

# Looking to Lenin on the NDR

*Clear lessons for in this 'stage' of the revolutionary chain*

**W**e have to appreciate the strides made by our Party in arresting and bringing to the fore what the ANC as leading force of the liberation struggle seems to be abandoning – a Marxist-Leninist approach to the NDR and how it relates to the struggle against imperialism.

Imperialism is the principal enemy. The SACP needs to elaborate on this more forcefully because the NDR is not a neutral phenomenon. This will go a long way in challenging the emerging dominant theorisation in the ANC that the NDR is about 'managing contradictions' between capitalist and working classes.

The NDR not just about national grievance and de-racialisation of the apartheid capitalist economy and co-option of black people without transforming the systemic colonial and apartheid features embedded in the present growth path. Lenin argued that the National Question (the NDR in today's terms) cannot be "solved on the quiet" on its own, off the highway of the revolutionary working class struggle against imperialism.

He argued that the NDR is part of the general, part of the whole struggle against imperialism. But Lenin warned that support of the national movements cannot be given wily-nilly, meaning national movements are not inherently progressive. Lenin advanced the importance of taking into consideration the concrete conditions of each country and the content of various democratic demands. He said that a national movement needs to be supported if it works to weaken and overthrow imperialism, and that it cannot be supported if it works to preserve and strengthen imperialism. But the question of the content of "various democratic demands" needs to be examined further. Such examination will find a mix of progressive reforms with potential for

revolutionary change and other reforms which are outright reactionary.

Although the SACP seems to avoid the use of the term "stages" in the struggle, this term is important if it is not vulgarised or used mechanically but is used in describing a chain of a continuing revolution.

On strategy and tactics Lenin raised the importance of determining as a Party where you are directing your main blow in each stage" of the revolution. In the present "stage" I would argue that our "main blow" needs to be directed against the South African ruling class because they want to consolidate the post-apartheid democracy as a capitalist society. In our SACP terms this is the "1996 class project" we must defeat.

That is why they are doing all they can to win the masses through propaganda and patronage. As part of our tactics, what is our plan as the Party to expose their

practical bankruptcy (that a better life for all is a lie in capitalist society) and to educate the masses to realize the inevitability of the collapse of capitalism? Again in Lenin's terms "what is our plan for the disposition of forces" – that is, building alliances? Lenin argues that no victory can be won by the vanguard alone. This takes me to my practical experience when I was in Idutywa to address a rally of public sector workers.

I shared the podium with a well known businessman in the area, a petty-bourgeoisie (Ngumbela), I was not interested in the 10 sheep, R1000 worth of sausages, the bread and drinks he contributed, I was interested in his message of solidarity.

He said that he supported the strike because he makes money out of public sector workers. He urged workers not to accept 7% or 8%!

In building alliances because no vanguard can win a revolution alone, why should we isolate people like this? We need to expose and isolate anti-working class elements, both within and outside the Party. Lenin talks about tactics changing with the flow of the revolution. Are our campaigns as part of our tactics changing according to the flow?

On the question of strategic leadership, Lenin raised the importance of the Party's ability to exploit vulnerable spots in your enemy. The Freedom Charter remains the most popular document and the dominant class project has abandoned the Charter.

In this context I would like to introduce Lenin's concept of "loss of tempo". He argued that this is when the Party is lagging behind the class it is supposed to lead or is far ahead the class.

He further argues that we need to develop the ability to raise the mass sentiment in favour of socialism and ready the masses to fight the bourgeoisie and its surrogates. This will help focus the anger of the people about what they are aggrieved about.

Another important concept is "loosing one's bearings". Lenin referred to this when the Party decided to take part in parliamentary elections, thereby confusing the masses who were already demanding revolutionary change.

Have we not already mixed things up by going to parliament through an ANC ticket and therefore confusing the masses when they want to hold us accountable for their miseries? Or if we go alone won't we have a Party that is just an extension of a parliamentary group?

A resolution to contest elections is fine, but needs to be informed by tactics, including campaigns to raise the fighting capacity of the working class and assessments as you go into each election. The answer to the "when" question is not in the boardroom – but in the theatre of struggle. ●



**By XOLILE NQATHA**  
Secretary  
Skenjana Roji District