
Lenin and Stalin as Mass Leaders

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The great revolution of October 1917, which abolished Russian capitalism and landlordism and set up the Soviet government, resulted in the establishment of socialism throughout 1/6th of the earth, and is now surging forward to the building of communism, constitutes the deepest-going, farthest-reaching, and most fundamental mass movement in all human history. The two chief figures in the Communist Party heading this epic struggle — Lenin and Stalin — have continuously displayed, in its course, unequalled qualities as political leaders of the working class and of the toiling people generally.

Lenin and Stalin have evidenced their outstanding brilliance as mass leaders in every revolutionary requirement: in Marxian theory, political strategy, the building of mass organizations, and in the development of the mass struggle. The characteristic feature of their work is its many-sidedness. Both men of action as well as of thought, they have exemplified in their activities that coordination of theory and practice which is so indispensable to the success of the everyday struggles of the masses and the final establishment of socialism. Both have worked in the clearest realization of the twin truths that there can be no revolutionary movement without revolutionary theory, and that revolutionary theory unsupported by organized mass struggle must remain sterile. Like Marx and Engels before them, Lenin and Stalin have shown superlative capacities in translating their socialist principles into successful mass action.

The work of Lenin and Stalin, so graphically portrayed in the *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union*, is full of urgent and vital lessons for the Communist Party of the United States and the whole popular mass movement in these days of imperialist war. This article will undertake to point out some of

these lessons, paying special attention to the organizational aspects of the work of Lenin and Stalin.

Great Marxian Theoreticians.

The main foundation of the brilliant successes of Lenin and Stalin as the leaders of the Russian Revolution lies in their deep mastery of Marxian theory. With unmatched ability, they analyzed the innumerable objective and subjective complexities of decaying capitalism and growing socialism, and drew the necessary practical conclusions therefrom. Better than anyone else, they pointed out clearly to the Communist Party and the broad masses, both in the Soviet Union and throughout the world, the unfolding path to prosperity and freedom.

Lenin's great theoretical work advanced and expanded Marxism in many fields. His major achievements include his analysis of imperialism as parasitic, decaying capitalism; his survey and evaluation, in the light of dialectical materialism, of many branches of current science; his elaboration of the theory of the uneven development of capitalism and its effects upon imperialist war, proletarian revolution and the realization of socialism in a single country. He elaborated the method of transforming imperialist war into civil war; he analyzed the capitalist state and the dictatorship of the proletariat; he presented a deep theoretical work on the national question; he clarified the role of the peasantry in the revolution. His annihilating polemics against the Narodniks, Economists, Mensheviks and the whole network of international Social-Democracy, Socialist Revolutionaries, Anarchists, Syndicalists, Trotskyists, and other pseudo-revolutionary groups; and his solution of innumerable additional theoretical and practical problems were of the utmost

significance in welding the theoretical and organizational strength and unity which charted the Bolshevik Party on the course of victory.

Stalin has further developed Marxism-Leninism through many invaluable theoretical accomplishments. His principal contributions to Marxian theory lie in indicating the path of the actual building of socialism in the USSR. Thus, his powerful polemics against Trotsky, Zinoviev, Bukharin and their counterrevolutionary affiliates comprised the greatest ideological struggle of our times. They clarified every aspect of the vast and unique problem of building socialism in one country, and surveyed the whole position of international capitalism. They resulted in a decisive victory for the leadership of the Communist Party and, thereby, of socialism.

Marx and Engels laid the foundations of socialism by establishing its main scientific principles. Lenin was especially the theoretician of the revolutionary seizure of power and the establishment of the fundamental institutions of socialism. He further developed the profound Marxian analysis of the capitalist system and the class struggle, carrying it into the epoch of imperialism. Stalin has raised the whole Marxist-Leninist structure still another stage higher by revealing the path to the actual building of socialism and the development toward communism.

