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THE CHARACTER OF THE CHINESE REGIME

By Daniel Roberts

(Report to the National Committee Meeting, Feb. 27, 1960)

The discussion in the National Committee which began in the spring of 1959 over the Chinese communes has now become a discussion over the character of the Chinese Communist party's regime.

That the discussion would shift onto that ground was implicit in the first writings of Comrades Swabeck and Liang on the communes, and it became explicit with their article, "The Third Chinese Revolution, the Communes and the Regime." (See Internal Bulletin, Vol. 21, No. 2, January 1960).

The different appraisals of the communes have now become subordinate to the differing appraisals of the regime. On the one hand, Comrades Swabeck and Liang's views about the communes form but a component part of their viewpoint about the regime and should be discussed with them within that context. On the other hand, differences of opinion on the communes that might still exist among those who do not accept Comrades Liang and Swabeck's views about the regime are secondary to their agreement on the question of the regime.

Again, once the question of the nature of the Chinese CP regime is posed categorically, the question of whether the Militant's treatment of Chinese developments has been "too negative" and should be made "more positive" disappears altogether.

All signed articles or editorials in the Militant dealing with China during the last year have been written in accordance with the statement on the Chinese communes adopted by the 1959 SWP Convention. This statement in turn reaffirmed the analysis of social relations in China and of the Mao regime set forth by the resolution, "The Third Chinese Revolution and Its Aftermath," first adopted by the SWP National Committee in September 1955, then ratified by the 1957 SWP National Convention. (See text of the resolution in Discussion Bulletin A-31, October 1955.)

This resolution is distinctly "positive" about the Chinese revolution and the workers' state that it brought into being. The resolution says that the fundamental social achievements of the revolution -- expropriation of landlords and capitalists, nationalization of the means of production, and planning -- are progressive and must be defended unconditionally.

But so far as the Mao regime is concerned, the 1955 resolution says it is bureaucratic and represents a fetter on the progress of the Chinese revolution. The resolution predicts -- it does not call for, but it predicts -- that a political revolution will be necessary to replace the present regime with one of workers' democracy oriented toward helping to advance the world socialist revolution.

Thus what the 1955 resolution says about the Chinese CP leaders is clearly "negative." It indicates opposition. But if it is in line with reality, as I firmly believe it is, then "negative" though our position may be toward Mao's regime, we still have a revolutionary duty to publicize it. As can be seen, the articles in the Militant on China cannot be evaluated as "negative" or "positive" as if these terms had independent meaning and as if the Militant were under instruction at all times to accentuate the "positive" and eliminate the "negative." The Militant endeavors to reflect party policy and has clearly done so in its treatment of Chinese developments.

Liang and Swabeck's real bone of contention is not that the Militant is "too negative" but that the 1955 resolution is wrong in its appraisal of social relations in China and in its assessment of the Mao regime.

They propose in effect that we abandon opposition to the regime, and extend critical support to the CP leaders. They don't want us to stop at unconditional support to the Chinese state in its fight against imperialism or against attempts at capitalist restoration. They want us to go all the way and give endorsement, though critical, to the regime in its dealings with the Chinese working people and in its overall policies.

They say that the Chinese CP has "engaged in a struggle for power by revolutionary means," that it has "departed from Stalinism," and that it has "proved itself an adequate instrument for the historic task" posed by the revolutionary crisis from 1946 to 1949.

Furthermore, they maintain, the CP leaders have tried to guide an ever-rising revolutionary wave, which has not yet spent itself. Evidently, the CP leaders have succeeded, for Swabeck and Liang say that the CP was "compelled to keep step" with the revolution.

The revolution has been moving uninterruptedly from stage to stage toward socialism, say Swabeck and Liang. The measures that have made the uninterrupted progress possible were "promoted by the regime and they are identified with the regime."

There has been no Thermidorian downturn in the revolutionary curve; no decisive backsliding.

"Democratic electoral forms" have developed in China -- especially with the advent of the communes. There is bureaucratism but not a malignant bureaucracy. The Mao regime resembles the Bolshevik regime of 1920 -- it is a workers' state with deformations in the sense that Lenin applied this definition to the Soviet state in the early years. It is not a Stalinist regime.

The Trotskyist program must consequently be one of seeking to reform the regime along more democratic lines and cannot be aimed at promoting a political revolution, say Swabeck and Liang.

Here a word of warning about the Liang-Swabeck position is imperative. In outward appearance -- the advocacy of reform rather than political revolution -- the Liang-Swabeck position is similar to that of the Trotskyist Left Opposition toward the Stalinist regime from 1923 to 1933. Yet, in its essence, the Swabeck-Liang position is totally different from the Left Opposition's reform program. For this program was motivated by opposition to the Stalinist regime. And the Trotskyists maintained their opposition even after 1928 when Stalin adopted sections of the program on industrialization and collectivization that had first been advanced by the Left Opposition and that had been fought by the Stalinist group.

Eventually, the Left Opposition's aim of reforming the CP developed into a program of political revolution, as deepening degeneration eliminated the possibilities of restoring workers' democracy through reform of the party.

Liang and Swabeck's proposals to reform the Mao regime is headed in the opposite direction. What they are proposing in essence is political reconciliation with the Chinese CP leaders.

In 1928, Trotsky justified continued opposition to Stalin on the ground that it wasn't enough that, under Stalin, industrialization and collectivization should finally have been undertaken. Who does it and how it is done -- these questions are just as important, said Trotsky.

With Liang and Swabeck, on the other hand, the fact that industrialization and collectivization have been undertaken is sufficient grounds for crediting the regime with following a revolutionary policy.

The concept animating the 1955 resolution -- that revolutionary gains in China as in the Soviet Union have been made despite the Communist party regime and its false policies -- is overthrown. Liang and Swabeck proclaim the revolution and the regime to be one. The revolution molded the party and the party molded the further course of the revolution.

We are told to hail this development and to please hold down the criticisms.

Here a question mark is posed -- one we ask Liang and Swabeck to ponder well. Are we to be partisans of the Chinese CP and opponents of the Soviet CP? Or are Khrushchev and Co. also moving with the revolutionary tide? Is the Soviet CP also being remolded by the successes of the Soviet Union?

Liang and Swabeck have not answered this question. But their method in regard to China opens the door for a reconciliation with the Khrushchev regime as well as with Mao's regime.

For, if promotion of some needed measures -- regardless of who does it, how it's done and how many harmful measures are intertwined -- is to be the criterion for judging the regime in China,

why not adopt this criterion for the Soviet Union? If Stalinism is to be defined exclusively as a product of revolutionary ebb-tide (and that is how Liang and Swabeck define it), what about Khrushchevism which operates in the same alleged epoch of revolutionary flood-tide as Maoism. Indeed, didn't Khrushchev come to power by dumping Stalinist excesses?

We must ask Liang and Swabeck to carry their analysis through to the end. They have demarcated China today from the Soviet Union of the time of Stalin's rise to power. Are we also to demarcate China today from the Soviet Union today? If so, why?

The party must know if Swabeck and Liang propose a reconciliation with Stalin's heirs in the Soviet Union as well as with Mao and Co., who have always avowed Stalin as their leader and teacher. That's not an unessential question. It goes to the heart of whether we are to remain Trotskyists or not. That is how many comrades pose the question.

Before we rush in with Swabeck and Liang to hail the Mao regime, let us re-examine the 1955 resolution. According to Swabeck and Liang all the resolution did in effect was to take Trotsky's book, The Revolution Betrayed, and to substitute Chinese names, dates and places for the corresponding Russian ones. In other words, they score the resolution as a mechanical application of our appraisal of the Soviet Union in Stalin's time to China today.

Now, this accusation is simply not valid, as a reading of the resolution will show and as anybody who recalls the 1955 plenum discussion can testify. We had something new before us. A workers' state had been created -- that appeared obvious by 1955. The bureaucratic deformations too were obvious. None of us were strangers to the history of the Chinese Communist Party. We knew it was not a revolutionary party. We knew it to be a bureaucratized, Stalinist party from as far back as 1927. Its cadres were declassed petty-bourgeois, and for nearly two decades, until after its accession to state power, the party's principal mass base was the peasantry.

This posed serious theoretical problems to us. How could a social overturn have taken place without a revolutionary party to lead it? Can Stalinists ever do anything except bring revolution to defeat? If a victorious revolution took place in China, wasn't this proof that the CP had ceased to be Stalinist? Or, on the other hand, didn't this prove that Stalinism was no longer really counter-revolutionary?

One could answer these questions (I shall not attempt to do so here) only through a painstaking review of the facts -- that is, only through a meticulous examination of how the revolution had actually unfolded and of the role the CP leadership had played in the events. When Swabeck and Liang accuse the authors of the 1955 resolution of having slapped a copy-book label on the Chinese reality, my reply to them is this: There was no copy-book label to slap on. The reality was too unprecedented to permit of simple labels being pasted on. This was admitted on all sides

during the discussion. In reality, the 1955 resolution summarized all the factual material available on the Third Chinese Revolution and drew its conclusions from that. The most valuable material extant is that supplied by the Chinese Trotskyists in articles printed in the Fourth International and in International Information bulletins in 1945-51. Swabeck and Liang quote selectively from some of these articles -- that is, they take whatever they want from them to back up their particular position, but they neglect whatever does not fit their point of view. The authors of the 1955 resolution proceeded more rigorously. They took the whole material at their disposal and derived their conclusions from it.

These conclusions can be summarized as follows: The Communist party leadership deformed the revolution but did not succeed in derailing it. The enormous revolutionary surge of the masses and the inner rottenness of the Chiang Kai-shek regime pushed the CP onto a road it had not previously envisaged and in fact onto a road it had previously barred. But the CP succeeded, nevertheless, in bureaucratizing the mass movement and in keeping the movement from breaking out of bureaucratic confines. In particular, they deliberately avoided forging a link between the peasants' movement and the workers. They never appealed for independent working class efforts. The unprecedented collapse of bourgeois rule -- beyond the capacity of imperialism to repair -- facilitated the process. American imperialism itself could not rush forces to repair the damage and when it intervened militarily against the extension of the Chinese revolution into Korea, preparatory to assaulting the Chinese revolution itself, it was stalemated.

The result of the revolution which carried the CP to power, without shattering its monolithic hold over the mass movement (though to further the revolution, the CP leaders had at times to relax their grip), was a deformed workers' state, says the 1955 resolution. The workers' state was deformed because the revolution was deformed. The Communist party was not changed into a revolutionary party (an "adequate instrument of revolutionary change.") It remained Stalinist.

