

History Teaches Us that to Win the Revolution We Must Struggle Today for a Socialist Future!

Liberation is only Possible if a Revolutionary Party Organizes the Working Class in Alliance with the Rural and Urban Poor for the Socialist World Revolution!

Resolution on the Lessons 100th Anniversary of the October Revolution

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1. The socialist revolution in Russia in October 1917 remains the most important event in the liberation struggle of the working class and the oppressed in the modern era. It was the first time that the working class, led by the Bolshevik Party of Lenin and Trotsky, succeeded in overthrowing the capitalist class and created a workers' and peasant republic with the goal of spreading the revolution internationally. The RCIT stands in the tradition of the Bolshevik Party of Lenin and Trotsky and the socialist revolution in Russia of October 1917. Our goal is to build a Bolshevik Party nationally and internationally in order to carry forward a new October Revolution.

2. The socialist October Revolution has confirmed a number of Marxist maxims which are extremely relevant for any fundamental revolutionary transformation today. The first is that the revolution will inevitably be defeated or thrown back if it is not continually driven forward, without interruption, until final victory is achieved and the working class takes power and overthrows the capitalist system. Any uncompleted revolutionary process which leaves the bourgeoisie in power, or a fraction of it, or reformist and petty-bourgeoisie leaders who act as servants for capitalism; all such unfinished revolutions will not succeed in solving any fundamental antagonism of the capitalist society. The revolution must become a "*Permanent Revolution*" (Trotsky) until the working class takes power through a socialist revolution or it will stall, be thrown back and ultimately defeated.

3. The theory of permanent revolution was the strategic conclusion of the Marxist's understanding that the development of humanity was ruled by the historic "*Law of Uneven and Combined Development*". In Russia the capitalist mode of production was developed within the feudal relations of exploitation of the peasants. As a result, Russia was a backward imperialist state with a large majority of peasants and a working class mainly based in very large factories (many of them owned by foreign capitalists). On the left there were three different theories on the coming revolution. The reformist Mensheviks argued that the revolution will have a bourgeois character and that the working class and the peasants must support the capitalist class. Lenin, until 1917, argued that the revolution will have a bourgeois-democratic character revolution but will be made by the alliance of the working class and the poor peasants. Finally, there was Trotsky's theory of the Permanent Revolution which stated that the revolution will begin as a democratic revolution but that the working class must lead the poor peasants and strive to take power. Once the working class will take power it will continue with the socialist tasks as part of the world revolution. Lenin adopted Trotsky's theory upon his return from exile in April 1917 and called, despite opposition by Kamenev and Stalin, for a socialist revolution as part of a world revolution.

4. Capitalism inevitably throws the working class into misery, and torments it with *unemployment, low wages, job insecurity*, etc. This is the situation today on every continent of this planet. This was also the case in Russia before 1917 and remained so after the February Revolution in that year, when the workers overthrew the Tsarist autocracy but were prevented from taking power by a coalition of reformist “socialist” parties and bourgeois forces (“*popular front*”). It was only when the working class imposed *workers’ control in the factories* and the Bolsheviks took power in October, only when they *nationalized the large enterprises and banks under workers’ control*, that these crucial issues of working men’s and women’s life were solved. It was only later, when the Stalinist bureaucracy replaced the Bolshevik leadership in 1924 after Lenin’s death that, one after another, rights were taken away from the workers.

5. The same is true for the *agrarian issue*. As long as the working class revolution is not victorious, so long as it does not expropriate the bourgeoisie and the land owners, the poor peasants will always remain an oppressed and exploited class. When the February Revolution brought the biggest petty-bourgeois peasant party – the so-called “*Social-Revolutionary Party*” – to power, it proved unable to expropriate the big land owners and distribute their lands among the poor peasants. Only when the October Revolution smashed the capitalist system, was it possible to *expropriate the big land owners by nationalizing the land and handing it over to committees of poor peasants so that they could distribute it among themselves*. This guaranteed the loyalty of the poor peasants to the Soviet Republic and enabled the latter to be victorious in the devastating civil war (1918-1921) during which 14 foreign armies fought against it on the side of Russian counter-revolutionary forces. The Bolsheviks advocated the creation of *voluntary cooperatives and state farms* to raise agrarian productivity. It was the Stalinist counterrevolution which took away the land from the poor peasantry in 1928-29 (“*forced collectivization*”), a policy that led to devastating famine which ensured the complete alienation of this important segment of society from the socialist goal.