Without the profound work of Lenin and Stalin, the Party and the masses could not have found their way through the maze of thorny problems that beset them. The mastery of Marxism-Leninism is Stalin's great mainstay in piloting the Soviet Union through the present complicated world situation.

Brilliant Political Strategist.

As masters of Marxian theory, Lenin and Stalin could develop their profound ability as political strategists. The Marxist method of analysis, enabling them to gauge accurately the relationship of classes and the general economic and political forces at work in a given situation, equipped them to determine when, how and where the Party and the masses could strike the most effective blows.

Lenin was bold, resourceful and flexible in his political strategy. Time and again he outlined separate mass actions or general courses of policy upon the ini-

tiation and success of which the very life of the revolution depended. So original and startling were these policies that they often astounded the world. Lenin on several occasions had to convince opposing majorities of the Central Committee of the Party as to the correctness of his proposals, as well as smash through the sabotage of alien elements like Zinoviev, Kamenev, Bukharin, Trotsky and others.

Among Lenin's great achievements in political strategy were his leadership in the transformation of the 1905 post-war struggle of the masses into armed insurrection; in the successful boycott of the first Duma; in the transformation of the imperialist World War into civil war within Russia; in the Party's resolute stand against the Provisional Government in 1917 and the bold development of the Soviets into the mass organs by which that capitalist, war-making regime was overthrown; in the mobilization of the masses to defeat the Kornilov revolt, while at the same time continuing the struggle against Kerensky.

Lenin's greatest achievement, however, as a political strategist was in determining the precise time and manner for achieving the October Revolution. In this supreme moment of history he gave the Party and the masses correct Marxian leadership.

During the following years of desperate revolutionary struggle in the USSR, there was Lenin's political masterstroke of the Brest-Litovsk Peace Treaty, which gave the revolution a "breathing-spell" from imperialist attack, saving it from defeat. There was his leadership in the terribly difficult Civil War and in the complicated development of War Communism. There was his tremendous work of outlining and clarifying the New Economic Policy as the means to get economic reconstruction under way in the devastated country. There was his brilliant attack upon the infantile Leftism of those revolutionaries who refused to work within the reactionary trade unions and bourgeois parliaments.

Stalin, "the best pupil of Lenin," also displays a high genius of political strategy. He has Lenin's boldness, flexibility and clear-sightedness. It is significant that, in the many difficult strategical moves Lenin worked out, Stalin always found himself in agreement with him, although at times many Central Committee members were initially uncertain or in opposition. This quick grasp of the true meaning of Lenin's poli-

cies was an indication of that great strategical ability which Stalin himself has shown so often since his accession to the chief Party leadership after Lenin's death in 1924.

Stalin's greatest masterpieces of political strategy, like his main theoretical work, have been directly connected with the building of socialism. They were notably expressed by his leadership in the intense drive to industrialize the USSR and to collectivize its agriculture. That history-making movement, which the Party initiated in the First 5-Year Plan beginning in 1929, has already made the Soviet Union the second industrial country of the world, with the most advanced agricultural organization. That tremendous movement involved Marxist-Leninist evaluation, organizational work, and strategical considerations of deep complexity. Vital complementary features of this great task of socialist construction (every phase of which was ridiculed and declared impossible by bourgeois economists the world over) were the timely economic and political liquidation of the Nepmen, (small traders) and the kulaks (rich farmers).

A strategic move of great importance was Stalin's bold purge of spies and wreckers from Soviet life, which gave fascism its biggest defeat, upsetting Chamberlain's and Hitler's plan of a united attack upon the Soviet Union. Leninism-Stalinism also was the theoretical basis of the international policy of the people's front, the historically imperative tactic to unite the masses of workers, farmers, professionals and small business people in the capitalist and colonial countries in effective struggle against fascism and for democracy. The people's front policy was connected with the Soviet world peace policy which sought to create an international front of the democratic peoples to stop the fascist aggressor powers. This policy would undoubtedly have been successful in preventing war, but primarily because the Social-Democratic leaders of England and France did not support it, Chamberlain and Daladier were able to reject it. Undeterred by this defeat of the international peace front and the outbreak of the war, the Soviet Union, guided by the brilliant strategy of Stalin and the Communist Party, has developed a new policy in the struggle for world peace and democracy. As it has rapidly unfolded, this policy has amazed the world with its boldness, some of its major aspects being the Soviet-German Non-Aggression Pact, the

smashing of the fascist Axis, the liberation of the White Russian and Ukrainian minorities in Poland, the armistice with Japan, and the mutual assistance pacts with the Baltic nations.

