

THE ORGANIZATION OF THE PROLETARIAT'S ARMED FORCES

ONE of the main objectives of the party of the revolutionary proletariat in an immediately revolutionary situation is the creation of proletarian armed forces, i.e. the formation of a combat organization. The need for this combat organization is indisputable.

The experience of the armed insurrections which have taken place in numerous countries in the past teaches us that however excellent the Party's work in the bourgeois army (and armed forces generally) may be, it will never be possible to have subverted the entire army by the time the insurrection is launched. It will never be possible to win over all the army to the revolution, nor even to neutralize it entirely simply by the political work carried out within it. There will always remain units and groups loyal to the reactionary high command, who will fight actively against the proletariat. In his 1906 article: 'Lessons of the Moscow Uprising', Lenin wrote:

We have carried on work in the army and we will redouble our efforts in the future ideologically to win over the troops. But we shall prove to be miserable pedants if we forget that at a time of uprising there must also be a physical struggle for the troops.¹

Every army possesses many tested units, recruited from the offspring of social elements loyal to the bourgeoisie (officers' and NCOs' training academies, special detachments of the police or the army, 'Mauserists' as in China, etc), and well paid. There are also all kinds of volunteer organizations (very widespread in the West) which are specially designed for waging an active struggle against

the revolutionary proletariat. Moreover it must be borne in mind that the bourgeoisie, during the insurrection, will employ all methods (corruption, lies, drink, repression, etc.) to keep the wavering troops in its grasp. It can therefore be asserted quite categorically that the proletariat will never succeed in wresting the army completely away from the influence of the ruling classes, or in winning away from the counter-revolutionary command all those soldiers who are wavering, and bringing them over to the revolution. *The subversion and neutralization of these units will only be possible after they have been disarmed by the armed forces of the proletariat. Whence the absolute necessity of constituting in good time adequate proletarian armed forces, capable of allying themselves with such army units as come over to the revolution, so that together they can annihilate the military basis of the old regime definitively.*

In future insurrections, above all
In future insurrections, above all if the immediately revolutionary situation does not occur in the aftermath of a war, it will often happen that the entire weight of the first decisive battles must be borne by the red guard detachments, without any help from revolutionary soldiers.

The revolutionary army is needed for military struggle and for military leadership of the masses against the remnants of the military forces of the autocracy. The revolutionary army is needed because great historical issues can be resolved only by force, and, in modern struggle, the organization of force means military organization.²

The structure of the proletariat's combat organization varies from country to country. Only one thing is certain: the detachments of that combat organization must base themselves on the masses (factories, plants big firms, etc.) and must be numerically strong. Their structure must more or less resemble that of the red guard in Russia, the Proletarian

Hundreds in Germany in 1923, the combat squads in China, etc.

The red guard cannot simply be formed in any political situation whatsoever:

The Red Guard is an organ of rebellion. It is the duty of the Communists to agitate for the establishment of such a Red Guard and to organize it when an immediate revolutionary situation arises.

Under no circumstances must it be forgotten that the existence of a proletarian militia or a Red Guard, in imperialist countries, under a bourgeois State and in a state of 'peace', is absolutely impossible.

The mass military organization of the proletariat (the red guard) must be created as soon as the Party puts the question of dictatorship of the proletariat on the immediate agenda, and reorients itself towards direct preparation for the seizure of power.

SKILLED POLITICO-MILITARY CADRES

The lesson of Petrograd, Moscow, Germany in 1923, Canton, Shanghai etc., show that, in an acute revolutionary period, it is relatively easy to create a vast combat organization. Ordinarily, several months will be available for this. But a really combat-worthy military organization can only be formed as quickly as this if there already exists a sufficiently large number of cadres with adequate military and political training. Without these cadres, who will provide the skeleton of the combat organization, i.e. its commanders, the military organization will not be worth much in fighting terms.

In Petrograd, Moscow and the other Russian towns in 1917, the situation was extremely favourable from this point of view. As commanders and instructors, the red guard had communist soldiers and often officers. These instructors, who commanded the red guard detachments during the October fighting, had previously taught the combatants to use their weapons, and had also taught them the princi-

ples of tactics and of military science in general.

