

SPOTLIGHT

The 1917 October Revolution was a watershed moment in history. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels set the philosophical vision for the scientific theory of revolution, and even actively fought for it, but it was Vladimir Lenin under whose stewardship it became a reality. Lenin successfully united the workers and peasants and supervised the revolutionary activities of the Bolsheviks in Russia, leading to the October Revolution.

The revolution was significant for a number of causes—foremost among them were its global appeal, the establishment of social ownership instead of the capitalist concept of private ownership, and creation of an environment of compassion and cooperation instead of self-centredness in a world otherwise driven by profits.

There have been many other revolutions also, but those were either specific to a cause or a certain country. There was, for example, the Industrial Revolution in Europe; the French Revolution, which started in France and spread to other European nations, but was eventually cut short by imperialist designs. On the scientific front, there were a number of revolutionary inventions. And then there was the October Revolution, a movement that enlightened the common people about the historical context of the scientific revolution. It revealed that individual ownership comes at a price, that if all scientific inventions and innovations are left in the hands of a few individuals, they would use it to advance their own interests—to exploit and to oppress.

The capitalists are the enemy of people as well as of nature. They wage war, exploit science and scientists to develop weapons of mass destruction, and trade in weapons, drugs and people. It is because of capitalism that our nature is at stake, and the world is warming. Over the years, there has been a massive change in the earth's climate. Cyclones and tidal surges have increased in both frequency and intensity. Sea levels are rising thanks to melting of ice, threatening to sink the low-lying areas. These are nothing but retribution for men's unjust interference with the course of nature, for which the consumerist culture of capitalism is responsible. The poor, meanwhile, continue to suffer.

Poverty in the shadow of wealth—that is an essential feature of capitalism. Capitalism creates and sustains poverty by leaving property ownership to a small minority with power, depriving the vast majority, and judges everything against its exchange value. It's a market that only those who have money and means can access. The fact is, poverty didn't create inequality; it was inequality that created poverty.

The capitalists also drive people off their land, making them float around helplessly inside their own country and outside. They use labour but don't



Between July 16-20, 1917, also known as the July Days, a series of spontaneous armed anti-government demonstrations of industrial workers and soldiers, began in Petrograd, with Prince Lvov resigning as leader of the Provisional Government.



On March 8, 1917, International Women's Day, demonstrators and striking workers—many of whom are women—take to the streets to protest against food shortages and the war.

WHY THE OCTOBER REVOLUTION IS STILL SIGNIFICANT



A 1919 poster saying "Death to capital, or death under the heel of capitalism!"

value the labourers. It wouldn't be an overstatement to say that they don't even like them. So, the odds are stacked against the poor, who risk being redundant as the capitalists increasingly lean towards automation

To the capitalists, the present is everything, and history and heritage have no discernible value. They view

the future only insofar as an extension of their current dominance. The world, truly, is at stake in the hands of the capitalists.

