rosa Luxemburg, which rejected the 'slogan' of self-determination on the ground that it diverted the proletariat from its real revolutionary tasks; and Luxemburg continued to hold this view after **1917**. But even she said in **1915** that 'socialism gives to every people the right of independence and the freedom of independent control of its own destinies'.² In effect, she believed that self-determination could not be achieved under capitalism, and that to seek it was a diversion from the main task; but she also believed that socialism would make self-determination possible and that it was indeed a fundamental right. So did the Bolshevik leaders believe this, with some qualifications other than those advanced by Luxemburg. They very reasonably held that, while self-determination could not be denied to a people who wanted it, and could particularly not be denied by the revolutionaries of an 'oppressor' nation like Czarist Russia, it was not incumbent upon them to press it upon people who were content with regional autonomy or federal arrangements. The Bolsheviks' own most important saving clause, however, was that the demand for self-determination must not run counter to the larger requirements of the class struggle, nationally and internationally. Even though they had recognised Georgia's more or less independent status in May **1920**, they cast aside its Menshevik Government by military action in February **1921** and brought Georgia back into the Soviet fold. In due course, what had been a saving clause became a convenient excuse. From the early years of the Bolshevik

Revolution until some such time as 1956, there was one centre—Moscow—to decide for the world Communist movement what was in the best interests of the class struggle on a global scale; and this made it possible for the Soviet leaders to interpret the principle of self-determination—and any other principle—as they willed.

Military intervention need not formally deny national self-determination expressed as statehood. The Soviet Union did not incorporate Hungary in 1956 or Czechoslovakia in 1968, and thereby bring to an end their independent existence as states. But military intervention, under the 'doctrine', of 'limited national sovereignty', does turn this statehood into a largely formal thing, by ensuring that a government wholly subservient to the intervening power is installed in the given country. Even this is a lot better than incorporation and the end of statehood: but it does deprive statehood of a substantial part of its meaning. The principle of self-determination is not unduly stretched by the inclusion within it of the right of the people or of a majority of the people not to have a regime imposed upon them by a foreign power. Such imposition does constitute a drastic infringement of the principle of self-determination, which may here be taken to mean popular self-determination. It would be unrealistic to stipulate that under no circumstances of any kind must that principle ever be infringed. But the onus is on those who defend the infringement to show on what other principle the infringement was justified in any particular case; and the point does hold that it is only in the direst and most extreme circumstances that it could ever be justified.

There are many different ways—and not only by military intervention—in which the imposition of unpopular rule can occur. One such way is by the extension of help to reactionary and repressive regimes in order to enable them to defeat popular pressure and resistance; and the United States and its allies have engaged in such imposition on numerous occasions since the end of World War II.³ It is in Cold War propaganda and apologetics that the Soviet Union and other Communist powers are the only ones to have imposed unwanted regimes upon other countries. But this does not negate the fact that Communist powers have engaged in such enterprises.

I have argued that the threat of counter-revolution was not a proper justification for military intervention in the cases of Hungary and Czechoslovakia. But what of Afghanistan? Here is a country where a revolutionary coup brought to power in April 1978 a **leftwing** government with strong Russian connections and sympathies. The leader of the new regime, Nur Mohammad Taraki, was himself overthrown and killed when he tried, in September 1979, to get rid of his Prime Minister, **Hafizullah Amin**. **Amin** took over but was in turn removed and executed at the end of December 1979, and replaced by Babrak Karmal. The removal of **Amin** and his replacement by Karmal was obviously instigated by the Soviet Union, which also marched into Afghanistan to provide military backing for him.