

# LIBERATION

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## THE LESSONS OF OCTOBER

ON the month of October, the very seat of the martial law regime's power trembled from the most militant and daring expression of the people's struggle in the cities.

Cocksure and arrogant, the dictator Marcos announced in the last week of August that he had dismantled the "apparatus of rebellion" against his regime. Soon after, he proclaimed the holding of a referendum-plebiscite on October 16 with a guarantee of "free discussion and debate".

With the captive media's reports about the capture of Commander Dante and other leaders of the Communist Party of the Philippines, the dictator expected to demoralize the forces opposing and resisting his tyrannical rule. He was all set to stage a "grand show" in October for the delegates of the International Monetary Fund-World Bank, the source of more than \$950 million in loans for his regime in the next three years, and for the international mass media on whom depended the image of the dictatorship abroad.

But the history of October 1976 was not to be written by the Marcos fascist dictatorship.

### OCTOBER EXPLODES

THREE SUCCESSIVE DEMONSTRATIONS exploded in October, each a living manifesto of the people's hatred and condemnation of four years of martial rule.

On October 3, some 4,000 workers, urban poor, students, professionals, priests and nuns gathered at St. Paul College in Manila. They raised the fighting slogans which concentrated their stance and challenge against the regime: **MARCOS HITLER DIKTADOR TUTA! DOWN WITH MARTIAL LAW! FIGHT FOR DEMOCRACY!**

On October 10, their numbers swelled threefold, they translated their fighting slogans into bold action. Stopped by police and **harrangay** blockades as they streamed out of La Salle College into Taft Avenue, they carried on their march to Plaza Miranda by boarding jeeps, trucks and buses. There, burning with anger against the most abusive regime in the post-war history of the Filipino people, they moved to march to the very gates of Malacanang and confront the dictator himself. And when attacked by the fascist goons of the dictatorship, many of them fought back --- with truncheons seized from the police, with placards and bottles, with their own bare fists.

On October 16, they massed again at San Marcelino Church. In open defiance of the fascist troops who were encircling the area and who were ready to reenact the brutality of October 10, they dared to engage in an open act of civil disobedience --- the boycott of the dictator's referendum. Their will to fight had not been broken.



Their determination to continue the struggle was not at all diminished.

### A VICTORY IN PROPAGANDA: PROTESTS REACH MILLIONS

NEWS ABOUT THE PROTESTS IS SPREADING. In the factories, schools, communities and offices, thousands of participants and witnesses are re-living for those who were not there, the boldness, the militance, the revolutionary spirit of October. The sparks will leap even to the towns and barrios as the student-demonstrators and their friends go back to their hometowns. The underground newspapers multiply these testimonies in tens of thousands; the people eagerly read and pass them on to several others.

In this way, news of the protests against the dictatorship spreads and reaches the lives of millions of people. In this way, the experience of thousands becomes the experience of millions.

This is particularly true of protests which are held in the very center of the country's economic and political life, the very center of communications. Not only do these become the focus of national attention; these are also interpreted as reflections of the national condition. These stirrings in Greater Manila are seen as the outgrowth and concentrated expression of stirrings all over the country.

After October, who can now doubt that the Filipino masses indeed desire the overthrow of the Marcos fascist dictatorship, that they recognize it as their enemy, the source of their increasing hardship and suffering? In one brief month, under a regime which has used the most deceptive and violent methods to prevent the expression of their will, thousands upon thousands of patriotic Filipino citizens responded to the call to expose and denounce the dictatorship. So swiftly and enthusiastically did they embrace the call: DOWN WITH MARTIAL LAW! FIGHT FOR DEMOCRACY! They grasped the very essence of the dictator himself: MARCOS HITLER DIKTADOR TUTA!

But the October events stir the imagination of all freedom-loving Filipinos, not only because these are an expression of the people's anger and resistance. More than this, these inspire and draw the people to greater heights of struggle. In these very rich experiences, they derive concrete lessons in politics; they learn about the relation between themselves and the enemy more quickly, more effectively, than from a thousand books and lectures.