6. The issue of *liberation of oppressed nations* is another example of the relevance of the Marxist teachings of Lenin and Trotsky for today’s revolutionary struggle. Tsarist Russia was a “*prison house of peoples*,” with 57% of the population being non-Russians who were denied their fundamental rights. This didn’t change when the reformist-bourgeois government took power between February and October 1917. It was only the Bolshevik government, after October, which guaranteed the oppressed people of their *right of national self-determination*. All nations were ensured full equality, their languages were taught in schools, their culture promoted, they had the right to found their own state, etc. It was only after the Stalinist counter-revolution that non-Russian nations were increasingly oppressed, that Great Russian chauvinism was promoted and that a number of small nations like the Chechens, the Crimean Tatars and others were forcefully deported to remote places thousands of kilometers away from their homelands. Likewise, the Bolsheviks consistently defended the Jews already during the 1903 pogroms as well as after the revolution. In contrast, the capitalist counter-revolution killed numerous Jews. Characteristically, Stalin also waged his campaigns against oppositional groups with anti-Semitic undertones. Likewise, the right-wing Zionists led by Ze’ev Jabotinsky supported the reactionary and anti-Semitic regime of Symon Petlura in the Ukraine during the civil war which killed many Jews.

7. Similarly, the Bolsheviks were committed to *unconditional support for the liberation struggles of the oppressed people in the colonies and semi-colonies in Africa, Asia and Latin America*. They called for an end of imperialist domination and supported the anti-colonial uprisings of the Rif-Berbers against

Spanish and French imperialism, of the Indians against British imperialism, of the Chinese against all Great Powers and of Turkey against Britain. Lenin and Trotsky called for unconditional support for the struggle of black people in the US and in Africa against imperialist super-exploitation and racism. They gave unconditional support to such struggles despite the fact they were usually led by non-socialist, (petty-)bourgeois nationalist and religious forces (*“anti-imperialist united front tactic”*). However, the Communist International advocated simultaneously the independent organization of the working class. It emphasized the necessity for the working class and the oppressed to prepare to replace the non-revolutionary leaderships as the latter will inevitably betray the liberation struggle.

8. The Soviet Union at the time of Lenin and Trotsky was the first state in the world which gave *women full equality*. For the first time women were ensured equal wages, voting rights, maternity protection, the right to divorce, to abortions, etc. Furthermore women played a crucial role in the revolution itself. Alexandra Kollontai became the first female minister in the world; women fought in the Red Army and played an important role in the political and social campaigns among the popular masses; and the Bolsheviks went on to create a communist women’s movement. Likewise the young Soviet Union abolished all oppressive laws related to sexuality, including laws which criminalized homosexuality. Again, it was the Stalinist counter-revolution which took away from women a number of rights (like that of abortion). Similarly, Stalin added an article to the criminal code in 1933, which made male homosexuality a crime punishable by up to five years in prison with hard labor.

