

THE WEAPON OF CRITICISM

Soviet Critique of "Terrorism" Singing the Hymns of the Bourgeois State

Leftist Terrorism

By Viktor Vitiuk
(Progress Publishers, Moscow,
1985)

By P.B.

With the publication of *Leftist Terrorism*, by Victor Vitiuk of the USSR Academy of Sciences, the Soviet revisionists reinforce their position in another arena of inter-imperialist rivalry: that of seeing which imperialist superpower can be the most ardent defender of "law and order." Vitiuk's book, which takes as its point of departure the urban guerrilla trend in Western Europe, parrots many of the most reactionary frothings of his Western counterparts, such as CIA mouth-piece Claire Sterling, who raise the banner of fighting "international terrorism" to justify intensified repressive measures. Indeed, just as Western hacks insist that the Kremlin is the purse-master of "terrorism," so also Vitiuk insists that the main backer of the urban guerrilla trend is American imperialism. And, he urges, "Leftist terrorism is becoming a problem which demands an urgent solution."

Anyone seeking to understand the urban guerrilla trend will, however, be sorely disappointed. For this is not the real subject of Vitiuk's book. There is precious little about the

major points of the political line of the urban guerrilla trend in W. Europe and its evolution since its emergence in the late 1960s. (For a Marxist-Leninist criticism of this trend, see *AWTW* No. 4, "The False Path of the W. European 'Urban Guerrilla'") Vitiuk instead takes the urban guerrilla phenomenon as an excuse for a hymn of praise to the established order in W. Europe and a vigorous attack on threats "from below." So, though ostensibly directed against the "leftist terrorists," Vitiuk's real target is not the urban guerrilla trend, who are misguided and ineffectual at best, but all those who actually seek the overthrow of the established order, and especially the genuine Marxist-Leninists who are preparing to lead the masses in doing this. His critiques of the Western imperialists focus principally on how they are inferior to the Soviet revisionists in their understanding of the way to crush the rumblings of popular discontent. Vitiuk's real point then is to advertise to the world, including especially to the Western European imperialists, that the Soviets are the best defenders of the bourgeois system, the most capable of defeating any real threats to the established social order, including principally proletarian revolution itself. *Leftist Terrorism* is a self-exposure of the fact that "Soviet socialism" is simply the signboard of the bourgeois

dictatorship that rules the USSR today.

Worshipping Bourgeois Democracy

Perhaps the key rampart of the bourgeois status quo that Vitiuk is determined to defend is bourgeois democracy. In discussing the urban guerrilla analysis of "state terrorism," Vitiuk argues that for them, "[state terrorism] includes not only the dictatorship regimes, which abolish democratic legality, but also the existence of legality *per se*, and not only open repression and violence practised by the police and the army, but the very fact of existence of those and other, administrative institutions. In simple terms, it is the bourgeois state, no matter what its forms are... that they regard as terrorist." Vitiuk goes on to characterise the line of the urban guerrillas: "Therefore, the bourgeois democracy is not only hypocritical as a form of predominance of the bourgeoisie; essentially it is a peaceful mask of fascism, retained for demagogic purposes as long as the opportunity exists. Yet, as soon as fascism encounters more serious difficulties, revealed behind its parliamentary mask is a brutish grin." Vitiuk finds all this completely outrageous, the result of "manipulations" of isolated quotes of Marx and Lenin motivated by "morbid suspiciousness."

