

VERA POLYCARPOU

The 100th Anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution

This year progressive humanity is honouring in a special way the 100th anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution, which, with its dynamism and example, shook the world, ushering a new era for Humanity; an era that was marked by the overcoming of capitalist barbarity and the beginning of the construction of socialism. The oppressed and downtrodden overcame difficulties, adversities, hardships, tragedies, and in conditions of complete disorganization brought about by the ongoing First World War overthrew the Tsarist autocracy and transformed the bourgeois democratic revolution into a socialist one.

The international significance of the Great October Socialist Revolution is indisputable. V.I. Lenin himself, speaking about the international significance of the Russian revolution, wrote in 'Left-wing communism, an infantile disorder of communism': *'... not just some, but all the essential characteristics of our revolution are of international significance in the sense of its impact on all countries. But I am not talking in this broad sense. I am speaking in the narrowest sense of the word, that is meaning with the words international significance the importance of our revolution or the historical necessity to be repeated on an international level...'* And he added: *'Of course, it would be a very big mistake to exaggerate this truth, to extend it beyond certain key characteristics of our revolution.'*

The October Revolution was not the result of some momentary act or a coincidence of circumstances. It was the result of the sum total of a series of objective and subjective preconditions that, at the given moment, the Russian proletariat under the leadership of the Bolshevik Party responded earnestly with selflessness and self-sacrifice to the demands of the times - to seize power and set forth the principle of building socialism under extremely adverse conditions.

The Great October Socialist Revolution was the result of both the uneven development of capitalism in conditions of imperialism, the shift from the beginning of the 20th century of the world's revolutionary centre to Russia to the creation precisely here of the weakest link in the imperialist chain; a link, the contradictions of which the First World War with its horrifying consequences intensified immensely, while at the same time the radicalization of Russian society was growing; a link that, to be broken, must also have had the maturing of the subjective factor, a fact that would shape the necessary 'revolutionary situation'.

For a 'revolutionary state' to develop, it is usually insufficient for *'the lower classes not to want'* to live in the old way; it is also necessary that *'the upper classes should be unable'* to live in the old way, but that it must be accompanied by a considerable increase in the masses' activity, namely *'the ability of the revolutionary class to develop mass, powerful enough, revolutionary action to crush (or significantly weaken) the old government, which even in an era of crises never falls, unless they overthrow it'*, concluded V.I. Lenin in 1915 (The Bankruptcy of the Second International).

It is not enough for the revolutionary class, however, to develop 'revolutionary actions', but it must act in an organized and conscious way. It is precisely at this point that there is still a crucial issue raised related to the role of the revolutionary vanguard, which acts however not 'from above' arrogantly, but is fully coordinated with the whole of the working class and the broader strata of the people. The vanguard, being at the head of the most decisive events, with its self-sacrifice and selflessness, gives a living example and guides the masses with which it forges and maintains unshakable ties and wins their trust.

These characteristic elements, which evolved in Russia in 1917, contributed to the overthrow of the Tyranny with the February Revolution and its transformation into a socialist one in October. In the vanguard of these world-shaking revolutionary processes was the Bolshevik Party, which guided by V.I. Lenin was able to respond to the burning issues of the time, responding to the visions and wishes of the overwhelming majority of the Russian people.

In 1917 the Russian people sought PEACE and LAND. The bourgeois democratic revolution of February was the

only one that offered the abolition of the Autocracy, but also the creation in the country of dual power - the Soviets of Representatives and the Provisional Government; a Provisional Government, which could not, or better still, did not want to meet the popular demands.

Within a period of eight months, the revolutionary processes in the country were so deep that they were increasingly radicalizing society and intensifying the pressure for an end to the Dual Power and the assumption of all power by the Soviets of the working people, soldiers and peasants.

The Revolution of October with the storming of the Winter Palace, the overthrow of the Provisional Government and simultaneous assignment of all power to the Soviets proved in practice through the deliberations of the 2nd All-Russian Congress of the Soviets of workers, soldiers and peasants that it was ready to implement the popular demands.

The first legislative act of the Soviets was the Decree on Peace – the day after the storming of the Winter Palace (October 26th/November 8th 1917), which recorded the proposal of the new Soviet power addressed to all warring peoples and their governments to begin negotiations, aiming at ending the war and the signing of a just and democratic peace.

The second legislative act of the Soviets was the Decree on Land, giving land to millions of poor and landless peasants, which was proclaimed 'social property,' that is, it now belonged to all the people.

The Third Legislative Act of the Soviets was the Decree establishing the Council of People's Commissars, which was declared to be the supreme executive power in Soviet Russia, accountable to the Congress of Soviet Representatives and revocable by it.

Therefore, the first Decree of the newly created as a result of the October Revolution of the Soviet state of workers and peasants was for Peace, through which it called upon all warring countries to conclude a ceasefire and sit down at the negotiating table; negotiations however that were to be conducted without any demand whatsoever for the annexations of territories (that is, without the conquest of foreign territories, without the forced annexation of foreign peoples) and compensations. At the same time, the abandonment of secret diplomacy was proclaimed and the desire of the new Government was expressed to struggle for the liberation of countries and the peoples from colonial oppression.