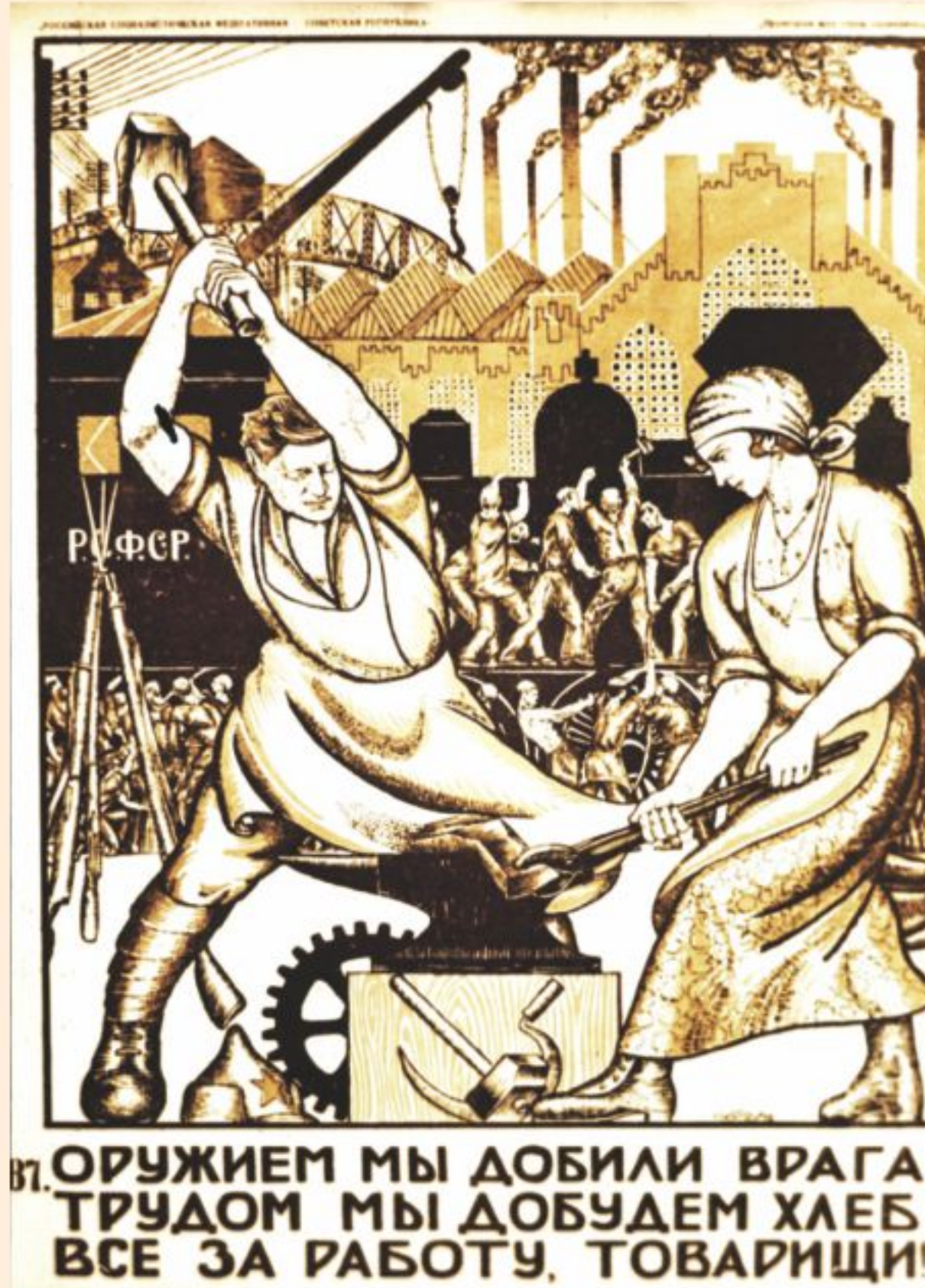
The 1917 socialist

revolution wanted to thwart the increasingly dangerous campaign of capitalism and build a world that is just, compassionate and

revolution wanted

SERAJUL ISLAM CHOUDHURY

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Poster from the 1920s, which says, "With guns we will defeat the enemy, with hard work we will have bread. To work, comrades!"

backward and agrarian country. It also proved that revolution is not just something that you see in your dreams: it's real and it's possible. All you need is practical knowledge, organisational capability and continuous activism.

The October Revolution saved civilisation from Hitler's fascism, established socialism in Russia, and showed the world the path to freedom. There was a time when one-third of humanity started to benefit from socialism. But 70 years down the line, that system collapsed, thanks to stiff opposition and manipulation from the capitalist camp and dissension from within. The capitalists had a few more tricks up their sleeves: they gave the downtrodden a taste of their wealth and privileges, lured them with grand promises, stifled resistance, and used the media to mount anti-communist campaigns. As a result, the communist states slowly moved away from socialism. No, socialism did not fail—it was the communists that moved away from it.

The result is visible to everyone. The capitalists, with no one to put up a fight, have stepped up their efforts. Driven by a misguided sense of satisfaction, they started to claim that human civilisation has reached its pinnacle, and that