It is only by assessing and drawing the lessons of these experiences that the people can take a step forward in their struggle. Their spontaneous protests will not simply rise and die away but can be sharpened into deadly weapons against the dictatorship.

### THE MASSES ACT BOLDLY

FOR THOSE WHO KNEW the First Quarter Storm of 1970, the signs of revolution and of revolutionary struggle were strikes, demonstrations and street-marches.

During the first three years of martial law, these signs disappeared from the factory gates, the university campuses and the plazas. Many began to say: "The masses are apathetic, indifferent. They do not care about the loss of their civil liberties. They are afraid to fight." Only the isolated, dramatic actions of a few individuals opposing the dictatorship could be seen. They were thus looked upon as the ones who could really bring about the change that the people hoped for.



Of course, the masses did not speak out. And they could not speak out openly. Because they had no protection whatsoever from any attack the dictatorship could have launched against them. They had no wealth, no international connections, no institutions to fall back on. For them, speaking out alone would have been suicide. They had to wait until they were ready to rise as one, in a factory or in a community. Their only protection lay in their numbers, in their collective action.

But when the masses acted, they did not only speak out. In their day-to-day struggle against the capitalists for their economic needs, they already showed their militance and unity. They engaged in small, provoking actions: trooping to the courts and the labor offices, slowing down production in many creative ways. Then starting October, 1975, they waged strike after strike. They filled the plazas again with their resounding protests. They poured out into the streets and marched.

The masses showed that when they act, they can only act boldly and militantly. Not for them is the indecision of the intellectual who can afford to agonize over the delicate points of an issue. The masses are engaged in a life-and-death struggle which permits no vacillation and no hesitation. They must choose weapons which are effective. For what do they sacrifice their livelihood, their very lives, if they cannot deal the same hard blow against their enemy?

For what good would just speaking out have done? Was it to plead with the dictator? They had been doing it for years, this futile bargaining for scraps from the capitalists, the labor officials, the dictatorship. Would just speaking out, like good, respectable, middle class citizens, have spared them the harassment, the arrests, the detention, the torture? In the experiences of the workers, they know that the capitalist does not distinguish whether they act with "reasonableness" or "tact". Would it be different with the dictator, the representative and collaborator of those who were oppressing them?

Thus, when the masses acted, they went far beyond the calm and logical expectations of the intellectuals. They did not only irritate the dictatorship with petitions; they confronted the enemy face to face, confronted it with unswerving courage and determination.

Now those who doubt the masses are saying: "We are on your side. Your struggle is right and just. But what will these demonstrations achieve? You will only invite more repression. This is nothing but blind heroism!"

Do the masses only have blind courage? Why do they embrace these forms of struggle and sense their importance to the advancement of the revolution?

Let us draw out the lessons of these recent events one by one and let them serve us practical guides to our actions.

#### THE MASSES GAIN CONFIDENCE

THE MOST SIGNIFICANT EFFECT of the protests of October is that the masses have gained confidence in their own strength and have grasped the weakness of the enemy behind its armor of terror. The demonstrators proved to themselves, to their class and to the entire nation that they cannot be cowed by the threats and violence of the fascist regime.

Since it imposed a fascist dictatorship, the Marcos regime reigned as if it were a "superman" which could not be defeated. It made itself the sole arbiter of the people's destiny. It wrote its



own history in the captive media. It silenced one by one those who would challenge its authority and legitimacy.

The fascist dictatorship was so huge and the people were so small. Could they ever fight this monster?

The revolutionary movement never ceased to have faith in the masses and never stopped to arouse, mobilize and organize them to rise and struggle against the dictatorship. On the surface, nothing seemed to be happening. There is nothing dramatic about hard painstaking organizational work. The day-to-day struggle of the masses to uplift their economic welfare did not catch much attention. But here was a truly revolutionary struggle that others did not see. Within this struggle, the revolutionary mass movement built step by step an underground network amid the most intense fascist surveillance and repression, and gained the ever-increasing support of the masses.

In October 1975, the workers broke the silence of the streets and factory gates. Because the ground had been prepared, one bold militant strike was enough to ignite a class which had long been seeking an outlet for its seething anger. That bold militant strike in October was like a lightning flash. The thunder of 80 strikes and two big demonstrations (November 23 and December 6) rolled after it.

