



Marxism and the Theoretical Underpinnings of the Bolshevic Revolution and other Global Communist Revolutions

Dave Ude Ugwu

Institute of Public Policy and Administration
University of Calabar
Calabar-Nigeria

Finian Igbede Moko

Department of Philosophy
University of Calabar
Calabar-Nigeria

finian.moko@yahoo.com

08182792743

Abstract

Marxism has never been a loss to society. Although it has its shortcomings, its successes were widely recorded in the 20th century communist resolutions of different countries including the Bolshevic revolution of 1918 in Russia, which turned Tsarist Russia into a communist state. Research has identified in Marxism, a useful political strength in an aggrieved masses, the unforgivable hatred of victims of capitalism for the system and an unwavering passion in an oppressed class for change, as some of the theoretical underpinnings behind all communist revolutions. This essay discusses Marxism while highlighting some theoretical underpinnings of the Bolshevic revolution of 1918 and other global communist revolutions in the world.

Key words: Marxism, Bolshevism, Revolutions, Tsarist Russia, Soviet Russia, Communism.

Introduction

The main purpose of the current essay is to discuss Marxism and to highlight some of the theoretical underpinnings, which provided the political framework for the successful achievement of the Bolshevic revolution of 1918; hence, it transformed Tsarist Russia into soviet Russia with influences on other global communist revolutions in the world. This instantly throws open for consideration in this essay, a number of strategic tools from Marxism, such as; the emphasis on the political strength of a united masses, the need to always oust a political dictatorship through a violent revolt to prevent its come back, hatred for capitalism and passion for communism; as

the main Marxian ingredients behind all communists' revolutions including the Bolshevik Revolt of 1918.

There is, therefore, to be said here that Marxism provided the theoretical background while the French Revolution provided the practical procedure and the method. Marxism did not only provide the theoretical background while the French Revelation provided the procedure and method for the communist revolution of 1918 in Tsarist Russia, which has here been called the Bolshevik Revolution, having been carried out by the Bolshevik faction of the Russian Socialist Party. Marxism and the French Revelation served these purposes for the 1918 Bolshevik Revolution in Russia just like they did to other global communists' revolutions in the world (Mukherjee & Remaswamy 349). Although our task in this essay is to also distinguish between Marxism in its 'orthodox teachings' as given by Marx and Engels and in its 'classical teachings' and 'modified versions' of Lenin, Stalin and Trosky (Shilson 1); The essay also tries to discover to what extent Lenin and other leaders of the Bolshevik Revolt and other global communists revolutions, have been faithful to the orthodox teachings of Karl Marx? But this all would require an initial highlight of the orthodox teachings of Marxism as it has descended down through history.

Marxism

The term Marxism, whenever it is used in this orthodox sense of the current essay without distinction, it is to be taken to mean a set of political and economic theories of Karl Marx and Fredrick Engels, which have furthermore, been modified by followers of Marx into producing Marxism as the basis of communism (Russell 750). Marxism is both a theory of state and a method of analyzing society ([www.thefreedictionary.com/ marxi..](http://www.thefreedictionary.com/marxi..)). The theory takes seriously the question of 'class struggle' while associating itself with a materialists' interpretation of the historical developments of things; a dialectical view of reality and a revolutionary idea of the meaning of political transitions, particularly, the change of political power from unbearable dictatorships to civil rule (Shilson 2).

The set of theories here being referred to as Marxism is not only antithetical to capitalism and opposed to communism. Its theories assume and do everything possible to prove right its primary assumption that while history has always been unfair to the 'masses of society', being that the 'masses of society' make all the wealth but own nothing; From the perspective of Marxism, the political state remains a traitor, being that it allows capitalism

and to some extent socialism, to establish either through the mechanism of 'private profit' or the 'nationalization of assets' a 'permanent' kind of 'class conflict' (Russell 750). The task, therefore, for Marxism is to 'demolish' the current structure of states by effecting a 'communist revolution' which would transform all capitalists and socialists' structures into a new, equalitarian, fair and equalitarian structure called the communist state (Resnik and Stephen 130).

Marxism teaches from its heritage of Karl Marx that in a good state, supposedly a communist state, there is one principle by which justice and fairness is exercised to realize equality in an unequal universe. In it, the production, ownership, distribution and control of the means of production, are all of them to be conducted on the basis of '*from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs*' (Marx, Manifesto 76). But instead, the current state structures supported by capitalism and socialism, have alienated the labourers from their labour to the extent that they work in companies to produce goods from their sweat which they do not own (Weiberg 2). Such an economic and political alienation would require a new political order, the communist state, together with its true dictatorship of the proletariat or the absolute rule of the proletariats (Manifesto 74). But before pointing out the theoretical importance of Marxism to the Bolshevik revolution, what, first of all is Bolshevism as a position under discussion in the current essay?