Condemning the bourgeois state as "terrorist" "no matter what its form," exposing the "brutish grin" behind its parliamentary mask — are these sins in the eyes of anyone *except* a worshipper of the bourgeois state?! If so, then let the first person Vitiuk condemns to hell be Lenin himself — for it was Lenin who analysed democracy as "the best shell for the political rule of the bourgeoisie," and who declared that "democracy is ... an organisation for the systematic use of *force* by one class against another, by one section of the population against another." Lenin went on to sum up: "Bourgeois states are most varied in form, but their essence is the same: all these states, whatever their form, in the final analysis are inevitably the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie." (*The State and Revolution*)

This Soviet champion of bour-

geois democracy even defends the particular form this takes in W. Europe, of parliaments with competing political parties. He ridicules the "leftist terrorist" analysis: "As to the parties themselves — social democratic, liberal, conservative, leftist, centrist, rightist, secular, or religious — one is as good as another, as there is no difference of substance among them. The RAF [Red Army Fraction, a W. German urban guerrilla group — *AWTW*] leadership, for instance, defined the difference between the CDU [Christian Democratic Union, the party of Helmut Kohl] and the SPD [the Social-Democratic Party of Willy Brandt] quite graphically as that 'between plague and cholera.'" (Here it should be mentioned that it is unfortunate that the RAF leadership didn't continue to apply this correct analysis, including to the international arena, where they have degenerated from first supporting the USSR as a lesser "plague" to now upholding it as "socialist.")

Labelling the CDU and SDP as "plague" and "cholera" particularly disturbs Vitiuk because the Soviet revisionists continually search to use any differences whatever in the West European ruling classes to seek and draw them closer to the Soviet bloc, or at least towards a position of neutrality. Outright labelling the social-democrats as preferable has given them some problems lately, because it has been the classical social-democrats who have often especially trumpeted the need to militarise against the Soviets: Helmut Schmidt issued the call for the Pershing and cruise missiles, Mitterand was a chief advocate of their deployment as well as a most determined defender of France's nuclear "force de frappe," etc. Nonetheless, the Soviet's programme is not to smash the existing bourgeois state machine in these countries, but to pry at divisions within the imperialist ranks and manoeuvre for positions of influence. Hence what interests them most of all is differences *within* the bourgeoisie, whatever particular form that takes today — differences which, for the proletariat, are indeed nothing but choices between "plague and cholera."

Vitiuk also argues that the "leftist

terrorist" trend is illegitimate and reactionary because it fails to see that the bourgeois democracies are much better than fascism: "... one can fail to see the qualitative difference [of bourgeois democracy] from fascism only if one wears the darkest of dark glasses. The former is not only a form of political predominance of the bourgeoisie; to a no lesser degree, it is a most important thing gained by the working masses, a result of their long and difficult struggle, and a condition of its further development...."

Claiming that democracy is a gain of the working class "to a no lesser degree" than a form of bourgeois rule doesn't even have the merit of being an original revisionist deception; it is a repetition of what the renegade Second International argued, saying, for instance, that the social-democrats' seats in the German Reichstag were a victory for the working class which gave it something to defend in the first imperialist world war, thus justifying the stand of "defence of the fatherland." Fascism and bourgeois democracy are not the same thing; but they *are* both *forms* of the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, Vitiuk's phrase "to a no lesser degree" negates this above all, in a sleight-of-hand effort to portray the bourgeois democracies as somehow belonging equally to both bourgeoisie and proletariat.

Saving the Bourgeois State

Integral to Vitiuk's glorification of bourgeois democracy is the promotion of legal forms of struggle. "Marxism recognises different, rather than exclusively armed, forms of class struggle, and proletarian violence vis-à-vis the bourgeoisie with the purpose of gaining freedom from exploitation and proceeding towards socialism. Karl Marx said... that the socialists would have preferred to 'buy' the capitalists 'off' if a real opportunity arose." So, while openly enforcing their rule with bombs and bullets in Afghanistan, and with prisons and billyclubs in Poland, the revisionists seek to breathe new life into parliamentary cretinism in Western Europe. For this purpose Marx is

transformed from an extremist revolutionary into a reasonable chap, willing to do a deal with the bourgeoisie! As if he had never written those famous concluding lines of the *Communist Manifesto*: “The Communists disdain to conceal their views and aims. They openly declare that their ends can be attained only by *the forcible overthrow of all existing social conditions.*” (emphasis added)

