

# Correct Attitude on the Organisational Question

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# Correct Attitude on the Organisational Question

On the basis of the deep crisis of capitalist system an imperialist war is becoming widespread on the one hand and a flame of revolt on the part of the masses spreads over various regions of the world. While upsetting the old balances of the bourgeois order this situation also expresses an important change in the course of class struggle. The preceding last decades were marked by a colossal retreat on the part of the workers' movement. Mass psychology was deeply affected by the ruthless offensive of the world bourgeoisie against revolutionary struggle and the goal of socialism, presenting the capitalist system's survival as a victory. Even to speak of revolution those days was sufficient for one to be labelled as a "dinosaur". But the wheel of history did not stop there and changed to turn in a discomfoting way for the bourgeoisie. So a dark period that threw the workers' movement heavily backwards is now being transcended vindicating revolutionary Marxists' historical optimism. It is of course not possible to foretell what will happen in the process of revival of the revolutionary struggle of the working class. But there is a clear fact today. Revolution, which the bourgeoisie declared dead and took a relief for a period, is back with waves of revolt triggered by the historical crisis of capitalism and with all its actuality which is more burning than ever.

## The actuality of revolution

Surely history is not merely repetition. But there are many events recurring depending on the ebbs and flows of class struggle throughout the history of capitalist mode of production and many subjects of discussion forgotten and raised again and again. "The actuality of revolution" is one of them to remember in this context. For many years this subject has been one of the discussions going on

among Marxist milieus. It is well known that for those who follow a reformist line a workers' revolution is a dream that can never come true. Even in periods of crisis and revolt, when the flow of history accelerates, reformists continue to regard aspiration for revolution and even talking about it as an empty dream or a dangerous adventure.

Marx and Lenin were accused of "voluntarism" by opportunist or reformist politicians and thinkers of their time since they aspired to and kept referring to revolution. However, in the approach of the revolutionary leaders of the working class there was not an inch of the fallacy of attempting a voluntary pushing of the flow of history and thus of leading workers to dangerous games. They are just revolutionary leaders who strive to strengthen even the slightest movement in the workers' movement in the direction of furthering the struggle. Under today's conditions where there are new and worldwide upsurges in the workers' movement after a long period of retreat the correct approaches of these revolutionary leaders on revolutionary strategy and organisational questions continue to be instructive in the first place. A fundamental task of revolutionary Marxists today is to perceive the actuality of revolution and serve to strengthen the revolutionary organisation of the working class on a national and international level.

That the working class took its place on the stage of capitalist history with its struggles and developed as a growing class with time means the workers' revolution acquiring the dimension of an actual reality. Besides, capitalist development that continued through years paved the objective foundations of socialism on a world scale. But the present profound historical crisis of capitalist system develops the objective conditions of revolution as well. Mass revolts across the world, that workers and toilers at large do not want to live as they do and that the bourgeois regimes go through political instability, all show that now there are revolutionary situations developing in various countries.

In a very general way the age of imperialism when historical conditions became ripe on a world scale from the standpoint of the workers' revolution points to the actuality of revolution. This matter has been addressed by many Marxist writers. But this aspect of the question should not be oversimplified in the sense that there is a continuous revolutionary situation in the world in imperialist era which is the era of capitalist decay. As Trotsky noted many years ago the revolutionary character of the imperialist era does not lay in that it enables the accomplishment of revolution, that is, the seizure of power, at every given moment. The revolutionary character of the era results from that it is loaded with deep and sharp fluctuations, that it involves sudden and frequent turns like transitions

from a direct revolutionary situation to a period of defeat that leads to a victory of fascist or semi-fascist counter-revolution.

In its actual and concrete aspect, the actuality of revolution means a period of profound tumult in which balances of capitalist system pertaining to its ordinary periods are upset. Main symptom of such periods is a state of general discontent and tumult gradually encompassing all sections of society. Under such revolutionary situations the level of revolutionary consciousness and organisation of the proletariat (the level of maturing of the subjective conditions of revolution) will be directly decisive in the course of class struggle. Therefore in revolutionary periods it is much more important to further even the most commonplace-looking daily struggle of the working class without losing sight of the perspective of revolution.

Revolutionary periods make the vanguardship of the revolutionary party of the working class extremely necessary. However, there has to be a preceding preparatory work in this vein, since the needed organisations cannot be created all of a sudden in sharp turning points of social life. There is a problem here that can only be resolved under one condition. It is reformism in general and corresponding organisational conceptions that prevail in periods when revolution is considered an unlikely event by society. In such periods, defence of revolutionary party appears to large sections of the left as an exaggerated and sectarian approach. This happened many times throughout the history of capitalism. And this is the reason why revolutionary periods when social life is rapidly upset are faced generally unprepared. But it was only in one case, i.e. in the case of October Revolution where the working class was organised around Leninist conception of party, that a revolutionary situation could end in a victorious workers' revolution.