Bolshevism

The term bolshevism refers to a political movement of early 20th century era, credited with organizing the 1918 Marxian revolution in Russia, which turned Tsarist Russia into a communist state, all by relying completely on the principles provided by Marxism. Bolsheviks were a faction within the ruling Russia Socialist Democratic Labour Party, who were later renamed as the Communist Party (Chilson 1). Having achieved the so-called Communist or Marxian Revolution of 1918, which enthroned communism in soviet Russia, their presence and achievements of the Marxian principles, here stated, were felt in the leadership and teachings of its members, such as Vladimir Lenin and Joseph Stalin (www.marxist.org/archive).

Bolshevism is an ideology which sought to find mass power among the peasant class by which to overthrow an autocratic system which was inimical both to the peasants and the workforce of society (Marx, History 66). Rudolf Sprenger conceives Bolshevism as a revolutionary wing of the Russian

Socialist Party, which, like a 'triangle', is premised on three things; welfare of the working class, unbearable situation of the peasant class, and the growth of industries (Sprenger 2). The term 'Bolshevik', came from a mathematical term, 'Bolshe', which was an equivalent of 'whole loaf', hence, in line with Marxism, the 'Bolshe' were all out to crush completely every part of Tsarist government, which it overthrew in Russia (Kolokwosky, 909).

Bolshevism or the 'Russian Communist Movement', was a bureaucratic group, consisting of three kinds of membership. The topmost hierarchy consisted of the '*intelligentsia*' or the academic class of society, whose role was that of the political education of the peasant class and of the communist revolution strategy; the second, consisted of the civil and public servants- the working class population of Tsarist government; and its role was to coordinate the peasants in the field, being that the '*intelligentsia*' or top hierarchy of the party, were only meant to give public speeches, organize symposia and publish books that would educate the public on Marxism and the necessity of a communist revolution. The third group, the lowest hierarchy, the peasant population, was to be trained as the real 'foot-soldiers' during the revolt, and neither the peasants nor the workers' unions, were to be allowed membership of the top hierarchy of the Bolshevik movement, namely, the Russian 'Communist Party. This top hierarchy was to be exclusively reserved for the '*intelligentsia*' or the so-called 'academic bureaucrats' of society (Pipes 364-365).

This means that by making the '*intelligentsia*' a superior class towards an impending communist society; Bolshevism or the Russian Communist Movement, was generally faithful (though with variations) to Marx's vision of a new class structure in an eventual formation of a communist state. This would hence mean a replacement of a capitalist class structure with a communist class structure against Marx's own announcement of an eventual communist state as one which is going to be a classless society (Wolf 8). The enthronement of the '*intelligentsia*' ahead of an eventual communism state reflected Marx's prediction of a new kind of dictatorship; one which is to be carried out by the proletariat, but in the considerations of Bolshevism. This meant nothing other than replacing Marx's idea of dictatorship of the proletariat with that of the '*intelligentsia*' (Marx, Manifesto 74).

To prove the point that the communist revolution of 1918, owed its successes and failure to Marxism and to the French Revolution; this is further proved by the Bolshevik's political connection with the Gotha Programme of the French Revolution, upon which Marx depended heavily on his teachings

on revolutions and the creation of political anarchy (Mukherjee and Ramaswamy 373). The Bolsheviks, in 1909, adopted all the 10 points of the Gotha document as a prerequisite for establishing a Communist Party, which they eventually did, out of the teachings of Marxism (A History 373). The agenda of the Gotha Programme for Bolshevism and eventually for the 1918 Communist Revolution in Russia were as follows;

Abolition of landed property and application of all rents for tax purpose; a heavy progression or graduated tax payment and abolition of all rights of inheritance; confiscation of the properties of emigrants and rebels to the system; centralization of all credits in the hands of the states the centralization of all the means of transport, in the lands of the states; extension of factories and instruments of production owned by the state; Equal liabilities for all labour; combination of agriculture and industries, gradual abolition of the distinction between town and country; free education for all children on public schools (Marx, Manifesto, 74).

This so-called Gotha agenda of the French Revolutionaries; having duly been adopted by Marx and the Marxists was not only adopted by the Bolshevik Party as a Communist Agenda from the teachings of Karl Marx; it was adopted by the Communist Party of Soviet Russia, adopted as a guide for establishing the Communist Constitution for a new Russian Society, even after the 1918 Revolution and beyond; Yet, this could not be the case without the twin figures of Vladimir Lenin and Joseph Stalin.

