

Revolutionary Marxism 2024

Esteemed peoples of all races,

...

I love you with respect and affection and merriness.

Neither superior to any other

Nor inferior to any other

You sit on the throne of my heart side by side.

...

Esteemed peoples of all races

and all motherlands,

there is on this earth also a motherland for me above all others

Neither Turkey nor Russia

Neither Japan nor Polynesia nor Azerbaijan

It is there where my first hopes blossomed

It is there my first dawn lit up.

The passport I carry belongs there.

Not made of paper,

Its visa is carved on my heart

my heart carries its seal.

There are my eyes

And my eyebrows.

There belongs the first New Man of my century

Comrade Lenin, citizen of all my motherlands.

Excerpt from Nazım Hikmet's poem, *There*
Moscow, 1958

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Revolutionary Marxism 2024

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A JOURNAL OF THEORY AND POLITICS



Savas Mikhail Matsas

Sungur Savran

Oswaldo Coggiola

Iosif Grigorovich Abramson

Daria Mitina

Mikhail B. Konashev

David Epstein

Flo Menezes

Edgar Azevedo

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Enric Mompó and Toni Marcó

Levent Dölek

E. Agelis/M. Patsouras

Campagne Georges Abdallah

Jeremy Lester

Savas Mikhail-Matsas

Burak Saygan

Kutlu Dâne

Lenin for the future

Lenin as alternative

From Lenin to Leninism

Dialectics of proletarian revolution

Contribution to Lenin 100

Lenin's revolution

Understand and act

Lenin's cultural internationalism

Lenin's other testament

Sobre Lenin

Message to Lenin 100 Conference

Lenin's legacy

Pour le centenaire de Lénine

Guerra imperialista, guerra civile

Best tribute to Lenin

Strongest revolutionary weapon

Lenin and youth

L'adresse pour Lenin 100

Liberating the imagination

In defense of the Palestinian people

DIP and Palestine

Al Aqsa Flood and its aftermath

*Without revolutionary theory
there can be no revolutionary movement.*
V. I. Lenin, *What is to be done?*

Revolutionary Marxism 2024

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Cover Photo

Lenin (on the left side), at the Second Congress of the Communist International in 1920.
(Geneva Graduate Institute archives, Boris Souvarine papers).

Revolutionary Marxism 2024

CONTENTS

RM Editorial Board	In this issue	5
<i>Lenin's Legacy 100 years on (Conference proceedings)</i>		
Savas Mikhail Matsas	Lenin for the future	9
Sungur Savran	Lenin as alternative	17
Osvaldo Coggiola	From Lenin to Leninism	47
Iosif Grigorovich	The Dialectics of proletarian revolution and the creation of the union of Europe and Asia Soviet republics	71
Abramson		
Daria Mitina	Contribution to Lenin 100 Conference	73
Mikhail B. Konashev	The revolution of Lenin and its urgency	77
David Epstein	Understand the new world and act	81
Flo Menezes	Lenin's cultural internationalism	87
Edgar Azevedo	Lenin's other testament	103
José Capitán	Sobre Lenin, la conferencia de Génova y el tratado de Rapallo	109
Alex Mitchell	Message to Lenin 100 Conference	113
Dimitris Mizaras	Lenin's legacy on the eve of a war escalation in the Baltic Sea	115
G. Bégéneix	Intervention pour le centenaire de la mort de Lénine	119
Gian Franco Camboni	La consegna di Lenin: trasformare la guerra imperialista in guerra civile!	123
Enric Mompó and Toni Marcó	Reflections on the best tribute we can pay to comrade Lenin	127
Levent Dölek	Leninism: the strongest revolutionary weapon	131
Ernesto Agelis/ Mitrofanis Patsouras	Lenin and youth	135
<i>Lenin's Legacy 100 years on, Special Session on Palestine (Conference proceedings)</i>		
Campagne unitaire pour la libération de Georges Abdallah	L'adresse pour Lenin 100	139
Jeremy Lester	Liberating the imagination for future memories in the realms of 'alam al-mithal and 'alam al-khaya	143
Savas Mikhail-Matsas	In defense of the Palestinian people	147
Burak Saygan	DIP and Palestine	151
Kutlu Dâne	Some points regarding the Al Aqsa Flood and its aftermath	155

In this issue

Our previous issue, *Revolutionary Marxism 2023* was published after the beginning of the Zionist genocide in Gaza. Unfortunately, after wiping out nearly 35,000 Palestinians, the army of the Zionist entity is still continuing its genocidal onslaught in Gaza. They are backed by the imperialists, and many so-called friends of Palestine are doing absolutely nothing to stop the Zionist assault, discounting the fact that Iran and its allies, Ansarullah and Hezbollah, are giving a hard time to Israel in distinct fields. During the winter, the imperialist centres were shaken by huge protests demanding an urgent ceasefire. Spring came with encampments and demonstrations in universities all around the world, which began in the heart of US imperialism. In Turkey, the persistent demand to cut trade relations with Israel, emanating both from the Islamic movement and the left, was not met by the despotism of Erdogan, who had previously secured his position in between imperialists and Zionist Israel. He paid a price in the local elections in March, and had to put a ban on trade with the Zionist entity, but only after having a scent for a ceasefire between Hamas and Israel, which he looked to for restoring the trade.

Imperialism is paving the way for a third world war, not only by supporting the Zionists in West Asia against Palestinians and Iran, but also by relentlessly inciting and supporting Ukraine in its war against Russia, and preparing and shielding Taiwan for a possible war with China. Circling China and Russia, world's neuralgic centre may easily phase out from West Asia to East Asia or Eastern Europe. But today, it's indisputably in Palestine.

For us, finding opportunities and tasks for the establishment of the world of the future with a dialectical approach is only possible by understanding Lenin's dialectical understanding of world politics, his war policy and his political path after the World War. So, a century after the great revolutionary leader's demise, we are proud to say that Lenin is the title and the content of *Revolutionary Marxism's* 2024 issue.

Unfortunate as it is, the legacy of the arguably greatest revolutionary leader in history is either silently ignored or wilfully blemished just as history necessitates that Lenin's lessons be put into action, now more than ever. The utter hostility at worst

and shy ambiguity at best by those who claim to be the heritors of the 20th-century revolutionary history toward Lenin's heritage makes this issue of *Revolutionary Marxism* in the international publishing scene of the left broadly defined. Let alone being discouraged by it; this aberration only consolidates our determination to uphold Lenin's legacy and introduce it to a new generation of militants and intellectuals who turn towards Marxism, not least under the impact of the ongoing genocide in Palestine and steadfast resistance against it.

For this reason, one can state without any exaggeration that publishing a special dossier on Lenin and his legacy is already a statement in and of itself, even beyond its content. Many shades of post-Leninism, from identity politics to intersectionality, seem to be all the rage on the international left. However, as sizeable chunks of the international left – not to say the overwhelming majority of it – spent the last three and a half decades chasing one fad after another, world history proved that Lenin and Leninism are deeply needed not only by those on the left but mostly for masses around the world who bear the brunt of approaching world war and the steady rise of fascism. Ongoing local wars and imminent regional, even worldwide wars remind us the actuality of the Leninist theory of imperialism, while the post-Leninist left seems happy with the dubious honour of an international outlook more often than not in sync with that of NATO. As the national question comes to the fore under very different forms – from Palestine to the Caucasus, from Kurdistan to Macedonia, from the United States and Europe to Latin America and India – Leninist internationalism remains superior to the chimera of EU-sponsored peace. And as popular uprisings rock the world but remain without decisive victories, history calls forth the Leninist party – internationally and nationally – as the force capable of cutting the Gordian Knot that blocks humanity's way.

This issue finds its basis in the conference jointly organised by the International Socialist Center Christian Rakovsky and the RedMed Web Network on January 21st, 2024, that is to say, precisely on the centenary of comrade Lenin's death. The workshop itself saw the participation of militants and intellectuals from all over the world. Their contributions, after a minimal amount of editorial touch, are reproduced in the 2024 issue of the *Revolutionary Marxism* journal. The breadth and variety of contributions – in English, Spanish, French and Italian alike – is testimony to the actuality of Lenin's heritage. Accordingly, the texts that you will read illustrate the importance of Lenin, not as a mere symbol of a bygone past, but as a political and theoretical body of work that proved itself abundantly relevant for the fighters of socialism in the age of imperialism.

The dossier starts with two pieces by Savas-Mikhail Matsas and Sungur Savran for two organisations spearheading the conference, the EEK (Workers Revolutionary Party, Greece) and the DIP (Revolutionary Workers Party, Turkey) respectively. Savran's article here has been substantially broadened in comparison to his contribution to the conference, which contained only a fraction of what the present piece includes. Then, the extent of contributions shows itself from a regional standpoint, in addition to that of topics addressed. Post-Soviet countries and their Marxists assume an important role. Iosif Grigorovitch Abramson, the towering figure of Russian communism, contributes with a short piece on the tactical arsenal mobi-

lized by Vladimir Ilitch Lenin and his comrades in the fateful months leading into the October Revolution. Daria Mitina, from the OKP (United Communist Party in Russia), attacks head-on the denigration of Lenin's legacy by Vladimir Putin and his ilk as she underlines Lenin's role in constructing the great achievement that was the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. Mikhail Konashev, from the Association of the Soviet Union, takes a steadfast defense of Lenin's legacy as the embodiment of the "unity of revolutionary theory and revolutionary practice." Finally, David Epstein undertakes a discussion of current geopolitics and socialist planning in the 21st century.

Latin America is equally well-represented. Osvaldo Coggiola, from Brazil-Argentina, offers an article-length study of Lenin's political trajectory and the transformation of Leninist as an adjective to Leninism as a noun. Edgar Azevedo, takes Lenin's speech to the 4th Congress of the Communist International as a starting point to discuss what we can learn from this great revolutionary in the construction of revolutionary leadership. Jose Capitan, from Opción Obrera in Venezuela, deals with another historical topic, this time the Rapallo Treaty of 1922. Flo Menendez, from Universidade Estadual Paulista, discusses Lenin's internationalism from a cultural standpoint.

Contributions extend to political analyses by revolutionary organizations and groups from all across the world. Dimitris Mizaras from Marxist Workers League (Finland) asserts the relevancy of Lenin's legacy as the Baltic region, just like the world as a whole, draws ever closer to a disastrous war. From France, G. Bégéneix from ROR offers an in-depth analysis of the French political situation and the need for a Leninist organization to put an end to the crisis. Enric Mompó and Toni Marcó from Red Roja in Catalonia point out how concrete lessons of Lenin could be applied to the current European situation. Gian Franco Camboni from Sardegna Rossa (Italy), reiterates Lenin's call to transform the imperialist war into a civil war. Alex Mitchell, recalls the importance of Lenin through the role of the revolutionary leader in his own political development.

Last but not least, the dossier carries contributions on and from Palestine, befitting Lenin's strategic orientation for the alliance of the working class and the oppressed nations. The Unitary Campaign for the Liberation of Georges Abdallah, which carries forward the cause of the Lebanese communist fighter of the Palestinian cause, braving the prison of French imperialism for the last four decades, opens the dossier. Then, Jeremy Lester recounts his personal experience in the West Bank's refugee camps during the initial stage of Israel's ongoing genocide. After pointing that the war is extended beyond the region, Savas Mikhail Matsas points to a revolutionary international for the emancipation of the Palestinians. Kutlu Dâne, the spokesperson of the Friends of Palestine against Imperialism and Zionism in Turkey, gives a brief rundown of his organization's history and solidarity action. Finally, Burak Saygan from the Revolutionary Workers Party (DIP) in Turkey, retells DIP's congress resolution and approach to the Palestinian struggle.

We hope our readers will enjoy reading our current issue and some will contribute to the journal by submitting manuscripts and actively promoting *Revolutionary Marxism* among broader audiences.

Lenin's Legacy 100 years on

Online conference
organized by
International Socialist Center
Christian Rakovsky and
RedMed web network



21 January
2024



07:00 EST
09:00 Sao Paulo
13:00 CET
14:00 Athens
15:00 Moscow
St Petersburg
Istanbul
23:00 Melbourne

Lenin for the future

Savas Mikhail Matsas (Christian Rakovsky
International Socialist Center)

Introductory Session.

Opening speech on behalf of the “Christian Rakovsky” International Socialist Center

1. Dear Comrades, товарищи, compañeros y compañeras, camarades, compagni e compagne, yoldaşlar, σύντροφοι και συντρόφισσες

Welcome to the International Conference on *Lenin’s Legacy 100 Years On* organized by the International Socialist Center “Christian Rakovsky” and the RedMed web network!

Our deliberations today, January 21, 2024, exactly 100 years from the day when Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, the leader of the Great October 1917 Socialist Revolution passed away to eternity, marks the beginning of a much needed, fresh, collective reflection on his revolutionary legacy. It is not a formal celebration of a “harmless icon”, of a legacy reduced into a fossilized, dead dogma. We need a new dialectical-critical turn to a historical source, which is not at all dried up. It remains an indispensable source of inspiration and creativity for revolutionary theory and practice for all those who today fight for the self-emancipation of the working class, for the liberation of the exploited and oppressed humanity. With this spirit, we want to declare this year 2024 as the *Year Lenin!*

Vladimir Lenin, the architect of the victory of the Red October, the October

Revolution itself as well as the epic and tragic trajectory of the Soviet Union is not a relic of the past but a necessary *preparation for the future!*

2. By opening our Conference, we want to pay tribute to all those who heroically defended against all its gravediggers and creatively developed Lenin's legacy the last 100 years both in the Soviet Union and all over the world.

Particularly, today, in this Conference, we want to pay tribute to our Comrade **Alexander Vladimirovitch Buzgalin**, an internationally well known Marxist, Professor of Political Economy and of Marxist Studies in Lomonosov Moscow State University, a founder of the *Alternativyi* movement and journal, author of many important theoretical books and articles, organizer of many successful scientific, cultural and political events, in Russia and internationally.

He dedicated all his life of theoretical research and political struggle, specially in the tragic period following the collapse of the Soviet Union, to defend communism against bureaucratic deformations and bourgeois slanders, to promote internationalism in action, to develop Lenin's heritage, to renew a creative Marxism, to educate a new young generation for the paths of emancipation, towards a *Homo Novus Creator*.

3. Why to return to Lenin today? Why we need to rediscover his theoretical and political revolutionary contribution now, in our turbulent times?

At the Centenary of Marx's birth, in 2018, we had noticed¹ the reactions of well known spokesmen of the capitalist class and of the mainstream bourgeois Press: the respectful bourgeois American newspaper *New York Times*, on April 30, 2018, has published an article, with the cheerful title: *Happy Birthday, Karl Marx, You Were Right!*² Soon after, on May 4, 2018, the voice of the City of London, the equally respectful and bourgeois *Financial Times* hosted a book review by the economic historian Adam Tooze under the impressive headlines "*Why Karl Marx is more relevant than ever*"³.

Nothing similar could be noticed today, at the Centenary of Lenin's death. Why?

The belated, after the event, recognition of Marx by his opponents is caused by the eruption, in 2008, of an explosive, unexpected by them, on-going global capitalist crisis, which is spiraling without solution up to now. They have to turn back to Marx, with horror, because of the total inability of bourgeois economics to explain the crisis. They have to admit that it "*cannot explain the past- the lack of prognosis of the 2007 global crisis and the lack of understanding of its deepest causes; also it cannot understand the present – why the crisis remains unresolved despite the extraordinary, heterodox measures of gigantic stimulus packages, quantitative easing, and nearly zero interest rates, taken by central banks*

1 See Savvas Matsas (2019) Karl Marx and the Future, *Critique* 47:1 63-69.

2 Jason Barker, *Happy Birthday, Karl Marx, You Were Right!* *New York Times*, April 30, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/30/opinion/karl-marx-at-200-influence.html>, assessed on 05/01/2018.

3 Adam Tooze, *Why Karl Marx is more relevant than ever*, *Financial Times*, May 4, 2018, <https://www.ft.com/content/cf6532dc-4c67-11e8-97e4-13afc22d86d4?segmentId=a7371401-027d-d8bf-8a7f-2a746e767d56>, assessed on May 4, 2018.

and governments; and, last but not at all least, **it cannot foresee the future** although sinister signs appear already in the horizon.”⁴ As one of them, Chris Giles wrote: “*The future is uncertain. The present is uncertain. The past is uncertain.*”⁵

In these conditions of theoretical bankruptcy, epistemological impasse and generalized disorientation, liberal economists like Nouriel Roubini can “agree that *Marx’s conviction that capitalism has an inbuilt tendency to destroy itself remains as prescient as ever.*”⁶

The ruling class, its think tanks, analysts and apologists can agree that a destruction of capitalism, even an end of the world is possible **-but never a victorious socialist revolution!** And **Lenin is insolubly connected precisely with the victorious October Revolution.**

To add insult to the injury, the Bolshevik leader himself characterized this event as **the beginning of a world socialist revolution**, a historical prospect and a horrifying future for all rulers in the present world!

The vast majority of them try to console themselves thinking that Lenin is buried for ever in 1991 under the ruins of the disintegration of the Soviet Union. They conclude, consequently, that, together with Lenin, was buried the threat, which emerged in 1917 of a revolutionary overthrow of world capitalism.

This dominant wishful thinking proved to be an illusion. It ended together with Fukuyama’s fallacy of the “end of History”, of the “final and complete victory of liberal capitalism”, and of the delusion of a “monopolar moment” of an American ruled “world Empire”. Contrary to bourgeois expectations, History has accelerated its march, liberal capitalism plunged into a protracted and escalating global crisis, the decline of American capitalism and of its world hegemony are manifest in more and more brutal forms, intensifying its imperialist war drive. *War is the continuation and extension, with other means of a desperate policy to counteract the decline and fall of a historically outdated social system.*

If everything was historically settled for US and global capitalism with the catastrophe of the USSR **why they need to complete the 1991 disaster by a NATO proxy war to fragment, colonize and rule under puppet regimes the former Soviet space, the post-Soviet Russia and, on this war path, China?**

Is it accidental that US/NATO imperialism considers as primary strategic targets and urgent need to attack Russia and China, two countries where the greatest social revolutions of the 20th century took place? Why their absorption in a decaying global capitalism produces and needs the drive towards a catastrophic world war?

They are simply afraid from competition by another belated rival entering within the limits of their declining world system or they are terrified **by the possibility of a reversal of the 1991 disaster?**

With wars at the heart of Europe and in the Middle East, and dozens other military conflicts in the Global South, declining US and global capitalism, **imperialism** as Lenin has profoundly analyzed its nature, brings humanity at the brink of the abyss

4 Savvas Matsas op.cit.

5 Chris Giles, Has Economics Failed? *Financial Times* April 23, 2018.

6 Jason Barker, *Happy Birthday, Karl Marx, You Were Right!* *New York Times*, April 30, 2018.

of a nuclear holocaust.

Are they afraid less from an end of the world than from a new “Lenin moment”?

4. In today’s conditions of an insoluble global capitalist crisis escalating into an impending imperialist world war catastrophe, Lenin’s theoretical work on **imperialism** acquires a burning actuality.

After the eruption of the First World War, the unfolding barbarism in Europe and the collapse of the international socialist Left, Lenin’s struggle, often in solitude or within a small minority, represents the most dramatic but also the most creative period of his revolutionary life. It was absolutely vital for preparing, politically re-arming and leading, Lenin together with Trotsky, the Bolshevik Party at the head of the masses organized in Soviets to the triumph of the 1917 October Revolution.

The rise of a new revolutionary subjectivity was a process neither automatic nor linear at all. The road to Soviet power was full of obstacles, traps, conflicts, splits, mortal counter-revolutionary dangers, repression of the vanguard of the working class, realignment and re-orientation of revolutionary forces within and beyond the Bolsheviks. *Without a leap in revolutionary theory, no such a tremendous leap in revolutionary practice could be possible.*

Trotsky had made, in his autobiography the following profound assessment meditating on the victory of Soviet power in 1917:

Marxism considers itself the conscious expression of the unconscious historical process. But the “unconscious” process, in the historic – philosophical sense of the term not in the psychological, coincides with its conscious expression only at its highest point, when the masses, by sheer elemental pressure, break through the social routine and give victorious expression to the deepest needs of historical development. And at such moments the highest theoretical consciousness of the epoch merges with the immediate action of those oppressed masses who are farthest away from theory. The creative union of the conscious with the unconscious is what one usually calls “inspiration.” Revolution is the inspired frenzy of history.⁷

From the eruption of the Great War and the capitulation of the Second International, Lenin had to grasp the *specific historical nature of imperialism*. On this scientific, historical-dialectical materialist understanding, he clearly conceived the entire field of forces in conflict on the world historical scene. The imperialist war was not only a clash between solely the Great Powers, a military conflict between States. It involved also popular masses, class forces with objectively irreconcilable interests in conflict, in class struggle.

On this basis, Lenin developed the line of *transformation of the imperialist world war into an international socialist revolution*. Finally, with this internationalist line as a compass, he succeeded to make the Bolsheviks and the Soviets of workers, peasants and soldiers able to transform a war catastrophe into the triumph of socialist revolution in Russia.

The revolutionary program was not an already given, fixed list of demands but a theoretically elaborated guide for action from the standpoint of the highest

⁷ Leon Trotsky, *My Life, chapter XX In Power* <https://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1930/my-life/ch29.htm>.

quantitative and qualitative analysis of the changing reality. ***Without historical materialist dialectics, there is no revolutionary program of a combat proletarian Party***

After the initial shock in 1914, the first crucial step of Lenin was a decisive, original and deep re-working of ***materialist dialectics*** by a detailed study of Hegel's *Science of Logic* as well as a vast philosophical field from Antiquity and Aristotle to the philosophers of the Modern Times and early 20th century. Lenin's ***Philosophical Notebooks*** is a unique testimony on his theoretical laboratory and a vital document of his ***methodological break*** with the so-called "orthodox Marxism" of the Second International, the theoretical foundations of its reformist opportunism..

Lenin's intense philosophical-methodological work and break from mechanical thinking and linear gradualism penetrates and marks all his writings on imperialism, the political center of gravity of his research and activity during the Great War. His small book *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism* with the modest subtitle *A Popular Outline*, presents, under conditions of censorship, in a condensed form, the main results of an immense theoretical labor. It is based on a mountain of empirical facts and a critical study of the main debates on imperialism of that period, particularly from the works of Hobson and Hilferding. This tireless critical labor can be seen in his voluminous *Notebooks on Imperialism*.

In these *Notebooks* is not absent the evidence of his continuous attention to philosophy, with constant references to dialectics, its categories and concepts, even a note of interest to Hegel's *Phenomenology of the Spirit*.

The booklet on *Imperialism, Highest Stage of Capitalism* has to be carefully studied in connection and within this broader epistemological framework. Any eclectic separation of a particular quotation from the entire context of dialectical – historical materialist inquiry and exposition has disastrous political implications.

5. A typical example, repeated *ad nauseam*, is the misuse of Lenin's definition of imperialism by most often quoted than understood five basic economic features

- (1) the concentration of production and capital has developed to such a high stage that it has created monopolies which play a decisive role in economic life;
- (2) the merging of bank capital with industrial capital, and the creation, on the basis of this "finance capital," of a financial oligarchy;
- (3) the export of capital as distinguished from the export of commodities acquires exceptional importance;
- (4) the formation of international monopolist capitalist associations which share the world among themselves and
- (5) the territorial division of the whole world among the biggest capitalist powers is completed. Imperialism is capitalism at that stage of development at which the dominance of monopolies and finance capital is established; in which the export of capital has acquired pronounced importance; in which the division of the world among the international trusts has begun, in which the division of all territories of the globe among the biggest capitalist powers has been completed.⁸

This definition is taken out of context and reduced into an abstract, dead formula,

⁸ V. I. Lenin, *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, Chapter VII. "Imperialism as a special stage of Capitalism" www.marxists.org/archive/lenin.

to be artificially imposed upon every concrete, living, specific social formation in uneven and combined world historical development. The dialectic between the universal, the particular and the singular disappears.

In this distorting way, the warnings of Lenin himself are ignored. Just before the definition in five basic features, he warns about “*the conditional and relative value of all definitions in general, which can never embrace all the concatenations of a phenomenon in its full development*”. Immediately after the definition, Lenin points out: “...*imperialism can and must be defined differently if we bear in mind not only the basic, purely economic concepts- to which the above definition is limited- but also the historical place of this stage of capitalism in relation to capitalism in general, or the relation between imperialism and the two main trends in the working class movement*”⁹- namely the opportunist and the revolutionary trend.

The opportunist trend in our days, sometimes claiming to be even “Leninist”, arbitrarily applies the 5 points definition to declare Russia and China as imperialist countries to legitimize their “equidistant” position in the US/NATO proxy war in Ukraine or in the US imperialist aggressive antagonism against China.

In other versions, the same method of formal justification of a reactionary policy of “keeping equal distances”, while paying lip service to Lenin against Lenin, uses the pseudo-concept of “*sub-imperialism*” or of “*peripheral imperialism*” or of “*capitalism in transition to imperialism*” to describe conflicts between the Global North and the Global South.

These pseudo-concepts totally ignore and/or reject Lenin’s central approach to the *historical* nature of imperialism: its analysis and recognition as **an epoch of transition from a “decaying”, “parasitic”, “rotten”, “agonizing” capitalism** - the adjectives are Lenin’s- **to Socialism**.

This transition to a higher social mode of production beyond capitalism, to a new higher form of social life beyond capital’s fetishist form [‘Die Gestalt des gesellschaftlichen Lebensprozesses’-Marx¹⁰] can begin from one or several countries but it can be completed only on a *world* scale. There is an objective necessity for a **permanent world revolution** arising precisely from the **nature of the transitional epoch of imperialism** itself, which prevents a completion of a *world* transition to be fulfilled isolated **in a single country**.

6. The contradictions and tendencies of the imperialist epoch of capitalist decline discovered by Lenin did not disappear at all. They immensely grew the last 100 years and are exacerbated at the end of the 20th and the early 21st century. Decay and parasitism took monstrous dimensions. A tiny minority of a financial oligarchy, the infamous 1 per cent situated in the imperialist metropolitan centers, dominate and exploit the world economy sucking the surplus of the laboring humanity. Speculative finance capital in the Global North dominates productive capital while the center of gravity of industrial manufacturing activity has moved in the Global South, especially in Asia and China. Despite technological progress, particularly in the field of Artificial Intelligence, the rate of productivity growth is slowing

⁹ op. cit.

¹⁰ Karl Marx, *Das Kapital* I, Dietzverlag Berlin 1972 p.94.

in the US and European capitalist economy. Decline is manifest in all spheres-socioeconomic, geopolitical, political, cultural.

An epoch of historical decline, Hegel had pointed out¹¹ is the negative expression of the emergence of a higher principle of social organization. In the current epoch, declining Capitalism is its special historical stage “*when*”, Lenin writes, “*the features of the epoch of transition from capitalism to a higher social and economic system had taken shape and revealed themselves in all spheres*”¹² **This** is the **essential** point of Lenin’s analysis: imperialism is not an expansionary policy but the historical stage of a parasitic, decaying, agonizing capitalism. It is an epoch of transition to the higher **socialist** reorganization of society; a non linear process of transformation into a communist society, the realm of freedom. **This** is the **central** point ignored and/or rejected by all inventors of new “post-imperialist stages”.

7. Together with this essential point is interconnected another one: the transition beyond capitalism is **not**, as in the past, a transition from one form of class society to another form of class society. It is *an entire historical epoch of transition from class to a classless society, world communism*. It is not an automatic linear evolution but it needs **a world socialist revolution**.

The role of **revolutionary subjectivity** becomes **immense, preponderant**. To lead the transition forward, it is needed the **conscious participation** of the **working class** as a **universal class**, which cannot emancipate itself without leading a universal human emancipation from all forms of exploitation and oppression To fulfill its historical task the working class has to be organized into its own independent organs of mass struggle and political power, first of all to be organized into **revolutionary combat parties of a revolutionary International**.

Here, at this central point, palpitates the living heart of Lenin’s legacy.

It belongs not to a remote past but to an open and necessary future. The future is **open**, not predetermined. Its outcome depends on the living struggle of living forces on national and international levels. It is **necessary** because it arises out of objective contradictions and tendencies.

The historical dilemma posed today to a humanity struggling amid the current global capitalist crisis, producing conditions of unprecedented social destruction, climate catastrophe, world war, including a nuclear holocaust, is not limited, as in the past to the alternative “*Socialism or barbarism*”. It is **Socialism or no future**.

January 2024

¹¹ Hegel, *Principles of Philosophy of the Right and State*, paragraph # 347.

¹² Lenin, *Imperialism...* op. cit. chapter VII.

Book launch

In the Tracks of Marx's *Capital*

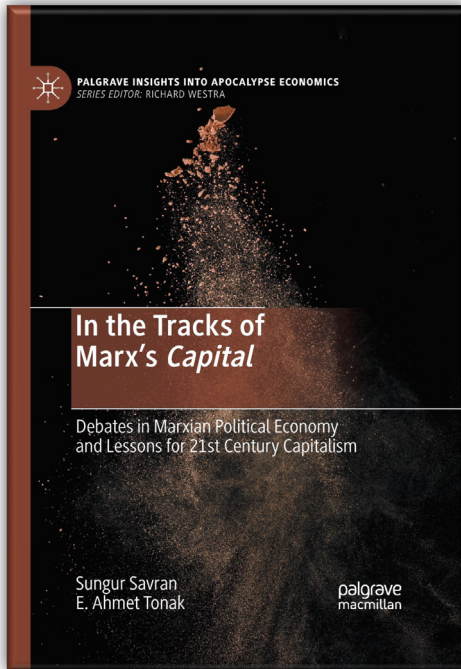
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Lenin as alternative

Sungur Savran (RedMed)

There are revolutionary leaders or great thinkers who, notwithstanding their overall historic importance, are no longer of burning relevance for the future. Such are Spartacus, Babeuf, or Sandino.¹ There are those whose action and thinking have been invaluable for our epoch, but as conditions have changed irreversibly, they are no longer a source of inspiration for future generations. Such are Hugo Blanco, Steve Biko, or Miguel Enríquez.

There are, however, some revolutionary leaders, who were born 200 years ago or died 100 years ago, but whose thought and action are as topical today as when they first uttered their words or accomplished their action. Their thinking even becomes more actual and more topical as time goes by. Such is Marx, such is Lenin.

¹ This article is based on the translation of an article of ours published in January 2024 in issue 56 of *Devrimci Marksizm*, the Turkish-language mother publication of *Revolutionary Marxism*. in memoriam the centennial of Lenin's death. Yet it is not identical in its content with that original. There, Lenin's original contributions to Marxism were discussed for his entire lifetime, including his first period up until 1914 before he was faced with the task of the leadership of world revolution and thus included, in particular, his contribution in *What Is To Be Done?*, to the deeper grasp of the political life of bourgeois society and how the proletarian vanguard should fight against the rule of the bourgeoisie, with particular reference to Lenin's theory of the revolutionary proletarian party. Here, concerns of space and time have led us to omit this aspect of Lenin's contribution, as well as his contribution to the understanding of and struggle against the specific aspects of Tsarist Russia. For the rest, this translation is quite loyal to the original text, but does veer, from time to time, from it on some secondary aspects, not, let us hasten to add, in substance, but in the formulation of that same substance. One final point: the titles of the two articles are also different. The original article's title can best be translated as "Lenin's legacy denied". This change is by no means due to a change in our views on Lenin's contribution to Marxism.

Lenin was not only indisputably the greatest leader of the worldwide revolutionary wave of early twentieth century. He is the leader of world revolution who now, precisely a century after his death, shows us the way forward so that the catastrophic collapse of the experience of socialist construction of the twentieth century is not repeated. He is the leader who shows us the *alternative* to the degeneration, decay and destruction that the first experience of socialist construction fell prey to.

Lenin's practice and theory are fully actual and topical in the twenty-first century.

This is what we will try to show in this article. We are aware that "it is harder to crack prejudice than the atom", an idea attributed to Einstein. In those who have laid the entire blame for the collapse of the socialist experience of the twentieth century at Lenin's door, this article will create cynicism or even anger. But revolutionaries who look at history without prejudice, and honest people still looking for a way out of the prevalent despair of the present situation, we hope, will start to reconsider the importance of Lenin's practice and theory in order to save humanity from the barbarism approaching with the putrefaction of the capitalist world order.

1. Another Lenin

Many readers may at this stage suspect that we will repeat the positive aspects of Lenin's thinking and practice that have been rehearsed often in the past: the decisive importance of Lenin's conception of the revolutionary party, the clairvoyance of his theory of imperialism, the democratic vision of socialism depicted in *State and Revolution* that contrasts sharply with all the calamities that visited Soviet socialism after Lenin's death, the conflict that opposed Lenin to Stalin in the last months of Lenin's conscious life, his testament, which advised the party to dismiss Stalin from the office of party secretary etc. etc. Nothing of the kind.

There is not a shred of doubt that all this is extremely important. But this is not the alternative that we are talking about. The import of this article is different. We contend that the initiatives Lenin took and the ideas he developed in the final period of his life, say between 1919 and spring 1923, are of a nature that shows the way forward in the twenty-first century. All this has been either overlooked or deliberately ignored, neglected, misrepresented and denied. This is the topic of this article.

Lenin made a striking observation on Marx and Marxists. He made this as he was reading Hegel's *The Science of Logic* and other works in the autumn and winter of 1914, after the war had started. In the light of this reading, which made it possible for him to grasp Hegel's dialectic in all its depth, Lenin reached the following conclusion:

It is impossible completely to understand Marx's *Capital*, and especially its first chapter, without having thoroughly studied and understood the *whole* of Hegel's *Logic*. Consequently, half a century later none of the Marxists understood Marx!²

² V. I. Lenin, "Conspectus of Hegel's Book *The Science of Logic*", *Collected Works*, c. 38, Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1976, p. 180.

We are afraid what befell Marx turned also to be the fate of Lenin! It seems that the strategy and the programme developed by Lenin has still not been understood by Marxists even 100 years after Lenin's death. Our claim that Lenin's legacy can and should be resorted to as an alternative to the lived experience of twentieth-century socialist construction is with reference to this hardly noticed, misunderstood, underrated or, alternatively, deliberately denied Lenin. Had the leaderships of the socialist revolutions that occurred around the world in the twentieth century followed in the footsteps of Lenin's theory and practice, the world would have been a different place from what it is now. History might have taken an entirely different path.

2. From the leadership of Russian Marxism to that of world revolution

Irony of history, if there ever was one, the secret to this new strategy and programme developed by Lenin lies in the betrayal of the social democratic leadership of the Second International in the summer of 1914. This is such an unexpected turn of events that when the news of the vote in the Reichstag in which the entire social democratic group voted in favour of the war budget of German imperialism, Lenin exclaims that this is a trick of the German general staff, that it is a pure lie. There is surely a long road that separates that Lenin from the mature leader of the October revolution and the Communist International (Comintern). The reading of Hegel is only a minor part of that road.

With a resolve displayed by very few Marxists, Lenin immediately draws the conclusion that a new International is necessary. In order to assess the full significance of this, we should remember how Lenin viewed the task of leadership of the international socialist movement up until that point.

To make a long story short, it may safely be said that for Lenin, as Plekhanov was the teacher of the Marxist movement in Russia, despite all the discord that arose over the course of the practical movement after the Second Congress of the Russian party in 1903, so was Kautsky the theoretical mentor of the entire international movement up until the summer of 1914.

It is this confidence in the leadership of the German movement that evaporates with the onset of the Great War. Although not as chauvinistically as some of their colleagues, both Kautsky and Plekhanov have joined the bandwagon of warmongers. In fact, of the larger parties of the International, only the Bolshevik Party in its entirety has resisted the drift towards this betrayal. There are of course other forces that have withstood the pressure of jingoism, most importantly the current called Spartacus led by Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht of the German party. But despite their no less determined insistence on proletarian internationalism the Germans were not able, for reasons that need not detain us here, to lead the struggle for a new International.

So the task of resurrecting the revolutionary and internationalist Marxist leadership of the world proletariat is now a responsibility that Lenin cannot shirk.

If the Bolshevik Party is the party best-placed to lead the new movement, then by the nature of things Lenin has to undertake the leadership of the revolutionary proletariat worldwide.

The irony of history is that the betrayal of the midgets of reformist social democracy threw forward this giant of the century to undertake the leadership of the world revolutionary movement in the decade that was to remain for him.

3. The preparation for the leadership of world revolution

Having grasped the full significance of the new task he was facing, Lenin immediately set to work to prepare for this new responsibility in single-handed fashion. One aspect of this was the theoretical work he undertook for a broader understanding of the new situation of the world and of the international proletarian movement. The major areas of this theoretical preparation consist of a study of the dialectic, a comprehensive analysis of the nature of the modern imperialist age of capitalism, and the entire gamut of questions taken up in his 1917 book, *The State and Revolution*.

Hegel's dialectics and Lenin's "Philosophical Notebooks"

As a revolutionary preparing to play his part in the mission of re-founding the world party of revolution and thus undertaking the leadership of world revolution, Lenin immediately moved to prepare the theoretical basis upon which the entire task would be carried through. Having realised as a result of the miserable failure of the old leadership that the entire edifice of the leadership of the Second International stood on shaky ground, he went back to the basics and delved into a study of the dialectic. He studied assiduously a wide range of the works of Hegel, starting out with his *Science of Logic*, the most authoritative source of dialectical thinking in the entire history of philosophy. The study of Hegel started in September, immediately in the aftermath of the catastrophe of 4 August, and lasted until December.

Reading Hegel brought home for Lenin, above all else, how much in the thinking of both Kautsky and Plekhanov the part played by the subject within the dialectical object-subject relationship had been pushed to the background. This outlook, which may conveniently be labelled as the "Marxism of the Second International", assumes that history progresses as a succession of pre-defined stages. It remains aloof to the possibility of sudden historical leaps, of hybrid mixtures as a result of original formations unsuspected in earlier epochs, of the possibility of thrusts forward despite the immaturity of certain material preconditions etc.

It is easily understandable that this type of quasi-deterministic approach, bordering at times into a historical fatalism, has inevitably left a certain mark on Lenin's own thinking in the prewar period. After all, he was heavily influenced by the brand of Marxism espoused by both Kautsky and Plekhanov. It was through reading Hegel that he realised how much of a deterministic kind of Marxism these two subscribed to. The irony is that his bourgeois critics have always accused Lenin of sticking to a "voluntaristic" view of the world, of forcing the pace of history when material

conditions did not really warrant the kind of development Lenin was trying to achieve. This was not true, at least concerning an issue of burning importance. This had to do with the tasks of the revolution in Lenin's native Russia. It was certainly impossible for any Marxist to deny that the immediate tasks of the revolution in early twentieth-century Russia was the accomplishment of a democratic revolution. The Mensheviks drew from this premise, in the most mechanical manner possible, the conclusion that since the revolution would be "bourgeois-democratic" in nature, social democrats (i.e. Marxists in the parlance of the epoch) should support the efforts of the bourgeoisie. They were the real followers in Russia of what we have labelled the Marxism of the Second International. Lenin believed that they were under the influence of the revisionists and the opportunists *à la Bernstein* in Germany, without realising Kautsky was of the same ilk on this question.

Lenin himself did not entertain a schematic point of view. Quite the contrary. He did certainly concur that the proximate task of the revolution was of a "bourgeois-democratic" nature. However, because he believed that the Russian liberal bourgeoisie was far from being a revolutionary class, he claimed that the democratic revolution in Russia would be led by an alliance of the proletariat and the peasantry. This was a revolutionary leap in the domain of strategy. Lenin did not stop there, either. He contended that if the Russian revolution coincided with a revolutionary wave in Europe, this would create the dynamics of an "uninterrupted revolution" in Russia itself. In other words, the revolution in Russia could possibly proceed, without a break in continuity, to a socialist stage. This was a real divorce from the classical schema of revolution by stages.

Nonetheless, Lenin insisted that if no revolution occurred in Europe, the Russian revolution could not proceed further than the democratic stage. This was the insuperable frontier for Lenin. The material conditions were absent for a socialist revolution in Russia alone. Trotsky, on the other hand, had concluded from a study of the writings of Marx and Engels on the 1848 revolutions that in Russia, too, as in Germany, the bourgeoisie could no longer play the leading part in a revolution, and deduced from the events of the laboratory of the 1905 revolution in Russia that revolution in that country could bring the proletariat to power, which would then have to resort to socialist measures. This he called "permanent revolution", borrowing the term from Marx's 1850 circular to the Communist League.

The 1917 revolution was to confirm Trotsky's prediction to the full. What is interesting for us in the context that we are discussing in this article is this, though: Lenin, with his new command of Hegel, now removed the iron frontier that he had raised earlier and, on the night of the taking of the Winter Palace, started his address to the All-Russia Second Congress of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies with the following sentence: "Now we are moving to the construction of socialism".

In all the decisions that Lenin made after 1914, it is possible to see the same tremendous impact of this profound grasp of the dialectic.

The place of imperialism in history

The second important step Lenin took was the comprehensive study of imperialism he carried out. This work started in 1915 and culminated in his famous book *Imperialism. The Highest Stage of Imperialism* published in 1916. His analysis of imperialism served as the groundwork for his correct comprehension of the world situation from very different angles. Thanks to this study, Lenin now approached capitalism as a full-blown world system. He dwelled on the tendencies towards parasitism and stagnation present within the bosom of imperialism and the relations between these and counteracting tendencies. But the most important points in relation to revolution and socialism were, first, the formation of a “labour aristocracy” in imperialist countries and, secondly, the significance of the imperialist stage with respect to historical development. We will be returning to the labour aristocracy presently when we take up *The State and Revolution*. Let us now consider the question of the place of imperialism in history.

It is not a wanton whim for Lenin to have characterised imperialism as “the highest stage of capitalism.” The imperialist stage is one during which capitalism centralises productive forces to a progressive degree, where all workers are unified in every workplace as the “collective worker” whose labour can no longer be seen in isolation from each other, where all units of production and all sectors are indissolubly tied to all others, and where the economies of all countries become enmeshed on the scale of the world and production and capital itself are internationalised. Lenin devotes Chapter 10 of his book to these tendencies. His conclusion is the same as that reached by Marx in *Capital*. Productive forces that are socialised to such an extent can only be administered through central planning. The world is now ready for a socialist economy in which capitalist private property is done away with, all large means of production and circulation are nationalised, and the economy is controlled on the basis of a central plan. That is why Lenin raises the question of the “highest stage of capitalism”. There remains no further possibility of development within the capitalist mode of production.

Hence, the determination has been made that the world situation is now mature for the transition to socialism. After the dialectic, this is the second stepping stone Lenin has discovered to reach for world revolution.

