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FOR NC INFORMATION:

[The following is being circulated among National Committee members at the request of Comrade Arne Swabeck.]

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To National Committee members at the plenum November 18, 19, and 20.

Dear Comrades:

With problems of the world movement on the plenum agenda, I assume that your discussion will devote particular attention, as it should, to developments that are distinctly new in character. Most important among these is unquestionably the socialist cultural revolution now unfolding in China. And the conclusion that you draw from your discussion of this question will constitute a serious test of the party's understanding of the fundamental problems of the proletarian revolution.

Since I am unable to attend the plenum in person I avail myself of the democratic privilege of submitting my views in writing as a contribution to your discussion.

Arne Swabeck

September 28, 1966

## THE SOCIALIST CULTURAL REVOLUTION IN CHINA

The socialist cultural revolution in China is a movement of vast proportions, determined to uproot all remnants of feudal and bourgeois ideology and use the new ideas, customs, habits and motivations of the proletariat to change the mental outlook of the whole society. It started out from the basic Marxist concept of revolution as an uninterrupted process, which must be carried forward ever more widely and deeply on all fronts. This is an entirely new and monumental historical development, the lessons of which need to be assimilated by Marxists everywhere.

Some of these lessons can now be indicated.

The proletarian revolution in an economically backward country faces certain tasks that are decisive in character. These can be described roughly as follows: (1) To replace the bourgeois state powers with that of the proletariat, acting in close alliance with the peasantry, and establishing the dictatorship of the proletariat. (2) To transform the economic foundation and create the necessary socialist structure. (3) To remold the consciousness of the people so they may prove capable of preparing the conditions for the future realization of communism.

These are the tasks of the permanent revolution. Among them, the last one mentioned has proved to be by far the most difficult, but it is also the most important. Unless every challenge of feudal and bourgeois ideology is met headon and replaced by the ideology of proletarian origin there can be no assurance of completing the socialist foundation, much less will there be any advance toward communism.

When the Bolsheviks took power in Russia they established the dictatorship of the proletariat. They boldly proclaimed their intention of transforming society and remolding the consciousness of the people to correspond to this aim. However, the Stalinist usurpation of powers intervened. The proletarian dictatorship was malignantly disfigured; the creation of the socialist economic structure could proceed only by violently repressive bureaucratic methods; the possibility for the essential remolding of the consciousness of the people was hopelessly wrecked. This is the foundation on which the present Kremlin revisionism rests.

The Chinese Communist Party leaders, despite their false views on Stalin and Stalin's historical role, are keenly aware of the nature of the foundation for the Kremlin revisionism; they are thoroughly alarmed by its results. Hence their determination to maintain a resolutely opposite course. They realize, as Marx said, that their society is, "in every respect, economically, morally and intellectually, still stamped with the birth marks of the old society from whose womb it emerges."

These birth marks the present revolution is striving to wash off by removing the remaining traditions, prejudices and outlook

of the old society and begin the creation of a socialist culture. Education, literature, art and all elements of culture must serve the people, say the Chinese leaders, serve the revolution and serve the socialist reorganization of society. To this they add: when the economic base and the political system have changed, culture, as a form of ideology, must also change correspondingly. They apply the Marxist dialectical concept of work-in-learning and learning-through-work. Theory and practice are being fused into inseparable pursuits; neither one is regarded as having scientific meaning without the other.

This is quite in accord with the point made by Trotsky in the introduction to Literature and Revolution. One of the ultimate aims of the revolution, Trotsky wrote, is to overcome completely the separation between intellectual and physical activity practiced by bourgeois society. "In this sense, as in all other senses, the problem of creating a new art proceeds entirely along the lines of the fundamental problem of constructing a socialist culture."

There is ample evidence to show that the great mass of workers, peasants, soldiers and revolutionary intellectuals, with the youth in the vanguard, are providing both the powerful impetus and the inspiration for the cultural revolution. The outcome, declares a CCP Central Committee statement, "will be determined by whether the party leadership does or does not dare boldly to arouse the masses."