Lenin was just as clear: “[The bourgeois state] *cannot* be superseded by the proletarian state (the dictatorship of the proletariat) through the process of ‘withering away,’ but, as a general rule, only through a violent revolution. The panegyric Engels sang in its honour, and which fully corresponds to Marx’s repeated statements... this panegyric is by no means a mere ‘impulse,’ a mere declamation or a polemical sally. The necessity of imbuing the masses with *this* and precisely this view of violent revolution lies at the root of the *entire* theory of Marx and Engels.... The supersession of the bourgeois state by the proletarian state is impossible without a violent revolution.” (*The State and Revolution*)

Is this any less true today than in Lenin’s time? Hasn’t the vast accumulation of military forces throughout the world, not least of all in the imperialist countries, made such talk of “buying” the capitalists off not simply outmoded, but a criminal attempt to mystify the masses? It is not that the Soviet social-imperialists have become doves — as noted, they wield armed force whenever and wherever it suits their interests; but in Western Europe today they want to promote this parliamentary cretinism in their interests of seeking to influence and bloc with sections of the bourgeoisie and the more bourgeoisified masses there.

Hence Vitiuk condemns the urban guerrillas for disrupting the tranquil bourgeois order there, for being *too violent*: “... the only idea that they [leftist terrorists] adhere to is that of legitimacy of, and the need for, terrorist violence.” He goes on to characterise the “leftist terrorists”: “...the traditional inclination towards dogmatic reasoning, such as ‘revolution is civil war, and world

revolution is world war,’ prevails among leftist terrorists.... The question naturally arises if these actions are not fraught with consequences threatening the very existence of humanity.” Thus men whose fingers are on the trigger of one of the two largest nuclear arsenals in the world blame a tiny handful of urban guerrillas for “threatening humanity’s existence”!

Indeed, even while preparing for an imperialist world war of nearly unimaginable destruction, Vitiuk mocks the prospects of genuine mass revolutionary war: “The apology of war is in accord with the leftist terrorists’ ideology and psychology.” For them, Vitiuk says, “War is the greatest form of political violence. It brings about an extraordinary situation, a lack or limitation of law and order, and the solution of all problems by force of arms.” What Vitiuk obviously scoffs at as a caricature of reason is remarkably similar to the description of civil war by that well-known “leftist terrorist” Lenin: “Do not frighten us, gentlemen, with civil war. Civil war is inevitable... This war will bring victory over the exploiters, it will give the land to the peasants, it will give peace to the peoples, it will open the bright road to the victorious revolution of the world socialist proletariat.” (“The Russian Revolution and Civil War”) This is a veritable panegyric to civil war, which Lenin also called “the sharpest form of the class struggle.”

Lenin explained how revolutionary communists approach the question of civil war while refuting the charges of the bourgeois Cadet Party in Russia which raised the spectre of “rivers of blood” if revolution was launched: “Such rivers of blood would give victory to the proletariat and the poor peasantry, and it is a hundred to one that this victory would bring *peace* in place of the imperialist war, i.e., that it would save the lives of *hundreds of thousands* of men who are now shedding their blood for the sake of a division of spoils and seizures (annexations) by the capitalists.... This is how the class-conscious Russian worker and soldier figures, this is how he must figure, if he weighs and analyses the question of civil war

now being raised everywhere.” (“The Russian Revolution and Civil War”) Isn’t this how the class-conscious revolutionaries in Western Europe, and elsewhere, must also reason? Haven’t the imperialists already killed untold millions even since the last world war, in wars in Korea (nearly 1 million), Indochina (at least 2 million), Algeria (at least 1 million), Afghanistan (1-2 million), Iran-Iraq (at least 1 million), on top of the countless crimes committed daily in the exploitative social conditions maintained by imperialism, in especially the oppressed nations, and not to mention the hundreds of millions who would die in the nuclear war the imperialists are even now preparing? Isn’t it necessary to ruthlessly calculate the daily violence and exploitation this system holds for the world’s oppressed and to seriously weigh the cost of *not* preparing to launch insurrection and revolutionary war as soon as possible?

