

## **For Independence, Peace and Social Development**

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Dear comrades, dear friends,

It is with great pleasure that we begin this European Seminar on the Juche Idea, held here today in Helsinki. This Seminar is an opportunity not only to deepen some of the relevant themes of these ideas and to examine in their light some of the realities of our continent, but also it is an opportunity to celebrate, this year, the 40th anniversary of the founding of the European Regional Society for the Study of Juche Idea (ERSSJI).

Therefore welcome, everyone, and thanks to all of you, both those present and those participating online. I would like to express my particular gratitude to the representatives of the Korean delegation, who have honored us with their presence, and to representatives of the Korean Association of Social Scientists, who sent us a message which they are going to read. And I would like to express my special thanks to Dr Ogami Ken-ichi, Secretary General of the International Institute of the Juche Idea, who has sent us, together with his congratulatory message, a valuable contribution which will be read to you, as he is unable to attend for health reasons. On behalf of all of you, I send him our best and warm wishes for a speedy recovery.

This European Seminar is being held slightly later than the date originally scheduled to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the founding of the ERSSJI, which took place on October 20, 1985, because, as many of you know, the International Seminar was held in Pyongyang just a few weeks ago, with a very large number of delegates participating from many countries around the world—and in whose presidency I had the honour of being called to take part—alongside grand celebrations in which we had the privilege of sharing the joy of the Korean people in commemorating the 80th anniversary of the founding of the Workers' Party of Korea.

The successes achieved throughout this long time by the Korean people, led by the Workers' Party of Korea under the direction of its Leaders, have been realised by applying the Juche idea, which have provided, as an original theory, the key to understanding and inspiring also the path of other peoples towards independence and socialism, and have therefore been the basis for

interest in these ideas in many parts of the world, including Europe, where national study groups have become increasingly numerous.

For these reasons, there has been a growing need over time to create an association in Europe, as in other regions of the world, to promote the study and dissemination of these ideas at a regional level.

After meetings held in Lisbon in 1984 and in Vienna in April 1985, which highlighted the need to establish a regional institute to strengthen and coordinate the activities of national study groups, the European Regional Society for the Study of the Juche Idea was founded at a meeting held in Paris on 20 October 1985, as I said, with the participation of numerous delegates, scholars and journalists from various European countries, including France, Italy, the United Kingdom, the Federal Republic of Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Denmark, Finland, Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, Portugal, Greece and Malta.

I would like to recall that in the first Board, Edmond Jouve (professor at the University of Paris I) was elected Director-General, Michael Peristerakis (vice-chairman of the International Peace Bureau in Geneva and vice-chairman of the Greek Independent Peace Movement) and Norbert Wimmer (member of the Constitutional Drafting Committee of the Republic of Austria and dean of the Faculty of Law and Political Science, University of Innsbruck) were elected Deputies Director-General, and other personalities were elected as Directors, including Bruno Amoroso (professor at Roskilde University, Denmark) and myself (professor at the University of Rome I).

Many seminars, together with Board meetings, were subsequently organised by the ERSSJI, among which the following are particularly noteworthy: the seminar held in Moscow in June 1999, attended by delegations from 18 European countries, as well as Japan, India and the DPRK; the Seminar held in Rome in May 2007 in a large lecture hall of the “Sapienza” University of Rome I, where Keith Bennett was elected as the new Deputy Director-General and myself as the new Secretary General; another European Regional Seminar, also held in Rome in October 2017, on the theme “Independence and Peace in the Contemporary World”; and the Seminar held in Sofia in September 2019 on the theme: “Independence, Sovereignty and International Relations”.

Also amid the Covid-19 pandemic, despite the limitations, European seminars were held online, with Italy as the host country: in December 2021 on the theme “The Legacy of Kim Jong Il” on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of his death, and in February 2022 on the theme: “Kim Jong Il's Contribution to the Development and Application of Juche Idea” on the occasion of the 80th anniversary of his birth. The last European Seminar was held on the

theme “Sovereignty, Independence and New International Relations” in Sofia in September 2024, when the Board appointed Prof. Edmond Jouve as Director-General Emeritus and myself as Director-General, Juha Kieksi as Secretary-General, and Dr. Alexander Vorontsov, member of the Russian Academy of Social Sciences, as Director of the ERSSJI Board.

I can also tell you that we are already considering organising the next European Seminar, which could take place next year in a different city, yet to be decided, to demonstrate the spread of the study of the Juche idea in the European region.

Thanks to the active commitment of many researchers of the Juche idea, the ERSSJI has been very active in various fields beyond the organisation of European Seminars, lectures and other events, which have become increasingly frequent in recent years, reflecting the growing interest in various European countries.

