

One Hundred Years of Learning: The Russian Revolution of 1917

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Abstract

This year, 2017, the world celebrates the centenary of the two Russian Revolutions that marked the twentieth century and changed the course of history. This article traces the worldwide impact of the Russian Revolution and its contribution to the awakening of the masses in Europe and the peripheries, in the course of the twentieth century. It also throws light on the imperialist counteroffensive and argues for the ongoing relevance of Leninist doctrine in the struggle against imperialism and bourgeois domination. The article elaborates the teachings of Leninism and its unique organizational power in the interest of long-term struggle.

Keywords

Russian Revolution, Leninism, imperialism, neocolonialism, revolutionary strategy

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The Awakening of the Masses

This year—2017—the world celebrates the centenary of the two Russian revolutions that marked the twentieth century and changed the course of history. In February–March 1917, a popular revolution took place in the main cities of the Czarist Empire, which would lead to its collapse, bringing with it a liberal government. Months later, with the weariness of the government resulting from the February revolution, the October Revolution, which was dominated by the Bolshevik party, prevailed. The whole of these revolutions cannot be separated from the painful process of World War I (1914–1918), which also contributed to its end.

The fall of the autocracy led to civil war, in which the new power had to face the armed intervention of 22 countries, whose troops sought to restore to power the supporters of the overthrown regime (1917–1921). At the end of this period, the organizing forces of the revolution devoted themselves to rebuilding the country, indeed a group of nations, many of which were under the rule of the Tsarist regime. A reorganization of the economy was attempted, then totally destroyed by successive conflicts. This was the New Economic Policy (NEP). The NEP adopted freedom for internal trade, business and wages, foreign capital inflows, and other measures in favour of a rapid economic recovery. The banking system, large industries and foreign trade remained in the hands of the state, under the coordination of the State Commission for Economic Planning (GOSPLAN). This body applied the experience of economic coordination obtained during the war, on the basis of which the Soviet technique of planning was gradually built.

In December 1922, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), headed by the Supreme Soviet (Legislative Power), was elected, electing an Executive Commission (Presidium) to direct the actions of the state. These organs controlled the tasks of the direction of foreign trade, of internal and external politics, education, defence, etc. Through the so-called 5-year plans, GOSPLAN directed measures for the reconstruction of what had been the tsarist economy, successfully resuming the industrialization of the entire Soviet territory (1924–1939). The two driving forces behind this reconstruction in the territory of the USSR were (a) the Bolshevik party and (b) the alliance of workers and peasants, idealized and carried out by it. In fact, these socialist forces not only built the Soviet Union but were able to oppose the German invasion (1941–1945) in World War II. By defeating the extremely aggressive forces of German Nazism and European fascism, the Soviet government could then participate in the reorganization of the world at the Yalta Conference (February 1945) and Potsdam (July–August 1945).

The complete military victory of the Soviet Union and its allies in World War II allowed the Soviet power to support in many countries democratic transformations in the interests of the workers and the poor, thus forming a field of socialist countries. With its example and even material support, the Soviet Union contributed to the widespread collapse of the colonial system in the post-war period. European countries that previously only gravitated around the commercial interests of the great powers were able to liberate themselves and to build regimes much more democratic than those in which they lived previously. This was the case, for example, of Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria and Albania. Peoples enslaved outside Europe by European powers were able to break the colonial yoke, with the new conditions created and with the support of the Soviet Union. Thus, peoples from Africa, Asia and Oceania were able to see their liberation movements triumph, as in Ghana, Guinea, Angola, Mozambique, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, East Timor and many others. It would not be possible to explain the victories of the peoples of Mongolia, Korea, Vietnam and China without the liberating impact of the Russian revolution and the diffusion of its liberating teachings. In the imperialist metropolis itself, the labour and labour movement, the struggle of the women's movement and other social movements could only advance after the uncontested victories of the Soviet people. One can see this clearly in the advancement of women's rights, with access to vote and the formation of workers' parties in many places. Liberal propaganda to date seeks to conceal that most social rights were only ceded in the West after they were established in the Soviet Union.

In this way, we must recognize that certain political and social features of the Russian revolution—as the French Revolution, in its time—contributed decisively to the progress of humanity.