The State and Revolution

The third great theoretical thrust of the Great War period for Lenin is the publication of the book *The State and Revolution*. On the surface, the book seems to focus on the democratic character of the socialism advocated by Marx and Engels, and subsequently of Lenin, who is but a loyal student of theirs on this question. There is no doubt that this is indeed the major theme of the book. But that clear theme that dominates the entire argument of the book is not the reason why Lenin undertook to write the book in the months of September and October (new calendar), when Lenin himself was in hiding in Finland and when the revolution was definitively on the agenda in Russia. The book was clearly written with a view

to *expose* all the revisionists and the opportunists who had turned their back on the Marxist theories of the state and of revolution and, above all, to attack Kautsky. For Lenin had already decided that the moment of insurrection had arrived in Russia, he was trying to convince the leadership of the Bolsheviks to reach out for power, and was even exerting great pressure on elements within that leadership who were prevaricating. Who says the time is ripe for insurrection obviously believes that the insurrection will win. What then is the place of *The State and Revolution* in all this?

Lenin was convinced that after the working class took power in Russia, it would be the turn of world revolution. Having arrived at Finland Station in Petrograd a month after the February uprising, he finished his address to the working-class crowd there with the following battle-cry: “Long live the world socialist revolution!”. It is quite obvious that, for him, the Russian revolution was only a stairway to world revolution. However, notwithstanding his faith in the European proletariat, he had no confidence in the social democratic leadership. This was the contradiction behind the almost panicky mood that pushed him into writing *The State and Revolution* in the heat of the revolution. What he was aiming for was the isolation of the revisionist and opportunist leadership from the cadres, the militants and the working-class rank and file of the parties of Western Europe.

These political currents and tendencies that harboured a deep-seated hatred to revolutionary Marxism would play a great part in Lenin’s political moves after the Great War as well. The reason for this was that a *structural* characteristic of imperialism begets a tendency within the working classes of the imperialist countries towards an assimilation to the established capitalist-imperialist order. As imperialist countries provide extra advantages to the higher echelons of their working classes out of the super profits they appropriate as a result of their domination over the world economy, they “bribe” these layers into acquiescence, which breeds revisionist, opportunist and reformist tendencies at the level of the political movements of the working class. The conclusion that Lenin drew from this division of the working-class movement is that the revolution will move forward with fits and starts until the revolutionary proletariat finally takes the upper hand in the struggle against capitalism.

Thus, the real aim of The State and Revolution is not to sing the praise of democracy, but to expose the enemies of revolution.

4. Lenin as leader of world revolution

We have already pointed out that the catastrophic collapse of the Second International left Lenin face to face with a task that nothing shows he had even imagined he would have to shoulder one day, the task of leading world revolution. We now proceed to show that Lenin accomplished this task in an extremely original and faultless manner. And not only that. Alongside his contribution to the spread of the revolution internationally in his day, through his practice between 1914 and 1924, he also left behind for us an alternative route as opposed to the miserable failure of the leaderships that succeeded him in the rest of the twentieth century. We will deal with these two questions in conjunction with each other.

World revolution

We first need to eliminate a long-standing prejudice. The close affinity of Lenin's thinking with the concept and programme of world revolution was consigned to oblivion in the process of the imposition of national-communism by the Stalinist bureaucracy, starting from the mid-1920s. An article of Lenin's ("On the Slogan of the United States of Europe") dating from 1915 was adduced as evidence for his subscription to the idea of "socialism in a single country", but propaganda aiming to show that Lenin refused the concept of "world revolution" was never advanced. How could it have been otherwise? The concept "world revolution" played a central role in the entire corpus of Lenin's declarations of a theoretical, organisational, programmatic, propagandistic or agitational nature. It is, of course, possible to censor this or that article or declaration from his *Collected Works*, as was done for instance to his article on "Autonomisation" until 1956 (see below), thus concealing his ideas on certain topics from the Soviet people. But trying to wage war against "world revolution" is another thing. You then have to submit to censorship dozens of his articles and the records of hundreds of his addresses and speeches. For Lenin, as it was for Marx and Engels, world revolution is of the essence of Marxism. He never really attempts to highlight it since to his mind it is the basic revolutionary programme of Marxism. It should not be forgotten that *never even once* did Lenin hear or see the formula "socialism in a single country" in his lifetime. The concept was first advanced by Stalin *after* Lenin's death, at the end of 1924, when he revised a text, published earlier, which contended the exact opposite of what he said now, i.e. it said earlier that "socialism in a single country" is impossible. That is why Lenin did not feel any need to polemicise against this concept, which would later become the mainstay of twentieth century (Stalinist) socialism, of the national-communist current.

Moreover, if anything, the whole experience of the period of the October revolution brought to Lenin new additional evidence of how genuine and realistic the programme of "world revolution" was. The 1918 November revolution in Germany broke out precisely in the country where the Bolsheviks expected it most. Soviet republics were established, albeit for a brief period, in Bavaria and Hungary. Revolution searched new outlets for itself in Italy, Scotland, Finland and elsewhere. While this was happening in Europe, the Middle East (West Asia) and North Africa were in flames: Egypt, the Ottoman lands/Turkey, Iran and Morocco experienced outright revolutions and other territories such as Palestine and Syria followed suit. Revolutions would later erupt in China (1925-1927) and Spain (1936-39), but unfortunately Lenin did not live to see them.

The record of classical Marxism is so clear on this question that if anyone dares to claim that any of the prominent Marxists of that period refused to swear by world revolution, the burden of proof would be on them to provide the evidence. We said "any of the prominent Marxists". Let alone Lenin.

The first test in the leadership of world revolution: Lenin and the Great War

We already know that Lenin's irreversible rupture from mainstream social democracy had its source in the political orientation adopted by its leadership. But all we know at this point is the following: Lenin and the Bolsheviks (along with a minority of the parties of the Second International or a part of the leadership of other parties) adamantly stood against the support the mainstream extended to the bourgeoisies of each warring country, thus forcing the workers and peasants of all countries to slaughter their counterparts in other countries. We have not yet, in the context of this article, spoken about the other aspects of Lenin's own policy. True, Lenin is against the drift from proletarian internationalism into national chauvinism. But what kind of policy should socialists pursue when the world has become a slaughterhouse?

An orientation on this question exists from the period before the war, which served to show the way forward to Lenin and other socialists in the internationalist minority. The resolutions adopted in all three congresses that were convened before the war (Stuttgart, Copenhagen, and Basel) pointed in the same direction: there is a rising threat of war; socialists are duty-bound to prevent the onset of a war and to fight militarism; if, despite every effort, war should break out, socialists should use the new situation in order to do everything to achieve the victory of proletarian revolution.

This means that the mainstream pursued a nationalist, even chauvinistic policy by trampling upon all the resolutions adopted persistently by the International. Lenin made this official orientation of the international organisation the backbone of his policy line. This was summarised as "turning the world war into civil war in each country" or, in shorter form, "turn war into civil war". "Civil war" here is not any civil war, but one that is characterised by the final settling of accounts between the two major classes of capitalist society. In other words, the task is defined as to transform world war into revolution.

What we have so far discussed is the aspect of the policy that Lenin and the Bolsheviks shared with other revolutionary Marxists. To cite the most prominent instance, the policy advocated by Lenin and Karl Liebknecht, one of the leaders of the Spartakusbund in Germany is identical up until this point. However, on top of this common policy, Lenin created a more complex and ambitious policy superstructure. In order to see this, one should first realise that Lenin's policy during the Great War is divided into three distinct periods. The importance of this observation lies in that it shows the *utterly fallacious nature* of the idea that Lenin advocated the implementation of the famous policy of "revolutionary defeatism" in the context of all types of war. No, "revolutionary defeatism", an ingenious policy discovered by Lenin in the context of the world war, is *not* a policy that Lenin advises socialists to pursue in all kinds of wars. This is so true that Lenin did not implement this policy *even* throughout the Great War itself.

Lenin's war policy between 1914 and 1918 should be examined by breaking it into three different periods: (1) From the onset of the war to the February revolution:

“turning war into civil war” and its special Leninist variant, “revolutionary defeatism”. (2) From the February revolution to the victory of the October revolution: A policy of “just peace” so long as the proletariat has not yet taken power. (3) From the October revolution to the German November revolution (which also ended the Great War): diversionary tactics in order to temporise with the aim of guaranteeing the survival of the Soviet state until world revolution spreads to other countries.

We would like to draw the attention of the reader to the fact that, contrary to the impression that is created when one reasons in terms of years (1914-1917), the February revolution did not occur three years after the onset of the war but only two and a half (August 1914 to February 1917). In other words, the implementation of the policies of “turn the war into civil war” and “revolutionary defeatism” lasted for 30 months, while the war spread over a period of fully 51 months. 21 of these 51 months saw the implementation of policies other than “revolutionary defeatism.” Food for thought.

Let us also draw the attention of those who imagine Lenin as an aficionado of “revolutionary defeatism” that in the last of the three phases listed above, Lenin would have resorted to a policy of “revolutionary defensism” had he believed that the young Soviet state was capable of coping with the might of the German empire. All evidence points in this direction. For a single moment, in fact, in 1920, Lenin defended the advance of the Red Army troops into Poland, on the basis of the hope that the Polish working class would rise up in a revolutionary insurrection as a result. (Trotsky, who was the commander-in-chief of the Red Army and who, later, would be accused of wishing to “export” revolution, insisted that this was a wrong decision). Lenin’s prediction did really prove to be wrong and the Red Army would have to withdraw from Poland as a result. But what is important for us here is that this attitude on the part of Lenin proves that he was for “revolutionary war” even if for a moment.

Once it has been established that the policy of “revolutionary defeatism” is entirely contingent on a number of conditions, we can now turn to an inquiry into the question of its substance and aim. The clearest definition of this policy is the following: the revolutionaries of each country fight towards the defeat of their own country. What heavy burden this policy lays at the door of any political party and its representatives vis-à-vis the state and even the people in times of war is self-evident. To insist on this policy loud and clear could have taken many a revolutionary to court martial. This extremely dangerous policy was in fact rejected by many, leaving Lenin and a small minority of his Bolshevik comrades alone in its defence. Lenin faced alone almost the entire world.

Why is it that Lenin proposed to his party and the rest of the left such a dangerous policy? We are now entering a discussion of Lenin’s performance during the first test he confronted as he was undertaking the part of the leader of world revolution. Could Lenin have been oblivious to the dangers such a policy implied? The fact that in some of his statements about this policy he stressed that it excluded things like sabotage of the war effort or the blowing up of bridges or special effort to paralyse the war industry by mounting powerful strikes seems to aim at paring down the “extreme” character of the policy so that, for instance, an earnest Bolshevik soldier

would not proceed to blow up the ammunition depot in his unit and end up in court martial and, finally, on the gallows. Whatever the reason, these warnings clearly show that he himself is very much aware of the sharp nature of this policy.

The question we need to answer is the following: why did Lenin defend this extremely dangerous policy? The answer is this: Lenin is trying hard to save his party and any other parties or minorities he can from the plague of chauvinism. The first function of the policy of revolutionary defeatism is, at a moment when the International is being drowned in a sea of nationalism, to save those that have not yet succumbed to the deluge and, thus, to preserve the human material necessary to form a new International safe and sound. In other words, his whole effort is geared to make those who still remain in the domain of revolutionary Marxism impervious to the nationalist pest.

To think that the danger does not exist implies a lack of comprehension with regard to the catastrophe the European proletarian movement had been stricken with. In other writings, we have explained the polemics Lenin had to engage in against other giants of the period, such as Rosa Luxemburg or Trotsky or how he remained entirely isolated within even the “Zimmerwald left” or his own party. We will only cite two striking examples here. If a revolutionary Marxist leader of Rosa Luxemburg’s stature brought herself to write, in her otherwise much praised work, the *Junius Brochure*, with reference to imperialist Germany, that every country has the right to defend itself in war, that is, if she experienced even a momentary spell of social patriotism that falls outside of the policy of “turn the war into civil war” so bravely defended on the streets of Berlin by his closest comrade Karl Liebknecht, i.e. if she capitulated to the general atmosphere even if for a short moment, who can be considered to be immune to the nationalistic, patriotic or chauvinistic pestilence?

Even more fatally, if the Zimmerwald Conference, the only effective move against the debacle of the leadership of the international proletariat, is not able to insert into its declaration the formula “if war breaks out despite all efforts, then revolution”, which already has existed throughout three congresses of the Second International, as we saw above, if it cannot call every socialist to vote against the war appropriation of his own country as Karl Liebknecht has done in the German Reichstag all on his own in December 1914, this clearly proves that nationalism has a very strong hold on the socialist movement. (Ledebour, a German centrist and a comrade of Kautsky, as well as French socialists of his ilk, participated in the Zimmerwald Conference. They certainly were instrumental in preventing the adoption of such consistent internationalist policies. But this in itself shows nothing else than how nationalism was able to permeate even the most internationalist environments available to revolutionary Marxists.)

It is thus that Lenin protected the Bolshevik Party and some other parties or minorities from falling into the swamp of nationalism. Obviously, his primary aim was to implant immunity against chauvinism in his own party for he had direct access to the membership and could act most efficiently upon it. If Bolshevism remained a strong fortress of internationalism, proletarian internationalism could then be able to fight to instil a renewed vigour to the world movement, using the party as a base from which to spread the word. This is exactly what was

to happen in practice after the October revolution.

The other achievement of Lenin's policy was to "turn war into civil war". From the very beginning of the war, Lenin insisted that the world was facing a revolutionary situation. According to him, if those who rule cannot rule in the same way as before and those who are ruled do not wish to be ruled as before, and, finally, if the masses descend on the streets to voice their grievances and advance their demands, that means that there is a revolutionary situation. It was, in fact, the case that, despite the ravages of the war, large strikes, street action, mutinies in military units were rampant. The Easter Uprising in Ireland in the spring of 1916 was the culmination of these struggles. (There was a similar, even larger uprising in Central Asia against the Tsar, but this became part of humanity's collective memory much later.)

It is necessary to distinguish carefully between a "revolutionary situation" and "revolution" *per se*. What is needed to meaningfully talk about a "revolution" is, beyond all the conditions that define a revolutionary situation according to Lenin, the reaching out of the masses towards political power and the social order thus being threatened with collapse. This is, at times, possible as a result of the smallest spark acting as a trigger, thanks to the fact that a "revolutionary situation" was already present. And this is exactly what happened when working-class women rose to demand bread on International Working Women's Day at the beginning of 1917 (25 February on the old calendar). This event vindicated Lenin's view fully. War in Russia now turned into civil war.

From that moment on, conditions changed completely. The policy of "turn war into civil war" immediately lost its validity. For civil war had already started. "Revolutionary defeatism", a sharp, pointed roof placed upon the more basic policy of "turn war into civil war", was thereby also a thing of the past now. Now the task was to win the civil war. For this, the war policy of Bolshevism needed to establish the peace demanded by the soldiers at the front and their wives and mothers and grandfathers in the villages. The slogan of "land, peace, bread" adopted by the Bolshevik Party under Lenin's guidance expresses the sum total of the demands, respectively of soldiers, peasants and workers and is the passage way to the realisation of the battle cry "All power to the soviets!" It is clear that in such a situation the only aim of war policy can be peace. The people aspire to peace, but the bourgeoisie that holds the power now cannot provide this. Hence the fate of the revolution revolves around peace. Revolutionary policy merges with war policy. The swift adaptation of Lenin's war policy to the requirements of the new period is, among the tactical moves that are decisive for the victory of the revolution (to which we will return), is unquestionably the most important.

In the years following the victory of the October revolution, as long as the Great War was continuing, the war policy of Lenin merged into the extremely significant policy of the protection of the young Soviet state (in other words, of the dictatorship of the proletariat) as a support of the leadership of world revolution, so we will take up this phase of war policy below. But we should remember that although revolutionary defensism, that is to say the waging of war by the socialist state in whatever region with the capitalist world for the purpose of vanquishing its opponent(s) is an entirely legitimate act, Lenin pursued a totally different policy

(with the exception of the hapless Poland case depicted above).

The key link of the chain: the October revolution

What happened in the eight months from February 1917 to October 1917 determined for 80 years the destiny not only of Russia and the other lands that became part of the Soviet Union, but of the *entire world*. One should reflect deeply on this statement. In his study of the two revolutions of February and June 1848 in *Class Struggles in France*, Marx had characterised revolutions as the “locomotives of history”. This sentence is very famous, but we do not think that those who are not genuine revolutionaries can internalise its meaning fully. Of course, everyone understands the idea that when a revolution is successful, it creates radical change in the society in which it occurs. But the determination of the history of the entire world by a single revolution! That is hard to imagine for many a simple soul. We will explain later on in what sense the October revolution was truly a world revolution. It is too early to delve into this at this stage. But if that statement is true, it means that everyone who did something to contribute to the victory of the revolution between February and October 1917, even without knowing this, perhaps realising to a certain extent that they are “making history” in their own country, but never imagining that they “are determining world history”, did precisely this.

The working-class women who rose and lit the signal flare of the revolutionary uprising on the occasion of the International Working Women’s Day, the working-class men who entered the fray following the footsteps of their women, the soldiers who, after obeying their commanders for a brief moment, rapidly started to favour the masses of workers, the workers and soldiers who gradually broke from the Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries and voted for the Bolsheviks in the elections to the soviets, the peasants who, after waiting patiently for some months, themselves resorted to direct action in order to quench their hunger for land, the entire rank and file of the Red Army, the uncountable number of people from the minority nationalities who, after the October revolution, struggled to achieve sovietisation in all corners of the former Tsarist Russia—all of them, without necessarily being conscious of this, fought in a manner that would leave a different world to posterity and contributed to the opening of a new era for humankind, not only in their own country, the Soviet land, but humankind all around the world.

But, whether no-party or member of this or that party or a Bolshevik, no one played so special a role in this as Lenin. Lenin, then, is a leader that has played an immense part in shaping the entire 20th century around the world. Moreover, as opposed to the great majority of people who did play their part, he did this fully conscious of the sense in which revolutions are the “locomotives of history”.

It is simply impossible to exaggerate the part Lenin played in the victory of the October revolution. In somewhat similar fashion to what happened in the area of war policy, Lenin found himself *alone to a great extent* concerning the policy that the Bolshevik Party should pursue in the aftermath of the February revolution. Among the prominent leaders of the Russian movement, all parties taken together, only Trotsky had a position that was no less perspicacious than that of Lenin. But because

up until that moment he had not understood the importance of the construction of a consistent and disciplined revolutionary party, he lacked that instrument absolutely necessary to carry the revolution through and, however accurate his assessment of the situation and however to the point his grasp of the tactics to be followed, he had no party apparatus in his hands that can put all of this into action. Only after joining the Bolshevik Party together with the cadres and militants of the small organisation called *Mezhraiontsy* did he finally accede to such an instrument. Hence, there is only one person who united all the conditions necessary to lead the October revolution to victory on the basis of an effective policy and that was Lenin.

The full import of the policies Lenin pursued in the course of the October revolution can only be properly explained in a special article devoted to this matter or even in a book-length study. Here we intend to take up only the most delicate turning points among these, in other words those aspects that render him unique among his peers.

To start out, we should first dwell on the skilful manner in which he grasped the dialectic of the general picture created by the February revolution as rapidly as he did, even from his exile in Switzerland when he was able to follow the rapidly unfolding developments in Russia only from the international bourgeois press. We have already made clear that those who rose up during the February revolution were the workers. The soldiers who swiftly moved to the side of the proletariat then facilitated the fall of the Tsar. In other words, this was a proletarian revolution supported by the peasantry under military uniform. It was the working class that brought down the Tsar. But because the soviets that this class immediately moved to form and the highest instance of those soviets in Petrograd were dominated by the Mensheviks and the Socialist Revolutionaries, whose horizon was bounded by a bourgeois revolution, the government had been offered to the representatives of the Russian bourgeoisie. Lenin saw through this immediately, that *the bourgeoisie had come to power on the crest of another social class*.

There is a second aspect he saw clearly. The bourgeoisie had set up a government, but its power remained shaky, for the body that had appointed the bourgeois government belonged to those who had made the revolution, in other words the executive of the Petrograd Workers' Deputies Soviet. In that case, said Lenin, resorting to a new conceptualisation of historic significance, there was *dual power* in the country.

Lenin grasped this tenuous hold of the Provisional Government on power, set forth a propaganda slogan, i.e. a slogan that could only be realised after the cumulation of certain conditions, "All power to the soviets!", and convinced the mass of the Bolshevik Party to march in the direction pointed to by that slogan, which, in class terms, signified "All power to the workers and peasants", through the maze of the complex stages of the revolution. All the others in the Russian socialist movement (excepting of course Trotsky and his comrades) were inclined towards conditional support to be provided to the bourgeois government born of the revolution.

How did Lenin know, how did he foresee that there would be endless contradictions between the two organs of power? Which contradictions were the basis for his call of the turning of power over to the Soviet? There are two answers to this question,

mutually complementary. First, because, despite the insistence on “democratic revolution” as being the horizon of this stage of the revolution, Bolshevism had always refused to accept that the Russian bourgeoisie was revolutionary. It was hence comprehensible that Lenin should not give in to the idea that the bourgeoisie was ordained to lead the revolution. What was surprising was the fact that other Bolsheviks were prone to support the government of the bourgeoisie in a manner reminiscent of the Menshevik model for Russia. Secondly, it was the fact that Lenin did not let go the link of the chain that he had earlier grasped, that the decisive factor for the fate of the revolution was the war. Lenin understood that the Russian bourgeoisie could not undertake a *break* with its imperialist allies, England, France and America (the latter-day ally), deduced from this the certitude that it could not meet the demand of “peace” raised by the popular masses, and would plainly be unable to meet any of the other demands. This would constantly lead to a clash between the Provisional Government and the executive of the Soviet. Once this dynamic has been discovered, it is no longer necessary for us to go into the other details and phases of the unfolding process for our purposes here.

However, after having briefly recapitulated the strategy between February and October, we need to dwell, albeit briefly, on two instances of the fine-tuning of tactics also. One of these pertains to the finesse displayed in propaganda and agitation, in particular the determination of slogans, with particular attention paid to the mood of the masses. For Lenin the continuation of the war was simply a murderous policy. He insisted that the choice between war and peace was vital, going so far as to say, at a certain stage, “we cannot be defensist even if Petrograd were to fall”. But because he knew that a sizeable section of the popular masses, in particular those who followed the Socialist Revolutionaries in their nationalistic policies, sided with the war effort, he was adamant that the anti-war propaganda should be formulated in very careful language.

Another tactical delicacy in terms of paying attention to the state of mind of the masses was displayed in the attitude to the Provisional Government before the July Days. Up until those days, the Bolsheviks refrained from attacking the entire government, in which there were also workers’ representatives, but used the slogan “Ten capitalist ministers out now!” Hence, the Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries in the government were not directly attacked because the workers and peasants still supported them, the demand was advanced on the basis of class contradictions, yet the Mensheviks and the Socialist Revolutionaries were nonetheless exposed for collaborating with the non-revolutionary bourgeoisie in a revolutionary period.

It should not be forgotten that, with the exception of the struggle against the Kornilov coup attempt, the Bolsheviks never attempted to set up a united front with these political parties. So, it is not because they spare the Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries for that purpose. It is the sentiment of the masses that really set the stage for the slogans. (The tactic adopted when faced with the Kornilov coup attempt, on the other hand, was the manifestation of an incredible capacity for manoeuvre. Having made the opposition to the Provisional government a *strategic* aim all along (this is the meaning of “All power to the soviets!”), the party acted

in a spirit of united front with the government, let alone the other socialist parties, when faced with the attempt of counter-revolution. But as soon as the danger had been averted, that is to say as soon as Kornilov's defeat had become fully obvious, the party went immediately back to its strategic line.)

The second point not to be missed is the set of instances that display an extraordinary skill for correct timing. The outstanding case here is the chain of events that has gone down in history as the "July Days", a case still unique in history for its dialectical splendour. On 3-4 July, the workers of the largest factories of Petrograd organised, together with the armed troops resident in the city, a spontaneous insurrection in order to take power from the Provisional Government and marched to the Kseshinskaia Mansion, where the Bolsheviks had set up their headquarters after the February revolution, to summon the party to lead the insurrection. Lenin stepped out into the small balcony facing a park full of workers and armed soldiers to address them and implored them not to turn this into an insurrection aiming at taking the power. Of course, it was neither possible nor correct to convince such an angry mass of workers and soldiers to turn back and head for their factories or barracks. The Bolshevik organisation marched together with the mass and did its best to convert the insurrection into a display of armed force on the part of the revolution. (In his *History of the Russian Revolution*, Trotsky will characterise the July Days as a "semi-insurrection".)

Why did Lenin and the Bolsheviks take this route? That this powerful mass movement, armed to the teeth, could easily take Petrograd that day had it so willed is beyond doubt. Why not then encourage them to do so? Because Lenin wanted to avoid a repetition of the experience of the Paris Commune. He knew that sufficient support for the revolution had not accumulated outside the industrial basins of Petrograd, Moscow and the Volga region, and this especially among the rank and file of the army, and did not wish to make an early move that would then abort the entire revolutionary process.

The second striking example of delicate timing is Lenin's insistence from September on that the time to organise an insurrection and take power had arrived. This man, who only two months earlier had tried to limit the aim of the action of the July Days, now displayed the skill of determining the actuality of insurrection. The contrast here is one of the most striking lessons in tactical finesse in the entire history of revolutions.

And because the timing was right, power was taken on the 7th of November (25 October on the old calendar) and turned over to where it belonged, the general assembly of the Second All-Russia Congress of the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies.

The internationalisation of Bolshevism: the Comintern

When did the second period of Lenin's political life, that is the period of his leadership of world revolution, start? We saw above that a very punctual date is possible to quote in answer to this question: 4 August 1914. In the light of the betrayal of the social democratic leadership *en masse*, Lenin immediately concluded

that the Second International had be consigned to history and a new International be founded. Within the context of the work started with the Zimmerwald Conference based on a very small minority of socialists internationally, the “Zimmerwald Left” acted as a consistently internationalist beacon that shed light on the way forward. This policy gained in strength thanks to an accurate war policy. Later with the victory of the October revolution, Bolshevism became a centre of attraction in the international arena as well. When, in November 1918, revolution broke out in Germany, a new International became a fully actual question on the agenda of internationalist Marxists. Since the German revolution also led to the end of the War, the leaders of the Second International were now busy trying to resuscitate the Second International. With his acute sense of timing, Lenin decided that the time to establish the new International had come, so as not to leave the mantle of internationalism on the shoulders of the impostors. Thus was born the Third or Communist International (Comintern) in February 1919.

It is necessary to draw attention to the fact that the re-founding of a revolutionary International was a true case of crossing the desert for Lenin. Having remained almost on his own in 1914, disagreeing even with almost all internationalist Marxists on the question of war policy, having been forced to set up a left bloc even at the Zimmerwald Conference in order to be able to establish a consistent internationalist policy, having been treated as a lunatic within the Russian and European left movement for defending the idea of fighting for working-class power after the February revolution, having been isolated at first even in his Bolshevik Party, Lenin had now, four years later, accomplished the task of founding a new International. In several years’ time the Comintern would be able to organise hundreds of thousands or even millions of workers and youth all over the world. Mission accomplished against all odds.

The new International was superior in a qualitative sense to the Second International. For one thing, the latter had never been able to penetrate countries exploited and oppressed by imperialism and remained mostly confined to European countries. The Comintern, on the other hand, was to organise in many poor and colonial countries from China to Egypt and from Brazil to South Africa, especially in the years 1920-1921.

Even more important than this geographical expansion was the fact that the new International gained the character of a *world party* capable of undertaking the leadership of world revolution. The greatest part here was played by the internationalisation of Bolshevism through the Comintern. We need to understand in what difficulty Lenin and his comrades found themselves at the outset. With a few exceptions only, the movement that was expected to unite in the new International had to emerge from the prewar social democracy. The programmatic, strategic, and political perspectives of these parties had been marked the by the Marxism of the Second International, their party cadre had been educated along the lines of Kautsky’s thinking and the *Neue Zeit* school, and the organisation had been influenced by the centrism of Jaurès in France and the reformism of the Labour Party in Britain. A passage from this raw material to a communism of the Bolshevik type was obviously a great challenge. The combination of tactical flexibility and

principled discipline displayed by Lenin and the Bolsheviks in order to win over, to educate and to organise this material was once again a test that Lenin passed as the leader of world revolution. Openness to almost all kinds of socialist organisations, on the one hand, combined with the strict requirements contained within the famous 21 Conditions of affiliation to the Communist International was a line that finally gave birth to a whole new generation of Marxist combatants ready to fight capitalism in intransigent manner.

Lenin's skills were decisive here as well. The striking example is the policy adopted vis-à-vis the USPD (the Independent SPD of Germany), which had hundreds of thousands of workers in its membership, but was led by a leadership that had capitulated to the imperialist war, Kautsky, Hilferding and Ledebour being the most prominent leaders. Kautsky had refused to support the October revolution and become a chief target for both Lenin and Trotsky. Despite this, Lenin insisted that the Comintern had to reach out to the workers and the communists within that party. The successful attack on the party by the Comintern paid off and the USPD suffered a scission with hundreds of thousands of workers taking the side of the Comintern and a unified communist party being established in Germany.

The place of the Soviet state within the world system

War had been turned into civil war and the civil war had been crowned with a victorious revolution. The working class had risen to power, supported by the peasantry. As the leader of world revolution Lenin had passed great tests in both phases (i.e. the phases of war and civil war).

These two topics have been given ample attention, the part Lenin played has been studied closely and analysed at length, not in the same way we have so far taken up things, but nonetheless have not been neglected. But the domain we are about to enter has never been studied *as a whole*. Some of the aspects of what we are going to delve into have surely been discussed seriously, but nowhere have we come across the idea that Lenin attributed a special importance and *a very specific role to the Soviet state in achieving the victory of world revolution*.

Let us describe this with a simile so as to impress it on the reader's memory. The Soviet state is to Lenin's mind like the King in the chess game of world revolution. He conceived the first dictatorship of the proletariat (the Paris Commune was too short-lived) in history as the heavy battalion of this universal revolution and made use of it accordingly.

Let us elaborate on this a bit lest the reader misunderstand what we are saying and our proposition be perceived as a run-of-the-mill conception of the Soviet Union. A great revolution, one to which only the Great French Revolution of 1789 can be compared, has smashed the state of the *ancien régime* and established a new state *under the power of a different class*. Common sense dictates that this state will do now whatever other states do in order to preserve its place within the international system of nations-states. There is nothing wrong here. We can even say that such common sense is much healthier than saying "well, now that the Soviet state has signed (for instance) a trade agreement with Britain (March 1921), it must be

considered to have become an ordinary nation-state no different from the others.” When Marx chides the national narrow-mindedness of Lassalle in the “Critique of the Gotha Programme” and reminds his interlocutor that Germany can only exist as a state within a system of states internationally, he is really stressing that the socialist state will have to cope with this reality.

No qualms so far. What we wish to point out is that this is not Lenin’s *exclusive* vision of the Soviet state in its relationship with the international system of states. For Lenin, world revolution is, just like revolutions at the national level, a form of class struggle. But a class struggle that is woven of a much more complex web of mediations than revolution at the national level. In this struggle, imperialist states are the organisations of the bourgeoisie at the level of the international system and as organisations of the bourgeoisie, i.e. as class organisations, oppose revolutions in other countries when these break out. The Soviet state, on the other hand, is the ***first organisation of the proletariat that has assumed the form of a state***. In other words, the Soviet state, which, initially appeared as “another state within the system of nation-states”, appears, when considered under its class character, as a proletarian class-struggle organisation. By this token it is precious solely by its very existence as a class organisation and must at all costs be preserved. Its preservation is not important solely for the Soviet working class, but for the interest of the international proletariat and its allies as well.

This vision manifests itself in certain episodes that caused a lot of debate in the post-revolutionary period, episodes that are amply discussed, but in which Lenin’s real motivation has not been dwelled upon seriously.

The Brest-Litovsk episode that moved to the centre of attention of all communists in the immediate aftermath of the October revolution is a major case in point. Let us explain without going into detail. The Brest-Litovsk affair was born when Soviet Russia withdrew from the war in perfect fidelity to the promises made to the masses before the October revolution triumphed. Germany capitalised on the new situation and used the weakness of the Soviet state in the most aggressive manner possible, making very heavy territorial claims on the new state. Brest-Litovsk is the name of the town where deliberations for peace took place. The debate within the Bolshevik Party was centred around the response to be given to German demands.

It may be remembered that Lenin had said “no defensism”, seemingly in total indifference to “national interests”. When the question of Brest-Litovsk came on the agenda, a very strong tendency within the Bolshevik Party, called “left Communists”, reminding to their interlocutors that the situation had changed since the party was now in power, called for “revolutionary war” in defence of Soviet territory. Trotsky, the People’s Commissar for Foreign Affairs, who was involved naturally in the forefront during the negotiations with the Germans, advanced the idea of temporising until the German revolution broke out, using the formula “neither war nor peace”. Lenin, on the other hand, defended an outright policy of concessions to the Germans. Why was this? Because the policy of revolutionary war, however heroic it may sound, might end in a cataclysmic defeat and might lead to the collapse of the Soviet state. For Lenin, the Soviet state should be preserved at all costs, as we explained above. After long debates within the party and the

government, Lenin's position gained the upper hand and the Brest peace was signed, with great concessions being granted to Germany.

When we were discussing war policy above, we stressed that throughout the war Lenin pursued three different policies. We delved into a discussion of the first two, i.e. that until the February revolution and that between February and October, and then pointed out that we could discuss the third policy only later. This is now the period in question: the policy of temporising and preserving the Soviet state while waiting for the German revolution. This became a policy that drew the nationalist ire of the left Socialist Revolutionaries, who had become the allies of the Bolsheviks in the wake of the October revolution. But of course, when the German revolution broke out and the Great War came to an end, it became crystal clear that this policy was correct as well as those that went before it.

The iron necessity of preserving the Soviet state also played a very significant part in the adoption of the New Economic Policy. The combination of the destruction wrought by the civil war of 1918-1920 waged against the Soviet regime by the counter revolutionaries of the White armies, with the additional support of the armed forces of 14 imperialist states, and the economic scarcity created by the policy of "war communism", centred around the forcible seizure of the agricultural surplus from the peasantry which, although sufficiently responding to the needs of the war effort, impoverished the peasantry, had led to growing resentment and social unrest within the peasantry and even within certain layers of the working class. Having planned a radical turn in economic policy in late 1920 and early 1921, Lenin presented this to the 10th Congress of the party. The New Economic Policy (NEP) lifted the heavy burden on the shoulders of the peasantry and made a policy framework that gave primacy to market relations, made trade a major element in the allocation of resources, and even attributed a part to foreign capital for the recovery of the economy the major orientation of state policy.

After the adoption of NEP as the central policy in the economic domain, Lenin constantly underlined the idea that what was being practised was capitalism under the dictatorship of the proletariat. It is clear that this is a grand retreat. But the entire reasoning was based on the role the Soviet state would play in world revolution. The importance of keeping the Soviet state alive until revolution spread to other countries was a justification even for this grand retreat.

What was, then, the advantage that would be brought by preserving this organisation of the international proletariat embodied in the form of a state? Let us answer this question at two stages, looking first at the period when Lenin was alive and later at the developments that were to succeed his death.

The vision of the revolution of the 20th century in Lenin

We said above that Lenin was a loyal student of Marx and Engels on the question of world revolution. We do not mean by this that Lenin did not contribute to Marx and Engels' vision in this area. On the contrary, his premise was that of the masters, but his conclusions definitely enriched, diversified and extended the programme and strategy of world revolution.

Let us start from the last mentioned. In the time of Marx and Engels, the perspective of socialist revolution was confined to Europe and North America for it was only in these geographic regions that capitalism had developed yet. Hence, Marx and Engels always spoke about the “European revolution”, not even bringing, in the name of realism, North America into the picture (the period of the American Civil War (1861-1865) may be considered an exception in this sense). The politics of the Leninist leadership pursued in the aftermath of the October revolution resulted in the spread of the communist movement to all corners of the world, thus making the concept “world revolution” much more fully topical, palpable and concrete. We have already mentioned how the parallel concept of “world party” became a reality with the growth of Comintern.

The question of “diversification” may be examined through two distinct key concepts. One is the question of *peasant societies*. After the October revolution, Lenin realised that these poor countries, once labelled the “Third World” and now more commonly called the “Global South”, have entered the vortex of international seisms and expanded his horizon in a manner that would bring them into the flow of world revolution. While it was the advanced capitalist countries that acted as the major actors of world history up until then, the peoples of the poor countries of the East and of similar regions were now being, according to Lenin, sucked up into the maelstrom of world history. India, Indonesia, China, Korea, and the Middle East (or West Asia) were large countries and territories that entered Lenin’s radar. Hence, Lenin started to attribute great importance to the development in creative fashion of new strategies and tactics that would adequately respond to the revolts and revolutions peculiar to peasant societies.

The second major area to be brought under the process of “diversification” of world revolution finds its source in the new contradictions engendered by imperialism. This is in fact again a reference to the same “peasant societies” that we have already referred to, but here the cause behind the emergence of struggles is a different type of contradiction. Lenin is of the opinion that rebellion against imperialism and in particular colonialism will play a great part in characterising revolutions in the 20th century. He now stresses how, alongside and together with the contradiction between the capitalist class and the proletariat, revolt and revolution against imperialism will be vital in marking revolution in this “highest stage” of capitalism.

It was in this context that, according to Lenin, as revolutionary tendencies developed in those countries subordinated to imperialism, where peasants were subjected to dire levels of exploitation, that Soviet Russia (and from the end of 1922 on the Soviet Union) would play an indispensable role as *an international centre*.

Is it possible not to see here *a new type of worker-peasant alliance* emerging had Lenin’s life not ended at the very early age of 53? The alliance between the proletariat organised as a state and the peasantry suffering under imperialistic exploitation and oppression was, for Lenin, becoming the key to world revolution. In some of his speeches Lenin went so far as to state that revolution in the 20th century would advance not only on the basis of proletarian class struggle, but primarily as a result of the uprising of the international peasantry. Now that the 20th century is over, we can turn back and say retroactively that almost all great popular revolutions were

peasant revolutions under the political hegemony of communism (China, Korea, Vietnam, Albania, Cuba or even Yugoslavia, a somewhat more advanced society than the others).

We would now like to draw the reader's attention to a very fine nuance. Throughout the 20th century, both the Soviet Union and all the workers' states under its sway, on the one hand, and the official communist parties in the capitalist world repeated the following slogan enthusiastically: "Workers of all countries and oppressed nations, unite!" There is not a shred of doubt that this slogan was invented at the time when Lenin was still alive and active. But after Lenin's time, the slogan implied the situation where the liberated former colonies had each established an independent nation-state, bearing the form and class character of a bourgeois state or strongly resembling such. So, alongside those countries that called themselves either "communist" or a "popular democracy" or, in the case of China, a "people's republic", this slogan celebrated bourgeois republics of the type of independent Egypt, Algeria, India, Indonesia etc.

Was it this that Lenin also had in mind in his own time? Extremely doubtful. If we look carefully in what Lenin said after 1919 regarding peasant societies and anti-imperialist struggle, we see that his perspective was "organising the peasantry in soviets". So, Lenin's horizon reached out not to the independent bourgeois state of India, but all the way to the People's Republic of China. We will return once again to this topic below when we are discussing what we call "the question of nations".

The part played by the "Soviet centre" after Lenin

We know how history unfolded. Lenin died prematurely. His death was no accident, but the gradual product of an assassination attempt that was the result of the wrath felt by Russian nationalists of the left against his internationalism. The price of the tactical finesse that accompanied Lenin's commitment to keep the Russian revolution on an internationalist track was paid by the forced withdrawal of the towering actor of internationalism of the 20th century from the stage of history.

The developments of the post-Lenin period are not the stuff of this article. We have analysed the development of the Soviet Union after the death of Lenin elsewhere in the past. Our topic now is what impact the *mere existence* of the Soviet Union made on world history to the extent that that can be distinguished from the *mode of development of the Soviet Union itself*. Why is this important? Because we contend that Lenin attributed a special role to the Soviet state as *an organisation of the international proletariat*. We have already seen how Lenin considered the Soviet state could play this role in his own time. Now it is time to see if the Soviet state did have that kind of a function in the post-Lenin period.

We have done this elsewhere so we will make do with a summary. The mere existence of the Soviet Union, that is to say irrespective of the kind of policies pursued by the rulers of the country in the different periods of its history, has deeply marked the history of the 20th century. First, the scourge of Nazism and fascism, the greatest and most barbaric threat that has so far faced humanity in modern times, was repelled by the Red Army and the heroic resistance of the Soviet people, along

with the revolutions that erupted in Europe and Asia. Secondly, as capitalism was restructuring itself in the postwar period so as to avoid new defections to the set of socialist countries that was growing by the year, the adoption of the measures commonly known under the label “welfare state” were clearly the product of the fear provoked in capitalist circles of the rights recognised by the Soviet workers’ state (and its allies especially in Europe) for its proletariat and working people at large (employment guarantee, a more humane work pace, low-cost housing, free education and health care etc. etc.).

Thirdly, in the context of the colonial revolution and overall decolonisation that came about after World War Two, the existence of the Soviet state as a force on which the colonial peoples could rely was a great support for them. Fourth, the communist movement that the Soviet proletarian power helped form and organise in other countries contributed immensely to the emergence of workers’ states (China, Vietnam, Korea, Yugoslavia, Albania etc.) as an end-result of struggles against colonialism and imperialism.

This much should suffice. Today, everyone on the left is bitterly aware that the dissolution and collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 (in parallel with the fall of other workers’ states) opened up new horizons for international capital, led to the brazen encouragement of imperialistic practices all around the world, and made possible the policies of “globalisation” and neoliberalism as strategies that atomise and impoverish great masses of people on every continent.

In the light of all this, Lenin’s adamant insistence on the protection of the Soviet state under all conditions emerges as an extremely wise and clairvoyant posture in terms of the course of world history.

The policy of nations from the October revolution to the foundation of the Soviet Union

We now come to the indisputably greatest contribution made by Lenin to Marxism and to the future of humanity: This is his perspective and programme on the question of nations. We will examine this question under three headings. But before we proceed further let us immediately draw attention to an important point: Lenin’s approach to this area is usually called the “national question”. We, on the other hand, are talking about the “question of nations”. The reason is that usually it is Lenin’s analysis of the problems faced by oppressed nations and the policy solutions he advocates vis-à-vis these problems that take pride of place concerning this general area. Lenin, however, has so much more to say on the relations of nations and on the nexus between nations and internationalism. We are going to use the concept “question of nations” to designate this entire field of discussion that transcends the “national question” proper. What we mean by this will become clearer as we proceed.