9. Lenin, following Marx and Engels, characterized the victorious workers state as a *“dictatorship of the proletariat.”* Bourgeois demagogues maintain that this explicitly precludes democracy. Nothing could be further from the truth. Surely, the victorious revolution cannot tolerate its sworn enemies who will use all means necessary to restore the power of the old capitalist class. Bourgeois historians refer to the example of the Constituent Assembly which was dissolved by the Bolsheviks in January 1918. However, the Constituent Assembly with its majority of petty-bourgeois parties (right-wing Socialist-Revolutionaries and Mensheviks) represented an institution hostile to the revolution and it did not represent the will of the majority of the workers and poor peasants as it was expressed in the All-Russian Soviet Congress. Contrary to the claims of bourgeois ideologists, the young Soviet Union was full of debates about the course of the revolution and even saw numerous blocs and factions within the Bolshevik Party. Authentic workers’ democracy existed in the revolutionary workers’ and peasants’ republic at the time of Lenin and Trotsky. Only when the Stalinist bureaucracy took power, did they systematically suppress any dissent. It expelled the Left Opposition led by Leon Trotsky at the end of 1927, and subsequently threw tens of thousands – later even millions of oppositionists – into prison, many of whom were later executed. Stalinism is not the continuation of Bolshevism but the embodiment of its negation. A line of blood is drawn between these two antipodes.

10. *The revolution is doomed to degenerate, to bureaucratize and finally to collapse if it fails to spread internationally to other countries.* This is so because (a) the imperialist enemies will unavoidable do everything in their power to subvert, to attack and finally to smash the revolution; and (b) because the modern productive forces, by their very nature, transcend all borders of the nation state. True, the revolution will not succeed in several countries in a single stroke. The working class will first take power in one country. But, while striving for consolidation of the socialist nation state as much as it is possible under the condition of imperialist encirclement, the priority must be given to the internationalization of the revolution, of spreading it to other countries. If this fails and the revolution remains isolated for a number of years, it is doomed. If a country remains isolated, it will suffer from

backwardness and poverty. However, socialism can only be built on the basis of modern productive forces in order to free humanity increasingly from the burden of labor. Hence, socialism cannot be built in isolation in one country, as Stalin infamously proclaimed in 1924, but only on an international level. This was proven by the fate of the USSR, China and all other Stalinist states: first they bureaucratized and suppressed the working class and popular masses and finally they collapsed and opened the road to capitalism in 1989-91. This is why Lenin and Trotsky advocated the internationalization of the revolution as a chief priority after 1917. This is why they launched the Communist International in 1919. And this is why Stalin transformed this International into a subordinated appendix of Moscow's foreign policy and finally dissolved it in 1943.

11. Contrary to the claims of numerous reformists and centrists, *the socialist revolution cannot be accomplished by peaceful means*. The ruling class will inevitably launch massive and violent attacks against insurrectional workers and oppressed. The October Revolution itself was conducted relatively peacefully in those days, with only a limited number of deaths – proving that the working class is not bloodthirsty but rather interested in an orderly transformation. However, following the Bolshevik Revolution, the ruling class and their imperialist allies organized a vicious counterrevolution which opened years of bloody civil war. The experience and legacy of the Bolsheviks teaches us that every oppressed class that desires to overcome its circumstances must organize and arm itself in *workers' and popular militias* and later, after the successful revolution, create a *Red Workers' and Peasants Army*. The pacifist preachers of a “*peaceful transformation*” are nothing but lackeys of the bourgeoisie who only serve to disarm the working class and oppressed.

12. Another crucial lesson of the October Revolution is that *all forms of coalition governments with bourgeois parties, any kind of government which tacitly administers capitalism are in fact betraying the interests of the working class and oppressed*. Lenin and Trotsky rightly and vehemently opposed any attempt to politically support – to say nothing of actually joining – the bourgeois-reformist government between February and October 1917. For the same reason, the Bolsheviks continued to pursue the line of *revolutionary defeatism* during the war as Russia remained an imperialist state after February (albeit Lenin modified the application of this strategy in specific situation when e.g. the Kerensky government conspired to allow the German occupation of Petrograd so that the later could suppress the revolutionary workers and soldiers). The Bolsheviks resolutely generalized this experience and called the issue of support for or participation in coalition governments with pro-capitalist parties as a crucial line of demarcation between communism and reformism. Later this lesson was trampled by Stalin when he ordered the Communist parties in France, Italy, Spain, Austria, etc. to support or openly join capitalist governments and to oppose working class struggles against such governments (as took place, for example, in the 1930s and again in 1945-47).