Vladimir Lenin

Vladimir Lenin was one of the leaders of the Russian Communist Party, which was before acquiring this name, was called the Bolshevik faction of Russian Socialist Democratic Labour Party. As a leader of the new movement, the Communist Party, and aware of his role as a member of the '*intelligentsia*' arm of the Communist Party, being one of preparing the peasant population of Russian ahead of the 1918 revolution, Lenin immediately embraced his

dual roles through a succession of public lectures, several publications and a number of meaningful symposia. Lenin was able to produce from all his adventures, his 'revisionist version' of Marxism; a neo-Marxist theory, a Marxian-Leninism, which he applied meticulously to achieve the said 1918 Communist Revolution (Mukharjee and Ramaswamy 376).

Lenin methodically developed his own Marxian–Leninism making it more or less different but like that of Marx, a theory of class struggle. Lenin went on to introduce into Marxism, his own Bolshevik recognition in the Marxian class struggle, three distinct classes in the communist struggle; the Tsarist leadership of Russia, the workers population in the country, and the peasant class at the bottom of the hierarchy (Pipes 365). Lenin distinguished his theory by introducing a unique group which Marx did not - the '*intelligentsia*' or the academic class of society, thereby, making the Bolshevik blueprint, the first to emphasize the role of a systematic political education of the proletariat in the development of Marxism globally (Russell 751).

Lenin's reformed account of Marxism or the so-called Leninism, went on to organize the prospective revolutionaries in the 1918 Communist Revolution into three kinds of membership. First, the '*intelligentsia class*' to whom he Lenin would function, and whose constitution was role to be made up of the academic class of society with the role of providing the theoretical framework for the successful establishment of a communist state in Russia. Second class of the three was the working class population of Russia; and since workers' in Lenin's terms, clearly know nothing of revolutions or political anarchy but only the true business of workers unions, hence, the duty of rampaging and that of the needed anarchy in the 1918 revolution was to be left to the third class, namely, the peasants (Shilson 4).

Lenin contended, and so, proceeded to re-organise Marxism into a new outlook, in which the so-called Communist Revolution, which Marx predicted and whose practical application has eventually been experienced in the Bolsheviks revolt of 1918; is to be led, no longer by a directionless 'masses of society' as Marx taught, but by the '*intelligentsia*' from an academic library. This was to be seen against the backdrop that the '*intelligentsia*' were in their true sense, a small group of the so-called 'Professional Revolutionaries' (Lenin, Collected Works 259). With this, Lenin was able to organise the Communist Party of Russia or the Bolshevik faction of Russian Parliament into a revolutionary force in which everybody is to work for everybody, at the same time, keeping the leadership of the party, the '*intelligentsia*' or the 'academic class' of Russia, above the entire Communist Party and Communist

Movements. This means that apart from emphasizing the role of the *intelligentsia* in the communist agenda, Lenin was apt to replace Marx's dictatorship of the proletariat with that of the *intelligentsia* (collected works 34).

Johan Trotsky

Bolshevik Movement or the Russian communist party had a lot of diversity. While Lenin and Stalin represented in their theories, Marxian revisionists' theories, there were other members who adopted the orthodox teachings of Karl Marx and Fredrick Engels, without improvement or armaments. One such orthodox Marxist in the Bolshevik communist agenda was Johann Trotsky. He was very critical of Lenin and Stalin. He rejected Lenin's idea of replacing the dictatorship of the proletariat with the hegemony of the intelligentsia. He also criticized Lenin for super imposing the political will of a passive minority academic class on the majority population of Russia. He praised Lenin for his analysis of the implications of Marxism for Russian Revolution but rejected Stalin's abrogation of freedom of opinion in the new Communist State that was t be the eventual outcome of the 1918 revolution (Shilson 4).

Joseph Stalin

Stalin took over the leadership of the Russian Communist Party after the death of Lenin in 1924. He commenced his own revisionists' theory as Marxian-Stalinism, by adopting orthodox Marxism while rejecting some of the teachings of other communist leaders, including those of his predecessor, Vladimir Lenin. Stalin disagrees partly with the orthodox teaching of Trotsky and proceeded to adopt every other teaching of Lenin, except that he replaced Lenin's emphasis on the 'Professional Revolutionaries' or the '*intelligentsia class*', with his own Leninian concept of the 'cult of personalities'. He placed this so-called cult of personalities' or 'those that matter in the polity' in the same party hierarchy, where Lenin had placed the '*intelligentsia*'. The reason for this, according to Gilbert Strong, was to justify his intention to digress from Marxism in a manner that would justify the kind of political and economic corruption which his theory intended to introduce into Communist Russia (Strong 391).Stalin-Marxism had several aspects to contemplate. However, according to David Hoffmann, Marxian Stalinism was to be summed up as follows:

The Stalin 'cult of personalities' was the central element in Stalinism, and as such, it was one of the most salient features of the Soviet rule under him...many scholars of Stalinism, cited the cult as integral to Stalin's power as evidenced in Stalin's megalomania (909).