Furthermore, once the revolution entered new channels of expropriating foreign and domestic capital -- and this was forced on the Mao regime by the exigencies of economic reconstruction and imperialist blockade -- Mao and Co. deliberately confined the lines of economic development to those already laid down by the Stalin regime for Russia, namely, the construction of "socialism in a single country." It was then that the Mao regime consciously patterned the Chinese development on the Russian, Stalinist development. It was the Maoists and not the authors of the 1955 resolution who introduced the similarities with what Trotsky had described and analyzed in The Revolution Betrayed. The authors of the 1955 resolution did no more than summarize the evidence on this score.

What was some of the evidence? It included a statement by the CP leaders envisaging fifty years of "socialist" construction through heavy sacrifices by the masses. This is the Stalinist

perspective of building "socialism" in a single country instead of relying on -- and promoting -- successful revolutions abroad, especially in the industrially advanced countries.

The foreign policy pursued by the Chinese CP leaders was one of "neutralizing the bourgeoisie" -- that is the perspective of "peaceful coexistence" deals with imperialism. This was most openly pursued from 1954 to 1958. But it remains the governing line for the CP even in this period when they are at odds with the Kremlin over how it is to be applied.

The 1955 resolution noted that ranks had again been introduced into the Chinese army, signifying the deliberate fostering of privileges and the elevation of a privileged caste above the population. The army is a reflection of society as a whole. Gradations of privilege in the army mean gradations in the rest of society. The resolution also cited the existence of totalitarian rule. One indication of that was the execution of Trotskyists and the crushing of the Trotskyist movement.

This last point is not a small matter. We need not be modest at all in asserting that every purge of Trotskyists is reactionary. A good indication of the character of the CP regime is its attitude towards Trotskyists -- that is, towards the fully conscious revolutionary socialists. At one point in their article, Swabeck and Liang, seeking to prove the CP regime is democratically inclined, state that the CP regime even maintains itself through a governmental coalition with other parties. ("It can also afford to have elements of a coalition still in the government," they say.) Aside from the fact that the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois parties involved are thoroughly housebroken, the question arises: Why couldn't the CP leaders form a coalition with the Chinese Trotskyists? Why did they purge them?

The Russian Bolsheviki under Lenin merged with every revolutionary-socialist grouping in 1917. They fused with Trotsky's group (The Mezhrayontsi), with a section of the Menshevik-Internationalists led by Larin, and even with many Left Socialist-Revolutionists after the coalition between the Bolsheviki and the Left S-R's, under which the Soviets seized power, was dissolved by the S-R's.

In China, on the other hand, the CP purged the most revolutionary elements. Were the Trotskyists perhaps at fault? Did their conduct imperil the revolution as had the policies of the Left S-R's after the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk? Even in their case, it should be noted that the Bolsheviki maintained the collaboration up to the time the S-R's employed individual terrorism to put their policies into effect. Did the Chinese Trotskyists turn to sabotaging the revolution or to individual terror?

The Chinese Trotskyists have thoroughly refuted any possibility that they were to blame even in part for the ruthless purges launched against their organization from 1949 to the early part of 1953. They gave their record in full at that time, conscious of the fact that they owed an accounting of their policies

and conduct to the world working class even though they were the victims of the purge.

The Trotskyists had a fairly big movement in China. It was not nearly as big as the CP, of course, or as powerful. But the Trotskyists had influence among important sections of the workers and very close ties with them, whereas the CP, because it had operated for two decades in the hinterland had relatively few influential cadres among the workers and needed badly to reknit ties with them. Had the CP really acted as a revolutionary party, it would have cemented an alliance with the Trotskyists at that point or even have proposed a fusion.

But the CCP considered these heroic revolutionaries, some of whom they had even singled out individually for praise, as a threat to their bureaucratic rule and eliminated them.

Here are excerpts from the appeal to the "international working class and revolutionists," written by five Chinese Trotskyists Jan. 28, 1953. It was printed in the October 19 Militant:

"This document is written in Shanghai and will be taken to Hong Kong at the risk of death. We hope it will be published to the whole world by our friends.

"No sooner did the Chinese Communist party overthrow the reactionary Kuomintang regime and establish the People's Government of China than several local organizations of the Chinese Trotskyist party were raided. In August 1949 most members of the Kiangsu-Chekiang Emergency Committee of our party and several other responsible comrades were arrested but were later instructed to cease political activity and released.

"Meanwhile, the CP mobilized an anti-Trotskyist campaign in two districts, Wenchow of Chekiang Province and Shunsan of Kwantung Province where the Trotskyists had a long tradition of broad activities and had considerable strength in numbers -- and arrested many of them. Some were shot on the false charge of being 'Kuomintang agents.'

"When they were bound and dragged to the execution grounds, they demanded that the signboard hung on their backs should be marked with the name 'Trotskyist,' but this just demand was denied to them. Their mouths were stuffed with cotton to prevent them from shouting at the moment of execution.

"In 1950, a new wave of similar general arrests occurred in another place (Kwangsi Province) where the Trotskyists had the most profound traditions and influence. The fate of dozens of arrested comrades is not yet known to this day....

"From December 1952 to January 1953, wholesale arrests of Trotskyists were staged throughout the country, from Peking to Canton, and from Shanghai to Chungking. These

arrests occurred at midnight of two different days, Dec. 22, 1952 and Jan. 8, 1953. Such a simultaneous action on a national scale clearly indicates that it was by no means a 'local incident,' but a planned action conducted directly by the supreme authority of the CP.

"Up to now we have not yet learned exactly how many were arrested, but there are at least a few hundred already. The victims are not limited to official members of the Trotskyist party, but include sympathizers and even those who do not have any organizational relations with the party itself except as wives and brothers of Trotskyists.

"Among the arrested, ranging them in revolutionary generations, there are old militants over 50 years of age like Cheng Chao-lin, Yun-Kwan, etc., who were leaders in the 1927 Revolution and passed a number of years of their lives in Chiang Kai-shek's prisons.

"There are those around the age of 30 who were involved in the whirlpool of political struggle during the Resistance War against Japanese imperialism. There were those who participated in the military activity of the resistance warfare (including both field battle and guerrilla wars), or risked their lives in the underground activities against Japanese imperialism.

"There are also young people of about 20 who awakened during the struggle to overthrow Chiang Kai-shek's regime in the post-war period and, like the older generations, were all active participants in this revolution.

"Among those arrested are factory workers, trade-union officers, university professors, teachers in colleges or primary schools or in the 'work of social education,' students, land-reform workers, functionaries in state financial or economic institutions.

"In the past they never lagged behind in any progressive struggles; and in recent years, they have been working consistently in their respective positions in the struggle against imperialism and the landlord-bourgeoisie, and in the projects to industrialize the country.

"In the land reform, together with peasant masses, they participated in liquidating the landlord class. In the movement against American aid to Korea, they joined ardently in the contribution campaign, offering as much as they could financially and taking part actively in all kinds of 'Against American Aid to Korea' propaganda campaigns.

"In the movement to suppress counter-revolutionaries, they fought in the battle to exterminate the remaining forces of the old regime.

"In the movement of democratic reform of factories

and mines, they have always been in the vanguard in resisting the despotism of 'feudal foremen.'

"They were active in the 'San-fan' and 'Wu-fan' campaigns. (San-fan -- Chinese abbreviation for 'against three'; the campaign against corruption, bureaucratism and wastes. 'Wu-fan' -- abbreviation for 'against five.' Besides the three targets of the 'San-fan' campaign, two more were added: theft of state property and tax evasion.)

"They resolutely opposed the corrupt elements in government institutions and supported the government in purging the bourgeois corrosion of state properties. Some even came out openly in favor of liquidating their own fathers. In the movement to eliminate illiteracy, they exerted their utmost efforts in response to the call of the government.

"Some of these revolutionary activities of the Trotskyists were even reported in the official papers and openly praised (without mentioning them as Trotskyists, of course). But all these comrades have now disappeared.

"Many of the comrades of these arrested Trotskyists died under the bayonets of the hangman Chiang Kai-shek, or spent years in prison during the period of reaction of 1928-1937. Among them were the well-known Lee Ping, Own-fan, Chen I-mo, Chan Shir, Peng Tao-tze, etc. Many died in the Resistance War against Japan, like Chen Shun-shi, member of the Central Committee of the party and a guerrilla leader in Kwangtung Province, Cheng Chi-chang, an old militant of the party, and Chao Tse-ching, a young leader in the South of China, etc.

"Still others, who spent long years in Wan Ching-wei's prisons and Chiang Kai-shek's concentration camps, died in the civil war or (like Comrade Wang and his wife in Chungking) were buried alive together with CP revolutionists on the eve of the liberation, or were assassinated by landlords and autocrats in the land-reform movement.

"Yet, today, the companions of these heroes, who consecrated their lives in revolutionary struggles, are arrested by the leadership of the present revolution -- the Chinese Communist party."

* * *

Well, that was in 1953. Has there been evidence of totalitarian rule in China since then? The period of 1956-1957 is crucial for testing all regimes in the Soviet orbit -- including the Yugoslavs, by the way, and all the leaderships of Communist parties outside the Soviet orbit. In the wake of the Khrushchev revelations at the twentieth congress of the Soviet Communist party, the Polish and Hungarian working-classes with rank-and-file Communists in the leadership sought to put an end to bureaucratic tyranny. In the showdown over the right of the working class to exercise socialist

democracy, not one of the CP leaderships aligned itself with the workers. Though differing in their degree of hypocrisy (with the Titoists playing the most hypocritical role of all) or bloodthirstiness, the leaders of all Communist parties proved themselves to be Stalinists to the core.

As for the Chinese, they put themselves at the service of the Kremlin in the drive to restore bureaucratic rule in Eastern Europe. Taking advantage of the prestige enjoyed by the Chinese Revolution throughout the Soviet world, Chou En-lai fronted for Khrushchev and visited Poland and Hungary during the spring of 1957. In Poland, he threw his weight behind Gomulka who was then beginning systematically to crack down on the workers' councils movement and the independent student youth. In Hungary, Chou threw his weight behind the Kadar regime. At the end of 1957, the Chinese took the leadership in the Kremlin's drive to reassert full dominance over all Communist parties and in attacking the Yugoslavs, who alone clung to their demands for national independence.