The object of the cultural revolution is to lay down the proper foundation on which to advance Chinese society to higher social levels. It is the permanent revolution carried forward triumphantly from the economic and political field to the cultural arena. It unfolds under the banner of greater, more intimate, more thoroughly integrated and fraternal relations between the party, the government, arts and sciences together with all intellectual pursuits on the one hand, and the mass of the people on the other. "The people," said Mao Tse-tung, "are the inexhaustible source of our revolutionary culture."

The reciprocal interaction flowing from this relationship is stimulating another great leap forward in socialist construction. And, "when China leaps," wrote one bourgeois reporter in Newsweek some time ago, "the whole world trembles."

Both the Chinese party leaders and the people have good reason to intensify the process of socialist cultural revolution just now. The world revolutionary movement has suffered a series of severe setbacks. Beginning with the overturn in Brazil, reaction spread through the catastrophe in Indonesia to the military coups in the Congo, Ghana and elsewhere. Above all, revolutionary China and its close ally, Vietnam, have to face up to the enormous military might of American imperialism. Vietnam bears the brunt of the onslaught now, China will later.

The United States has shifted its basic military strategy from Europe to Asia. Its immediate objective is to crush the

people's revolution in Vietnam and establish a military basis there from which to mount the assault on China. This is the revolution and counter-revolution engaged in mortal conflict; with the field of battle extending to other parts of the world. In fact, the struggle today between American imperialism and revolutionary China forms the epicenter in all major developments of international class conflicts.

For the solution of the gigantic problems involved in this confrontation, the Chinese party leaders face the imperative need of a united population, inspired by socialist consciousness and irrevocably committed to the victory of the revolution. This is what is now emerging out of the socialist cultural revolution.

This is the reality in China. How does the party position square with this reality?

George Novack is the author of a series of menchevik inspired articles on China, appearing in The Militant and World Outlook. Naturally Comrade Novack speaks for the position of the majority party leadership.

Even the casual reader cannot help but notice in these articles the degree of aping the slanders and speculations of bourgeois commentators and the lie factory in Hong Kong. Here are some examples: reference to what is called the disasters of the great leap forward in 1958; presenting the situation in China as a dispute about "Mao's infallibility" or "omniscience"; presenting it also as a struggle for power between the heirs of Mao; speculations about differences emerging between Peking and Hanoi at a time when both sides emphasize the contrary. During the early days of the Soviet Republic similar types of stories emanated from the lie factory in Riga; but the difference between then and now is that we did not believe a single one of the Riga stories.

The Novack articles charge that the voice of the minority in China was not heard. The fact is, that those leading party members who were singled out as opponents made up the majority of the editorial boards of the Peking Evening News (a daily paper) and the fortnightly magazine, Frontline. It was their views expressed in these publications, which included conciliation toward the Kremlin revisionists, that brought special intensity and puritanical fervor to the campaign for a socialist culture.

Protection of minority rights was emphasized in the Central Committee declaration mentioned above. It stated: "The method to be used in debates is to present the facts, reason things out, and persuade through reasoning. Any method of forcing a minority holding different views to submit is impermissible. The minority should be protected, because sometimes truth is with the minority. Even if the minority is wrong, they should still be allowed to argue their case and reserve their views." On the other hand, however, the logic of the intense campaign produced over-reaction and supercharged accusations such as monsters, black gangs, etc.

The accusations were directed particularly against leaders who attempted to circumvent the intimate party relations with the masses. They were directed against those who opposed the obligation of party and government officials, managers and intellectuals to take part in regular periods of manual labor with workers and peasants as the most effective method of struggle against bureaucratic and bourgeois degenerative tendencies.

Most directly involved in this opposition were the Peking party committee and the president and some of his associates of Peking University. Actions taken against them are not done by killing as happened in Stalin's purges; not even by imprisonment. Actions are taken by public criticism in a Great Debate which is the Chinese way. But some of those accused may have to be satisfied with less prominent jobs.

Nevertheless the Novack articles charge the Chinese party leaders with political purges which follow the example of what is called their Soviet counterparts. True, a number of people named have been removed from party posts. This is not an unusual occurrence in any party function. If these removals in China were purges, then the removal of Pablo and his co-thinkers was a similar purge. Pablo was one of the founders of the Fourth International and its most prominent spokesman and secretary for a number of years. At the Reunification Congress in 1963 he was again elected to the executive committee. But the May 1964 plenum removed Pablo and three other members of his tendency from the executive body; expulsion followed at the Eighth Congress.