13. *Similarly, Lenin and Trotsky strongly denounced any political collaboration with or support for imperialist states*. While practical deals like diplomatic treaties and trade agreements are legitimate and unavoidable, this must never lead to any political support for such regimes. Hence, the Bolsheviks, after being forced to conclude the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk with Germany in March 1918, and again the Treaty of Rapallo in 1922, never stopped supporting and assisting the German Revolution during this period which culminated first in the November Revolution of 1918 as well as in the ultimately unsuccessful uprising during the autumn of 1923. In contrast with Lenin and Trotsky, Stalin *did* advocate political support for and collaboration with one or the other imperialist camp (with French, British and American imperialism in 1935–39 and again in 1941–47; and with Nazi Germany in

1939–41). Such collaboration resulted in political support for or even the joining (by Stalinist political parties in Europe) of imperialist governments, and the advocacy of ceasing the class struggle against the imperialist allies, including the violent denunciation of anti-colonial uprisings in India in 1942 and Algeria in 1945.

14. Another crucial lesson of the October Revolution is how the Bolshevik party successfully used the *united front tactic* to win over the masses that initially supported the reformist parties. While refusing to politically support the reformist government which came to power after February 1917, the Bolsheviks made concrete demands on these coalition parties and called upon reformist-minded workers and peasants to put pressure on them by organizing the struggle in the streets, in the factories and on the land. When sectors of the masses in Petrograd pre-maturely wanted to take power in July 1917, the Bolsheviks tried to restrain them as the relationship of forces in the whole country was not ripe for a revolution. Since a large section of the working class still had illusions in the reformists, the Bolsheviks called to throw out the ten bourgeois ministers. The Bolsheviks were prepared to side with the reformists when a military crisis ensued following threats of a military coup by General Kornilov in September 1917, but refused to give any *political* support to the government. However, such practical collaboration did not stop Lenin and Trotsky from sharply criticizing the reformists for their failure to carry the revolution forward. As subsequent history showed, such situations of the counter-revolution preparing a military coup to smash a popular front government, often take place (e.g. Spain 1936, Chile 1973) and revolutionaries must use the same approach as the Bolsheviks in 1917.

15. The Bolsheviks emphasized the *importance of the Soviets* to the revolution. Such councils exist as a democratic hierarchy – with councils organizing the workers and oppressed in every work place, neighborhood, and village. These local soviets elect delegates with a clear mandate to the next higher body – local, regional and finally national soviets. These delegates remain under control of the electoral base and can be recalled at any time if their performance is unsatisfactory. As representatives they earn an income no higher than that of an average worker. While such soviets already existed in the autumn of 1905 in the city of St. Petersburg, where Trotsky was elected as chairman, in 1917 they spread to the whole of Russia as well as to many other countries. We saw similar workers' and popular councils in Chile 1973 and in Iran in 1979. A similar form of direct workers' democracy existed in the daily assemblies and decision making bodies set up by the heroic South African miners in Marikana in August 2012. In fact, every authentic popular revolution is characterized by its being based on these types of mass workers' and popular councils in stark contrast with a coup by a small armed minority. Various centrists claim that the Bolsheviks made the revolution by calling for "*Bread, Land and Peace*". While it is true that they raised this slogan, the centrists omit the fact that the Bolsheviks combined this with the slogan "*All Power to the Soviets*". By this omission, the centrists distort the Bolsheviks' strategy and transform it into a Menshevik two-stage revolution.

16. Another important lesson of the October Revolution is that *the socialist revolution must be led by the working class*. The working class is the modern class that epitomizes the negation of capitalism. It is – and must be – the leading class of the revolution, even if it constitutes a relatively small force in society. In Russia in 1917, for example, the proletariat accounted for no more than 10% of the population, while the huge majority of Russians were peasants. There is hardly a country in the world today where the working class is smaller in relative terms. Nevertheless, the Bolsheviks rightly insisted that the city leads the countryside and the workers lead the peasantry, because of the former's central role in the process of production. This lesson remains fully valid today.

