

On the ideological-political conditions of the October Revolution

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The October Revolution in the Russian Empire, of which we are observing the 100th anniversary, meant a gigantic leap forward in the history of humankind. Its lessons starting from its special aspects are universally valid. We learn from it as well as from the revolutions in other countries of the 20th century, no matter if they were victorious or defeated, as happened with the Paris Commune in the 19th century.

Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov, Lenin, the great leader and organizer of the party of the proletariat which led the October Revolution to victory in 1917, conducted an in-depth analysis on the formation of the imperialist world system, guided by the fundamental contributions of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels; he summed up this analysis in what he called a popular outline: ***Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism***, completed at the beginning of 1916. That was a fundamental theoretical contribution to Marxism in which he discussed the essence of the First World War started in 1914.

In that he came to the conclusion that since the beginning of the 20th century the imperialist features of capitalism which had developed in the last quarter of the 19th century had consolidated, and **that capitalism had entered its imperialist stage. The era of imperialism and proletarian revolution, as Lenin defined it, began.** Lenin showed that imperialism politically is marked by the development of militarism, military build-up, extreme violence against the working class and the peoples, the division of the working-class movement and especially by war. He summed up: *“Imperialism ... is everywhere reaction”* (“Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism”, Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 22, p. 297). Not only do the imperialist bourgeoisies exploit the working class and oppress the peoples of their countries, but they oppress and plunder the entire world and transform the majority of the countries of the world into colonies, semi-colonies and dependent countries.

This era is marked by distinct unevenness of development of the imperialist countries, emergence of new monopolies and imperialist powers and the decline of others, intensifying the competition between the imperialist monopolies and the rivalry between the imperialist powers over the control of the world and bringing about new wars over its division.

The inter-imperialist dispute over the control of the world generated the First World War in 1914. During this war the Communist Party (Bolsheviks) of Russia under the leadership of Lenin led the armed uprising of the workers, peasants and soldiers in October 1917 which led to the victory of the socialist revolution in Russia.

Contrary to Kautsky's position of "ultra-imperialism" Lenin showed that the uneven development immanent in capitalism does not weaken, but on the contrary intensifies in its imperialist stage. That is why the war was an inevitable result of rivalry between the monopolies and between the imperialists; in order to counter that the socialist revolution was necessary and possible.

Also in view of this reality a revolutionary strategy emerged counting on breaking "the chain" of the imperialist rule at its "weakest link", at the point where all contradictions are concentrating in the most intensified form, making the victory of the revolution and its further expansion possible.

It is known that the majority of the European socialist parties of the Second International sank in the most shameful betrayal of the working class by siding with the bourgeoisies of their countries. In contrast to this Lenin and the Bolsheviks stood loyal to Marxism and proletarian internationalism and developed the line, "to change the rifle from one shoulder to the other" ("Two Tactics of Social-Democracy in the Democratic Revolution", Lenin, *Coll. Works*, Vol. 9, p. 51) and to change the imperialist war to a civil war against the own imperialist bourgeoisie. In this sense the October Revolution was the practical implementation of this position.

The clear definition of Lenin and the Bolsheviks regarding this first big military confrontation between the imperialist powers serves as reference to the present, where the factors of war are growing in the world and all over the world a discussion is arising whether the working-class and people's forces should confront the imperialist war or let themselves be taken in tow by one side against the other.

The Soviet revolution actually emerged as answer to the imperialist war and, making use of its contradictions, opened up a period of revolutionary upswing in Europe and worldwide. The most prominent cases were the emergence of the revolution in Germany and Hungary, on which the Bolsheviks placed great hopes for advancing with the socialist transformation in Russia. However, these revolutions were quelled.

On the other hand, the October Revolution expanded because of the civil war and against the intervention of 14 foreign powers to encompass the nations and peoples oppressed by tsarism and Russian imperialism. This process secured its victory and made the national liberation and the beginning of socialist building in the Asian regions of the old Russian empire possible, in which oppressed peoples played a vanguard role for centuries. It also proved to be true that in the new era the intensification of the contradiction between the imperialist powers and the oppressed nations and peoples gave a new character to the "national question", the solution of which became possible on the basis of the hegemony of the proletariat and the alliance between workers and peasants.

Although at the time the proletarian revolution was only victorious in the USSR, where the Russian workers and peasants had to march on the road of socialist construction under very difficult conditions because of the imperialist encirclement, its progress radiated worldwide.