Political purges are known to us as a part of the monstrous Stalinist practice in the Soviet Union. We should reject any idea of applying this characterization to developments in China.

These articles also deal with the Sino-Soviet ideological dispute. The revolutionary setbacks in the colonial and semi-colonial areas are recounted -- but as setbacks for China. There is no trace of an understanding that these are setbacks for the entire revolutionary movement, and by virtue of this fact, setbacks also for us, for our party. A Marxist evaluation would demand that this fact be clearly stated.

Gloatingly Comrade Novack asserts that Peking's loss is Moscow's gain. Never did the thought enter his mind that the period of severe setbacks does not serve to promote gains for parties, groups or tendencies that uphold the revolutionary position. Rather the forces of counterrevolution and their class-collaboration hangers on stand to benefit. The logic of this relationship should be crystal clear especially to Trotskyists.

More important yet, the Novack articles reiterate the demand that China should call upon the Soviet Union for the constitution of a united front in defense of Vietnam. Mao and his associates are condemned for failure to initiate such a move. Blandly it is asserted that differences between Moscow and Peking should be put aside in favor of unity on the point presumed to be in agreement -- the defense of Vietnam.

To Trotskyists, who are well acquainted with the nature of the Kremlin bureaucracy, the question occurs: on what basis can agreement for the defense of Vietnam be assumed to exist? We know that this bureaucracy is at all times concerned primarily with the protection of its own powers and privileges. Revolutionary developments anywhere in the world it views as a danger and a threat to these powers and privileges. Hence, as history has amply demonstrated, the Kremlin bureaucrats put obstacles in the road of these developments wherever it can manage to do so.

The policy of peaceful coexistence with American imperialism is the true political expression of the bureaucracy's position. Conversely, the well founded feeling in Washington that there will be no direct Soviet military support for Vietnam encourages the continued imperialist war escalation.

Vietnam is subjected to the twin scourge of imperialist assault and Kremlin treachery. The civil war there is the climax of a revolutionary development which the American imperialist armies are trying to crush. In this case also the policy of the Kremlin bureaucracy remains true to its basic position. Fearful of a revolutionary victory in Vietnam, and the enormous new strength and prestige China would thus gain, both Kosygin and Shelepin went to Hanoi to plead the U.S. case for negotiations.

Their pleas were rejected at Hanoi and the Chinese leaders knew very well that a proposal for a united front would be gleefully accepted by the Kremlin bureaucrats and used by them as a cover under which to continue their treachery.

Pained by this rejection Comrade Novack complains that China's "factional demand that Soviet revisionism must be defeated before victory over imperialism can be attained was one of the major factors in precipitating a rupture between Havana and Peking."

This is an astonishing statement. Covertly it insinuates that Peking is responsible for Castro's support of the Kremlin in the ideological dispute. The real situation is, as every Marxist should know, that the continuation of the Cuban revolution, in the absence of its extension to Latin America, depended directly on Soviet material aid. And even though socialism cannot be built in Cuba on Soviet rations, Castro made this principled concession of support to the Kremlin bureaucrats.

More spurious yet is the other aspect of Comrade Novack's statement just mentioned. What is factional about demanding that Soviet revisionism must be defeated before victory over imperialism can be attained? This revisionism and the peaceful coexistence policy is class collaboration pure and simple. Marxists know very well that the class collaboration policy must be rooted out from the proletarian movement before there can be any serious struggle against imperialism, let alone a victorious struggle. This is precisely where an intransigent attitude becomes imperative. The Chinese demand represents the Marxist position; the views of the accuser have drawn inspiration from menshevick concepts.

Finally, some comments are in order on the Novack charge that the Chinese regime elevates Mao Tse-tung to the position of infallibility to which the interests and desires of the people must be subordinated. This is presented as synonymous to the adulations once bestowed upon Stalin. Bourgeois commentators call it the deification of Mao.