With hindsight, a hundred years after the revolutions of 1917, one can see the positive side that the profound rupture in that society of tsarism was capable of producing. The majority of the population of the Czarist Empire worked hard, most of it being oppressed by an oligarchy of landlords associated with foreign capital. The oligarchy sought to benefit from a process of industrialization (1870–1917), but the more the factories and grain exports multiplied, the more the empire's population plunged into poverty, owing to the mechanism of income concentration. The concentration of property pushed millions of peasants into poverty.

The power of the tsarist aristocracy ignored the suffering of the workers and the poor, exercising against them enormous repression. The urban bourgeoisie was not capable of reforming the political regime.

The middle classes simply protested and struggled for their economic survival. One must, therefore, understand the force of renewal that the October Revolution represented for hundreds of millions of workers previously subjected to tsardom. The Russian revolution was not only a Russian phenomenon but a result of the rise of a barbaric capitalist exploitation. As such, the liberating force of the revolution could not be summed up in the space of the tsarist world. It would reach all workers in all parts of the world, organize their struggles and foster new democratic revolutions. These struggles and revolutions could succeed or not. However, they could not fail to occur.

In this way, the first teaching of the revolution for workers everywhere was that capitalist exploitation could come to an end. The worker could become a winner and organize a society in which one would receive the fruits of one's own labour. This formidable teaching spread across the world and produced in its wake a whole series of revolutionary actions by workers. In these new revolutions, the workers dared to apply their own ideas, and not just to follow the old democratic ideas of other social forces, as in the revolutions of 1830 or 1848. In Germany, the revolution of 1918 occurred and workers' councils were created. In Hungary, there was the workers' revolution of 1919. In Italy, peasant leagues were formed and factories were occupied by workers. In Brazil, the strikes of 1917 led to the growing unity of the labour movement and the formation of the Communist Party in 1922.

The advent of the Russian revolution in the colonial and dependent countries led, here and there, to the formation of nuclei of analysis and independent interpretation of the socio-economic situation. These nuclei promoted debating circles, publications and, finally, the germination of new democratic movements. Such movements turned into liberation struggles of nations and oppressed peoples.

In many countries, the role of the worker-peasant alliance and the place of the various social layers in the new transformations that were necessary were discussed and understood. A new layer of leaders, interested in the people's cause and imbued with the spirit of long-term struggle for political, social and economic liberation, was formed on a world scale.

Anti-imperialist struggles in Africa and Asia, the May 4 movement in China, the struggles for independence in India and the national revolution in Turkey (1920), expressed the movement of awakening. It can be said that on a world scale a new came into being, capable of understanding the close and profound association between the national struggle and the social struggle.

Evidently, with high and low points in this process of struggle, progressive forces consolidated their programmes for transformation in each country and sought to lead a national path to reform, broaden the strength of democratic movements and make the poor and the workers the true arbiter of power. The tactics and strategies of social movements in each country would have been much weaker had they not experienced and learned from the Russian revolution of 1917 and the transformations it brought.

Therefore, the October Revolution contributed enormously to the awakening of the masses everywhere, and to their organization.

The Imperialist Counteroffensive

In order to confront this dawn of the peoples, particularly the poorest and most oppressed, the imperialist powers had to reorganize themselves and take up new forms of action. At the same time, having reinforced all forms of repression against social movements, the imperialist powers adopted the language of progressive forces, selling cat for hare. They organized neocolonialism, creating in each dependent country a network of privileged agents to demoralize the national struggle and to propagate consumerism. With the expansion of credit on an international scale, they sought to divert the workers and the poor everywhere from their true objectives, pushing them towards indebtedness and ambition of bourgeois life.

Monopolies and oligopolies were expanded in unprecedented numbers. They were placed in charge of social and political life, diverting the struggle of workers from social interests to individual greed. In the struggle to block the progressive march of universal history, the great capitalists created, in the 1970s, so-called 'globalization'. Through globalization, the enemies of peoples have imposed certain traits on political and economic life on a world scale. First, through bilateral trade treaties, they forced poor nations to liquidate control of their borders and their national development programmes. With the excuse of 'speeding up' the movement of goods, they practically folded the customs authority of poor countries so to ensure the rapid circulation of goods from central countries. Using free trade, they have everywhere introduced drug smuggling and drug trafficking to dissolve local processes of industrialization, the unity of workers and the poor and the principle of national sovereignty.