Outstanding Mass Organizers.

Lenin and Stalin proved themselves to be not only great Marxian theoreticians and brilliant strategists, but also highly gifted builders of the mass organizations necessary to give flesh and blood to their Marxian theory and strategy. Lenin said, "The proletariat has no other weapon in the struggle for power except organization." The writings of both Lenin and Stalin are saturated with a profound appreciation of the decisive political significance of organization, and their work is full of organizational tasks carried out to their remotest detail.

Lenin was a superlatively great organizer. He worked out, in practice as well as in theory, the fundamental organizational principles of the Communist Party, the most advanced and complicated form of political organization yet forged by mankind. He organized to the smallest details the publication of the first all-Russian Marxist newspaper in Russia, the *Iskra*, within whose columns were published outstanding contributions to Marxist literature, and which enormously assisted the ideological and organizational unity of the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party. In sharp conflict with opportunists of various brands, he hammered out the conceptions of the Party's vanguard role, of iron discipline, democratic centralism, monolithic unity, self-criticism, factory unit form of organization, legal and illegal methods of work, the role of the professional revolutionist, etc. This made the Communist Party of the Soviet Union a party of the new type and enabled it to lead the Russian Revolution successfully.

Lenin personally led in organizing the Communist International. He not only laid down its basic theoretical groundwork and indicated the key moment of its launching, but he also, in the midst of his stupendous activities as leader of the Russian Revolution, worked out the main lines of its program and much of its detailed structure and procedure. The guiding hand of Lenin can be seen through the fiber and being of the Communist International.

Lenin applied himself closely to organizational tasks in many other forms of mass activity, with the usual brilliant results. Thus, he developed the theory of the role and structure of the Soviets, following up personally their many complicated organizational problems. He also turned his powerful intellect and gigantic energies upon organizing the Red Army which militantly defended the country during the three years of bitter civil war. He, furthermore, was the main authority in setting up the unique and difficult forms of socialist economic organization, labor discipline, financing, etc., in Soviet industry. His work also in solving the complexities in the relations of the trade unions to the Party, to the state, to industry, and to the workers' interests generally, was of inestimable value; his writings on trade unionism remain classics. One of the last achievements of Lenin's fruitful life was his profound article upon the organization and tasks of the cooperatives.

Stalin, like Lenin, also possesses surpassing merit as a mass organizer. At the Seventeenth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, he stated that one of the Party's basic tasks was "to raise organizational leadership to the level of political leadership." This principle has guided his active political life.

Stalin was a close collaborator with Lenin in all his brilliant organizational work; and since Lenin's death, he, as leader of the Party, has been called upon constantly to exercise his great mass organizing talent. His main organizing work, like his theoretical and strategical contributions, related chiefly to carrying through socialist construction. This vast task involved rearing millions of skilled workers and engineers out of an industrially backward population, building up unique economic organs, developing new methods of mass work, and a thousand other grave organizational problems. A gigantic feature of this work was the historic collectivization of Soviet agriculture. In all this socialist construction Stalin was the chief organizer, leader and teacher of the Party and the masses.

Under Stalin's leadership, too, the Red Army has been built into the most formidable military force in the world. Every detail of organization has been under his constant surveillance. Stalin has also led the Party in that basic aspect of social organization, the elaboration and crystallization of growing socialist democracy. This highly political development, like all other fea-

tures of Soviet life, has its complicated organizational sides. The expanding Soviet democracy has given birth, as its legal expression, to the new Constitution, most advanced in the world, fitly named after Stalin.

