



WORKERS PARTY OF IRELAND STATEMENT ON THE CENTENARY OF THE DEATH OF VLADIMIR ILYICH LENIN

“Without revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement.”
(Lenin: *What is to be done?*)

21st January marks the centenary of Vladimir Ilyich Lenin’s death. On 22nd January 1924, his death was announced to the delegates of the Eleventh All-Russia Congress of Soviets. At the request of the workers of Petrograd, the city was renamed Leningrad. The death of Lenin was a serious loss to the Party, the working class of the Soviet Union and the international communist and labour movement.

For the Workers Party of Ireland, and for millions of our comrades around the world, this is a momentous anniversary offering the opportunity to reflect on Lenin’s immense contributions to the cause of proletarian revolution and the liberation of humanity from exploitation and oppression. It is impossible in a short statement to do justice to Lenin’s achievements and his legacy.

Marx and Engels provided scientific grounds for the struggle for emancipation. Lenin’s immense contributions to the theory and praxis of revolutionary struggle were the result of his dedication to the study, understanding, and application of the Marxist method for understanding human society. In a draft programme for a revolutionary party written in prison in 1895-96 he made clear that the struggle of the working class against the capitalist class was a struggle against all classes living off the

labour of others and that “it can only end in the passage of political power into the hands of the working class, the transfer of all the land, instruments, factories, machines and mines to the whole of society for the organisation of socialist production, under which all that is produced by the workers and all improvement in production must benefit the working people themselves.” (*Coll. Works, Vol. 2, pp. 95-96*)

Lenin was the moving figure and leader of the Great October Socialist Revolution, an extraordinary and dynamic event which changed the course of history. The socialist society which the workers of Russia, under the leadership of Lenin as the founder of Soviet power secured, created a social order which abolished exploitation and realised workers’ power. The construction of socialism led to progress in industry, science and technology, the raising of living standards, the accomplishment of significant economic and social tasks, the development of free education and medical care, the right to work, leisure and social benefits and the advancement of Soviet culture, literature, music and art. The creation of the first workers’ state and the process of socialist transformation was a beacon of hope for the workers of the world.

In April 1917, after nearly ten years in exile, Lenin had arrived in Petrograd to a rousing welcome. Thousands of workers flocked to the Finland Station to meet him. Lenin demonstrated a clear-sighted grasp of the realities of the class struggle in his time, of the nature of imperialism, and of the possibilities for revolutionary change that were invisible to so many of his contemporaries.

While the vast majority of European socialists, even those who professed to be Marxist, lost their political bearings in response to the war, surrendering to the siren call of nationalism, Lenin’s understanding of imperialism, and the connection between imperialism and war, enabled him to correctly analyse the situation and ultimately to provide the political leadership that would bring about a revolution that overthrew the capitalist system in the Great October Socialist Revolution.

Lenin understood the importance of democracy, and of workers being in power. During the Tsarist regime, he constantly reiterated the importance of the struggle for democracy, of the need to overthrow the autocratic regime. Unlike some of his contemporaries, who remained locked in a schematic view that the democratic revolution must be led by the bourgeoisie, Lenin insisted that the only class that could be trusted to pursue the struggle for democracy consistently and without compromise was the working class. Where the bourgeoisie would vacillate, and seek the protection of the autocracy should it think its property threatened, the working class would continue the struggle for democracy. Lenin's attitude to democracy, to elections, and to the use of bourgeois parliaments serve as a reminder that those seeking revolutionary change must not be frightened to use every method at their disposal to advance the cause of proletarian politics while recognising that the object is not to reform the unreformable.

Lenin's example of unyielding principled opposition to all attempts to divide workers on national or sectarian grounds is of particular importance and relevance to our Party, operating in a society riven by sectarianism. At every stage, he opposed those seeking to divide workers through nationalism or religious hatred. He gave no ground on this issue. Condemning nationalists and sectarians, he stated "Long live the fraternal trust and fighting alliance of the workers of all nations in the struggle to overthrow capital." (*Coll. Works, Vol. 29, pp. 252-253*)

At the theoretical level, Lenin's contribution was so great that Marxism-Leninism advanced a new methodology for understanding and changing the world. Amongst the most important of Lenin's greatest theoretical insights, and of special relevance for our world today, was his analysis of imperialism. Capitalism, as Lenin saw it, was not a rigid unchanging phenomenon.