But that is not all. Swabeck and Liang, while admitting that the Maoists played a counter-revolutionary role in Hungary, (a damning admission, which by itself blows their praise for the Chinese CP leadership sky-high!), aver that they did not need to fear from any Hungarian-type revolutionary movement at home. This is manifestly untrue.

The twentieth congress revelations and the liberal reforms promulgated by Khrushchev had their counterpart in the Hundred Flowers policy of the Mao regime. In Mao's speech, the Chinese people were invited to criticize shortcomings of the regime; Mao himself scored Stalinist excesses of the Soviet government; and strikes were even declared tolerable. "Let a hundred flowers bloom and contend," was Mao's motto.

But just as Khrushchev's attacks on Stalin and on bureaucracy quickly led to the appearance of "rotten elements" who sought to go beyond the limits fixed by the bureaucracy, so the Hundred Flowers policy rapidly encouraged the growth of "poisonous weeds" in the form of the expression of mass discontent among workers, peasants, students and intellectuals that went far beyond what the Mao regime was prepared to put up with. The movement among the students took such organized scope that it was within an ace of involving the workers. Authorities sounded the alarm against a Hungarian-type explosion. At that point the Mao regime cracked down on the students and brought the "bloom and contend" policy to a halt.

The pages of the Chinese CP press themselves provided information about the scope of the student movement and its political character. The Militant, Oct. 7, 1957, ran a report by Mei Lei-tar, a leading Trotskyist in Hong Kong, based on the Chinese CP press accounts.

It is worth quoting at length from this article, all the more so because it will help spike an accusation made by Comrade Swabeck that the Militant never presented any substantial evidence for labelling the Mao regime "Stalinist."

"The student movement, especially, acquired such a momentum that by the beginning of June (1957), in a little more than a month, Tseng Chao-lun, the vice-minister of the Higher Education Department, and Chien Wei-chang, vice-principal of Tsingshua University in Peking admitted that 'a demonstration of students in the streets can occur any minute, and if it unites with the people, there will be a Hungarian event in China,' " writes Mei Lei-tar.

"As soon as Mao's speech on contradictions -- which launched the "bloom and contend" program -- reached the colleges, the activities began. At first, two groupings were formed among the students with opposite viewpoints, each with its own newspaper put up on the campus walls. With more and more participants, they held symposiums in the halls, in which thousands of students participated. The students demanded democracy in the schools and abolition of the party committee system, which actually runs the schools. These committees function as a secret police to investigate people's thoughts, interfere with their lives and give arbitrary orders.

"Then the students formed their own open or clandestine organizations. Tan Tien-yang, the student leader in Peking University, formed the 'Hegel and Engels Faction' and 'Hundred Flowers Association.' Wu Kai-ping, student leader of Wuchang-Hankow University, published 'Flame,' a newspaper. Militant students at Peking Teachers' University, all members of the Communist Youth League, formed the 'Bitter Medicine Association,' an allusion to the proverb that the more bitter the medicine, the better the cure -- and published 'The Voice from the Bottom.'....The members of the Communist Youth League in Tientsin Musical Institute formed the 'Frank Speech Association' and published 'Open Door.' There were so many groups formed that we cannot list them all. The biggest groupings were formed in Peking University and Wuchang-Hankow University, which grouped around Lin Hsi-ling, woman student leader of the China People's University, a college for the Communist Party cadres.

"Lin is 21 years old, a member of the Communist Youth League and a senior law student. She joined the Communist Liberation Army when she was only 13....

"Analyzing the social roots of the three abuses which the 'rectification' campaign (official drive against bureaucratism) was supposed to cure, she came to the conclusion that they are the products of the existing regime. She pointed out that 'the upper strata of Chinese society today does not coincide with the socially-owned economic base,' because the 'party and state have become a bureaucratic apparatus which governs the people without democracy.' Since the 'socially-owned economic base of our country is progressive, it is the superstructure that must be fundamentally changed.' She quoted Engels to demonstrate socialism could not be built in a single country and Lenin to show that socialism means the elimination of classes. Then she went on to prove

that, the USSR and China have not yet become socialist states.

"Lin said, 'The authentic socialist society is fully democratic. Since we don't have democracy, I call our society "socialism built on feudalism.'" She said she wanted to strive for real socialism and added, 'I don't approve of reformism but of fundamental change.' She came to this bold conclusion because she recognized that the contradictions between the bureaucratic rulers and the masses of the people were irreconcilable.

"She said: 'It is not enough for the party to launch a "rectification" campaign or adopt a measure of reforms as a concession to the people. People are not fools who can be maneuvered around. To solve the problem of China today depends only on the action of the people.'"*

*The June 30, 1957 People's Daily, leading Communist party newspaper cited Lin Hsi-ling's views interlarding attacks on her with a report of her speech on May 23 at the open-air forum at Peking University. Other excerpts than the one cited by Mei Lei-tar are to be found in P. Brune's "La Lutte des classes en Chine bureaucratique." Socialisme ou Barbarie, May-June 1958, and on p. 140 of Roderick MacFarquhar's recently published book, "The Hundred Flowers Campaign and the Chinese Intellectuals."

The "bloom and contend" policy lasted one month all told and was followed by a campaign against "rightists."

"According to a Sept. 8 Reuters dispatch," says Mei Lei-tar, three student leaders have been executed....Other leaders were sentenced to five-to-ten years in prison."

"Just as the student movement had reached the turning point from criticism to action, the Chinese Communist party scoundered the alarm by launching the 'counter-attack against the Rightists movement' and began applying murderous pressure on all critics to make them conform once again....

"So the honeymoon period in which criticism was to be tolerated is over with. It lasted a little over a month. Control over thought and speech has returned to the same condition that existed before the 'bloom-and-contend' policy. But the 'counter-attack against the Rightists movement' though still going on, can hardly expect to get any support from the masses who understand that most of the so-called 'Rightists' are real revolutionaries."

Now, this is all part of the evidence that is available as to the character of the Chinese Communist party regime. Swabeck and Liang have left it out of account in painting up the regime as one we should support.

Finally -- and this, too, has been given the silent treat-

ment by Swabeck and Liang -- we have the five-month campaign against the "rightists" that began in August 1959.

The Chinese CP papers have been filled with attacks on the opposition which is denounced in vitriolic terms. We learn that this opposition is located principally in the Communist party including its leadership and including leaders that have gone through three revolutions -- but the opposition is never allowed to state its own views. At best we have isolated quotations from them and bowdlerized descriptions of their views. It is significant, however, that in one leading editorial against the so-called "rightists," they are likened to Chen Tu-shiu, founder of the Chinese Communist party and of the Chinese Trotskyist movement. That's some "rightism"!

Chou Tse, a Trotskyist in Hong Kong, on the basis of a careful study of the Chinese Communist party press has arrived at the following conclusions regarding the campaign against the "rightists":

(1) That party members being denounced as being 'rightists' in their thinking are quite numerous....

(2) That the anti-rightist struggle and unrest has spread to the formerly stable and quiet armed forces....

(3) That the influence of the opposition is so great that Hong-qui (theoretical magazine published by the CP Central Committee) asserted recently that if the opposition is not thoroughly liquidated, it will prove impossible to carry out the general line, to develop the leap forward and to consolidate the communes.

"From the situation mentioned above, the adventuristic policy of the CCP has met general opposition, especially from the lowest stratas of the masses and from the party cadres who are closest to the masses and most susceptible to their pressure. They consider that in order to carry out socialist construction harmoniously, the CCP's ultra-leftist and adventuristic policies must be changed."

Faced by an opposition on such crucial questions as the rate of accumulation, the goal of completing the second five year plan in two years and the like, the Chinese CP tops responded not by organizing a discussion in the party, but by launching an all-out campaign to silence all dissidence and to liquidate the opposition. That is not the behavior of a tendency becoming more and more transformed in a revolutionary direction or of a regime that is moving in step with revolutionary needs. It is the behavior of a regime which oppresses the masses and collides with their needs and aspirations. It is the typical behavior of a Stalinist bureaucracy.

Swabeck and Liang are able to portray the Chinese CP leadership as evolving in a revolutionary direction only by suppressing all evidence that goes counter to this conclusion. This is really the most ominous feature of their writings on the Chinese question.

Swabeck's letter of Dec. 10, 1959 to the Chinese Trotskyist L. (Discussion Bulletin Vol. 21, No. 2) is truly outrageous. Having

started a discussion with the Hong Kong Trotskyists over how to obtain reliable information about what is going on in the People's Republic, Swabeck suddenly breaks it off and declares: "...I do not consider it fruitful to continue discussion about which information on China is most reliable. The fact is that sufficient information is available to enable a fair estimate of the overall developments. A much more important question is: How do we interpret the information?" Swabeck then berates the Chinese Trotskyists for being excessively critical, for accentuating the negative and for allowing themselves to become disoriented through factional feelings.

Hold on a moment, Comrade Swabeck! The discussion as to which information on China is most reliable is still very much in order. The Chinese Trotskyists have sources of information -- and have had these sources since the revolution began -- which it is absolutely dangerous to overlook. They receive letters from the mainland, they discuss with Chinese workers in Hong Kong who receive letters from home or go back periodically to visit their families, they study the Chinese press from all the major areas of the country. This is all first-rate information, all the more so because the unionized workers in Hong Kong are not sympathetic to Chiang Kai-shek but to the People's Republic.

Swabeck's trouble is not that he places a different interpretation on that information but that he rules it out of court. He demands that another class of reports become the sole authentic basis of information on which valid conclusions about China can be drawn. What does this consist of? (1) Eyewitness accounts by British and Canadian correspondents who don't know the language and who write only about what they have been shown. Even in their case, he suppresses the critical portions of their books, as in the case of the incidents of thought-control that repelled Gerald Clark. (2) The accounts of professional friends of New China.

In short, our appraisal of the Chinese regime is supposed to rest on the kind of "information" dispensed so voluminously in Stalin's day by the Friends of the Soviet Union. Inevitably, in such a selection, the star witness for Swabeck and Liang's position turns out to be a Stalinist hack -- for I don't know how else to characterize Peter Townsend, whose book China Phoenix Swabeck and Liang use from one end of their article to the other. He is their authority on the history of the revolution, on the agrarian transformations and on the physiognomy of the regime.