It is evident that in history no class was successful in overthrowing the old order and seizing power without bringing out its political representatives and leaders from within its ranks. This is of utmost importance for the working class. For the working class to accomplish its historical mission, it is still imperative, as in the past, that its vanguard layer be armed with revolutionary theory and achieve revolutionary consciousness. And this cannot come true spontaneously and in daily economic struggle. For this to happen, a revolutionary organisation has to be created which has an understanding of waging revolutionary political struggle based on the working class. What we understand from the Leninist conception of party is not a form to be imitated, not a template for organisation, but a revolutionary organisation to really meet this need under today's conditions. Today it is vital from the standpoint of the struggle of the working class to make sense of

this. To put it in Marx's theoretical framework, the point is to change the world from the standpoint of the revolutionary proletariat and it is indispensable for the proletariat to organise along a correctly-conceived Leninist conception of party for this change to happen.

## **Rights and wrongs**

The aforementioned points constitute the priorities to be upheld firmly under today's conditions in order the workers' revolution to be successful. However there are many left political milieus that are on a different wavelength, condemning Leninist conception of party or keeping themselves away from it. They are legion in spreading the word that the working class can lead the anti-capitalist struggle to success thanks to spontaneous mass actions and that there is no need ever for a Leninist type party. Although there are differences in political approaches and intentions, the arguments that are used for keeping away from the Leninist conception of party are common. Distortion of the question of illegality which stems actually from not the form but the essence of the revolutionary class party, i.e. its anti-system nature, is one of the primary arguments. They equate illegality with conspiracy or secrecy and, moving from this point, attack Leninist conception of party.

If it is used in its related context and correctly, illegality expresses the revolutionary quality of the working-class struggle that cannot be contained in the legal boundaries of the bourgeois order and that the political essence and the content of the actions of its revolutionary vanguard (its party) must be in harmony with this revolutionary quality. Revolutionary class party, beyond any formalistic considerations, if it is really to lead the class in a revolutionary way, should not limit itself to the framework of bourgeois legality and should not establish itself relying on bourgeois laws. In this sense illegality is a necessity for communist work not only for those countries where the struggle has to be waged under conditions of extraordinary bourgeois regimes such as Bonapartism or fascism, but also for even those so-called democratic European countries. And this necessity constitutes an important point of difference which European socialists are particularly reluctant to understand correctly.

It is unthinkable for a movement that is to lead the working class in a revolutionary manner to leave its organisation to the mercy of the bourgeois regime and rely on bourgeois democracy. Not compromising the revolutionary essence of the struggle program and action has to be the decisive criterion in the working class

conception of revolutionary party. Precisely for this reason revolutionary organisation of the working class extends beyond the framework of bourgeois legality (legitimacy). This kind of organisation bases its legitimacy on the rightfulness of its revolutionary struggle and mass base gained on this basis. If it is considered carefully then one can easily understand that there is a great qualitative difference in political essence between the revolutionary vanguard organisation of the working class and legalist left structures. Those organisations that speak of revolutionism but confine themselves in practice to bourgeois laws, rules of bourgeois parliamentary order, election system etc. would eventually and inevitably be dragged towards legalism and end up being reformist organisations!

For all left circles, organisations and parties that adapt themselves to periods of relative calm under capitalism, that are engulfed in the marsh of legalism, illegality is something bad that must be kept away. They voluntarily accept to confine themselves to bourgeois laws in the name of open work. And they try to picture Leninist type revolutionary organisations as secret organisations out of touch of the masses. Yet Leninist type party is the revolutionary class party that tries to utilise all legal opportunities without compromising its illegal revolutionary essence and wages struggle in all necessary open fields to establish revolutionary contacts with the mass of the class. For the working class to wage an extensive anti-capitalist struggle in the real sense of the word and to succeed in this struggle, it is necessary to create a class party of this kind.

However such necessities emanating from the tough nature of the class struggle always appear to opportunists and revisionist elements as unnecessary sharpness and rigidity. Revisionism has always found independent class attitude that permeates genuine revolutionary approaches one-sided and sectarian and sought a point of compromise that can soften revolutionary class line. This feature of revisionism covers a wide spectrum from various theoretical and political questions to the conception of political organisation. In fact it is definitely incorrect to isolate the questions and approaches on organisational field from general ideological framework and theoretical understanding. In its essence revisionism is eclectic and conciliationist. While it seeks conciliation between the working class and the bourgeoisie in the field of class struggle, it also quests for creating deformations to soften the revolutionary line in theoretical and organisational front.

