How relevant is Lenin today?

Presentation by Tebogo Phadu

JSPS

About Lenin

1. Born April 22, 1870 in Russia from a middle strata family, died in January 22, 1924 (54 years) a result of decline in health. Today is his 100 anniversary since his death.
2. Studied law at Kazan University and became involved in revolutionary activities during his time there against the repressive and oppressive Tsarist regime,
3. Influenced by Marxist theory, which advocated for a classless society through the abolition of capitalism.
4. Formed in 1093, the Bolshevik group (meaning “majority”) opposed to Menshevik (”minority) group) as part of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party. Bolsheviks believed that a disciplined vanguard party for a working class-led revolution is a necessity.
5. Played a leading role in the events of the Russian revolution in 1917 in the midst of World War I. In Feb that year, widespread protests and strikes led to the removal of Tsar Nicholas II and establishment of provisional government. However Lenin believed the revolution continues, and that power should be transferred to the Soviets or worker councils.



About Lenin

6. In October 1917, Lenin led the Bolsheviks in what is known as the Great October Socialist Revolution, whose impact was felt around the world, including here in South Africa, inspiring to formation of communist parties and working-class revolts

7. Became the head of the new, and first world's government of the working class (in alliance with peasants) known as Soviet Socialist Republic and later USSR. His leadership had profound impact on the course of history.

8. His writings and ideas (known as Leninism) and enriched by other Marxist-Leninists influenced the development of socialist and communist theory and practice. But also with criticized by others.



On this 100th anniversary we ask?

1. How relevant is Lenin today?

We suggest that we look at:

- Contributions and significance of Lenin to Marxist theory and practice – key features of **Leninism**
  - Concrete analysis of the concrete situation
  - State and revolution
  - A Vanguard party
  - Imperialism and anti-imperialism
  - Revolutionary strategy
  - Building socialism

It is important to note that Leninism has been interpreted and adapted by various communist and socialist movements around the world, and there are different interpretations and variations of Leninist theory and practice



1. Concrete analysis of a concrete situation

- This is key principle in Marxist theory and revolutionary practice. Lenin, building on Marxist philosophy of *historical materialism. It is about*

  - **Rejecting Dogmatism**: Lenin argued against dogmatic and rigid application of revolutionary theory.
  - Dialectical Materialism: Lenin's concept of concrete analysis is rooted in the Marxist framework of dialectical materialism. Dialectical materialism emphasizes the interconnectedness of social, economic, and political factors, and the understanding that change occurs through contradictions and conflicts.

  - **Understanding Specificity**: Lenin emphasized the need to understand the specific characteristics and contradictions of a given situation. This includes analyzing the class structure, the balance of forces, the level of consciousness among different social groups, and the potential for revolutionary mobilization.

  - **Revolutionary Strategy**: Concrete analysis of concrete situation serves as the foundation for developing revolutionary strategy. By understanding the specific conditions and dynamics, Lenin believed that revolutionaries can identify the most effective methods and tactics to advance the revolutionary cause and achieve their goals.

  - **Adaptability and Flexibility**: Lenin's concept of concrete analysis also highlights the need for adaptability and flexibility in revolutionary practice. He argued that revolutionary tactics and strategies should be adjusted and revised based on the changing circumstances and the responses of the ruling class.

2. State and Revolution

- **Key points**

  - **Dictatorship of the Proletariat**: Lenin argued that the bourgeois state is an instrument of class rule that serves the interests of the bourgeoisie. He advocated for the establishment of a proletarian state, known as the "dictatorship of the proletariat," which would be a transitional state between capitalism and communism. This state would serve as a tool for the working class to suppress the bourgeoisie and carry out the socialist transformation.
  - **Withering Away of the State**: Lenin proposed that the ultimate goal of the dictatorship of the proletariat is the withering away of the state. He believed that as class antagonisms and social divisions diminish under socialism, the need for a coercive state apparatus would gradually fade away. This would lead to the establishment of a classless society and the full realization of communism.
  - **Revolutionary Violence**: Lenin emphasized the necessity of revolutionary violence to overthrow the bourgeois state and establish the dictatorship of the proletariat. He argued that the ruling class would not willingly give up its power, and therefore, a violent revolution is necessary to seize state power and dismantle the capitalist system.
  - **Working Class' Democracy**: Lenin advocated for the participation and active involvement of the working class in the decision-making processes of the state. He believed in the importance of workers' democracy, where the working class exercises political power through democratic institutions and has control over the means of production.
  - **Dual Power**: Lenin discussed the concept of "dual power," which refers to the coexistence of the bourgeois state and the emerging proletarian state during a revolutionary period. He argued that this dual power situation creates a tension and conflict between the two classes, eventually leading to the overthrow of the bourgeois state and the establishment of proletarian rule.

3. Vanguard Party

- **Vanguard Party as the "political vanguard"**: Lenin saw the Vanguard Party as the political vanguard of the working class, meaning it would provide the necessary political leadership and direction for the revolutionar movement.
- 2. **Professional revolutionaries**: Lenin believed that the members of the Vanguard Party should be professional revolutionaries, devoting their lives entirely to the cause of revolution. These individuals would undergo rigorou political education and training to become experts in revolutionary theory and tactics.
- **Party discipline**: Lenin emphasized the importance of party discipline with the Vanguard Party. He believed that discipline was necessary to ensure unity of action and prevent the party from being undermined by counter-revolutionary forces. This discipline was enforced through democratic

3. Vanguard Party

- **Role in organising the working class**: The Vanguard Party had a critical role in organizing the working class and mobilizing them for revolutionary action. This involved conducting propaganda, raising awareness about the exploitative nature of capitalism, and organizing strikes and protests to challenge the power of the ruling class.
- **Leading the revolution:** Lenin believed that the Vanguard Party should play a leading role in the revolution, not just by organizing the working class but also by seizing political power and establishing a dictatorship of the proletariat. The party would then guide the transition towards socialism and the construction of a new social order.

3. Vanguard Party

- **Internationalism:** Lenin's concept of the Vanguard Party extended beyond national boundaries. He emphasized the need for international solidarity among revolutionary parties and the working class, advocating for a global revolution that would overthrow capitalism on a global scale.
- **On-going revolution**: Lenin believed that the revolution should not stop at the establishment of socialism or national democratic revolution. He argued for a ongoing revolution, where the Vanguard Party would remain vigilant and actively work to prevent the restoration of capitalism. This involved ongoing class struggle and the constant development of socialist society.