

Russia, The Return of the Revolution: An Appeal

February 22, 2012

"Yesterday (Feb. 4, 2012) more than 100 000 people marched on the streets in the centre of Moscow despite severe cold (-20C) demanding free and fair elections and the end of Vladimir Putin's authoritarian rule. Following on the mass demonstrations of December 10th and 24th in Moscow, in which tens of thousands of people took part, this shows clearly that the period of social passivity in Russia is over; the Putin era is nearing its end. The last time such large demonstrations took place in Moscow was in 1990-91 at the height of the democratic wave directed against the domination of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. As a result of these mass actions, the whole party-state system of the USSR began to crumble. Those who participated in those events twenty years ago are feeling the same atmosphere again: revolution is in the air."

So writes Alexei Gusev, a prominent activist during the 1990-1991 democratic upsurge and today Prof. of History at the University of Moscow. "The rising wave of protest has demystified the key myth of Putinism : the myth of a durable 'consensus' between the people and the authorities in Russia. What was revealed, is that it was not just a few small 'marginal' groups but the mass of ordinary active people who no longer were willing to exchange their civil and political rights for Putin-style 'stability.'"

The full text of Alexei's "The Return of the Russian Revolution: Nature and Perspectives of the Wave of Social Protest in Russia"—a classic Marxist analysis of the class composition of the demonstrators, the foundations of Putinism, the weakness of the regime, the limits of the revolution, the dangers of nationalism and perspectives for the future—will appear in the Summer 2012 issue of *New Politics*.

Alexei concludes : "The objective task of the democratic revolution in Russia consists in liberating civil society from the authoritarian and bureaucratic yoke, in creating a political space where all social forces can express their interests. In the long term, this will permit the void on the left wing of the political milieu in Russia to be filled. The absence of an organized left movement (outside of tiny Trotskyist and anarchist groups) cannot continue for a long time, and the different neo-Stalinists and bogus 'social democrats' (members of Just Russia party parading as 'Leftists') are not up to filling the bill. Today already, 17% of the protesters identify with the non-Communist Left. Their position is not yet represented politically. But sooner or later, the consolidation of the democratic left forces that are anti-totalitarian, internationalist and defend human rights and the rights of the workers must begin." The Praxis Research and Education Center, of which Alexei Gusev is Chair, has been defending that political space in Moscow for nearly fifteen years. Today, Praxis needs your help.

In 1997 Praxis opened the Victor Serge Library in Moscow (with over 6,000 radical books in six languages) as a home for anti-totalitarian, internationalist socialists, anarchists, ecologists and human rights activists in the ex-Soviet space. Praxis has translated published a score of left classics for the first time in Russia including Victor Serge's *Memoirs*, Voline's *Hidden Revolution*, Maximilien Rubel's *Marx Critic of Marxism* and just this winter Raya Dunayevskaya's *Marxism and Freedom*, with Jonathan Neale's *Stop Global Warming Now!* in press. Praxis has survived two politically-motivated evictions. We can't get a printer to run off our paper *Free Thought*, but our website gets lots of hits, and we have now opened a branch in Kiev. All on a shoe-string.

Now—just as perspectives are opening for the independent Left in Russia - Praxis has run out of

money! And so we are asking our friends and supporters around the world to help us kindle the flame of truly democratic socialism in Russia as the ongoing revolution advances to an uncertain future. Send US tax deductible contributions (in dollars, euros or £) to the Victor Serge Foundation, a 501 (c) (3) nonprofit, at 16 Rue de la Teinturerie, 34000 Montpellier France.

To learn more about Praxis, please go to http://www.praxiscenter.ru/about_us/english/.