The revolutionary spirit of the masses lives! It set aflame all those who had been nursing their protest in isolation. It put to shame all those who had been content with their fine words and fancy phrases. There was an unprecedented growth in the mass movement among the workers and other oppressed sectors. Many factories, previously unreachd, were opened. A style of militant struggle was set within the working class, and it was a model which others sought to emulate.

The dictatorship answered with even greater repression. Seeking to break the backbone of these protests, it went after the leaders and cadres of the revolutionary mass movement. Those it was able to capture, it tortured with extreme cruelty, as if trying to stamp out the very spirit of revolution within their hearts. But oftentimes, the leaders could not be distinguished from the masses. They were so much a part of, they came from the people. The state hauled hundreds of workers and urban poor into its detention camps. In the period from March to July 1976 alone, more than a thousand workers were brought into these camps.

The intriguers went among the masses, saying: "Your courage has availed you nothing."

Nothing?

In October, 1976, the masses launched three big protest actions against the dictatorship. And these were qualitatively different from the protests of the year before. Then, the people were fighting for the interests of the various sectors from which they came. Now, they were united by one political goal -- the need to overthrow the Marcos fascist rule and to fight for democracy. Then, they put before the dictator certain demands. Now, they were declaring war against it.

In these protests of October, the masses said to the dictatorship: "Your terror has availed you nothing. We have come back, bigger and stronger. You can never stop us."

The October demonstrations thus teach the people that the enemy is a paper tiger and they are the ones who are truly powerful. A law of history has been concretely taught to the people: the dictator



cannot escape from the fate of all reactionaries --- to make trouble, fail, make trouble again, fail again until their final collapse. The fate of the people is also becoming clear: to struggle, fail, struggle again, fail again, struggle again until their final victory.

When the people draw out this lesson from their experiences and grasp it firmly, it becomes a material force that can change their very lives.

### THE ENEMY IS WEAK

**BUT NOT ONLY HAVE THE MASSES** proved that they are strong. They have also seen the weakness of the enemy in the city.

The dictator's fascist goons had no illusion who the demonstrators were and what they were fighting for. Yet the thousands of demonstrators were not arrested. The people pushed through with their march. The reactionary military could not use their guns.

What does this mean? Is the dictatorship getting kind-hearted? No! This simply means that the dictator Marcos cannot do what he wants all the time!

For imagine how the Filipino people would react to a massacre of citizens peacefully expressing their sentiments under the "free debate" encouraged by the dictator himself. They would begin to ask: what kind of a regime would commit such a heinous crime? Can we allow such a regime to exist even a minute longer and endanger our lives and our future? The dictator knows that the masses hate him. But he would not like to push that hatred to the point where it will be translated into revolutionary action. That is why he is afraid of a direct confrontation with the mass movement.

Not only that. The city is the center of the country's and the world's attention. Anything that happens here can not be hidden. It would be exposed very quickly to millions of citizens both here and abroad.

The masses have seen this weakness of the dictatorship. At certain times, under certain conditions, they can take advantage of the dictator's pretensions to "democracy" and "stability". They are becoming more and more sensitive to those conditions where there is room for the mass movement to advance. As their numbers grow --- from 12,000 to 50,000 to 100,000 --- they can create their own opportunities and have less and less need for the dictator's pretensions. How much more if the people decide their own destiny, if they take up arms and launch a people's war!

As a result of the October protests, many revolutionaries are now rising forward from the ranks of the masses. They have been tempered in the struggle, they are determined and are prepared to launch more vigorous mass actions. Hundreds are entering the revolutionary schools, to arm themselves with the theories and methods that will sharpen them for higher forms of struggle against the dictatorship. Thousands are willing to take up the numerous tasks in the revolutionary underground.

### PROTEST ACTIONS DRAW ALLIES

**PROTEST ACTIONS ARE EFFECTIVE** in drawing allies to side with and support the revolutionary movement.

The professionals, intellectuals, religious rank-and-file, and nationalist businessmen are allies of the revolution in the



sense that they too are suffering under martial rule and desire the overthrow of the dictatorship. They feel keenly the loss of their civil liberties and wish to fight for democracy.