It is obvious that chronologically speaking the first issue that Lenin was interested in when looking at the “question of nations” is the “national question” in the narrow sense of national oppression and its proposed solution. From very early on in his political career, he showed great interest in this question for Tsarist Russia was a

country notorious for being a “prison house of nations” and he defended the “right of nations to self-determination”, up to and including the right to secession, a right historically identified with his name in the socialist movement (as well as, in a wider context, that of Wilson, the US president during the Great War). Consistent with this early engagement with the issue, the question of the liberation of oppressed nations ranked as one of Lenin’s priorities in the post-October period as well.

It is of utmost importance to underline that the young Soviet state recognised in practice the right to national self-determination the Bolshevik Party had for years defended in theory. The proletariat in power responded with respect to the will manifested by five peoples of the former Tsarist state to secede: the Baltic trio of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, as well as Finland and, a bit more controversially, Poland. However, the only type of national question that Lenin dwelled on when the new state was raising its scaffolding was not that which existed on the European continent. For Lenin, the national question that existed among the non-Russian, even non-Slavic peoples living in the Southeastern borderlands of Caucasia and Transcaucasia, in various regions of the interior of Russia proper, and in Central Asia, conquered as late as the second half of the 19th century, was even of greater import than what was going on in the European territories.

If one of the reasons for this was to establish a democratic basis for the relations among nations that were going to form the new state, another was the fact that the political line the young Soviet republic was going to follow vis-à-vis the world at large would be deeply conditioned by the approach of the new state to peoples who had so far been indisputably heavily oppressed inside the country. We have already talked about Lenin’s approach to the national question, colonialism and imperialism. Now it is the turn of internal questions.

We have stressed the point elsewhere: it is not right to limit the Russian revolution that established a multinational socialist republic that lasted for three quarters of a century to the upheavals of 1917 alone. If, in the last analysis, revolution is the act of smashing the old state apparatus and establishing a new one, then perforce revolution in Russia must have started in February 1917 and continued until December 1922, when the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics was founded. Here, the ambiguity of the term Russia may confuse the issue. In this context, we use Russia to signify the entire territory of the Tsarist state. In other words, “all-Russia”, as it is sometimes designated.

In the narrower sense, i.e. in the sense of the territories that the population of Russians inhabit, the revolution has of course triumphed in October 1917. As a result, the Russian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic (Soviet Russia) was founded at an early stage. But the revolution has not yet been able to reach Ukraine, Belarus, Transcaucasia, and the Muslim peoples living in the interior of Russia proper and in Central Asia. This will only transpire as a result of the Civil War, when the revolution was embodied in that war. Yet wars, and in particular civil wars, are won not as a result of military operations alone, but also on the ground of political struggles. Lenin and his comrades won the war through the heroic and steadfast fight of the Red Army as a class army and the masterly leadership of the command structure, but also thanks to the untiring efforts of Lenin in pursuing

a national policy that won the hearts and minds of the minority nationalities of the ex-Tsarist territories. The war that raged across the territory of “all-Russia” had naturally drawn in the plethora of peoples that populated Russia. The correct political line pursued played a decisive role in the winning of that war.

This policy consists of four major planks. The first is obviously the self-determination of nations, which Lenin has already been defending from the very beginning of the 20th century and which, as we pointed out a moment ago, was observed in practice for many nations.

The second is the federal principle. As a matter of fact, all his life Lenin advocated large and centralised territorial administration with the largest population possible living in that very territory for reasons of economic efficiency and judicious division of labour leading to rapid growth and development. For this reason, before the October revolution his tendency was to refuse negotiations on the degree of centralisation once the decision was made to stay within the frontiers of the larger national unit. However, after October, he realised that Great Russian chauvinism had an afterlife even within the ranks of communist cadres and rapidly embraced the federal principle. This can be seen even in the name of the Russian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic (RSFSR), which was established almost immediately after the revolution. But much more important was the struggle Lenin waged during the foundation of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics at the end of 1922. We will return to this in a little more detail presently.

Third was Lenin’s insistence, to the end of his life, on the necessity of going beyond *formal* equality between nations in order to strive for *real* equality. This aspect of the question became a burning issue within the Soviet government and the Bolshevik Party on an ever-growing scale in the years 1921-1922 and even brought Lenin and Stalin to the brink of a personal break. Dwelling on this issue briefly will make it much easier for the reader to understand why Lenin was so unbending on the federal principle and real equality rather than formal.

To summarise a long story through its most striking aspects, Stalin, who had been the People’s Commissar of National Affairs since the revolution, had adopted a rigid and aggressive stance on developments in Georgia, together with some of his assistants who were in charge of Transcaucasian affairs. The Mensheviks were strong in Georgia and the Menshevik Georgian government had been pro-British. Although having taken power at a certain stage with the support of the Red Army in a development parallel to what happened in Armenia and Azerbaijan, the Georgian Bolsheviks were aware that they had to pursue a nuanced policy mix that took note of the high level of support the Mensheviks enjoyed within the popular masses. This strained relations between the representatives of the People’s Commissariat of National Affairs, on the one hand, and the Georgian communists. An interesting detail is the obvious fact that Stalin himself was Georgian by origin, as well as Ordzhonikidze, who was one of the top people in charge of Transcaucasian affairs. The leadership of the People’s Commissariat was glowing with resentment against the Georgian communists, who did not comply sheepishly with the line imposed on them. During a heated debate, one of the representatives of the Commissariat had even gone so far as to slap a Georgian communist on the face. Conduct of this type

between communists of two nations implied that the Russian representatives (who, even if some of them were Georgian, officially represented the RSFSR) believed that Russia was superior in some sense to Georgia.

Meanwhile, there was also another debate going on that generalised this question of equality between nations. Stalin, the People's Commissar of National Affairs, had transformed the unification of all sovietised territories under the roof of a single state into one of bringing all others under the sway of the RSFSR. This meant that the Ukrainians, the Belarusians, the Transcaucasian nations would all become subordinated to the RSFSR, would, in other words become "autonomous" republics under that political entity. For this reason, this project had come to be known as "autonomisation". There was no doubt that this project aimed at sustaining the superiority of the Russians at the expense of the other nations. Moreover, in order to control the Georgians, as well as the Armenians and the Azerbaijanis, these three states were to be brought together on a federative Transcaucasian republic. This was evidence that showed the slap on the face was not a product of momentary rage, but a sign of a real feeling of superiority.

Lenin was furious when he took notice of the incident. He had already been very sceptical of the "autonomisation" project. There happened to be other matters of discord between Lenin and Stalin at the time: the former was against the relaxation of the monopoly of foreign trade, which the Central Committee had decided for when he, Lenin, was absent out of illness; he was also very critical of the neglect shown to the development of the central planning mechanism; he observed that after the government apparatus, the party apparatus was also becoming bureaucratised; and he held Stalin personally responsible for all of this. For all these reasons he engaged in a frontal struggle against Stalin, which would turn into a personal break when Stalin bullied and threatened Lenin's wife Nadezhda Krupskaya.

It was in this overall context that Lenin advanced an alternative formula against Stalin's "autonomisation" project, which clearly brought all other nations under Russian sway, a formula that stipulated unification among equals, embodied in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. He won the day. Accompanying this political drive towards full equality, he dictated, from his sick bed, an article to his secretaries in which he squarely attacked the "autonomisation" project. He contended, in extremely direct and harsh language, that formal equality between nations was the product of a bourgeois or petty-bourgeois approach. What distinguished the Marxist attitude was the advocacy of real equality. The defence of real equality required, according to him, positive discrimination in favour of the oppressed nations. This, then, was the third component of the Bolshevik policy in the context of the formation of the *Soyuz* (union). This article on "autonomisation" was to be hidden from the Soviet people and published in his *Collected Works* only in 1956.

The official foundation of the USSR on 30 December 1922 was the last victory of Lenin at the very end of a life that was full of triumphs, small or large. From spring 1923 all the way to the end, Lenin was in a state of paralysis and could never again intervene in political life. We shall see in a moment that this last victory, although on the face of it concerned only the land of October, was, in fact, a victory on the scale of the world revolution.

To return to this point in a moment, let us now look at the last component of Bolshevik policy set that was applied with the aim of winning the Civil War and the winning over of the peoples that populated in the All-Russia geography. The USSR was the first and only state of the modern age that did not make a reference to any nation or specific geography. In other words, as a *nationless state*, it confronted as a *unique political formation* all the nation-states that had been established since the age of bourgeois revolution. (We would like to remind the reader at this point of the two-level analysis we made of the Soviet state above, one as simply another nation-state within a system of nation-states and another as a dictatorship of the proletariat that was out to fight and destroy that whole system of nation-states in a process of world revolution.)

Looking at the other side of the matter, Lenin advocated, as we saw a moment ago, measures of positive discrimination to be implemented in favour of hitherto oppressed nations so as to work towards not only formal but also real equality between nations. So, the previously oppressed nations of the *Soyuz* had to have the special privilege of sustaining their national sensibilities, which had been suppressed or even denied under the Tsars, developing them and passing them on to future generations without external restrictions. These nations needed also to manage their own affairs locally to the extent possible. This policy was called *korenizatsia*. Despite all the future distortions and degenerations and despite Russian nationalism being reawakened from the time of World War Two on, the policy of *korenizatsia* was to be preserved and applied in earnest to the very end, up to the dissolution of the USSR.

Thus was the Soviet Union a nationless state, but a state within which oppressed nations found a national home and flourished in a rich diversity of peoples. Thanks to this dialectic unprecedented in any capitalist country, the USSR became a land where nations fraternised and coexisted peacefully. The overarching consciousness of Soviet citizenship capped this diversity in a projected unity of nations in the future. If a country as riven as Yugoslavia between nations before the revolution in 1944 was transformed into one where a considerable part of the population identified themselves as Yugoslav rather than Serb or Croat or Bosniac or any other nationality in censuses until the late 1980s, that is thanks to this Leninist conception being taken over in other post-revolutionary climes.

Lenin made all of this possible because he had succeeded in making a great leap in reformulating the “national question” and cast it in a new light in his second period, during the Great War. Everyone knows that there are widely diverging views on the Marxist left on the “national question”. However, all of these were unified under one overarching assumption: the national question was a question of democracy between nations and not one of socialism. Lenin inverted this view when faced with the task of the leadership of world revolution, i.e. during the Great War. He squarely put the fundamental question of this sphere as “how does socialism overcome the barriers set up by millennia of division and discord between different peoples that modern nations had inherited from history and reproduced over the previous centuries?” Thus, for Marxism, the fundamental aim was now to find the methods for transcending national animosity in order to march towards

fusion between nations. The leader of world revolution had discovered the most pressing issue concerning the “question of nations” for Marxist leadership in the age of proletarian revolutions and the transition from capitalism to socialism.

From the USSR to the World Socialist Federation

When the structure of the USSR is brought together with the resolution called “Theses on the National and Colonial Questions”, which Lenin presented to the Second Congress of the Comintern back in 1920 and which, after being twice deliberated upon at the relevant commission, was adopted unanimously by the delegates (excepting three Western delegates who refrained from voting because of the special atmosphere in their country) and thus became **a programmatic document of the Comintern**, it becomes clear that Lenin has bequeathed humanity with an extremely original formula for the future transition from capitalism to socialism/communism on the world scale.

At the beginning of this article, we quoted Lenin from his *Philosophical Notebooks* to the effect that half a century after the publication of *Capital*, not even a single Marxist had understood that book for lack of a full understanding of the dialectic. We then added that, ironically, the same thing has happened to Lenin: we made the bold assertion that not even a single Marxist has understood the programmatic and strategic legacy that Lenin left to humanity as a result of his leadership of world revolution in the last decade of his life (1914-1924). There was an entire series of points that corroborated that statement throughout this article. But none has remained as opaque and misunderstood in the centennial period after Lenin’s death as the point we are raising now. Perhaps two related points we have already made come closest to this in having remained in the dark: the fact that Lenin changed the entire framework of the so-called “national question” in his last decade and made it an organic part of the process of transition from capitalism to socialism and the quality of a nationless state that makes the USSR a **unique state form** in the modern era. No Marxist to our knowledge has so far pointed out these two aspects of Lenin’s thinking and practice. We are now going to discuss how these two points led to Lenin’s creation of an unprecedented strategy of transition to the future World Socialist Federation.

This avenue should be depicted in the most concise form: for both those capitalist countries that will in future undergo a victorious socialist revolution and those peasant countries that will succeed to oust the colonial power that has enslaved them, **Lenin advocates their adherence to the Soviet Union**. Moreover, this has not remained a personal idea, however powerful and compelling. Lenin has presented this idea to the Comintern, the world party of socialist revolution and succeeded to have it approved by unanimous vote! This has, therefore, become **the programme and the strategy of the international communist movement!**

What is the basis of this assertion? Which principles put forward in the “Theses” justify our reading? We have taken this question up in detail in our book published

in Turkish in January 2024 in memoriam of Lenin's centennial.³ We intend to have an English translation published in the near future. Until then let us provide the basic elements of our reading of the Theses.

Our general methodological contention is that the Theses have been misread and misunderstood overall. They are very widely interpreted as the communist programme on the liberation of oppressed nations. This is not at all the full substance of the Theses. It is only a specific aspect of a much more general approach to the question of nations. Lenin presents here the road map from a world of (bourgeois) nation-states to a world socialist federation for all nations, from the most advanced to the most enslaved colonial people. Once this is understood, the text becomes much more transparent. A discussion of two points should suffice for our purposes here.

Paragraphs 5 to 7 together assert, very clearly, that (a) the world situation is determined by the struggle of the world bourgeoisie against the Soviet state, (b) therefore the struggle for the unity of the working classes of different nations should not be considered in abstract terms but should aim for close cooperation with the Soviet state, (c) this cooperation should take the form of a federation as a form transitional to full union (d) with the aim of the proletariat of all nations to create a world economy based on a common plan. What is this but a world socialist federation constructed gradually through an adherence of all post-revolutionary countries to the Soviet state on an ever-growing level of integration?

We then move to the question of peasant societies. Paragraph 10, clause f asserts boldly that after liberation, the former colonies and semi-colonies will remain economically subordinate to imperialism if they attempt to form independent states, that their independence will therefore be illusory, and, for that reason should instead unify with the Soviet republics. So, the programme of emancipation advocated by Lenin is not "full independence" but federating with the Soviet state. The reader may at this point remember that we expressed above our doubt regarding whether the slogan "Workers of the world and oppressed nations, unite!" really meant independent states for the former colonies and semi-colonies. Here lies the basis for that reserve.

We hope the reader has now grasped the solemnity of what is being said. The communist movement in its most glorious moment in history draws the road map of world revolution. But not one leadership implements this programme and strategy after the death of Lenin. No one even remembers this. When socialist revolutions triumph, as in Yugoslavia (1944), Vietnam (1945), China (1949), Korea (1950), Cuba (1959-1961) etc., no one appeals to them to adhere to, to join, to unify with the Soviet Union.⁴ When the first workers' state after the USSR is to be formed, Trotsky is no longer alive. No one else, to our knowledge, within the communist opposition to Stalinism, whether Trotskyist or otherwise, raises a voice.

³ Sungur Savran, *Lenin: Dünya Devriminin Önderi* [Lenin: Leader of World Revolution], Istanbul: Yordam Kitap, 2024, especially Chapter 9 on "Towards a World Federation: How Will the Fusion of Nations Be Achieved?", pp. 239-247.

⁴ Of this we cannot be totally sure since there is a vast history and geography concerned. But this is at least theoretically verifiable in the future.

A hundred years on, the new generations of communists are entitled to discover this legacy.

Let us draw some conclusions. Had communists remained loyal to Lenin's legacy and implemented the resolution of the Comintern (the Theses), then in the post-World War Two period, we would have had a single socialist state that extended from the Sea of Japan to Central Europe and from the Arctic Ocean to the Mediterranean, a country that would be ruled by a single plan. We have already pointed out that Lenin (who in fact took this principle over from Marx) favoured a centralised state economic apparatus for economic efficiency. This would have made it possible for the new socialist federation to survive much longer than what was possible under the fragmented state structure of the actual socialist state system.

Secondly, it would have been much more difficult for capitalist powers to threaten this giant of a socialist country militarily.

Third, as a result of this cooperation and increasing integration, the former colonies and newly liberated peoples would be convinced that this was a truly international union which no one nation would be able to command and bully and thus they would be much more prepared to unite their economic fate with the socialist commonwealth than suffer the scourge and humiliation of being subordinated to imperialism. This could at a certain point bring in India, in addition to the already present gigantic countries like China and Russia into the federation, reproducing, at an even higher level, the advantages of this route.

Conclusion

In this article we pointed out that there were two different periods in Lenin's political life with different tasks and concerns taking centre stage. The first extends from the 1890s to 1914 (roughly a quarter of a century) in which Lenin is the prospective leader of the Russian revolution. The second is much shorter, lasting hardly a decade (1914-early 1924), in which he is the rising leader of world revolution.

We limited our discussion to the second period for concerns of space. However, the choice of the second period as our topic is fundamentally due to our belief that this period of Lenin's theory and practice have formed the backbone of the little understood and misinterpreted and at times deliberately denied legacy of Lenin, of great importance for the younger generations of revolutionaries.

We then went on to explain the elements that formed this powerful legacy, which culminated in the road map that Lenin left for the future communist movement in the form of a nationless state acting as the avenue through which humanity can most forcefully march towards a society that is not only classless but also nationless, i.e. a society in which, ultimately, all nations can and will fuse into one human nation.

So, Lenin is not of the past but of the future. He is the alternative. He alone can unite honest and serious communists of all nations and persuasions. But only the Lenin depicted here, the genuine Lenin can that fountainhead be.

From Lenin to Leninism

Oswaldo Coggiola

In *The Age of Extremes*, Eric Hobsbawm defined Lenin as “the man with the greatest single impact on the history of the 20th century”. The man, as we know, was the main (but not the only) leader of the October Revolution, whose shadow hung and hangs over the world. His myth inspired the ghost that haunted the century, that of the “world communist revolution”, used to justify wars and massacres without parallel in history. In Russia, the birthplace of the “communist specter” and a “country with an unpredictable past”, we find diametrically opposed interpretations of Lenin in the writings of the same authors. This is the case of Dimitri Volkogonov, who for years supported the “official” Soviet version, presenting Bolshevism as an “absolute good” that sprang from Lenin’s head. In contrast, Trotsky was presented as the incarnation of evil, Lenin’s enemy from start to finish (but hiding this for a brief period), and the enemy of socialism because of imperialism. In a trilogy devoted to the most important characters in the history of the USSR,¹ Volkogonov changed the field completely: Bolshevism was now “absolute evil”, born out of Lenin’s (demonic) genius. As for Stalin and Trotsky, they were “enemy brothers”,

¹ Dimitri Volkogonov. *The real Lenin*. Paris, Robert Laffont, 1995; *Stalin*. Paris, Robert Laffont, 1994; *Trotsky*. The eternal revolutionary. New York, The Free Press, 1996. Volkogonov went further: “Lenin is the real father of the Red Terror, not Stalin” - an obvious statement: when terror was adopted as the transitional method of struggle for Soviet power, Stalin was still a secondary political figure.

the former a legitimate son of Lenin. Volkogonov biasedly interpreted sentences in which “note for note, letter for letter, Lenin, the demigod revered for 62 years, including by me, appears not as the magnanimous guide of legend, but a cynical tyrant, willing to do anything to seize and retain power”. “Venerated demigod”: that was Lenin’s quality in the “official history” of the USSR. A Western practitioner of leaflet history, in the wake of the post-Soviet anti-communist reaction, entitled one of his works “Lenin, the Cause of Evil”.²

“Leninism” was created on the occasion of Lenin’s death as a supposedly infallible doctrine, capable of guaranteeing, through its “application”, the victory of the socialist revolution. A century later, on the ground that has been cleared and also devastated by victorious and defeated revolutions, by bloody wars and counter-revolutions, it is worth pausing to consider the conditions that forged the man, and also those that governed the doctrine that inspired the so-called “international communist movement”. Bukharin summarized: “Marx mainly gave the algebra of capitalist development and revolutionary action; Lenin added the algebra of new phenomena of destruction and construction, as well as their arithmetic. He deciphered the formulas of algebra from a concrete and practical point of view”.³ This in a country where, in Trotsky’s words, “the fall of the monarchy had long been the indispensable condition for the development of Russia’s economy and culture. But the forces to carry out this task were lacking. The bourgeoisie was terrified of revolution. Intellectuals tried to organize the peasantry around them. Unable to generalize its efforts and objectives, the *mujik* did not respond to the calls of the youth. The intelligentsia armed itself with dynamite. An entire generation was consumed in this struggle”. This included Lenin’s older brother, Alexander Ulianov, a populist who was executed by the Tsarist regime for plotting against the monarch, without any attempt being made against him.

A member of the next revolutionary generation, Lenin began his career in the RSDLP (Russian Social Democratic Labour Party) by fighting, within the old Russian populism (including its dynamite strand), its intended specific, “eastern” path to socialism, based on the survival of the Russian agrarian community (the *mir*). It was wrong to support the possibility of achieving a *Russian socialism* based on the rural community, as the *narodniki* did, since capitalist development had created a social differentiation within rural communities. The village was in the process of dissolving, giving way to capitalist agrarian property on the one hand and agricultural wage earners on the other. His diagnosis of the dissolution of the old rural community (confirmed by later historical research),⁴ set out in various works, especially in *The Development of Capitalism in Russia*, followed in the footsteps of Plekhanov’s political struggle against populism, summarized in *Our Differences*.⁵

Lenin added a differentiated appreciation of the peasant movement, which pointed

² Paul Mourousy. *Lenin. The cause of evil*. Paris, Perrin, 1992.

³ Nikolai Bukharin. *Lenin Marxist*. Barcelona, Anagrama, 1976.

⁴ Dorothy Atkinson. *The End of the Agrarian Land Commune*. Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1983.

⁵ Samuel H. Baron. *Plekhanov. The father of Russian Marxism*. Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1963.

to the nodal point of the revolutionary strategy, the worker-peasant alliance. In the *Agrarian Programme of Social Democracy*, he said: “The mistake of certain Marxists is that, in criticizing the theory of the populists, they lose sight of its historically real and legitimate content in the struggle against feudalism. They rightly criticize the ‘principle of work’ and ‘egalitarianism’ as backward, reactionary, petty-bourgeois socialism and forget that these theories express advanced, revolutionary petty-bourgeois democratism; these theories serve as a banner for the most decisive of the struggles against old Russia, feudal Russia. The idea of equality is the most revolutionary idea in the struggle against the old order of things of absolutism in general and against the old feudal and landowning regime in particular. The idea of equality is legitimate and progressive in the peasant petty-bourgeoisie, because it expresses the aspiration to distribution.”

For Lenin, “the agrarian question constituted the basis of the bourgeois revolution in Russia and determined the national particularity of that revolution”.⁶ The objectives he set for the bourgeois revolution were: a democratic republic, a constituent assembly, and a provisional revolutionary government in the regime of the democratic dictatorship of the workers and peasants. The means to achieve these goals would be armed popular insurrection. According to Lenin, the party should promote a workers’ and peasants’ revolution, and the latter, by carrying out the democratic revolution, although preparing the ground for the socialist revolution, could not escape, at least for a while, the fate of bourgeois revolution. Trotsky, a member of the successive generation, understood that the proletariat would have to seek the support of the peasants, but it couldn’t stop there: on completing the bourgeois revolution, the proletariat would inevitably be induced to carry out its own revolution, without a solution of continuity. The already controversial question of the revolution’s *programme* was intertwined with that of *organization*, which gave rise to *Bolshevism*, identified with Lenin.

Lenin’s political role at the turn of the century was to lay the foundations for the organization of a unified workers’ party, after the dispersion of the groups participating in the founding congress of the RSDLP in 1898. A kind of unity existed through the reference to the exiled socialists, led by Plekhanov. But “until then Plekhanov’s group had been mainly concerned with the problem of theoretical orientation, for the reason that there was no political party that identified with Marx’s theory and sought to spread this doctrine among the masses of people.”⁷ In *Our Immediate Task*, of 1899, Lenin stated that “the party has not ceased to exist; it has only withdrawn into itself in order to gather strength and face the task of unifying all Russian Social Democrats on firm ground. To achieve this unification, to work out the appropriate forms, to put aside the fractured localist work once and for all: these are the most immediate and essential tasks of the Russian Social Democrats.” How did Bolshevism, Lenin’s great political creation, come about in these conditions?

Against the a-historical interpretation, it was pointed out that “there are three

6 Luciano Gruppi. *Lenin’s Thought*. Rio de Janeiro, Graal, 1979.

7 Christopher Hill. *Lenin*. Buenos Aires, CEAL, 1987.

organizations commonly referred to as the ‘Bolshevik party’: 1) the RSDLP, between 1903 and 1911, in which many fractions disputed the leadership; 2) the Bolshevik fraction within that same party; 3) the RSDLP (Bolshevik) finally founded in 1912, which would receive important reinforcements, especially that of the Petrograd ‘inter-district organization’ with Trotsky, before becoming the victorious Bolshevik party in October.”⁸ Bolshevism was a current that emerged from ideological and political disputes, splits and mergers, but with continuity. It was Lenin who took it upon himself, early on, to relativize the political and organizational principles of *What Is To Be Done?* (1902), considered (wrongly) to be the founding charter of Bolshevism, as being those of a “new type” of party. The term “Bolshevik” initially had the meaning of *majority* (from the Second Congress of the RSDLP in 1903). Writing in 1907 a preface to the reissue of his works, Lenin criticized the exegetes of *What Is To Be Done*, who “completely separate this work from its context in a definite historical situation - a definite period long since overtaken by the development of the party”, pointing out that “no other organization than that led by the *Iskra* could, in the circumstances of Russia in 1900-1905, have created a Social Democratic Labour Party such as the one that has been created. *What Is To Be Done?* is a summary of the tactics and organizational policy of the *Iskra* group in 1901 and 1902”.

This tactic and policy were not considered original, but a version, in Russian conditions (severe repression, lack of democratic freedoms and political democracy), of the principles of the Second International, especially the German SPD, of which the German police chief had already said in 1883 that “the socialist parties abroad consider it as the example that should be imitated in all its aspects”.⁹ Lenin proposed an organization of revolutionaries, conspiratorial and centralized, which was at the same time a workers’ organization, with ample room for internal debate, but with full unity of action. If the first aspect was emphasized, it was because it clashed with the supporters of a “lax” party, which the Bolsheviks did not consider adapted to Russian conditions. For Lenin, the revolutionary “should not have the ideal of a trade union secretary, but of a *people’s tribune*, who knows how to react against every manifestation of arbitrariness and oppression, wherever it occurs, whatever the class or social stratum affected, who knows how to generalize all the facts in order to compose a complete picture of police violence and capitalist exploitation, who knows how to take advantage of the slightest opportunity to expose his socialist convictions and his democratic demands, to explain to each and every one the historical scope of the emancipatory struggle of the proletariat”.

In short, a workers’ party as well as a professional party. This idea would be maintained in all phases of Bolshevism, including changes in the program. Based on it, combined with specific circumstances, Bolshevism began to profile itself as a different political current among socialist currents, including international ones, beyond the intentions of its founders. Lenin changed not once, but *several* times,

⁸ Pierre Broué. Observations on the history of the Bolshevik party. In: Maximilien Rubel et al. *Partido y Revolución*. Buenos Aires, Rodolfo Alonso, 1971.

⁹ Georges Haupt. Parti-guide: the rayonnement of German social democracy. *L’Historien et le Mouvement Social*. Paris, François Maspéro, 1980.

his assessment of the nature of the Russian revolution, but never the idea that its central protagonist would be the industrial proletariat, elaborated in the 1890s in a polemic against the *narodniki* (populists): “The working class is the consistent and declared enemy of absolutism, and only between the working class and absolutism is no compromise possible. The hostility of all other classes, groups and strata of the population towards autocracy is not absolute: their democracy is always looking backwards.”

It was *for and with* this working class that Bolshevism set out to build a party. It was by virtue of its effectiveness in this that Bolshevism was formed and succeeded. At first, Lenin’s comrades probably did not understand the deep meaning of his proposals. His concept of organization and discipline was, however, an effective policy in the task of unifying the underground socialist committees, whose numbers were growing rapidly in Russia, with the leadership of *Iskra*, located abroad. Many committees opposed this. The “party question” (and its fractions) arose from the disagreement between Lenin and Martov at the Second Congress of the RSDLP over the first article of the statute. Martov proposed: “A member of the RSDLP is anyone who accepts its program and supports the party, either materially or through regular cooperation under the direction of one of its bodies”. To which Lenin replied: “A member of the party is anyone who accepts its program and supports the party, either materially or through *personal participation* in the activity of one of its bodies.” A seemingly minimal disagreement.

At the 1903 Social Democratic congress, the “second”, the Bolshevik majority was actually a minority in the votes immediately before and after the vote on the statutes: “Martov’s more elastic formulation, which, in opposition to Lenin, did not consider that ‘collaboration’ should constitute a requirement in a Party organization, was accepted by 28 votes to 23. After the withdrawal of seven delegates, Lenin went on to constitute a majority of 24 against 20, so that he managed to get his own list of candidates admitted to the Central Committee... The victory was short-lived, as the result was the division of the Party leadership into two fractions [Bolsheviks and Mensheviks]. The leading positions in *Iskra* reverted to men who had become Lenin’s ideological adversaries and who soon joined Plekhanov. Lenin prepared the foundation of his own periodical; *Vperiod* (Forward) was launched at the end of 1904”.¹⁰ The Bolsheviks formed their own fraction and convened their own congress as the Third Congress of the RSDLP (London, 1905). Bolshevism, as we can see, emerged from a series of crises and political upheavals, not from a pre-existing finished project.

A popular political dictionary, however, considered Leninism to be “the theoretical-practical interpretation of Marxism, in a revolutionary key, elaborated by Lenin in and for an industrially backward country like Russia, where peasants represented the vast majority of the population”, attributing Lenin’s “party theory” to “clear populist roots” and simultaneously situating it as a “leftist” variant of Bernsteinian

¹⁰ Leonard Shapiro. Bolsheviks, in: C. D. Kernig. *Marxism and Democracy*. Madrid, Rioduero, 1975.

revisionism.¹¹ The organizational polemic in Russian Social Democracy masked a disagreement over what *kind* of party (parliamentary or revolutionary) for what kind of activity (electoral or revolutionary), for what kind of era (peaceful or revolutionary). What initially seemed to be a difference over the methods for building a workers' party in Russia, turned out to be a disagreement over the program and the world-historical epoch, which would split the international workers' movement, with Lenin and Bolshevism as the pivot of the split.

Lenin was the main organizer of the Second Congress of the RSDLP, considered the real founding congress of the party. It was the result of a series of previous political victories: "When the Congress was held in 1903, three ideological battles had already been fought and resolved, which formed the basis of the party program unanimously adopted by the Congress. In the face of the *narodniki*, the RSDLP considered the proletariat and not the peasants to be the agent of the future revolution; in the face of the 'legal Marxists', it preached revolutionary action and denied any compromise with the bourgeoisie; in the face of the 'economists', it stressed the essentially political character of the party's program".¹² The struggle against the economicists, summarized by Lenin in *What Is To Be Done*, was a common heritage of the party, including the future opponents of the supposed ultra-centralism contained in that text.

In *What Is To Be Done*, Lenin had stated that "the spontaneous development of the workers' movement is marching precisely towards its subordination to bourgeois ideology, because the spontaneous workers' movement is trade-unionist (...) Anything that bends towards the spontaneity of the workers' movement, anything that diminishes the role of the 'conscious element', the role of social democracy, means strengthening the influence of bourgeois ideology on the workers." But at the same time, he defined "the spontaneous element as nothing more than the embryonic form of the conscious. And the primitive riots already reflected a certain conscious awakening". Or: "The working class spontaneously tends towards socialism, but the bourgeois ideology, the most widespread (and constantly resurrected in the most diverse forms) is the one that most spontaneously imposes itself on the workers." The text and its consequences sparked a controversy that still resonates today. It proposed a new foundation (only partially anticipated by Kautsky) for the workers' *political* party.

In 1904, Rosa Luxemburg used her pen against Leninist "ultra centralism" in *Organizational Questions of the Russian Social Democracy*: "It is not by starting from the discipline inculcated in it by the capitalist state, with the mere transfer of

11 Domenico Settembrini. Leninism. In: Norberto Bobbio et al. *Dictionary of Politics*. Brasilia, UnB, 1986. The thesis of the terrorist-populist origin of the Leninist conception of the party is widespread: Alain Besançon. *The Intellectual Origins of Leninism*. Madrid, RIALP, 1980; René Canac. *Netchaïev, du Nihilisme au Terrorisme*. Aux sources de la révolution russe. Paris, Payot, 1961. That political action in a country cannot do without its political and cultural traditions is obvious: *What Is To Be Done?* took its title from a novel by Nikolai Tchernichevski, written in 1862 while its author was imprisoned in the Peter and Paul Fortress in St. Petersburg. According to Orlando Figes, "Tchernichevski's novel converted more men to the cause of revolution than all the works of Marx and Engels put together (Marx himself learned Russian in order to read the book)".

12 Edward H. Carr. *Studies on the Revolution*. Madrid, Alianza, 1970.

the baton from the hand of the bourgeoisie to that of a Social Democratic central committee, but by breaking, by extirpating this spirit of servile discipline, that the proletariat can be educated to the new discipline, the voluntary self-discipline of Social Democracy.” Adding that “the ultra-centralism advocated by Lenin seems to us, in all its essence, to be the bearer, not of a positive and creative spirit, but of the sterile spirit of the night watchman. His concern is above all to control party activity and not to fertilize it, to restrict the movement and not to develop it, to harass it and not to unify it.” In Luxemburg’s view, “social democracy is not linked to the organization of the working class: it is the movement of the working class itself”.¹³ Lenin’s response¹⁴ was simple: Rosa’s criticisms were politely answered, one by one, stating that “what Rosa Luxemburg’s article in *Die Neue Zeit* makes known to the reader is not my book, but something else”, and saying, in essence, that “what I defend throughout the book, from the first page to the last, are the elementary principles of any party organization imaginable; (not) one system of organization against any other”. Lenin, therefore, did not proclaim himself the inventor of “democratic centralism”.

Also in 1904, Trotsky published a brochure (*Our Political Tasks*) in which, alongside a remarkable series of personal attacks on Lenin (inaugurating a practice unknown to Russian socialists: Trotsky would later justify himself by referring to his “immaturity” - witnesses at the time, such as Angelica Balabanova, claimed that there was no personal affinity between the two men)¹⁵ also accused Bolshevism of intending to establish “the dictatorship of the party over the working class”, of the central committee over the party, and of the leader over the central committee. Alongside polemical tricks, Trotsky also resorted to futurological exercises: “The tasks of the new regime will be so complex that they cannot be solved except through competition between various methods of economic and political construction, through prolonged ‘disputes’, a systematic struggle not only between the socialist and capitalist worlds, but also between many tendencies within socialism, which will inevitably arise as soon as the proletarian dictatorship brings dozens of new problems. No strong and ‘dominant’ organization will be able to suppress these controversies. A proletariat capable of exercising its dictatorship over society will not tolerate any dictatorship over itself. The working class will have in its ranks a few handfuls of political invalids and a lot of ballast of stale ideas that it will have to get rid of. At the time of its dictatorship, just as today, it will have to cleanse its mind of false bourgeois theories and experiences, and purge its ranks of political charlatans and revolutionaries who only know how to look backwards. But this intricate task cannot be solved by putting over the proletariat a handful of chosen people, or a single onslaught of power.”

Trotsky had broken with Lenin at the 1903 Congress. In retrospect, he presented this break as “subjective” and “moral”, linked to an issue that did not imply any

13 Rosa Luxemburg. *Mass Party or Vanguard Party*. São Paulo, Ched, 1980.

14 In an article sent to Kautsky to be published in *Die Neue Zeit*, the organ of German Social Democracy, it was refused and only made known in 1930.

15 Angélica Balabanova. *Mi Vida de Rebelde*. Barcelona, Martinez Roca, 1974.

political principle. Lenin proposed reducing the number of *Iskra* editors from six to three. These were to be Plekhanov, Martov and himself. Axelrod, Zasulich and Potresov were to be excluded. He wanted *Iskra*'s editorial work to be more effective than it had been recently; "to Trotsky, this attempt to eliminate Axelrod and Zasulich, two of its founders, from *Iskra* seemed sacrilegious. Lenin's harshness aroused his disgust".¹⁶ At the Congress, Trotsky spoke out against Lenin only on two points on the agenda: paragraph 1 of the party statutes and the election of the party's central bodies. Trotsky did not oppose the theses of the party program prepared by Lenin. On the contrary, on this item he defended Lenin.¹⁷ In his autobiography, Trotsky did not refer to his 1904 pamphlet; after the 1903 Congress, he was briefly linked to the Mensheviks, with whom he later broke. During the following decade, he was a supporter of the "conciliation" of the fractions (not without some successes, also ephemeral), which fed the legend of an "anti-Bolshevik" Trotsky, although he came closer to Bolshevism being as much a member of the RSDLP as Lenin, at a time when the formal split of the party had not been consummated.

Against Trotsky, Lenin said that he "forgot that the Party must be only a detachment of the vanguard, the leader of the immense mass of the working class, which as a whole (or almost) works 'under the control and under the direction' of the Party organizations, but which does not enter entirely, and nor should it, into the 'Party'."¹⁸ (The ironic quotation marks are Lenin's). Party, workers' vanguard, working class, were not identified with each other (as Trotsky and Rosa Luxemburg did, according to Lenin) although they influenced each other. In 1905, Bolshevism was a party of *the* workers' vanguard, its composition was almost 62% workers (and almost 5% peasants)¹⁹: this was the party of the "professional revolutionaries". Three years later, Lenin mocked his critics: "To say that the *Iskra* (of 1901 and 1902!) exaggerated the idea of an organization of professional revolutionaries is like saying, *after* the Russo-Japanese war, that the Japanese had an exaggerated idea of the Russian military forces, and that they were too preoccupied, before the war, with fighting against these forces."²⁰

Many saw *Our Political Tasks* as a prophecy about the fate of Bolshevism and the revolution. For Isaac Deutscher, who criticized the work's personal attacks, it was also "astonishing" because it contained "great ideas" and "subtle historical insight".²¹ For E. H. Carr, "the (future) process was predicted in great detail by Trotsky, who in a brilliant pamphlet published in 1904 announced a situation in which 'the party is replaced by the party organization, the organization by the central committee and finally the central committee by the dictator'."²² Pierre Broué criticized the "pedantry" of *Our Tasks*, its invectives against "Maximilien Lenin",

16 Isaac Deutscher. *Trotsky*. The armed prophet. Mexico, ERA, 1976.

17 A. V. Pantsov. *Voprosy Istorii*. Moscow, 1989, 7/10; Brian Pearce (ed.). *Minutes of the Second Ordinary Congress of the RSDLP (1903)*. London, New Park, 1978.

18 V. I. Lenin. *Oeuvres*, vol. VI, Paris, Éditions Sociales, 1964.

19 David Lane. *The Roots of Russian Communism*. A social and historical study of Russian social democracy 1898-1907. Mexico, Siglo XXI, 1977.

20 V. I. Lenin. Prefazione alla raccolta "Na 12 Let". In: *Che Fare?* Torino, Einaudi, 1971.

21 Isaac Deutscher. *Trotsky*, cit.

22 Edward H. Carr. *The October Revolution*. Before and after. New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1969.

stating that Trotsky later considered the work “a terribly annoying document about which he observed the greatest discretion”, and wondered why, in the circumstances of its publication (Trotsky’s break with Menshevism) he “did not renounce its publication”.²³ Lenin responded to the comparison with Robespierre by saying that “the Jacobin who is indissolubly linked to the organization of the proletariat, who is conscious of his class interests, is precisely the revolutionary social democrat”.²⁴ The strongest criticism referred to the fact that Lenin had maintained that the revolutionary intelligentsia played a special role in the revolutionary movement, providing it with the socialist perspective that the workers could not achieve on their own. Trotsky saw this opinion as a denial of the revolutionary capacities of the working class and the aspiration of the intelligentsia to keep the workers’ movement under its tutelage. The Polish socialist Machajski held a similar view of “Russian socialism” in general.²⁵

Trotsky said that, at the Congress, “my whole being protested against the merciless suppression of veterans. From the indignation I felt came my break with Lenin, which took place to some extent on moral ground. But that was only an appearance. Deep down, our differences had a political character that manifested itself in the question of organization.”²⁶ *Our Political Tasks* was “dedicated to Pavel Axelrod”. Today it seems clear that “both Trotsky and Luxemburg were unfair to Lenin when they removed the positions of *What Is To Be Done* from their concrete historical context and gave them a universal character”.²⁷ Trotsky pronounced himself, much later, on his “cursed” work, with no regrets: “In a brochure written in 1904, whose criticism of Lenin often lacked maturity and fairness, there are nevertheless pages that provide a very faithful idea of the way of thinking of the *komitetchiki* of that time (...) The battle that Lenin would sustain a year later, at the congress [Third Congress, April 1905], against the arrogant *komitetchiki* fully confirms this criticism.”²⁸ This is the aspect exploited by historians who claim that “(in 1903) Lenin was already convinced that it was the professional revolutionary, and not the masses, who held the key to the victory of socialism”.²⁹

Lenin’s position, which led to the emergence of the fractions, had nothing to do with a sudden impulse: it was the continuity of a political and ideological struggle in which he had been the protagonist since the 1890s. The struggle against populism, *What Is To Be Done*, the delimitation in the face of Menshevism, were its various phases, not based on a fetish of statutes: Lenin accepted, at the 1906 reunification congress (Bolsheviks + Mensheviks), the Menshevik wording of article 1° of the statutes... This and other episodes allow us to question the retrospective view of the Bolshevik Zinoviev: “In 1903 we already had two clearly separated groups,

23 Pierre Broué. *Trotsky*. Paris, Fayard, 1988.

24 On Leninist “Jacobinism”, see: Jean Pierre Joubert. Lenin and Jacobinism. *Cahiers Leon Trotsky*, nº 30, Paris, June 1987.