Townsend is no six-week visitor to China. He lived in China from 1941 to 1955. He learned Chinese. He is acquainted with the main Chinese CP documents. The tip-off on where he stands in relation to the Chinese CP leaders is given on page 238, where, in discussing the history of the Chinese Communist party, he serves up their stock slanders against Chen Tu-hsiu. "The Chinese Party," he writes about the period of the 1925-27 Revolution, "...had in Ch'en Tu-hsiu an autocratic leader. (In The Story of the Chinese Revolution, the British journalist, O.M. Green, not unfairly compared him to Kerensky, nauseated by 'the noise and reek of the common folk,' and instinctively 'for the old regime.')" (Emphasis in the original.) The founder of the Chinese Communist Party and

the devoted revolutionary who embraced Trotskyism after carrying out Stalin's reactionary directives and learning from experience how these played into the hands of Chiang Kai-shek and of imperialism is likened -- "not unfairly" -- to Kerensky. Who else would say this but a Stalinist hack?

I am in favor of studying everything that is available about China, including Peter Townsend's book. But I think it is absolutely impermissible in the Trotskyist movement to dismiss out of hand the information and judgments presented by the Chinese Trotskyists and accept at face value the testimony of a Stalinist apologist. Swabek's and Liang's procedure is utterly unheard of in our movement.

The bulk of the evidence shows in my opinion that the Mao regime is a Stalinist-type regime. The Maoists were Stalinists when they took power and the regime they established once events compelled them to lead an anti-capitalist revolution was a regime basically similar to that in the Soviet Union and in Eastern Europe.

The evidence also indicates that the lower ranks of the Chinese CP incorporate a significant number of cadres that are genuinely devoted to the socialist revolution and to furthering the interests of the working people. This can serve as the premise for the Chinese Trotskyists carrying through an entry-type tactic in the CP. It would certainly seem that the most fruitful work the Chinese Trotskyists can carry out today is inside the CP, by linking themselves to the lower cadres. But this does not mean reconciliation in any way with the bureaucratic leadership of the CP. A split between these and all genuinely revolutionary elements in the ranks is inevitable. The genuine Communists will need to form a new party and this means they will have to conduct a political revolution. This fundamental prognosis of the 1955 resolution, which Comrades Swabek and Liang dispute, retains all its validity.

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TROTSKYIST THEORY AND THE CHARACTER OF THE CHINESE REGIME

By Daniel Roberts

(The following article was originally designed as part of my report to National Committee Meeting, Feb. 27, 1960. Because of time limitation, I had to delete this section from the report. I am submitting it as a separate article in the internal discussion.)

In the plenum report, I stated that the 1955 resolution proceeded from a rigidly systematic and all-around examination of the facts pertaining to the revolution and its subsequent unfolding. The 1955 resolution studied reality, but did so, of course, in the light of theory developed by the Russian experience. Otherwise it would not have been a Trotskyist document. The authors of the 1955 resolution availed themselves fully of all of Trotsky's contributions. Trotsky not only provided the factual data for the Stalinist degeneration and the explanation for the specific Russian experience. He derived general laws from the specific Russian experience which are fully applicable to China and all the other economically backward countries of the world. The theory of permanent revolution which he first developed in 1905 was vastly enriched not only by the lessons of the Russian Revolution but of the Stalinist degeneration as well.

The central contradiction which confronted the isolated Soviet state and which confronts China, too, is this: The forces of production lag far behind the new property relations.

On a global scale, of course, this type of contradiction is an absurdity. It is in flagrant violation of the laws of social evolution in which the characteristic contradictions arise from the forces of production outstripping the property relations within which they have matured. Indeed, the crisis of capitalism on a world scale is the normative type of contradiction -- the capitalist property forms have become a fetter on the further development of the forces of production. The forces of production have outgrown the property forms and the national boundaries under which they initially developed. But world revolution, which will resolve this contradiction, through a continuous, uninterrupted process taken on a broad historical scale, knows ebbs as well as flows. It knows interruptions during which the progressive property forms may be isolated for varying periods of time in the most impoverished sections of the world. Hence the special contradiction confronting the socialist revolution so long as it is confined to the economically backward parts of the world.

This contradiction gives rise to all sorts of bastardized social formations that are in reality the rebirth of bourgeois and petty-bourgeois tendencies, for whose growth the soil of China is today more propitious than for the growth of genuinely socialist relations. The anti-socialist consequences of the contradiction can be mitigated by correct economic and political policies, but can be removed realistically only by the world-wide victory of socialism, which means the victory of the working class in the economically advanced countries.

(Of course, given enough time, and assuming the defeat both

of capitalist restorationist moves from outside and inside, given also successful resistance to the corrosive effects of the world capitalist economy on the economy of a workers' state in an under-developed country, the gap can be closed and the contradiction removed. This is, however, not a realistic but a utopian perspective. The enormous industrial gains of the Soviet Union notwithstanding, the relationship of forces between capitalism and workers' states isolated in economically backward surroundings is too great for the latter to prevail without the intervention of the working class in the principal capitalist lands.)

The enormous merit of the Lenin-Trotsky regime from 1917-1922 is that it sought out all the possibilities for accelerating social transformations in Russia, without ever overlooking the limitations on socialist construction imposed by the isolation of the revolution in a backward country. This two-sided approach to their domestic program flowed in turn from their perspectives of world revolution.

Guided by the policies of the Lenin-Trotsky regime, the 1955 resolution warned of a collision between the state and the peasants, for instance, because the Maoists are not prone to seek out the real revolutionary possibilities nor to look for the limitations. One needs an internationalist revolutionary outlook to pursue a correct revolutionary policy at home, and this is above all what the Maoists lack.

All wrong! say Comrades Swabeck and Liang.

"The fact is that the prophesied collision (between the state and the peasants) did not occur," they write, "while present developments point in the exact opposite direction. The reason for this is the changing reality itself: the social and economic position of the once existing 400 million individual cultivators of midget peasant plots has been decisively altered...."

"The need to unify the midget peasant plots into a socialist type of socio-economic structure, first through cooperatives, next by collectivization and finally by the communes, based on large-scale cooperative labor, was a life and death question for the peasantry, for agriculture and for society. If China was to industrialize, agriculture had to be subjected to planning....This could only be done if the farm units were sufficiently large. When the first Five Year Plan began, the reorganization of agriculture had to follow suit. Peasants' living standards gradually improved and agricultural surpluses became available for capital accumulation.

"This helped to satisfy the demand the regime was compelled to make upon the peasants. But the regime was still not able to supply the peasants with manufactured goods; mechanization of agriculture was out of the question until a sufficient industrial basis had been attained. Meanwhile, the Commune form of organization enabled local artisans to establish small industrial enterprises based on local resources and local technique. These provided better tools for local needs, and they served thus on an elementary level to bridge the time gap until manufactured goods and modern implements

could be furnished by the industry rising rapidly in the urban centers." (Emphasis added.)

It doesn't even occur to Swabek and Liang that the dangers of collision arise precisely out of the time gap and that total collectivization without manufactured goods and modern implements from the city can aggravate rather than lessen the dangers.

Their contention is that the dangers of collision flow purely from the status of the peasant as an individual proprietor. Bring him into the collective and presto-changeo, his social status has been altered. Here we come to Trotsky's profound contribution to the question, which, to be sure he made in connection with Soviet experience, but which has more general application as can be seen from the way he elucidated the problem.

Dealing with Stalin's collectivization program, Trotsky wrote in The Revolution Betrayed that: "At the present time hardly anybody would be foolish enough to repeat the twaddle of liberals to the effect that collectivization as a whole was accomplished by naked force. (Swabek and Liang who refer to the breakdown of Soviet collectivization as due solely to its forcible character, please note -- D.R.)...Now, after the expropriation of the great estates and the extreme parcellation of the land, the union of these small parcels into big tracts had become a question of life and death for the peasants, for agriculture, and for society as a whole." Page 38. (Emphasis added.)

Seemingly, Trotsky discovered for the Soviet Union what Swabek and Liang discovered for China: collectivization was imperative and impelled many peasants of their own volition into collectives. But Trotsky didn't believe that this resolved the problem or averted the danger of collision with the peasants, for he went on:

"The problem, however, is far from settled by these general historic considerations. The real possibilities of collectivization are determined, not by the depth of the impasse in the villages and not by the administrative energy of the government, but primarily by the existing productive resources -- that is, the ability of the industries to furnish large-scale agriculture with the requisite machinery. These material conditions were lacking. The collective farms were set up with an equipment suitable in the main only for small-scale farming. In these conditions an exaggeratedly swift collectivization took the character of an economic adventure." p. 38.

What is Trotsky saying? He is saying that on the one hand the state faces an imperative need to bring the entire peasantry under conditions of socialized agriculture, but that, on the other hand, this can't be done at once because the technological conditions are lacking.

What the Trotskyist Left Opposition, carrying forward the programmatic conceptions of the Lenin-Trotsky regime, advocated from 1926-28, was a forthright turn to planned industrial growth.

One of the main objectives of the industrialization program would be to supply the peasants with industrial goods and modern agricultural implements. At the same time collectivization should be begun at once and developed as fast as the development of industry permitted. The poor peasants should be organized in their own Soviets in order to check the tendency of the rich peasants to become capitalists and to oppose the regime. Agricultural laborers too should be organized for struggle in behalf of their economic demands. This entire program -- both on its industrial and agricultural side -- was in sharp conflict with the Stalin-Bucharin line of allowing industry to develop at a snail's pace and of allowing the upper strata of the peasants to enrich themselves unhindered.

When Stalin broke with Bucharin in 1928 and the bureaucracy made a 180 degree turn to industrialization and collectivization the tempo in both cases was adventuristic. The interrelation between economic development -- i.e., the production of modern agricultural implements and chemical fertilizer and the rate of collectivization -- were totally disregarded. This is what Trotsky then criticized in the Stalinist program.

But why is it wrong to take the peasants into collectives -- even without machinery -- if parcellation of the land makes the poorer peasants ready to try something new? The answer is that the peasants enter the collectives full of hope but find no genuine solution to their problem. A revolutionary regime might warn them that the benefits without modern machinery will be limited and let them determine voluntarily whether to form a collective or not or to disband a collective if the results prove indeed disappointing. The trouble in Russia and in China is that the regime pumped the poorer peasants full of promises and the CP leaders deluded themselves with the idea that total collectivization, even without machinery, would raise productivity immensely and transform the petty-bourgeois peasant into a socialist farmer. In anticipation of the higher output that collective labor was supposedly sure to bring, the exactions of the state on the peasants were drastically increased.

