

I am including below some overlapping comments that came to mind after reading the two documents that were circulated on imperialism and the present international situation. I hope the points are made clearly enough. --Ansar (NYC)

imperialism useful?

Is imperialism, the way it is used in Marxist rhetoric (style of argumentation), a helpful concept? In most cases, I find it to be unhelpful since it is often used as shorthand for "uninvited international intervention by a powerful country into the affairs of a weaker one" but it remains freighted with the meaning that Lenin once assigned it. I don't think that the examples discussed in the articles can be made to easily fit the "classical" Leninist mold. In the case of Russia in Ukraine and Israeli attacks on Palestinians, are we dealing with imperialism? In the first case, it seems to me to be an attempt at colonization. The Russian state is not trying to gain power over or access to markets in Ukraine through a local proxy government or other forms of indirect control but rather through physical occupation and rule directly by Moscow. Is this not colonialism rather than imperialism? In the case of Israeli suppression of Palestinian aspirations for self-rule, we again have the expansion of a settler colonial state, not imperialism in the Leninist sense. The case of China does seem to fall better within the framework of imperialism in some cases but not others (e.g. Uyghurs). I remain skeptical of its analytic value.

enemy is at home - helpful?

I don't see how it serves us to import to the present the slogan "the enemy is at home". It is taken from the struggle within the German SPD at the start of WWI when a significant part of the German population was within the orbit of the SPD. Does it have any resonance outside of Marxist circles? In fact, I see the use of this slogan in the present context as symptomatic of seeing everything in the present as a repeat of historical moments (as Marx famously noted in the 18th Brumaire that we dress up the present in the garb of the past). I am not saying we should only use those concepts that have resonance with people but rather that we should express ourselves in ways that are accessible and meaningful to people - to people "on the street" if we still aim to speak to such people rather than erudite leftists.

economic rationality of "imperialism"

I agree with Promise's suggestions for concrete actions in support of, among others, Chinese workers in general, Uyghur Muslims in particular, and Palestinians. I also agree that the international situation is both chaotic and inchoate but not necessarily for the reasons spelled out. To me, the incoherence is not due to the fact that there are competing and contradictory interests but rather that the language of "interests" is itself an illusion. It comes from our compulsion to impose ex post facto a rationality to situations we confront, which we could

never have predicted and in fact did not. I have yet to hear a convincing "rational" explanation of Putin's attack on Ukraine.

But what does it matter whether we can assign a rationality to the horrors that David and Promise talk about? What matters is how we respond to the horrors whether we understand their "origins" or not.

ethical terminology, now not future

In order to make the relevance of our political positions clear, we should use the language of ethics rather than of law, calculation, and Marxism. I, personally, am not interested in whether actions are legal or not (expressed sometimes as actions being "criminal" say) or whether a particular position can be said to be compatible with "Marxism" (whatever meaning that term might still have). I am also opposed to holding a position with the purpose of achieving a particular outcome and pretending that we know what the future will hold. All our actions are melancholic acts of rebellion against the immoral state of the present, with the knowledge that what will happen cannot be known. Thus, the purpose of our actions are rooted in the present – both in resistance and in the positive acts of creation - not in the future.

enemy "campists"?

I am troubled by how much the focus of our energies is on refuting "campists" and "pacifists", i.e. misguided leftists. As if the main enemy consists of sections of an already marginal left. This is reminiscent of the many pointless and ultimately destructive debates on the "correct line" on various conflicts. Let's debate the people we consider to be misguided and engage them rather than making them the subjects of polemics where they have already been discounted as useless or even dangerous idiots. Whatever differences we may have with these people, let's recognize that they are trying to figure out how to act with the inertia of the ideological baggage left over from a different order of power. They should not be the main focus of our energies - they are even more powerless than we are since their views are not compatible with those of the US State, whereas many of ours are (armed support for Ukraine). The focus of our work should be on the work needed to support people in Ukraine, Palestine etc and not denouncing people who are mostly our political kin. Secondly, we should not just be cheerleaders for the latest arms deals and collaborations between the US and Ukraine at the state level. How do we establish real bonds of solidarity that create bonds with Ukrainians on the ground? I don't know how but I think that is what we should be focused on.