25 Jan Wacław Machajski. *The Socialism of Intellectuals*. Paris, Points, 1979.

26 Leon Trotsky. *A Life*. Paris, Gallimard, 1973.

27 Ernest Mandel. *Trotsky as an Alternative*. São Paulo, Xamã, 1995.

28 Leon Trotsky. *Stalin*. Biography. São Paulo, Livraria da Física, 2012.

29 Adam B. Ulam. *The Bolsheviks*. Rio de Janeiro, Nova Fronteira, 1976.

two organizations and two parties. Bolshevism and Menshevism, as ideological tendencies, were already formed with their characteristic profile, later evidenced in the revolutionary storm.³⁰ At the 1905 London (Bolshevik) Congress, Lenin waged a battle to recruit and promote workers who were not “professional revolutionaries”, but only militant workers: the index of a conflict with the *komitetchiki*, the “committee men”.

Nadezhda Krupskaya, Lenin’s wife, recounted in her memoirs the battle between Lenin and Rykov, spokesman for the “underground”: “The *komitetchiki* was a man full of security... he did not allow any democracy within the party... he did not like innovations”. According to her, Lenin could hardly contain himself “when he heard that there were no workers capable of forming part of the committees”. He proposed making it compulsory to include a majority of workers on the committees. The party apparatus was opposed; Lenin’s proposal was defeated, a fact that Pierre Broué related to “the sect-like spirit that kept the Bolsheviks away from the first Soviets, in which many of them feared an opposing organization”. The 1905 revolution, already underway, had witnessed the formation of workers’ councils, elected by the workers in their own workplaces. The delegates could always be revoked by their electors. Unionized or not, politically organized or disorganized, the proletarians of Petersburg, Moscow, Kiev, Kharkov, Tula, Odessa and other industrial agglomerations were creating a new form of mass organization, which appeared as the opposite of the parliamentary assemblies with which the Western bourgeoisie exercised its class domination. Their transformation into organs of government, however, was not yet the project of any political current.

The revolutionary tradition of the Russian working class played a decisive role in the 1905 revolution; the January 1905 strike was closely linked to the explosion of another general strike in 1904 in Baku, in the Caucasus. This, in turn, was preceded by other major strikes that took place between 1903 and 1904 in southern Russia, which had as their predecessor the great strike of 1902 in Batumi. We can identify the beginning of this series of strikes in the one undertaken by the textile workers of St. Petersburg between 1896 and 1897. Since the end of the 19th century, Russia had become an epicenter of the European revolution: at its 1903 congress, the RSDLP adopted a program “which included, for the first time in the history of social democratic parties, the slogan of the *dictatorship of the proletariat*”.³¹ The class struggle in Russia was gaining its own vanguard profile on the international stage; Russian Social Democracy was not simply a projection of European socialism into “wild lands”.

In the 1905 revolution, the problem of the Soviets affected all factions of the RSDLP: “Without taking into account the cooperation of many Bolshevik workers in the councils, the principled position of the Bolshevik leadership varied between a radical rejection and a somewhat disgusted acceptance of these ‘bodies alien’ to the revolution. The Bolsheviks’ position on the Soviets differed from place to place

30 Grigori Zinoviev. *History of the Bolshevik Party*. From the beginnings to February 1917. London, New Park, 1973.

31 Pierre Broué. *The Bolshevik Party*. Paris, Minuit, 1971.

and was undergoing changes; Lenin himself did not reach a definitive judgment on their role and importance, although he was the only one among the Bolsheviks who made an effort to examine this new revolutionary phenomenon in depth and add it to his revolutionary theory and tactics. During the October strike, the Bolshevik workers took part in the formation of the Petersburg Council of Workers' Deputies, as did the other workers. In the early days of the Soviet's existence, when it acted as a strike committee and no one really knew what role it would play in the future, the Bolsheviks were benevolently opposed to it. But that changed when, at the end of the October strike, the Soviet remained in place and began to evolve into a political leadership body for the working class. Most of the Bolsheviks openly opposed the Soviet; in the federative committees made up of representatives of both fractions of the RSDLP, they drew up a resolution recommending official acceptance of the programme of Social Democracy, since independent council-style organizations could not guide a clear political orientation and would be pernicious".³² The party that would project itself to the world as the vanguard of "Soviet power" was initially opposed to the leading or governmental function of the Soviet. There was no "genius Lenin" to prevent this.

For most Marxist historians, there was a link between *What Is To Be Done* and "Bolshevik sectarianism". Paul Le Blanc states that "the potential sectarianism that (Rosa) Luxemburg had noticed in Lenin's conceptions, manifested itself clearly from 1905".³³ For Ernest Mandel "it is clear that Lenin underestimated in the course of the 1902-1903 debate the dangers for the workers' movement that could arise from building up a bureaucracy within it".³⁴ The test of the revolution, and its defeat, produced new crises and political realignments. During the reaction after 1905, the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks split into three factions each: the "liquidators" (Potresov, Zasulich), the center (Martov, Dan) and the "party Mensheviks" (Plekhanov) among the latter; the "vperiodists" (Bogdanov), the "Leninists" and the "conciliators" or "party Bolsheviks" (Rykov, Nogin) among the former. If 1903 was not the "magic date" for Bolshevism, 1906 (the reunification congress) was not the great hour of lost conciliation (Lenin declared that "until the social revolution, Social Democracy will inevitably have an opportunist wing and a revolutionary wing"); the Bolsheviks maintained a "clandestine center" in the unified party; finally, 1912 (when the Bolsheviks definitively split from the Mensheviks) was not the "final party", because before 1912 Lenin reconciled with Plekhanov and formed a bloc in the RSDLP with the "party Mensheviks" against the "liquidators", with the aim of maintaining a clandestine apparatus. It was on this position that the (Bolshevik) RSDLP was formed, with a revolutionary wing and an "opportunist" one...

Between crises and fierce disputes between fractions, the political problems of Russian Social Democracy were at a higher level than those of the other sections

32 Oskar Anweiler. *The Soviets in Russia 1905-1921*. Madrid, Zero, 1975.

33 Paul Le Blanc. Lenin and Rosa Luxemburg on revolutionary organization. *Cahiers d'Étude et de Recherche* n° 14, Paris, 1990.

34 Ernest Mandel. *The Leninist Theory of Organization*. São Paulo, Aparte, 1984.

of the Second International, which were steeped in reformism and electoralism. Its particularity does not have to do with a supposed theory about “the Party, with a capital letter, (which) constitutes the great and ambiguous Russian contribution to contemporary history”, also called “the Party: a meta-political entity totally different from anything that had been seen until then on the varied scene of European socialist movements”, considered as the birth of a new anthropological variant: *homo bolchevicus!*³⁵ It’s easy to point the finger at the confusion of the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks about the role of the Soviets; the leaders of the Soviets themselves were confused about it: “Even at the second congress (of the Soviets) on October 28, no member of this assembly knew very well what their function was, whether they constituted a central strike committee or a new type of organization, similar to a revolutionary self-administration body.”³⁶

Lenin’s evolution was described ironically by Moshe Lewin: “Ever since his work in Siberian exile, Lenin tended to see capitalism behind every Russian cart. The 1905 revolution led him to nuance his ideas: capitalism was still weakly developed, the liberal forces were embryonic and timid.”³⁷ Even so, for Lenin the revolution remained “bourgeois in the sense of its economic-social content. Which means: the tasks of the revolution taking place in Russia do not go beyond the scope of bourgeois society. Not even the fullest victory of the present revolution, that is, the conquest of the most democratic republic and the confiscation of all land from the landlords by the peasants, will shake the foundations of the bourgeois social order.” But from this thesis, Lenin did not derive the conclusion that the main engine of the revolution would be the bourgeoisie, as the Mensheviks wanted, because the revolution was taking place at a time when “the proletariat has already begun to become conscious of itself as a particular class and to unite in an autonomous class organization”.

In September 1905, during the “first Russian revolution”, Lenin said that “from the democratic revolution we will soon begin to move, to the extent of our strength, the strength of the conscious and organized proletariat, to the socialist revolution. We are for *uninterrupted revolution*. We will not stop halfway.” Lenin, however, limited the immediate scope of the revolution to the bourgeois-democratic horizon. According to Trotsky, he “wanted to imply that, in order to maintain unity with the peasantry, the proletariat would be forced to dispense with the immediate implementation of socialist tasks during the next revolution. But this meant the proletariat renouncing its own dictatorship. Consequently, the dictatorship was, in essence, that of the peasantry, even if the workers participated in it.” Let us quote

35 Enzo Bettiza. *The Mystery of Lenin*. Barcelona, Argos-Vergara, 1984.

36 Avraham Yassour. *Leçons de 1905: Parti ou Soviet? Le Mouvement Social* n° 62, Paris, January-March 1968. Shortly after the revolution, Trotsky wrote that “the council of workers’ deputies was born to achieve a goal: in the course of events to create an organization that represents authority, free from tradition, an organization that can embrace all the disaggregated masses without imposing organizational obstacles, an organization that can unite the revolutionary currents within the proletariat and control an initiative by itself in a capable and automatic way and, what is most fundamental, an organization that could be brought to life in 24 hours”.

37 Moshe Lewin. *Communist illusion or Soviet reality? Le Monde Diplomatique*. Paris, December 1996.

Lenin's confirmatory words, spoken at the Stockholm Congress of the RSDLP (1906) when he replied to Plekhanov: "What program are we talking about? An agrarian program. Who is supposed to take power with this program? The revolutionary peasants." Was Lenin confusing the government of the proletariat with the government of the peasants? "No," he said, referring to himself, "Lenin made a clear distinction between the socialist government of the proletariat and the bourgeois-democratic government of the peasantry."

Trotsky was already advocating *permanent revolution*, the perspective of which was that "the complete victory of the democratic revolution in Russia can only be conceived in the form of the dictatorship of the proletariat, supported by the peasantry. The dictatorship of the proletariat, which would inevitably put not only democratic but also socialist tasks on the table, would at the same time give a vigorous impetus to the international socialist revolution. Only the victory of the proletariat in the West could protect Russia from bourgeois restoration, giving it the security to complete the establishment of socialism." It was a divergence of strategic scope: "Bolshevism was not infected by the belief in the power and strength of a revolutionary bourgeois democracy in Russia. From the outset it recognized the decisive significance of the struggle of the working class in the coming revolution, but its program was limited, in the first period, to the interests of the great peasant masses, without whom - and against whom - the revolution could not have been carried out by the proletariat. Hence the provisional recognition of the bourgeois-democratic character of the revolution and its prospects. For this reason, the author [Trotsky] did not belong, at that time, to either of the two main currents of the Russian workers' movement." For him, "the proletariat, having come to power, must not limit itself to the framework of bourgeois democracy, but must employ the tactic of *permanent revolution*, that is to say, annul the limits between the minimum and maximum program of social democracy, moving on to ever deeper social reforms and seeking direct and immediate support in the revolution in Western Europe."³⁸

As positions evolved, a convergence took shape since the Fifth (London) Congress of the RSDLP: "The most notable fact of the congress was the isolation of the Mensheviks in the face of the convergence of positions of Lenin, Rosa Luxemburg and Trotsky. It was an objective convergence, without any agreement, and not without considerable discrepancies, between Lenin and the Bolsheviks, on the one hand, and Rosa and Trotsky, on the other."³⁹ Post-Gorbachev Soviet historiography has tended to minimize the pre-revolution Lenin-Trotsky disagreements (just as Stalinism previously exaggerated them to the point of outright lies): "These disagreements do not have much significance when we consider them from a historical perspective. This includes the question of the permanent revolution, which was always taken to exaggerated proportions after Lenin's death. In fact, after 1916, Lenin never highlighted this issue again." The same author points out

³⁸ Leon Trotsky. Tres concepciones de la revolución rusa. In: *Results and Prospects*. Buenos Aires, El Yunque, 1974.

³⁹ Vittorio Strada. The controversy between the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks over the 1905 revolution. In: Eric J. Hobsbawm (org.), *History of Marxism*. Vol. 3, Rio de Janeiro, Paz e Terra, 1984.

that “articles by Trotsky were published in magazines directed by Lenin”.⁴⁰

Strategic disagreements continued. They became more acute after the “August Bloc” (a bloc “for the unity of the RSDLP”, headed by Trotsky, with Menshevik participation) of 1912, when the Bolsheviks embarked on the path of building an independent party. For 15 years, Lenin and Trotsky exchanged various insults in writing (“mediocre”, “second-rate lawyer”, Trotsky said of Lenin; “cheap slanderer”, “*balalaika* player”, “pretender”, “ambitious”, the latter retorted), which Trotsky retrospectively attributed to immaturity and the “heat” of the factional struggle. In the middle of the period of reaction, Trotsky specified the extent of the differences: “If the Mensheviks, starting from the following conception: ‘our revolution is bourgeois’, arrive at the idea of adapting the entire tactics of the proletariat to the conduct of the liberal bourgeoisie until it conquers power, the Bolsheviks, starting from a no less abstract conception, ‘democratic dictatorship, but not socialist’, arrive at the idea of a self-limitation of the proletariat, which holds power, to a regime of bourgeois democracy. It is true that there is an essential difference between the Mensheviks and the Bolsheviks: while the anti-revolutionary aspects of Menshevism are manifest from the present, in all their size, what is anti-revolutionary in Bolshevism does not threaten us - but the threat is no less serious - except in the event of a revolutionary victory.”⁴¹ This can be read in two ways: 1) Trotsky put Bolshevism on a higher historical and political level than Menshevism; 2) he also had the opinion that there were anti-revolutionary aspects to Bolshevism, which was no small thing.

We focus here on the Lenin-Trotsky polemic because of the role of both leaders in the October Revolution and subsequent history. Before that, for more than a quarter of a century, Lenin took part in polemics with numerous currents of Russian and international socialism (even the Argentinian socialist Juan B. Justo criticized the Leninist theory of imperialism) and was undoubtedly the pivot of political debates in the workers’ movement in his country. The programmatic differences between the Bolsheviks, Mensheviks and “Trotskyists” became clear with the revolution. For Rudi Dutschke, “only an understanding of the bourgeois revolution of 1905 allows us to get closer, through Lenin’s economic conceptions, to the roots of democratic centralism as a type of party”.⁴² Insofar as, initially, all the fractions agreed on the bourgeois nature of the Russian Revolution, the divergences did not appear clearly. At first, the 1905 revolution and its repression by Tsarism brought the Bolsheviks closer to the Mensheviks: both believed in the need for a “bourgeois-democratic” stage prior to the socialist revolution. However, between 1907 and 1908, it turned out that while the Mensheviks believed that the bourgeoisie could lead and complete this stage, the Bolsheviks claimed that only the proletariat and the peasants could fulfill the task of the bourgeois-democratic stage.

Divergences were overcome, not completely, in practice (the October Revolution was identified with the names of Lenin and Trotsky) and by the political

40 Vladimir I. Billik. In: *Komsomolskaia Pravda*. n° 33, Moscow, August 1989.

41 Leon Trotsky. *Nos différends*. In: *1905*, Paris, Minuit, 1969.

42 Rudi Dutschke. *Lenin*. Attempts to put Lenin on his feet. Barcelona, Icaria, 1976.

assimilation of this practice. Thinking of political differences as an abnormality, and homogeneity as an ideal to be achieved, means denying thought itself and its driving force (contradiction). Without the revolution, it is likely that some of these polemics would have been extended *ad infinitum*. In his autobiography, Trotsky was quite pithy on the subject: “I came to Lenin later than others, but on my own path, having gone through and reflected on the experience of revolution, counter-revolution and imperialist war. Thanks to this, I came to him more firmly and seriously than his ‘disciples’” (note the quotation marks). To which the Stalinist historian Léo Figuères replied: “It is worth asking whether Trotsky would have been able to join Bolshevism in 1917 if all his disciples (sic, without quotation marks) had followed his path, abandoned and fought Lenin after the Second Congress”.⁴³ If that had happened, Bolshevism would not have existed. Figuères, as a good Stalinist, considered Bolshevism to be a current of Lenin’s “disciples”, that is, in religious terms.

On an international level, nothing is more contrary to the truth than the legend coined by Stalin in *Foundations of Leninism*: that the Bolsheviks had acted, since 1903, to split with the reformists in the Socialist International. It was with great struggle that Lenin managed to be recognized as the representative of the RSDLP (together with Plekhanov) since 1905, in the International Socialist Bureau (BSI), a position he would hold until the First World War. Within this framework, the Russian “Unity Congress” of 1906 took place. In 1907, at the International Socialist Congress in Stuttgart, the motion on the attitude and duty of socialists in the event of war (“to use the crisis caused by the war to precipitate the fall of the bourgeoisie”) was presented jointly by Lenin, Rosa Luxemburg and the Menshevik Martov. When in January 1912 the (Bolshevik) Prague conference consummated the split with the Mensheviks, Lenin did not present it in the BSI as the break between reformists and revolutionaries, but of the defenders of the “*real workers’ party*” against the “liquidators” (supporters of a merely “legal” party), and defending “the only existing party, the illegal party” (report by Kamenev, Lenin’s representative, in the BSI of November 1913).

In 1912, the Bolsheviks fought to impose themselves as representatives of the RSDLP at the International Socialist Congress in Basel. Already in 1914 (before the war), due to the international isolation of the Bolsheviks (including in relation to the left wing of the Socialist International, whose leader Rosa Luxemburg had allied herself with the Mensheviks and the “August Bloc” led by Trotsky), the Bolsheviks accepted a new and fruitless “unification conference”. Lenin was already aware of the international projection of the “Russian split” and, after the capitulation of the main parties of the Socialist International to the outbreak of war in August 1914, he proclaimed from the end of that year the struggle for a new International, the Third.⁴⁴ Three years later, in 1917, in Russia, Bolshevism was the point of confluence for the revolutionaries.

43 Léo Figuères. *Le Trotskysme, cet Antiléninisme*. Paris, Éditions Sociales, 1969.

44 Georges Haupt. Lenin, the Bolsheviks and the Second International. *The Historian and the Social Movement*. Paris, François Maspéro, 1980.

Lenin, in the middle of the imperialist war (at the end of 1915) accused Trotsky, even though they both belonged to the so-called “Zimmerwald Left”, the ultra-minority internationalist fraction of international socialism: “Trotsky’s original theory borrows from the Bolsheviks the call for a decisive revolutionary struggle and the conquest of political power by the proletariat, and from the Mensheviks the denial of the role of the peasantry. The peasantry, it seems, became divided, differentiated, and would be less and less able to play a revolutionary role. In Russia, a ‘national’ revolution would be impossible, ‘we live in the epoch of imperialism’, and ‘imperialism does not oppose the bourgeois nation to the old regime, but the proletariat to the bourgeois nation’. Here’s an amusing example of the jokes that can be played with the word ‘imperialism’. If, in Russia, the proletariat is already opposed to the ‘bourgeois nation’, then it is on the eve of a socialist revolution. In this case, the ‘confiscation of the estates’ (put forward by Trotsky in 1915) is false and it is not a question of talking about a ‘revolutionary workers’ government’, but a ‘socialist workers’ government’. The extent of Trotsky’s confusion can be seen in his assertion that the proletariat will lead the non-proletarian masses of the people! Trotsky doesn’t even think that if the proletariat manages to lead the non-proletarian masses to the confiscation of the estates and the overthrow of the monarchy, this will be the realization of the ‘bourgeois national revolution’, the democratic-revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry.”

And Lenin concluded that “Trotsky is in fact helping the liberal workers’ politicians, who, denying the role of the peasantry, refuse to lead the peasants to the revolution”. In the light of Trotsky’s work, it can be said that Lenin’s accusation was false, although it was based on elements that were still weak in the formulation of the “permanent revolution”, which Trotsky would take care to clarify in later works (not to mention that, in fact, Russia was “on the eve of a socialist revolution”). The war itself gave rise to other disagreements: on “revolutionary defeatism” (which Trotsky, along with several Bolsheviks, did not accept), on the “United States of Europe”... But the common internationalist work on Zimmerwald’s left did not fail to create the elements of future political unity. The convergence that took place in 1917 was primarily *political*, the struggle to build the instrument of the revolution, the *party*. Even at the moment of unification, however, Trotsky drafted a document, which included a “phrase with which he pointed out, in organizational matters, ‘the narrow circle spirit’ of the Bolsheviks.... The inter-district workers retained a great distrust of the Petrograd committee (of Bolshevism). I wrote at the time that ‘the circle spirit, a legacy from the past, still exists, but for it to diminish, the inter-district workers must stop pursuing an isolated activity’.”⁴⁵

Years later, he wrote that “without belonging to either faction during his emigration, the author underestimated the fundamental fact that in the differences of opinion between the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks there was, in fact, a group of inflexible revolutionaries on the one hand and, on the other, a group of elements increasingly disintegrated by opportunism and a lack of principles. When the revolution broke

45 Leon Trotsky. Lessons from October. *From Red October to my Destiny*. Buenos Aires, Barrios, 1973.

out in 1917, the Bolshevik Party represented a strong centralized organization, which had absorbed the best elements among the progressive workers and among the revolutionary intelligentsia.”⁴⁶ On the eve of the Russian revolution, Lenin, in a lecture given in Switzerland on the occasion of the anniversary of “Bloody Sunday” in 1905, said that perhaps only future generations would be able to witness the revolutionary victory that brought Bolshevism to power less than a year later...⁴⁷ Trotsky reaffirmed that “the most important disagreement between Lenin and me during those years consisted of my hope that unification with the Mensheviks would propel the majority of them onto the revolutionary path. Lenin was right about this fundamental question. However, it must be said that in 1917 the tendencies towards ‘unification’ were very strong among the Bolsheviks.”⁴⁸

The October Revolution of 1917 was preceded by the February Revolution, which was not the result of a conspiracy by any political party. 1917 was called the “terrible year” by French President Poincaré, the third of the World Wars, after a harsh European winter. For millions of men, it was the end of the patriotic illusions of 1914, transformed into massacres of combatants in “offensives” that cost hundreds of thousands of lives; supply difficulties, with sharp price increases, hitting the working class in all countries; the “civil peace” defended by the unions and workers’ parties in the warring countries had resulted in the questioning of all the workers’ conquests (rhythms of production, working hours, working conditions, claiming rights); the wear and tear on equipment, machines and the economic apparatus had caused a crisis in all countries. Russia was the country that had suffered by far the worst consequences of the war, making its historical contradictions more acute and unbearable. The February Revolution led to the fall of Tsarism and ushered in a period of political crises that ended with the October “coup d’état”, which brought the Bolsheviks to power, by then already in the majority in the workers’, soldiers’ and peasants’ Soviets. Lenin, as has already been amply explained throughout historiography, was at the center of these events, which were the culmination of his political career and changed the fate of the world, justifying Hobsbawm’s assertion.

The Bolshevik Party that came to power in October 1917 was an extension of the party born in 1912 and the fraction after 1903. However, it was also different. In the months of acute political crisis, it had recruited widely among the younger generations of workers, peasants and soldiers: the underground organization, which had 25,000 members in January, had almost 80,000 at the April conference, and 200,000 at the Sixth Bolshevik Congress in August: the Old Bolsheviks and the *Komitetchiki* were a minority of 10%. The membership included workers’ groups that were not defined in relation to the pre-war fractions and quarrels: the Interdistrict Organization, which had no more than 4,000 members, had three of its members elected to the Central Committee. The August 1917 congress saw the convergence of various organizations or groups; their solid foundation was Lenin’s

46 Leon Trotsky. *Results and Perspectives*, cit.

47 See the text of the conference in: V. I. Lenin. *1905: Revolutionary Days*. São Paulo, História, 1980.

48 Leon Trotsky. *Autobiography*. In: *Lenin’s Testament*. Buenos Aires, El Yunque, 1983.

(Bolshevik) RSDLP, into which flowed the “revolutionary streams” to which Radek referred.⁴⁹ Two years after the October Revolution, Lenin wrote: “At the moment of the conquest of power, when the Republic of Soviets was created, Bolshevism attracted all that was best in the tendencies of the closest socialist thought.”⁵⁰

Lenin converged with Trotsky’s theory⁵¹ from his own theory. In the *April Theses*, the historical program of the “turning point”, Lenin started from the “conclusion of the bourgeois phase of the revolution”. If what had prevented the proletariat from seizing power in February 1917 was only its insufficient consciousness and organization, this meant that there was no such thing as a “national revolution” separated by a historical stage from the proletarian revolution. Bolshevism was therefore the political instrument of the “second stage” of the revolution. It was Trotsky, in *The Lessons of October* (1924), who made the critical necrological assessment of the Leninist formula of “democratic dictatorship”: “Entirely revolutionary and profoundly dynamic, Lenin’s approach to the problem was radically opposed to the Menshevik system, according to which Russia could only claim to repeat the history of the advanced peoples, with the bourgeoisie in power and the Social Democracy in opposition. However, in Lenin’s formula, certain circles in our party did not emphasize the word ‘dictatorship’, but the word ‘democratic’, as opposed to the word ‘socialist’. This would mean that in Russia, a backward country, only the democratic revolution was conceived. The socialist revolution had to begin in the West and we could only join the current of socialism by following England, France and Germany.”

The “programmatic turn” of Bolshevism was clear in the assessment made by Lenin himself, a few years after the October 1917 victory: “In order to consolidate for the peoples of Russia the achievements of the bourgeois-democratic revolution, we had to go further, and so we did. We solved the problems of the bourgeois-democratic revolution in the course of the process, as a ‘by-product’ of our fundamental and genuinely *proletarian*, revolutionary socialist activities. We have always said that

49 Karl Radek. *The Routes and Driving Forces of the Russian Revolution*. Madrid, Akal, 1976.

50 At a conference in Copenhagen in 1932, Trotsky summarized the history of the workers’ party in Russia: “In 1903 the split between the Mensheviks and the Bolsheviks took place. In 1912 the Bolshevik fraction definitely became an independent party. For twelve years (1905-1917) it taught us to recognize the class mechanics of society in struggles and great events. It educated cadres capable of both initiative and discipline. The discipline of revolutionary action was based on the unity of doctrine, the traditions of common struggles and trust in an experienced leadership. This is what the party was like in 1917. While official ‘public opinion’ and the tons of paper in the intellectual press despised it, the party oriented itself according to the course of the mass movement. The formidable lever that this party wielded firmly was introduced into the factories and regiments. The peasant masses were increasingly turning to it. If the nation is understood to mean not the privileged, but the majority of the people, that is, the workers and peasants, Bolshevism became, in the course of 1917, the truly national Russian party.”

51 This is what Abraham Joffé, the Soviet leader who committed suicide in June 1927, in the midst of the rise of Stalinism, said in his farewell letter: “For more than twenty years we have fought together, since the permanent revolution. But I have always thought that you lacked the inflexibility, the intransigence of Lenin, his resolution to stand alone, if necessary, in his position, foreseeing the future majority, when everyone had recognized the correctness of the path he had chosen. You were always right politically, and I have already said that I heard Lenin recognize several times that in 1905 it was not he, but you, who was right.”

democratic reforms - we have said it and demonstrated it with the facts - are a by-product of the proletarian revolution, that is, the socialist revolution. This is the relationship between the bourgeois-democratic revolution and the proletarian socialist revolution: the former becomes the latter. The latter solves the problems of the former in passing. The second consolidates the work of the first. The struggle, and only the struggle, determines the extent to which the latter manages to impose itself on the former.”⁵² The “new Bolshevism” dominated the Congress (August 1917), which materialized the fusion and was chaired by Lenin and Trotsky (absent due to the July repression), the latter being elected to the CC with 131 out of a possible 134 votes.

The entry of Trotsky and his supporters, as well as other groups, was decisive in bringing about the “historic turning point” in Bolshevism, which took on its definitive name of *Communist Party*. The political convergence took place at a time when, according to the Menshevik memoirist Sukhanov, “the masses lived and breathed with the Bolsheviks, they were entirely in the hands of the party of Lenin and Trotsky”.⁵³ Reflecting back, Trotsky recalled that: “There were violent clashes between Lenin and me, because in cases where I was in disagreement with him on a serious issue, I carried the fight through to the end. These cases, of course, are recorded in all the memoirs, and the epigones wrote a lot about them later. But there are a hundred times more cases where we understood each other with half a word, and where our solidarity ensured that the issue passed in the Politburo without debate. Lenin greatly appreciated this solidarity.”⁵⁴

Once the revolution was victorious, Bolshevism was not the “sole party of the revolution”, due to specific circumstances (a bloody civil war, sustained by the intervention of 14 foreign powers, and the country’s international isolation). During the October Revolution, four anarchists were members of the Revolutionary Military Committee. An anarchist sailor from Kronstadt led the delegation that dissolved the Constituent Assembly. At the same time, however, Bolshevik hegemony was clear. Factory committees sprang up everywhere, quickly became strong and were dominated by the Bolsheviks. From October 30 to November 4, the first Russian Conference of Factory Committees was held in Petrograd, where 96 of the 167 delegates were Bolsheviks.⁵⁵ Even so, “during the first week of December 1917 there were some demonstrations in favor of the Constituent Assembly, that is, against the power of the Soviets. Irresponsible Red Guards then shot at one of the processions and killed some people. The reaction to this stupid violence was immediate: ***within twelve hours, the constitution of the Petrograd Soviet was changed***; more than a dozen Bolshevik deputies were dismissed and replaced by Mensheviks... Despite

52 V. I. Lenin. *Obras Completas*. Vol. XXXV, Buenos Aires, Cartago, 1968.

53 Nikolai N. Sukhanov. *The Russian Revolution 1917*. A personal record. New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1984.

54 For Jean-Jacques Marie (*Stalin*. Paris, Seuil, 1967), even when “Lenin requests (in his *Testament*) that Stalin be eliminated from the post of General Secretary, he is only questioning his character, not his value”.

55 Y. M. Gorodetsky. *The Bolshevik Revolution*. In: AAVV. *História do Século XX*, São Paulo, Abril Cultural, 1976.

this, it took three weeks to calm public resentment and allow the Bolsheviks to be recalled and reinstated.”⁵⁶

Trotsky was explicit in recognizing the superiority of Lenin’s role in the revolution: “If I had not been in Petersburg in 1917, the October Revolution would have happened in the same way - **conditioned by Lenin’s presence and direction**. If neither Lenin nor I had been in Petersburg, there would have been no October Revolution: the leadership of the Bolshevik Party would have prevented it from happening... If Lenin had not been in Petersburg, there would have been no chance of me getting the Bolshevik top brass to resist. The struggle against ‘Trotskyism’ (that is, against the proletarian revolution) would have been open from May 1917, and the outcome of the revolution would have been a question mark. But, I repeat, with Lenin present, the October Revolution would have achieved victory anyway. The same can be said, in short, of the civil war.”⁵⁷ Regarding the party, Trotsky referred to the old organizational questions in terms that echoed, almost point by point, the terms Lenin had used to criticize it three decades earlier: “The leadership is not a simple ‘reflection’ of a class, or the product of its free creation. Leadership is forged in the process of clashes between the different layers of a given class. Once it has assumed its role, the leadership rises above its class and is exposed to the pressure and influence of other classes... A very important factor in the maturity of the Russian proletariat in 1917 was Lenin, who did not fall from the sky. He embodied the revolutionary tradition of the working class. In order for his postulates to make their way among the masses, there had to be cadres, albeit limited ones; there had to be the confidence of the cadres in his leadership, a confidence based on all past experience.”⁵⁸

Bolshevism was not just the product of a group of individuals, their political and ideological struggles, but of the history of the workers’ movement and the revolution, through a gigantic clash of ideas, programmes, tactics, organizations and men. In the early years of the revolution, Bolshevism had no problem admitting its 1917 turnaround, as demonstrated by an article by Molotov (later Stalin’s apparatchik in the highest state positions) from 1924: “It must be said openly: the party had neither the clarity of vision nor the spirit of decision required by the revolutionary moment. It did not have them because it did not have a clear attitude or orientation towards the socialist revolution. In general, the agitation and the whole practice of the revolutionary party lacked a solid foundation, since thought had not yet advanced to the bold conclusion of the need for an immediate struggle for socialism and socialist revolution.”⁵⁹

The victory of the Soviet revolution meant the shipwreck of all the parties that had bet against absolutism on bourgeois regimes, from a constitutional monarchy (the constitutional party, Kadets) to a parliamentary democracy (almost all the socialist parties, with the exception of Bolshevism). It was above all from Lenin that efforts

56 John Reed. *Ten Days that Shook the World*. São Paulo, Companhia das Letras, 2010.

57 Leon Trotsky. *Diary of Exile*. São Paulo, Edições Populares, 1980.

58 Leon Trotsky. *Class, Party and Direction*. Buenos Aires, El Yunque, 1974 [1940].

59 In: Ernest Mandel. *On the History of the Workers’ Movement*. Barcelona, Fontamara, 1978.

were made to preserve a multi-party political framework in these conditions. In an unstable framework, an olive branch was extended to the socialist parties excluded from power. The Mensheviks held a five-day conference in Moscow at the end of October 1918. The outbreak of civil war and the threat to the Soviet regime led them down the path of compromise. The conference adopted a series of theses and resolutions recognizing the October Revolution as “historically necessary” and as “a gigantic ferment that had set the whole world in motion”, renouncing “all political cooperation with classes hostile to democracy”. Attempts to collaborate with the anarchists (whom Lenin went so far as to define as “our best allies”, going so far as to have a friendly meeting with their famous Ukrainian leader Nestor Makhno) collapsed amidst the events of the civil war, which saw violent clashes between the Red Army and the Ukrainian “Black Army”.

The policy of conciliation did not stand the test of events, against a backdrop of internal counter-revolution and external intervention, both violent. The civil war first transformed the Bolsheviks into a “single ruling party”, with the attempt by the Left SRs (Revolutionary Socialists), who were part of the Soviet government, against Lenin (although Fanny Kaplan, the perpetrator, insisted that she had acted on her own) and the murders of Uritsky and Volodarsky, Bolshevik leaders: “The events of the summer of 1918 left the Bolsheviks without rivals or comrades as the dominant party in the state; and they possessed in the Tcheka an absolute organ of power. There remained, however, a strong reluctance to use this power without restriction. The time had not yet come for the final extinction of the excluded parties. Terror was at this time a capricious instrument and it was normal to find parties against which the most violent anathemas had been pronounced and the most drastic measures taken, continuing to survive and enjoying tolerance. One of the first decrees of the new regime had authorized the Sovnarkom to close down all newspapers that preached ‘open resistance or disobedience to the Workers’ and Peasants’ Government’ and the bourgeois press ceased to exist. The Petrograd Menshevik newspaper, *Novyi Luch*, was suppressed in February 1918 for its campaign of opposition to the Brest-Litovsk treaty. Nevertheless, it reappeared in Moscow in April under the name *Vperiod* and continued its career for some time without interference. Anarchist newspapers were published in Moscow long after the Tcheka’s action against the anarchists in April 1918.”⁶⁰ The civil war swept away all the compromises between Bolshevism and its political opposition.

Lenin was opposed to considering this situation as ideal, and evolved in his assessment of the nature of the Soviet power established in Russia. In 1918, he wrote: “The struggle against the bureaucratic deformation of the Soviet organization is guaranteed by the solidity of the links between the Soviets and the people, by the flexibility and elasticity of these links. The poor never regard bourgeois parliaments as their own institutions, even in the most democratic capitalist republic in the world. The Soviets, on the contrary, are their institutions, not alien to the masses of workers and peasants.”⁶¹ As early as 1921, in the course of the polemic on the trade

60 Edward H. Carr. *The Bolshevik Revolution 1917 - 1923*. Lisbon, Afrontamento, 1977, vol. 1.

61 V. I. Lenin Six Theses on the Immediate Tasks of Soviet Power (March 1918). <https://www.>

unions, Lenin referred to the Soviet state as “a workers’ state with the peculiarity that in the country not the worker population predominates, but the peasant population, and secondly, a workers’ state with a bureaucratic deformation”.⁶² The transition from deformation to bureaucratic degeneration was a political and social process, summarized by Christian Rakovsky: “The situation of a class that struggles for power and that of a class that holds power is different [...] when a class takes power, part of it becomes an agent of that power. In a socialist state, where capitalist accumulation is forbidden, this difference starts out being functional, and then becomes social.”⁶³

Five years after the October Revolution, the isolation of the revolution, the economic hardship, the fatigue of the masses and the emptying of the Soviets were inevitably accompanied by the differentiation of a privileged bureaucratic layer in the party, which was then the only party in the state. The struggle against the bureaucratization of the state and the party was also “Lenin’s last [and unsuccessful] fight”.⁶⁴ In the crisis provoked by the Georgian national question (against the chauvinist Great-Russian policy of the nascent bureaucracy, and Stalin in particular, who was Georgian himself) and in Lenin’s political will (which proposed the removal of Stalin from the post of general secretary of the party), the main lines of this struggle were revealed. Trotsky agreed to form a political bloc with Lenin against bureaucratization, which did not mean that this bloc was guaranteed victory in advance, given the weight of the prestige of both leaders.⁶⁵

In his autobiography, Trotsky wrote: “Only Lenin and I knew about the idea of forming a Lenin-Trotsky ‘bloc’ against the bureaucracy. The other members of the Political Bureau had only vague suspicions. Nobody knew anything about Lenin’s letters on the national question or the *Testament*. If I had started acting, they might have said that I was starting a personal struggle to take Lenin’s place. I couldn’t think about it without shivering. I thought that, even if I won, the end result would be such a demoralization for me that it would cost me dearly. There was one element of uncertainty in all the calculations: Lenin himself and his state of health. Will he be able to express his opinion? Will he have time to do so? Will the party understand that Lenin and Trotsky are fighting for the future of the revolution, and not that Trotsky is fighting for the position of the sick Lenin? The provisional situation continued. But procrastination favored the usurpers, because Stalin, as general secretary, naturally ran the entire state machine during the interregnum.”

Lenin tried to make his break with Stalin public in the last days of 1922, shortly before he was sidelined by illness. As Commissar of Nationalities, Stalin had imposed a submissive government on Georgia *manu militari*, invading it in

[marxists.org/portugues/lenin/1918/04/26.htm](https://www.marxists.org/portugues/lenin/1918/04/26.htm)

62 V. I. Lenin. La crisis del partido (January 19, 1921). *Obras Completas*, vol.32, Moscow, Progreso, 1983.

63 Christian Rakovsky. The professional dangers of power (August 1928). Translation: Marcio Lauria Monteiro <https://www.marxists.org/portugues/rakovski/1928/08/06.htm>

64 Moshe Lewin. *Le Dernier Combat de Lénine*. Paris, Minuit, 1980.

65 V. V. Juravlev and N. A. Nenakorov. Trotsky and the Georgian Affair. *Cahiers Léon Trotsky* n° 41, Paris, March 1990.

February 1921 and ousting the Menshevik government headed by Noah Jordan, not only against the will of the majority of the population, but also of the Georgian Bolsheviks. Lenin said in a “Letter to Congress”: “I think that, in this episode, Stalin’s impatience and his taste for administrative coercion, as well as his hatred of the famous ‘social chauvinism’, exerted a fatal influence. The influence of hatred on politics in general is extremely harmful. Our case, that of our relations with Georgia, is a typical example of the need to use the utmost prudence and show a conciliatory and tolerant spirit if we want to resolve the issue in an authentically proletarian way.” And, referring directly to Stalin: “The Georgian who is dismissive of this aspect of the problem, who shamelessly hurls accusations of social-nationalism (when he himself is an authentic social-nationalist and also a vulgar, Great-Russian executioner), this Georgian, in fact, violates the interests of proletarian class solidarity. Stalin and [Felix] Dzerzhinsky [creator and head of the Tcheka] must be held politically responsible for this campaign.” The Georgian question signaled the transformation of the USSR, created in 1922, from a project of a free federation of socialist republics (with the explicit right to secede) into a “prison of peoples”, which would explode 70 years later.

Lenin died in January 1924, after a year of increasing health complications - partly due to the attempt on his life in 1919 - and almost total withdrawal from active politics. In the last months of his life, his concerns, recorded in his “Testament”, caused embarrassment when read out to the Central Committee; the meeting on the eve of the 13th Congress that decided not to remove Stalin also decided to release the document to only a few delegates. A series of provocations and insults against Trotsky followed, tending to polarize the political scene: the aim was to propose an incompatibility between “Leninism” and “Trotskyism”. With Lenin’s death, Stalin quickly presented himself as the legitimate heir to this “Leninism”, defined as a set of vaguely defined but infallible doctrines that would distinguish the party’s “official line” from the “heresies” of its critics. The open and changing thinking of a revolutionary method was transformed into the closed and immutable system of a conservative and counter-revolutionary interest.

The adjective (“*Leninist* theory of...”) was replaced by the noun (Leninism) first used against Trotsky and the Left Opposition (created at the end of 1923) and then as the official doctrine of the USSR and the Communist International. Within a few years, the high priest of the new single system of “thought” and, above all, political coercion naturally added “Stalinism” to the doctrinal canon of the new Holy Scriptures. The enemy of all definitive schemes and ideas, Lenin, was misrepresented and presented as the founding father of the Great Definitive Scheme, while his body was obscenely embalmed as a religious relic for public display, a fact that survives to this day. The communist parties were “Bolshevized”, bureaucratically disciplined, to be transformed into an apparatus for integrating the new bureaucracy into the world order, which precipitated the world once again into a scenario dominated by inter-imperialist contradictions that led to the greatest catastrophe in human history.

Endeavored in a “socialist world” with feet of clay, the figure of Lenin was qualified, after the end of that “world”, as the greatest villain in human history, by

Revolutionary Marxism 2024

publicists recruited from the ranks of the old deifiers, recycled into representatives of a hysterical anti-communism by the ideologues of a self-confident capitalism, more savage than ever. As this self-confidence melts away in the light of capital's historic crisis, Lenin's trajectory re-emerges, a hundred years later, in its true dimension: not that of the creation of an "ism" for consumption and legitimization of conservative "left" sects, but that of an unavoidable moment of critical-dialectical thinking, the only basis for revolutionary action, against a world in which the ever-increasing unfolding of barbarism, neoliberal, fundamentalist, eco-destructive and neofascist, only leaves socialism as a viable alternative for the survival of humanity. In this historical context of ours, it is necessary to unpack Lenin's thought and action as an exemplary moment, which has not yet been surpassed, in the transformation of revolutionary ideas into material force.