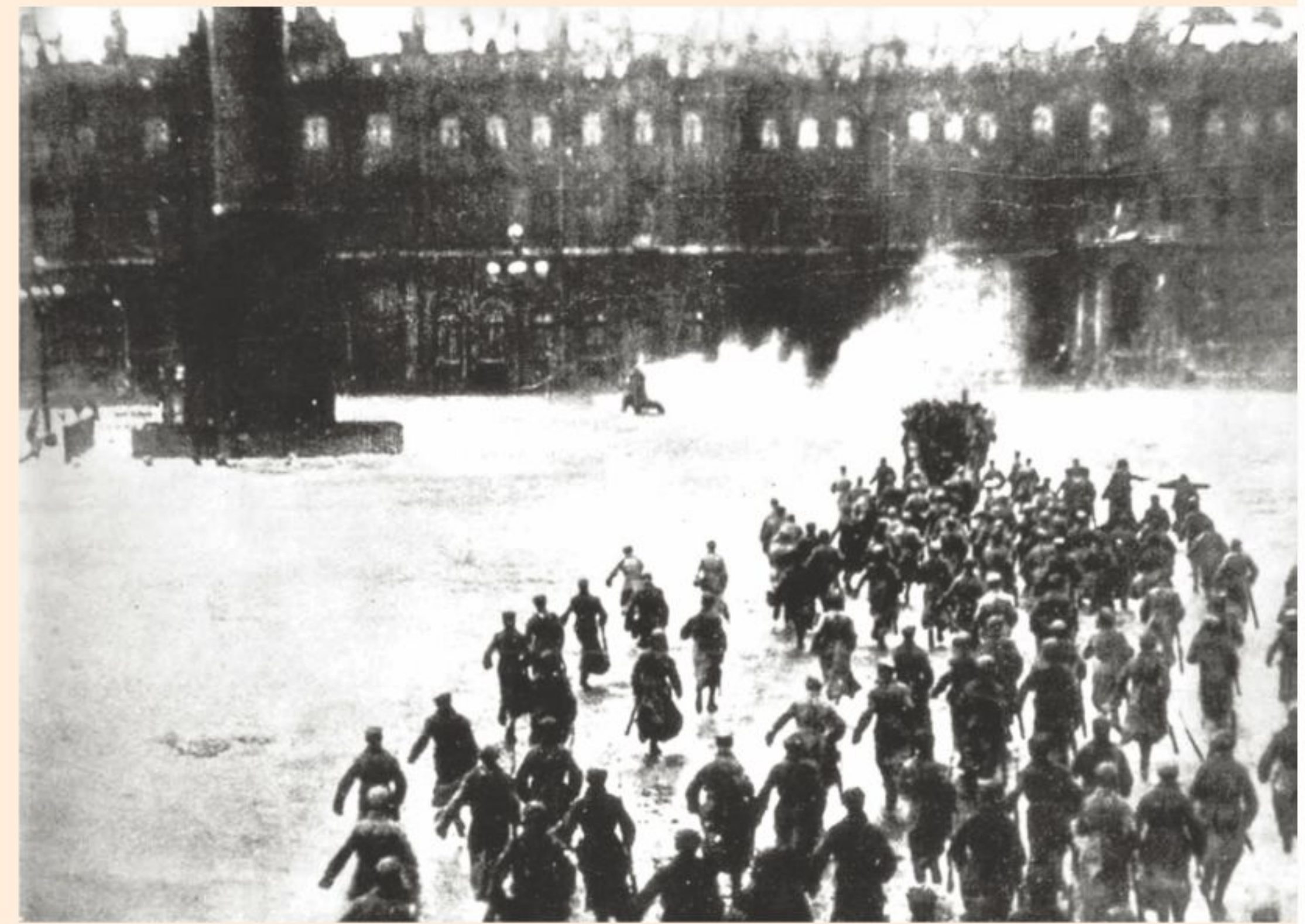
everything worth achieving has been achieved. But people's grievances and sufferings tell us that civilisation has rather reached a new low. The existence of the human race, and that of the world that we inhabit, is at risk. Oppression, repression and exploitation have become pervasive. A world once known for its riches has turned into one of want, depravity and conflicts. Some people call it "moral decadence," but in

with the oppressors. It didn't even bother to recognise their sufferings by dispatching so-called humanitarian relief, as a section of the capitalists did. The reason is obvious: Myanmar's government offers profits, something that the Rohingyas cannot. Russia's position was no different. Even India, which offered shelter to about one crore people from Bangladesh and helped in the War of Liberation, has sided with the Myanmar government. The reason is simple: capitalist interest.

It is quite unsettling to imagine how lakhs of people from Myanmar have crossed over into Bangladesh, barely alive. The women suffered the worst fate, being raped and tortured in a

The capitalist system came following slavery and feudalism, and it will go away just like the former two. The question is how that will happen. Will it change due to inherent contradictions or external pressures? Through chaos or in an organised manner? That, I think, depends on the strength and character of the revolution. The onus is on the people of conscience to expedite the inevitable reinstatement of socialism. In one way or another, people are already fighting to achieve that goal.

If there is one thing that capitalists fear most, it is unity among the socialists. Capitalism sustains divisions and sustains itself through divisions. In order to preserve its power structures,



On November 8, 1917, the Bolsheviks take control of the Winter Palace, the last remaining holdout of the Provisional Government.

manner that has few precedents in history. Their children, many orphaned during the conflict, do not know what their future holds. They are not much safer in Bangladesh either. There have been reports of women being raped on the streets, in moving buses, hotels, households and even schools. Some were gang-raped and others killed after rape, a throwback to the atrocities committed by the Pakistani army. Clearly, those killers, both in the present day and during the 1971 war, and Myanmar's angels of destruction are all of the same faith—that of capitalism, the same capitalism that the October Revolution had resisted.

Some liberals are surprised that Aung San Suu Kyi has supported military aggression. But I think this is hardly surprising, for Suu Kyi's democracy is but a capitalist democracy, and in the end, she will always try to protect capitalist interests. Hers is not a pro-people cause, but a pro-profit one.

All things considered, socialism is inevitable. The majority will not let their earth be destroyed. They will save themselves and the earth. From a scientific perspective, a revolution is also inevitable. The history of civilisation shows that it must always move forward. It cannot remain static.

capitalism makes people isolated and individualistic, keeping them on their toes fighting life's basic challenges, and making small problems appear bigger. But the possibility of an imminent fall has made capitalism desperate. It is now using every weapon that it has at its disposal to survive, including the media.

But civilisation evolves with the transfer of power from one class to another. The slave-owners were replaced by the feudalists, who were replaced by the capitalists. There is one thing that all three systems have in common: private ownership of property. None of them have established collective ownership in the place of individual ownership, as slavery persisted in one form or another through the ages—enslavement to the (slave) owners, the landowners, and wage labour in a capitalist system—different terms, but similar outcomes. The October Revolution broke the fetters of slavery by liberating the common man and woman.

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