

# **THE OCTOBER REVOLUTION LIVES – CONCLUSIONS FOR THE REVOLUTIONARY CLASS STRUGGLE TODAY**

Introductory speech for International Seminar 100th anniversary of the October Revolution, thematic block 6, Jose Maria Sison, Chairman, Communist Party of the Philippines, Chairperson, International League of Peoples' Struggle

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**Excerpts of the paper in bold are to be read by the author in about 15 minutes.**

**Dear Comrades,**

**First of all, I wish to thank Comrade Stefan Engel, the International Coordination of Revolutionary Parties and Organizations (ICOR) and the International Conference of Marxist-Leninist Parties and Organizations (ICMLPO) for inviting me to speak on item 6, “The October Revolution Lives. Conclusions for the revolutionary class struggle today”, in this international theoretical seminar to celebrate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution.**

**It is a pleasure and honor to have this opportunity to exchange ideas and views with the comrades in ICOR and the 12<sup>th</sup> ICMLPO. I convey to you warmest greetings of solidarity from the International League of Peoples' Struggle, which has been undertaking study conferences and other activities to celebrate the centenary of the October Revolution.**

**I propose to draw conclusions from the development of subjective forces of the revolution before, during and after the October Revolution. I wish to focus on how Lenin and his loyal successors built the Bolshevik Party ideologically, politically and organizationally. The aim of making the conclusions is to define the lessons to learn from the example of the Bolsheviks and the tasks to carry out in the revolutionary class struggle today.**

**Part I Conclusions from the Development of Subjective Forces in the October Revolution**

**1. Ideological Building (For reading by author: first 5 paragraphs)**

Before he turned twenty years old, Lenin had already read and studied thoroughly *The Communist Manifesto* and *Das Capital*, which educated him on the application of materialist dialectics in the class struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat and in the critique of the capitalist political economy, respectively. When he read the works of the Marxist forerunner Georgi Plekhanov, he agreed with him that Russia was moving from feudalism to capitalism and that the proletariat would carry the development further to proletarian revolution and socialism. This view repudiated that of the agrarian-socialist Narodnik movement, which had presumed that the peasantry could establish socialism by building peasant communes. However, Lenin recognized the importance of the revolutionary role of the peasantry in alliance with proletariat.

By the time that Lenin published his *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* in 1909, it was clear that he had surpassed Plekhanov in comprehending Marxist materialist philosophy. The latter could not recognize the prime importance of social practice over personal experience. Lenin contended with the "third party" philosophy of bourgeois subjectivists, especially of the type of Hume and Bishop Berkeley, who regarded reality as mere constructs of sense-data. Outstandingly, he identified the unity of opposites as the most fundamental law of material dialectics. This is rigorously demonstrated in the analytical writings of Marx and Lenin himself.

The first major work of Lenin, *The Development of Capitalism in Russia* (1899), showed his comprehensive and profound knowledge of Russian economy and society and laid the ground for understanding the role of Russia in the international context of modern imperialism. Russian imperialism was of the military feudal kind but already had industrial enclaves which were comparable to those of the cities of Western Europe and whose capital accumulation was fed by the oppressed nationalities in an ocean of feudalism and feudalism.

Lenin had a clear view of Russia as the weakest link in the chain of imperialist countries and as a huge country subject to the law of uneven development, oppressing and exploiting the toiling masses of workers and peasants and yet imposed upon by stronger imperialist powers. He could lead the October Revolution to victory because he understood the nature and laws of motion of imperialism as he explicated in his 1916 book, *Imperialism: the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, more comprehensively and more profoundly than the earlier critics of this phenomenon like John A. Hobson (*Imperialism*, 1902) and Rudolf Hilferding (*Finance Capital*, 1910).

Most important of all he opposed Kautsky's notion of ultra-imperialism in 1912.