Peerless Mass Activizers.

In our foregoing analysis of Lenin and Stalin as mass leaders, we have briefly reviewed their great genius as Marxian theoreticians, as political strategists and as builders of mass organizations. They also display no less brilliance in that other fundamental requirement of effective leadership: the ability to bring into struggle the broadest masses and to animate them with an invincible fighting spirit. This requires a thoroughgoing coordination of Marxian theory, sound strategy and tactics, solid organization, good methods of work, boundless militancy and resoluteness. The final test of good political generalship in the class struggle is to be able to mobilize to the utmost all available and potential fighting forces. This requires the closest contact with, and understanding of, the masses. Lenin and Stalin have always been completely identified with the working class and its natural allies. They have excelled in their knowledge of how the people have felt and thought at any moment. Their ear at all times has been close to the ground. They have been able to voice at any given time the deepest aspirations of the masses and to point the way for realization of their most basic needs.

Lenin and Stalin have been master mobilizers of the people. Never were they mere "cabinet" generals, but functioned directly on the firing line. Thus, Stalin was head of the committee that prepared the revolutionary seizure of power in Petrograd; and on the night of October 24, just before the decisive action began, when Lenin arrived in the city, Stalin was assigned personal leadership of the uprising.

Time and again during the Revolution these two leaders developed veritable miracles of mass activation and struggle, with few organized resources and in the face of gigantic obstacles. By realizing in struggle the identity of interest of the Party and the people, they could bind the Party to every fiber of the working and peasant masses and convey to these masses a high degree of the Party's clearheadedness, systematic methods of work, resoluteness, unflinching courage, firm

unity, iron discipline and unbreakable fighting spirit.

The October Revolution itself furnished the best illustration of Lenin's great activizing ability; of his capacity, by the coordination of theory and practice, to involve huge masses in struggle around a relatively small organized force. When this gigantic movement was carried through, the Communist Party which headed it had hardly more than 300,000 members in a population of 160 million. But the Party, clearheaded and capably led, with a sound policy, using practical methods of work, and infused with the tireless and dauntless fighting spirit of Lenin, was able by prodigious effort to reach the masses. It educated them, set them in motion, and led their millions in successful revolutionary struggle against capitalism.

Another brilliant example of this supreme ability of Lenin and the Party to mobilize and activate the whole people in struggle was shown in the bitterly fought Civil War. When the Revolution took place in October 1917, the Russian army, betrayed by its tsarist officers and defeated by the Germans, was rapidly disintegrating and about to fall to pieces. World military experts declared it impossible for the war-weary, starving Russian people to be reorganized to fight against the imperialist intervention, launched by England, France, Japan and the United States. But the job was done. The Communist Party, led by Lenin, in the fire of civil war, with industry and agriculture prostrate and with daily rations as low as two ounces of bread per person, was able to build the Red Army into an invincible force of 5 million soldiers who victoriously drove the counterrevolution from Soviet Russia's borders. To perform this "impossibility" required a tremendous mobilization of the people, and to bring this about taxed all the understanding, tenacity and fighting spirit of the Party.

Stalin, like Lenin, is distinguished by high ability as a mass activizer. His great capacity in this key phase of leadership was graphically shown, among other major campaigns, by the Party's great drive to carry through the First 5-Year Plan. When this plan became known internationally, it evoked a chorus of sneers from bourgeois economists and statesmen. These wisecracks pronounced the whole thing fantastic, a mere propaganda stunt. Many declared it would require, not 5, but 50 years to fulfil, because the Soviet government was deeply deficient in capital, industrial experi-

ence, engineers and skilled workers. These people especially ridiculed the section of the plan dealing with farm collectivization, and declared that the individualistic peasants could never be organized to carry it out.

