

MARXIST

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| | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| <i>Editorial Note</i> | 3 |
| IRFAN HABIB The Road to the October Revolution in Russia, 1917 | 7 |
| AMAR FAROOQUI The October Revolution and the National Movement in India | 21 |
| FIDEL CASTRO RUZ When the People Rule | 37 |
| COMMUNIST PARTY OF PORTUGAL “We Were, Are, and Will be Communists!” | 54 |
| COMMUNIST PARTY OF GREECE “Socialism is Timely and Necessary” | 68 |

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Editorial Note

Beginning with this issue, spanning a period of one year, till the third quarter issue of 2017, *Marxist* will be observing the centenary of the great October Socialist Revolution of 1917. It shall be our endeavour to provide our readers some insightful materials on the multi-dimensional impact of the October Revolution in shaping the contours of human civilization in the 20th century.

Following the dismantling of socialism in the USSR and East European countries, the CPI(M) in January 1992 at its 14th Congress concluded that these reverses to socialism neither negate the revolutionary ideology of Marxism-Leninism, nor the pursuit of the socialist ideal. Evaluating the 20th century developments, the CPI(M) came to the following conclusion:

During this century, capitalism plunged humanity into two barbaric world wars claiming millions of lives. It produced and used nuclear weapons to demonstrate its inhuman superiority and plunged the world into a nuclear race with devastating consequences. It launched numerous wars to contain humanity's advance to socialism, intervened in the internal affairs of independent countries, organised coups, foisted reactionary and dictatorial regimes to suit its interests. Its most barbaric form was exposed in the fascist dictatorships.

On the other hand, the socialist revolutions and national liberation struggles imparted a richer content to human civilisation, by making it possible for the majority of the working people in many countries to lead their lives without national oppression and free from exploitation. This impact continues to chart the future course of human development towards national and social liberation. This process, however, will be long, complex and full of twists and turns.

MARXIST

But the fundamental direction of the epoch continues to be that of a transition from capitalism to socialism.

Irfan Habib, in his article, details the background situation and developments in Russia that led up to the 1917 socialist revolution and the establishment of socialism. The Russian Empire then, after the British Empire, “formed the largest state in the world”. However, in terms of economic indices, Russia was the most backward and poorest of European countries. One redeeming feature in Russia was a fairly extensive educational system and a relatively high level of literacy amongst its people. This, according to Irfan Habib, explains the early presence of socialist ideas in Russia. Marx’s *Capital* (Volume I) saw its first translated edition in Russia within four years of the German publication. Irfan Habib points out that Karl Marx himself, in his late years, thought that given its peasant unrest, Russia was a country where the revolution was then impending. So it is wrong to hold that the October Revolution of 1917 occurred in contradiction to Marx’s own predictions.

The Leninist understanding of converting the imperialist war into a civil war and breaking the imperialist chain at its weakest link, which was then Russia, was resoundingly vindicated with the success of the revolution and the subsequent establishment of socialism. The epic human endeavour that went into the establishment of socialism was completed with the successful implementation of the first Five Year Plan in 1933. Irfan Habib concludes: “This was a unique achievement in world history and marked the fulfillment of the main object of the great October Revolution.”

Amar Farooqui traces the impact of the October Revolution across the world inspiring new revolutionary movements, radicalizing people’s struggles and having a profound impact on the struggles in the colonial world for freedom and liberation. Lenin’s “Theses on national and colonial questions” brought out the integration of the struggles of the colonial people for freedom

with the global struggle for emancipation against imperialism. He recalls a moving passage on how Ho Chi Minh was inspired and motivated with this Theses.

As a part of the global impact of the October Revolution, Farooqui discusses some aspects of the impact this had on the Indian national movement. The coalescence of various revolutionary trends in India consolidated the Communist Party which had a radical impact on India's freedom struggle. "It is not easy to assess the huge historical impact that a revolutionary upheaval of the magnitude of the October Revolution in Russia has had on the course of history, or even specifically on the course of Indian history. A century might not be adequate". Yet, the insights Farooqui provides on the huge impact that the October Revolution had on the Indian national movement constitutes the basis for further in-depth studies in this direction.

It shall be our endeavour also to provide documents from different Communist Parties in the world, all of whom are observing the centenary. In this issue, we reproduce, as a document, the speech of the General Secretary of the Communist Party of Portugal launching the year-long observance. We are also carrying the opening speech of the General Secretary of the Communist Party of Greece at the conference of the Communist Parties of Europe on the occasion of this anniversary.

As our humble homage to Comrade Fidel Castro Ruz, who strode the global revolutionary movement like a colossus, in the second half of the 20th century. Following his recent demise, we are reproducing one of his early speeches delivered on January 21, 1959 to a million plus Cuban workers and peasants. It was this speech that announced to the world what the Cuban Revolution envisages as its role and responsibilities both internationally and domestically. "When the people rule" announced to the world that the Cuban Revolution with the support of the Cuban people had come to stay in human history.

Prophetically, a few days earlier, after his triumphal march

MARXIST

crossing the country, Fidel spoke on the next tasks of the revolution at General Batista's (who by then had fled Cuba) military fortress, camp Colombia on January 8, 1959. He ends his speech by saying: "I know that there never will be such a crowd again, except on one other occasion – the day I'm buried. I'm sure that there will be a large crowd then, too, to take me to my grave, because I will never defraud our people."

Indeed, millions turned out to bid farewell to Comrade Fidel Castro. The whole of Cuba rose as one man to celebrate Fidel's life and work with a redoubled resolve to further strengthen and enrich socialism in Cuba. This was a unique expression of the love and affection that Fidel and the revolution received from the Cuban people.

The Marxist pays its revolutionary homage to Comrade Fidel Castro Ruz.