Therefore it is no wonder those revisionists who talk about anti-capitalist struggle in Marxist guise attack Leninist conception of party with a vengeance. In fact beneath these kinds of approaches of all revisionists of the world lies disbelief in the need for overthrowing capitalism in a revolutionary way. They develop and

try to implant an understanding that revolutions led by Leninist parties do not bring about a solution and thus leaving the destiny of society to ebbs and flows of spontaneous mass movement would be more beneficial. That is why today's revisionist avoids genuine revolutionary class organisation like a plague and glorifies an amorphous mass growth which is in fact an expression of lack of organisation. In fact the political approaches that are hidden beneath this praise for masses end up leaving the destiny of masses to the bourgeoisie which has its hegemony over whole society with its various apparatuses of repression and ideology, political parties and other organisations.

Those political circles should not be tolerated who seem to worship spontaneous actions of masses but do not have slightest faith in the revolutionary might of the working class and still try to present themselves as anti-capitalists. One of the characteristic features of this kind of circles is that they claim that Leninist conception of party deny mass power of the class and the importance of spontaneous actions of the class. Yet what is meant by creating the revolutionary organisation of workers is not eliminating the spontaneous mass actions of the class. On the contrary, it is to lead them to boost the mass power of the class and to channel mass actions in the right direction. As Lenin remarked, spontaneous action of the proletariat cannot become a class struggle reaching its real dimensions until a powerful organisation of revolutionaries lead it. Also, refuting some of the Trotskyists, who are on a different wavelength today, Trotsky himself stressed that without a capable party to lead the revolutionary struggle proletarian revolution could not be successful. He strongly pointed out that the proletariat could not seize power with a spontaneous uprising.

It is vindicated by many historical examples that those parties that compromised their revolutionary principles and essence in the name of achieving mass influence could not lead the revolution. And the plight of the European "workers" parties that have become social-democratic parties of the bourgeoisie is there to see. Indeed masses are bent to be deceived by reformist political currents until they come to realize that revolution is an absolute necessity on the basis of their own experiences. So a political organisation can become a mass workers party by flattering the masses. But a left party becoming a mass party this way, even though it may lead the overwhelming majority of masses, it will not be able to meet the need of the working class for leadership in revolutionary situations when decisive turning points are sharpened in class struggle. On the contrary, it would betray the working class. What is right is therefore to wage struggle immersing oneself in the class without compromising the revolutionary line and

create a revolutionary organisation capable of leading workers mass movement as much as one can.

One of the pretexts used by legalist and reformist circles to attack the Leninist conception of party is the claim that there is no internal democracy in Leninist organisations. Those who put forward this claim to libel Leninist party equate revolutionary Bolshevism which actually lived in Lenin's time with Stalinism that killed it and came to power. To repeat, Stalinism is a historical reality that abolished the gains of the October Revolution and the rule of workers' soviets and the Bolshevik Party of the revolution and replaced it with its totalitarian-oppressive structure. It is true that Stalinist organisations do not have an inch of internal democracy. There has to be a struggle against this for sure. But Leninist conception of party has nothing to do with that. It is also clear that in order to create the revolutionary organisation of the class communists must completely free themselves of the Stalinist frame of mind on the question of internal organisational workings. Revolutionary vanguards of the proletariat stand for the widest and most consistent democracy, i.e. the workers democracy, against the narrowness and hypocrisy of the bourgeois democracy. But this has to be proved by correct attitudes on organisational questions.

Internal democracy is not a question of form in the Leninist party and it is not to be implemented by formal rules borrowed from the bourgeois democracy. Democratic operation in the revolutionary organisation of the class cannot be reduced merely to the existence of elected representative institutions as inculcated by the bourgeois democracy. Democracy in the revolutionary organisation of the working class can only rest on elements who wage a determined struggle to raise the theoretical level and revolutionary consciousness of its cadres enjoying a voluntary unity among them and that embrace one another comradely. Only in such a structure, where the elements who have been won from within the class are raised to the quality of a genuine communist, a qualified debate and freedom to criticise required by internal democracy can be established and sustained. Otherwise the rules of democratic operation will be condemned to stay on paper. Or the organisations with claims to embark on creating the revolutionary organisation of the class will fall apart through petty-bourgeois elements in the name of so-called freedom of debate and criticism. If a revolutionary organisation is wanted to be created on sound grounds and with sound steps then it is clear that such an internal operation is needed that is to be the cement of this organisation and that draws its legitimacy from revolutionary program, unity of principles and style and that rests on comradely trust.