Second, through their local agents, they approved 'packages' of anti-national measures that block social and industrial development in each periphery country. They have strengthened the local banks as agents of the central countries, developing the financial markets there at an early stage, putting an end to the independence of governments. By valuing the independence of central banks, monopolists have put an end to the national character of economic policies, putting in place the rules of 'globalization'. The agents of imperialism have taken possession of the governments of each country in the periphery, in successive order.

Third, the imperialist powers organized the 'international' network of satellites to spy on every poor country to help enforce the customs and vices of so-called 'Western civilization' there. Since such 'Western civilization' never existed, imperialist propaganda agents through the 'international' network of satellites can present on TV all kinds of banditry and perversity, inducing youth and people of weak personality to crime and debauchery. For monopolists, similar 'advances' are also part of globalization.

Fourth, to complete neocolonial strategies, Western 'culture' has become a machine of lies. It follows the Hitlerite motto of Goebbels, according to which 'a lie, repeated a hundred times, becomes a truth'. In Goebbels' doctoral thesis, he argued that in urban society people do not know anyone's past, which is why truth and lies are worth the same. It is the case narrated in that famous Argentine tango *Cambalache*, in which the author explains that nothing is worth anything in the environment of the cities. The famous German sociologist Herbert Marcuse used to say that the Nazis lost the war, but their strategies of destruction would gain the world, under the control of the oligopolies.

Therefore, in the centenary of the Russian revolution, it is important that every honourable person meditates on the goals of the cause of progress. Although there have been countless progressive revolutions in the twentieth century, the moment today is not for rest. The traits of progressive strategy are as current and necessary today as they were a hundred years ago. Every progressive person must have them in mind to continue the struggle and successfully bring the cause of national independence in each country to a successful end, ensuring social progress.

Learning from the Russian Revolution

To counter neocolonialism, the return of policies aimed at destroying the national state (of others, of course), the policies of deindustrialization

of the periphery, the advance of globalization, etc., must return to the winning strategies of the Russian revolution. In commemorating the 100 years of the revolution, one must keep in mind the objectives of the struggle for social and economic progress. We must have the humility to learn from those victorious revolutionaries who have succeeded in combating imperialism and the domination of the most violent bourgeoisie.

The insurrections of Hungary and Bavaria (1919), with the local formation of embryos of red armies, the uprisings in Reval, Estonia (1924), Hamburg (1923), Canton and Shanghai in China (1926–1927), were widely debated by the agencies in charge of the cadres, in the activities of the International and the Red Army. They participated in the organization of these actions and produced training material on Osip Piatniski, Unschlicht, Ture Lehen, Erich Wollenberg, M. Tukhachevski, Blücher (the alterego of Chiang Kaishek until then), Igorov, Ho Chi Minh, Yakir, Garmanik and others.

Thus, the inheritance of the ‘universal path of October’ was condensed in the form of courses, books, handouts, documents and, above all, political ideology at the head of the Red Army and the Third International. It constituted the insurrectional base of Soviet political and military doctrine, Leninism. However, because of the purges, and because of the scarce formation of Leninist cadres in many regions, such as Africa and America, most of this heritage would become only a reference for the parties and movements of these regions. In them would continue to prevail in many places the romantic reformist discourse, which united reason and general unreason into a Marxist view, whose mother view was Kautsky.

The failure of the insurrection in Reval (1924), when examined in its great features, contains elements very similar to the failure of the insurrection in Brazil in 1935. In the Estonian case, it was the opportunism of Zinoviev, who wished to recover from the political weakening caused by the defeat of ‘German October’ (1923). He would have led his Bolshevik followers to articulate an insurrection in Reval without the knowledge of the Comintern’s organizational organs. It would have been the result of both the overestimation of local conditions and the lack of support in cadres and material that in fact, the Third International could provide.