By coordinating national and local study groups and developing relationships between researchers from different countries, the ERSSJI has also carried out a series of initiatives, including the collection and publication of the proceedings of seminars, as well as the collection and translation of some of the main texts that developed the Juche theories. This is not only in order to promote the in-depth study of these ideas and their dissemination in the European region, but also with the aim of providing tools and keys for analysing the various aspects of European reality in the light of Juche principles and, at the same time, with the aim of providing criteria for achieving the objectives to be pursued.

Looking at the achievements of the Korean people in social development on the internal level and in gaining an equal position on the international stage, it is possible to understand that objectives and methods are elucidated in Juche principles, the correct application of which has enabled the Korean people to achieve those successes and has enabled the Workers’ Party of Korea to lead the Korean people for 80 years, the longest period in history, while other socialist states in Eastern Europe have collapsed and many states are now struggling with serious crises subject to the policies of other states.

The main reasons for this are primarily related to the principle of independence and in the principle of “people first”, connected to it, which the Korean leadership applying the Juche idea has always adhered to.

In fact independence, as the fundamental principle is affirmed in the Juche idea at all levels, and like in concentric circles, starting from the independence of the individual up to affirming the independence of the people, and therefore the independence of the state.

It is very interesting to note, however, that unlike liberal doctrines, which aim to ensure the preeminence of the individual, but in practice affirming it only for the strongest ones and

denying it for all others, and similarly affirming the prevalence of the strongest peoples and states to the detriment of others, the independence of human being, according to Juche idea, can only be achieved within the community to which it belongs; which community therefore, as a people, must in turn be independent from others in order to ensure the independence of all its members; just as the independence of people, as architects of their own history, can only be achieved if the independence of the State is ensured on an equal footing with other States.

The State's independence, therefore, is the guarantee that, through the self-determination of peoples, their social and civil development can be achieved and, within this framework, true individual freedom can be realised: not according to the law of the jungle, where the strongest prevail, but according to mechanisms of solidarity and cooperation that benefit everyone and ensure a commonality of purposes.

It is clear at this point that the primary objectives must be the safeguarding of the sovereignty and independence of the State and, at the same time, the pursuit of the improvement of the welfare and living conditions of the popular masses, to which all government activity must be directed, so that the masses can identify with and support their State.

In this way the "people first" policy, which in the DPRK has put the needs of the people at foremost, has in turn closely united the Korean people around the Party and its Leader, and on the other hand the defence of the country's independence, which has guaranteed a greater level of social justice at home, has allowed the State to establish itself on the international stage as a State with which other States must cooperate in order to maintain peace.

So the Juche idea, centred on the fundamental principle of independence, is particularly important in the contemporary era, when the concept of independence has acquired an essential significance as a goal to be achieved but also as a criterion for a new international order that overturns all hegemony and subjugation.

More and more people in the world aspire today to realize their true independence, despite conditions of exploitation and subordination.

This is true also in Europe, where governments pursue anti-popular policies that take resources away from the welfare of their peoples and utilize them for rearmament and for fighting with other peoples in order to expand their domination in the name of supposed "democratic values": the very values that they themselves deny in practice by opposing the will and even the interests of their peoples, in fact with the real aim of exporting capitalism.

This is particularly what is happening today in relations with Russia, where European governments, severing long-standing economic and cultural ties, keep on fueling with a continuous escalation and against their own interests a proxy war decided by the United States

and unwanted by the peoples, even at the risk of triggering a new world war with grave dangers of destruction for the entire European continent and other regions.

It is the same unbearable and excruciating aggression that is in full view of everyone in the Middle East, where the Palestinian people have long been victims of a fierce colonial policy by Israel, which aims to expel them by all arbitrary and violent means from their territories or even to wipe them out, as happened in the United States of America with the Native American peoples; this moreover with genocidal practices that today have reached a level of barbarism probably never seen before in history, and with the complicity of Western countries, which continue to consider Israel in their likeness, as “the only democracy in the Middle East”.

It is ultimately the same aggression that imperialism always unleashes against all the peoples of the world, who do not submit to the empire, do not conform to its diktats to change their social system and, who seek their own path to independence: and here it is enough to mention only Cuba and Venezuela.

In the light of what has been recalled above, the way to put an end to all this and to establish a truly new international order can therefore find inspiration in the Juche idea’s principles, that can provide guidance for people to reach their independence and their social development, cooperating between them without exploitation and supremacy for the peace in the world.

For these objectives the ERSSJI, whose 40th founding anniversary we are celebrating today, will continue to operate, as it has done all these years, to promote the study and dissemination of the Juche idea, strengthen the relations between its researchers, in close collaboration with the International Institute of the Juche Idea and in full agreement with scholars and other regional institutes of the Juche idea, as well as the Korean Association of Social Scientists.

I am sure that the following interventions in this Seminar will bring fruitful contributions for further insights. My task here was just to make an introduction to these topics and in order not to take too much time my exposition stops now to give space to your speeches.