In his article on the communes, Peng cited that as soon as they were inaugurated, taxes on the peasants were raised "voluntarily" to 30 per cent and reserve funds to 50 per cent of the total agricultural yield, leaving 20 per cent for peasants' consumption.

In an article in the Jan.-March, 1960 China quarterly, Choh Ming-li writes: "According to the many instances reported in the mainland newspapers, in 1958 the communes were generally required to set aside, as 'accumulation,' 50 to 70 per cent of their total output, net of production and management costs. Now a survey made by Peking's State Statistical Bureau of 228 collectives in the country reveals that in 1957 consumption accounted for 39 per cent of the net output, with only 11 per cent for accumulation....It does not take much calculation to see that the net agricultural output must increase 60 per cent if consumption in 1958 was to be maintained on the same level as in 1957. Obviously the 50-70 per cent accumulation rate was decided upon in accordance with an expected increase in gross agricultural output of about 80 per cent. However, since the gross agricultural output in fact increased only 25 per cent (accord-

ing to officially revised data), if one assumes that the net output had grown at the same pace, consumption must have declined by about one-third when one-half of the net output went into accumulation. It is not surprising that the peasants became restive."

Choh Ming-li is a conservative economist. The China Quarterly features exclusively the principal bourgeois analysts of Chinese developments. That the regime took far too much from the peasants in the year the communes were formed because they expected the great leap forward to work wonders is confirmed from an unexpected quarter. In an article in the New World Review for February 1960, entitled "China's Communes Come of Age," Anna Louise Strong, a sickening apologist for the Mao regime, writes that "the farmers believed their own guesses enough to stake their future food on them, handed over to the government the 'surplus' for which they had no storage, and then found themselves reduced (in 1959) to a sweet potato diet before the next crops came in." It is subject to doubt whether the peasants set their fantastically high quotas, then handed over the fictitious 'surpluses' to the government voluntarily. But that somebody believed that "higher forms" of collectivization in themselves were a magic recipe for raising productivity is amply testified to even by Anna Louise Strong. The "somebody" in question was the Mao regime.

Thus far from collectivization and the creation of the communes averting a collision with the peasantry, the adventuristic pace -- including both the sweeping character of the collectivization program and the illusions as to the degree of productivity increases it would bring -- led to a major collision with the peasantry. The campaign against the "rightists" -- those CP cadres that urged a slower and more reasonable tempo -- testifies to that.

In addition, there are the constant adjustments and readjustments in the communes -- especially the retreat in August 1959 from the original commune set-up. The basic unit of peasant organization is again the production brigade corresponding to the pre-commune cooperatives. Individual production has also been encouraged again. A bastardized set-up -- part collective, part individual economy -- has been restored. The Chinese press last year again emphasized the need for the richer production brigades to help the poorer, indicating that differentiations among the peasantry, which the commune system was supposed to have wiped out, were again coming to the fore.

Finally, the state decreed at the beginning of this year that industry must turn its face to the peasantry and that there can be no solution of the peasant question without mechanization of agriculture and employment of modern fertilizers. Much valuable time, however, has already been lost in experimentation with social forms, as if these alone, given the low technological conditions obtaining in the country, offered any solution.

But, says Comrade Swabeck, didn't Trotsky declare in the preface to his book, The Permanent Revolution, that "The collectivization of peasant holdings is, it is understood, the most necessary

and fundamental part of the socialist transformation of society"? Yes, Trotsky said that. But this quotation, too, must be understood. That is, it must not be wrenched out of context as Comrade Swabek does. For in the very next sentence, Trotsky says: "The volume and tempo of collectivization, however, are not only determined by the government's will but, in the final analysis, by the economic factors: by the height of the country's economic level, the relationship between industry and agriculture and consequently by the technical resources of agriculture itself."

"Industrialization is the motive force of the whole newer culture," he continued, "and, by that, the only conceivable basis of socialism. In the conditions of the Soviet Union, industrialization means first of all the strengthening of the base of the proletariat as a ruling class. Simultaneously, it creates the material and technical premises for the collectivization of agriculture. The tempos of both these processes are interdependent. The proletariat is interested in the highest tempos for these processes, in so far as the new society that is to be created is thus best protected from external danger, and at the same time creates a source for systematically improving the material level of the toiling masses.

"However, the tempo that can be accomplished is limited by the whole material and cultural position of the country, by the mutual relationship between the city and village and by the most urgent needs of the masses, who can sacrifice their today for the sake of tomorrow only up to a certain point. (Trotsky's emphasis.) The best and most advantageous tempos are those which not only produce the most rapid development of industry and collectivization at the given moment, but secure the necessary resistance of the social regime, that is, first of all the strengthening of the alliance of the workers and peasants, which alone prepares the possibility of further successes.

"From this point of view, the general historical criterion by which the party and state leadership directs the development of industry as planned economy assumes decisive significance. Here two principal variants are possible: (a) the course described above toward the economic entrenchment of the proletarian dictatorship in one country until further victories of the international proletarian revolution (the viewpoint of the Left Opposition); (b) the course towards the construction of an isolated national socialist society and at that 'in the shortest historical time' (the present official viewpoint).

"These are two distinct, and in the final analysis, directly opposed theoretical conceptions of socialism. Out of these flow basically different strategy and tactics."

Trotsky then elaborated the theoretical roots of these two conceptions of socialism -- Marxist internationalism and Stalinist nationalism -- and returned to the question of socialist transformation of agriculture. "...the sharpest convulsions in the

USSR," he wrote, "are created by the fact that the present leadership tries to make a virtue out of a necessity, and out of the political isolation of the workers' state, constructs a program of an economically isolated socialist society. From this has resulted the attempt at complete socialist collectivization of peasant holdings on the basis of the pre-capitalist inventory -- a most dangerous adventure which threatens to undermine the very possibility of collaboration between the proletariat and the peasantry."

In what sense then is Trotsky's initial sentence, the one quoted by Swabeck, to be understood? Trotsky himself tells us again on page 131 of The Revolution Betrayed. "...it is not to be inferred," he writes, "that private small economy is superior to large-scale socialized economy, but that the transition from the one to the other, from barbarism to civilization, conceals many difficulties which cannot be removed by mere administrative pressure."

The central difficulty is the low technological condition of agriculture which in the last analysis can only be removed with the aid of the working class in the advanced countries. In the meantime, administrative pressure in regard to social forms arbitrarily introduced and extended, as well as in regard to backbreaking economic tempos, can imperil the revolution over and over again.

As with agriculture so with the economy as a whole. The Mao regime has since the end of 1957 driven for impossible goals and systematically violated the needs of the masses. This has introduced confusion and disorganization, as the criticism of the so-called "rightist" opposition seems to indicate. Again, we have startling confirmation of this from Anna Louise Strong. In the article already quoted, she writes that "part of the excess figure" in the grossly inflated 1958 agricultural statistics "was really produced but not gathered, since over-enthusiastic farmers left the harvest to make incredible amounts of amateur iron and steel." Again, we are entitled to doubt whether the farmers acted of their own volition. But that the bureaucratically inspired "great leap forward" campaign led to severe dislocations, and consequent collision with the working masses, is here again confirmed by one of the most shameless apologists for the Mao regime.

All these crisis points were anticipated by the 1955 resolution thanks to its correct evaluation of the Mao regime and the fact that the authors took as their theoretical guide Trotsky's broad generalizations derived from the Soviet experience. These generalizations form as much a part of Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution as does his prognosis that the bourgeois-democratic tasks in an economically backward country can be resolved only through the socialist revolution. After all, isn't rejection of the possibility of constructing socialism in a single country the hallmark of Trotskyism in the struggle against Stalinism? This rejection is a key component of the theory of uninterrupted, or permanent, revolution.

Let us listen, however, to Swabeck and Liang. We already heard from them that the Mao regime allegedly avoided collision with the peasants by going over to the forms of socialized agriculture.

This has been so successful, according to Comrades Swabeck and Liang, that they even claim the "disappearance of the peasantry as a property owning class."

Here is how they sum up the achievements of the Chinese revolution after ten years: "In agriculture the march of events proceeded from the early mutual aid groups to producers cooperatives and collectives, culminating in the socialist type of socio-economic organization -- the Communes. Unfolding side by side with industrialization, this powerful combination constitutes the motive force for the whole newer culture, while providing a material foundation for the socialist transformation of society. (Emphasis added. Whereas Trotsky saw in industrialization the "motive force for the whole newer culture" and genuine collectivization as a product of industrialization, Swabeck and Liang combine the two into a joint motive force. This is the exact opposite of Trotsky's method. -- D.R.)

"Thus, regardless of the misconceptions, empirical improvisation and opportunism of the CCP leaders, the uninterrupted development of the Chinese revolution stands out clearly and conclusively. Each new stage has been firmly anchored in the preceding one, each stage elevated society to qualitatively higher levels in which the socialist direction is unmistakable. What this signifies is a striking confirmation of the theory of permanent and continuous revolution."

This concept is radically different from Trotsky's theory of continuous revolution, because it is a theory of continuous revolution in a single -- and economically backward -- country. Its gist is the succession of social forms without corresponding technological transformation. It is also the justification for attempts at imposing impossibly rapid tempos of economic accumulation and growth. This does not differ at all -- except in name -- from the Stalinist program of constructing "socialism" in a single country. And even in applying the name "uninterrupted revolution" to what is, in essence, the Stalinist practice, Swabeck and Liang are not original. The Maoists beat them to it. They have proclaimed themselves partisans of the "uninterrupted revolution" -- in a single country.

The fundamental contradiction of China and the Soviet Union -- the disparity between the new social forms and the degree of development of the means of production -- is not only the source of perpetual crisis in the policies of the Stalin, Khrushchev and Mao regimes. It is the true source of the bureaucratic caste in these countries. (The gap between low level of means of production and highly advanced property forms is of course much smaller in the Soviet Union today than in China.)

Here we come to another major theoretical disagreement I have with Swabeck and Liang.

Speaking of the Trotskyist movement, they say:

"We have always attributed the rise of the Stalinist bureaucracy, and its crystallization into a privileged caste, to the conditions of a particular historical juncture.

Basically, its rise was due to the world situation and a special correlation of internal factors and forces. Mention need be made here only of such outstanding factors as the economic backwardness of the country and its isolation in a hostile capitalist world. Working class sacrifices, weariness from the civil war and the economic distress that followed the revolution left the road open to leadership for careerists. The necessary retreat from war communism to the New Economic Policy emboldened the petty bourgeois social strata. They became points of support for the rising party and state bureaucracy.