Stalinism by this fact, deemphasised the interests of the working class of Russia and that of the peasant population in favour of giving pride of place to his cult of personalities. The 'cult of personalities' or the 'a group of his political cronies' was to occupy both the leadership of the party and the leadership of the state. Lenin was apt to deemphasise all previous emphases on the peasant class and the working class. He did this out of his suspicion that the peasants would soon graduate into the working class and the working class into a new class of bourgeois capitalists when they get empowered eventually through a communist revolution, hence, they portend a great danger as future oppressors. Leninism was, therefore, a political rather than a civil movement; It could also be seen as a kind of transnationalism since it suggested the application of the principles and policies of the Bolshevik or Communist Revolution, to all societies throughout the world (Tucker 5)

Bolshevik Revolution

In October, 1918, some of the teachings of orthodox and non-orthodox Marxism were applied by the Bolshevik revolutionaries or the Russian Communist Party in achieving the historic communist revolution of Tsarist Russia in 1918. In the said revolution, the then Tsarist Socialist Government was toppled by Russian 'peasants', 'Russian soviets' and 'Russian proletariats; and in place of Tsarist Socialist Rule, Communist Rule was enthroned in its place. The communist faction or the Bolshevik Movement, completely teleguided the 1918 Revolution through the intellectual instructions provided by the '*intelligentsia class*' of the Russian Communist Party (Shilson 6).

According to sources, while it is true that Vladimir Lenin is the Bolshevik godhead who had practically worked out this programme or the Russian 1918 revolution through his intellectual publications and speeches, the fact that he was at the time of the revolution, out of country and that it was the younger members of the Russian Communist Party, who had coordinated the

revolution; this mixed-up, has raised many question whether Lenin was ever a participant of the revolution he so passionately claimed to have been the true architect and finisher (Weiberg 87).

The revolution itself was concentrated at Petrograd the capital of the then 1918 Russia also called St. Petersburg. In the so-called 1918 Communist Revolution, the rampage was in such a way that the armed revolutionaries were led by the workers of Russia and the peasants were the 'foot soldiers' upon whom the workers transmitted the 'revolutionary strategy' formulated by the 'intelligentsia' for this purpose during the revolution. The peasants as coordinated by the workers, who first of all, betrayed the government as their employer and master, made the peasants to take up physical arms, and in this thorough-going revolution, the provisional government of the time was successfully transferred to the soviets of Russia. As soon as this happened, the capital was immediately relocated from Petrograd or St. Petersburg to present-day Moscow, being more than anything else, the current Russian capital (Lenin, State and Revolutions 3395, 3347).

Other Global Revolution

a) The Chinese Communist Revolution

The Chinese communist revolution is what has come to be known as the Chinese Second Civil War of 1945. The revolution, like that Communist Russia, threw out of power the existing Socialist Government and enthroned Communism under the leadership of Mao Zedong. Therefore, like the Russian example, the leadership of the revolting Communist Party, formed an army out of a network of peasants from villages, and the war or revolution was carried out along line of bilateral struggle between the corrupt socialist rule of the time and the people of China. The difference, however, is that the revolution was less violent in china than it was in Rusia; All the guidelines and principles of Marxism, especially, as they were applied by the Bolshe's of Russia, were also applied during the Chinese Communist revolution of 1945 (Itun 374)

b) Class Struggle in France

The French revolution was instrumental to the theory here beng called Marxism. The French revolution is to be seen as a historical reality which prefigured both the teachings of Marx on class struggle and the communist revolutions of the 20th century. Strengthened by the practical example of the

French Revolution, the predictions of Marx come through in the Russian, Cuban and Korean communist Revolutions. Therefore, anytime class struggle is mentioned in relation to the French revolution, it is taken to mean the full implications of the role of the classes in every political revolution. It emphasizes at its very nature very the importance of the proletariat and of the working class of society in every political revolution. Thus, when seen from the prism of the Bolshevik revolution, the role of the classes is more real in the Russian, Cuban, Chinese and Polish Communist Revolutions than in the French revolution which prefigured all of them.

Conclusion

Every Marxian revolution is an attempt to replace an existing dictatorship with a new kind of government which would take to heart the concerns of all the citizens. Therefore, throughout the course of history, there have been several examples of which a few examples including those of Russia and Chinese Communist Revolutions would tell the whole story of Marxism and its theoretical underpinnings, such as; untapped energy of an aggrieved proletariat, hatred for capitalism by victims of capitalism and the passion in an oppressed society for change, etc, for the successful conduct of the 1918 Bolshevik Revolution and other Communist Revolutions in the world. All the communist revolutions in the world are, by their very nature, based on certain theoretical assumption, all of which are provided by Marxism. In the case of the Bolshevik revolution and other global communists' revolutions, their successes were carefully based on certain theoretical underpinnings, such as; power of an aggrieved masses, passion for an urgent regime change, hatred for capitalism and love for one's country.

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