17. However – and this is another crucial lesson of the socialist revolution of October 1917 – *the working class cannot succeed in its struggle to topple capitalism without an alliance with other oppressed classes and strata of the population*. This is especially so regarding the poor peasantry which faces barbaric exploitation in the semi-colonial countries and which constitutes a substantial part of the popular masses in these countries. Another important sector is the growing layer of urban poor. In the old imperialist countries (North America, Western Europe and Japan) special importance must be given to the struggles of the socially oppressed layers of the popular masses – women, migrants, youth, national minorities.

18. The experience of the Russian Revolution, the early Soviet Union and its Stalinist degeneration offer rich lessons for our programmatic vision of the kind of society we want to build. Our Socialism – in contrast to its Stalinist caricature – will be revolutionary and free! Our struggle for the *Socialism of the 21st century* is inspired by the revolutionary spirit of the young Soviet Union at the time of Lenin and Trotsky, but which was subsequently annihilated by the Stalinist bureaucracy. We are fighting for socialism where the working class, the peasants, the urban poor (including both those still in being educated as well as those who are already pensioners) rule the society via popular councils which are present in all enterprises, schools and universities, and in the slums and villages. The *Socialism of the 21st century* – in contrast to the Stalinist dictatorship – is bottom up and *not* top down. All important issues are discussed in these councils and delegates are elected to represent the viewpoint of the rank and file in higher bodies; local, regional, national and international. These delegates must be recallable if the rank and file no longer feel that they are being adequately represented. The *Socialism of the 21st century* must *not* be a socialism where a caste of bureaucrats rule society as was, and is, the case in the Stalinist countries. It is an important lesson of the 20th century that socialism must never be a dictatorship of bureaucrats against the workers. Nor can the *Socialism of the 21st century* be one in which only a single party exists and rules. Rather, the working class and the popular masses will express their views in different parties which will compete democratically for a majority in the councils. Neither must the *Socialism of the 21st century* be one in which a caudillo rules over society as a combination of a parliamentarian and bonapartist system (as is the case in Venezuela). The *Socialism of the 21st century* we are fighting for will be characterised by a global planned economy and a world federation of socialist republics. It will move towards the creation of *general wealth for the whole of humanity* and, in this process, state structures and classes will gradually *whiter away*, to use Marx's analogy. However, in the period of socialist revolution and in the transition period following it, when the old ruling class will try to hold on to, or to take back, power by any means, the working class must do everything necessary to win what will be a long and bitter civil war. In such a period of transition, it is clear that only the dictatorship of the proletariat and the popular masses can smash and suppress the resistance of the old ruling class. Otherwise they will smash us.

19. The *Socialism of the 21st century* we are fighting for is one where the economy is in the hands of the working class and the oppressed and one which is democratically planned. Immediately after the successful socialist revolution, the working class will socialise the banks, key financial institutions, transport and utility companies and major industries. Family enterprises and the peasant economy will remain as private property and will be integrated in a plan for economic development. In the end, however, the economy will never achieve its optimal development as long as significant parts of it remain in private hands. Of course, with regard to small scale production and property, such as peasant farms, socialisation should proceed cautiously, on the basis of voluntary agreements, and not by force as was the case with the Stalinist bureaucracy. The *Socialism of the 21st century* we are fighting