Vitiuk conceals the violent character of his own masters because their violence is of a different sort than that of Lenin: reactionary violence for suppressing their subjects and defending their empires. As Lenin noted: “The proletarian civil war can come out with an open exposition of its final aims before the people and win the sympathies of the working people, whereas the bourgeois civil war can attempt to lead part of the masses only by concealing its aims.” (“The Russian Revolution and Civil War”) And so the apologists of imperialists wielding nuclear arms shriek from the rooftops about the violence of “leftist terrorists”! It is like the old Chinese saying Mao Tsetung popularised: the emperors burn down the villages, while the common people are forbidden to light candles.

Bourgeoisifying the Proletariat

As a basis for a programme for fighting “leftist terrorism,” Vitiuk develops a class analysis that distinguishes a social base that he thinks should remain loyal to the bourgeoisie from those who are potentially disloyal. Thus he accounts for the broad sympathy that the Red

Brigades once had in certain Italian working class areas, arguing: "Those are not the skilled workers at major modern plants; those are either employees of small enterprises or, which is especially characteristic of Italy with its North-South problem and mass social migration, former peasants and provincial residents in unskilled jobs. In a word, those are unstable, lumpenised and marginalised social elements."

"Former peasants" and "provincial residents in unskilled jobs" are in Vitiuk's hands transformed into lumpen-proletarians! It would be quite logical if he next began to call the October Revolution a "lumpen-proletarian" revolution — for such "former peasants" and "provincial residents in unskilled jobs" formed a great part of the revolutionary proletariat in Russia in 1917. Marx and Engels wrote in the *Communist Manifesto* of "a class of labourers, who live only so long as they find work, and who find work only so long as their labour increases capital," labourers who are constantly "exposed to all the vicissitudes of competition, to all the fluctuations of the market," whose livelihood is "more and more precarious" — a class that "has nothing to lose but its chains." Obviously, for Vitiuk, just another band of "lumpen"....

Vitiuk warns of the potential danger of these so-called lumpenised social elements: "Their déclassé nature and an acute feeling of deprivation originating therein, their painful reaction to injustice, hatred for their surroundings, a thirst for revenge and self-assertion, and the primitive nature of their notions of freedom and equality quite easily and naturally lead them to the idea of total rejection, and become an incentive for destructive action." What's so "lumpen" about "acute feelings of deprivation" or "hatred of their surroundings" or "painful reactions to injustice"? And how about "total rejection"! Poor misguided Karl Marx — when he called for the "overthrow of *all* existing social relations" by those who have "nothing to lose but their chains," he didn't have the great Academician Vitiuk around to instruct him that this was the programme not of proletarian revolution, as genuine

revolutionaries have always held, but of "lumpen" "déclassé" "destructive action"!

Vitiuk's masters obviously want something besides "total rejection" of the existing system; indeed, what they want is the *partial* rejection of the existing social order, rejection of Western domination and its replacement by *Soviet social-imperialist* domination of *the same* basic social order. This is the thoroughly bourgeois outlook underlying Vitiuk's denunciation of the urban guerrillas' "failure" to orient themselves towards Vitiuk's "modern skilled working class," and it goes hand in hand with his promotion of bourgeois democracy and parliamentary cretinism. One pillar of existing society which Vitiuk most definitely wants to preserve is patriarchy. He is outraged that in the "leftist terrorists'" "total rejection" of society they go too far on this matter: "According to their [the "leftist terrorists'"] logic ... even conflicts between fathers and children are assigned a political importance. The conflicts, they believe, have a family nature in appearance only. In actual fact, the fathers are backed by the government, the schools and the police, which systematically suppress the aspirations of the children for freedom." This staid patriarch is shocked that the family could be considered anything but the affair of the *paterfamilias* himself, to decide as he wants — that it could be regarded as *political*, and thus an affair which concerns the whole of society! But isn't this exactly what it means to live under bourgeois dictatorship: that *every* sphere of society is dominated by the ruling class' ideas, which are enforced by their political, and ultimately military, power.

