

“Without revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement.” Lenin, *What Is To Be Done*

BOSSES DON'T WANT US TO LEARN REVOLUTION FROM HISTORY

We continue to explore the question, “Does history always repeat or are truly new things possible?” Last issue we discussed “Laws of Motion.” Laws are universal within a given system. They say that only certain outcomes are allowed and, ultimately, inevitable. For example, the laws of motion of capitalism determine that crisis must follow crisis in this system.

The bosses want to deny that laws of motion play any role in history. It puts their dictatorship at risk. Hence, they come up with bogus philosophical objections.

Many capitalist philosophers even claim that there are no real laws in nature. There are several variations on this line (called “constructivism,” “empiricism,” etc.), but they all represent idealism. They claim that what nature seems to dictate—what makes it seem that there are necessary constraints in natural processes—is really just something that human thought puts there. These idealists recognize patterns in nature, but claim

that the “must happen” character that a law requires is not really in nature itself, just in our minds.

Other capitalist philosophers claim that while there are laws of nature, there can be no laws of human history, but just a series of accidents. A famous example is the claim that Napoleon lost his empire because of his hemorrhoids. At the battle of Waterloo, Napoleon’s hemorrhoids hurt so much that he avoided riding his horse onto the battlefield and left some early decisions to his lieutenants, who made mistakes. Those mistakes lost the battle, so the story goes, and thus the empire. A scientific analysis of the battle is very different from this, however, emphasizing the relative strengths and weaknesses of the French Army and its opponents, and contingent factors such as the weather.

History is not fully determined by laws, and accidental or contingent causes sometimes play an important role. When fruit seller Mohamed

Bouazizi set himself on fire in January 2011, it triggered the revolt that overthrew Tunisian dictator Ben Ali and started the Arab Spring. Although oppression always provokes resistance, laws do not fully determine what form this resistance will take. Mr. Bouazizi’s action was contingent, that is, not determined by the laws of motion of politics in Tunisia.

If the “everything is an accident view” were true, however, it would mean that people could not make their own history, because they couldn’t learn or use laws of economics, politics or war to determine what must result from their actions or what is impossible for them to do.

Next issue we will discuss the laws of motion of socialism. These laws show that socialism must eventually return to open capitalism despite the best efforts of revolutionaries. That’s why we mobilize directly for communism.