Such notion presupposed that the imperialist powers invest abroad, develop the less developed countries and bring about the growth of industry and the proletariat on a unilinear line. It paved the way for social chauvinism and supporting the imperialist war budgets in the run up

**to World War I. Lenin countered Kautsky and the Second International by stressing the law of uneven development, the imperialist struggle for a redivision of the world and the spasmodic flow of investment that results in crises and wars. He was firm on describing imperialism as crisis-stricken, decadent, moribund and aggressive. Having led the victory of the October Revolution, Lenin further repudiated Kautsky in 1918 with the book, *The Proletarian Revolution and Renegade Kautsky*.**

Lenin correctly defined modern imperialism or monopoly capitalism as the highest and final stage of capitalism and described the era as that of modern imperialism and proletarian internationalism. He identified the five features, such as the following: a) the dominance of monopoly capital in capitalist economies, b) the merger of industrial and bank capital to form a finance oligarchy, c) the growing importance of the export of surplus capital over the export of surplus goods, d) the formation of cartels, syndicates and other international combines of monopolies, and e) the complete division of the world among the capitalist countries as economic territory (sources of cheap labor and raw materials, markets, fields of investments and spheres of influence; be these colonies, semicolonies and dependent countries). The fifth feature leads to a struggle for redivision of the world among the imperialist powers upon the unceasing change in the balance of forces.

The economic crisis of the world capitalist system and the contradictions among the capitalist powers had already broken out into World War I when in 1916 Lenin wrote *Imperialism: the Highest Stage of Capitalism*. The inter-imperialist war and the victory of the October Revolution vindicated and proved correct a series of his propositions: the uneven development of the imperialist countries, Russia as one of the weakest links in the chain of imperialist countries, imperialism as the eve of socialism, turning the imperialist war into a revolutionary civil war and the possibility of the revolutionary victory of the Bolsheviks first against Tsarism and then against the bourgeoisie.

He predicted the victory of the October Revolution as well as the emergence of a worse general crisis of the world capitalist system after World War I. Indeed, a more severe socio-economic and political crisis afflicted a number of imperialist countries, especially the losers in World War I. The struggle between revolution and counterrevolution continued in Germany in the 1920s. Fascism took power in Italy in 1922. The ever worsening crisis of the Weimar Republic and the bourgeois incompetence and bunglings of the social democrats led to the rise of the Nazis to power in Germany in 1933. The Great Depression engulfed the entire capitalist world in the 1930s and led to World War II.)

## **2. Political Building (For reading by author: first 5 paragraphs)**

In his major work *Two Tactics of Social Democracy* (1905), Lenin put forward the general line of the revolution by which the Bolsheviks could arouse, organize and mobilize the broad masses of the people against Tsarism and the bourgeoisie. He elaborated on the teaching of Marx that the battle for democracy must be won before the battle for socialism. He called for the basic democratic alliance of the workers and peasants in sharp contrast to the narrow losing line of the 1905 revolution, which prematurely called for all power to the workers' soviets.

Under the leadership of Lenin, the Bolsheviks maintained their solidity as a proletarian revolutionary party but also saw the importance and necessity of alliance with other political forces in order to overthrow Tsarism in the February Revolution. In preparation for the October Revolution, Lenin paid attention to developing comprehensive leadership over the soviets of workers, peasants and soldiers. He made sure that upon the overthrow of the provisional government under Kerensky, power would pass on to the soviets. As early as 1914, he wrote the *Right of Nations to Self-determination* in order to undermine the military-feudal foundation of Russian imperialism.

From the study of the Paris Commune of 1871 by Karl Marx, Lenin learned the most essential lesson that for the proletarian dictatorship and the proletarian revolution to prevail, the bureaucratic and military machinery of the bourgeois state must be smashed. He wrote and published *State and Revolution* in 1917 while he was preoccupied with the practical problems of the proletarian revolution. The strategy and tactics for defeating the enemy and winning the revolution must be consonant with and appropriate to the history and conditions of the imperialist country where the proletariat leads and carries out the armed revolution. The imperialist war, the terrible consequences on Russian troops and the revolutionary work done by the Bolsheviks among them created the conditions for the overthrow of Tsarist rule in February 1917 and then of the Kerensky-led bourgeois government in October 1917 through urban uprisings.

But the fighting extended from the cities to the countryside until 1920 because of the sizeable remnants of the reactionary army and the forces of Western imperialist intervention. The Bolsheviks became well prepared for the fighting in the countryside because they had gained all-round leadership in the soviets of workers, peasants and soldiers, had built up a formidable Red Army and had control over the centers and lines of logistics and communications. The successful strategy and tactics employed by the Bolsheviks in the urban uprisings and in the battles of fluid movement in the countryside became a rich source of lessons and inspiration for the proletarian revolutionaries all over the world under the auspices of the Third International.