Vitiuk argues that the "only idea" that unites the "leftist terrorists" is "the legitimacy of, and the need for, terrorist violence"; in this way, Vitiuk seeks to paint all opposition to stability and law and order as in essence the same. For instance, he explains that the reason he is focusing on the "leftist terrorists" is "... not for the sake of opposing leftist terrorists to rightist ones, as if some were 'better' and some 'worse.' Both are bad enough." "Fascism

and left extremism are like the heads of Siamese twins: though one may seem to be turned right, and the other left, they are both part of the same body."

Treating fascist violence and the violence of the urban guerrillas as the same raises violence above all other factors; intent, effect, etc., all become secondary to violence *per se*. Red Brigaders who assassinate an imperialist military figure are supposedly no different than fascist gangsters who beat immigrant workers to death. This position is that of someone who cares not at all for discovering the incorrect *political line* behind the urban guerrilla's deviation and correcting it so as to enable them, and others, to advance so as to carry out the preparations vital for revolution. Lenin showed how terrorism shared many features with economism — but since Vitiuk represents an empire which routinely uses both reformism and naked terror, it is neither Vitiuk's intent nor in his interests (or capacity) to attack the urban guerrillas at the level of political line: his are the interests of Soviet social-imperialism, spelling out a programme for reinforcing the bourgeois order under their domination, and crushing any and all threats to it.

Vitiuk turns upside down the actual relationship between the urban guerrilla and repression. He alleges, for instance, that "Turkish terrorists provoked the establishment of a military regime in the country(!), which suppressed democracy, brought all of its pressure to bear on the progressive forces of the left and crushed the terrorists themselves." The reader is left with nothing but to imagine that these poor Turkish generals were a lot of peacefully-inclined democratic souls so tormented by leftist fanatics that they finally had to put their foot down. For Vitiuk, vicious repression by the fascist Turkish state is the "natural" response to a threat to law and order — just as it was in Poland! His is so thoroughly the view of the exploiting class that any other view — that, for instance, Chile's Pinochet, Haiti's Namphy, Afghanistan's Najibullah, South Africa's Botha, etc., are not in place because of "provocation" by guerrillas but be-

cause imperialism is bloodthirsty and repressive — is simply unthinkable.

Vitiuk goes on to make similar statements with regard to Italy. But isn't it obvious that the wave of repressive measures sweeping the *entire* imperialist world is not at all in response to the in fact puny activities of urban guerrillas and the like but is part of the active preparation of the genuine mass-scale terrorists who rule the planet to carry out imperialist war and suppress the gathering resistance of masses worldwide?

Finally, it should be noted that Vitiuk is very obviously a *Soviet social-imperialist* propagandist. There is, for instance, a heavy dose of the anti-Oriental chauvinism fashionable in Soviet establishment circles. In attacking the Japanese Red Army faction, Vitiuk argues that "the ideology and psychology of Japanese extremists... clearly bear the imprint of regional thinking and of certain, purely national habits and traditions.... fanatical loyalty, religious in nature and fervour, excluding any independent, to say nothing of critical approach to the idea.... a reciprocal bond typical of ancient samurai units..." It is such national characteristics, says Vitiuk, which account for "the unlimited cruelty which distinguish Japanese terrorists" from their European counterparts — as if "cruelty" were not every bit as much a part of the *European* landscape, from the savage days of the Crusades up through the twentieth century world wars, with Auschwitz, Exocet missiles and other modern means of mass extermination.