Also in the analysis of other events, such as Chiang Kaishek’s coup in 1927, one can see the lack of cold calculation on the part of the International, with the play of interests of personal careers, the deformation of methods of internal struggle and other errors. What would be the problem with these errors? The inherent human incompetence and

malice? The Marxist critique presents them as permanent vices of petty-bourgeois ideology and difficulty to assimilate the new political, proletarian ideology. Would there be an intrinsic possibility of cadres in a revolutionary centre to understand the national and class traits of a local revolution? Looking at the question from a historical point of view, the answer seems to be in the last question. The observation of victorious movements, such as in Yugoslavia, China, Cuba and Vietnam, indicates that the less direct external intervention in the conduct of local cadres, the greater the success of the revolutionary forces. The perception of this certainly led to the Soviet thesis against the so-called 'export of revolution'. This is clear, without dispensing theoretical and technical training as support, and eventual material support. The bourgeoisie intervenes directly in any country and this gives it an enormous inertial advantage. The bourgeoisie, when it was revolutionary class, always 'exported' the revolution. However, the bourgeoisie is a social class of exploiters, it does not require exactly a new ideology. Elements of material interest prevail in local environments, dispensing with spiritual or ideological purges. The same cannot be said of the proletarian revolution, largely based on selflessness and altruistic collectivism.

The culmination of this differentiating element seems clear in the Chinese and Vietnamese cases, where the leading cadres received external training but had a predominantly local view. Mao Tse Tung himself, who trained the formative nuclei of the Vietnamese and Korean armies, once declared: 'Marxism is revolutionary when it becomes a national force. Marxism is revolutionary when it takes hold of the masses of a country'.

This brings the discussion to the already classic question of the need for a national social nucleus, capable of understanding the national and local classes in local terms, and to develop an independent, autonomous project that places the local revolutionary movement in its place in the world. However, global influences will continue to exert themselves.

Leninism

In organizing the mass movement from its most basic claims, Leninism sees propaganda and agitation as the two sides of its strategy (just political line). The political struggle of the revolutionary class, the awakening of its own class consciousness, comes from any objective shock, a minimal or economic claim, which, through the resistance of the bourgeoisie, becomes a 'seven-headed bug'. At that moment, the Leninist

framework is inserted in that concrete struggle and seeks to unfold it logically, according to the interests of the broader masses of the local people. This is a case in which the experience of the struggle of the Russian people is evident. The local mass movement, as much as the general, does not seek, when it is launched against the ruling classes, to obtain the majority, but to obtain the unanimity of the masses. Hence, the importance attributed to political propaganda. Hence, the importance is also given to prior preparation of the cadres who are expected to intervene in the foreseeable future crises. For Leninism, the consequence (to arrive at the 'true end') of the struggle of the masses is outside the struggle of the masses, but inside the party that constitutes the vanguard and the staff of the revolution—this being another important experience.

Therefore, for Leninists, it is of no importance if the outcome of each partial struggle of the mass movement is victorious or defeated. With future mistakes, victory can turn into defeat. With future success, defeat can be turned into victory. The essential feature of Leninist psychology—certainly generated by its ideological force—is the certainty of the perpetuity of the struggle, the certainty that the given forms of struggle will succeed each other in a continuous movement. This certainty about the nature of the social world leads to a perpetual struggle against its social enemy, the bourgeoisie. In this way, the necessary agitation of an initial local movement follows the apparent placidity of the advertising phase, which serves as the basis for the organizational work. In the Leninist sense, without the advanced understanding of the fundamental classes (working class and poor peasantry), there is no possibility of victory. Victory is an element of social consciousness. Only the conscious worker goes to the fight. Only the conscious worker can reach the 'true end', that is, the organizational annihilation of the class enemy. Marxism, in general, and Russian Marxism, in particular, gave much to identify in each space the class enemy of the workers.