**Lenin and the Bolsheviks concentrated on leading the October Revolution to victory in 1917, and the subsequent tasks of building Soviet power such as reconstituting the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party as the All-Russian Communist Party in 1918, defeating the White Armies in the Civil War and foreign interventionist powers until 1920, founding the Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics in 1922 and reviving the economy and consolidating Soviet power through the New Economic Policy. But even amidst the Civil War in 1919, Lenin promptly paid attention to the founding of the Third International in Moscow in order to advance the world proletarian revolution and to further demonstrate the difference between the Communists and the opportunists and revisionists in the Second International which had dissolved in 1916.**

At first, Lenin expected that the first inter-imperialist war and continuing crisis of the world capitalist system would generate revolutionary conditions in the imperialist countries in Europe, especially in Germany where the working class movement became strong under communist leadership. But unlike Trotsky, he did not depend exclusively on victory of the proletarian revolution in Germany or Western Europe for the consolidation of Soviet power and the continued advance of the world proletarian revolution. Indeed, if the world proletarian revolution could not advance through Berlin it could do so through Beijing. Lenin extended the call of the *Communist Manifesto* for the workers of the world to unite against capitalism to the call for the workers and all oppressed peoples and nations to unite against imperialism.

Early on after the victory of the October Revolution in 1917, Lenin paid great attention to the role and work of the Third International in the anti-colonial and anti-imperialist struggles of the oppressed peoples and nations in the East and made sure that communist parties were formed among them. He laid the ground for the theory and practice of two-stage revolution (new democratic revolution and then socialist revolution) in the underdeveloped countries. After the death of Lenin, Stalin continued the proletarian revolutionary leadership of the Bolsheviks in socialist construction and revolution. He built the strong foundation of the Soviet economy through socialist industrialization and through the collectivization and mechanization of agriculture.

In the further experience and clarification of the new democratic and socialist stages of the revolution after the October Revolution, Mao and the Chinese Communist Party have outstandingly demonstrated the correctness and effectiveness of the strategic line of protracted people's war by encircling the cities from the countryside and accumulating strength until conditions are ripe for seizing power in the cities in predominantly agrarian and underdeveloped countries. At any rate, the various forms of legal and armed struggles that enabled the rise of people's democracies and several socialist countries after World War II are worthy of study for appropriate application in various types of countries under various conditions. In the course of World War II partisan warfare could be waged in both urban and rural areas in Europe.

### **3. Organizational Building (For reading by author: first 5 paragraphs)**

**In *What Is to be Done* (1902) Lenin gave much importance to the Party newspaper *Iskra* as a propagandist and organizer of the Party. Indeed, to recruit new members and firm up the old stock of members, the Party must always invigorate them with the correct revolutionary position on vital issues and must account how many members are buying and reading the newspaper, and how many members and unorganized people are responding to calls for mass mobilization.**

**In his debate with Martov on organizational matters, Lenin opposed the view that the Party must be constituted by the trade unions. He pointed out that if the Party would exclusively arise out of the narrow confines of trade unionism, then it would be like the bourgeois laborite party. He called for professional proletarian revolutionaries and advocated individual Party membership subject to the principles of proletarian revolutionary remoulding, active party life, militant activism among the masses and democratic centralism conducive to freedom and discipline. The Party cadres and members must be able to look over the entire society from the vantage of the working class, become a partisan to this class and further remould themselves as proletarian revolutionaries.**

**Because revolution is a mass undertaking, the Party must be at the helm and at the core of the trade unions, peasant associations and other mass organizations. These must be under the direction of the competent Party offices and cadres. And within mass organizations, there must be fractions, groups or cells of the Party at the core. The masses organized by the Party are the reservoir of new Party members and can serve as the hard core of the spontaneous masses who rise up during revolutionary situations and crises.**

**Giving due importance to its central revolutionary task, which is to seize political power, the Party must consider how to smash the military and bureaucratic machinery of the reactionary state. The Bolsheviks sent cadres into the Tsarist army to organize revolutionary cells within and also participated in parliament. Thus, by the time the revolutions of 1917 occurred, the soviets of soldiers were already a major revolutionary force. From the masses of workers and peasants who were organized as Red Guard, the Red Army grew bigger as the soviets contributed troops and supplies for winning the civil war and the resistance against foreign interventionist forces.**