The majority of these allies will certainly not side with the dictatorship. But they do not have any trust in the mass movement and sometimes, they are even afraid of it. That is why they tend to become enamored with such methods as assassination, coup d'etat, the futile bargaining for reforms. They are easily drawn into the maneuvers of the reactionaries who want to replace Marcos.

The allies can only be drawn to the side of the revolution if they feel the strength of the mass movement. In these open protest actions, they see the masses rising and fighting. They see the courage and determination of the poorest and most exploited in society. They see the masses are the ones who can really change the course of history.

The protests of October give this message to the allies: "Here is where you should give your support --- to the revolutionary mass movement. Follow our road, because this is the only way to save yourselves!"

After October, the majority of the allies are coming one, two, three steps nearer the line of revolution.

This is particularly true of allies who have gone among the masses and witnessed the new spirit, the quality of keenness that the revolutionary movement has developed within them. Many of these allies are learning that they must shake off their narrow class interests and embrace the interests of the broad masses of the people.

But there are still allies who wish to tie the masses down to their own small interests. When the masses show their own mind and launch actions without asking permission, these allies exclaim: "It is terrible. They are going too far. Are they really deciding these actions?" These allies no longer recognize in the awakened, aroused masses, the people who used to receive their dole-outs. At bottom, they still think of the masses as children who should be prodded or told what to do.

What do these kinds of allies want? Perhaps they merely want to use the masses to achieve the few changes that they wish for themselves, not the far-reaching revolutionary changes that, to the masses, are the only means to end their poverty and exploitation. If these allies are truly sincere in their desire to achieve a just, democratic society, they should not stifle or hold back the initiative of the masses.

In the unity that they forge with the masses, the allies must realize that the masses will exercise their own independence and initiative. After all, the revolution is a life-and-death issue for the masses. It is they who stand to lose the most if this struggle is not carried through to victory.

The masses will unite with these allies on a common program which is based on principles and a respect for each other's legitimate interests. Only such a unity will be strong and enduring.

#### PROTESTS WEAKEN DICTATORSHIP

DEMOCRATIC PROTEST ACTIONS also directly weaken the dictatorship.



The sign that a ruling class is weakening is when it can no longer rule in the old way. The change from a puppet regime pretending to be a bourgeois democracy to a full-blown fascist dictatorship was therefore a sign of weakness, not of strength. It meant that the existing ruling system was already unable to moderate the contradictions between the exploiting and exploited classes and assure the continuance of the semi-feudal and semi-colonial order.

In the years just before the declaration of martial law, there was a fast worsening economic crisis, the effects of which the exploiters were passing on to the people. The start of the people's war in 1969 and the rise of the revolutionary mass movement in the cities after the First Quarter Storm of 1970 heightened the contradictions even more.

The big capitalists and big landlords wanted to maintain and even increase their rates of profit. They felt threatened by the escalation of workers' strikes and peasant unrest. The U.S. imperialists, at one time, wanted to impose an oil price increase on the Filipino people. Mammoth rallies and marches prevented them.

The competition for power among the various reactionary groups also intensified, since power meant great economic advantage in a time of crisis. The wide-ranging protests against the regime of Marcos emboldened the most ambitious of these reactionary groups to desert Marcos and make plots to replace him.

With the imposition of martial rule, it was not only the masses who were suppressed. The dictator made sure that his political rivals were also put out of the way. He imprisoned those who were in a position to endanger his rule. Then, he closed one by one every peaceful avenue by which they could regain power.

These anti-Marcos reactionaries wait for the day when the Marcos regime will collapse and they will replace him. They make themselves available to any camp within the dictator's main supporter --- U.S. imperialism. They try to make the dictator appear as bad as possible to U.S. imperialism so that it will withdraw its support from him. That is why their main activity has so far been blackening the dictator's image abroad.