Here we must remember that Leninism is the revolutionary form of Marxism in the contemporary world. Like Marxism, Leninism believes in dialectics as a theory of knowledge. That is: Leninism does not believe in a supposedly formal character of the world, but believes that everything that exists is in motion, closes its opposite, consuming it inexorably. Being the world—this includes the social world—perpetual movement, everything we know will soon be destroyed, gone and fulfils the task of modifying it in the best way for the human condition. The future is thus an act of voluntary construction, which allows the will of the one who knows the most and most relentlessly—or determinedly—to be imposed. In our time, the task of changing the world is in the hands of the conscious

workers and the Leninist party is the weapon that can use them. Political agitation, class organization and political propaganda are thus intertwined moments of class social practice that rise to the awareness that they exist and have a place in history. For the Leninist, as a Marxist that he is, the dialectic exists in the structure of human thought and can be grasped by a specific logic, a logic of contradiction, which is dialectical logic. The categories of dialectical logic are thus the outward manifestation—in the process of thought—of the very logic inherent in thought, society and nature. Only through dialectical categories can the Leninist framework maximize its class intuition and fully understand the sense of reality, that is, where the world moves. The Russian revolution also gave us this lesson.

This certainty gained in thousands of hours of study, debates, meetings and struggles underlies the understanding of the Leninist framework and leads it to advance, among the fires and storms of life. The strength of the Leninist vanguard can be measured—in its ideological firmness—by the fact that in the twentieth century the police of all capitalist countries had created a political department to combat it, often launching the armed forces to eliminate physically this kind of militant. The entire structure of the media and capitalist education is undermined by lies and slander against Leninism, to the point of committing deliberate falsification of historical facts.

However, despite the apparent success of the capitalist state police, Leninism is a living force among intellectuals, leftist movements and organized workers. It cannot be eradicated by force, nor Marxism in general. Everything indicates that the periodic crises of capitalism and the almost absolute emptiness of the spiritual life of the poor under the capitalist regime continue to generate generations of young people with doubts capable of leading them to Leninist militancy. Hence, the idea of the existence of an international revolutionary proletariat does not seem—to anyone who analyses the situation—a dead idea, but a phenomenon in hibernation. Something learned from the October Revolution.

This is not a simple metaphor, when Lenin says that the proletarian party is ‘the proletariat’s staff’ and the ‘organizer of its combat units’. The Marxists of the Second International rejected what they defined as Lenin’s ‘military language’. However, in merging the two languages, that of Politics and that of War, Lenin sought to emphasize the continuity between Politics and War. It sought to eliminate the hypocritical view of the bourgeoisie that the war should be against, or in the absence of, its interests.

The Leninist party presents a cohesive version of Marxism—Bolshevism—which is, in fact, the only version of Marxism that seeks to seize power in the social practice of different countries or different regions of the world. So-called ‘Western Marxism’, widely diffused, moved away from the question of power and evolved into forms of neo-Kantianism. It is based on a reformed version of Kautskyism, with a variety of forms, but which almost always degenerate into demagogic politics or even academic discourse of bourgeois democracy, to simply support bourgeois forms of domination.

The accumulation of all forces of the bourgeoisie on a world scale leads to the current centralization and unification of the global politics of imperialism. The imperialist centres tried to infuse order, discipline and planning in the policies of looting the so-called Third World, seeking to destroy the local foci of resistance to their action and assuring the hegemony of the few on a world scale. The only strategy that sees and opposes imperialism as a whole, as the structure of the domain of capital in our time, is the Leninist strategy. That is why it continues to carry the unifying banner of the exploiting masses everywhere and constitutes the faithful instrument of the victory of the working people. This is an important legacy of the Russian October experience.

Leninist Leadership and Planning Nucleus

Formed as the ‘ruling nucleus’ of the revolutionary party, the Leninist point of view must here answer the question: what is the most advantageous form of struggle to unite and mobilize classes with revolutionary potential? For Leninism, whatever the initial scenario in which the class consciousness of the proletariat is formed, it is possible, in our historical epoch, to wage the struggle for power. The analysis of the correlation of forces empowers the ruling nucleus to elaborate a correct theory and strategy in the struggle for power, and, from it, the correct tactic to consciously unleash the struggle for power.