Lenin understood that the imperialism that gripped the world in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century – the era of the so-called 'Scramble for Africa' and the seizure of territory across Asia by Europeans and the United States – was not simply a continuation of older forms of colonialism and empire. The metropolitan capitalist countries towards the end of the

nineteenth century were compelled to export capital abroad. The epoch of monopoly capitalism (imperialism) connoted the end of liberal laissez faire economics and this new situation turned the “old capitalism”, the capitalism of the free competition age, into the capitalism of giant trusts, syndicates and cartels.

In 2024 the originality, relevance and power of Lenin’s argument remains undiminished. Today the monopolies continue to wage a ferocious struggle for markets, energy supplies, natural resources and securing travel routes. Lenin’s analysis continues to explain the intensity of the rivalry among different imperialist blocs and the barbarity of imperialist aggression and war around the globe leaving death, destruction, inequality, exploitation, oppression, poverty, misery, hunger and environmental devastation in its wake.

Lenin’s appeal to those engaged in anti-imperialist struggles across the globe during his life and following his death, including to millions in the Global South today, are a reminder that Lenin stood, and stands, as a symbol of liberation, of freedom from tyranny, of hope for a brighter and better future. No capitalist propaganda can alter the fact that Lenin’s politics and his example strengthened and emboldened the movement for national liberation, freedom and independence across the world and socialism became the hope of the oppressed.

Following Marx, Lenin knew that the working class needed a political party of its own – only a political party of and for the working class could deliver the revolutionary transformation necessary to liberate working people. He demonstrated, both in theory and practice, the type of party a proletarian revolution requires: a vanguard party, a party composed of the most class-conscious elements of the working class, properly organised, disciplined and committed, bolstered by revolutionary theory and dedicated to achieving their aims.

The Bolsheviks built such a party in the most difficult of circumstances, and it was this achievement, allied to their correct analysis that what the peoples

of the former Russian Empire required and desired was peace, bread, and land, that enabled them to build class consciousness among the people and to lead the October Revolution. The Bolsheviks' dedication and organisation, allied to the skills of their members, enabled them to establish the Soviet Union despite the efforts of multiple armed counter-revolutionary forces supported by imperialist powers ranging from the UK, France, the US, Japan, and more. The Leninist model of the vanguard party remains valid and was the inspiration for our own Party as the essential mechanism for revolutionary change.

Lenin made clear that historical materialism provides both the goals of and the means to action and that Marxist dialectics call for a concrete analysis of each specific historical situation. He stated: "It is not difficult to be a revolutionary when revolution has already broken out and is in spate, when all people are joining the revolution just because they are carried away, because it is the vogue, and sometimes even from careerist motives. It is far more difficult—and far more precious—to be a revolutionary when the conditions for direct, open, really mass and really revolutionary struggle *do not yet exist.*" (*Left-Wing" Communism: An Infantile Disorder*)

Lenin left the international communist movement an inexhaustible source of revolutionary thought and action. He developed and enriched the theory of Marxism. He became a symbol of social progress, workers' power, proletarian revolution and socialism.

100 years on from Lenin's death, it remains the case that Lenin's example, ideology, and practice remain central to the mission to liberate humanity, end exploitation and oppression, abolish the capitalist system and build that better future, socialism, promised by proletarian internationalism and proletarian power.

The enemies of socialism have sought, unsuccessfully, to diminish the greatness of Lenin's achievements and ideas. Marxism-Leninism and its vision for the future remain as vibrant and relevant as ever.

Today, 100 years from his death, the Workers Party of Ireland commemorates this centenary and applauds the legacy that Lenin left us.

Lenin lives!

Central Executive Committee
Workers Party of Ireland

Ted Tynan, President

Gerry Grainger, International Secretary

Email: wpi.international@gmail.com