

Our Generation of Activists Learn and Benefit from the Past

We don't throw into the dustbin
the great and arduous experiences and lessons of history
by Millet G. Morante*

Indeed debates rang out and lingered after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the East European countries. But sorry, it did not register to me the much-debated subjects were democracy and socialism but capitalism and socialism, i.e., between bourgeois and proletarian democracies. The subjects of the debates were summarized into the questions, "Were the states that collapsed socialist or capitalist? Were the communist parties in the centers of power consistent with proletarian ideology of Marxism-Leninism or have retrogressed into bureaucratic bourgeois parties?"

If we are to be objective in our studies and debates on history before and after the October 1917 Revolution we have to free ourselves of whatever biases we have for or against the leading personalities who studied, debated and integrated theory and practice in first ever effort and experiment of the proletariat at establishing its class rule and building socialism while at the same time being encircled, sabotaged, harassed and intimidated economically, politically and militarily by imperialism. Pending continuing and deepening studies and sharpened debates, we could at least, in the meantime, unite on concrete historical circumstances of the socialist experiments.

The social laboratories were not advanced capitalist countries like Germany or Britain as envisioned and desired by Marx, Engels and even by Lenin who was there until 1924. The proletariat first won political power in Russia, a backward capitalist country that was isolated from the rest of the world by Tzarism before the revolution and by imperialist encirclement after. From Russia the revolution spread to other backward countries. Together they formed later the USSR or the Soviet Union. The revolutions in Germany, Hungary and other West European countries after World War I (WWI) failed and it was commonly observed and asserted then that capitalism was able to recover or stabilize after WWI, at least temporarily, until it was engulfed in a decade long crisis called the Great Depression that broke out again in another inter-imperialist war that was World War II (WWII).

The initial efforts and experiments in building "socialism in one country" begun after the New Economic Policy (NEP) was terminated under Stalin-led Communist Party of the Soviet Union in a lingering debate against the proposition by Trotsky and the left opposition of "permanent revolution" until the outbreak of WWII and Nazi Germany's invasion of Russia rendered further and bigger difficulties. The NEP or was an adjustment to the specific conditions and circumstances of a backward capitalist Russia that was further exacerbated by the first inter-imperialist war and the ensuing civil war or counter-revolutionary war waged by imperialism and white Russians against the first

workers' state. Before the NEP commenced, under Lenin's leadership the COMINTERN was formed in 1919 as the world party of the proletariat for the world proletarian revolution. The succeeding experiments after WWII were also in backward countries—China and the East European countries. The experiments failed, but these do not spell -- socialism is doomed and capitalism is vindicated.

Studies and debates on history of proletarian revolution continue but are limited not only by available historically proven and verified data but more so by diverse objectives, outlooks and biases. Even if biases are shed off, studies and debates would be limited, tempered and disciplined by specific historical and societal circumstances of the socialist projects and experiments of the past and the present. Nevertheless the struggle of the working class in all countries continues until capitalism is gone and done away with from the face of the earth.

But the proletarian revolution would not be without the guiding light of proletarian revolutionary ideology. Marx and Engels laid its foundations. With Lenin's leadership the Bolsheviks creatively applied and integrated Marxism in the concrete practice of the first victorious proletarian revolution, albeit in a backward capitalist country. In the process Leninism became a further development of Marxism in the era marked by imperialism and in the initial project and experiment of establishing proletarian leadership and dictatorship.

The present and future generations of the world's proletariat have a world to win and a great but arduous history of struggles to draw lessons from. We are favored to be bequeathed with not only theoretical propositions but practical experiences and lessons in tactics of struggle and methods of work. We may not mechanically apply and transfer them to our own specific and historical circumstances. The soul of Marxism-Leninism is "concrete analysis of concrete conditions". We learn from both positive and negative experiences and not just drop the lessons from history as if they are worthless. We draw lessons and insights from both contending propositions, from what became dominant and applied in practice and from what was defeated in debates or paid for in blood. We can not turn blind nor view things with colored or dirty lenses. Without denial of classes and class struggles, we do even study bourgeois propositions and experiences. Let us remember the proletariat develops in contest and contradiction with the bourgeoisie, its older and chief antagonist class.

With regards the other but related topics in this main session and the workshops today we are glad and fortunate to listen and learn from comrades from Cuba and Vietnam who both have histories of victorious revolutions and struggles against imperialist domination and aggression. This is the main context of participatory people's power in their respective countries. About the autonomous villages and the specific areas of people's participation in Brazil, Venezuela and Mexico, we Filipinos should remember and be thankful that the Brazilian, Venezuelan and Mexican peoples have histories of victorious revolutions against Spanish and Portuguese colonial rules. They were able to build sovereign nations before US imperialism started subverting them. Now they are

among the Latin American peoples who are showing grit and determination in resisting and going around Yankee imperialism. #

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