It is necessary to conduct an open debate when ideological differences occur in the revolutionary organisation of the class, i.e. its vanguard party, on important matters. Without this (and for tendencies, if there are any, to express their views freely) there can be no healthy progress. When important differences that need to be debated come up, it would then suffocate the internal life of the organisation to suppress debate, also creating bureaucratic degeneration. There is another important issue equally sensitive. And that is the fact that a fighting organisation cannot be a sum of factions pulling towards different directions. Therefore those people who talk about internal democracy disregarding the need for revolutionary discipline in fact deny the revolutionary tradition of the working class. It would be useful here to remind an important matter which also became part of Comintern resolutions in Lenin's time. In that resolution a communist is required to be loyal to the party (of course to a party that deserves its name –EÇ) during all his/her activity whether (s)he is a leader of a revolutionary strike, an underground organiser, a union secretary, an agitator in mass demonstrations, a member of parliament, a lead organiser of co-operatives, a barricade warrior.

The right of debate and tendency can only have a right and revolutionary meaning as long as it serves to strengthen the organisation of the class, not to break it into pieces. And the historically found solution to this problem is to implement this right together with the principle of unity in action. The best thing is not to separate the need for internal democracy and discipline and not to counterpose them. In fact the Leninist conception of party and genuine democratic centralism rest on the dialectical unity of the two. Without internal democracy there can be no revolutionary education but without organisational discipline revolutionary unity of action of the working class cannot be achieved. However, those petty-bourgeois types who pass themselves off as Marxists but freak away from discipline or those educated types who are gripped by the sickness of intellectualism are very anxious to create confusion on this kind of issues. So we have to underline that a healthy understanding of discipline that must be defended draws its strength and justification from the revolutionary struggle arising from within the working class itself. Only this kind of internal discipline would not be in conflict with democratic operation, but would strengthen the struggle.

It is important from the standpoint of the struggle to correctly understand the issues especially noted by Lenin in his views on organisational questions which distinguish the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks of those days and carry the revolutionary essence of those truths to today. For instance, in the Menshevik conception of party the party is basically composed of a party nucleus formed of intellectuals

and an amorphous mass of workers covering it. In other words, in Menshevik party organisation and division of labour is limited to a nucleus formed of party professionals and intellectuals. And beyond that there are disorganised workers amassed in fact as a shapeless heap who are defined as party members. Yet the Bolshevik conception of party rests on the principle that revolutionary party cannot be a simple arithmetic sum of members taken individually. As Lenin underlined the revolutionary party of the working class is not organised only in its nucleus but on its whole. In this organisation there is a division of labour in which everyone does his/her best and all members are active on this basis. This profound understanding of being organised also includes the party sympathizers on a different level. A Leninist organisation is an organism where members and non-members, and those who are committed to the fight and those who are flimsily staying on the fringes of the fight are not mingled each other, and where, thus, an organisational chaos is out of question.

## **A product of revolutionary program, faith and determination**

Organised life is not a playground where petty-bourgeois elements satisfy themselves, who are not happy with discipline but temporarily get involved for a short time with the drive to get the taste of it like they do in everything. Communist struggle requires an extremely serious organisational understanding that must be embraced primarily by the vanguard elements of the class. Revolution cannot be successful without a party capable of correctly assessing the developments in the world, ups and downs of the class struggle, capable of adapting itself to any political condition and of gaining the support and confidence of the working masses by immersing itself in the class and working for its fundamental interests.

Class struggle does not follow a straight line at all. There are defeats and regressions as well as leaps forward in this struggle. Therefore it is imperative that the real forces of revolution are able to deeply understand the changes in concrete conditions, adopt proper tactics and develop an enduring body appropriate for any condition. Periods of reaction, when the bourgeois order steps up repression on the working masses and goes over to the ideological offensive against revolutionary struggle and revolutionary values, are days of test that differentiate genuine revolutionaries and loose and liquidationist elements. Only those elements who, with faith and determination, are able to carry on preparations for the revolutionary days of future upsurge despite all difficulties can pass this test. Surely

there cannot be many who manage to keep up this way in periods of reaction and repression as all examples in history show. Because in such periods revolution appears a completely impossible dream to society and the working class. As revolutionary proletarian struggle suffers heavy defeats, revolutionary values are generally denied, many renegades turn up and revolutionary memory is erased.