This unabashedly chauvinist diatribe is no simple "slip-up" on Vitiuk's part. The Russian empire was erected on the bones of Asian tribespeople throughout the vast regions of Central Asia and Siberia; more recently the Soviet revisionists suffered humiliation at the hands of that "Oriental peasant philosopher," as they like to call Mao Tsetung, and even went to the brink of launching a nuclear war against then-revolutionary China in 1969. Even dissidents like Andrei Amalrik and Solzhenitsyn feel free to raise the spectre of "yellow hor-

des" overrunning Russia. Today, the social-imperialists are using their own "cruel" methods to "civilise" Afghanistan, and to beat the oppressed Asian minorities in the USSR into submission. In a word, the Russian bourgeoisie has a long and ugly tradition of especially sharp battles to suppress the Asian masses, and have developed all the ideological rationales which go along with this — while citing Lenin is obligatory for appearance's sake, spewing out anti-Asian chauvinism is part of their real, and very European imperialist, nature.

Revisionism's Programme for Fighting "Leftist Terrorism"

Vitiuk presents a programme for fighting "leftist terrorism" that would be the envy of any of his Western imperialist counterparts. He even vigorously takes to task those who hold the view of "terrorism as an unavoidable social evil, one which can only be eliminated by the downfall of capitalism," as "deeply pessimistic." Western reactionaries of all stripes, keep the faith — the Soviet revisionists are here to console and advise you on how to liquidate the terrorist scourge!

One of the revisionists' key planks is to separate the urban guerrillas from any kind of intellectual supporters. For example, Vitiuk criticises British Vicar Paul Oestreicher, who said that the main blame for terrorists taking that path is "the complacent capitalist establishment, which has consistently refused to take its critics seriously and which wrote off the student movement of the 1960s as 'communist scum'; the successful citizens, managers, bureaucrats and workers, for whom the word 'student' became an expression of contempt." Vitiuk retorts that Oestreicher "is thus actually refusing to see the terrorists' guilt behind that of the society." No liberalism to be tolerated here!

He goes on: "[Terrorist sympathisers] voiced their protests against the arrest of various persons associated with the terrorists... they accused investigation agencies of falsifying evidence against the terrorists[!], and, finally, they put great stress on the idea that the fight

governments were waging against the terrorists was being conducted mainly in order to create an excuse for instigating an all-out campaign against the left. This does contain a grain of truth, but only a grain."

Vitiuk gives a number of very concrete recommendations. He argues that while increasing repression is effective for long-existing groups, and so should be maintained and even stepped up, it is not so useful against newly arising and thus unknown ones, and so other measures needed to be added. The media must cooperate in isolating the terrorists, ceasing to exaggerate their significance and treat them "too kindly." The importance of secret police efforts to penetrate the groups should not be underestimated. Above all, Vitiuk highlights the role that the mass revisionist parties can play, arguing that support from the masses for the "leftist terrorists" or even refusal to cooperate with police efforts cripples the bourgeoisie's ability to smash the urban guerrillas. He points proudly to the role the revisionist Communist Party of Italy played in mobilising their social base in Italy against the Red Brigades during the Moro crisis.

It is ironic but true that many of those "leftist terrorists" whom the social-imperialists are out to so ruthlessly crush are some of their most ardent promoters. Spain's GRAPO, West Germany's Red Army Faction, and some of the remnants of Italy's Red Brigades, have all reversed verdicts on the USSR and now declare it "socialist." However irrational this might appear, there is a certain logic: for the urban guerrilla trend, like the rulers of the USSR, are not out to make proletarian revolution, hence they are ultimately able to find some common ground.

Vitiuk's analysis of "leftist terrorism" and his programme for combatting it is not that of some reformist who has gone off the mark. Instead it reflects the interests of a reactionary ruling class bent on establishing its dictatorship and authority everywhere, and putting out its own programme for law and order. Behind Vitiuk's revisionist-socialist mask lies, in fact, a very "brutish grin." □