

Lum/061/0003/10

LECTURE 9.

THEORY OF REVOLUTION.

9.0 THE ART OF REVOLUTION.

War - the "human slaughter industry", Marx called it - has forces and relations of production. As in other economic structures, the means of production decide the organisation of labour, which is the armed forces. The more advanced the weapons are, the more detailed is the division of the army and the more specialised are its branches; the infantry, artillery tanks, mine-laying, demolition, communications, air force, navy and submarines.

Scientific discoveries and technology improvement impact on methods of warfare, while wars in turn speed up scientific, technological and social changes. Wars often give great impetus to economic development.

Warfare makes use of science but it is not a science. It is an art. Politicians and generals make war, adopt planned strategies, but cannot foresee or control all the many factors that result. The outcome of a war is uncertain, as Americans discovered in Vietnam.

A revolution is like war - an art. Engels, commenting on the defeat of the bourgeois revolution of 1848 in Germany, remarked that "insurrection is an art quite as much as war or any other, and subject to rules of proceeding, which when neglected, will produce the ruin of the party neglecting them".

Lenin reminded the Mensheviks opposition in November 1917 that "it was Marx who called uprising nothing but an art, who said that uprising must be treated as an art".

The rules of revolution are both general and particular. The general rules hold true for all revolutions. The particular rules apply only to one or other kind of revolution: bourgeois, proletarian, national liberation or guerrilla war. There will be placed in this discussion on the rules of proletarian revolution, but something needs to be said about bourgeois revolution.

9.1 BOURGEOIS REVOLUTION

A bourgeois revolution is typically a rising of the capitalist class for the seizure of political power from a feudalistic autocracy. The democratic bourgeoisie aim only at reforming the superstructure to give the.

When in control of the State, they use its machinery to bring the revolution to a close and to suppress the revolutionary workers' party.

The workers support the struggle for democratic rights and make common cause with the middle-class democrats but can never be satisfied with the achievement of bourgeois reforms. Marx told the Communist League in 1850 that "it is our interest and our task to make the revolution permanent, to keep it going until all the ruling and possessing classes are deprived of power... until the more important forces of production are concentrated in the hands of the proletariat."

Marx laid down several rules, based on his political experience and study of bourgeois revolutions. The workers' party should

- a) refuse to merge with bourgeois parties; operate both an underground movement and a legal organisation; mobilise workers for intensive, even 'excessive' activity; present their independent demands and form revolutionary workers' councils;
- b) arm the proletariat with rifles, guns and ammunition, resist any attempt at disarming them, organise a workers' militia with its general staff under the workers' revolutionary authority;
- c) strengthen their organisation under a central committee as the new government is in power, put up its members as working class candidates in all forms of federalism and other measures which enable reactionary groups to sabotage progressive changes.

9.2 PERMANENT REVOLUTION

The situation that Marx had in mind is likely to arise when a middle class revolution succeeds with the mass support of workers and peasants. He warns the workers' party to remain independent, arm the people and prepare to defend themselves against treachery on the part of the new government. Fight legally and illegally, he advises, but at all times and everywhere for the workers' independent line. Keep the revolution going, "make it permanent" develop the middle-class democratic revolution into the proletariat revolution.

A workers' party has to maintain its independence during and after a middle class revolution both to save itself and to defend the revolution against the bourgeoisie. This lesson was taught in the French revolution of February 1848. The workers made the revolution, put the middle class in power and were forced, by the new government's repressive measures, to rise in armed revolt on June 22 in the streets of Paris. They suffered defeat after five days of heroic battle against the government's troops. The bourgeoisie took its revenge by slaughtering over 3,000 defenceless prisoners.

The lesson was repeated at a more advanced level in the French-Prussian war of 1870-71. The French government accepted defeat by Prussia, agreed to surrender Paris and with it the whole of France to Bismarck's armies. But the workers of Paris refused to lay down arms. They formed a National Guard of working men, seized governmental power, and proclaimed the Paris Commune on March 18, 1871.

The Commune abolished the standing army and police; opened school to all the people; withdrew State grants to church; placed factories under workers' control; and began the construction of a socialist order. The French bourgeoisie, who had laid down their arms against the Prussians, turned the guns on the French working men, women and children. The Commune was overthrown after eight days of bloody civil war in May 1871. There followed a repetition of June 22, 1848: wholesale slaughter of insurgents, torture of prisoners, merciless hunt for concealed leaders, persecution of political enemies.