But every dark period eventually comes to light with a social awakening and the reality that capitalism is unable to escape turns up in a more mature way. With an economic, ideological and political crisis that starts to rock the system deeply, the idea of the actuality of revolution begins to make sense again for the ever-growing sections of the working class. And now reformism and opportunism begin to raise their heads preaching for that social circumstances can be improved by means of reforms to divert the working class away from revolution. The wave of reformism is always accompanied by hostility towards the idea of revolutionary organisation and by the tendency to confine the working class to bourgeois legal space (legalism). In conclusion, it is equally an accomplishment to manage to stay revolutionary under hard conditions of reactionary periods and to follow a revolutionary line as against lapsing into reformism and to stick to the conception of revolutionary party in periods of social dynamism.

When days of revolutionary upsurge come, where revolutionary situations frequently erupt, only those who have not given up the revolutionary stance against counter currents in previous periods can accomplish a leap forward in the proper direction. It is impossible for those who do not dare to fight the hardships of though days or who go away from the conception of revolutionary organisation trusting the bourgeois democracy, whatever their rhetorical claims are, to create a political organisation of the kind needed by the working class. It is obvious that a revolutionary organisation to progress on healthy and lasting foundations calls for stamina, patience and determination from its constituents. It is impossible for those who regard these requirements as unnecessary sacrifices to remain in the realm of revolutionary struggle or hide themselves for a long time. So there is no greater acid test than the process of practical struggle.

The logic of actual struggle does not respect self-proclamations and unfounded boastings but distinguishes between proletarian elements, who have a bent for discipline and struggling with hardships owing to their conditions of reproducing their lives, and petty-bourgeois elements who cannot stand that. Therefore it is impossible for those petty-bourgeois elements who do not attach themselves to the revolutionary struggle of the working class but to seeking certain bureaucratic posts or labels to remain in a revolutionary organisation proper forever.

The revolutionary struggle of the working class requires a kind of human material that is hard-working, self-sacrificing, and ready to commit oneself to the cause of human emancipation. And a Leninist party in the real sense of the word can only be created starting with these foundations and a proper cadre accumulation.

Many negative examples of the past and today reveal one thing. The revolutionary party of the working class is not an organisation that can be formed by means of self-styled claims of any left group. The making of revolutionary party cannot be reduced to a resolution, which is beyond the scope of any left group, or a question of labelling. If there is not an organisational comedy going on and the revolutionary vanguard organisation of the working class in the real sense of the world is sought to be created, then a process of arduous struggle to be waged on the basis of the class has to be ventured in faith and determination stemming from the revolutionary program. A workers revolution involves such profound historical dimensions that would put an end to class society and exploitation. This revolution demands from those elements, who are to be the vanguards, of not only their “free” times but of devoting their whole lives.

The efforts of organising to be the manifestations of a principled and planned process can come near to forming of Leninist party as long as it involves the militant and sacrificing vanguard elements of the working class. Thus to establish firm contacts with vanguard workers, to educate them ideologically and politically and raise them to the level of communist militants is the main axis of the revolutionary work within the working class. It is a distinguishing feature of Leninist conception of organisation not to educate vanguard workers as union representatives but as communist militants. The vanguard party of the working class can never be built outside them and in isolation from them. The Leninist party can only be a living organism erupting from the realm of proletarian struggle with militants (communist workers and communist intellectuals) working heartily to overcome any tasks from the simplest one to the most complex ones. Without maturing in the field of revolutionary struggle one cannot be communist and without the determined and planned work of such communist elements carried on in faith in the revolutionary program, the vanguard revolutionary party of the working class cannot be built either.

The imperialist wars becoming widespread, increasing repression of the bourgeois state on the working masses in almost every country, i.e. the rotting of the existing social order, all send a call of mission for the working class to put an end to the capitalist system. There is no doubt that a very hard process awaits the working masses as long as they choose to live under capitalism. But the point is

that this is not a divine destiny and that the working class has an enormous capacity to get rid of the capitalist curse and create a beautiful future. Moreover it is evident that the present profound system crisis of capitalism will create many revolutionary situations. Such periods create leaps in the mood of the oppressed in the direction of sympathy towards revolutionary struggle. Also in these periods the working masses can learn the requirements of the revolutionary struggle faster than the past. In short, the changed situation on a world scale has now put the task of strengthening the class movement along revolutionary lines before the communists as an immediate one. And overcoming this task is only possible by taking a correct attitude on the organisational question.