The dialectics of proletarian revolution and the creation of the union of Europe and Asia Soviet republics

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The preparation and all processes of the October Revolution were themselves one superlative example of Marxist dialectics: The change of the tactics, peaceful or armed seizure of power; The promotion, removal and new promotion of the slogan “All power to the Soviets!”; The realization of the idea of breaking the imperialist chain in its most weak link, when backwardness of Tsarist Russia by the presence of powerful proletarian movement and its Party became the precondition of the first episode of the world socialist revolution; The tactics skill in the liquidation of the bourgeois Temporary government, beginning from “today is still early but the day after tomorrow will be too late”; Allotment; Civil war; Brest-Litovsk peace and the triumph of this, at the beginning, debatable idea. Lenin – the brilliant leader, more –the creator of the Great Revolution ideology. And all principled solutions which was taken during its realization are shining examples of practical dialectics. It is striking that no one but J. Stalin had convincingly shown this in his work “October Overturn” published in the newspaper *Pravda* on November 6, 1918, on the first

page, for the first anniversary of the Revolution. He wrote there: “Vladimir Ilyich Lenin led the movement the day before he came from the secret apartment into Smolny”. And in that article Stalin showed the prominent role of L.D. Trotsky in a grandiose epic: “Party must know that for the transition of the garrison on the uprising side and for skillful leadership over the work of the Military-revolution Committee it obliged chiefly and primarily to comrade Trotsky.” After splendidly conducting the act of taking power, the main act of the October Revolution, Lenin was most of all anxious about the problem of keeping power. The uprisings in Europe, one after another, endured defeats. Not only to retain power but also to ensure the creation of the foundations of socialism, the new economic policy (NEP) was called upon - another vivid example of Lenin’s dialectic. Next, Lenin puts forward the task of an anti-imperialist alliance with national liberation movements. Lenin was the creator and leader of the Communist International, which implemented this strategy in the 1920s and 1930s.

According to Marx (*Critique of the Gotha Program*), after the departure of capitalism from the historical scene, the era of a classless society begins – communism with a preliminary phase – socialism. During this long-developing phase, “*the management of people gradually gives way to the management of things and production (technological) processes*”

But not only Marx, it is unlikely that Lenin could have imagined that there would be a situation of long-term coexistence of socialism in different countries with different national characteristics (China, Cuba, Vietnam, North Korea) and capitalism persisting on the world stage, or imperialism that had lost its colonies.

The Soviet Union collapsed, unable to withstand the bureaucratic-bourgeois degeneration of the ruling party, whose leadership ignored Lenin’s warnings of threatening dangers. But the revolutionary Red Banner continues to fly over our planet. Cuba has survived, preserving the spirit of struggle that possessed Fidel and Raul Castro and their heroic associate Che Guevara. And Cuba, being literally in the underbelly of the main imperialism in the world, the United States, assumes the responsibility of being one of the centers of the international communist movement (for example, the meeting of Communist party delegations in Havana in 2022). And, of course, the influence of socialist Cuba is undoubtedly on the unprecedented left turn of the vast majority of the Caribbean-Latin American countries.

The world has been living without the Soviet Union already for 32 years. But the red fist of China, which has become the second economy in the world with an amazing growth rate, is raised high. China, like Vietnam, have become a powerful center of attraction for workings and leftist political forces in Asia, Africa and the Pacific and Indian Ocean islands. Lenin’s ideas are not a thing of the past, they inspire today in the struggle for a socialist future.

Contribution to Lenin 100 Conference

Daria Mitina (United Communist Party-OKP
Russian Federation)

First of all, let me salute you all. It is unbearable for me to know that we are now meeting without Alexander Vladimirovitch Buzgalin. Usually, he called himself a Marxist, but he was a Leninist at the same time, of course.

This year, 2024, is the centenary of the death of Vladimir Ilyich Lenin. In fact, the entire century since the victory of the Great October of 1917 has passed under the sign of V. I. Lenin and Leninism and at the same time in a bitter struggle against them by the forces of global reaction. Very often, these commemorations are intended to awaken the memory of certain personalities of the past who, although they have left their mark on history, have long since lost their relevance to the present. Such a fate befell many famous heroes of that time; the Tsarist nobles, civil servants, Duma party leaders and even the entire cabinet of ministers of the Provisional Government of post-imperial Russia; many of V. I. Lenin's contemporaries, but not himself.

After the temporary retreat of the system of socialism around the world and the victory of the counter-revolutionary Black October 1993 in Russia itself, there was not a day that went by when all the reactionary offshoots, from clueless liberal-fundamentalists to outright neo-Nazis who joined them on the basis of anti-communism, did not try to overturn Lenin's ideological and political legacy and

even uproot any mention of him. From the toponymy of Russian localities to his historic burial in the heart of the Russian capital. Over the past thirty years, dozens of adventurers and political passers-by have made and continue to make dubious names for themselves in the ostentatious “fight” against the world-famous Lenin Mausoleum.

At the same time, the works of Lenin and Marx still rank first in the world among translated literature.

In Russia, in 1991, there were around 7,000 monuments to Lenin, today approximately 6,000 remain. The Russian people have not succumbed to the mad wave of decommunization that Yeltsin and Yeltsinists tried to initiate. Monuments have been preserved in almost every capital city of regions in the Russian Federation, with the exception of Grozny (in Grozny, Lenin [monument] was demolished in the early 1990s), in the vast majority of regional centers and in many small towns and townships. In Moscow, over 100 monuments have been preserved, in St. Petersburg, over 50 monuments to Lenin. In 2020, on the initiative of the OKP, United Communist Party of Russia, my party, a mobile detachment was created to combat decommunization. We succeeded in protecting several monuments to Lenin, Dzerzhinsky and other revolutionaries from demolition in several cities.

In recent years, several monuments to Lenin have been built thanks to the efforts of the left-wing public, thanks to communists, thanks to socialists, overcoming resistance from the authorities.

But it's not just a question of monument-related propaganda. In today's Russia, the authorities are doing everything they can to belittle Lenin's role, cover the mausoleum, distort the history of the Leninist struggle and denigrate it. We know that President Putin regularly repeats the absolutely false and anti-historical thesis that Lenin “planted a bomb under Russia”, thus transforming the creator into a destroyer, the uniter of land into an enemy of its integrity.

The undisputed record-holder certainly, more in terms of degradation and extinction, is the former Soviet Ukraine, formerly Soviet, which has distinguished itself in the field of total decommunization. But it would be naive to think that the latter is an exception to the rules. Everywhere the vector of social development follows the line of negation of Lenin and Leninism. The most reactionary forces gain the upper hand and the most backward forms of social relations triumph. As a result, even a quarter of a century after the violent suppression of the Soviet project, none, none, of the former republics of the USSR reached the level of development of 1991.

That's why, the more obvious the historical impasse in which humanity has found itself in the face of socialism's retreat becomes to contemporaries, the more the campaign to denigrate the luminous image of V. I. Lenin, a brilliant materialist scientist, an outstanding creative revolutionary, founder of a fundamentally new state of the majority in the form of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic.

As far as Russia itself is concerned, everything that's happening here today, the savage social stratification, the domination of the corrupt bureaucracy, the disregard for all democratic foundations, including federated principles, etc., is a direct consequence of the tragic apostasy. This is the result of the departure of our country

from Lenin's fundamental project and the dismantlement of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic. All this is a direct consequence of the tragic apostasy: our country's departure from Lenin's fundamental project and the dismantlement of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic. In fact, many of the most notorious "atomic bombs" or "mines" were laid at the foundation of today's Russian Federation. But not by V. I. Lenin and the Soviet project, but precisely by those who first transformed the largest republic of the USSR into a colonial appendage of the world of capitalist predators, and today, with the same foolish obstinacy, dream of a special salvific "third way." To keep the spoils and stay in the same campaign with those same predators, but only on an equal footing. However, such a path is a dead end and profoundly hostile to the interests of the vast majority, to the interests of labouring Russia, of working-class Russia.

In paying tribute to the memory of the immortal leader and teacher of all working-class humankind, we are convinced that the best monument to Lenin, both a hundred years ago and now, will be the work of communists to popularize Lenin's multifaceted scientific and practical heritage, which is still for us a proven ideological and political reference. Not a dogma, but an effective scientific method aimed at the revolutionary reorganization of reality. The construction of a new reality, of which Vladimir Ilyich Lenin himself providentially declared: "If the workers and peasants have learned, felt and seen that they are defending their Soviet power, the power of the workers, who are defending the cause whose victory for them and their children will enable them to enjoy all the advantages of culture, of all the creatures of human labor, that people will never be defeated."

With Lenin and Leninism, we shall triumph!

Thank you for your attention, dear comrades.

I returned from Cuba this morning,
On a square in Cuba, six million people white and black and
yellow and mestizo are planting a luminous seed, the seed of seeds
laughing and dancing
Can you paint the picture of happiness, Abidin?
But without taking the easy way
Not the picture of an angelic mother nursing her rosy-cheeked
baby
Nor of apples on top of a white cloth
Nor of a red fish darting through water bubbles in an aquarium
Can you paint the picture of happiness, Abidin?

Excerpt from Nazım Hikmet's poem, *Hay-Yellow*

The revolution of Lenin and its urgency

Mikhail B. Konashev (Association 'Soviet Union'-Russian Federation)

It is natural that in Russian mass media Lenin is described and evaluated mainly as negative figure in the history of Russia as well of the whole world. It is also natural that Putin too evaluated Lenin regularly in the same way and had no one positive word for him. Let me cite the most demonstrative of Putin's statements on Lenin.

On January 21, 2016, at a meeting of the Presidential Council for Science and Education, Putin said: *"To control the flow of thought is the right thing, it is only necessary that this thought leads to the right results, and not like Vladimir Ilyich's. Otherwise, in the end, this thought led to the collapse of the Soviet Union, that's what. There were a lot of thoughts like this: autonomy and so on. They put an atomic bomb under a building called Russia, and then it exploded. And we did not need a world revolution"*. In 2022 he added:

"As a result of the Bolshevik policy, Soviet Ukraine arose, which today can be rightfully called the Ukraine named after Vladimir Ilyich Lenin. He is its author and architect. This is fully confirmed by archival documents, including Lenin's directives on Donbass, which was literally squeezed into Ukraine".

Besides Putin openly named the key purpose of his own policy:

“Now grateful descendants have demolished monuments to Lenin in Ukraine. They call this decommunization. Do you want to decommunize? Well, that’s fine with us. But you do not have to stop halfway. We are ready to show you what real decommunization means for Ukraine”.

It can seem unnatural that some people who call themselves Marxists criticized permanently Lenin and had found serious mistakes in his activity as a politician and a theorist, a thinker. For instance, one of the relatively positive articles devoted to Lenin was entitled “Lenin’s fruitful mistakes.” The author of this article published in 1999 in so called patriotic journal *Nash sovremennik* - which means “Our contemporary” - was Sergey Georgievich Kara-Murza, publicist, author of works on the history of the USSR, sociologist, political scientist, Doctor of Chemical Sciences, Professor, Chief Researcher at the Institute of Socio-Political Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences. According to Wikipedia, he is a supporter of the “Soviet project.” A representative of left-wing patriotic thought, a defender of the ideals of collectivism, “traditional” ideocratic society and rational thinking. In general, Kara-Murza has a positive attitude toward the historical experience of the USSR, criticizing Marxism from positions close to Antonio Gramsci and populism. However, in 2007 he published an article in the *Russian Journal* “Hope for a third term. Putin’s Plan”, in which he stated that Vladimir Putin, despite a number of unresolved problems, “has become a symbol of Russia and fulfilled the mission necessary to save the country. Because of this, he became one of the historically significant politicians worthy of memory and respect.”

However such a strange attitude is also natural although marginal in all senses because this attitude is natural as an objective result of the destruction of the Soviet Union. The general or usual main reasons for their position are personal ambitions in connection with personal failure to reach any public recognition in Soviet times. However many famous authors also states that Lenin was a politician, at last a revolutionist but he was not a philosopher at all. This is a very wrong statement.

Lenin surely was not a philosopher in a traditional or a bourgeois understanding. But without any doubt he was just an original and profound philosopher, and precisely a Marxist philosopher, a disciple and follower of Marx. Why so? Because Marxism is not only philosophy, or political economy, or the theory of revolution, and even not only the whole of these three main organic parts of theoretical or philosophical unity. Marxism is also and first of all the organic unity of revolutionary thinking including philosophical thinking with revolutionary practice. That is why Lenin is a truly holistic, harmonious and at the same time contradictory embodiment of this unity of revolutionary theory and revolutionary practice. Unity, which is in a constant process of revolutionary origin and development, its critical renewal.

This revolutionary unity is not understood by critics of Lenin including so called Marxist critics of him. We need this unity and we need such a revolutionary Lenin just now and in near future. We also need a new revolutionary politician like Lenin with Lenin’s key traits.

He invariably kept his finger on the pulse of life, on the pulse of the rapidly rushing and menacing stream of history, and, in particular, on the pulse of the revolution. He spoke to everyone in their language, both with a peasant from a

distant province, and with a worker from the Putilov factory, and with a refined intellectual. He understood everyone and everyone understood him. Everyone who was a person, who was a worker, who brought benefit not only to himself and not so much to himself as to other people with his work, his actions, his creativity. And he certainly brought it to them himself.

The purpose of Lenin and that revolution, which became his life's work, so that his enemies, slanderers and haters would not invent there, was the liberation of man – the liberation of the proletariat, all workers and all mankind. He dreamed of a revolution, predicted a revolution, prepared a revolution and accomplished it together with those who, according to Marx, were supposed to accomplish it. All those who accomplished the revolution, and he along with them, fulfilled their vocation and destiny. He was a true liberator, from a cohort of the best, great people, dreamers, thinkers and accomplices, true humanists. He was the very thought and the very action, a thinker and a figure of a global, universal scale. A materialist. A dialectician. An optimist. The poetic metaphor “he turned over hundreds of provinces” is not hyperbole, but an expression of the essence of his thoughts and actions. In a sense, he was a premature man, a man of the future, who lived for the future and for the sake of this future – a truly bright future for all mankind.

Thus, he saved Russia and guided it along the only path that only gave the country the possibility of existence, the possibility of a future, and a true and humane future – the future of Russia and the whole world. He did everything he could for this, everything in humanly possible, but also everything that seemed to be beyond human strength; he accomplished the impossible. He has given immeasurably much to all the peoples of Russia. He does not need to be compared with Christ, not with the ecclesiastical, magnificent one, but with the one who was a revolutionary in religious clothes. But he really came to give people a new world and a new person, and not after a thousand years, and he gave this new world. His world. The very world in which, as he claimed after Karl Marx, there would be neither the poor nor the rich, neither the humiliated nor the insulted, where universal liberation would take place and universal freedom, equality and fraternity would come.

At the same time, he was not only a genuine Russian and a genuine European, but also a real universal, all-human person. Absorbed all the best that humanity has developed, and that, in his own words, only allows a person to become a communist, that is, a real person, a reasonable, creative and humane person, *Homo sapiens, creatrix et humanus*. This is all the man about whom Fedor Mikhailovich Dostoevsky spoke inspiringly and visionarily in his famous speech about Alexander Sergeevich Pushkin. He himself would not object to the fact that what he did, his role in history was evaluated in the same way as he proposed to evaluate the role in the history of others: “Historical merits are judged not by what historical figures did not give in comparison with modern requirements, but by what they gave new in comparison with their predecessors”. His key role in the history of Russia and his global importance in history is irrefutable, recognized by everyone, including his enemies”.

It was precisely such a revolutionary, someone who was so missed in the USSR and in the world in the 1930s and all subsequent years, especially in the 1960s,

when there was still a chance to save and develop the revolution in the USSR, Lenin was perceived and understood in the Soviet Union by all thinking, searching, conscientious people, especially revolutionaries even if they were revolutionaries in their hearts, in their thoughts, and very little, sometimes negligibly little, in their actions. That's how we all love and need him. He is our Lenin, he is my Lenin, and he will always be like that. And he is highly relevant in modern Russia and around the world.

Someone may doubt, lose faith, lose their bearings, stumble and give up, finally give up. But Lenin continues to fight, and he will win. Indeed, the wheel of history cannot be turned back, and it is rolling, albeit in zigzags, albeit with delays, with reversals, along the road that Lenin entered and which the Russian proletariat and the working people of other countries entered with him. Sooner or later, this road will lead to a new human world anyway, and then the prehistory of mankind will really end and its genuine human and human history will begin. It will begin because it already began in 1917 and he, Lenin, stood at the beginning of this story, but the revolution has not ended and the main battles are still ahead.

This Lenin's path is difficult and thorny, but we must go through it. Therefore it is best to end with the lines from the famous Vladimir Mayakovsky's poem *Vladimir Ilyich Lenin*: ***“Lenin is now more alive than all the living. Our banner - strength and weapons!”***

Understand the new world and act

David Epstein

Let me first of all thank the organizers of this wonderful conference for allowing me make a presentation. This is a great honor for me.

The topic of my report is: To understand the new world and act!

Remembering Lenin, we cannot but admire his purposefulness, determination, and consistency. Having embarked on the path of struggle against Tsarism already at the university, and then, having entered the highway of revolutionary Marxism and the creation of the revolutionary party in 1895, Lenin never left this path. Moreover, he was constantly developing the theory and tactics of the revolutionary struggle in Russia, the struggle for socialism, never losing sight of this goal.

One hundred years have passed since the death of Vladimir Il'ich Lenin. The world has changed enormously since then. We would like to follow the basic ideas of Lenin, to correspond to his transformative activities in the history of mankind. What was the main thing in his activities? In our opinion, this is the main thing - this is the greatest devotion in deeds and in thoughts to the advanced social idea (if you like - the paradigm) of our time. This is a humanistic idea of liberating the

working class and all of humanity from exploitation, the idea of building a socially just society with the priority of the interests of workers.

But if the world has changed in a hundred years, it means that we must strive to create an equally substantiated theoretical picture of the new, changed world, trying to further follow the humanistic and active transformative model of Lenin's activity.

We will try to consider the main changes, limiting ourselves, in view of the established regulations, to two questions.

I) changes in the global geopolitical situation,

II) changes in our understanding of socialism and the ways of moving towards it.

I. Changes in the global geopolitical situation

We see that the human world is fundamentally one, thanks to the ever-increasing communication between people, societies, and countries. But today it is split into four camps:

1) USA+, that is, the USA and the countries that clearly follow the instructions of the USA, first of all, these are the NATO and EU countries;

Similarly:

2) Russia+ (part of the former republics of the USSR that support Russia) +;

3) China + Asian socialist countries +,

4) neutral countries.

The root cause of the current division and the changes that have occurred over 100 years is the uneven development inherent in the global economic process, as well as the struggle of geopolitical groupings.

In each of the three camps (let us leave neutral countries for now), there is a hegemon, but the US+ camp is economically the most powerful.

At the same time, the fear of the hegemon (USA) of economic and then military competition remains, imposed on the old aggressive and defensive strategies peculiar to the hegemons for many centuries.

Let us emphasize that these strategies have always worked on the world stage... As soon as states appeared, and perhaps even earlier: we capture weak competitors – we defend ourselves from strong competitors preemptively and we surround them with satellites and bases. This applies to any country and any region and has almost always been the case.

Hence, we have the fear from Russia in the West since the 18th century and earlier. This fear intensified after the end of the Civil War with the victory of the Bolsheviks, and increased by an order of magnitude after the victory of the USSR and its allies over Nazi Germany.

Even after the collapse of the USSR, Russia is large, unpredictable, potentially very strong and dangerous for them.

Today's conflict between the United States and Russia, the United States and China is based on the same nature.

This fear of competitors from the United States, imposed on a rather low rate

of labor productivity growth (in the range of 1.5-2%) and economic growth, is dangerous, since it leads to erroneous and dangerous aggressive economic and geopolitical (military) policies, which we observe in the United States.

Since the early 90s, the United States has repeatedly shown its readiness, without the approval of the UN Security Council, to strike at any regime that pursues its domestic or foreign policy, but is unable to repel armed aggression.

Russia's demand to move the danger away from its borders, that is, not accept Ukraine, which is clearly aggressive, with growing nationalism, joining NATO and involving in the EU, was justified from the point of view of the security of all parties, from the point of view of justice, equality of relations between countries, that is, from the position of socialism (but not in relation to classes, and in relation to countries and peoples). Although, of course, the interests of Russian companies, including state and semi-state ones, were behind this requirement also.

The division of the world by alliances of major imperialist powers was also in the early 20th century, but what are the differences in the current situation?

1) Huge amounts of nuclear weapons have been accumulated, and the threat of a world-wide war is the threat of the destruction of mankind;

2) The imperialist alliances themselves were much weaker 100 years ago, and their military capabilities were generally local, in reality they could not significantly affect all states and the entire globe. There was no total structure covering almost all countries through a system of regional hegemony. There was also no system of containment by one imperialist camp (USA+) of the development of another imperialist camp, a system capable of really and totally restraining the economic development of another country or group of countries.

3) The struggle of the imperialist powers and their alliances in the first quarter of the 20th century was for the colonies, on both sides it was unfair. Today, there may be a right and a guilty side in conflicts associated with a real total deterrence of development, today in geopolitical conflicts there may be an attacking and forcibly defending side.

Therefore, today, in the 21st century, fundamentally new rules are needed, a new international law that would implement the requirements of justice in relation to geopolitics, that is, the requirements of creating conditions for the development of each country. This means that Marxists must put forward their new theory of international development and a new world order, a new international law.

This new theory should reflect and realize the chances for evolutionary development, for development without external interference, to develop ways to guarantee equal and fair treatment of each state, as well as the right to self-defense and protection of the world community from aggression.

That is, it should be a theory of a kind of socialism in relations between countries.

So the task of the Marxists of the 21st century is to study and understand the geopolitical structure of the new world and put forward their principles of equality and justice and their theory of its improvement as socialism in relations between states and peoples.

II. A debate on socialist planning in the 21st century

Here we turn to the second part of our report and to one of the most important problems that Lenin's followers must solve today within their countries. What is socialism today, taking into account the experience of a hundred years?

Socialism can be understood, on the one hand, as what existed in the Soviet Union without significant changes. This is the first variant. There is a second variant - the Soviet Union, but in a corrected democratic version, with self-government of labor collectives and civil society, but without a market and commodity-money relations, as Marx, Engels, Lenin, Kautsky and many other Marxists assumed. May be also democratic socialism with a regulated market. This is the third variant.

But it can also be understood as the movement of society towards greater social justice and solidarity without fixing any ideal models. This is the fourth variant. And between them there may be several intermediate variants. It turns out, essentially, a whole continuum of variants for what socialism is. Which one is correct, scientific? That is, what is socialism?

Let us start with the question of the market. Today, in my opinion, it has been proven practically and theoretically that the idea of Marx and Engels about the destruction of the market and commodity-money relations under socialism turned out to be wrong. I will try to explain this briefly. This is a difficult question, even for many economists.

The economy should produce mainly what the consumer needs. But consumers need a lot of products and in different quantities. But the degree of the need, the severity of the need is different. If there is a market, the consumer, focusing on prices and his budget, chooses for himself what and in what quantity he needs. He compares 1) the importance of this type of product for him with others, 2) its price from different manufacturers with the price of other types of products and their substitutes, 3) the possibilities of his budget. As a result, the consumer chooses and buys exactly what he needs, taking into account the importance of a specific need and other needs, actually paying for it with his own money.

This determines the real demand for each type of product, its quality and its price, which balances supply and demand. Moreover, this ratio is flexible; it changes quickly depending on the time of year, changes in production, the export and delivery of imported products, etc. If this market mechanism does not exist, then the State Planning Committee, without a market and commodity-money relations, must determine what needs to be produced and in what quantity, of what quality, and for each of the hundreds of thousands of enterprises and millions of types of products. But the State Planning Committee only has last year's data on production and sales and new wishes of enterprises that are ready to take more of everything and better quality, since they will receive the necessary budget from the state.

Therefore, in the Soviet Union and other socialist countries there have always been colossal shortages of many types of products, many types of products had low quality, and there were constant queues for shortages. This is an ineradicable planning defect in the absence of a market, when the choice is determined not by the real money of the real buyer, but by the management body. And this fundamental

defect of the absence of a market cannot be corrected by any powerful computer or network of computers, because without a market there is no necessary information for effective planning. It is similar in the field of planning scientific and technological progress. The State Planning Committee can only choose from new technologies already known to it and tested, and the task is to stimulate in the new period the creation and implementation of new technologies that are not yet known to the State Planning Committee.

And finally, one more important, most important factor. In the absence of a market and the prohibition on everyone who wants to be engaged in entrepreneurship and production, only managers of enterprises and research institutes are included in the search for the most effective production options and new types of products and technologies. And if there is a market, millions more people are involved in entrepreneurship and the search for effective options, creating new types of products and new methods of production. Therefore, a market economy can be efficient, but with directive central planning in the absence of a real market, efficiency decreases, each percent of growth costs more and more and growth rates drop to very low and even negative.

This was proven both by the practice of the Soviet Union and the world socialist system, and by the theory that studied the role of economic information generated by the market in optimizing economic development.

In recent decades, there have been attempts to develop effective planning methods that are based on repeated consultations of all possible participants in the economy with everyone - enterprises, producer unions, consumer unions, trade organizations, trade unions, political parties, and the state. But so far no convincing positive result has been obtained. And I doubt that it can be obtained if there is no market in the economy, market prices, freedom of choice for producers and consumers, etc.

How does this affect our understanding of what socialism is? Our previous understanding was that socialism is the system that is required by the new, emerging productive forces today. They already demanded it under Marx, 150 years ago. Socialism directly realizes public interests, that is, the interests of social justice, solidarity, freedom and development. This is directly realized sociality. In this way it fundamentally differs from the existing capitalist system. But the capitalist system also realizes certain interests of society, the interests of economic development and growth, income growth, but it realizes them indirectly, through the market. The market realizes some public interests, but incompletely; it reproduces social inequality and social injustice, monopolism, long-term crises, etc.

But, as we have found out, the direct implementation of social requirements without a market is impossible; it leads to a loss of economic efficiency.

Consequently, it is necessary to supplement the indirect implementation of public interests with direct implementation, that is, public property in various forms and regulation of the market, private property, the entire system of economic relations and planning... On this path, we can achieve a combination of economic efficiency and social justice, creating conditions for the full and comprehensive development of every person and society.

However, the very content of the requirements of social justice and solidarity

Revolutionary Marxism 2024

should not be unchangeable and dogmatic, it should be updated by society taking into account the changes achieved in the productive forces and the requirements for their further development, improvement of education, health, nature protection, development of self-government, etc.

The concept seems attractive. In fact, we have come to the concept of NEP, which was first developed by Lenin as a path to socialism.

But where are the guarantees of victory and preservation of socialism today, and not the victory of capitalist forces, given that NEP means class struggle?

The only guarantee of victory is that in the end it is beneficial to the majority of workers and, even more, it is beneficial to the majority of entrepreneurs, because the socialist state must take care of favorable conditions for entrepreneurs.

But in order to implement such socialism, its unconditional supporters must come to power. The party or parties of supporters of socialism must come to power. That is, it is necessary to mobilize the masses, to attract them to the supporters of socialism. And in order to achieve this, an attractive theoretic example of socialism is needed.

Members of these parties must become tough, demanding supporters of consistent improvements in the direction of human and social development, development that meets the capabilities of nature and the planet, and implements the ideas of social justice, solidarity, freedom, and humanism. And they must lead the masses.

Let me finish my report here.

Thank you for your attention!

Lenin's cultural internationalism

Flo Menezes

One of the striking democratic traits of Lenin's spirit is his notorious discretion in the arts. Unlike authoritarian personalities, who immediately seek to impose their own conception on all fields of human activity, generally without accepting any dissent and directing them towards strengthening their own power – either through themselves or through their agents – an authentic revolutionary leader will always know how to encourage freedom of artistic thought and creation, and when we look at Lenin's attitude towards art throughout his life, this notable difference between the way he saw culture and the truculence that followed him in the bureaucratic command of the Russian Revolution, leading to Stalinist Socialist Realism, mainly formulated and postulated in strict rules of artistic conduct by Andrei Alexandrovich Jdanov, Stalin's close collaborator, stands out. The coercions that many artists suffered under Jdanov, a fact that led such impositions to be categorized as typical of "Jdanovism", in reality loosened not with Jdanov's death in August 1948, but only with the disappearance of Stalin himself in March 1953, which proves the above all *Stalinist* character of Socialist Realism, having generated one of the most embarrassing phases in the arts, such was the low level of the works produced under the tutelage of the Soviet usurper who, paradoxically, used "Leninism" as one of the arguments for maintaining and strengthening his authoritarian power.

The way in which art and culture were treated in the Stalinist era is one of the clearest proofs of how contradictory Stalin's claim to a "Leninist" heritage was, because as Anatoli Lunatcharski, People's Commissar for Education and Culture

after the October Revolution of 1917, rightly said, “throughout his life, Lenin had very little time to devote to art. In this respect, he always confessed to being a layman and, as he always considered dilettantism to be something odious, he didn’t like to give opinions on art” (Lunatcharski 1975, p. 9). It was clear that, for Lenin, art required specific and careful consideration, and serious expression in this regard could only come from people who considered themselves sufficiently competent in artistic languages: “[Lenin] declared that he could not speak seriously about those questions [about art], because he did not consider himself to have the necessary competence” (Lunatcharski 1975, p. 13).¹ From this fundamental attitude, which shows respect and restraint in the face of creation and invention in the arts, comes a logical consequence in keeping with the revolutionary spirit: art and culture should not be imposed by the Revolution, and a revolutionary leader, however much he might naturally have his own predilections, and even if he thought he had the necessary competence to pronounce on art, should not exert any coercion on the artist. And as much as Lenin was the supreme leader of the Russian Revolution, enjoying greater prestige and power than his greatest companion in directing the course of the Revolution, Leon Trotsky, his occasional opinions would never serve as an argument to formulate guidelines to be followed by cultural agents. This fact is proven and reinforced by Lunatcharski himself who, constantly dispatching Lenin on matters related to education and culture and respectfully asking him, quite often, about his opinions on the directions to be adopted in his section, vehemently attests: “Vladimir Ilyich never converted his aesthetic sympathies and antipathies into guiding ideas” (Lunatcharski 1975, p. 15).

Trotsky’s resourcefulness in dealing with artistic issues, and more specifically with literature, the main (but not the only) fruit of which was his volume bringing together essays written mainly between 1922 and 1923 under the title *Literature and Revolution*, leads us to conjecture that there was a certain distinction between Lenin and Trotsky: while the former is characterized, as we have attested above, by a manifest restraint in the face of artistic issues, the latter seemed more involved, resourceful and dedicated to these issues, possessing, it seems, a broader and more critical culture in relation above all to literary works, to the point of manifesting himself through these critical essays that ended up constituting one of the most precious contributions of 20th century Marxism in the field of the arts. Not to mention his later involvement, in the final years of his life (in 1938, to be precise), with one of the main strands of the artistic avant-garde, namely Surrealism – especially as a result of his very friendly relations with the French writer André Breton, one of the movement’s leaders and an avowed Trotskyist –, even if he was equally critical of this current, which Trotsky viewed with a certain amount of caution because he understood that, through the so-called *automatic writing*, Surrealism was perhaps misinterpreting the still emerging Freudian psychoanalysis. This was Trotsky’s reservation about “objective chance”, which had become a sacred principle of the

¹ In an important text from 1932, *On the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Alexandrinsky Theatre*, Lunatcharski reproduces a line that Lenin allegedly addressed to him: “I do not pretend to be an expert in artistic matters” (Lenin *apud* Lunatcharski, 1980, p. 246).

Surrealist movement.²Therefore, this distinction between Lenin and Trotsky seems indisputable to us, i.e., in terms of their involvement with artistic issues and their resourcefulness in this very specific field, but the convergences are no less important. For, in an important text of May 9, 1924, *The Party and the Artists*, Trotsky, in full accordance with Leninian discretion (I prefer this term here to “Leninist”), states:

Yes, we must deal with art as art and literature as literature, in other words, as an entirely specific sector of human activity. We do, of course, have class criteria that also apply to the artistic field, but these class criteria must, in this case, be subjected to a kind of artistic refraction, in other words, they must be adapted to ***the absolutely specific character of the sphere of activity to which we apply them.*** (Trotsky 1973, p. 137; our emphasis)

Trotsky's statement, in the midst of the affirmation phase of the Russian Revolution and already in the process of degeneration – since it dates from four months after Lenin's death – echoes his already visionary formulation of 1910, when, in a text entitled *The Intelligentsia and Socialism*, he stated that

regardless of the class character of any movement (for that is only the way!), and regardless of its current party-political physiognomy (for that is only the means!), socialism, by its very essence, as a universal social ideal, means the liberation of all types of intellectual labor from all social-historical limitations and obstacles. (Trotsky 1973, p. 38)

Now, was not this liberation of intellectual work as one of the fundamental goals of socialism precisely what Lenin wrote as one of his basic precepts in relation to artists? Rosa Luxemburg's great friend Clara Zetkin, in her *Memories of Lenin* (1955), reproduces a statement by Lenin that leaves us in no doubt about this:

In a society based on private property, artists produce goods for the market, they need buyers. Our revolution freed artists from the yoke of such prosaic conditions. It made the Soviet state their defender and their client. ***Every artist, everyone who considers themselves an artist, has the right to create freely according to their ideal, without depending on anything.*** (Lenin *apud* Zetkin, in: Lenin 1980, p. 231; our emphasis)

As we can see, Lenin's stance was not without its contradictions. For in the heat of the moment, he sometimes appealed to Lunatcharski to guide cultural production as *propaganda* for the Revolution.³ Now, if the artist should not “depend on anything”, why should art serve as “propaganda”? The heat of the hours to which

² Breton himself quotes Trotsky in his text about his visit to the revolutionary leader during his exile in Mexico: “Comrade Breton, your interest in the phenomena of objective chance doesn't seem clear to me. I know very well that Engels appealed to this notion, but I wonder if, in your case, there isn't something else. It seems to me that you have some concern to keep – your hands were marking out a fragile space in the air – a little window open to the ***beyond***” (Trotsky *apud* Breton, in: Trotsky & Breton 1985, p. 62; original emphasis).

³ “In 1918 Vladimir Ilyich called me and told me that it was necessary to develop art as a means of propaganda” (Lunatcharski 1975, p. 11).

we refer does not only date back to the October Revolution: as early as the *first*, unsuccessful Russian Revolution of 1905, in a text entitled “The Organization of the Party and Party Literature”, written on November 13 (26)⁴, Lenin even formulates that “publishing houses, stores, bookshops and reading rooms, libraries and other establishments must be Party enterprises, subject to its control” (Lenin 1975, p. 73), a formulation that would fit like a glove in the iron grip of the Jdanovists/Stalinists in their strict and authoritarian control of cultural production.

But even here, contradictions exist and can play a positive role. In the very same text from 1905, Lenin recognized that the Party’s relationship with art could in no way be mechanical, defending the individual freedom of the creator precisely in the field of literature, which, in dealing with words, makes the meaning of its formulations and the ideology of its authors clearer than any other art:

It is indisputable that literature lends itself less than anything else to this mechanical equation, to leveling, to the domination of the majority over the minority. It is indisputable that it is absolutely necessary in this field to give a greater place to personal initiative, to individual inclinations, to thought and imagination, to form and content. All this is indisputable, but all this only proves that the literary sector of the Party’s work cannot be identified mechanically with the other sectors of its work. (Lenin 1975, p. 73)

In any case, the congruence between Lenin and Trotsky manifested itself more and more categorically, not only in practical questions of an eminently political nature, but also ideologically. Maturity also comes to great geniuses, and already in the construction of the socialism that had been victorious until then, both Lenin and Trotsky defended a non-mechanistic relationship between the Party and art, or between Marxism itself and culture, because it was clear to both of them that the methods of art acquire a certain autonomy, differing from the eminently Marxist methods of analysis. This is precisely what Trotsky refers to in his text “Party politics in art”, part of *Literature and Revolution*:

Marxism offers several possibilities: it evaluates the development of the new art, follows all its changes and variations through criticism, encourages progressive currents, but does no more than that. **Art must blaze its own trail. The methods of Marxism are not the same as those of art.** (Trotsky 1980, p. 187; our emphasis)

The fact is that, no matter how much one wants to affirm, in a genuinely Marxist stance, the supervalence of historical factors over individuals, the thesis of a *historical substitutionism*, whereby individuals are seen as essentially weaker than their macro-structural conditions, must be challenged and questioned, because we see that, depending on *who* this or that historical circumstance depends on, the course of events turns out to be completely different. In the oscillations of such formulations on the ambivalent relationship between Party and culture, we see that some of them do not run the risk of becoming authoritarian weapons as long as they are in the hands of individuals of upright character like Lenin, but already in the hands

⁴ The difference in dates refers to the difference between the Western and Russian calendars.

of personalities like Stalin... Lenin certainly wasn't counting on his own death when he insisted on the propagandistic nature of art, because making propaganda for a revolutionary regime is completely different from making propaganda for a despotic regime. If propaganda is necessary, it is only revolutionary if it is "controlled" by revolutionaries, otherwise it becomes a lethal weapon for the Revolution itself!

In this sense, the defense of an *anarchic* condition for artistic creation, absolutely free of all coercion and consequently of all obligation in the face of a presumed and inescapable commitment to ideological propaganda itself, as Trotsky had made a point of stating in the definitive wording of the Manifesto of the International Federation of Independent Revolutionary Artists, founded by him, Breton and Diego Rivera in 1938, is symptomatic. In the provisional draft, written by Breton and Rivera, the statement that emphasizes this precept did not exist, but it is included in the finished text and corrected by Trotsky:

If, for the development of the material productive forces, it is up to the revolution to erect a *socialist* regime with a centralized plan, for intellectual creation it must, right from the start, establish and ensure an *anarchist* regime of individual freedom. (Trotsky & Breton 1985, pp. 42-43)⁵

In a hermeneutic analysis of the origin of this essay, it becomes clear that the insistence and emphasis on the *anarchist* character of artistic creation comes from the hands of Trotsky himself, which at first may seem surprising. How, in the midst of building the Fourth International, could there be any concession to *anarchism* as a concept, even if it was strictly confined to artistic creation? Maturity – as we have already said – also comes to great geniuses...

And another aspect that is no less surprising is precisely the appeal to this concept considered by the supposedly Marxist orthodoxy to be so... bourgeois! In his 1910-1911 essays on Leon Tolstoy, in one of the few digressions that Lenin had made into the realm of art – motivated above all by the death of the great Russian writer – Lenin appealed to the concept of *genius*⁶ that sought to place Tolstoy's personality beyond any thesis of historical substitutionism, attributing to him a unique role in the history of Russian literature: "Leon Tolstoy belongs to an era that was reflected in masterly relief both in his *ingenious* artistic works and in his doctrine, an era that extends from 1861 to 1905" ("Leon Tolstoy and his epoch", essay written on January 22 (February 4), 1911: Lenin 1975, p. 60; our emphasis). The same concept is evoked in an earlier text, dated November 28 (December 11) 1910, entitled "Leon Tolstoy and the contemporary workers' movement":

5 In the original French: "Si, pour le développement des forces productives matérielles, la révolution est tenue d'ériger un régime *socialiste* de plan centralisé, pour la création intellectuelle elle doit dès le début même établir et assurer un régime *anarchiste* de liberté individuelle." ("Pour un art révolutionnaire indépendant" (Manifesto of July 25, 1938), signed by André Breton and Diego Rivera, but also written by Trotsky, in: *Dossier André Breton – Surréalisme et Politique*, Les Cahiers du Musée National d'Art Moderne. Paris: Centre Pompidou, 2016, p. 106).

6 Although I have a basic knowledge of the Russian language, I haven't had access to Lenin's texts in the original Russian, but I'm using the seriousness of the translations I've read (in Spanish, Portuguese...), based on the assumption that Lenin did indeed appeal to the concept of *genius* or *geniality* in its corresponding word in Russian.

Tolstoy's criticism is not new [...]. But the originality of Tolstoy's criticism, its historical importance, lies in the fact that it translates, with a vigor of which only *genius* artists are capable, the transformation of the mentality of the broadest masses of the people of Russia in the period in question, and precisely of rural and peasant Russia. (Lenin 1975, p. 50; our emphasis)

Much more bourgeois (or petty-bourgeois) than evoking the term is ignoring its original meaning, as formulated with great skill by Arthur Schopenhauer. The concept of *geniality* refers to special circumstances in which an individual, acting with high *objectivity* in the face of the facts of his world and its structural orderings, manages to *transcend* the specific historical conditions that surround him and ends up erecting works that manage to be transplanted, with permanent value, to other later eras with the same or perhaps even greater artistic and aesthetic value than at the time they were conceived. For Schopenhauer, it is precisely in Art that *genius* reveals itself in all its fullness:

It is **ART**, the work of genius. It repeats the eternal Ideas apprehended by pure contemplation, the essential and permanent phenomena of the world, which, depending on the form in which it is repeated, is displayed as plastic art, poetry or music. Its only origin is the knowledge of Ideas, its only end is the communication of this knowledge. – Science follows the endless and incessant stream of the various forms from foundation to consequence: from each end achieved, it is thrown forward again, never reaching a final end, or complete satisfaction, just as running can reach the point where the clouds touch the horizon. Art, on the other hand, finds its end everywhere. For the object of its contemplation it removes from the torrent of the world's course and isolates it before itself. And this particular, which in the fleeting torrent of the world was a tiny part disappearing, becomes a representative of the whole, an equivalent in space and time of the infinite. Art stops at this particular. The wheel of time stops. Relationships disappear. Only the essential, the Idea, is the object of art. (Schopenhauer 2005, pp. 253-254; original emphasis)⁷

In this sense, far from interpreting *geniality* as something of an absolutely *subjective* nature – which would effectively make the concept fit in perfectly with the properly *bourgeois* and above all romantic spirit – the concept is imbued with an *objective* nature, leaning much more towards a *Marxist* interpretation of its meaning:

⁷ Given the importance of the philosophical formulation, we reproduce the passage in the original German: “Es ist *die Kunst*, das Werk des Genius. Sie wiederholt die durch reine Kontemplation aufgefaßten ewigen Ideen, das Wesentliche und Bleibende aller Erscheinungen der Welt, und je nachdem der Stoff ist, in welchem sie wiederholt, ist sie bildende Kunst; Poesie oder Musik. Ihr einziger Ursprung ist die Erkenntnis der Ideen; ihr einziges Ziel Mittheilung dieser Erkenntnis. – Während die Wissenschaft, dem rast- und bestandlosen Strom vierfach gestalteter Gründe und Folgen nachgehend, bei jedem erreichten Ziel immer wieder weiter gewiesen wird und nie ein letztes Ziel, noch völlige Befriedigung finden kann, so wenig als man durch Laufen den Punkt erreicht, wo die Wolken den Horizont berühren; so ist dagegen die Kunst überall am Ziel. Denn sie reißt das Objekt ihrer Kontemplation heraus aus dem Strome des Weltlaufs und hat es isoliert vor sich: und dieses Einzelne, was in jenem Strom ein verschwindend kleiner Teil war, wird ihr ein Repräsentant des Ganzen, ein Äquivalent des in Raum und Zeit unendlich vielen: sie bleibt daher bei diesem einzelnen stehen: das Rad der Zeit hält sie an: die Relationen verschwinden ihr: nur das Wesentliche, die Idee, ist ihr Objekt.” (Schopenhauer, *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, Drittes Buch, § 36, in: Schopenhauer 2014, pp. 199-200; original emphasis).