for is therefore a socialism where people own the economy together and work together. We reject the vision of a Socialism based on autonomous cooperatives. Of course, for a transitional period after the revolution, there may well be cooperatives. But we have to be aware of their inherent dangers; competition between the cooperatives would inevitably lead towards the redevelopment of a market economy and, in the end, capital accumulation and concentration and the re-emergence of classes. When there is no private ownership of the economy, "ownership" will be vested in those who produce, and those they produce for, at the appropriate level; local, regional, national, international. Anything that can be decided locally will be. Broader allocations of resources and exchanges of products will be done on a national, regional or global level. Since there will be no competitive struggle for profits, no hidden privileges for bureaucrats or experts, there will be no need for secrecy. Information about resources and decisions will be available to all. We would not have a single, monstrous, bureaucratic central plan, such as existed under Stalinism, where everything was decided in one place by a caste of privileged bureaucrats. Under real socialism, what will exist will be an ascending series of plans at all appropriate levels, each decided on after debate in a workers' and consumers' democracy. Such a democratically planned economy is not a dream as the bourgeois propagandists claim. Via modern technologies it is possible to communicate needs and necessities and to coordinate production and transport across the globe in seconds. Indeed, every modern multinational corporation works this way. But, in contrast to the capitalist corporations, we will utilise the achievements of modern technologies not for the profit of a few but for the wealth of humanity as a whole.

20. The final, and probably most important, lesson of the October Revolution is that *the working class insurrection cannot succeed without the leadership of a revolutionary party*. The October revolution could only take place because the Bolshevik party had prepared for it for one and half decades by constructing a militant, combative party. Such a party can only exist on the basis of a solid and scientific Marxist program derived from theory. It can only operate successfully if it is based on iron discipline and democratic centralism (democracy in internal debates, unity in action). Its cadre can only be steeled by regularly intervening in the class struggle and by rooting the party in the working class. It can only exist as a workers' party with a special focus on organizing of women, minorities, youth, etc. The revisionist thesis that Lenin would have thought that the reformists could lead a socialist revolution is a falsification of history. Lenin thought that, under pressure, the reformists could go further than they wanted initially. However, he understood that such forces could never lead a proletarian revolution. In fact, the failure of later revolutions has to be explained by the absence of such a Bolshevik party. Building anew such parties constitutes the chief task of revolutionaries today.

21. The October Revolution also demonstrated once more *the important role of personality in history*. Without Lenin and Trotsky, the revolution would not have taken place. Most of the Bolsheviks' Central Committee gave critical support to the popular front before Lenin arrival to Russia. In autumn many members of the Central Committee opposed Lenin demand for armed insurrection. Zinoviev and Kamenev even betrayed the party and informed Gorky that Lenin was preparing an insurrection.

22. Lenin and Trotsky always insisted that such *a revolutionary party must not exist in national isolation but can only exist as a world party*. Capitalism exists, and can only exist, on an international plane. Hence, the working class must also organize its struggle against the exploiters internationally. This is why Marx and Engels always strived for the creation of international workers' parties. This is why the Bolsheviks called for the creation of the Third International from the autumn of 1914 onwards

and finally founded it in March 1919. This is why Trotsky saw the construction of the Fourth International – after the Stalinist degeneration of the Third – as the chief task of the 1930s. This is why the RCIT identifies the building of the Fifth revolutionary International as our central task today! We call upon all revolutionary workers and youth to join us in this struggle!

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We encourage organizations and activists who share the general outlook of this document to contact us so that we can discuss working jointly for the liberation of the workers and oppressed:

The RCIT is an international revolutionary organization which unites sections and activists in 14 countries on the basis of a joint program and the organizational principles of democratic centralism (Zambia, Zimbabwe, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Yemen, Tunisia, Israel/Occupied Palestine, Turkey, Brazil, Mexico, Aotearoa/New Zealand, Britain, Germany, and Austria).

For a more extensive overview of the RCIT's viewpoints we refer those who are interested to our website www.thecommunists.net. We want to draw particular attention to our programmatic documents:

RCIT: Manifesto for Revolutionary Liberation. The Tasks of the Liberation Struggle against Decaying Capitalism (adopted by the 1st Congress of the RCIT in October 2016, <https://www.thecommunists.net/rcit-program-2016/>)

RCIT: The Revolutionary Communist Manifesto, April 2012, <https://www.thecommunists.net/rcit-manifesto/>