Reading the Decree on Peace today, one could argue that its content is naive because it was addressed to the imperialist warring states, calling on them to end the war and conclude peace without territorial annexations and compensations.

However, was V.I. Lenin so naive when he signed the first Soviet Decree? The very objective situation itself at the end of 1917 shows us that in Germany there was growing dissatisfaction with the prolonged war that was increasingly radicalizing German society. In addition, almost the rest of Europe was only just and barely holding back and containing the revolutionary upheavals. Gradually people began to perceive the absurdity of the war and the relation it had with super-profits for the ruling class. That's why it was no coincidence that the Decree addressed the ordinary citizen. Therefore, the Decree, I repeat, was addressed to '*all warring peoples and their Governments*'.

Consequently, the Decree on Peace was an all-European popular demand that had the utmost international significance, because along with the foreign policy moves subsequently pursued by the young Soviet state, it set as its main objective the creation of the best possible conditions for growth/development and the strengthening the socialist revolution in Russia, but also the establishment of world peace and security for the Peoples. At the same time, the Decree on Peace expressed the Soviet people's willingness to live peacefully with all other nations, while it also constituted a legal document where the effort for a broad international understanding and cooperation was expressed which represented the solid basis of Soviet foreign policy throughout the 70 year old path of its existence.

The peace-loving foreign policy of the USSR was based on the democratic principles proclaimed by the Decree on Peace, which, from the very outset of the victorious October Revolution gave a concrete form to:

- (a) the restoration and strengthening of the political and economic independence of small and economically weak countries and peoples, and
- (b) the safeguarding of the right of all the peoples of the world on their own, without any external interventions –whether direct or indirect – to choose their own form of state governance.

A policy that continued in the mid-war years, especially in the mid-1930's when the clouds of war began to gather over Europe and beyond. Since 1933, the Soviet Union made a proposal to the General Disarmament

Commission for the term 'aggression' to be defined, however the British and French-controlled League of Nations rejected the Soviet proposal because they didn't want a common front against German aggression.

Subsequently, the efforts of Soviet foreign policy to achieve a system of 'collective security', whose implementation would have at least signified in Europe the cooperation of the first socialist state - the USSR with the capitalist countries of England and France (bourgeois democracy) against fascism/Nazism- were also rejected; an effort which unfortunately for humanity did not materialize with the imperialist circles of England and France primarily responsible, who were pursuing the policy of 'appeasement' of Hitler Germany, which led to the Munich Pact (September 1938) between Great Britain, France, Germany and Italy, aiming to direct the Hitlerites towards the east.

Eventually, the anti-Hitler coalition operated with its ups and downs, even if proper consistency had not always been demonstrated, even if the collaborators in this coalition had other plans and thoughts against the USSR; thoughts expressed openly and publicly after the anti-fascist Victory of the peoples, the greatest burden of which was taken by the Soviet Union, while the Soviet people paid a heavy price in millions of dead, with the declaration of the Cold War and the pursuance of the 'atomic bomb policy' .

On the one hand, the Soviet Union is proceeding to annihilate the atomic bomb's political power by developing its own atomic arsenal, thus creating a balance of forces, even though it is based on the 'terror of a nuclear disaster'. On the other hand the country of the Soviets acts as a steadfast fighter for Peace and Security of the Peoples, and setting an example to other nations, the Supreme Soviet of the USSR voted in March 1951 the Defence of Peace Act and proclamation of propaganda in favour of war a Crime against Humanity.

It is through such concrete actions that an impetus was given to the Peace Movement, which developed and embraced all the countries all over the world; a Movement that, from its first steps, stood firm on positions of principle against war, subordination, colonial oppression and racial discrimination, which pose a threat to world peace.

The counter-revolutionary overthrows at the turn of the 1980's and 1990's of the 20th century, which led to the collapse of socialism in Europe, the dissolution of the USSR, and the restoration of capitalism in these countries were a serious setback to the development of Humanity; a setback which, in addition to the severe socio-economic negative impacts on the popular masses, have put world peace and stability in danger.

It would be an unforgivable mistake if today, under the pressure of the negative developments for socialism, we throw the foreign policy pursued on peace issues by the USSR and the socialist system after the Second World War and beyond in the dustbin; a policy that contributed to changing the balance of forces and which created favourable conditions for advancing the struggle of the peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin America to assert a better life.

Contrary to the enthusiastic declarations of various apologists of capitalism about the prevalence of a 'new international order', which supposedly was stabilizing world peace and that would lead to a reduction in armaments, a growing aggression of the US-NATO-EU Euro-Atlantic Front is being observed in violation of the principles of International Law and the Helsinki Final Act, with tactics not only promoting the destabilization and undermining of sovereign states, but also the waging of blatant military interventions and raids. Not only has NATO globalized its action, which it has done in association with the EU, but it is modernizing and expanding its arsenal, seeking to 'legitimize' its supposedly pre-emptive, military interventions.