“It follows that GENIALITY is nothing but the most perfect OBJECTIVITY, that is, the objective orientation of the spirit, as opposed to the subjective one that goes hand in hand with the person himself, that is, with the will” (Schopenhauer 2005, p. 254; original emphasis)⁸. And it is to this objective character, which transcends its time while still referring to it with all its sharpness, that Lenin refers when he refers to Tolstoy.

Contrary to what one might expect, Lenin did not openly combat Tolstoy's *pacifism*, nor his moralism. Recognizing the Russian writer's noble origins, he praised the transcendent character that transpires in his writings, especially in his final works:

Tolstoy belonged, by birth and upbringing, to the high nobility of the Russian countryside; he broke with all the current opinions in that milieu and, in his last works, vehemently criticized the current political, ecclesiastical, social and economic regime, based on the enslavement of the masses, their misery, the ruin of the peasants and small landowners in general, the violence and hypocrisy that permeate contemporary life from top to bottom. (Lenin 1975, p. 50)⁹

More than that: he comes out in defense of Tolstoy, declaring the Socialist Revolution as the only necessary and possible way for the work of the Russian master to become accessible to everyone:

The artist Tolstoy is only known, even in Russia, by a minority. In order for his great works to become accessible to everyone, it is necessary to fight, to continue fighting against the social order that has condemned millions, tens of millions of men, to ignorance, brutalization, forced labor, misery; the socialist revolution is necessary. (Lenin 1975, p. 43; original emphasis)¹⁰

Faced with this “transcendence”, this *objectivity* of which the “genius” work is capable, Lenin made a curious comment in one of his essays on the Russian writer, dated January 22 (February 4) 1911 and entitled “Leon Tolstoy and his time”, in which he highlighted the progressive aspects present in great works of art, regardless of their time. The “curiosity” lies in the fact that, instead of “progressive”, Lenin uses the term... *socialist!* This reminds us of an answer that the great Brazilian communist literary critic Antônio Candido gave when asked if he was disappointed by the collapse of socialism in the face of capitalist hegemony. More or less with these words, Antônio Candido surprised the interviewer and returned the question with another initial question, followed by a categorical statement: “The collapse of socialism? But socialism is a winner! All the social conquests within capitalism, the most progressive things in it, are due to the socialist ideology and its struggles!”¹¹

⁸ In the original German: “[...] So ist *Genialität* nichts anderes als die vollkommenste *Objektivität*, d. h. objektive Richtung des Geistes, entgegengesetzt der subjektiven, auf die eigene Person, d. i., den Willen, gehenden.” (Schopenhauer *idem*, 2014, p. 200; original emphasis).

⁹ This excerpt is taken from his essay “Leon Tolstoy and the contemporary workers' movement”, dated November 28 (December 11), 1910.

¹⁰ This excerpt is taken from the essay that Lenin wrote on the occasion of the Russian writer's death: “Leon Tolstoy”, November 16 (29), 1910.

¹¹ I'm reproducing the great critic's statement from memory, but I can vouch for the truth of its

Revolutionary Marxism 2024

In his essay, Lenin states that there is socialism and socialism, praising, as if in apology for the *minimal programs* that are still trapped by conditions that were once feudal and then capitalist, every progressive element as fundamentally *socialist* in nature:

There is no doubt that Tolstoy's teachings are utopian and reactionary, in the most exact and profound sense of the term, in their content. But this in no way means that this doctrine is not socialist, nor that it does not contain critical elements capable of providing valuable material for the instruction of the advanced classes. There is socialism and socialism. In all countries where there is a capitalist mode of production, there is a socialism that expresses the ideology of the class called upon to replace the bourgeoisie, and there is another socialism that corresponds to the ideology of the classes that the bourgeoisie has replaced. Feudal socialism, for example, falls into the latter category, and its character was defined many years ago, more than sixty years ago, by Marx, along with the other varieties of socialism. (Lenin 1975, pp. 63-64)

Obviously, there is a certain freedom in the use of the term here, but what is evident is the importance of not closing the doors to the creations of the past, coming out in defense of the cultural and historical legacy of all humanity, something that viscerally united, once again, the thought and erudition of both Lenin and Trotsky, in stark opposition to the truculence and ignorance of Stalin.

In "Lenin on Culture", an article written for *Pravda* on January 21, 1930, Lunatcharski stresses that

Lenin strongly emphasized that it would be much easier for us to fight and build if we had inherited a more developed bourgeois culture after the overthrow of the monarchy and the ruling classes. He repeated several times that this bourgeois culture would make it easier for the proletariat of the countries of the West to accelerate, after its victory, the effective and complete realization of socialism. (Lunatcharski in Lenin 1980, p. 247)

It was in this sense that, making an analogy with the use of officers from the old regime as members of the Red Army organized by Trotsky, Lenin stated in his 1919 text "Successes and difficulties of Soviet power" that the edifice of socialism should be built with the stones inherited from the bourgeoisie:

When comrade Trotsky recently told me that the number of officers in the army was in the tens of thousands, I had a concrete idea of what the secret of using our enemy is, how we must force those who were our enemies to build communism, how we must build communism with the bricks that the capitalists chose to use against us. No other bricks were given to us! And with these bricks, under the leadership of the proletariat, we must force the bourgeois experts to erect our building. This is the most difficult thing, but it is also the guarantee of success. (Lenin 1980, p. 63)¹²

content.

¹² It is also in this sense that Lenin also states, in *Leftism, the infantile disease of communism*, that "bourgeois intellectuals cannot be banished or destroyed, they must be defeated, transformed,

Through this defense of the bourgeois cultural heritage, Lenin strongly identified with Trotsky's vision of art and culture, because for both of them, socialism would not represent the negation of historical culture, but rather *the historical emancipation of thought*, finally making accessible to the masses the most important things that man has managed to build, even in the midst of the market conditions of capitalism, or even before, in the midst of feudalism, in the fields of science, philosophy and the arts. Hence their strong reservations about the imminent *proletarian culture* – the *Proletkult*, advocated by Alexander Bogdanov, his great friend Lunatcharski and others. In the draft resolution on proletarian culture, whose unfinished manuscript of October 9, 1920 was only published for the first time in 1945, Lenin leaves no doubt when he states in his second point how he saw the issue:

Not the *invention* of a new proletarian culture, but the *development* of the best models, traditions and results of the *existing culture from the point of view* of the Marxist conception of the world and the conditions of life and struggle of the proletariat at the time of its dictatorship. (Lenin 1980, p. 152; original emphasis)

It is nuclear in this context how a Marxist conception of the world could serve as a point of view for such a development from the models of the bourgeois past, but there is an unequivocal understanding that *inventing* a new proletarian culture would be a task that is not only inadvisable, but unfeasible, since in the dictatorship of the proletariat, the proletariat itself would cease to be a class. No one could have predicted the direction the arts would take in the long and assured construction of socialism – a fact that could not be verified, as the October Revolution itself began its process of degeneration, notably from 1923 onwards, with Lenin's illness and, above all, the definitive defeat of the German Revolution –, but for both Lenin and Trotsky it was certain that one of the means to be appropriated by the proletariat in the revolutionary process was the means of intellectual production: the historical cultural legacy of humanity¹³.

In the cultural field, there was no need to make a *tabula rasa*. Ruptures of this kind, if they were to occur, should come from eminently artistic positions, as a free choice of the creator, not as an imposition of the Party, and even less as a fundamental guideline of the Revolution. In his magnificent essay on the great poet Vladimir Mayakovsky¹⁴, considered by Jean-Michel Palmier in his immense study

merged again, re-educated, just as the proletarians themselves must be re-educated on the basis of the dictatorship of the proletariat, at the cost of a long-term struggle, for neither will they be able to rid themselves of their petty-bourgeois prejudices suddenly, by a miracle, by the intervention of the Blessed Virgin, by an order, a resolution or a decree, but only at the cost of a long and difficult mass struggle against petty-bourgeois influences on the masses" (Lenin 1975, p. 149).

13 In *The Plastic Arts and Politics in the U.S.S.R.*, Lunatcharski, who was at odds with Lenin for advocating *Proletkult*, says: "Vladimir Ilyich also disagreed with my opinion of *Proletkult*. [...] He feared that *Proletkult* would also try to deal with the 'elaboration' of a proletarian science and, in general, a total proletarian culture. [...] He thought that with these initiatives, which for the moment were immature, the proletariat would turn its back on studying and assimilating the scientific and cultural elements that already existed" (Lunatcharski 1975, pp. 15-16).

14 Both the essay on Mayakovsky and the one on Fyodor Dostoevsky (in which the author develops the idea of the *polyphonic novel* in the Russian writer's work) are proof of Lunatcharski's great critical talent. The essay on Mayakovsky, however, reveals Lunatcharski's rather questionable side in

on Lenin and art to be the greatest poet of the Russian Revolution¹⁵, Lunatcharski states that

Mayakovsky understood very well that humanity's past held immense values, but he feared that if he accepted them, he would be forced to accept everything else as well. Therefore, it was better to rebel against everything and say: "We are our own ancestors". (Lunatcharski 2018, p. 186)

But Lenin, quite the opposite – and with certain reservations, perhaps without much reason, about the poetic work of the *metal poet* (as Mayakovsky defined himself) –, and just like Trotsky, did not hesitate to defend the bourgeois heritage, even calling for its systematic study by the victorious proletariat. Resolution 4 of the text "Proletarian culture", dated October 9, 1920, clearly states this:

Marxism gained its universal historical significance as the ideology of the revolutionary proletariat because it in no way rejected the most valuable achievements of the bourgeois epoch, but, on the contrary, assimilated and reformulated everything that was of value in more than two thousand years of the development of human thought and culture. Only further work on this basis and in this direction, inspired by the practical existence of the dictatorship of the proletariat as the struggle of the proletariat against all exploitation, can be regarded as the development of a truly proletarian culture. (Lenin 1979, p. 271)

In the aforementioned text by Trotsky from 1924, "The Party and the artists", there is an enunciation that finds great identity with the Leninist formulation, when Trotsky states that

the bourgeoisie took power and created its own culture; the proletariat, having taken power, will create a proletarian culture. But the bourgeoisie is a wealthy and

its conclusion, when he vehemently opposed Trotsky, claiming that, for Trotsky, the poet's suicide in 1930 was due to the course of the Revolution, which was already in full degeneracy. Lunatcharski writes: "Trotsky wrote that the poet's tragedy is to have loved the revolution with all his might, to have gone to meet it, when that revolution was no longer authentic, losing itself in its love and its journey. Of course, how could the revolution be authentic if Trotsky didn't take part in it? That alone is enough to demonstrate that it is a 'false' revolution! Trotsky also says that Mayakovsky took his own life because the revolution didn't follow the Trotskyist path. [...] Thus, in the interests of his small, insignificant and bankrupt political group, Trotsky welcomes everything that is hostile to the progressive elements of the socialist world we are creating" (Lunatcharski 2018, p. 199). This did not prevent Trotsky, with his unwavering intellectual honesty, from writing a posthumous tribute to Lunatcharski on January 1, 1933, recognizing his cultural and intellectual merits by drawing, with his acute pen, a shrewd psychological portrait of the militant who, from a friend and comrade, became, in his words, an "honest adversary". The short essay, which didn't appear in any edition of *Literature and Revolution* during his lifetime, ended up being added to the posthumous editions of this fundamental book for Marxist culture. In any case, it must be acknowledged that Trotsky's claim about the motives that drove Mayakovsky to suicide did not necessarily correspond to reality, since, as Palmier rightly describes, suicide was an idea that had haunted the poet for a long time: "On April 14, 1930, a tragedy occurred. Mayakovsky shot himself in the heart. Many people tried to find a political reason for this suicide, trying to read into it the result of the divorce between the new regime and himself [...]. Others saw it as the culmination of all the criticism he had received and, above all, the lack of enthusiasm for his last works. In reality, Mayakovsky, this hypersensitive giant, had been haunted by death and suicide ever since he was young" (Palmier 1975, pp. 406-407).
15 See Palmier 1975, p. 423.

therefore educated class. Bourgeois culture existed even before the bourgeoisie formally took power. [...] In bourgeois society, the proletariat is a disinherited class, which owns nothing and is therefore not in a position to create its own culture. When it takes power, it sees clearly for the first time the real situation of its terrible cultural backwardness. (Trotsky 1973, p. 140)

This crude realization, evident in minds with intellectual honesty and frankness, prompts us to reflect on the situation of culture today, in the midst of the hegemony of capital. The situation, however, is different: with the delay of the proletarian revolutions and the relative “socializing” advance of some populist measures of a social nature within capitalism itself (advances of the “minimal program” type to which we have already referred), the proletariat, even in the midst of late capitalism, ends up erecting its own “marginal” culture, doing so, however, in extremely precarious conditions and *under strong ideological imposition, at the specific level of artistic languages*. The result is cultural products of a very low standard, defended tooth and nail by the “ideology of empowerment”, very common nowadays, which tends to confuse the legitimacy of such initiatives with an irresponsible attitude, from a Marxist point of view, in defense of the quality of these cultural by-products of capitalist society, simply because they come from the most exploited classes in society. We therefore have a veritable *apology for cultural misery*. What we are simply seeing is the supremacy and apology of the capitalist *cultural industry* itself (as Theodor W. Adorno defined it). From a cultural point of view, we are living through humanity's most critical period. We have to have the courage to denounce a critical situation like this, in the face of the risk of lynching by pseudo-leftists (in general, petty-bourgeois with a shallow cultural background), *and fight, even within the framework of capitalism, for access for disadvantaged populations to culture and the study of artistic languages, with all their technical specificities*. This without abandoning the defense of the artistic avant-garde, because the character of resistance in the face of cultural barbarism comes to the fore in the midst of its manifestations, in a battle that revives the struggle waged by Mayakovsky for the New. Referring to Mayakovsky's stance, Lunatcharski states:

The poet must take part in the production of new things, that is, his works, even if they are not utilitarian in themselves, must provide stimuli, methods or instructions for producing useful things. The purpose of all this is the transfiguration of circumstances and, consequently, the transformation of society as a whole. (Lunatcharski 2018, p. 189)

What is being defended here is *aesthetic sensibility*, something systematically fought against by late capitalism and the cultural industry.

However, Lenin didn't always know how to follow or even appreciate this New that the metal poet championed. “Regarding Futurism”, for example, “his opinion was frankly negative” (Lunatcharski 1975, p. 13), and he had great difficulty assimilating or letting himself be carried away by the musical sensibility. The abstraction of music, which despite all its technicality (which certainly makes it the most difficult of the arts) has the potential, through the force of its tensions and

relaxations and its time course, to move, to provoke emotions, bothered Lenin¹⁶. Perhaps because of this difficulty he preferred Beethoven's music, especially the *Appassionata* Sonata, as his wife Nadejda Krupskaya attests in her *Memories of Lenin*¹⁷.

This episode is symptomatic because Beethoven's work is obviously not the only one in which this occurs, but it is a very clear example of how bourgeois technical progress has a direct impact on artistic creation, and at the same time in a direction that is sometimes opposed to the bourgeois spirit itself. In his curious analysis and reflection on the sounds of the world – his book *The Tuning of the World* – the creator of the term *soundscape*, Canadian Murray Schafer, observes that

the substitution of the harpsichord, with its clamped string, for the piano, with its hammered string, typifies the greater aggressiveness of an era in which clamped or hammered objects came into existence thanks to new industrial processes. [...] The power allowed by these new technical developments was harnessed for the first time by Beethoven [...] his aggressive temperament made the “offensive” character of the new instruments especially significant for him [...]. In principle, there is little difference between Beethoven's attempts to *épater les bourgeois*, with the effects in *sforzando* with clenched fists, and those of the modern teenager with his motorcycle. The former is the embryo of the latter (Schafer 2011, p. 159).

Of all the Leninist conceptions of art, however, the one that is most strikingly up-to-date is the defense of *internationalism*! This aspect is relevant because, in addition to defending the entire legacy of humanity in the cultural field, it helps to clarify Lenin's position on nationalism in his very important polemic with Rosa Luxemburg.

As is widely known, the debate around the national question came to a head when, in her *Junius Pamphlet: The Crisis of German Social Democracy*, written between February and April 1915 and published just a year later, in April 1916, Rosa Luxemburg stated as Task 5 at the end of her text: “In this age of unbridled imperialism, there can no longer be national wars. National interests serve only as a pretext for placing the working masses of the people under the domination of their mortal enemy, imperialism” (Luxemburg 1979, Volume II, p. 176). In line with this formulation, Rosa concludes in his Principle 6, in a categorical manner, that “the immediate mission of socialism is the spiritual liberation of the proletariat from the tutelage of the bourgeoisie, which is expressed through the influence of nationalist ideology” (Luxemburg 1979, Volume II, p. 180).

Rosa Luxemburg's position is assertive and leaves no room for doubt: she rightly identifies in nationalist ideology the essence of bourgeois ideology itself. Her vision is based on *radical internationalism*, without any concession, and from this point of view, Rosa was, of all the great Marxists, the most consistent personality

16 “Music was very pleasing to Vladimir Ilyich, but it changed him. [...] One day he told me frankly: ‘Listening to music is very pleasant, no one doubts that, but imagine, it changes my mood. In a way, I endure it painfully’. [...] The music pleased Lenin very much, but [it] made him visibly nervous.” (Lunatcharski 1975, p. 14)

17 In Lenin 1975, p. 246. The Trotskyist Juan Posadas, in his naive book on Beethoven's music, reaffirms Lenin's predilection for this Beethoven Sonata: see Posadas 2020, p. 45.

regarding the most essential precepts of Marxism itself, since she claimed that radical internationalism was the main goal to be achieved by the international revolutionary movement. Thus, at the same time as it was in line, *avant la lettre*, with the Trotskyist conception that criticized the isolation of *socialism in a single country* (a Stalinist theory that would serve as the basis for strengthening the Soviet bureaucracy), that is, within national borders (something that, as we know, would only become increasingly evident later on, during the process of degeneration of the Soviet state, in diametrically opposing Trotsky to Stalin), it was also identified, in an anticipatory and premonitory way, with the theory of the (perhaps utopian) dissolution of the State as an instrument of power and social organization of the ruling classes, so well formulated by Lenin in *The State and the Revolution*, conceived a year after the publication of the *Junius Pamphlet*, that is, between August and September 1917, on the eve of the October Revolution.

Rosa was therefore a great visionary, and would soon establish herself as the main leader of the German Revolution of 1918, alongside Karl Liebknecht, whose negative outcome, with the assassination of both in January 1919 by the militias that preceded Hitler's rise to power in Germany¹⁸, would be the main blow suffered by the international communist movement in the 20th century, because if the German Revolution had been victorious under the leadership of Rosa and Liebknecht, the Russian Revolution would have found strong and immediate support in Europe and in the most geographically and politically important European country at the beginning of the 20th century, and the whole course of the last century would have been completely different, with a likely overwhelming advance of the communist movement across the globe! In reality, the collapse of the new German revolutionary uprising in 1923, sealing off any possibility of a communist revolution on German soil, frustrating the German revolutionary movement of 1918 once and for all and opening the way for the rise of the Nazis, represented, alongside Lenin's death at the beginning of 1924, the two great disasters suffered by the international revolutionary movement: the first, due to political circumstances; the second, due to bad luck, a fatality that, for health reasons, took away from the victorious Revolution in Russia, just at its most critical moment, its main leader, Lenin. It was too bad an omen to have worked...

In any case, on learning of the *Junius Pamphlet*, Lenin, recognizing the very high standard of the (genuinely Marxist) drafting of the text, and not knowing that Junius was a pseudonym and that it was written by the brilliant Rosa Luxemburg, was surprised by the content of the text, precisely with regard to the *Junius Pamphlet's* opposition to the thesis of the *self-determination of peoples*, contrasting this precept, held (to this day) by the majority of Marxists as an almost sacred principle, with the basic principle of the *class struggle*, by identifying the ideological roots of national

18 The fatal blow from the pre-Hitler right culminated shortly afterwards in the assassination of Kurt Eisner in Bavaria on February 21, 1919, a personality who mediated between the workers' movement and the bourgeois parliament and who defended the maintenance of private property, but who still represented, after the disappearance of the two great German revolutionary leaders, a glimmer of hope for some minimally progressive advances in German society. On the German Revolution, see Isabel Loureiro's indispensable book: Loureiro 2020.

movements with bourgeois ideology itself: “Lenin (who didn’t know that Junius was Rosa Luxemburg) was shocked to read in the same text that analysis which opposed national self-determination and counterposed to it the ‘class struggle’” (Dunayevskaya 2017, p. 140).

Lenin obviously relied on the progressive character and transitional strategy that was evident in the defense of anti-colonial struggles, supported by the history of evaluations of the struggles for independence in colonial countries since Marx and Engels. Already in a letter to Kautsky dated February 7, 1882, Friedrich Engels stated:

In no case do we have the task of diverting the Poles from their efforts to fight for the vital conditions of their future development, or of persuading them that national independence is a very secondary issue from an international point of view. On the contrary, independence is the basis of all common international action [...].” (Engels *apud* Dunayevskaya 2017, pp. 136-137)

But Rosa Luxemburg did not accept any concessions, and we understand her well as radical artists: Rosa’s position, radically *internationalist*, is, in the eyes of the radical artist (and here I say that I am one of them), and alongside the defense of his *anarchic* condition (as Trotsky defended in his 1938 text conceived jointly with Breton and Rivera), the most coherent with the most fundamental precepts of communist and revolutionary ideology, and even with regard to the self-determination of peoples, Rosa was skeptical, because behind this principle there was, as a rule, a trail of bourgeois ideology that would certainly have a strong propensity to slow down the revolutionary movement and restrict national emancipation within the regulatory frameworks of classist society. For Rosa, only a movement whose fundamental motto was *revolutionary internationalism* could carry out the radical communist project without losing its way and falling into a dramatic capitulation. As Dunayevskaya says, “the outbreak of the First World War did not dampen Luxemburg’s opposition to self-determination. [...] His conviction was that internationalism and ‘nationalism’, even the question of self-determination, were absolute opposites” (Dunayevskaya 2017, p. 139). Lenin opposed Rosa’s position, however – and not without reason from his point of view – to the fact that “Marxist dialectics requires a correct analysis of each specific situation [...]. Civil war against the bourgeoisie is also a form of class struggle” (Lenin *apud* Dunayevskaya 2017, p. 141).

There is nothing more perverse and opposed to Marxist dialectics than dualistic thinking that wants to decree one side right when, from their respective perspectives and points of view, ***both sides were right!*** A Marxism that wants to be permanently evolving, in an invigorating update, needs to air itself out and understand that the differences between great revolutionaries can result in a healthy maturing in the face of the strategies and tactics to be put into continuous movement, in permanent (r) evolution, and if Lenin’s position concerned local decisions, concrete assessments of each situation of struggle, it was precisely in the field of culture, in his open opposition to “national cultures”, that Lenin’s radical internationalism is more than evident. For already in his “Critical notes on the national question” of November

1913, Lenin stated:

The slogan of national culture is bourgeois arrogance (and often also ultra-reactionary and clerical). Our slogan is the international culture of democracy and the global workers' movement.

[...] Whoever wants to serve the proletariat must unite the workers of all nations, invariably fighting against bourgeois nationalism, both his own and that of others. Whoever defends the slogan of national culture has no place among Marxists, his place is among the nationalist philistines. (Lenin 1975, pp. 157 and 159)

A brief assessment of the reactionary role played by nationalist currents in art – especially, in my personal context, Brazilian nationalist music, against which I struggle as a radical composer – would suffice to make sure that both Rosa and Lenin were right: if socialism wants to emerge as effectively emancipatory, it will do so in defense of the entire cultural legacy of humanity, sweeping away any national borders that seek to imprison artistic, cultural and scientific facts, opposing the peoples of this tiny planet.

And so, from his discretion in the face of artistic phenomena to his struggle for radical access to the masses to the entire cultural legacy of humanity, including his uncompromising defense of creative freedom, the transcendence of great (genius) works of art, the assimilation and study of the bourgeois cultural heritage and cultural internationalism, we can glimpse the *integrity* of genuinely *Leninist* thought.

Sao Paulo, January 2024

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Revolutionary Marxism 2024

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Lenin's Other Testament

Edgar Azevedo

First of all, I would like to thank the organizers for the invitation to participate in such an important event. In view of the short time for our intervention, what we propose is just to draw attention to a question that we consider of great strategic importance, and also very relevant for the challenges facing the international working class nowadays, in a scenario of profound decomposition of the dying capitalism, and for the tasks that this brings along for all of us. As you know, Lenin, in the final phase of his life, already severely affected by illness, wrote between December 1922 and the first weeks of 1923 the letter to the Congress of the Russian CP known as his Testament, and a series of associated documents, which went down in history as his political testament. At that moment, Lenin intended to initiate a struggle to change the party regime in the PCUS. These documents constituted a critique of the state of the Soviet government and warned about a series of dangers that threatened the revolution, the danger of bureaucratization, the risks associated with the composition of the Central Committee at the time, and in particular about Stalin, its general secretary, as well as a series of suggestions on how to face the challenges of the economy and the administration. The text, we know now, was not published and anyone who distributed it was accused of being a counterrevolutionary and enemy of the revolution.

In that same historical context, a month before, in November 1922, Lenin

delivered his last speech before the Communist International, where he addressed the issues he considered a priority at that particular juncture, issues that are directly related to the content of the political testament. In his speech, Lenin took stock of the conquests in the five years following the victory of the October Revolution and addressed two main issues. Most of his speech was concerned with the problems and difficulties of the New Economic Policy and the state of Soviet society. But in the end, in his final words before the delegates from all over the world gathered at the Fourth Congress of the IC, he referred to the perspectives for the international revolution. In that final part of his speech, Lenin concentrated his considerations on a critical questioning of the resolution adopted by the Third Congress of the International *On the structure, methods and action of the communist parties*. The resolution had the defect, he said, of being too long, so that foreigners would not be able to assimilate all its contents. Another problem was that it was too Russian, that it was completely imbued with the Russian spirit. Its greatest virtue, synthesizing the Russian experience, was at the same time “its greatest defect”. Thirdly, said Lenin: “Even if foreigners could understand it, they would have no conditions to apply it.” The conclusion, for him, was that had been made “a great mistake”. In Lenin’s own words: “We have blocked with it our own road to success.”

What is unique in Lenin’s assessment is that he also said that the resolution was “excellent”, and that “I am ready to subscribe to each of its points”. The document, indeed, is a veritable treatise on revolutionary political structuring. Its 59 theses constitute an attempt to transmit in an exhaustive and detailed manner the experience of the Bolshevik party and its methods. Just by mentioning here its eight chapters, it is possible to observe the breadth of its content: **1. In the generalities, the fundamental theoretical guidelines of the resolution are established; 2. The democratic centralization; 3. The duty to work of the communists; 4. The problem of the resolution; 5. Organization of political struggles; 6. The party press; 7. The structure of the party as a whole; and 8. The nexus between legal and illegal work.**

The biggest problem with the resolution, Lenin said, is that “we have not learned to present our Russian experience to foreigners,” which can be interpreted, actually, as two problems: that foreigners would have difficulty assimilating the Bolshevik experience in those terms, but also the problem that the Russians themselves would not be able to transmit their own experience, the lessons of the October victory. Lenin’s answer is, in a sense, enigmatic. For his answer is that these problems must be solved through study, “study, and study in a special way, study from scratch.” Where it resounds, clearly, that famous note written in Lenin’s *Philosophical Notebooks* about the fact that “it is impossible to understand Marx’s Capital without having thoroughly studied and understood the whole of Hegel’s Logic. Consequently, half a century later none of the Marxists understood Marx!”

Despite his shortcomings, Lenin concluded, “the resolution must be carried out,” but also warned that “the resolution is unintelligible to foreigners, who cannot content themselves with hanging it in a corner like an icon and praying to it; nothing will be achieved that way. They must assimilate part of the Russian experience. I don’t know how they will do it.” At the historical juncture at which Lenin was

speaking, in a way he was thinking also in the perspective of his own physical absence, in the perspective of death and of the political challenges opened up by that absence. And this is not in general sense, but as an issue of crucial importance regarding the prospects of the world revolution.

Lenin points out that the Bolsheviks and he himself have committed a lot of foolishness since the October Victory. But he also analyzes the moves of the capitalist powers and says that it was no exaggeration to say that these blunders were nothing beside those made by the capitalist powers and the Second Social-Democratic International. He specifically cites the Treaty of Versailles and his conclusion is that the world revolutionary perspectives were favorable and that, "if certain conditions" were fulfilled, they would be even better. These conditions referred, indeed, to the level of assimilation of the Bolshevik political conquests as a factor for the victory of the revolution, and in particular, we can say, Lenin was alluding to the expected German revolution, which was an open question.

It is within the context of the critical relationship between the perspectives of the world revolution and the process of assimilating the Bolshevik experience that the critical questioning of the resolution adopted at the Third Congress arises. In hindsight, considering Lenin's remarks, it becomes evident that, according to Lenin and Trotsky's conception of the socialist character of the Russian revolution as the initial link of the European revolution, the historical assessment of the failure of the German October can only be appropriately addressed through an evaluation of the extent to which the real Bolshevik experience influenced the politics of the German communists, and, crucially, the actual level of understanding of the nature of the Bolshevik experience even among the leadership of the Communist International.

Among the various interpretations of the failure of the German revolution, there are not a few which affirm that the objective conditions for such a revolution were not given, and that this would have been what ultimately led to its failure. However, Lenin's orientation suggests otherwise. What initially appears enigmatic in Lenin's reservations on the resolution of the Third Congress, is precisely what emerges as a decisive factor for the evaluation of both events, the victory of the Russian revolution and the defeat of the German revolution: the problem of revolutionary leadership, and the relationship between the action of the masses, the party, and its leadership. This strategic lesson from October sheds light not only on the fate of the German revolution but also that of the international revolutionary movement in the decades to come.

Lenin's last call to the Fourth Congress was ill-fated because, a year later, after the failure of the German October, the Executive Committee of the Communist International promoted the so-called Bolshevization of the Communist parties at the behest of Zinoviev and Kuusinen. Notably, this initiative was led by those responsible for drafting, under Lenin's supervision, the *21 Conditions for Admission into the Communist International* in 1920 (Zinoviev) and the *Theses on Structure and methods* in 1921 (Kuusinen). The intervention of the Communist parties, endorsed at the Fifth Congress of the International in 1924 based on the theses of "Bolshevization," aimed precisely at deflecting attention from the Executive Committee's responsibilities in the German failure. Simultaneously, it sought

to hold non-aligned factions critical of the CI leadership within the German CP accountable.

Bolshevization, with its apology of “monolithism”, prevented a political balance of the German revolution, fundamental for the future of the world Revolution, paralyzed the political development of the Communist parties, and consolidated the rise of the ascendant bureaucracy in the Soviet Union, opening the road for the later Stalinization and the subordination of the CI to the interests of the counterrevolutionary bureaucratic caste in the USSR. In other words, the exact opposite course to Lenin’s warnings, both in the destiny of Soviet Russia and in the field of the International. This process had among its most serious consequences the blockage of that which Lenin warned of as an essential and problematic challenge, namely, the question of the adequate assimilation of the political, organizational and methodological experience of the October revolution as a decisive factor for the perspectives of the world revolution.

The great questions that arise for us, and which are at stake in Lenin’s warning at the IV Congress, can be summarized in the following: “How does genuine revolutionary leadership develop historically? What paths and methods enable individuals to emerge from the historical movement of the working class to carry its struggle to victory? How is leadership forged to respond triumphantly to the violent shifts that characterize revolutionary situations? How is the capacity to synthesize, in practice, the mixture of historical necessity and contingency that define each unique revolutionary situation developed?”

The answer for these questions can be extracted from Lenin’s own historical trajectory as a party builder and revolutionary leader. This can be better understood in the light of Plekhanov’s analysis on *The Role of the Individual in History*, well known by Lenin himself, and clearly inspired by Hegel’s dialectical logic. The so-called “father of Russian Marxism” said that a great man is a pioneer because he sees further than others and wants more than others. “He solves scientific problems prioritized by the previous course of the mental development of society; he points out new social needs created by the previous development of social relations; and he takes upon himself the task of satisfying these needs. He is a hero, not in the sense of a hero who can stop or change the natural course of things, but in the sense that his activity is a conscious and free expression of this inevitable and unconscious course. This is his whole meaning, this is his power.”

In this last scene at the stage of the Fourth Congress of the IC, at the end of Lenin’s political life, what we have is an invaluable methodological orientation on the structuring and political development of the working class: his legacy, Lenin said to us, should not be understood as a universal solution, but as the rigorous formulation of a problem, a call launched to the world working class to assume a critical task, to be faced in a renewed way in each historical circumstance. Lenin’s definitive contribution lies in revealing that the process of constituting the working class as a conscious subject of the revolution—its structuring as a political party for the conquest of power—is inseparably linked, in its forms and dynamics, to the development of a political leadership. This leadership is forged through the dialectical relationship between revolutionary practice and theoretical

understanding, a relationship rooted in the systematic assimilation of the entire historical experience of struggle by the exploited masses.

The contemporary challenge of building revolutionary workers parties around the world and the world party of revolution demands a profound effort of study and re-evaluation of the legacy of October, and a broad deliberation and implementation of it among the masses. The condition for future victories, as Lenin tells us, requires a decisive, unavoidable and anti-dogmatic special study, a *study from scratch*, of the Bolshevik experience and the manifold lessons left by the great leader of the contemporary proletarian revolution.

Communists, I have a few words for you
whether you lead a state or you're in prison
whether you're a foot soldier or party secretary
Lenin should always and everywhere be able to enter
your work, your home, your whole life
as his own work, his own home, his own life.

Excerpt from Nazım Hikmet's poem, *Communists, just a
few words*

Sobre Lenin, la conferencia de Génova y el tratado de Rapallo

José Capitán (Opción Obrera – Venezuela)

A 100 años de la muerte de Lenin, la vigencia de su legado no disminuye, sino que hoy en 2024 es más relevante, en particular sus escritos posteriores a 1917, esos 6 años que van de 1918 a 1923, sin ánimo de dividir tajantemente dos períodos, pre y post revolución de octubre (noviembre). Esto por varias cosas concretas, objetivas, que puntualizan la importancia del internacionalismo proletario y revolucionario, cuestiones que son indivisibles en la lucha interna contra las limitaciones materiales en la URSS y la necesidad imperiosa de conseguir suministros del exterior en especial de los países capitalistas más avanzados.

Lenin en *Acerca del infantilismo «izquierdista» y del espíritu pequeñoburgués* 5 de mayo de 1918:

el socialismo es imposible sin aprovechar las conquistas de la técnica y de la cultura alcanzadas por el gran capitalismo... Sólo son dignos de llamarse comunistas quienes comprenden que es imposible crear o implantar el socialismo sin aprender de los organizadores de los trusts. Porque el socialismo no es una invención, sino la asimilación y la aplicación por la vanguardia proletaria, después de conquistar el Poder, de todo lo creado por los trusts. Nosotros, el Partido del proletariado no podemos sacar de ningún sitio la pericia para organizar la gran producción del tipo de los trusts, como los trusts; no podemos sacarla de ningún sitio como no sea de los mejores especialistas del capitalismo... Nosotros, en cambio, si no

somos comunistas en edad infantil ni de mentalidad infantil, debemos aprender de ellos, tenemos cosas que aprender, pues el partido del proletariado y la vanguardia del proletariado carecen de experiencia para trabajar independientemente en la organización de grandísimas empresas que sirvan a decenas de millones de habitantes.

Además de la constitución de la República Socialista Federativa Soviética de Rusia, aprobada el 10 de julio de 1918, la enfermedad infantil del izquierdismo y de los 4 primeros congresos de la Internacional comunista, que podemos estos últimos encasillarlos como algo ideológico, hay mucho material escrito por la premura de avanzar ante los frenos o limitaciones de las condiciones de las relaciones de producción arruinadas después de la guerra imperialista y de la guerra civil interna de las bandas contrarrevolucionarias, todo este material condensado y brillante, es ineludible analizar y profundizarlo ahora, después de los retrocesos temporales de las revoluciones tanto en la ex Unión Soviética como en China, Cuba, Viet Nam, y en la guerra de la Otan en Ucrania en contra de Rusia -país no imperialista-, el genocidio en Palestina, el apoyo concreto y no discursivo de los Huties, también el acoso a China y a otros países donde está incluido Venezuela a través del decreto 13692 – Obama 2015 – declarando a Venezuela como una amenaza a la seguridad de los EEUU y que ha sido prorrogado por Trump y Biden.

Ya Lenin había escrito *Proposición sobre el problema del combustible* 16 marzo 1921:

No hay duda de que la crisis de combustible es uno de los principales problemas, si no el más importante, de toda nuestra construcción económica... Sino otorgamos concesiones no podemos esperar ayuda de la bien equipada técnica capitalista moderna. Y sin utilizar esa técnica nos será imposible instalar correctamente los cimientos para nuestra gran producción en industrias como la extracción de petróleo, que tiene excepcional importancia para toda la economía mundial. Aún no hemos firmado un sólo contrato de concesión, pero haremos todo lo posible por firmarlos. ¿Han leído en el periódico que se va a inaugurar el oleoducto Bakú-Tiflís? Pronto habrá noticias de un oleoducto similar hasta Batum. Esto nos permitirá tener acceso al mercado mundial. La cuestión reside en mejorar nuestra situación económica y el equipamiento técnico de nuestra República, en aumentar la cantidad de productos, la cantidad de víveres y artículos de consumo para nuestros obreros. Todo lo que facilite las cosas en este aspecto tiene para nosotros enorme importancia. Por eso no tememos entregar en régimen de concesión una parte de Grozni y Bakú; entregando en régimen de concesión una cuarta parte de Grozni y una cuarta parte de Bakú, utilizaremos esa entrega —si conseguimos realizarla— para alcanzar, en las tres cuartas partes restantes, el alto nivel técnico del capitalismo avanzado.

Lenin decía en el *Informe Presentado Al II Congreso Nacional De Los Comités De Instrucción Política* El 17 de octubre de 1921:

“La burguesía de todo el mundo apoya hoy a la burguesía de Rusia y es muchísimo más fuerte que nosotros” en *La Lucha Será Mas Enconada Todavía*

“Guerras de esas ha habido muchas, pero jamás hubo ninguna de un poder público contra la burguesía de su propio país y contra la burguesía unida de todos los países”. En *¿es esta la lucha final?*

En abril mayo 1922, se realizó la Segunda Conferencia Monetaria Internacional convocada por la Sociedad de Naciones (con la excepción de EEUU) que tuvo lugar en la ciudad italiana de Génova con el fin de reconstruir el comercio y el sistema financiero internacional, se trató de instaurar el patrón de cambio oro. Todo esto producto del caos tras la Primera Guerra Imperialista Mundial

Asistió una delegación soviética encabezada por Gueorgui Vasílievich Chicherin, con una tarea aprobada por una resolución del CC del PC de Rusia, el fin de los bolcheviques eran aprovechar una brecha entre los países burgueses más agresivos y los más pacifistas, buscando beneficios comerciales de salida al estrangulamiento al que estaban sometidos.

Al margen de esa conferencia, el domingo 16 de Abril, en la población de Rapallo, cercano a Génova, se madrugaron los representantes de Alemania capitalista y Rusia soviética firmaron un Tratado estableciendo relaciones diplomáticas, ambos países estaban sometidos a duras condiciones, uno por su derrota en la guerra y el otro por sustituir al capitalismo, rompían el aislamiento individual cada uno, la que estaban sometidos, resultando una desagradable sorpresa para los planes de los países capitalistas reunidos en Génova.

En fin de este mensaje es aterrizar en la situación actual, donde prolifera lo que llamó Lenin el peligro de la altanería comunista y Trotsky más tarde señaló en el programa de transición como el peligro del sectarismo y desde Opción Obrera, añadimos y le llamamos las limitaciones de intentar cimentar partidos nacionales o exaltar los problemas nacionales olvidando el contexto universal de la lucha de clases como condición indispensable para todo intento de construir desde donde sea una organización que no puede ser nacional sino la sección desde una región del partido internacional. Lenin no hubiese plasmado todo lo que es hoy su legado, no pudiera haber escrito todas sus obras sobre el partido, el estado, el imperialismo, la revolución, en fin, aplicando la dialéctica materialista sin conocer las luchas y las organizaciones de toda Europa, no solo de Rusia, en otras palabras, fue un internacionalista consecuente.

Para cerrar de nuevo palabras de Lenin en *Cinco Años De La Revolución Rusa Y Perspectivas De La Revolución Mundial* 13 noviembre 1922:

Considero que lo más importante para todos nosotros, tanto para los rusos como para los camaradas extranjeros, es que, después de cinco años de revolución rusa, debemos estudiar. Sólo ahora hemos obtenido la posibilidad de estudiar. Ignoro cuánto durará esta posibilidad. No sé durante cuánto tiempo nos concederán las potencias capitalistas la posibilidad de estudiar tranquilamente. Pero debemos aprovechar cada minuto libre de las ocupaciones militares, de la guerra, para estudiar, comenzando, además, por el principio...

Estoy convencido de que, en este sentido, debemos decir no sólo a los camaradas rusos, sino también a los extranjeros, que lo más importante del período en que estamos entrando es estudiar. Nosotros estudiamos en sentido general. En cambio, los estudios de ellos deben tener un carácter especial para que lleguen a comprender realmente la organización, la estructura, el método y el contenido de la labor revolucionaria. Si se logra esto, las perspectivas de la revolución mundial, estoy convencido de ello, serán no solamente buenas, sino incluso magníficas.

Esteemed peoples of all races,

...

I love you with respect and affection and merriness.

Neither superior to any other

Nor inferior to any other

You sit on the throne of my heart side by side.

...

Esteemed peoples of all races

and all motherlands,

there is on this earth also a motherland for me above
all others

Neither Turkey nor Russia

Neither Japan nor Polynesia nor Azerbaijan

It is there where my first hopes blossomed

It is there my first dawn lit up.

The passport I carry belongs there.

Not made of paper,

Its visa is carved on my heart

my heart carries its seal.

There are my eyes

And my eyebrows.

There belongs the first New Man of my century

Comrade Lenin, citizen of all my motherlands.

