

The Historical Lessons from the First Hungarian Workers' State (1919)

The Hungarian Soviet Republic (HSR), the first Hungarian workers' state was established on 21 March 1919. It existed for 133 days. In August 1919 Romanian and French troops occupied Hungary. The workers' state was destroyed and replaced by a Bourgeois government.

The HSR's place in history

The Hungarian Soviet Republic was the first workers' state in Europe established after the October Revolution of 1917. It could exist longer than the Bavarian Soviet Republic (6 April-3 May 1919) or the Slovakian Soviet Republic (16 June-7 July 1919) so it was a more comprehensive experience of European socialism.

Background

Hungary became independent in 1867 in the frameworks of the Austrian-Hungarian Monarchy. Hungary participated in World War I on the side of Germany and lost the war. In November 1918 the Monarchy was dissolved.

In November 1918 the Bourgeois revolution triumphed in Budapest. Hungary was declared a peoples' republic. It was ruled by Bourgeois and social-democrat politicians.

The Hungarian ruling class faced three challenges. One: to normalize the economic situation after the war devastations. Two: to defend independence and territorial integrity against the winners of the war, like France, and the newly born national countries, like Romania and Czechoslovakia. Three: to prevent the strengthening of communist forces and to avoid socialist revolution. The ruling class was not able to solve these problems.

Lesson from the HSR

Lenin's idea about world revolution is a real possibility.

The HSR demonstrated that socialism is not an exclusively Russian solution but a general program of triumphing over capitalism.

There is no revolution without revolutionary situation

The HSR showed clearly that three factors are needed for a successful revolution. One: the ruling classes are not able to govern the country with traditional means and they are not ready or are not able to use non-traditional means, like military dictatorship, or fascism.

Two: most of the working people cannot see a solution for their problems in the framework of the existing system.

Three, there must be a disciplined, organised communist party with clear anticapitalist ideology and firm desire to take the power.

Communist parties should be prepared for taking the power.
Nobody can foresee how things change.

The Hungarian Communist Party was founded in November 1918. Nobody knew when revolution would be possible. But things changed very quickly and in March 1919 revolution became a reality. The Communist Party was prepared from political, ideological and even practical points of view to take the power.

Socialist revolution is impossible
without taking the political power.

Political power includes different elements, army, police, state security, state administration, media. If the communist party does not take any of these elements, the revolution gets into danger.

Socialist revolution is impossible without taking banks,
factories etc into social ownership.

The HSR realised a realistic program of nationalisation. Economic power was concentrated in the hands of the working classes.

There are no transitional periods.

The HSR understood that any delay of taking the power and nationalisation would save the power of the Bourgeoisie and can kill the revolution.

Workers' power must be defended.

The socialist revolution does not liquidate automatically the class enemies of socialism. They will use all possibilities to get back the power.

Social democrats do not want workers' power.
They want to save capitalism.

The HSR was based on the coalition of communists and social democrats. But the social democrats' aim was to save capitalism with aims different from those used by classical Bourgeois parties.

Getting support of the working classes,
neutralization and dividing the middle classes,
isolation of great bourgeoisie

The socialist revolution can be successful if the communist party can solve three problems: One: to win the support of the working classes. Two: to neutralize and divide the middle classes. Three: to isolate the great bourgeoisie. The HSR could

mobilize most of the workers but it could not neutralize the middle classes. The Bourgeoisie used this factor and turned the middle classes against the revolution.

The fight for revolution and national independence should go together

The socialist revolution has more chances to survive if the fight for socialism is combined with the fight for national independence. The HSR could not solve this problem although Hungary was surrounded by enemy countries and the HSR defended also national independence.

Socialism is a global tendency but it should win in concrete national circumstances.

Socialism depends also on the ability of the communist parties to find the best methods which respond to the national traditions. The HSR tried to find them but they could not do it fully. It is a fact that there was only one concrete historic experience, the lessons of the Russian revolution.

Now, our movement has many different experiences of socialist construction, including the lessons of Soviet Union, Hungary, Yugoslavia, China, Vietnam, Korea. We should be opened to different national experiences.

Antisemitism is a dangerous weapon against communist movement

Most of the leaders of the HSR were of Jewish origin. In Hungary there was a strong Jewish community playing an important role. Revolutionaries of Jewish origin were among the most devoted fighters for socialism. Antisemitism was used by the anti-Communist forces against the socialist revolution. It is until now one of their most dangerous weapons against us.