**According to circumstances, the revolutionary parties of the proletariat must build the mass organizations of various classes and sectors, self-defense organizations, the Red Army or the people's army, the organs of political power, the intra-class and inter-class alliances, the international unity of communist and workers' parties and the international solidarity of**

**peoples. By learning from the October Revolution and the subsequent revolutionary struggles, we come to know what subjective forces of the revolution must be organized in order to advance and win victory. As we wage revolutionary class struggle, we can expand and consolidate these forces, strengthen them in stages and look forward to a fundamentally better and brighter future in socialism.**

Part II Further Conclusions from the Building of Socialism in the Soviet Union and Later Developments to the Present

### 1. Building Socialism in One Country and Inspiring the World Proletarian Revolution

Lenin upheld the building of socialism in one country as a necessity in connection with building the international communist movement. He considered the Soviet Union as the bulwark of the international communist movement and the Third International. He set the line that building socialism in one country was possible because of the moribund and decadent character of imperialism and its recurrent and ever worsening crisis and proneness to war. Lenin led the Bolsheviks in building and consolidating Soviet power in the Soviet Union even as he wished that more socialist countries would help to consolidate socialism and even as he thought that it would take a whole historical epoch for socialism to defeat imperialism and bring about the withering of the proletarian state and the rise of communism as a classless society.

Stalin followed the line of Lenin in building socialism in one country against the defeatist line of Trotsky that it was impossible and that the path forward was through a Europe-wide revolutionary conflagration; and as well as against the Rightist line of Bukharin to extend the New Economic Policy indefinitely. Stalin actually succeeded in carrying forward the socialist revolution and construction. He was able to build socialist industry and accomplish the collectivization and mechanization of agriculture. He was also able to direct the Third International to promote the building of communist parties and revolutionary mass movements in dozens of countries. But the victories in socialist construction led to the premature declaration in the Soviet Constitution of 1936 that classes and class struggle had come to an end, except the one between the Soviet people and imperialism.

During World War II, the Soviet Union resoundingly defeated the invasionary forces of Nazi Germany and rolled them back, enabling several countries in Europe to establish people's democracies and socialism. The victory of the October Revolution extended to the rise of several socialist countries and national liberation movements during and after World War II. China emerged in 1949 as one more big and powerful socialist country to challenge imperialism. That same year, the Soviet Union broke the US monopoly of nuclear power. The Korean people fought US imperialism to a standstill from 1951 to 1953. The Democratic Peoples' Republic of Korea

frustrated US aggression and subsequent blockades and sanctions after the 1953 armistice. The Vietnamese, Laotian and Cambodian peoples inflicted defeats on US imperialists and their allies until their stunning succession of nationwide victories in 1975.

## 2. Revisionist Betrayal and Capitalist Restoration

Until 1956 it could be said that one-third of humankind had come under the governance of socialism under the leadership of revolutionary parties of the proletariat. But 1956 was also the year when the Krushchov revisionist clique came to power in the Soviet Union and totally negated the achievements of Stalin under the pretext of condemning the personality cult. Krushchov made a coup and brought about a comprehensive set of anti-socialist reforms in the CPSU, the State, and in industry and agriculture. He propagated such bourgeois populist notions as “party of the whole people” and “state of the whole people” and such bourgeois pacifist notions as “peaceful transition to socialism,” “peaceful economic competition” and “peaceful co-existence” as the general line of the international communist movement.

Brezhnev also made his own coup and replaced Krushchov in 1964. He paid some lip service to Stalin but in fact he hewed closely to the revisionist line of Krushchov. He recentralized some ministries and enterprises only to ensure funds for the federal center and for the arms race. The anti-socialist reforms continued. Worse, Mafia-type criminal syndicates arose to thieve on the state enterprises and delivered goods for their private profit to the expanded “free market”. Brezhnev practised social imperialism and pushed such notions as the “international dictatorship of the proletariat” and “limited national sovereignty” of other countries.