Leninism prefers peaceful forms of struggle but is not able to tolerate open dictatorships, class terrorism and other forms of oppression of the minority and dominant classes. Leninism values three methods (bundles of forms of struggle) as decisive: (a) the economic struggle, where it exposes the partial demands of the workers and of the people in general (restrooms and rest periods in factories, water and sanitation in neighbourhoods, improvements in supply and prices of the basic basket, etc.); (b) street struggle, when the simple organization and claim of the workers

and the poor is not heard or considered by the rulers; and (c) the parliamentary struggle, where the level of organization and struggle of workers already allows them to elect representatives of themselves or of groups or allied social groups, in search of social change. In the process of parliamentary struggle, the goal of Leninist action is to reach the highest level of propaganda and agitation, gradually putting on the agenda a solid alliance policy capable of representing the majority of the population in the struggle for power. In the case where the practical forms of struggle cannot be employed, in the face of an open or more or less terrorist dictatorship, the ruling nucleus must answer the question: how to advance from the current (blocked) struggle to a form of struggle more advantageous to the class? Therefore, for Leninism, initiative in the struggle is not a privilege of the bourgeoisie, nor could it be imposed by such a class on the workers. The leadership of the working class—even in clandestinity—can and must find a way to re-establish or gain initiative in the political struggle. In the struggle to obtain or recover the initiative, the ruling nucleus must solve the problem of the concrete tactical form of active defence, which it will apply. Generally, this can begin as a strong propaganda campaign in the class, which seeks to dispel the illusions aroused by demagogic promises made by the enemies of the people and the workers. For Leninism, this type of politician is most abundant in the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois parties.

To choose the most appropriate form of active defence, the ruling nucleus must answer the question: how do you come to prevail against the forces of the enemy in the present? Mass action—strategically oriented—guarantees that the workers' movement obtains or preserves the initiative. The Leninist policy of organization ensures the creation of the necessary means—especially the cadres—which correspond to the needs of the correlation of forces. The pace of this process determines the pace of the process of struggle. Here is another teaching. The organizational plan is based on the following elements:

1. In understanding the nature of the correlation of forces:
 - The plan can change quickly or slowly;
 - change may depend or not on 'our action'; it may depend on the nature (correct or not) of the triggered action;
 - it is important to preserve part of the structure involved in tactical action to ensure continuity and depth of future action.
2. In the control of the operational factors that guarantee the connection of the tactic with the strategy:

- provide adequate training to the pool of cadres to ensure tactical, operational and strategic continuity;
- develop choices that can guarantee the maintenance and/or recovery of the element of surprise (an important condition for the initiative);
- choose correctly the agenda of actions that can be carried out in a remarkable way.

The Leninist planning of revolutionary action gives importance to the use of space through: (a) analysis of the structure of the geoeconomic units that make up the action and (b) the distribution of the revolutionary forces in space, along with the predictions emanating from the tactical plane and the strategic unfolding. Leninists use space in accordance with their elaborate theory of class warfare that is incipient. The organizational structure of the revolutionary party and the structures it creates or controls obey the hierarchy of its planned deployment of strategic action. This can lead to seemingly contradictory directives for distinct structures.

This implies that the Leninist party has two types of structure in relation to form: (a) direction and (b) mass work. As for the objectives, the party has structures—internal and external—legal, semi-legal and clandestine. Such structures correspond to the needs of Leninist planning and the expectation of concrete forms of action. The true Leninist party is indeed a ‘staff of the class’ (see the German, Vietnamese and Chinese communist parties, the experiences that most linked the October Revolution to the present day). The structuring of the steering bodies is according to the following ‘construction fronts’: policy; organization; ideology (education); masses (agitation and propaganda); and finance.

The activation and deactivation of the steering organs happen according to the needs of tactical and/or strategic order. For example, in the organizational structure, there may be a Commission or a Trade Union Department, or not; such a body may have a security section or commission, or not.

The Bolshevik structure of clandestinity is a consequence of the strategic thinking of winning the victory for its class and its programme. The depth required by this struggle does not allow it to be subordinated to the bourgeois state, or to its class impositions. Marx points out that, in bourgeois democracy, laws are generic and tautological to the bourgeoisie, but they need further regulation for the proletariat. No one questions the right of the bourgeoisie in this type of society, but promptly questions the right of the poor and the workers, placing them under suspicion.

They are citizens only to support the bourgeoisie. This goes for any economic or political organization of the poor or working people. In order to function, they need the authorization of the police, of organs of the state, etc. When there is an ethnic difference between the majority and the bourgeoisie, it becomes even worse.