"International developments pushed with mighty force in the same direction....

"In this manner we interpreted the Stalinist degeneration on historical materialist grounds. For us the rise of Stalinism signified a parasitic growth which is not endowed with any quality of permanence. Such a monstrosity is not likely to be reproduced elsewhere under different historical conditions. If we maintain that this has happened in China nevertheless, we violate our own well established materialist conception of history."

Swabeck and Liang's method is simply to cite a whole series of factors leading to the Stalinist degeneration, but they do not probe these factors to determine which was primary. They lean, however, to the notion that the ebbs and flows of international revolutionary activity are decisive. In doing this they turn their back on the evolution of Trotsky's thinking, who over the years, deepened his analysis of the degeneration until he had arrived at what he believed was its most fundamental cause.

Stalinism is not simply the product of the ebb of the world revolution, he held, but had deep-seated roots in the social conditions under which the proletarian dictatorship struggled in an economically backward country. Here is what he wrote, page 105 of The Revolution Betrayed:

"We have defined the Soviet Thermidor as a triumph of the bureaucracy over the masses. We have tried to disclose the historic conditions of this triumph (in the preceding sections of the chapter entitled "The Soviet Thermidor"). The revolutionary vanguard of the proletariat was in part devoured by the administrative apparatus and gradually demoralized, in part annihilated in the civil war, and in part thrown out and crushed. The tired and disappointed masses were indifferent to what was happening on the summits. These conditions, however, important as they may have been in themselves, are inadequate to explain why the bureaucracy succeeded in raising itself above society and getting its fate firmly into its own hands. Its own will to this would in any case be inadequate; the arising of a new ruling stratum must have deep social causes. (Emphasis added.)

"The victory of the Thermidorians over the Jacobins in the eighteenth century was also aided by the weariness of the

masses and the demoralization of the leading cadres, but beneath these essentially incidental phenomena a deep organic process was taking place. The Jacobins rested upon the lower petty bourgeoisie lifted by the great wave. The revolution of the eighteenth century, however, corresponding to the course of development of the productive forces, could not but bring the great bourgeoisie to political ascendancy in the long run. The Thermidor was only one of the stages in this inevitable process."

"What similar social necessity found expression in the Soviet Thermidor?" asked Trotsky. Notice the form of the question. It was not rhetorically posed. Trotsky carried the analogy to Thermidor through rigorously to the point where he held the changing political moods of the masses to be subordinate to more deeply underlying social processes.

"The present Soviet society cannot get along without a state," he wrote on pages 111-113, "nor even -- within limits -- without a bureaucracy. But the cause of this is by no means the pitiful remnants of the past, but the mighty forces and tendencies of the present. The justification for the existence of a Soviet state as an apparatus of compulsion lies in the fact that the present transitional structure is still full of social contradictions, which in the sphere of consumption -- most close and sensitively felt by all -- are extremely tense, and forever threaten to break over into the sphere of production. The triumph of socialism cannot be called either final or irrevocable. (Trotsky's emphasis.)

"The basis of bureaucratic rule is the poverty of society in objects of consumption, with the resulting struggle of each against all. When there is enough goods in a store, the purchasers can come whenever they want to. When there is little goods, the purchasers are compelled to stand in line. When the lines are very long, it is necessary to appoint a policeman to keep order. Such is the starting point of the power of the Soviet bureaucracy. It 'knows' who is to get something and who has to wait.

"A raising of the material and cultural level ought, at first glance, to lessen the necessity of privileges, narrow the sphere of application of 'bourgeois law,' and thereby undermine the standing ground of its defenders, the bureaucracy. In reality the opposite thing has happened: the growth of the productive forces has been so far accompanied by an extreme development of all forms of inequality, privilege and advantage, and therewith of bureaucratism. That too is not accidental.

"In its first period, the Soviet regime was undoubtedly more equalitarian and less bureaucratic than now. But that was an equality of general poverty. The resources of the country were so scant that there was no opportunity to separate out from the masses of the population any broad privileged strata. At the same time the 'equalizing' character of wages, destroying personal interestedness, became

a brake upon the development of the productive forces. Soviet economy had to lift itself from its poverty to a somewhat higher level before fat deposits of privilege became possible. The present state of production is still far from guaranteeing all necessities to everybody. But it is already adequate to give significant privileges to a minority, and convert inequality into a whip for the spurring on of the majority. That is the first reason why the growth of production has so far strengthened not the socialist, but the bourgeois features of the state.

"But that is not the sole reason. Alongside the economic factor dictating capitalist methods of payment at the present stage, there operates a parallel political factor in the person of the bureaucracy itself. In its very essence it is the planter and protector of inequality. It arose in the beginning as the bourgeois organ of a workers' state. In establishing and defending the advantages of a minority, it of course draws off the cream for its own use. Nobody who has wealth to distribute ever omits himself. Thus out of a social necessity there has developed an organ which has far outgrown its socially necessary function, and become an independent factor and therewith the source of great danger for the whole social organism.

"The social meaning of the Soviet Thermidor now begins to take form before us. The poverty and cultural backwardness of the masses has again become incarnate in the malignant figure of the ruler with a great club in his hand. The deposed and abused bureaucracy, from being a servant of society, has again become its lord. On this road it has attained such a degree of social and moral alienation from the popular masses, that it cannot now permit any control over either its activities or its income."

Trotsky applied the historical-materialist method to the phenomenon of Stalinism rather than the multi-factor method touted by Swabeck and Liang as historical materialism, and he came to a conclusion opposite to theirs. Stalinism is not an exceptional phenomenon that cannot reappear under different historical conditions if what is meant by "different historical conditions" is simply a different political conjuncture of events.

The tendencies for triumphant bureaucracy will reproduce themselves no matter what the conditions are if the same social contradictions -- chiefly the disparity between the socialist property forms and the inadequate technological level which underlies the crisis of consumer goods -- are present. Powerful bureaucratic tendencies will manifest themselves in the economically backward areas of the world even under conditions of the triumph of the socialist revolution throughout the world. But in that eventuality, the rapid technological aid from the industrially advanced countries to the economically underdeveloped countries will be a powerfully mitigating tendency.

Is there then no room in this process for the operation of revolutionary consciousness? Doesn't a revolutionary upsurge, even

in an economically backward country, negate bureaucratism? Yes it does. At no time in the Soviet Union did the bureaucracy fail to arouse opposition from the working class. A struggle is ineluctably lodged between the bureaucracy and masses.

The revolutionary party allied to the masses can check bureaucratic tendencies and postpone their victory. But this requires the democratic organization of the working people, and it requires a high degree of revolutionary consciousness in the party leadership. Without that the party goes over to the bureaucratic tendencies, becomes their promoter, and the instrument for crushing the democratic rights of the masses. The masses must then forge a new instrument for themselves and this takes time.

In China, the bureaucratic, Stalinist tendency came to power right in the beginning. But because they took power at the head of a revolution -- which, they deformed bureaucratically, but could not crush -- the Chinese workers and peasants have never been as thoroughly demoralized and atomized as they were in Stalin's time in the Soviet Union. There is thus a more favorable relationship of forces between the masses and the bureaucracy than in the Soviet Union at the zenith of Stalinism. For that matter, there is now a far more favorable relation of forces between the masses and the bureaucracy in the USSR than obtained in Stalin's hey-day. But all this has not yet dislodged the bureaucracy and has not prevented it from entrenching itself in China.

The prospects of the political revolution -- an integral part of the world socialist revolution -- are distinctly better all over the Soviet bloc, including China, than in Stalin's day, thanks in large measure to the Chinese revolution. In China, and perhaps in the USSR, too, the Communist party contains many cadres who are genuinely revolutionary in their outlook and who seek to promote the interests of the masses. Furthermore, throughout the Soviet orbit, the Stalinist monolith has been shattered -- that is one indisputable product of the Chinese Revolution and the anti-Stalinist struggles after Stalin's death.

The bureaucracy is dividing along national lines -- Chinese versus Russians, Yugoslavs versus Chinese and Russians. Interbureaucratic conflicts are manifesting themselves sharply from time to time inside the various countries. In these intermural battles, a wing of the bureaucracy is bound, at one point or another, to open the door to the participation of the masses, even though this is what all of them fear now. From that point on the political revolution will become an irresistible tide.

If it should in turn rekindle the revolutionary movement in the advanced industrial countries -- where capitalist restabilization in the last decade has been a contributory factor in the rise of bureaucratism in China -- the Stalinist-type tendencies will be hurled back for a long time to come. With the establishment of a worldwide socialist order and the ensuing rapid and universal rise in the forces of production, the bureaucratic tendencies will be defeated for all time.

PLENUM REPORT -- CHINA

by Arne Swabeck

From its inception our Trotskyist tendency here in the United States faced one of the most difficult and complex problems of the epoch. In addition to the tasks imposed by the class struggle, we were confronted with the increasing degeneration of the proletarian power established by the Bolshevik revolution.

We were fortunate in having Comrade Trotsky's guidance to enable us to reach a clear theoretical comprehension of this terrible, but very real phenomenon. His guidance we do not have now when the new complexities of an opposite character have emerged and demand from us a corresponding advance in theoretical understanding.

The Chinese revolution presents a new complexity. It reproduced the creative power of the October revolution on the colossal scale of Asia. Though occurring in a backward country, with the immense difficulties that this entails, and under a leadership that originated in the Stalin school, the Chinese revolution has continued its rise to new and higher stages. Each new stage has been firmly anchored in the preceding one. New China represents a revolution in progress and development, not a degenerating revolution.

While a class struggle stalemate prevails in the metropolitan centers of the West, the victory achieved in China has catalyzed new colonial revolts; it has ended the long series of revolutionary defeats and, jointly with the general Soviet advance, it has altered the correlation of world forces to the advantage of the international revolution. The abolition of capitalist rule in one third of the globe has completely upset the world capitalist equilibrium.

In the Soviet Union the remarkable economic and cultural progress has brought about changes in the correlation of internal forces. It has strengthened the position of the working class and undermined that of the bureaucratic ruling caste. The latter was compelled to make retreats in the face of a powerful movement of new socialist consciousness heaving up from the depths of the masses. A new stage thus began in the continuing Russian revolution.

All these developments are the concrete manifestations of the process of permanent revolution which continues to assert its power despite the deformations and limitations imposed on its unfolding, at one time or another, by the ruling bureaucratic regimes.