Excerpt from Nazım Hikmet's poem, *There*

Message to Lenin 100 Conference

Alex Mitchell

Lenin has been my mentor and guide since my 20s. As a result, I became a rather pompous authority on his life. If I was confronted with a difficult decision in my life - whether to marry this lady or another, or take this job or that - I would ask myself: "What would Lenin do?" Sometimes Lenin's advice was good, but other times it was bad. Very bad. As an example, Lenin, the banned Russian revolutionary, was alarmingly carefree with his security. He was a terrible judge of character, particularly those who stopped him in the street, women or visitors to Moscow, who wanted an autograph. He wrote many books stressing the need for tight security, but it was theoretical and not practical. In 1901, he wrote *What Is To Be Done?*, which railed against dogmatism and celebrated freedom of criticism but in practice he did the opposite. I read and studied all of his writings - Lenin with the assistance of his wife/life partner Krupskaya - wrote dozens of books which lined my shelves. Ignorant commentators said his slogan for Russia's 1917 October Revolution - Bread, Peace and Land - was a motto stolen from others. That is a lie! Lenin's motto was derived from dialectics. He wanted to appeal to three sectors - Bread was for the hungry, Peace for war-weary soldiers and sailors, and Land was aimed at recruiting Russia's peasantry. Of all Lenin's sayings my favourite is: "We are marching in a compact group along a precipitous and difficult path, firmly holding each other by the hand. We are surrounded on all sides by enemies, and we

have to advance almost constantly under their fire. We have combined, by a freely adopted decision, for the purpose of fighting the enemy, and not of retreating to the neighbouring marsh, the inhabitants of which, from the very outset, have reproached us for having separated ourselves into an exclusive group and with having chosen the path of struggle instead of the path of conciliation. And now some among us begin to cry out: ‘Let us go back into the marsh!’ And when we begin to shame them, they retort, ‘What backward people you are! Are you not ashamed to deny us the liberty to invite you to take a better road?’ ‘Oh yes, gentlemen! You are free not only to invite us, but to go yourselves wherever you will, even into the marsh. In fact, we think that the marsh is your proper place, and we are prepared to render you every assistance to get there. Only let go of our hands, do not clutch at us and do not besmirch the grand word freedom, for we too are free to go where we please, for to fight not only against the marsh, but also against those who are turning towards the marsh!’” It was typical Lenin: brutally frank, and dismissive of opponents whether they were in his own ranks or not. Lenin makes today’s class compromisers look like second-raters.

Alex Mitchell was a former leader of Britain’s Workers Revolutionary Party and its global affiliate, the International Committee of the Fourth International. A former journalist, Mitchell now lives in Australia where he is an acclaimed author. Judith White, his partner-wife, writes books on culture and art history.

Lenin's legacy on the eve of a war escalation in the Baltic Sea

Dimitris Mizaras (MTL – Finland)

What does Lenin's legacy mean one hundred years after the Bolshevik leader's death? The October Revolution made it possible for Finland to establish an independent bourgeois state with Lenin's approval. The agreements of Brest Litovsk, the naive and inexperienced leadership of the working class in Finland, and the intervention of the Germans contributed to the fact that Lenin handed over the document of independence not to the representatives of the workers, as he would have liked, but to the bourgeoisie. The civil war that started right after that and the defeat of the Reds sent the rebels underground, to prisons, concentration camps, or Soviet Russia. The Communist Party (SKP) was founded in exile in Moscow only after the defeat, and it was illegal in Finland from the beginning. After Lenin's death, the Stalinist bureaucracy began to strengthen its position, and it was not very difficult to manipulate the SKP. Bourgeois Finland's attitude towards Russia was aggressive, hostile and Russophobic. Stalin's adventurism in the Winter War of 1939 further fueled Russian hatred. After the war, special relations prevailed until the Soviet Union was driven into political bankruptcy. After that, the Finnish Bourgeoisie returned to anti-Russian positions, joined the EU and, since last year, finally joined NATO. If Sweden also joins this military alliance, the Baltic Sea will become NATO's inner

lake.

The collapse of the Soviet Union has spread enormous confusion among the international left and even more so among the proletariat. On the international level, most of the leftists rejected Lenin's theoretical and political legacy and saw Leninism as the cause of not only the disaster but the phenomenon of Stalinism as well. Despite the illusions, Lenin's legacy is alive today, both theoretically and as a living force. You can see it from how both the central powers of imperialist capitalism, which is in a stage of decline and on its deathbed, and the oligarchic states hate and fear Lenin in principle. The power of a living Leninism lies firstly in the dynamics of the Marxist method, and the potential of the class struggle for deep transformation. These two camps, both in an existential crisis, faced off in Ukraine. The victory of imperialism would put the world closer to global barbarism. The defeat of imperialism is a necessity for humanity and the whole civilization as well. The proxies of imperialism in Ukraine are currently facing a fatal defeat. There is only one way forward for imperialism now. That is the path to escalation.

Ukraine's defeat makes the clash between the USA and Russia topical. This conclusion has been reached by Robert Bauer, the chairman of NATO's military committee, who stated without hesitation: "Let us prepare for war against Russia." Finland's 1,340 kilometer border has been handed over to the US army. The USA gets 15 base areas for its own use. American troops are permanently repatriated to Finland. Even the scenarios of stockpiling nuclear weapons in Finland have not been ruled out. At the same time, NATO is preparing for the largest military exercise in its history. Steadfast Defender 24 will take place from February 28 to April 21. More than 90,000 soldiers are participating in the military exercise. It is a rehearsal for the planned war against Russia. According to a NATO official, the eastern front of the escalation extends along the axis from Finland to Romania. A second part of the military exercise is planned to take place in May. A smaller military exercise Winter-24 started in Estonia in January. The Estonian military participates in it. The military exercises in question were planned at the NATO summit in Vilnius last July.

No one is going to offer the keys to power to the proletariat. Power is only taken by force. The war in the Middle East is part of the same development towards the East. In addition to the ethnic cleansing of the Palestinians, the target is Lebanon, Iran, Central Asia, and through it also China. Against Russia, both the Baltic and Black Sea fronts will be attempted. On the eve of the Great War, the present moment contains both aspects of massive destruction and the possibility of deep transformation. Seeds of a transition to a new historical era. This road passes through the collapse of capitalism and imperialism, and ends in the emancipation of the working population in the socialist era. For this task, we need Lenin's legacy, analysis of the prevailing situation, the power of class struggle, proper organization and orientation towards internationalism. In this way, we can prepare our own 1917 socialist revolution, leaving behind everything that refers to class cooperation and compromise.

This is the only way to avoid a world war and a nuclear disaster. If it breaks out, we must turn the war into a socialist revolution. This is the revolutionary challenge of today's Leninism. That is why Lenin's legacy is very crucial today. The succes-

sor to Leninism and Bolshevism, that is Trotskyism is dangerous for both the bourgeoisie and the oligarchs. We must return to Lenin. The international working class and its vanguards must complete the social global revolutionary change that began in October 1917 and remained unfinished. It will only happen when we succeed in forging the irreplaceable and vital tool for it: the revolutionary International of our time, which in our opinion should be the 4th International!

In the Winter Palace Kerensky
In Smolny the Soviets and Lenin.
And they on the streets.
They know that he said:
“Yesterday was too early, tomorrow too late,
It’s time now, today.”
And they said “We have understood, we know now.”
And never had they known what they knew
With such profound perfection.
There, look! With their bayonets back from the front,
With their trucks and machine-guns,
With their yearnings and aspirations and their sacred appetites,
With their words that scatter around with the snow
They are marching to the Winter Palace.

...
Of iron, coal, and sugar
And red copper
And textiles
And of love and oppression and life
And of all the branches of industry
And of the small and great Russias and Belarus, and of the
Caucasus, Siberia and Turkestan,
And of the sad roads of
the Volga
And of
cities
The fate of
all changed at one dawn.
At one dawn, when from the side of darkness
Their snow-covered boots
Stepped on the marble staircases...

Excerpt from Nazım Hikmet’s poem, *The Winter Palace*

Intervention pour le centenaire de la mort de Lénine

G. Bégéneix (ROR – France)

1) Crise politique en France

Pour se faire élire, Macron a bénéficié de l'effondrement et du PS et de l'UMP/LR compromis et discrédités par les politiques brutalement anti-sociales et anti-ouvrières de ces partis historiques de la V^e République. C'est sur ces ruines-là que Macron a construit son mouvement *En Marche*. Mais cela ne suffisait pas. La campagne électorale de Macron a été construite sur des illusions : celle du « social-libéralisme », celle d'un progressisme dynamique et jeune, et la tromperie, portée par toute la bourgeoisie, qu'il est possible de concilier les intérêts de la classe ouvrière et ceux du grand patronat, (c'est la pseudo-théorie dite « du ruissellement » celle qui prétend qu'en enrichissant les riches, l'argent fini par revenir vers les moins riches). Malgré les illusions, les mensonges et la promotion médiatique inouïe dont il a bénéficié de la part des grands patrons d'industrie, également grands patrons de presse, Macron a été mal élu dès 2017. L'abstention avait été forte et une fraction de ses électeurs avaient voté pour lui « pour faire barrage à l'extrême droite ».

En 2022, cinq ans plus tard, l'abstention était encore plus forte qu'en 2017, (il perd près de 2 millions de voix). 41 % de son électorat avait plus de 60 ans. La macronie, c'est les vieux, aisés, et doté en capital.

La classe ouvrière et les autres fractions des « classes populaires » connaissent désormais très bien la politique néolibérale : déréglementation, dérégulation,

remplacement des services publics par des entreprises privées,

Une frange de la CGT a lorgné (et lorgne encore) vers la CFDT et ses « succès ». Il y a longtemps déjà que cette confédération n'est plus sur une ligne de classe. Mais au printemps 2023, pendant la lutte massive et déterminée d'une énorme majorité de travailleurs (et bien au-delà de la classe ouvrière) contre la contre-réforme des retraites, l'opportunisme et la ligne réformiste traître de direction de la CGT a conduit cette organisation à se subordonner à la CFDT et a précipité le vaste mouvement vers une défaite en rase campagne, défaite lourde de conséquences. Résultat funeste qui, avec tout ce qui précède, ouvre une avenue à l'extrême droite.

Les grèves et manifestations contre les lois El Khomri (2016), l'effondrement de la « gauche » (PS) et de la droite et l'élection d'un Bonaparte fragile avec une abstention record (2017), le mouvement des Gilets Jaunes (2018-2019), l'abstention record aux élections présidentielles puis législative du printemps 2022, le mouvement gréviste des énergéticiens à l'automne 2022, la lutte contre l'anti-réforme des retraites (printemps 2023), les manifestations contre la loi immigration (directement inspirée et copiée dans le programme historique du FN/RN),... tout le montre encore et encore : la classe ouvrière et au-delà, une large fraction des « classes moyennes » ne veulent pas des politiques « néolibérales ». Mais les « gauches » politiques et syndicales ne représentent plus qu'elles-mêmes. Aucune force, un peu importante, n'est capable de donner un cap aux luttes, aucune organisation n'offre ni stratégie, ni tactique personne n'est capable d'organiser la résistance. La médiocrité des gauches fait la force de l'extrême droite. Les récents changements de personnel dans l'appareil gouvernemental ne feront qu'accélérer la crise, ce ne sont pas de simples ministres, ce sont des ennemis du peuple. La France est à la croisée des chemins.

2) La loi immigration

Avec la loi « immigration » Macron intègre la « préférence nationale » à la loi. Cette préférence nationale est une partie historique du programme du FN/RN de Le Pen (père et fille), un thème majeur de l'extrême droite. Cette loi raciste, voulue par Macron et développée par Darmanin est pourtant non constitutionnelle car elle contrevient à la constitution qui au contraire garantissait un droit égal pour tous. De fait, M. Le Pen ne s'y est pas trompée et a revendiqué « Une victoire idéologique ». Et il nous faut hélas le reconnaître, il s'agit bien de cela et, en conséquence, d'une défaite pour la classe ouvrière. *Le Monde*, habituellement si sage, titrait d'ailleurs : « Une rupture politique et morale » et qualifiait cette loi de « *Tract du Rassemblement National* ». Les dénégations hypocrites des macronistes, n'y peuvent rien changer.

Cette loi est faite pour diviser et affaiblir la classe ouvrière et les catégories populaires. Ce, à l'heure où le parti des fascistes est en position favorable pour les prochaines élections.

Après une armada de lois antisociales (dont la contre-réforme des retraites, celle de l'assurance chômage, etc.), après la destruction de l'hôpital public et plus de 160 000 morts lors de la pandémie, après la destruction de l'école et de l'Université,

etc. après une armada de lois profondément liberticides, après l'impunité d'une police pourri jusqu'au noyau par les syndicats et courants fascistes et xénophobes, après une menace explicite de putsch de la part de militaires, après le venin distillé jour après jour par des médias aux mains de patrons fascistes. Voici LE résultat de cette panique morale organisée par les médias, voici LA loi raciste, l'apartheid qui caractérise à lui seul toute la politique de Macron. Il donne la place aux fascistes.

3) Menace du fascisme

Pendant des décennies il a fallu batailler, à juste titre, pour ne pas qualifier de fascistes ceux contre qui l'on se battait. Le précédent allemand (quand le KPD qualifiait le SPD de fasciste) est là pour nous mettre en garde. Hélas, cette saine prudence constitue aujourd'hui un « point aveugle ». On discute et s'interroge volontiers pour savoir si le FN/RN est ou non fasciste. Et l'on a les mêmes interrogations avec Mme Meloni en Italie. Que les forces de répression étatiques soient capables de maintenir l'ordre bourgeois nous met, entend-on dire, à l'abri du fascisme. Du moins temporairement. Cela serait suffisant.

C'est oublier un peu vite que les fascistes ont leurs propres projets, leurs propre agendas. C'est oublier un peu vite que les frontières entre le FN/RN et les groupuscules néofascistes et néonazis sont poreuses, que les fils ou filles de tel ou tel dignitaire du FN/RN sont membres de ces groupuscules. C'est oublier que les politiques extrémistes « ultra-libérales » mécontentent fortement tant les milieux ouvriers que les milieux petits bourgeois et donnent des ailes au fascisme. C'est enfin oublier l'inexistence d'un parti de classe et de masse, capable d'organiser la classe ouvrière pour son autodéfense, en reliant cette défense à la lutte pour la révolution.

4) Résistances populaires et ouvrières

La France d'aujourd'hui ce sont 10 millions de pauvres, 8 millions de personnes qui ont recours à l'aide alimentaire et, dans le même temps, 200 milliards d'aides accordées par l'État aux entreprises, sans compter la fraude et « l'optimisation » fiscale qui, ensembles, permettent de répartir 100 milliards d'euros de dividendes entre les actionnaires dans les entreprises du CAC40. Nous avons vu ces dernières années de nombreuses luttes vraiment héroïques, bravant la répression policière (un vrai terrorisme d'État). Mais ce terrorisme fait peur (il est fait pour cela) et il est devenu dangereux de manifester. Or, tout le monde n'est pas héroïque. On ne peut pas et on ne doit pas mettre la révolution sous une condition d'héroïsme. Puisque nous sommes privés d'organisations à la hauteur des enjeux, même si nous faisons notre devoir de militants communistes nous sommes contraints d'attendre l'approfondissement de la crise, l'usure du pouvoir politique, son discrédit.

Le « moment Potemkine », est le point de basculement, quand l'autorité s'effondre et apparaît pour ce qu'elle est, c'est à dire nue, c'est quand il ne reste plus que la force physique de deux personnes qui se font face. C'est quand l'officier

donne un ordre et que, désobéissant, le matelot frappe l'officier et le terrasse. La force de ceux qui n'ont pas le pouvoir, ça a toujours été la coordination du nombre et l'irruption violente des masses dans le domaine où se règlent leurs destinées.

5) Nécessité d'une organisation révolutionnaire

En plus de la lutte au « long cours » contre le capitalisme « ordinaire », y inclus les différentes variantes de réformisme (sociales-démocrates et staliniennes), nous sommes engagés dans une course de vitesse contre le fascisme montant. Nous ne pouvons donc ni attendre ce « moment Potemkine », ni faire sans lui, c'est à dire sans le grand nombre et sans son irruption violente.

À l'occasion de la guerre par procuration entre les USA et la Russie, (voulue et préparée par les USA) sur le terrain ukrainien, une fraction majoritaire des organisations se réclamant de Trotsky et de sa continuité avec Lénine, se sont compromises dans une Union sacrée avec leurs bourgeoisies respectives et avec l'impérialisme, (comme la sociale démocratie en 1914).

C'est dans ce contexte contradictoire qu'il faut de nouveau mais inlassablement poser et reposer la question de l'organisation révolutionnaire. Cette crise, longue elle aussi, des organisations révolutionnaires se réclamant et de Lénine et de Trotsky, est aujourd'hui à un tournant. Nous devons rompre d'avec les courants et organisations faillis, et rechercher les convergences avec ceux et celles qui, sur la question de la guerre en Ukraine n'ont pas faillis, sans crainte des confrontations inévitables, du fait d'histoires différentes. La problématique du parti révolutionnaire se pose aujourd'hui à l'intersection 1) de la conception léniniste du parti qui s'oppose aux conceptions de Kautsky, d'une part et de Moisei Ostrogorski et Roberto Michels d'autre part, 2) des élaborations de Lénine sur la période révolutionnaire 3) des textes de Trotsky connu sous le titre de Défense du marxisme, et 4) de la question de savoir dans quelle dialectique s'articulent la question du droit des nations et la question des classes, c'est à dire laquelle de ces deux questions est principale.

La Consegnna di Lenin: Trasformare la Guerra Imperialista in Guerra Civile!

Gian Franco Camboni (Sardegna Rossa - Italy)

1) Il realismo e il disfattismo rivoluzionari di Lenin

Lenin, al contrario, degli altri capi dell'Internazionale operaia e socialista non si discostò mai nella teoria e nella pratica dalla regola fissata da Machiavelli nel Libro VI del *Principe*: “Ecco perché tutti i profeti armati vinsero e i disarmati andarono in rovina”. Il titolo del cap.VI del *Principe* è “I principati nuovi conquistati con le proprie armi e capacità”.

L'epoca dell'imperialismo si caratterizzava nell'elaborazione di Lenin come l'epoca in cui la classe operaia creerà i suoi “principati novi” e a questo compito doveva essere preparato il partito rivoluzionario.

Nel congresso dell'Internazionale operaia e socialista di Parigi del 1900 si individua la linea di sviluppo che porterà alla prima guerra mondiale imperialista. Nella discussione sulla “politica del militarismo”, Rosa Luxemburg dirà “che questa si è generalizzata ed accentuata nella forma politica dell'imperialismo. Questa politica è stata inaugurata dalla guerra cino-giapponese; poi sono seguite la guerra ispanico-americana, del Transvaal e infine quella dell'Europa unita contro la Cina...La

società borghese è entrata in una nuova fase della sua evoluzione...ma si esaurisce là il suo ultimo sforzo e precipita il momento fatale della sua disfatta.” Dopo la guerra russo-giapponese, la rivoluzione che ne seguì e i grandi scioperi del 1905 la Rivoluzionaria tedesca propose lo sciopero politico di massa come forma di lotta per abbattere la dominazione capitalista.

Riflettendo sull’esperienza rivoluzionaria del 1905, Lenin osservava che lo sciopero politico di massa non può essere la forma di lotta per la conquista del potere politico: “che lo sciopero politico generale dev’essere considerato, nell’attuale fase del movimento, non tanto un mezzo autonomo di lotta, quanto invece un mezzo sussidiario rispetto all’insurrezione; e che quindi è bene subordinare la scelta del momento per un simile sciopero, la scelta del luogo e dei settori di lavoro a cui deve estendersi, al momento e alle condizioni della forma principale di lotta, che è l’insurrezione armata.”

La questione dell’insurrezione fu posta da Lenin polemizzando contro gli economicisti e la concezione menscevica del partito come atto a cui i militanti dovevano essere sempre pronti: “l’organizzazione che si costruirà intorno da sé stessa intorno al giornale, l’organizzazione dei suoi collaboratori (nel senso largo della parola ,cioè di tutti coloro che se ne occuperanno) sarà precisamente pronta a tutto, sia a salvare l’onore il prestigio e la tradizione del partito nei momenti della peggiore ‘depressione rivoluzionaria’ che a preparare, a decidere e ad attuare l’insurrezione armata di tutto il popolo ”(*Che fare?*).

Negli anni che precedono la prima grande guerra imperialista ci fu il grande dibattito sull’armamento generale del popolo, la milizia popolare da contrapporre agli eserciti di massa, scrisse Karl Radek: “Non c’è miglior pietra di paragone per l’imperialismo della richiesta della milizia. La lotta per la milizia significa per il proletariato il passaggio dalla difesa all’attacco.” Sempre Radek, polemizzando con Jean Jaurès, chiarisce che l’armamento generale del popolo, la milizia popolare non sarà mai accettata dalla borghesia: “ed è proprio la convinzione nella compatibilità della democrazia con il capitalismo, parte di un’ideologia democratica piccolo-borghese, che ha dettato la sua visione di milizia al nostro compagno francese Jean Jaurès. Se nella sua opera estremamente interessante *L’armée nouvelle* collega l’idea di milizia con il completo allontanamento della Francia dalle strade della politica imperialista, e crede nella possibilità di una politica non solo pacifica ma puramente di difesa per la Francia, quindi la milizia non ha questa visione nulla a che fare con la realtà capitalistica. È un’utopia, perché il capitalismo francese si aggrapperà alla politica imperialista come tutti gli altri, finché il proletariato non gli toglierà il timone dalle mani.”

La sinistra della II Internazionale nella discussione della milizia popolare segue, sul piano teorico ,la contraddizione del militarismo individuata ed esposta da Engels nell’*Anti-dühring*... (Ma questo militarismo reca in sé anche il germe della sua propria rovina “esso è costretto a prendere sempre più sul serio il servizio militare obbligatorio per tutti e con ciò ,in definitiva ,a familiarizzare tutto il popolo con l’uso delle armi e a renderlo quindi capace di far valere ad un certo momento la sua volontà di fronte ai signori della casta militare che esercitano il comando ...A questo punto l’esercito dei principi si muta in un esercito del popolo ;la macchina si rifiuta

di servire „il militarismo soggiace alla dialettica del suo proprio sviluppo”

Perciò possiamo dire che l'imperativo politico di Lenin “trasformare la guerra imperialista in guerra civile” non cade dal cielo. Allora dove sta la differenza tra Lenin e la sinistra dell'Internazionale Operaia e Socialista? Lenin ha preparato sul piano pratico i bolscevichi a quest'impresa. La contraddizione del militarismo fornisce il materiale ma solo la specifica preparazione del partito può dare forma cosciente a quella materia, nel *Che fare?* L'indicazione è chiara: “Non appena le nostre forze lo permetteranno, dovremo occuparci con la massima attenzione della propaganda e dell'agitazione tra i soldati e gli ufficiali, della creazione di organizzazioni militari appartenenti al nostro partito.”

Per il III congresso del POSDR (12- 27 aprile 1905) Lenin scrive due progetti, una risoluzione e fa due discorsi sull'insurrezione. L'organizzazione di squadre di combattimento di partito e l'organizzazione per il lavoro di propaganda nell'esercito erano complementari. Nel 1905 fu formata l' “Organizzazione militare” che svolse il lavoro all'interno dell'esercito pubblicando i seguenti giornali: “Caserma” a Pietroburgo, “La vita del soldato” a Mosca, “Bollettino della caserma” in Finlandia, “La voce di un soldato” (Riga), “La vita soldato” (Ekaterinoslav).

Ecco perché la linea della “trasformazione della guerra imperialista in guerra civile” non era un “flatus voci”: dopo il febbraio del 1917 si tenne dal 16 al 23 giugno 1917 si tenne la Conferenza tutta russa delle organizzazioni del POSDR(b), alla quale parteciparono 167 delegati che rappresentano 26mila membri del partito, membri di queste organizzazioni.

Nel 1923, quando nel centro del capitalismo europeo, in Germania, si dovette mettere in pratica il piano insurrezionale elaborato a Mosca il suo fallimento fu dovuto all'incapacità dei comunisti tedeschi per il loro “fatalismo e attendismo” ben individuati da Trotsky: “molti comunisti occidentali che non si sono mai sbarazzati dalla loro maniera fatalista e passiva di affrontare i principali problemi della rivoluzione... C'è ancora nel partito comunista tedesco una corrente molto forte incline al fatalismo rivoluzionario. La rivoluzione si avvicina, dicono, e porterà con sé l'insurrezione e ci darà il potere. Quanto al partito, il suo ruolo è, in questo momento, quello di fare l'agitazione rivoluzionaria e di attenderne gli effetti. In tali condizioni, porre schiettamente la questione della scadenza dell'insurrezione, significa sradicare dal partito la passività ed il fatalismo, metterlo di fronte ai principali problemi della rivoluzione, in particolare all'organizzazione cosciente dell'insurrezione per cacciare il nemico dal potere.”

2) Il realismo e il disfattismo rivoluzionari oggi

La tattica del disfattismo rivoluzionario non fu sviluppata in astratto ma nel concreto esistente: gli eserciti di leva e di massa.

Oggi che nei paesi dominanti del sistema imperialista non ci sono più eserciti di leva e di massa ma eserciti di professionisti che lavoro bisogna fare per trasformare la guerra imperialista in guerra civile?

Innanzitutto dobbiamo chiederci gli eserciti di professionisti sono in buona salute? La risposta è negativa. Per esempio negli USA c'è una crisi del reclutamento

che procura gli incubi ai vertici militari: “La forza composta da soli volontari potrebbe finalmente aver raggiunto il punto di rottura... subito dopo il ritiro completo degli Stati Uniti dall’Afghanistan, la scorsa estate, è iniziata una pericolosa crisi di reclutamento, che non mostra segni di miglioramento nell’immediato futuro. Di conseguenza, le forze armate statunitensi si stanno riducendo, non a causa di scelte strategiche, ma semplicemente perché non ci sono abbastanza volontari qualificati – e ciò potrebbe avere enormi implicazioni per la posizione strategica degli Stati Uniti in un mondo sempre più incerto e pericoloso Per 50 anni, l’esercito americano ha fatto affidamento su un flusso ininterrotto di volontari volenterosi per riempire i suoi ranghi in tempi di pace e di guerra. Tuttavia, la maggior parte delle tendenze che hanno creato l’attuale crisi di reclutamento non cambieranno presto e, se non affrontate, potrebbero presto minacciare la capacità della forza composta da soli volontari di proteggere la nazione. Un ritorno alla coscrizione non è né auspicabile né politicamente fattibile, dal momento che, come spesso ci piace scherzare, gli unici gruppi in America che si oppongono ad una leva sono i democratici, i repubblicani e gli indipendenti. Quindi, senza un’azione urgente per migliorare l’idoneità e aumentare la propensione, le forze armate potrebbero ritrovarsi a continuare involontariamente a ridursi per ragioni del tutto non strategiche e potrebbero presto essere troppo piccole per affrontare le crescenti sfide alla sicurezza che gli Stati Uniti dovranno affrontare nei prossimi anni e oltre.”

Le masse oggi non vedono di buon occhio l’esercito professionista che associano all’economia di guerra e ben comprendono che la sua ragion d’essere è quella di aggredire.

Allora la guerra alla guerra imperialista deve farsi rivendicando l’abolizione dell’esercito di professionisti e rivendicare l’armamento generale del popolo, la milizia popolare. La classe operaia sciopera per gli aumenti salariali, per l’istruzione pubblica, per la conquista e la difesa dei diritti politici, sindacali e contro l’imperialismo così deve scioperare e mobilitarsi per abolire l’esercito dei volontari e per e rivendicare la milizia popolare, l’armamento generale del popolo.

Rivendicare l’abolizione dell’esercito professionale senza la rivendicazione dell’armamento generale del popolo è come voler zappare non avendo braccia! Perciò: “poiché la rivendicazione della milizia indica la via al potere, essa costituisce il nostro più eccellente slogan di lotta contro l’imperialismo, la parola d’ordine dei nostri giorni” Karl Radek.

Reflections on the best tribute we can pay to comrade Lenin

Enric Mompó and Toni Marcó (Red Roja-Catalonia)

Between the anniversary of the Russian Revolution and the anniversary of Lenin's death many articles have appeared, recalling well-known quotations and praising him in ways he would not have liked. So we prefer to point out two decisive themes of Lenin's work: his unfinished fight to prevent the bureaucratic degeneration of the Communist Party and, even more important for us in the present, to apply the essence of his lessons and experience to what needs to be done in our time and in the concrete European situation.

One of the merits of the great revolutionaries who, like Lenin, followed in the footsteps of Marx and Engels was their ability to distill the essence of their work, to transfer it to a time and circumstances different from those in which it was written, and to escape from the prevailing "evangelical" and dogmatic interpretations. Lenin was aware from the outset that Russia was not the country that Marx and Engels had envisaged as the anteroom of the world socialist revolution (although Marx, towards the end of his life, had considered the possibility of Russia's transition to socialism without having to go through capitalist hell). However, Russia, at the beginning of the 20th century, is not a "backward" country (pre-capitalist on the way to capitalism), but "underdeveloped" (peripherally integrated into world capitalism)

(Jorge Beinstein, “K. Marx: pending issues”). Questions such as the construction of the party, its function in the organization of the masses, the question of nationalities, or the struggle against imperialism should be questioned and analyzed in the crucible of today’s concrete reality. In the hundred years that separate us from his death, the world has changed radically. Capitalism has entered an increasingly decadent and senile phase that threatens the existence of humanity, if not life itself on this planet. The class consciousness of the working masses has receded in Europe and also in Spain, dragging with it the left which calls itself revolutionary because it is incapable of doing what Lenin himself did, which is to make a concrete analysis of concrete reality. Lenin’s work is of enormous importance and covers the fundamental themes for the development of the communist movement, both in theory and in practice. If since 1850 we have references to the dictatorship of the proletariat and permanent revolution (Marx, “The Class Struggle in France”), Lenin and his comrades of the Bolshevik Party put them into practice and opened a new phase in human history. Their method and experience continue to enlighten revolutionaries in the current class and struggle to apply them to a different situation that we cannot fail to analyze and discuss. We would like to highlight some aspects that are particularly useful to us in this indispensable work and which have been deliberately ignored or distorted by the reformists and all the “left” that is compatible with capital and the institutions of imperialism:

- The tactic of intervention in the bourgeois parliaments, using them to denounce capitalism and as a loudspeaker of the class struggle, not to create illusions in changing the system of bourgeois democratic institutions and in no case to commit the support of the working class to one bourgeois faction against another even more reactionary. When they ask us to vote for the parties of capital in the name of stopping the extreme right, we remember that the Bolsheviks fought against the Kornilov coup without supporting the bourgeois, imperialist, and warmongering government.

- The contribution on the right of the oppressed nations to self-determination and independence, developing the concept of the proletarian nation and bringing democratic radicalism to the solution of the historical questions pending under imperialism, which only the workers’ movement can overcome on condition that it carries its struggle to the end and maintains its independence against the nationalist bourgeoisie. Today, the UN and the EU have turned the right of self-determination into a mere political formalism to be applied to some African and Asian colonies that remain economically dominated or to create divisions that favor their geostrategic interests, as in Kosovo. Because of the decline of the imperialist powers, this principle is a tool to educate the working class against Eurocentric, chauvinist and pro-imperialist interpretations; it is a premise for international solidarity with the peoples’ struggle.

- Lenin’s own definition of the imperialist phase (about the role of finance capital, the development of fictitious, speculative and parasitic capital, the impulse of destructive forces, militarism and the war industry, etc.) clashes today with postmodern theories which empty the law of value of its content and distort the concept of imperialism in order to adapt it to the limits imposed by

“democratic” bourgeois reaction and the rules of outdated international institutions.

Even in this epoch of division between groups claiming to be Marxist, of confusion and adaptation of the workers’ movement to the limits of the capitalist system under reformist directions, Lenin has an orientation to give us: to work for the political unity of revolutionaries while fighting to strengthen the practice of the workers’ movement in the sense of going beyond the simple level of economic and social demands. Raising the perspective of the socialist goal is not only possible but necessary for broad sections of the masses to see a way out of the crisis of capitalism that has plunged them into suffocating misery and precariousness. For example, young people struggling for access to housing can directly understand that only socialist planning can provide affordable housing, as Engels explained.

Lenin attached great importance to the debating, even of small differences which could conceal serious errors of tomorrow. And he was always ready to debate with all revolutionary currents, gathering contributions from Plekhanov, Axelrod, Rosa Luxemburg, etc. despite the differences and the emphasis on clarification and theory. We must once again put into practice the dialectic between the broadest discussion with the class currents, without exclusions, and the rigor to define the tasks of intervention and party building in our epoch. Therefore, we propose to work in the next period to establish a calendar of debates to which to invite and to extend as much as possible to other revolutionary currents with the double objective of recovering class independence in the workers’ and anti-imperialist movement and of setting socialism as a political objective that directs the different struggles towards the question of power.

Just as there are new factors that we have against us (the backwardness of the consciousness of the masses and the penetration of bourgeois ideology and alienation in the popular culture, including the systematic historical falsification of the class struggle), we must make use of the factors that we have in our favour. We are able to make an honest assessment of the errors and limitations of the October experience and of the international communist movement to avoid the bureaucratic danger, as Rosa Luxemburg had warned and working on the question that Rakovsky asked in a letter to the Russian Left Opposition: how to keep the power in worker’s hands. This is to examine some aspects of the Russian Civil War, the NEP and the problem of scissors, the first years of the 3rd International: Congress of Livorno, the action in Germany in March 1921, etc.

Neither Lenin, Trotsky, nor any of their Bolshevik comrades were aware of the bureaucratic danger that would corrupt to the core the revolutionary experience of October and the first victorious attempt in history to build a socialist society.

Any historical analysis of the Bolshevik deed can only start from the awareness that Lenin and his comrades acted in the midst of improvisation and urgency, that they decided and carried out, and that in carrying out, they made some mistakes. Then, they had to correct their mistakes in an extreme situation that got out of their hands, sometimes making mistakes again in the midst of a fierce struggle against the white counterrevolution and the intervention of the imperialist powers. The best tribute we can pay to Lenin and his comrades is to learn from their successes but also to be aware of their mistakes so as not to repeat them.

Revolutionary Marxism 2024

Despite her limited knowledge of what was happening (she was in prison), Rosa Luxemburg had the merit of warning her Bolshevik comrades of the dangers of making a virtue of necessity. This warning takes on a special significance that we cannot and must not ignore when we know the historical outcome that led to bureaucratic degeneration and Stalinism.

Today we must put this knowledge to work, re-read Lenin, and fight again as he did to refine the theory and methods that allow us to work at different levels: to strengthen the proletarian culture and the left wing of the workers' movement, to give a socialist perspective to the social movements and struggles, to work for their political articulation, to go beyond partial and local demands, to aim at power, to take a position in a great world anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist struggle that is on the rise.

This is the practice that we need as a basis to work with the scattered forces of revolutionary Marxism for communist unity and the construction of the revolutionary international in a process that does not allow shortcuts or voluntarist proclamations; it is about responding with determination and flexibility to the tasks posed by the situation.

Leninism: the strongest revolutionary weapon

Levent Dölek (DIP – Turkey)

On behalf of the Revolutionary Workers Party, I greet all the international participants of our conference and all our comrades and friends who follow us on various social media platforms.

We as the Revolutionary Workers' Party think that Lenin is not the past, but the future. He is the leader of the World Revolution today, as he was throughout his revolutionary life!

The 7th Congress of Revolutionary Workers Party assembled in 2023 declared 2024 as the “Year of Lenin.” This resolution formulated our party’s duty as: “To introduce Lenin’s thought and practice to the working class and youth of Turkey and explain how future generations can benefit from it.”

This should be the duty of revolutionary socialists of every nation. We hope that this conference will contribute to the achievement of this mission on an international scale.

Who is Lenin?

Lenin is the theorist and architect of the Bolshevik Party as a disciplined and democratic centralist proletarian war organization, from his work “What is to be Done” to the 21 conditions of the Comintern.

Lenin is the victorious tactician of the revolution from his work “Two Tactics” to

his “April Theses”. Lenin’s subtle tactics from the February revolution to the October revolution, his jeweler-like meticulousness in timing, and his contributions to the art of insurrection have been invaluable contributions to the theory and practice of Marxism.

State and Revolution is an excellent summary of Marxist state theory, a harsh slap in the face to his contemporary Kautskys who denied that the working class should in revolutionary manner dismantle the bourgeois state apparatus, but at the same time, firmly committed to the interests of the bureaucracy, he promoted the reactionary utopia of “socialism in one country” by claiming that the state would exist even under communism. It is a harsh warning to future Stalins who lead to radical revisionism.

“Left” Communism: A Childhood Disease is the symmetric of State and Revolution: This last one was a theoretical-political blow to the revisionist and opportunist right within the international socialist movement, while “Left” Communism is leaving aside the necessary links of the road to revolution and immediately turning to power. It is a warning and an answer to leftist movements that want it.

If Lenin had lived, it is clear from the time period known as “Lenin’s last struggle” how he would have struggled to establish the future in the newly established Soviet country. Lenin would never agree to a nationalist bureaucratic counter-revolution and continued to fight against it.

Above all from the years of First World War to the era of first world revolutionary wave of October Revolution from Zimmerwald to Comintern he is the leader of the world socialist revolution... This is how we see him...

The leader of British imperialism Winston Churchill of course would see him in a different perspective. Asked about Lenin, Churchill said “Was he someone who wanted to save the world and his method of doing it was to blow it up?”

“Blow it up”! The concept of “revolutionary” could only be expressed in this way on the language of an imperialist.

Yes! Lenin became the leader of the world revolution with the revolutionary and internationalist pole he built against the social democrats who tried to reconcile socialism with the imperialist system and repair the capitalist system with reforms. His revolutionary pole as a genuine Marxist pole, was insisting to blow capitalist state up rather than to reform it. And the name of this pole is called Leninism as well as Bolshevism and Revolutionary Marxism for one hundred years.

It is necessary to remember the two great leaders of the internationalist pole that Lenin built against social chauvinism under the difficult conditions of the First World War. Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht. They were also murdered by social democratic traitors on 15th of January, 4 years before Lenin. These three are the 3L’s of revolutionary internationalism...

Rosa Luxemburg exposed social democracy’s support of its own imperialist governments in the war with these words: “The global historical appeal of the **Communist Manifesto** undergoes a fundamental revision: proletarians of all countries, unite in peace-time and cut each other’s throats in war!” Liebknecht’s internationalist phrase “the main enemy is at home” was an expression of Lenin’s revolutionary strategy “turn imperialist war into civil war”. This strategy made Bolshevism an

enemy of imperialism as well as the nationalist bourgeoisie of their own country. This position was not only virtuous, it was also the revolutionary strategy that led the proletariat to conquer power in Russia.

Lenin saw the October revolution as the beginning of the world revolution. After Lenin became the leader of world communism, he used his doctrine on the national question to draw the path of the world revolution. The conclusion he reached was that, on the one hand, communism was necessary for the liberation of colonial and semi-colonial countries, that the material existence conditions of the peasantry of these countries were suitable for organizing in soviets, and on the other hand, it was possible for the people of these countries to have no reservations about communism, that they would be oppressed again by an oppressor nation, so they could be saved only thanks to communism's approach to the national question. Thus, Lenin draws the path of the world communist society of the future. He carries the communist program of Marx and Engels to a world scale and makes it universal. Liberation will occur through the unification of post-revolutionary peoples in the heart of the same federation, the Soviet state.

Leninist policy on national question, never understood by the centrist, right-wing fractions of Russian and world communism. Nationalist bureaucratic tendencies were opposed to Leninist policy of Nations from a Great Russian perspective. Also we can observe liberal and opportunist tendencies which defending right to self-determination referencing Lenin. But in reality, they are defending not Lenin's principles but Wilson's...

Nowadays these opportunists are speaking about Ukraine's right to self-determination against Russia not against NATO!

On the other hand! Russia's capitalist restorationist leader Putin accuses Lenin "placing a time bomb under the Russian state by drawing administrative borders along ethnic lines."

Putin is wrong. Lenin never placed a time bomb under the Russian state. He blew it up directly with the revolutionary cannons of Avrora. He demolished not Russia but the bourgeois Russian state and built a new state with new working class roots. A state which is protected by a new, Red, workers and peasants army! A state which is not Russian but a Soviet State. And this non-Russian Soviet state had become the worst nightmare of imperialist for a century long time. And hope for all oppressed nations of the World against colonialism and imperialism.

Is it very ironic that Churchill and Putin's unity against Lenin? Their class base unites them against Lenin. But the saying "the enemy of my enemy is my friend" is not always true.

Putin and Russia are now in a war against NATO and US and British imperialism. In the recent war which can be defined as a prologue for a World War 3 we need "concrete analysis of the concrete situation" as Lenin always said. In the present war, neutrality is unacceptable. No doubt! We are in favour of the defeat of NATO and its proxies. Again! "the enemy of my enemy is my friend" is not always true. So, we are following Lenin for the World revolution. And we shout "Soviet Union again!" We are not following Putin we don't give any political support to him who says "Soviet Union never again!"

Leninist war policy focuses on the analysis of the present war based on the interests of the world proletariat and the world revolution. As Lenin says “Marxism requires a concrete assessment of each separate war.”

For the present war, we must understand that the political aim of today’s present war is to bring Russia and China to their knees by sieging them in military and economic ways by US led imperialism. We must understand the political goal of this war is to carry the capitalist restoration to its logical conclusion by turning these giant countries into giant semi-colonies and further possibly to divide them into pieces.

For the present genocidal war of Zionist Israel against Palestine, we don’t separate this war from the general imperialist campaign of imperialism. Regarding the future war, our attitude will be the same in the wars of US imperialism, directly or through its proxies, against China, Iran or North Korea. We don’t give political support to the leadership of these countries but unconditionally we are in favor of the defeat of US imperialism.

Lenin’s theory of imperialism saves us from the mistake of falling into a reactionary policy of neutrality by declaring Russia and China as imperialists. Lenin’s theory of imperialism shows us that the Russian economy, in which the export of raw materials is decisive, not the export of capital, or China, in which the export of commodities is decisive, not the export of capital, cannot be described as imperialist. Lenin provided us with the necessary tools to distinguish between expansionist policies or struggles for regional influence, on the one hand, and imperialism, on the other, which means the struggle for domination over the world.

Leninism is unity of theory and action, unity of strategy and tactics fully dedicated to the main goal “world socialist revolution.”

Leninism is the strongest revolutionary weapon at the hands of world proletariat. Why not may be a bomb to blow up not the world as Churchill said but the imperialist world order.

We need that weapon. We need this revolutionary political bomb rather than bombastic fads and fashions like post labeled ideologies, countless types of identity politics and liberal-left garbage.

