

but mistrusted it. Stubborn facts were seen as the substance of politics, and he feared that a concern for theoretical consistency was more likely to lead to impractical policies and wishful thinking than to a fuller appreciation of political relationships.

For the true theorist, theory elucidates reality. It allows a person to cut through the confusion of inconsequential detail and to isolate crucial variables and relationships. It makes sense out of overwhelming chaos. For Lenin, the reverse was true. He saw theory as a Procrustean bed of narrow formulas which truncated reality. Theory was always an abstraction which simplified and distorted events:

[A] Marxist must take cognizance of real life, of the true facts of *reality*, and not cling to a theory of yesterday, which, like all theories, at best only outlines the main and the general, only *comes near* to embracing life in all its complexity.⁴

Lenin described theoreticians as:

... wretched men in mufflers who have kept away from life all the time, who have been sleeping with an old, shabby little book carefully stowed away under the pillow, the unwanted book that serves them as a guide and manual in implanting official socialism. But the minds of tens of millions of those who are doing things create something infinitely loftier than the greatest genius can foresee.⁵

In his view, even the theoretical vision of the Communist Party was bound to be limited:

History as a whole, and the history of revolutions in particular, is always richer in content, more varied, more multiform, more lively and "ingenious" than is imagined by even the best parties, the most class-conscious vanguards of the most advanced classes.⁶

⁴ V. I. Lenin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, Moscow: Gospolitizdat, 1958-1966, XXXI, p. 134 (emphasis in the original). Hereafter cited as "*Sochineniia*."

⁵ *Ibid.*, XXXV, p. 281.

⁶ *Ibid.*, XLI, p. 80.