Thus, the revolutionary content of Leninist thought implies rebellion, autonomy, and confrontation. Clandestinity becomes a response to repression. It aims to prepare a response for action. To different degrees of counterrevolutionary violence, Leninists dare to oppose similar revolutionary violence, in a calculated manner.

When Marx's friend Kugelmann, who fought in the 1848 revolution and in the American Civil War, expressed in a letter much doubt about the opportunity of the seizure of power by the Paris insurrection (Commune), Marx (2010[1871], p. 132) replied:

However that may be, the present rising in Paris – even if it be crushed by the wolves, swine and vile curs of the old society – is the most glorious deed of our Party since the June insurrection in Paris.

On insurrection, Lenin (1972[1905], pp. 367–368) further said:

‘Insurrection’ is an important word. A call to insurrection is an extremely serious call. The more complex the social system, the better the organisation of state power, and the more perfected the military machine, the more impermissible is it to launch such a slogan without due thought.

Li Lisan, of Chinese Communist Party, defended in 1927 that if insurrection is organized by the Party and the masses respond to the call, the Party has the responsibility of choosing the moment and direction of the struggle.

The great Leninist teaching for every revolutionary organizer is that his work is divided into two fronts: (a) an internal front, of party building, that is, of the construction of revolutionary forces and (b) an external front, that is, the relationship between the party and the different layers of the people.

Lenin advocated that the centre of the external front is the construction of the struggle of the masses. The line of mobilization of the popular masses, simply the ‘mass line’, consists in (a) taking the lowest level of popular demands in any particular place and organizing the struggle of the interested parties for the effective solution of that demand; (b) wholeheartedly upholding each small local claim in an uncompromising manner, until it actually achieves victory in this small point; and (c) never

abandoning the mass struggle, whatever the circumstances, provided that the decisions of struggle have been effectively taken by the local masses involved. Only in this way of (a) putting the mass in movement, (b) identifying with the struggle chosen and (c) fighting to the end, can a movement that proposes to build a vanguard party become a vanguard party.

The advice of the founders of the contemporary revolution is therefore clear: (a) do not play with insurrection; (b) do not forsake the people who rose up alone; and (c) carefully plan the inevitable insurrection.

The Subjective Factor

The power of the enemy rests solely upon our consent (V. N. Giap)

The work of raising awareness on the reality of class conditions and the impossibility of obtaining fullness of opportunity and rights under the ruthless rule of the bourgeoisie generate in the people the perception that it is in the hands of an internal enemy, unable to share the wealth and promote the welfare of the majority. Leninist propaganda touches on every note of misery and oppression from A to Z, gradually awakening in the masses of the people the understanding that beneath the bourgeoisie their sufferings are eternal. From the Leninist point of view, the barbarism of the bourgeois regime does not stem from the personal evil of every bourgeois. It stems from the structure of the system, from the cruelty of unjust distribution. The misery of the working people is a necessity for the bourgeoisie; otherwise, it would lose control of the means of domination of the system.

The external political work of the Leninist framework therefore consists of 'mass labour'. Lenin said that 70 per cent of the party's time should be devoted to 'patient enlightenment of the masses'. Only the remaining 30 per cent of the time should be devoted to the independent party organization. Why? Because the ruling classes can do nothing 'without the broad support' of the masses. Detailed, scientific, competent propaganda is at the heart of the work of Leninist agitation. It leads people in general to answer the question: do you think that (social) subjects will solve their problems? The first Leninist concern is to teach the masses to have independence. The second Leninist concern is to get the masses to 'walk with their own legs'. Nothing, anywhere, can stop the 'mass movement'.

It is therefore the teaching of the Russian revolution that in order to combat imperialism and bourgeois domination, it is necessary to fight the struggle permanently and in the long run. The exploiters do not give up exploiting the working people because the poor took power or made one or two revolutions. The struggle continues through the generations. In this sense, the study of revolution, the importance of learning from Leninism, cannot be ignored. It is not merely a question of copying Leninism. But to study it, see its teachings that are useful to our reality and incorporate them into our manual of struggle. This is the correct way to remember the great October Revolution. This is the way to incorporate it and honour it in our daily practice.

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