By the time that Gorbachov became the top leader of the Soviet Union, the Soviet Union was already mired in grave and deepgoing economic crisis due to rampant bureaucratic corruption and the extremely burdensome costs of the arms race and military operations. Gorbachov used all these to accelerate the restoration of capitalism under the rubric of “new thinking” (glasnost) and “restructuring” (perestroika). He fully realized capitalist restoration upon the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 after emboldening the revisionist ruling cliques in Eastern Europe to adopt outrightly capitalist and anti-socialist policies and measures.

Mao Zedong is responsible for the most significant and the greatest effort to confront the phenomenon of modern revisionism. He launched the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (GPCR) in 1966 and put forward the theory and practice of continuing revolution under proletarian dictatorship in order to combat revisionism, prevent the restoration of capitalism and consolidate socialism. In most of the ten-year course of the GPCR, Mao and the Chinese Communist Party provided effective leadership in revolutionizing the mode of production and the social superstructure. But soon after Chairman Mao’s death, the Deng revisionist clique successfully

staged a coup, purged at least 30 per cent of the membership of the CCP and imprisoned thousands of cadres.. Thereafter, it carried out anti-socialist reforms at an accelerated rate from 1978 onwards .

### 3. Intensifying Inter-Imperialist Contradictions and New Upsurge of the World Proletarian Revolution

We are still in the era of modern imperialism and proletarian revolution because of the success of the revisionist ruling cliques in subverting the previous socialist countries for several decades and converting nearly all of them into undisguised capitalist countries from 1989 to 1991. For a while after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, US imperialism boasted of itself as the winner in the Cold War and the sole superpower. It launched ideological, economic, political and military offensives in order to proclaim the “death” of socialism and the perpetuity of capitalism, and to take practical advantage of the dire conditions of those countries that have restored capitalism as their social system.

Within its national borders and abroad, the US has pushed hard the neoliberal economic policy, imagining that this could solve the problem of stagflation beginning in the 1970s. But this policy of unbridled greed has served to bring about the ever faster and deeper going recurrence and worsening of the economic and financial crises. The attempts to counter the crisis of overproduction with ever larger doses of public, corporate and household debt have brought about bigger busts. Until now, the imperialist countries have failed to solve the financial crisis that broke out in the US and spread globally since 2008. China, which used to enjoy US accommodation for its cheap labor and cheap manufactures, is now in the throes of severe economic and financial crisis due to domestic glut of goods and bad debts. It is now desperately looking for more ways to export its surplus capital earned from previous trade surpluses.

The US has also pushed hard its neoconservative policy of full-spectrum dominance, with Pax Americana in the 21<sup>st</sup> century boosted by hightech military power. It uses war production for buoying up its economy and launches wars of aggression and sponsors regional proxy wars in order to sell weapons and expand economic territory. There has been no end to the wars instigated by the US and its NATO allies since the 1990s. But for the US, the costs have far outweighed the benefits and are compounded by steady losses in its economic competition with other capitalist powers under conditions of global depression since 2008. The US has accelerated its strategic decline from an unchallenged hyperpower to being one among the imperialist powers in a multipolar world. The G-7 and its multilateral agencies and military treaty alliances are now being challenged by the Sino-Russian partnership, the BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

All major contradictions in the world today are intensifying. There is not a single capitalist power today that is not beset by intensifying struggle between capital and labor amidst serious economic and financial crisis. The contradictions between the imperialist powers and the oppressed peoples and nations rage most violently where the US and its NATO allies are carrying out wars of

aggression as in Iraq, Afghanistan, former Yugoslavia, Libya, Ukraine, Syria, Yemen, Sudan, Somalia, and elsewhere. The imperialist powers are being confronted by countries with increasing sense of independence as they resist imperialist impositions and see opportunities for maneuver in the multipolar world. Contradictions are intensifying among the imperialist powers because of the integration of China and Russia as major powers in the capitalist world.

As the socio-economic and political crises worsen at an accelerated rate, the proletariat and people suffer intolerable exploitation, deprivation and poverty. They will never accept oppression and exploitation without resistance. The objective conditions are becoming ever more favorable for building the subjective forces of the revolution and waging various forms of revolutionary struggle for national liberation, democracy and socialism. Towards fulfilling the central task of seizing political power, the revolutionary parties of the proletariat must build themselves as Bolshevik-type parties ideologically, politically and organizationally in the direction of socialism and communism.