The situation which we have observed in Germany in 1923 was a quite different one. Here some 250,000 red guards, grouped in Proletarian Hundreds, had been organized in the space of a few months. But there were not enough cadres with military training (the whole mass of red guards only had a handful of communist ex-officers). Moreover, the commanders were ignorant of the fundamentals of street-fighting tactics, indeed of tactics in general, and knew nothing about the organization or tactics of the government's armed forces. The result was that the military value of these Hundreds left much to be desired. This was all the truer in that they only had a very limited quantity of arms at their disposal.

The same could be said for Canton. The red guard, as we have seen had little idea how to use the arms available to it, and was consequently unable to utilize them in the fighting. It suffered heavy losses and a whole series of its operations failed because it was led by untried comrades who knew little of military science. For the number of communists in Canton who had any military training was extremely limited.

Communist parties, in practice, pay too little attention to the formation of cadres. Yet this is a question of the utmost significance especially in countries like China where the proletariat has few possibilities for forming its cadres inside the existing armies.

As a result of various specific features discussed below and which distinguish it from the ordinary tactics of regular armies, the tactics of insurrection and street fighting (all insurrections in towns take the form of street fighting) is extremely complicated. Its study requires prolonged effort and perseverance.

TRAINING THE MASSES

Thus a revolutionary party which remains Marxist through and through — i.e. which treats insurrection as an art, and propagates the idea of armed uprising in the working class — must confront in practice the question of how to train the cadres of the future insurrection, and must resolve it in one way or another. Every proletarian party must set about resolving this question without waiting for an immediately revolutionary situation (when it will be too late); it must do so independently of the current political situation.

The problem, despite its apparent difficulty, is not an insoluble one. Side by side with the study of Marxism-Leninism, the Party

Marxism-Leninism, the Party leadership must organize the study of military science, with particular emphasis on the lesson of past insurrections — especially those of Russia, Germany and China. This study can take place in communist circles and Party schools (legal, semi-legal or illegal depending on circumstances); by recording the lessons of proletarian armed struggle in the Party's publications; by studying military science in practice (sending comrades into the army); by creating legal or illegal military organizations ('Red Front' in Germany, 'Revolutionary Ex-servicemen's Association' in France).

A knowledge of theory is naturally not enough to form tried military leaders for the red guard detachments. However, it is a precondition for doing so, and should under no circumstances be neglected.

The great semi-military organizations of the proletariat (like the Red Front and the Revolutionary Ex-servicemen's Association) play an immense role in forming the military cadres of the future insurrection, and providing the proletarian masses with training in military science. These organizations can in no sense be identified with the red guard; they are not instruments of direct struggle

for the dictatorship of the proletariat. Their basic purpose, as we have shown in the preceding chapter, is to mobilize the proletariat and educate it in the spirit of class struggle, and to wage a political struggle against the military organizations of the bourgeoisie. But, in addition, they allow tens of thousands of proletarians to obtain a military training, and a preparation for civil war. As the combat organizations of proletarian self-defence, these groupings are simultaneously champions of the idea of civil war and a powerful means for propagating this idea throughout the working class.

The military training of the masses can also to some extent be carried out in various legal organizations; sporting associations, rifle clubs, etc. The Communist Party, wherever possible, must make use of these societies to give the revolutionary youth a military education.

When the immediately revolutionary situation arrives, the military training of the masses (the handling of weapons; the basic tactics of insurrection and street fighting; reconnaissance and liaison work; studying the organization and tactics of the army and police, etc.), the arming of the people and the formation everywhere of red guard detachments must reach their peak. Special attention must be paid in this respect to the decisive centres of the country's political and economic life (the capital, the great industrial centres, the railway junctions, etc.) To neglect these questions means exposing oneself, in the critical moments of the revolution, to extremely fateful consequences.

In the Canton insurrection, about three quarters of the workers who took an active part in the fighting did not know how to fire a rifle and were incapable of making any use of such weapons as they had captured in the initial stages of the rising. There were cases of workers shooting their own comrades by