9.3 A NEW STATE

The last fighter of the Commune yielded to superior forces on May 28, 1871. Two days later Marx read to the General Council of the Working Men's International an address on the Civil War in France. It remains, down to our time, a major source of revolutionary theory. Of special importance is his discussion of the transfer of power. The Commune proved, he pointed out, that "the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made state machinery and wield it for its own

purposes". The reasons are:

- (a) as modern industry expands and conflicts between capital and labour increase, the State power more and more becomes the power of capital over labour, a public force for social enslavement, an engine of class dictatorship;
- (b) the State becomes even more repressive, more of an instrument of class oppression, after every advance in the class struggle;
- (c) all past revolutions retained old State, built on it, added more officials, increased the police and armed forces, improved the State's coercive power;
- (d) all past revolutions strengthened the private ownership of the means of production, added to the economic power and wealth of the propertied class, used the State machinery to protect and expand private ownership;
- (e) a workers' party, which aims at the abolition of private property, which builds socialism, must do away with the old repressive machinery, shatter the bourgeois State and replace it with a new workers' State;
- (f) "between capitalist and communist society lies the period of the revolutionary transformation of the one into the other. There corresponds to this also a political transition period in which the state can be nothing but the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat".

(Marx, CRITIQUE OF THE GOTHA PROGRAMME, 1875).

9.4 VANGUARD PARTY

To seize power, there must be a revolutionary party, To build socialism there must be a socialist party.

The Communist Manifesto declared that "The Communist do not form a separate party opposed to other working class parties". It was an historic mission of Lenin, however, to form precisely such a separate party.

He wrote in 1902 (WHAT IS TO BE DONE?) that "Without a revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement... The role of vanguard fighter can be fulfilled only by a party that is guided by an advanced theory".

To be the vanguard, a party must have a revolutionary theory, programme, organisation and strategy.

9.5 REVOLUTIONARY THEORY

The theory of a revolutionary workers' party is Marxist: the first to transform socialism from a Utopia into a science" (Lenin, OUR PROGRAMME? 1899).

Revolutionary theory helps us to know and understand:

- (a) origins and forms of class exploitation, national oppression, and race discrimination;
- (b) relations between industrial capitalism and feudal-colonial superstructure;
- (c) contradictions between economic development and socio-political stagnation;
- (d) impact of world socialism and imperialism on our struggles;
- (e) objective conditions of our struggle, such as:
 - i. effects of industrial colour bars on labour organisation.
 - ii. labour migration, a special type of labour organisation.
 - iii. pauperisation of peasants and farm workers;
 - iv. growth and problems of middle class of oppressed nations;
 - v. role of 'tribal nations' in Bantustans and their effects on national unity against white domination;
 - vi. capitalist crisis and unemployment;
 - vii. repressive character of State machinery;
 - viii. relation between national struggle and class struggle.

9.6 PERIOD OF ILLEGALITY

Just as productive forces determine the organisation of labour so conditions of political struggle determine political organisation.

A socialist party that operates legally under bourgeois democracy labours difficulties. The capitalist class controls the State, press, and other official means of communication: spreads its ideology among working people incites national and racial divisions; bribe a privileged section of workers provides social welfare benefits for the unemployed and poor.

On the other hand, socialists can own their own press, hold public meetings form and lead unions, teach socialism, agitate the proletariat have decolonised their minds. They reject bourgeois morality and law.

This rising sea of revolution results from the contradictions between:

- (a) a huge propertyless proletariat, whose labour has been socialised in mines, factories and workshops, and the exploitative nature of capitalist ownership of the means of production;
- (b) foreign migrant workers from independent States and the rejection by those States of Apartheid;
- (c) the interests of migrant workers generally and the interest of the permanent urban proletariat;
- (d) industrial colour bars and the efficient organisation of the labour force;
- (e) the vital role of the working class in production and their complete exclusion from all forms of political power;
- (f) the poverty of peasants in the reserves and the fraud of tribal nationalist in the Bantustans;
- (g) the growth of a petty bourgeois of shopkeepers and manufacturers among the oppressed nations and the monopoly of the big bourgeois over the means of production and exchange;
- (h) the search of capitalism for markets and fields of investment in Africa and the rejection of Apartheid by African States;
- (i) a politically mature people demanding national liberation from the system of national oppression;

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(j) the wave of liberation that sweeps through Africa and Africa's opposition to Apartheid.

These are some of the objective conditions that favour our revolution. They show themselves in the political awakening of our people. A period of intense struggle has opened. Only a revolutionary vanguard party can provide the subjective forces needed to turn the tide of revolution into an irresistible flood that will sweep aside the dictatorship of the feudal-colonial State.

9.8 POLITICAL ORGANISATION.

A vanguard party in a period of revolutionary upsurge has the following characteristics:

- (a) an organised membership of cadres who accept the Party's programme and rules, belong to a specific Party unit, funds;
- (b) a central committee of members experienced in the Party's practical work and having a thorough understanding of the Party's theory and aims;
- (c) decentralisation of responsibilities for specific tasks allocated to units with specialised functions;
- (d) democratic centralism; decisions taken after discussion by units are binding on members and lower organs of the Party;
- (e) reliable feedback of information on activities and experiences of individual member and units to the Centre;
- (f) control, direction and discipline by the Centre over all units and members; strict observance of rules; fulfillment of tasks; subordination of lower units to higher units.

The emancipation of the nation must be the act of the nation itself. Its real emancipation requires a social revolution. Only a vanguard Party can lead the revolution to victory over the colonial-fascist dictatorship.