The lack of the 'opposing pole', which was provoking the socialist system, was an encouragement to imperialism, which today, with multinational capital as its spearhead, is intensifying the processes for the control of geostrategic points in areas not only with energy reserves, within the framework of inter-imperialist competitions for the redistribution of global and regional spheres of influence.

Despite the inherent inter-imperialist contradictions and antagonisms, in most cases an increased collective aggressive activity of the ruling imperialist states is being observed, based principally on the fact of the diversification of national monopolies and their transformation or subordination to multinational capital, which, although apparently acting supra-nationally, does not however cease promoting the geostrategic interests of a minority ruling oligarchy of ruling imperialist countries.

The modern systemic crisis, which plagues capitalism demonstrates yet again the deadlocks in which this exploitative system is driving Humanity into; a crisis that, in essence - even in the developed centres of capitalism - further strengthens and widens the differences within society, impoverishes the majority of the population and accumulates the wealth generated in the hands of an increasingly shrinking economic oligarchy.

The ruling class and its political representatives are trying to overcome the crisis on the one hand through the drastic enforcement of austerity measures, the imposition of fiscal discipline, with the ongoing dismantling of the welfare state, the reduction in development spending, and finally with the loss of national sovereignty of states, which is being replaced by multinational and financial monopolies, who now have the sole control over the economic, political and social management of each separate society. On the other hand however, they are also trying to overcome the crisis by promoting new armament systems and increasing state spending in the war and arms industry, which yields untold super-profits to the military-industrial complexes. Thus, the inherent problems of capitalism, which each crisis reproduces, constantly highlight the continuity and timelessness of socialism as a superior stage in human society's development.

The International Communist and Workers Movement is fighting back in the difficult conditions of neoliberalism and capitalist deadlocks to project alternative solutions to existing and emerging problems, but to also build the perspective for Humanity's future. This is indeed a difficult task, which is even more difficult because of the manipulation of public opinion and the common people on an international, regional and local level through controlled actions, with the ruling bourgeois mass media leading the way. This is an effort which having the fulfilment of the ultimate strategic goal at its centre, that is the overcoming of capitalist anachronism, should be in a position of being implemented through effective, flexible tactics and daily action to pursue and achieve intermediate and medium-term goals directly linked to existing reality, also including the struggle against war, military weapons, for the abolition of military bases in sovereign states, the reduction and up to the abolition of spending on arms programs, an end to the interventions in the internal affairs of sovereign countries and to military operations in foreign countries.

The forces struggling for peace face an experienced and well-organized opponent who, despite its inherent contradictions, manages to act in a coordinated and collective way. This obliges the political and social forces fighting against the multinational monopolies and their political representatives to coordinate their own actions and goals at both a regional, as well as an all-European and international level, in order to stop the onslaught of neo-liberalism, which, in addition to the socio-economic negative developments, is fermenting and promoting policies against peace. The relations of mutual understanding and respect created between the peace-loving forces must be based on mutual understanding and mutual respect, without mutual exclusions and directing.

As much as we use loud and fine-sounding sloganeering, whatever action we as a communist movement take will be ineffective if we don't manage to be not only a vanguard and a leading force in the struggle to defend and expand popular and worker's gains, to preserve conditions of peace and security, but to also be a force rallying all the social strata and political forces that oppose, in one way or another, the prevailing neo-liberal order.

AKEL, all through its 90 years of life and struggles, has always placed Cyprus and its people – Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots – above all else. It has been and is a force rallying wider political and social forces in an effort to:

- fortify and strengthen the Republic of Cyprus,
- free it from the occupation and de facto partition,
- ensure its territorial integrity and,
- reunification of the people - Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots
- in conditions of peace, security and prosperity in a bizonal, bicommunal federation, a fully demilitarized state without foreign armies and military bases, with a single sovereignty, a single international personality, a single citizenship, a bridge of peace and cooperation between the peoples of the eastern Mediterranean and the Near East.

The October Revolution, apart from its profoundly social character for the liberation of the working class and wider popular strata from the barbarism of the exploitative capitalist system, is directly linked to the cause of PEACE, which ensures the unhindered development of all the peoples of the World with simultaneous respect for their choices.

Socialism and peace are identical and intertwined concepts, and Communists have to be at the forefront of the struggle for peace, attaching a deep social content to it. The struggle for peace particularly today assumes a strong anti-imperialist character and Communists, on the one hand, must not and cannot be absent from and the other hand they have an obligation and must express their solidarity with all struggling peoples because this is what the history and action of the International Communist and Workers Movement dictates.

100 years have elapsed since the victorious Socialist Revolution of October 1917 in Russia, and its universal

timeless teachings and visions that have nurtured generations and generations of people, remain unchanged, maintain their realism, timelessness and relevance, shaping consciousness today too and strengthening today the will of working people and oppressed to overthrow and overcome capitalist barbarism, to build a socialist society, for world peace to prevail.