But the Communist Party, headed by Stalin, was undeterred by this pessimism, by the sabotage of Trotskyites and other wreckers. It proceeded to a tremendous mobilization and activation of the whole Soviet people. The pessimists said the Plan could not be accomplished in 5 years; very well, the Party resolved to make it in 4. The result is now history, a glorious page in the life of the Russian Revolution. By superhuman efforts, based upon the education of the masses; by organizing, inspiring, and straining every resource of the people to the limit, the 5-Year Plan was carried through in 4-and-1/4 years. Huge plants sprang up almost like magic; the farms were collectivized in a vast sweeping movement; multitudes of workers and technicians were rapidly trained. Never before had the world seen such a swift advance in industry and agriculture, such a tremendous energizing of a vast people. The Soviet Union leaped into second place among the world's industrial countries. Stalin stood forth as a superlative mass organizer.

In the present troubled world the practical political significance of this rapid progress (continued under the Second and Third 5-Year Plans) is that it made the Soviet Union an invincible fortress of peace in the path of war-makers. Should the USSR be drawn into the present war, in spite of all efforts to keep out, this Bolshevik ability to mobilize and activate the masses in struggle will play a role fatal to the program of the imperialists who seek the downfall of the Soviet Union.

Some General Conclusions.

The above-presented brief indications of Lenin's and Stalin's activities as mass leaders do not constitute a complete picture of their work, but serve at least to throw some highlights upon the four major aspects of their leadership: Marxian theory, political strategy, mass organization, and mass activation. The work of these leaders has many lessons for the Communist Party and for the American toiling masses. If we are to profit from them, however, we must not mechanically apply

here the methods used by Lenin and Stalin in Russia, but adapt them to the particular needs and special problems of our American movement.

Lenin and Stalin themselves have given the clearest examples of how to apply international Marxism to specifically national conditions. They have always stressed the need for the Communist Parties of the various lands to know their peoples well; to analyze the national traditions and peculiarities of their countries; and to apply Marxism, not mechanically but specifically, to their native conditions. Let us, therefore, briefly indicate a few of the major applications to our American situation.

First, in the matter of Marxian theory, the leaders of American trade unions, farm organizations, and other mass bodies are, with rare exceptions, extremely weak. There is deep confusion among them as to what is actually happening to capitalism. They do not clearly understand the economic, political and social forces at work undermining the capitalist system; nor do they realize that only socialism can solve the problems that are wrecking the present social order. Their estimation of the relationship of classes is unclear; their conception of the class struggle and the growth of fascism and reaction is superficial. This theoretical weakness hinders the working class from developing the necessary class consciousness; it affects adversely all phases of its strategy, organization and struggle.

The theoretical confusion of trade union and other popular mass leaders is now climaxed in their wrong attitude toward the war. With few exceptions, they are accepting the capitalist contention that Great Britain and France are defending democracy against Hitlerism. Thus they walk straight into the trap of the imperialist war-makers and try to draw the masses in after them. Reactionaries like Green and Woll, lieutenants of capitalism in the ranks of labor, take a pro-war position as a matter of policy; but there are also many honest mass leaders, especially of the lower categories, who follow the war-makers simply through ignorance and inability to analyze the complex clash of social forces.

A wider knowledge of Marxism-Leninism, both among the leadership and the rank and file, is essential to the success of the whole class struggle. It is a supreme task of the Communist Party to advance this knowledge throughout the broad mass movement.

Secondly, in the matter of political strategy, organically related to theoretical understanding, the mass organizations would also do well to absorb some lessons from Lenin and Stalin. Gross weaknesses are evident among them; for example in the lack of any plan for actually building an alliance of workers, farmers, professionals, and small business elements, the movement largely drifting in that direction under pressure of events and with much confusion and lost motion. Then there is the lack of anything that might definitely be called labor's political or economic program in the war situation. Next, there is the bad generalship which causes the workers to approach the crucial 1940 elections with a split trade union movement. Again, there is little conception of labor's necessary independent role politically. Then there is confusion in labor and progressive ranks on how to meet the vicious red-baiting campaign of the reactionaries, especially the Dies Committee and its attack upon the Communist Party. Although obviously the red-baiters' aim is to destroy, not only the Communist Party, but the whole labor and progressive movement, even the most progressive trade union leaders fail to fight these reactionary demagogues. All such confusion and weakness is remote indeed from the brilliant political strategy of Lenin and Stalin.

