

## Imperialist war and the socialist revolution as a response

On the eve of the first imperialist world war, it became increasingly clear that two currents deviating from Marxism were gaining importance in the labour movement: opportunism/revisionism and anarchism. In 1912, Lenin noted that this was not a phenomenon limited to a few countries but was beginning to occur everywhere. The origin, hence, was rooted in the development of capitalism itself.

Today, we find ourselves in the midst of a comprehensive crisis of the imperialist world system again and can observe the formation of an opportunist and revisionist bloc in the international communist and labour movement too. Lenin did not only respond to the developments theoretically; the Bolsheviks gave a practical answer with the October Revolution and proved the correctness of Marxist theory.

At the beginning of the 20th century, the development of imperialism as the highest stage of capitalism was complete. Monopoly capitalism had emerged in the most developed capitalist countries and the division of markets was complete. However, the uneven development of capitalism led to an ongoing fight over the division of markets and colonies, which could not be finally completed. While some tried to secure their influence, emerging capitals and their states attempted to force a new division. By the turn of the century at the latest, there was an increase in conflicts and armed disputes, some of which were fought directly and some indirectly between the great powers, which inevitably led to the First World War.

At the same time, opportunistic and revisionist currents emerged in European social democracy, whose most prominent theorists were Bernstein and Kautsky. Bernstein questioned the concentration of capital and monopolisation and claimed that reforms could lead to socialism. These theses fell on fertile ground in parts of social democracy. Lenin identified the cause as the emergence of monopoly capitalism, which allowed capital to corrupt sections of the working class, the so-called labour aristocracy, which became the source of opportunism. This opportunism led to the collapse of the Second International and the social democratic parties siding with their own bourgeoisie in the imperialist war.

Essentially, Lenin countered opportunism with five theses:

First: Modern capitalism, imperialism, is monopoly capitalism, in which the state is the state of monopoly and finance capital.

Second: Imperialism is a decaying form of capitalism that can only overcome crises through war and is ready for socialist revolution.

Third: the war is an imperialist war for the redivision of the world; none of the countries involved is waging a defensive war.

Fourth: The working class has no interest in this war; it must overthrow its own government, establish the dictatorship of the proletariat and build socialism.

And Fifth: To defeat monopoly capitalism, a solid revolutionary organisation is needed, a new type of party.

Whereas in Lenin's time a handful of imperialist robbers divided up the world, today we are dealing with imperialism as a world system. Capital export, the collapse of colonial empires and the counter-revolution in the socialist states have given rise to a multitude of capitalist states and created new imperialist centres. Today's system is one of mutual dependence, dominance and subordination. Austrian monopoly capital rides in German monopoly capital coattails and

used the NATO war against Yugoslavia and the eastward expansion of the EU to export capital. At the same time, it is not competitive with the strongest European monopolies and subordinates itself to them.

The emergence of new capitalist states and the deepening crisis of capitalism have further intensified competition among the monopolies, with the result that conflicts are increasingly leading to militarily conflicts. This is evident in the increase in military conflicts around the world, including Israel's genocide in Palestine with the support of NATO, the EU and the US. Militarisation and rearmament are becoming the mainstay of the EU economy. In preparation for major confrontations, the EU is converting its economy to a war economy. At the same time, it is in danger of being left behind by China and the US in the field of new technologies.

Rearmament and militarisation are accompanied by increased attacks on the social and political rights of the working class. Anti-communism is becoming socially acceptable again, especially in Eastern European countries, where communist symbols and parties are banned or threatened with a ban. The EU supports this policy through resolutions equating communism with fascism. Bourgeois democracy is once again proving to be a masquerade to conceal the policies of the ruling class. A similar policy can be observed in Russia, where the ruling class uses selected symbols from the socialist past to conceal its policies, while communists are criminalised.

Today, the communist and labour movement faces similar challenges to those it faced on the eve of the First World War: intensified contradictions between the monopolies, a growing threat of war, and new opportunist and revisionist currents attempting to divide the labour movement. From the classic reformism of the so-called Eurocommunist parties to those groups that claim Russia is waging an anti-fascist war in Ukraine and that capitalist alliances such as BRICS or ALBA should be strengthened.

All these developments make evident that the fundamental contradictions analysed by Lenin not only continue to exist but are returning in an intensified form. As in 1914, we are now faced with a situation in which capital is seeking a way out of the crisis through war, the labour movement is confused, and broad sections of the public are disoriented by bourgeois ideologies.

This is precisely why the question arises once again: what lessons can we learn from the October Revolution? The Bolsheviks not only provided the correct analysis of the war, but also showed what practical conclusions the working class must draw. The October Revolution was the answer to imperialist war. And today it offers us a yardstick for understanding the escalation of the system and a guide for the revolutionary movement.

The tasks of the communist and labour movement today are:

- the struggle against opportunism and revisionism, for clarity and unity
- the (re)building of a class-oriented trade union movement
- organising an anti-imperialist peace movement
- (re)building strong communist parties of a new type
- relentlessly exposing the policies of the ruling class

These are the basic conditions for countering the looming imperialist war with a strong workers' and people's movement. The crisis of capitalism and the warmongering policies of monopoly

capital will conjure up new revolutionary situations. It is our task to prepare the workers' and people's movement to take power and establish the dictatorship of the proletariat.