It especially encouraged the struggle of the peoples oppressed by imperialism in the 20th century, in a stage of the revolutionary movement in which the proletariat conquered power in countries encompassing more than one third of humankind.

The importance of the party as vanguard

Since the beginning of the 20th century Lenin fought for building a revolutionary party of the working class – a party that is guided by Marxist theory, is independent from the bourgeoisie and distances itself from the revisionist social-democracy. By building their revolutionary army, for the first time in human history millions of exploited accomplished the heroic deed by which the proletariat could maintain its dictatorship and begin to build a new society, to confiscate the property of the landowners and expropriate the means of production of big capital.

The existence of a vanguard party, hardened in the different forms of struggle and rooted in the masses, was crucial for the proletariat to conquer and keep power; for this it relied on the alliance between workers and peasants. The failure to correctly solve these questions was to lead to tragic defeats of the proletariat in various European countries during this period.

Lenin's contributions meant a new stage in the development of Marxism. Leninism is a further development of Marxism in regard to world outlook, i.e., in relation to dialectical and historical materialism, as well as in regard to the theory and tactics of the revolution in the epoch of imperialism, which includes the theory of the hegemony of the proletariat in the democratic revolution, the dictatorship of the proletariat, the proletarian party and socialist construction. In the months before the October Revolution, Lenin wrote *The State and Revolution* with the subtitle *The Marxist Theory of the State and the Tasks of the Proletariat in the Revolution*. This is a fundamental theoretical text for the preparation of the proletarian uprising, in which Lenin fundamentally refutes the revisionist and bourgeois arguments concerning the state and holds the view that the working class must destroy the bureaucratic military machine of the exploiting classes in order to reach its historical goal to end any form of exploitation. Almost 50 years later Ernesto Che Guevara said that “*in view of today's reality ‘The State and Revolution’ is the clearest and most fruitful theoretical and practical source of Marxist literature*” [own translation].

After one hundred years we defend the lessons of the October Revolution

The ideologists of the bourgeoisie have tried hard to remove this importance from the Russian revolution, from the message that it was an **accident** or an **error**, and that the economic base, which is reduced to the “*productive forces*” in these opinions, made it impossible, up to accepting that it was **inevitable historically** – as Gorbachev wrote – but evil from the ground up, because it entailed the revolutionary terror, something “immoral” from the point of view of the hypocritical bourgeois morality, for which the only democracy is the one making it possible for their system to perpetuate itself. You can also not hold the opinion that it was **unnecessary** with the argument that it was defeated 40 years later by the capitalist restoration: Lenin said four years after the victory of the revolution: “*that (in the last analysis) struggle alone will determine how far we shall advance, what part of this immense and lofty task we shall accomplish and to what extent we shall succeed in consolidating our victories. Time will show. But we see even now that a tremendous amount – tremendous for this ruined, exhausted and backward country – has already been done towards the socialist transformation of society. ... We have made the start. When, at what date and time, and the proletarians of which nation will complete this process is not important. The important thing is that the ice has been broken; the road is open, the way has been shown.*” (“Fourth Anniversary of the October Revolution”, Lenin, *Coll. Works*, Vol. 33, pp. 52 and 57)

The Russian revolution confirmed the Leninist theory of the hegemony of the proletariat and the Marxist view of the continuous revolution taking place in stages, which Mao Zedong later on developed on the character of the revolution in the colonial, semi-colonial and dependent countries.

In order to advance in the struggle for the end of exploitation of humans by humans, the working class must build its vanguard party and lead and organize the revolution in every country. Bringing together the universal truths of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism with the reality of the revolution in every country is the condition for achieving that. The historical goal of the working class is the society without exploiters and without those exploited: the communist society. A society in which all classes, privileges and oppression all over the world have been abolished. A society in which the enslaving subjugation of individuals under the division of labor and with it the contradiction and the subjugation between manual and mental labor, between town and country, between women and men, and all social inequalities which it implies, will have vanished. Then labor will not only be a means for life, but the main means for realization of human beings; with the all-sided development of the individuals the productive forces also will grow, the sources of collective wealth will flow in abundance and a new consciousness will be reached.

Although with the defeat of the socialist revolutions of the 20th century a stage in the history of the revolutionary movement of the proletariat came to an end, the era of imperialism and proletarian revolution continues to exist, which manifested itself in the emergence and victory of the October Revolution as well as in the long struggle for socialism and communism. That is why the lessons of this revolution which we are commemorating today still are valid in today's world.