This single process is made up of distinctly different parts. It is most evident in the course of developments as they have occurred in the Soviet Union and in China. Their fundamental essence is not at all the same; our attitude to these developments cannot simply be squeezed into identical moulds, nor can the conclusion that we draw from them be the same. Between the Moscow and Peking regimes the position of Comrade Liang and myself presents a clear line of distinction. The one cannot be equated with the other; much less can the same attitude be proposed for both. This is my answer to

the question, what is your position toward the Soviet Union and the Kremlin.

If the course of development in the Soviet Union and in China had been similar in character our attitude could be very simply defined. However, it is the fact of basic differences that pose serious problems for our party position. These problems are not merely strategical and tactical in nature, they involve questions of the highest theoretical order. They recur constantly in our interpretation of the Chinese revolution.

Most outstanding is the fact that in contrast to the degeneracy overtaking the Soviet state, the October revolution found its continuation and extension on Chinese soil. There the developments have unfolded, not in a period of revolutionary retreat such as brought the Stalinist privileged caste into being. On the contrary, the Chinese revolution has occurred in a different historical period; it is distinguished not by revolutionary retreats, but by revolutionary upheavals throughout the colonial world. As a consequence, the great source of creative power and energy generated by the Chinese revolution marks a new stage in the advance toward the socialist reconstruction of human society.

How should we distinguish between these different social phenomena -- the Stalinist degeneration of proletarian power and the continually advancing Chinese revolution? Needless to say we apply our Trotskyist theory, i.e., our Marxist theory, as an instrument of analysis. We establish certain criteria that are characteristic of events and facilitate an estimate of them. But even the most exact criteria can be only limited and provisional in nature, because they have reference to developments that are transient and changing.

Unfortunately, this is not how the Chinese revolution has been analyzed, either in our public press or the resolutions adopted. Beginning with the resolution of 1955, we have applied criteria perfectly valid for the Stalinist degeneration of the Soviet state in mechanical fashion to the distinctly different phenomenon of the rising Chinese revolution. In our subsequent treatment of events in New China these criteria have remained unchanged and rigidly fixed. If we continue along this road we run the risk of theoretical sterility if not the complete distortion of our position as a revolutionary party and the disorienting of those we aim to educate.

To this particular point I shall return later. Meanwhile, I want to make some comments on the contribution to this discussion made by Comrade Peng. (Discussion Bulletin, Vol. 21, No. 1.) I cannot regard this as a good example of how to analyze the Chinese revolution.

Comrade Peng's thesis is based on an unverified if not entirely false premise, namely that the establishment of the Communes represents forced collectivization -- that they were organized by means of coercion. This premise is unacceptable, for the simple reason that it cannot be substantiated. Nor does Peng make any effort to submit substantiating evidence. There are in his document several references on this point to an article by Mah-ki, which merely states the opinion of this Hong Kong comrade without any actual evidence.

Examples of heavy pressure from above in the forced march to organize Communes, and even of rude methods employed by excessively zealous cadres, can surely be found. But the decisive question is the character of the whole

movement. That this was basically one of willing and ready cooperation by the overwhelming majority of the peasants has been amply demonstrated. Coercion is unnecessary where people willingly cooperate. You will find facts on this score in the recent contribution to our discussion by Comrade Liang and myself. (Discussion Bulletin, Vol. 25, No. 2.)

For more conclusive evidence we need only compare this movement in China with Stalin's forced collectivization that swept the Soviet Union like a hurricane. That led to seriously reduced harvests and destruction of about half the nation's livestock while an untold number of people perished from hunger, cold, epidemic and repression. Stalin's forced collectivization brought the Soviet republic to the brink of disaster. Years had to pass before Russian agriculture could recuperate from the tragic effects.

In China we see the opposite picture. The swift rise of production, industrial and agricultural, reached proportions during 1958 that amazed the entire world, output of food grains increased about one-third over the previous year. Even this past year, 1959, food grains harvested rose another 8% in spite of the ravages of unprecedented natural disasters. Admittedly the standard of living is still distressingly low, enormous difficulties still lie ahead; but China, the land of chronic famine and homeless people, is now revolutionizing the feeding, clothing and housing of its multi-million population.

Facts such as these find confirmation even in the confusing reports of our Hong Kong comrades. A pamphlet published by this group in March 1959, entitled, "Eyewitness Report of the Communal Rural Areas," featured the following statement:

"After Communization, the starvation which existed to a great extent under Chiang's regime, and in certain areas in the first few years after liberation, has disappeared."

Where Stalin's collectivization was carried to completion suddenly and violently in the teeth of relentless peasant resistance, collectivization in China was developed over an extended period, primarily by means of persuasion. It began in 1951 with a rudimentary form of cooperation, unfolding organically to higher stages that culminated in the Communes in 1958. At each new stage the peasants improved their living standards and the nation made gains, providing a powerful impulse to further advance.

In view of such evidence, I think it is in order to repeat here that for historical materialists this economic yardstick is the basic measure of progress.

Recognition by us of the basic characteristics and the results attained by the transformation in the countryside accord both with our historical materialist approach and with the actual facts of life.

Unfortunately, our press has been treating the Chinese revolution as some kind of abstraction -- not as a flesh-and-blood transformation of society. In so far as we have treated it concretely, we have been doing so mainly -- almost exclusively -- as critics of the Peking regime. If our role of partisans of the revolution is to have more than a mere ritualistic meaning, this line must be changed. We must extol the revolution in the concrete, as a living and developing reality, by reporting and praising its achievements,

holding it up to the American workers as an example of what a great revolution means in terms of economic and social progress. The present line of our press, if we continue to pursue it, can only isolate us from the living current of events and earn for us the unenviable title of sectarians.

Turning to another aspect of this question, I notice that Peng does present evidence of serious shortcomings, waste, peasant opposition and sabotage. Examples of opposition and sabotage are mostly those of rich and upper middle peasants, though they infect also other social layers. These examples illustrate, on the one hand, the great difficulties of socialist reconstruction in a backward agrarian society. On the other hand, they exemplify the nature of the class struggle still prevailing in revolutionary China.

These considerations seem to escape Comrade Peng's attention, for he speaks derisively about the poor peasants raising "both hands" in favor of the Communes. The real point is that the poor peasants, who make up about 70% of the rural population, took the lead in every progressive development in the countryside. From the inception they were encouraged by the regime to do so. Redistribution of the land could have been done for them. The landlords could have been summarily dispossessed by the armed forces, or on the initiative of the cadres. This would have merely loosed the peasant's bonds: it would not have cut them. The peasants would have remained victims of passive resignation and superstitious fears. The problem was to arouse their consciousness and self-confidence so that they might "spit out their bitterness."

In practically every description of these events we see the cadres -- as they were instructed -- persuading the peasants, and predominantly the poor peasants, to do the job themselves, to get rid of the landlords and conquer their own freedom. Thus they got a sense of their own strength. Once mobilized this elemental force was irresistible. The poor peasants formed the bone and tissue of the revolution. Their actions gave it its tremendous power and sweep.

Similarly in establishing cooperatives, and later the Communes, the poor peasants took the lead. In most cases today they make up the committees of administration elected by the members of the Communes. Resistance or reluctance to join came primarily from the rich or upper middle peasants. And so, in these struggles in the countryside the Communist Party regime pursued a course based on the poor peasants. In other words, it followed Lenin's policy, not Stalin's.

Naturally we do not attribute the great economic and cultural progress, as Comrade Peng seems to infer, entirely to the Commune form of organization. If such an impression was made in this discussion by Comrade Liang and myself, it was unintended. We have consistently treated the rise of the Communes as the natural and logical culmination of the preceding stages. The economic and cultural achievements recorded are due, of course, to the whole process of revolutionary advance.

But to Comrade Peng, which form of rural organization is the most progressive does not make any difference, for he condemns both the cooperatives and the Communes. To make sure of no misunderstanding on this score, Peng declares:

"We are justified in saying, therefore, that the cooperative movement in 1955 and the general establishment of people's Communes in September of 1958

were dictated not by the interests of the farmers or workers but by the interests of the bureaucracy ... (the Communes are) only an effective instrument for the CCP to exploit and control the peasants."

By what strange logic, or fact, this conclusion could have any validity is difficult to say. The term, as well as the actuality, of exploitation is derived from capitalist society, where one social class works for the benefit and enrichment of another social class which appropriates surplus value by virtue of its ownership of the means of production.

China is different. It is denied access to the resources of world economy and outside of assistance from the Soviet Union, it is compelled to rely on internal accumulation for the capital necessary to industrialize. A good part, if not a major part, of this must come out of surpluses produced in agriculture. We may call it primitive socialist accumulation, such as Trotsky foresaw as a necessity for the Soviet Union in his demands for industrialization and economic planning. But this internal accumulation occurs on the foundation of social ownership of the means of production in industry and collective ownership of the land. Under such conditions it is not permissible to speak of exploitation.

Have the measures taken toward the socialist reconstruction established the necessary proportionality between the various sectors of the economy or created harmonious social relations? Of course, not yet! Have these measures enabled, so far, an easing of the backbreaking toil involved in the grim battle against nature and the effort to lift Chinese agriculture up to a level of modern mechanization? No! For this an abundance of the material requirements is necessary.

The important point is that the foundation for socialist reconstruction is firmly laid; its further implementation is provided by the actions of the toiling masses on the farms and in the factories. This is the living reality of the revolution; but this reality is entirely absent from the pages of Comrade Peng's document. There is no recognition of the fact that the people not only welcomed but demanded, and themselves undertook, the most radical reorganization of social and economic life.

The mass movement unleashed by the revolution could not be halted in mid-passage; it insisted on going all the way to a complete uprooting of bourgeois property in city and village. Trotsky foresaw that the third Chinese revolution would do that. The least we can do is to recognize it, now that it has become a fact.

Judging, however, by the negative approach of the Militant some comrades do not yet appreciate the real essence of the revolution. The party press fails to make it clear that we are genuine partisans of revolutionary China. Some of the articles by Comrade Roberts acknowledge certain progressive features, such as the large scale mobilization of labor, great public works and increased production, thus making capital available for industrialization. But what the Communes accomplished is summarized to mean merely a restoration of China's traditional farming methods. Mobilization of labor for public works is not new, we are told. Chinese agriculture always employed such methods. They date back to the periodic levies initiated by the ruling dynasty 40 centuries ago.