With the continuing protest actions in the cities and the heightening guerilla war in the countryside, these anti-Marcos reactionaries see a good opportunity to intensify their propaganda and recruitment of supporters. They would like to pose as the leaders who will save the Filipino people from the dictatorship.

But in the face of a strong and vigorous protest movement, their line is not attracting much attention. The move to call for the convening of the interim National Assembly was a flop; it did not cause a stir even among their camp of followers. More and more, the anti-Marcos reactionaries are compelled to use militant forms of struggle, to suit their reformist programs to the revolutionary sentiments of the masses, even to talk of arms. Although still unable and afraid to open an armed front against the dictatorship, they are being prodded to organize secret groups within the dictator's own power base, the AFP, in order to prepare for a coup d'etat.

This is good for the revolution. Not because we want the anti-Marcos reactionaries to come into power. But with these reactionaries actively creating trouble for the fascist regime,



particularly in the very organization which is the main component of its power, Marcos will be forced to turn less and less of his attention to the mass movement. And we will certainly seize such an opportunity to advance at an unprecedented pace. The more problems for the dictator, the better for us, for he cannot concentrate the full force of his power against us.

As protest actions and other forms of resistance to the dictatorship widen and intensify, the ranks of the local Marcos supporters will be split. Even now, they have begun to lose their arrogance that the Marcos regime will last forever.

What more if the millions of workers, urban poor, students and professionals in the cities wage general strikes, temporarily paralyzing from time to time the national economy which is the lifeblood of the regime? Will not even the supporters of the dictatorship in the bureaucracy and in the military be stricken with fear at the fate that awaits them should Marcos lose control of the situation and be overthrown? Even if they do not take the side of the revolution, their non-cooperation and inaction in times of crisis will surely be an added blow to the regime.

All these small blows gradually weaken the fascist dictatorship. As they accumulate over a long period of time, they result in a qualitative shift in the balance of strength between the dictatorship and the people. Now we are still in the stage of the strategic defensive, when the enemy's forces are strong and the people's forces are small and weak. With the building up of victories in the cities and the countryside, we will be able to reach the strategic stalemate, when the people's forces will match the enemy's forces, in strength and number. This stalemate will pass into the strategic offensive, when the people's forces, now far outnumbering the enemy forces, will deal the final death blows to the ruling system.

#### WORLD OPINION FAVORS REVOLUTION

PROTEST ACTIONS ALSO STRENGTHEN WORLD OPINION in favor of the Philippine revolution and weaken international support for the Marcos fascist dictatorship.

Why does the dictator go berserk over the unfavorable reports about his regime in the international press? Why is it necessary for him to stage grand shows on the stability and legitimacy of his regime?

For one thing, he knows that he must continue to assure his imperialist masters, particularly the funding agencies and investors, that he is doing a good job. He must guarantee the stability and legality of their interests here.

Moreover, the frequent exposures of the rottenness of his regime abroad isolate him from all the freedom-loving peoples of the world. These peoples exert great pressure on their governments to deny or lessen aid to such an inhuman and tyrannical regime as the Marcos police state. The American people, because they feel the oppression of U.S. monopoly capitalism in their own country and realize the extent of its oppression over other countries, can give the most significant help in this direction.

Favorable stories about the protest movement also draw the peoples of the world to extend direct material support to the Philippine revolution. They admire the bravery of the Filipino people in fighting for national democracy and freedom. Even as



the imperialists increase their support for the Marcos fascist dictatorship, the peoples of other countries also increase their material support to the Philippine revolution.

Right now, the dictator is spending so many millions on international propaganda that his resources are greatly drained. And he is compelled to spend even more as the tide of world public opinion turns more and more against him. In fact, this spending has become so frenetic that last October, the dictator actually spent much more on his grand show for the IMF-WB delegates than what he was able to wheedle out of them in loans and concessions. Furthermore, anti-martial law groups totally frustrated all his gimmicks; in the important newspapers abroad, the dictator did not get an inch of good publicity.

The rise of the democratic protest movement has thus triggered a chain of problems for the dictator, in addition to the ones that he is already unable to solve. Wherever he turns, he is besieged. His resources are fast being drained. His forces are being stretched from one end of the archipelago to the other. His room for maneuverability has been reduced.