Thirdly, in the matter of mass organization, our movement has likewise much to learn from those expert organizers, Lenin and Stalin. Observe the generally haphazard, lackadaisical methods of work and administration in American mass organizations of all kinds. The classic example of this is the way AF of L leaders desperately cling to the outworn craft form of trade unionism in a highly industrialized country like ours. The present split in the labor movement was caused by the AF of L officials' failure to adopt obviously necessary advances in organizational forms and methods. Then there is the lack of mass political organization of labor, aside from such beginnings as Labor's Non-Partisan League. In each recurring election we see the deplorable spectacle of organized labor, without organization of its own, trailing along after the capitalist party candidates.

Such organizational backwardness is, of course, based upon conservatism in political theory and strategy. It cries out for an application of the brilliant lessons given by Lenin and Stalin.

Fourthly, in the matter of mass activization, also, highly profitable lessons can be learned by American progressives from the work of Lenin and Stalin. Contrast the latter's tremendous mobilization of the Soviet people with the desultory activization of the masses in the American class struggle. There is, for example, the AF of L's clumsy inability to mobilize its big membership for united action in political elections, in strikes, or in organizing campaigns. This great, lumbering movement is incapable, with its present leadership and policies, of concerted motion in any direction.

Other examples were the recent failures of the trade unions and other mass organizations to act militantly in the Congressional fights over the Supreme Court, government reorganization, WPA, the lending bill and neutrality. In these important struggles only the most sketchy efforts were made to rouse the masses and swing them into action behind the New Deal program, so that the popular cause was repeatedly defeated, although the majority was on its side. At present we are being given an exhibition of characteristically weak activization of the masses by the straggling way the trade unions are fighting against the rising cost of living and for the organization of the unorganized.

The general effect of these weaknesses in activization (as well as in the spheres of theory, strategy, and organization) is dangerously to restrict the political fighting power of the mass movement. This cannot be tolerated in these days of well-organized and militant reaction. All sections of the American mass movement could profit from studying the work of those expert mobilizers of the people, Lenin and Stalin.

It is not simply a case, however, of applying these lessons to the trade unions, farmers' organizations, and to the mass movement generally. We Communists, above all, must learn from Lenin and Stalin to equip

ourselves for our role of vanguard. Our Party is still weak, in theory; our political strategy often leaves much to be desired; our organizational methods need drastic improvement, and in mobilizing the members of our Party for specific struggle, as well as activizing the mass organizations generally, we still display many deficiencies. Thus, our Party building resolution of the Tenth Convention urged:

The leading bodies of our Party have the task to assimilate and master more consciously and systematically the lessons of Comrade Stalin's leadership so gloriously exemplified in the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and its world-historic building of socialism.

Today our Party confronts gigantic problems of teaching the masses that this is an imperialist war, in mobilizing them to struggle for peace and to keep America out of the war, in organizing them to defend their civil rights, living standards, and social legislation; in enlightening them in the principles of socialism. Our Party can fulfill these difficult tasks only if it learns and practices the profound lessons that Lenin and Stalin have to teach us in Marxian theory, political strategy, mass organization, and mass activization.

Those workers and other militants determined to learn the most effective ways of battling against imperialist war in the fight for democracy and socialism must study the great principles of analysis and struggle outlined and applied by Lenin and Stalin, and adapt them to the American class struggle. To this end we are fortunate in having at our disposal the *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union*, which contains the whole instructive and dramatic story of the lives and struggles of these leaders. This great book should not only be read and studied, but also used as a practical Marxist-Leninist-Stalinist guide in shaping the struggles of the masses for freedom, democracy and socialism.

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