What is this but the kind of interpretation for which Marx chided the vulgar economists: "A definite social relation between men assumes in their eyes the fantastic form of a relation between things." Thus to the author of the Militant articles the significance of the Communes seems to be manifested exclusively as a relationship between things. The fundamental change wrought in the social relations of men seems to escape him entirely. Yet it is this aspect of the developments in China which, for Marxists, is of supreme importance.

In the first place, labor mobilizations of the past centuries for public works were by means of conscription imposed on the peasants and benefitting primarily the large landholders. The present mobilizations are those of voluntary cooperative labor, benefitting the peasants and advancing the country further along the road of socialist reconstruction. In the second place, the basic feature of peasant life, the very elements that make a peasant what he is, are disappearing because he is no longer compelled to subsist on a midget farm plot. All land is collectively owned by the Communes, which the peasants have entered as wage workers.

This momentous transformation of social relations in the countryside was achieved first, in part, by the cooperatives, and brought to a higher stage by the Communes. Precisely in this is to be found the real measure of the progressive character of the Communes, for it signifies the disappearance of the peasantry as a property owning class.

For an agricultural society long condemned to the backwardness of archaic relations these are radical developments indeed. Without them China would be unable to advance to its socialist destiny. I am sure this is what Trotsky had in mind when he wrote in the preface to the American edition of The Permanent Revolution: "The collectivization of peasant holdings is, it is understood, the most essential and fundamental part of the socialist transformation of society."

Certainly, these decisive aspects of the continuing Chinese revolution should form an important part of our analysis. Recognition of these basic features does not imply any illusion that peasant individualist tendencies or private property urges disappear overnight. They linger along with other contradictions, especially during this early stage of transition from capitalism to socialism.

Such psychological hangovers will disappear as the altered social and economic conditions make greater advantages available. At any rate, the younger generation is not likely to be fettered by petty-bourgeois ideas of private property; and youth is the driving force in the New China.

The important role of the peasantry in the civil war and the seizure of power by the CCP is well known, but there was more active worker participation than is commonly believed. Today the urban proletariat is considered the avant-garde. The socialist future is in its hands, for that future depends on industrialization. Side by side with industrial expansion, the proletariat will grow numerically and qualitatively. The effective pooling of the immense labor force, in agriculture, on the construction sites and in the industrial plants of New China is making a living reality of Marx's dictum: "Of all the instruments of production, the greatest productive power is the revolutionary class itself."

I shall not go into the conditions of the workers. I will merely remind you that although the Peking regime borrowed from Stalin the idea, "From each according to his ability, to each according to his work," there is no evidence that the extreme inequalities, which still persist in the Soviet Union, have been reproduced in China. Accounts of Chinese Trotskyists, appearing in our magazine, have stressed efforts by the regime to assure the leading role of the proletariat and to protect its interests.

In historical importance the Chinese revolution ranks with the Russian revolution of 1917. The process of development, which differs basically from the Stalinist degeneracy inflicted upon the Soviet state, constitutes an acid test of understanding, attitude and position for the working class in general and for the revolutionary party in particular.

The Stalinist degeneration we interpreted on historical materialist grounds. For us it signified a parasitic growth which is not endowed with any quality of permanence; nor was it likely to be reproduced elsewhere under different historical conditions. If we maintain that this has happened in China nevertheless, we violate the materialist conception of history.

This is precisely what is wrong with our so-called basic position. Instead of viewing the Chinese revolution as a continuation and extension of the Russian revolution of 1917, it has been equated with Stalinism. Our 1955 resolution predicts that the "insoluble contradictions which characterize the USSR, and which renders the regime that of permanent crisis, is now being reproduced on Chinese soil." The editor of the Militant, replying to Comrade Liang's suggestion to feature some positive aspects of the Chinese revolution, says: "From the party-building viewpoint it is far more productive to anticipate the crises that tear at Stalinism by carefully following the stresses and contradictions that eventually precipitate the crises." Declarations in the 1955 resolution, that in China the "Stalinist bureaucracy has entrenched itself as an uncontrolled caste, alien to socialism," etc., have been repeated and exaggerated in the Dan Roberts articles in the paper. Judging the Chinese revolution by such criteria, the result, as could be expected, is that even the achievements recorded must, under Stalinist leadership, turn out to be fallacious, or certainly subject to doubts and criticism.

When Trotsky characterized the Stalin bureaucracy as a privileged caste, alien to socialism, he proved the charge to the hilt; and while these features have since been somewhat modified under Khrushchev, there is plenty of evidence still of the basic tendency. For the flat assertions equating Mao's regime with Stalin's no evidence whatever is submitted. The equation is simply derived, a priori, from certain preconceived notions.

However, to apply Trotsky's exact delineation of Stalin's rule in mechanical fashion to the Peking regime is entirely out of relation to time and circumstance. Not only is it contrary to political logic and to facts, but it incurs the consequence of changing Trotskyist theory from an instrument of analysis into a collection of ritualistic formulas. The materialist principle and the dialectical method that constitute the heart of Marxism go out the window.

The character of the Peking regime can be determined only by an objective examination of all the basic factors and forces that condition its being including its own position and actions in relation to these factors and forces. Between the process of revolution and the regime there is an

interacting relationship. The regime assumes its leading role in given conditioning surroundings and on the basis of existing relations. While it becomes an objective part of the revolutionary process, it is at the same time, subject to the laws of revolutionary development. But through all these interwoven threads the revolution itself governs and conditions the character of the regime.

Just as the Stalinist regime was conditioned in its rise and development by the factor of revolutionary retreat, so the Mao regime has been conditioned by the distinctive factor of uninterrupted revolutionary advance.

True, the Chinese Communist Party leadership originated in the Stalin school. But it engaged in the struggle for power and established its regime by revolutionary means, through civil war and in disregard of Stalin's policy. By this action the CCP ceased to be a Stalinist Party in the properly accepted sense of the term and proved itself an adequate instrument for the historical task.

It is an established fact that the CCP led the victorious struggle that overthrew the capitalist system and initiated the measures necessary for the socialist reorganization of society. If we insist that nevertheless it is still a Stalinist party, then the question arises: In what consists the superiority of a revolutionary party? Failure to correctly estimate the CCP compels one to play down the real essence of the revolution, if not to deny it altogether. It is high time for us to put our political house in order on the Chinese question.

There have been, and still are today, certain similarities between the two regimes -- Peking and Moscow. But this does not warrant the assumption that the two are identical. The differences are far greater than the similarities and these are decisive for a correct appraisal of the Peking regime.

Before taking power the CCP followed a zig-zag course, alternating between class conciliation and class struggle policies and actions. After taking power, the CCP did not at first go beyond the bourgeois-democratic tasks. However, when facing imperialist intervention in Korea and economic blockade, combined with growing internal mass pressure, the regime was compelled to turn to measures of a distinctly socialist character.

That bureaucratism exists under highly centralized Communist Party rule need not be doubted. But this cannot justify the assumption of rule by a privileged caste, alien to socialism, in the sense that we have always understood it -- a hardened social formation of a parasitic nature, crystallized in a period of revolutionary retreat and concerned primarily with the protection of its own powers and privileges. There is no evidence for such an assumption; nor is there any evidence of Stalinist-type purges or party strangulation. The examples cited by Comrade Roberts of conflicts, suppression of student demonstration, etc., in 1957, are based on one-sided and unreliable reports. When the whole story is told, these events will show quite different characteristics.

Comrade Roberts reminded us about the murdered Chinese Trotskyists. This we have known for a good many years. We had reports that Trotskyists were physically destroyed at the time of the civil war in 1947 and 1949. For this we held the Communist Party leaders responsible. We had information of

widespread arrests of Trotskyists in late '52 and early '53 during the final stage of the Korean war. However, if these questions are brought up now in order to influence our attitude toward the Chinese revolution and its regime, that would be a serious mistake. Since the Peking regime was established as the ruling power it has not pursued the policy of physical annihilation of working class opponents.

With Stalin it was quite different. His rise to power could be assured and further consolidated only by the physical destruction of working class political opponents; and this he made a deliberate and premeditated policy. As early as 1928 Trotskyists were murdered. The number of victims increased year by year. Some Left Oppositionists in the USSR insisted then that it was necessary to call for the overthrow of the regime. Trotsky disagreed, and held fast to the program of reform until the 1933 Comintern debacle in Germany. In other words, Trotsky applied fundamental criteria in determining his attitude to the regime. We can well afford to follow his example.

We ought to be aware that in China the rapidly unfolding revolution, which conditioned the development of the regime, did not permit the consolidation of a privileged caste. The dialectical relation between party and class compelled the regime to keep in step with the powerful dynamic unleashed by the revolution. Riding a constantly rising revolutionary wave, as any objective examination will show, the regime also provided leadership and guidance. Aside from the early limitation that I have mentioned, it promoted the essential measures for the socialist reconstruction of society.

The Chinese Communist Party regime, erroneously said to be crisis-ridden has proved so far to be the most stable regime in the world. Serious differences may exist, even in the very top circles, of how to proceed most effectively with the difficult tasks of socialist reorganization; but according to the weight of evidence, the regime enjoys the support of the great majority of the population. This should be regarded as a decisive consideration.

We must support the basic course toward socialist reorganization, and support it unconditionally. Naturally we must be critical of bureaucratic manifestations and opportunistic class conciliation policies. From the example of the Bolsheviks we know that the answer to bureaucratism is the increasing participation in democratic control of the government, the economy and all phases of national life, by the masses of the working people.

It is not correct for us to project the idea of a political revolution in China for the simple reason that the Peking regime is not a Stalinist type regime hindering the country's advance. That idea would be regarded by the Chinese masses as counter-revolutionary; and it could not be justified. Rather it must be our task, as genuine partisans of the Chinese revolution, to emphasize demands for the specific democratic measures without which the road to socialism cannot be assured. We should accept the idea that in China such measures can be attained by means of reform.

A complete re-evaluation of what is called "our present basic position" as contained in the resolution of 1955 is essential. The resolution does not correctly describe the actual course of events and is out of harmony with changing reality. The constantly advancing Chinese revolution clearly indicates both what is new and what has been overthrown in "our present basic position." The consequent political and theoretical conclusions must be drawn to the full.

We acknowledge the necessity, always recognized among Marxists, for a continued implementation and development of our theoretical position. We test our theory against the facts of life, and not the other way around. This is a well established part of our methodology. If we agree, as we must, that reality is ever-changing and always manifested concretely, then our thinking must reflect these characteristics. Only thus can we be reasonably sure of a correct position.

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