The courage of the masses in launching protest actions has not been in vain. For these actions have generated even more favorable conditions for the further and faster advance of the revolutionary mass movement. Although the dictator is also creating more problems for us, the situation is changing, --- against the dictator.

We are confident and have proven that we can solve these problems for we have one thing that the dictator will never have: the support of the broad masses of the Filipino people. While the dictator, in due time, will be deserted even by his most rabid foreign and feudal supporters.

#### THE NEED FOR ARMED STRUGGLE

OUR EXPERIENCES IN THE DEMOCRATIC PROTEST MOVEMENT in the city continually teach us a basic lesson: the importance of armed struggle.

Today, the dictatorship can only use truncheons against the demonstrators. There should be no illusion that it will limit itself to this form of repression. Today, it cannot arrest the thousands of peacefully demonstrating citizens. Someday, it will no longer hesitate.

This does not mean that we should bring down the level of our struggle. This simply means that we must not be surprised. We must prepare ourselves to escalate the level of our struggle.

For the dictatorship is not using the most brutal weapons of repression in the city because it cannot stand bloodshed. It is capable of and has certainly done far worse things in the countryside. This is the regime which has perpetrated the most number of massacres among the Muslims in the South. This is the regime which has driven three million peasants out of their homes in its attempts to deprive the New People's Army of its bases. This is the regime which has been condemned all over the world for the extreme cruelty of its torture of political prisoners.

To defeat it, to overthrow it, to crush it utterly, the people must destroy the armed apparatus of the dictatorship's power. The people must raise their own army and build its strength in the countryside. For it is there that the enemy troops are scattered and where the oppressed peasantry is ever willing to take the road



of armed revolution. This armed struggle has begun, as early as 1969, when the first squads of the New People's Army were formed in the province of Tarlac. And the NPA has spread to all the important regions in the country.

Within the city, the concentrated force of the enemy does not permit us yet to engage in armed struggle as the main form of struggle. But we have learned that our role is not merely to passively wait until the people's army has reached the very fringes of Greater Manila. Through protest actions, we can develop the strength of the masses, draw the allies to the side of the revolution and weaken the dictatorship. These not only help the revolutionary mass movement in the city but also contribute to the advancement of the revolutionary armed struggle in the countryside.

The people's war in the countryside will develop faster if we are able to do these. By developing the strength of the masses, we prepare and temper thousands of revolutionaries who will join the guerilla units now operating in the mountains and in the plains. By drawing the allies to the side of the revolution, we expand the anti-fascist, anti-imperialist, anti-feudal united front and raise the broadest possible support for the armed struggle. By weakening the dictatorship, we lessen its capacity to concentrate the full force of its power and resources to destroy the guerilla zones and bases.

#### ACT WITH ALL SPEED

SO MANY THINGS CRY OUT TO BE DONE. The times are challenging every thinking and patriotic Filipino. The time for second thoughts, for vacillation, for agonized reflection, is past. Under these very excellent conditions that have opened for the revolution, any hesitation is a lost opportunity, a breathing space given to the dictatorship. It is demanded of us that we act with all speed, to mobilize all our strength and our capacities and to reach for things that were dreamed impossible before.

The excitement, the drama of October 1976 is shaking off our lethargy and our cynicism, and rousing our spirits. But though stimulated with the taste of these victories, we must remember that our struggle is a protracted one.

There will be times, like before, when immediate, dramatic results in the growth of the mass movement, in our painstaking daily work, cannot be seen. We advance step by step. Sometimes, we even take a step backward to be able to take two steps forward. Only after some time can we take great leaps forward in the revolutionary mass movement. Only when we look very deeply do we see the steady building up of strength in every retreat.

We must persevere, we must grasp firmly the lessons that history has taught us. We have faith in the masses and we are on the correct path. In the darkest of moments, we must hold on to that vision of the bright future which we have glimpsed in these recent struggles. Only then do we strengthen ourselves for the tremendous sacrifices that are asked of us. Only then will our spirit and our work be unflagging despite many difficulties.

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