Lenin’s thought passed through the test of history successfully. We have witnessed the confirmation of Leninism in the victories and defeats of the world proletariat. From the October Revolution to the collapse of the Soviet Union, the determining factor in victories and defeats was the presence or absence of the Leninist party. Speaking in terms of world revolution, we can say that victory and defeat will depend on whether the Comintern, which represents the organizational pinnacle of the Leninist party, is rebuilt or not. Of course, this task cannot be achieved without the programmatic achievements of the Fourth International.

The era of proletarian revolutions opened by the October Revolution continues. Revolutions are happening. We will see revolutions, we must prepare their victory. Therefore, the answer to the question “What is to be done” is still the same! Forward to the construction of revolutionary workers’ parties and international that organize the vanguard of the working class and put an end to imperialist capitalist barbarism!

Lenin and youth

Ernesto Agelis/Mitrofanis Patsouras (EEK – Greece)

121 years ago, Lenin, in September 1903, wrote the text “The Tasks of Revolutionary Youth”, a point of reference for revolutionary youth also today. In this text, the great bolshevik leader, responding to a related article that had been published, points out that the task of the young revolutionaries is to acquire a Marxist consciousness, by joining, training and fighting through the lines of the political body of Marxism, the Marxist Party of the working class, mentioning also the way to achieve this goal within the context of the ideological, political and organizational work of the leadership of the proletariat under formation at that time.

For Lenin, this Marxist political consciousness and revolutionary struggle of the youth, could not be acquired with ultimatums, moral preaching, appeals and bureaucratic trickery, suffocating the necessary independent political life and action of the youth, or submitting to their spontaneous instinct, as was the case with Stalinism, but in a living, non-dogmatic and ever-developing -collectively organized and disciplined way. And although in the youth all the contradictions of the bourgeois society are expressed, as they reflected with a relative peculiarity or even amorphously way, Lenin’s **criterion** for the work in the most politically advanced but disorganized and uneducated strata of the youth, is also in this case political, with the Bolshevik sense of the term, that is, on the basis of the rule of uncompromising organized struggle for the emancipation of the labor movement from bourgeois ideology and any bourgeois influence. In short, Lenin does not give organizational

recipes and formulas, supposed to be suitable for every situation, but he analyzes in a Marxist way the relationship between the party and the youth in the ongoing historical political conditions, from the viewpoint of the needs of the revolutionary action that derive from them. Precisely because of this methodology, Lenin's approach is as relevant as ever today.

Lenin, recognizing the revolutionary potential of the rapidly growing student movement, in the years preceding the revolution of 1905, fought against the obscuration of the main task of its conscious part, which was the consolidation and development of Marxist education and mobilization at the forefront of the class struggle of the proletariat and its vanguard. Having established with his work "What is to be Done?" the primacy of such an approach, that means the adoption and development of uncompromising Marxist theoretical-political work and its constant testing in the independent work of the proletarian Party among the masses, Lenin was able to face with greater flexibility in his polemic, the confusion that was shown in the youth movement, by the devotees of ideological compromise, making a brilliant enlightening contribution, regarding the inextricable link that has in it, the politics and sociology under the guidance of materialist dialectic. The essence of Lenin's polemic is that the differentiation of distinct political groups in the student movement reflects the differentiation of political forces in society, which ultimately represent different class interests. And this class determination of party differentiation in society and therefore in the student world, Lenin explains, is carried out only by political struggle, sometimes by long persistent struggle and in other situations in a stormy way in conditions in of a political crisis. The task of Marxists in the student youth, Lenin concludes, is to seek the most conscious and consistent separation of politically heterogeneous groups.

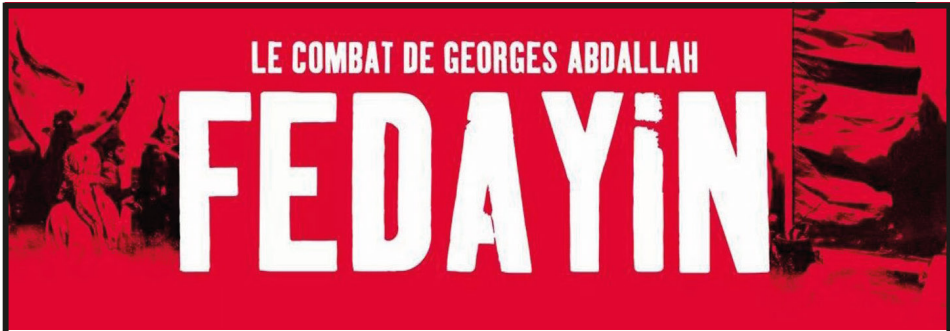
This kind of approach expresses, with the ideological acumen of Lenin, the necessity of the revolutionary intransigence of the Party, in the service of the proletariat and its historical interests. The importance that Lenin attached to this struggle for political separation within the lines of the labor movement, with the education of the revolutionaries in Marxism and with all the Party's methods of action based on the Marxist tradition, proved to be crucial throughout the long course after 1905, leading to the victorious seizure of power in 1917. The relentless ideological struggle of Lenin and the Bolsheviks, against all forms of bourgeois ideology among the proletarian youth, maintaining and dialectically superseding the conquests of earlier Bolshevism, acquired after the victory of October, a completely new, qualitatively higher level in the decisions on the tasks of the communist youth taken by the Third International, in its 3rd and 4th congresses.

In the first of these resolutions, imbued with the Bolshevik spirit, the Communist International defines as the basic task of the Communist Parties, the support of the work of the Communist youths, which were organized at the level of the Communist Youth International, which was founded about six months after the Communist International, in November 1919, by young leaders who had broken away from Social Democracy. The main task set by the Communist International to the newly created Communist Youth International was the complete political subordination of the Communist Youth organizations to their newly formed Party, while at the same

time maintaining that organizational independence that their work requires among the masses of working youth. So the second world congress of the Communist Youth International which began in April 1921 in Jena, continued in Berlin and ended in July in Moscow, took this decision. It is important to point out here that at the 4th Congress of the Communist International, its last congress as a fighting international revolutionary organization of the proletariat, the danger arising from the split that capital was organizing between the generations of the working class, with the youth, because of unemployment, to attempt to turn into a “battering ram” against older workers, was emphasized. The Congress sounds the alarm against the imposition of such a division on the working class. Also, in the relevant decision of the 4th Congress, it is even proposed to create associations for the children of the workers, with the responsibility for their education by the Communist youth. The rise of Stalinism destroyed all this work, turning the Communist Youth International into a degenerate instrument of class cooperation for the survival of the bureaucracy to eventually dissolve it too, like the Third International, also in 1943.

The struggle for the penetration and consolidation of the revolutionary party within the proletarian youth, which in the immortal words of Karl Liebknecht, is the flame of the proletarian revolution, is today more actual than ever, in this age of advanced rot of decadent capitalism; Trotsky warned in “Defense of Marxism” the world crisis and decline of capitalism offers great possibilities but also brings terrible dangers. The legacy of Lenin and Bolshevism, is a guide in the struggle for the revolutionary internationalist youth of the Party of the working class and the New International, which for the EEK-Trotskyists, is the Fourth International. This tradition, an integral part of the tradition of the oppressed, lives on in the international and internationalist struggle of the Rakovsky Center, for the crushing of imperialism, its capitalist governments and international institutions, with workers’ power and the opening of the way to universal communism, through the world socialist revolution.

Youth of EEK 1/2024



The documentary film “Fedayin: George Abdallah’s Combat” by Vacarme(s) Films collective has been projected in more than 20 countries and translated into several languages. Now, it’s available on Youtube.

The documentary, originally in French, is available with English, Arabic, Farsi, Spanish, Catalan, Italian, German and Turkish subtitles (Turkish subtitles were translated by militants of the Friends of Palestine against Imperialism and Zionism).

The documentary follows the life and struggle of George Abdallah, Lebanese communist revolutionary and a supporter of Palestinian cause jailed in France for 39 years. As a revolutionary who dedicated his life since his youth to the liberation of Palestine, he fought the Zionist occupiers alongside the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) during the invasion of Lebanon by Zionist Israel. He was convicted in France, with the accusation of being one of the founders of the armed organization Lebanese Armed Revolutionary Faction, that fought the Zionist invasion of Lebanon not only in Lebanon but also in the imperialist countries supporting the invasion, including France.

He became eligible for release in 1999 and the Lebanese government officially asked for his release and deportation to Lebanon, yet he is still being held in prison by French imperialism.

Available free on Youtube:



@collectifvacarmesfilms4009





L'adresse pour Lenin 100

Campagne unitaire pour la libération de Georges Abdallah

Chers amis, chers camarades,

au nom de tous les camarades de la Campagne Unitaire pour la Libération de Georges Abdallah, je souhaite tout d'abord remercier les camarades pour l'organisation de cette conférence et de nous donner l'occasion de rendre hommage au glorieux et grand dirigeant révolutionnaire qu'est Lénine.

Je ne m'attarderai pas à retracer en détail l'héritage ô combien crucial que Lénine a laissé au mouvement communiste mondial et au prolétariat : son œuvre théorique et son action révolutionnaire ; sa contribution décisive à la formation d'une avant-garde révolutionnaire moderne et d'un Parti de type nouveau - communiste ; son rôle de phare des forces révolutionnaires pendant la Première Guerre mondiale dans ce parcours victorieux des Bolcheviks vers la Révolution socialiste d'Octobre et dans les premières années de la construction socialiste ; et son rôle tout aussi essentiel dans la fondation de l'internationale communiste.

Ce sur quoi, en réalité, je souhaiterais surtout concentrer cet hommage est son apport essentiel à notre compréhension de l'impérialisme. Tout démontre aujourd'hui la justesse de son analyse du stade monopoliste, parasitaire et agonisant du capitalisme parvenu à son stade suprême qu'est l'impérialisme :

1. cette tendance à une concentration toujours plus extrême de la production dans les mains d'entreprises géantes et surpuissantes qui imposent leur monopole et leur diktat aux peuples et au reste du monde ;
2. cette domination toujours plus affirmée et autonome d'un capital financier

oligarchique

3. cette quête inépuisable de profits qui passe aussi nécessairement par l'exportation des capitaux vers les pays opprimés - ce que certains nomment « mondialisation », « délocalisation » ou encore « marché mondial » - et qui n'est autre que l'accaparement des terres, des matières premières et l'exploitation d'une main d'œuvre par cette oligarchie financière et ces grands monopoles internationaux.

4. et enfin ce partage du monde exacerbé révélant aussi toutes les contradictions inter-impérialistes de ces monopoles et des Etats qu'ils contrôlent.

Car ceci aussi Lénine nous le rappelle : dans cette bataille pour le contrôle de territoires, la tendance qui l'emporte est non pas celle de la collusion mais bien celle de la concurrence s'exprimant selon les deux faces d'une même médaille : sur le plan économique et militaire.

Aujourd'hui, on ne dénombre plus les régions du monde qui sont autant de zones de guerres et de tensions inter-impérialistes : que ce soit en Ukraine, en Arménie et en Azerbaïdjan, au Pakistan, en Iran, en Ethiopie et dans toute la corne de l'Afrique, au Yémen, en République démocratique du Congo et dans toute la région des grands lacs, au Sahel, dans la zone du Pacifique avec notamment Taïwan mais pas seulement, et aussi dans tout le Moyen-Orient. Ce sont autant de « zones de tempêtes » - reflets de la profondeur des contradictions d'un système qui court vers sa propre agonie - dont parlera Mao Zedong pour caractériser l'Afrique, l'Amérique latine, l'Asie et toutes ces zones des nations et peuples opprimés en proie à l'impérialisme et à ses contradictions. Mais ce sont aussi autant de zones qui se révoltent contre lui et qui annoncent le caractère inévitable de la crise révolutionnaire qu'engendre un tel système.

Aujourd'hui l'une de ces « zones de tempêtes » fait en particulier trembler « les tigres de papier » par son déluge d'Al Aqsa : c'est la Palestine et sa glorieuse résistance qui officiellement depuis 76 ans mais en réalité depuis l'arrivée du premier colon sur sa terre fait front et combat inlassablement ce bras organique de l'impérialisme dans la région qu'est l'entité sioniste. Car à travers cette lutte de libération nationale, c'est bien cela dont il s'agit : non pas seulement lutter contre un ennemi qui a occupé une terre qui ne lui appartenait nullement et qui en a chassé par la terreur une partie de ses habitants ; non pas seulement mener un combat contre un colon usurpateur et pour un droit inaliénable ; mais bien aussi mettre à mal une entité, véritable tête de pont du système impérialiste au Moyen-Orient, créée de toute pièce pour perpétuer l'accaparement des richesses et maintenir les peuples et les nations arabes sous sa domination. Cela aussi, Lénine nous l'enseigne et nous permet de ne pas nous perdre dans les méandres d'analyses erronées, idéalistes ou opportunistes. Ainsi, tout comme il a su en son temps dénoncer à travers sa critique de Kautsky tout ce qui pouvait conduire à justifier le développement d'un capitalisme soi-disant « réformable » qui pourrait être « sain » après quelques corrections, il nous aide dans ce combat contre l'impérialisme à choisir clairement notre camp : non pas celui des réformistes mais bien celui des révolutionnaires ! Ainsi dans le cas de la Palestine, cette boussole conduit à nous positionner clairement entre deux pôles résolument antagoniques : l'un fait de négociations, de concessions, de collaborations et au final de soumissions, prêt à brader la cause

palestinienne au nom d'un soi-disant « Etat réellement souverain » au milieu d'un projet de colonisation active ou encore d'une soi-disant coexistence pacifique entre deux "Etats" où le colon et le colonisé cohabiteraient miraculeusement en toute harmonie ; l'autre lié à la résistance, principalement armée, dans cette lutte de libération nationale pour une cause palestinienne qui est avant tout une cause de l'anti-impérialisme, de l'anticolonialisme, de l'antisionisme et contre tous les Etats réactionnaires arabes.

Dans cette guerre aux contours bien tranchés, un des glorieux résistants de cette cause a toujours choisi son camp : c'est Georges Abdallah. Ce combattant communiste, durant toute sa vie, n'a eu de cesse d'être aux côtés du peuple palestinien et des peuples opprimés et de combattre inlassablement les impérialistes. Détenu par l'Etat français depuis maintenant plus de 39 ans alors qu'il est libérable depuis 1999 - Georges Abdallah n'a jamais rien renié de ses engagements et s'est toujours tenu aux côtés des masses populaires en lutte contre ce « *système mortifère de misère et de répression* » qu'est le système capitaliste. Ce révolutionnaire - sur les pas de Lénine et de tous les révolutionnaires - porte en lui l'optimisme historique et affirme avec détermination que le peuple palestinien est toujours là, que la cause palestinienne est plus que jamais vivante et que forte de son expérience historique et héroïque de lutte, elle est et restera prête à continuer à relever le défi jusqu'à la victoire. Cet élan, il sait comme personne le porter et le transmettre et cela aussi Lénine et tous les révolutionnaires nous l'ont appris. Or c'est fort de cet enseignement et de cet optimisme révolutionnaire que nous tenons aussi à réaffirmer ici que les masses populaires et en particulier les masses populaires palestiniennes et leurs avant-gardes combattantes peuvent compter sur notre solidarité active et notre soutien sans faille dans leur lutte pour la victoire ou la victoire !

Que mille initiatives solidaires fleurissent en faveur de la Palestine et sa prometteuse Résistance !

La solidarité toute la solidarité avec les prolétaires en lutte !

Honneur aux Martyrs et aux masses populaires en lutte !

À bas l'impérialisme et ses chiens de garde sionistes et autres réactionnaires arabes !


Le capitalisme n'est plus que barbarie, honneur à tous ceux et celles qui s'y opposent dans la diversité de leurs expressions !

Ensemble Camarades, et ce n'est qu'ensemble que nous vaincrons !

À vous tous Camarades, nos salutations communistes.

Paris, le 22 janvier 2024

Campagne unitaire pour la libération de Georges Abdallah
Campagne.unitaire.gabdallah@gmail.com



RedMed
www.RedMed.org

RedMed and Christian Rakovsky Centre on the move!




RedMed (short for Red Mediterranean) was, until recently, a web site that published news, opinion, commentary and political declarations from around the Mediterranean Sea, the Balkans, the Middle East, the Black Sea region, Transcaucasia, and the broader Eurasian region. It has now been transformed, as of the beginning of 2020, into a centre for propagating socialist thinking, carrying commentary and political statements and publishing various journals from the Mediterranean region all the way to Russia and the former Soviet Union.

RedMed used to work hand in hand with the Balkan Socialist Centre Christian Rakovsky to establish links between socialists and revolutionaries from these regions. However, parallel to the expansion of RedMed, the Christian Rakovsky Centre also broadened its remit. Over time three Russian organisations became members of the Christian Rakovsky Centre: the OKP (United Communist Party), the RPK (Russian Party of Communists), and the Association “Soviet Union”, in addition to the original members, two political parties of two Mediterranean countries, EEK (Workers Revolutionary Party) of Greece and DIP (Revolutionary Workers Party) of Turkey. Thereupon the centre changed its name to the International Socialist Centre Christian Rakovsky.

RedMed is now publishing on a bimonthly basis both the Communist of Leningrad, journal brought out for quite some time in Russian by the RPK, and Soviet Renaissance, a new online journal in Russian prepared by the Association “Soviet Union”. This is in addition to its already established commentary and political statements on world affairs in many different languages, first and foremost in English, but also French, Italian, Greek, Turkish, Russian, Farsi and Arabic.

RedMed welcomes letters, comments, news about struggles, debates and material in different languages. We would appreciate very much if people would volunteer translating the different articles and declarations that we publish in the web site into their native tongue.

Let us join hands to bring down the yoke of imperialism and capitalism in Europe, in Asia, in the Middle East and North Africa, and across the world.

 redmed.org  [RedMedOrg](https://twitter.com/RedMedOrg)  [redmed_org](https://www.instagram.com/redmed_org)

Liberating the imagination for future memories in the realms of 'alam al-mithal and 'alam al-khayal

Jeremy Lester

*I will scream in my solitude,
not to wake up the sleeping.
But for my scream to wake me
from my imprisoned imagination!*

*A country on the verge of dawn,
awaken your horse
and ascend lightly,
lightly
to surpass your dream,
then sit - when the sky paints you -
on a rock and sigh*

Mahmoud Darwish

Over the years, many studies have been carried out demonstrating the terrible consequences and effects on Palestinian children of living under the constant violence of Israeli occupation. These effects are not only physical, exposing them

on a daily basis to injustice, imprisonment (often just for the Israeli-defined “crime” of throwing stones), humiliation, segregation and aggressions, but also, just as importantly, psychological and mental.

One aspect of these multiple psychological effects that has been investigated much less, however, has been in the sphere of the imagination. Moreover, of the few studies that have been carried out, most seem to indicate that there has been a widespread destruction of the capacity of children to unconsciously and consciously imagine a future that is in any meaningful way positive. To cite one such study, for example: observing Palestinian children while they play is quite interesting: games are more of a mimic of what is seen in their life, rather than a creation of the mind, where fantasies and dreams can blossom. Children replay the resistance, the intifada, the arrests, and the burials. Although this form of symbolical coping and working through their mourning and grieving process is called resilience, this mechanism to cope comes with a price hampering the imagination. When assessing the situation... it was quite striking to figure out how poor their capacity to project themselves in the future was.

The complex issues that children have to face, it is further contended, make any kind of normal imaginative life an almost impossible challenge. In short, the innocence of their childhood has been dispossessed and effectively destroyed. Indeed, it is almost as though the Palestinian child’s capacity of imagination has been bred (and bled) out of them. The simple and normally easy ability of abstraction, of imagining what their dreams and their future could just be, simply disappears. Bearing the wounds and scars of an intergenerational transmission of past traumas and a present in which they are caught in between anger and prostration, it clearly does make it extremely challenging to have any kind of freedom of imagination that can be of positive use for the future, especially if one considers that for the Israeli occupiers, for a Palestinian to use one’s imagination is itself almost tantamount to a “crime” and a “security threat” that must be punished.

The question I want to pose, however, is this: is this apparent lack of ability to imagine a future in any kind of positive way a phenomenon that is apparent with the young children of Dheisheh? If it is, can a new constructive narrative be used to help create a strong (politically motivated) defense mechanism when dealing with unspeakable traumas and major losses? Can encouragement, and a process of learning, be given to the “anticipatory illuminations” of possible positive futures?

To move away from wounded attachments, loss, and impossibility, and toward a politics invested in future potentiality, is the ability to imagine otherwise — to take a risk and let go of the investment in predefined collectives configured in familiar political categories (nation-state, ethnicity, nativity, etc.), and in favour of new and still unrecognizable collectives of the future. After all, there can be little doubt that all communities need to be distinguished not by their falsity or genuineness but by the style in which they are imagined. Using the imagination in the right kind of effective way can be an invaluable power of resistance; perhaps even the most effective form of resistance, especially where the imagination is capable of figuring forth something that is already latent in reality. The education of desire, the disruption of the taken-forgranted present, is implicitly directed to a further

end, that of transformation. It is also vital for the personal development and self-awareness of the child. One might almost say: I imagine therefore I am.

No one understood this better than Gilles Deleuze. For Deleuze, imagination captures possible universes as pure events that escape history: “What History grasps of the event is its effectuation in states of affairs or in lived experience, but the event in its becoming, in its specific consistency, in its self-positing as concept, escapes History.” Becoming requires a certain “leaving behind” of historical preconditions “in order to become, that is, to create something new.” It requires speculating beyond the narrative comfort zone of history’s “actuality,” which is held in place by pre-existing, recognizable political terms. This is where imagination comes in. Imagination creates possible universes that escape the limits of history. The imagination intervenes in the possible universe in ways resistant to time. Imagination opens history onto the ahistorical, and resistant to space. It opens the actual universe onto new universes or lands.

To put it in a different way, can one restore the star-charts of children’s imagination? Can imagination be a candle in the dark? Can it be like water for the flowers in the jar? Can it free the wings enabling the capacity of flight up into the sky, and into the stars above, away from the dust of the ground? Can imagination strip away the barbed wire too often wrapped around the heart? Can a positive form of imagination allow children to rest their heads on pillows of comforting hope rather than despair?

What I would like to do, therefore, during my brief stay in Dheisheh — ***with your permission, help and assistance*** — is to work with a group of young children and explore their existing capacities of imagination, and in particular to encourage them to develop their imagination into positive, liberating channels of desire. This can be done in the form of stories and perhaps in particular through their desire to draw images of how they envisage and how they would like to imagine their future. ***If a collection of such drawings could be put together, this would then allow me to arrange a small exhibition in my home city of Bologna; a city where there already exists a large Palestinian community and a very committed group of activists and supporters of the Palestinian cause and its struggles of resistance.***

With this aim in mind, I am reminded of a story that I encountered during one of my many trips to Latin America. It was told by the great Uruguayan writer and activist, Eduardo Galeano, and is based on a real life event that happened to one of his comrades. The event takes place in a Uruguayan prison (named “Freedom”!). Political prisoners are not allowed to speak without permission. They are not allowed to whistle, smile, sing, walk quickly, or greet another prisoner. Nor can they draw or receive drawings of pregnant women, couples, butterflies, stars or birds. Galeano’s comrade was a school teacher, who had been tortured and imprisoned for having ‘nonconformist ideological ideas’.

One Sunday, the comrade received a visit from his five-year-old daughter. The daughter brought him a drawing of birds. The censors, however, destroyed it at the entrance of the prison.

On the following Sunday, his daughter brought him another drawing, but this time of trees. The trees were not prohibited, and the drawing passed. The father praised

his daughter for the work, and asked about the coloured circles that appeared in the treetops, many small circles between the branches:

— ‘Are they oranges? What fruits are they?’

The daughter urges him to be quiet:

— ‘Ssshhhh.’

And secretly explains:

— ‘Silly. Can’t you see those oranges are really eyes? The eyes of the birds that I secretly brought you and whose wings will get you out of here and carry you back home.’

Reflecting on this story in the specific Israeli-Palestinian context, it is interesting to note how oranges can actually be used by the Israeli occupiers as a weapon to kill, not to metaphorically liberate. While Palestinians feed themselves and their children with oranges, and provide vitamins for their imaginations as well, the Israeli occupiers use them to bomb designated targets by means of booby-trapped trucks transporting the fruit. The most notorious case of this occurred back in 1948 at the very beginning of the Nakba. In Jaffa, Israeli armed groups used oranges to bomb an Islamic orphanage.

As you might have gathered, I grew up and became politically active in a period when one of the main militant slogans was “All Power to the Imagination” and when one dreamed of, and imagined, a future in which our Identity Card would be a flower, and when one could calculate that two plus two could just as easily equal “five”. Notwithstanding the obvious point that imagination can of course also be used for negative ends as well as positive ones, and notwithstanding as well the “philosophical” basis of my beliefs and activities over the course of my own life, I still cling very much to the positive capacity of imagination, especially when encouraged very early on in a child’s life. To quote the words of the poet, Ghassan Zaqtan: Dreams and imagination help us ‘to author a bend in the story so we can prolong the evening or make predictions and matters bearable.’ And it is very appropriate, I think, to conclude with these words of Ghassan. After all, it was his poet-activist father, Khalil Zaqtan, who started the first school in Dheisheh refugee camp.

*The world is imagination.
Yet in reality, it is Real.
Whoever understands this
Holds the secrets of the Way
What you plant here,
You will reap there.*

Ibn ‘Arabi

In defense of the Palestinian people

Savas Mikhail-Matsas (EEK – Greece)

Important that after a conference on Lenin, which was a real marathon because now we are more than 8-9 hours. We culminate this work by special session on Palestine. Because Palestine in struggle today against a genocidal war waged by Zionism with a full support of the collective Western imperialism. First of all the United States is the centre occupies the centre of the world political scene. Everything has changed after the Palestinian operation flag of Al Aqsa, the 7th of October. International Center of Rakovsky one week after this event, this break of continuity of political developments, not only the Middle East but all over the world, in our view, issued a statement stress the importance of this major turning point, not just the Palestinian struggle but the world history of struggle for universal human emancipation as Marx has called communism. So first of all, we want -it is not a formality- to denounce the genocide which takes place, a horrible thing which is not just a Nakba number two as both friends and enemies of the Palestinian people say. By the way in our view Nakba did not finish from 1948 until now. Had ups and downs but now we had reach very crucial point. In every minute some child is killed in Gaza and not only in Gaza. It is correct and it's important the report was just had by my friend, comrade Jeremy Lester about the West Bank.

Although the focus of the genocide now is Gaza, but it is not limited to Gaza,

the West Bank, it was always the main bastion of the most left wing most radical resistance of the Palestinian people and from the beginning the fascist government of Netanyahu and settlers they wanted the annexation of the West Bank and according to one of their minister Smotrich, even Jordan. So first of all we say "Stop the genocide, immediate ceasefire, immediate exchange of all political prisoners in the Zionist jails with all the hostages." All for all without this Bazaar which is really a shame and a crime against humanity which is taking place.

So we stand firmly with the Palestinian resistance and the Palestinian revolution for liberation from occupation to dismantle this regime of Apartheid, this settler colonialist tyranny which tries to exterminate the whole people. Because we have not to forget that settler colonialism in difference from other forms of colonial policies it has in its own logic, genocide. Because in settler colonialism is different from other colonialism the target is not just to over exploit the local indigenous population like for example in the Apartheid regime in South Africa in the past. It is to exterminate to expel all these people. For this, this is behind, there is a logic in the madness of these declarations by the Netanyahu government by the officials of this regime to bomb with the nuclear bomb Gaza or this hideous plan to expel them not only from Gaza but from the Middle East to Africa. Repeating what Hitler and Nazism had it was the initial plan to expel all Jewish from Europe to Madagascar or another place. Then they change they move their final solution to Auschwitz. And this horrible lie, big lie, to speak in the name of the Shoah of the Auschwitz. This followers of the Nazi extermination policy, they cannot speak in the name of the victims of Nazism. Those who repeat this crimes against another people with the full help with the fascist of Europe and America from Trump to the AFD in Germany to Orban to Meloni in Italy to the fascists in Greece including the Greek far right government of Mitsotakis all of them they take the side of the Netanyahu and settler Zionist again in this genocide. So we salute the heroism of the Palestinian people. This is a condition from our part and we fight by their side. And you denounce all those who do nothing in the genocide takes place in front of them. Both not only the bourgeois governments in the West including my country not only the most of the left, the official left despite the millions of people who spontaneously they move in the streets in Europe in America and all over the world not only the Arab Muslim World in solidarity but also against the Arab reactionary regimes they do nothing but help this genocide. Only the poorest of the poor, the Yemenis the Houthis they save the honour of Arab nation in its struggle against imperialism and against Zionism today.

We don't take a quick distant position as all kind of hypocrites despite all differences we have with the methods, tactics, strategy or the lack of strategy of the Hamas or other fundamentalist forces etc. We are not neutral in the clash between imperialism, Zionism from one side on the other side the Axis of Resistance in the Middle East. Their fight is our fight for liberation by world socialist revolution.

So we see already that the war is extended beyond not only Gaza beyond occupied Palestine all over the Middle East and even beyond in the Central Asia. It is part of this imperialist war drive that express the historical impasse in which America and global capitalism is in decline is today. The war at the heart of Europe in the NATO

proxy war in Ukraine against Russia, the war of the Zionist in the Middle East for the extermination of the Palestinian people with the full help of American and Western imperialism are different moments but of the same world historical process where a decaying system, capitalism brings humanity at the brink of a abyss of the third world war and of a nuclear Holocaust. We have to wage war against war.

The enemy of course we see it commits all these crimes but we call all the forces in their own countries to look the enemy in our own countries. We have to kick out the US / NATO bases from Greece Turkey to all over the world. If we accept we know very well that all the recent attacks are sustained by the US imperialist forces in bases in Greece. They sent the Greek government they said their military their ships to this fleet of the US and British imperialist in the Red Sea and beyond. There's already an international confrontation between the forces of destruction of humanity and the forces who can by struggle, by revolutionary struggle without compromise, go to emancipation, social and national emancipation of all oppressed.

For this reason we have not just stay and see what it happens, but to use the title of a contribution by a Russian comrade today, comrade Epstein, we have to understand and act. We have a huge political responsibility we have a huge moral ethical debt. We cannot be passive and see the innocent to be killed, massacred by the tyrants of this world.

But we can see also the other side despite the magnitude the horrible dimensions of what happens in this genocidal war. We can see also the enormous weakness of our enemy. The entire US and Zionist strategy recently before the 7th of October, it was to normalise the relations between the Arab monarchies with Israel. Either with the Abraham Accords by Trump or by the Israeli Saudi pact that the Biden tried to do on the eve of this explosion. They wanted really to create, to eliminate completely the Palestinian people, to create what they say just on the eve of this explosion: a new Middle East with a corridor of prosperity and peace going from the Gulf via Israel to Europe to make as the Zionist say to have an Israel from the River to the Sea, making a mockery of the well-known slogan of the Palestinian movement. But all this and the Americans the American capitalists in this crisis in this decay, needed either from Obama to Trump and then to Biden to make the so-called people to Asia go out of the Middle East where it was a fiasco in Afghanistan in Iraq in everywhere was in American Waterloo worse than what happened in Vietnam in 1975. They wanted to go to face in Asia what they call the main strategic rival China. But the Palestinian people with its resistance, destroy this needed strategic plans of imperialism and created a new world situation. The Zionist project itself faces and implosion. We saw this all the way even before the war with the judiciary coup by the Netanyahu. We saw it during the war because I don't remember any other war or even from the first weeks or months of a war confrontation to have antiwar demonstrations or activities. This enormous political polarisation even in the Israeli Jewish population we can see that and we can we should elaborate the strategy really which appears now a Utopia but it is not Utopia, in front of this hell. We have to fight to free historical space of the Palestine and create conditions and only a socialist revolution can do it for peace. A peace who cannot exist without justice. The victory of the justice of the oppressed Palestinian people of the

Revolutionary Marxism 2024

oppressed people in Arab countries of the oppressed people in the Global South of the oppressed and over exploited of working class all over the world.

On this basis we can see with confidence the horizon of our struggle for the world revolution and of the necessary instrument for this victory that build of a revolutionary international.

DIP and Palestine

Burak Saygan (DIP - Turkey)

I would like to start my words by expressing, just as many speakers did before me, my utmost solidarity with the Palestinian people, facing an ongoing genocide attempt, a continuation of Nakba, as we speak. Their resilience and resistance, notwithstanding arguably the most terrible atrocities committed of 21st century against them, under thunderous applause from what is euphemistically called the “international community”, carries in itself the promise of a Free Palestine.

It is no coincidence, dear comrades, that the Revolutionary Workers’ Party of Turkey 7th Congress, which adopted a resolution on Lenin and Lenin year, as comrade Levent eloquently explained in the previous session, also adopted a forceful resolution for Palestine. The resolution, adopted unanimously, expressed its unconditional support for Palestine and Palestinians against the massacre, genocide attempt, and ethnic cleansing that Israel undertook. I just said that the adoption of resolutions on Lenin and Palestine in the same congress was no mere coincidence. Indeed, the emphasis on a jealous defense of the Leninist heritage and a steadfast defense of the Palestinian cause are interrelated and equally central elements of the Revolutionary Workers’ Party’s revolutionary strategy.

By gathering here for a conference commemorating Vladimir Il’ich Lenin, we are not merely commemorating a historical figure. On the contrary, we claim and reclaim a political heritage, which includes as one of its cornerstones the strategical alliance of the working class and oppressed peoples against imperialist capitalism.

Accordingly, and as the logical consequence of this stance, we stand with Palestine, not as a mere token of solidarity, but with the consciousness that Palestine stands at the forefront of the fight against world imperialism and the prospects of an anti-imperialist revolutionary future. It is due to this dialectical connection that we affirm that one can not reclaim the Leninist heritage without unflinching support towards the anti-imperialist cause, not least that of Palestine, and once could hardly propose a coherent antiimperialist position on Palestine without basing itself on Lenin's political legacy.

It is on this understanding that the Revolutionary Workers Party conducts a relentless struggle in support of the Palestinian cause. As our 7th Congress resolution reiterates, DIP continues to fight “for a revolutionary solution in Palestine,” which would entail nothing less than a “free, democratic, secular and socialist Palestine” within the Socialist Federation of the Middle East and North Africa. In addition to theoretical elaboration and resolutions, DIP's engagement in the Palestinian cause is well visible in its militant action in the streets of Turkey, along with the Friend of Palestine, who will take the floor after me.

But dear comrades, it is also equally important for us to underline that support of the revolutionary Marxist tradition for the Palestinian cause, has a long history, not incidentally reaching well before the foundation of a state of Israel in historic Palestine.

After briefly introducing the resolution of DIP's 7th Congress, I would like to mention a special publication, concretely a dossier, published by the Revolutionary Workers' Party's theoretical quarterly journal in Turkish, *Devrimci Marksizm* and its special annual edition in English, *Revolutionary Marxism*. This dossier, whose introductory text is aptly titled “As Red as a Palestinian Watermelon,” introduces precisely this proud tradition of ours. The first two texts are from 1947, before the imperialist-imposed partition and the ensuing catastrophe, known in Arabic as Nakba. The first was published by the Revolutionary Communist League, which was the Palestinian section of the Fourth International at that time. The second, on the other hand, is an editorial from the French-language central publication of the Fourth International itself, *Quatrieme International*. What marks these texts is a steadfast and principled opposition to the partition of historic Palestine and the creation of a settler-colonial state on parts of it. We are proud to reclaim this history as ours, dear comrades. And whereas principled opposition to the colonization of Palestine might seem only too evident, please do remember that at the time, the Soviet Union and newly-emerging Eastern Bloc around it were voting for the partition of Palestine, and communist parties of the world were toeing this official line, and lining up to salute Israel. Let it be crystal clear comrades, our intention could not be further away from digging deep into history to find bones of contention where there exist none. But we would like to also offer a level of clarity and even confidence in the new generation of militants worldwide swelling the ranks of the fight to support Palestine, by showing that there exists a communist tradition whose support for Palestine is not simply conjectural or tactical, but rather strategical and let me say even existential comrades. Or to put it as Lenin once famously expressed in a distinctly different context, *est' takaia partiia* comrades, there is such a party,

such a revolutionary tradition. We, revolutionary Marxists, are proud to call this history ours.

And to be sure, this no ancient history and our support for the Palestinian causes does not conjugate in the past tense. As a reminder of this, the same dossier includes a communiqué con-published by DIP and our cherished EEK comrades in Greece. Let me conclude my words, dear comrades, that we shall never cease to hold that proud banner of ours high, until the day, that long-awaited day when Palestine is Free.

Friends of Palestine Against Imperialism and Zionism



The Friends of Palestine Against Imperialism and Zionism platform is fighting Zionism and its lackeys in Turkey since 2018.

It aims to support the Palestinian cause in the quest for the total destruction of Israel and the foundation of a free, democratic, secular and socialist Palestine from the river to the sea, for Arab and Jewish Palestinians.

It seeks to unmask the fake support of the despotism regime in Turkey of the Palestinian cause and to expose its complicity with Zionists by not heeding the boycott, divestment, and sanctions call of the Palestinians, and by maintaining economic, military, and diplomatic relations with Israel.

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Some points regarding the Al Aqsa Flood and its aftermath

Kutlu Dâne (Friends of Palestine Against Imperialism and Zionism - Turkey)

Comrades,

To begin with, I want to introduce our platform. Friends of Palestine Against Imperialism and Zionism was founded in 2018, as an initiative of DIP, The Revolutionary workers Party of Turkey. It also has participants from other organisations as well. Its main aim is to fight imperialism and Zionism in Turkiye.

In my speech, I wish to summarise our points regarding the latest developments in Palestine in seven, unfortunately very brief titles.

Firstly, we must admit that the problem did not begin in October the 7th. It's a result of the Zionist occupation in Palestine, which has a long history: the development of the Zionist movement, it's alliance with imperialism, the Balfour declaration of 1917, the Zionist terror in Palestine in 20's and 30's, the Nakbah and the ongoing Zionist massacres, ethnic cleansing, since then. Israel is clearly an illegitimate entity aiming to annihilate Palestine and expel Palestinians from their historical land. Israel had killed more than 200 Palestinians in the West Bank this year, when the Al Aqsa Flood operation was done. So, the Al Aqsa Flood did not occur in a vacuum. It was a response to all of these.

Secondly, we must also admit that the Al Aqsa Flood operation is a rebellion

against perishment. It followed 16 years of Gaza blockade, the rise of Israeli apartheid, ongoing ethnic cleansing, increasing humiliation, US's decision to accept Al Quds as the capital of Israel, the Abraham accords, and Netanyahu's map that he has shown in the United Nations, which does not include a Palestine on it! Palestinians thought they will suffocate very soon, and they got into action!

Thirdly, like all the Palestinian factions, Hamas is right and legitimate in its fight against Zionism. We, revolutionary Marxists, do support the communists of Palestine in their struggle to win the leadership of the Palestinians. For other Palestinian factions, we do not give any political support to them. They lack the political programme that will give Palestinians a prosperous life with equal rights at the end. But they are right in their fight against the coloniser. That's why we give them only a conditional support. This is also what Palestinian socialists do in their alliances with those factions, including Hamas.

Fourthly, we must emphasise, that the civil death toll in October the 7th, is in the responsibility of Israel. We, revolutionary Marxists, do not want any civilian death of course. But as we see previously in many instances, the accumulated outrage can unfortunately channel to civilians. Algeria is an example. Also, unlike Palestinian forces, Israel openly aims to kill civilians, in a systematic way. Moreover, Israel had to admit that its army had killed its own civilians. So Israel is directly responsible for many civilian deaths even if they are Jews. We must also say that the Israeli death toll is unreliable, as we saw in the example of 40 beheaded babies lie. Lastly and most importantly, the responsibility of civilian loses belongs to the guilty part in a war, which is Israel in this case.

Fifthly, we must clearly understand, that if Palestinians win, working masses around the world also win. A victory of Palestinians against the Zionist entity will also be a victory against imperialism, which is the most advanced power we face in our fight against capitalism. If imperialism receives a wound, there will be occasions for the exploited masses around the world. Also, even now the rise in the struggle of Palestinians is leading to some positive developments. For example: Egyptians taking it to the Tahrir Square after 10 years, huge demonstrations shake the imperialist centers and peoples of the West Asia, including Turkey, now clearly see the relations of their governments and bourgeois classes with Israel.

Sixthly, we see that Palestine is fighting against many powers. Zionists are at the top of the list of course, imperialists follow them. You know, Biden says aid to Israel is "a smart investment". European imperialism left its own rhetoric of human rights when it came to Gaza. Reactionary Arab regimes, follow the example of Jordanian king who attacked Palestinian guerrillas in 1970, and Anwar Sadat, who spoke at the Knesset. They now have the Abraham accords, which are nothing but a dirty shame! In Turkiye, Erdogan, the so-called protector of Palestine did nothing, absolutely nothing, in defence of Palestine. Moreover, his despotic regime was planning a new normalisation with Israel, in an attempt to take part in the stealing of Palestinian natural resources. Neither the Islamist, nor the secular-westernist bourgeois camps stopped trade relations with Israel during its assault against Gaza. Lastly, Palestinians' own "government" which is an offspring of Oslo accords, is still helping the Zionists to control West Bank. We won't forget the murder of Basil

Araj or other Palestinian fighters killed by Zionists with the help of the Palestinian Authority. It is some sort of a collaborator, fed with the imperialist funds.

So, for the freedom of Palestine, for the emancipation of Palestinians, for the defeat of Zionism and imperialism, we must mobilise the international working class and all the oppressed against the destruction of Gaza, stop especially the shipping of military products to Israel, with an organisation of trade unions and working-class organisations, call for an effective boycott of Israel, and sanctions to it, fight for the unity of Palestinian Arabs and Jews, fight for a free, independent, secular, socialist Palestine, from the river to the sea, which will be a part in a socialist federation of the West Asia.

And of course, also for the emancipation of Palestinians, we must work hard to build the vanguard of the international working class and the oppressed, following the internationalism of comrade Lenin.

Comrades,

Time is up for this special session. But not me, someone else will conclude this very conference: Ghassan Kanafani is one of the founders of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. His analysis on the Palestinian struggle of 1930s guided the Palestinian socialists in their fight against Zionism. He was an uncompromising internationalist. Now I quote him: "*Imperialism has laid its body over the world, the head in Eastern Asia, the heart in the Middle East, its arteries reaching Africa and Latin America. Wherever you strike it, you damage it, and you serve the world revolution.*" And another one: "*The Palestinian cause is not a cause for Palestinians only, but a cause for every revolutionary... as a cause of the exploited and oppressed masses in our era*"

Thank you comrades. I hope to meet in struggles that we shake imperialists and Zionists under the guidance of comrade Lenin!