Admittedly the constant and repetitious demand for the assimilation of Mao's thought appears rather irritating. But it must be understood as a part of a great ideological campaign; and in a campaign even correct demands often tend to be overdone. Nevertheless, when so often repeated by so many Chinese workers and peasants, this demand should arouse enough curiosity in the minds of our party leaders to be wanting to find out what Mao's thoughts actually are.

Let us not forget, however, that the panegyrics in the USSR to Stalin were to the person, the head of the bureaucracy, the ruler. The Chinese are not speaking of Mao as an individual but of his teaching, the body of Marxist-Leninist thought which he had developed over a period of over forty years of struggle. The fawning before Stalin glorified the usurper of powers. The great movement in China to assimilate the thought of Mao Tse-tung concerns the basic ideas of the leader of the revolution. And ideas become a material power when they penetrate the mass movement.

Peng Shu-tse adds his voice to that of Comrade Novack about the "Cult of Mao" and his "purges." An article in World Outlook, Vol. 4, No. 25, by Antonio Farin is based on background material on this subject furnished by Peng. It claims that the Chinese peasants "were forced to join and to give up their holdings to the Commune." The creation of "an atmosphere of terror" is ascribed to the regime, "in order to stifle criticism from the intellectuals and assure maintenance of control over the masses who feel likewise."

Where Peng got his information for background material he revealed long ago in his article "On the Nature of the Chinese Communist Party and its Regime." (SWP Internal Bulletin, Vol. 22, No. 4, March 1961) He got his information from a book entitled Ten Years of Storm, by Chow Ching-wen, who had been a member of the Central Committee of the China Democratic League. He fled to Hong Kong where his book was published. It is the testimony of an avowed counterrevolutionary. Comrades can verify this from the book which is available in public libraries.

To his everlasting shame Peng quoted page upon page in his article from this fraudulent testimony alleging the most lavish and luxurious living by party leaders and a terror regime keeping the people in conditions of poverty and misery. Apparently this still remains Peng's source of information about China. An equivalent would be our acceptance here of Miro Cardona as the fountainhead of information about the Cuban revolution.

Readers of World Outlook will find some examples in its pages of the smug and snobbish attitude motivating comrades in their attempt to ridicule the testimony of Chinese workers and peasants who voice greater concern about serving the people after they have studied Chairman Mao's works. A sneering posture on this subject is to

be expected from bourgeois commentators, but it has no place in the Marxist method. For only the effect of erosion from the bourgeois environment can make it difficult to comprehend the genuine fraternal socialist meaning of the term "Serve the People." In China this has become a nationwide aim for all work.

The additional fact that large numbers of people are consciously using the dialectic method to resolve concrete problems in all kinds of work has promoted the revolutionizing of their minds as well as their work. One of the most celebrated examples is the Taching oil workers.

Aware from Mao's teaching that "man's correct knowledge comes from social practice," the Taching oil workers studied also his essay "On Contradictions." "There are many contradictions," they said, "but the biggest is the country's lack of oil." Further on they noticed Mao writing that "qualitatively different contradictions can only be resolved by qualitatively different methods." And so, not to delay the drilling for oil until housing was provided, the workers lived in caves dug into the ground the first winter. Before enough cranes and tractors were available, they moved by hand, inch by inch and with the help of ropes and crowbars, 60-ton drillers and 120-foot-high derricks to the sites and set them up. These were qualitatively different methods indeed. Combined with their revolutionary spirit of self-reliance, the workers transformed, in less than five years, a barren wasteland into a highly productive modern oil center with derricks, pumps and refineries which are now able to supply all China's oil needs.

The new community at Taching has opened up the surrounding wasteland to food production. It integrates city and countryside, men and women are engaged jointly in physical and intellectual labor, while serving in the workers' militia, in farming and industrial work.

The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists (June issue), is devoted entirely to China. In this issue Dr. Oldham shows a more healthy political attitude than that of our party leaders to the problems involved. He writes that he had heard about the stories that many industrial and agricultural innovations and scientific progress were ascribed to the study of Mao's thought. In one particular case this had enabled a worker to increase the speed of rotation of his cotton spinning machine from 9,000 revolutions per minute to 13,000 revolutions per minute.

Dr. Oldham states that he had been prone to dismiss such stories as nonsense until his second visit to China, in May, 1965, where he heard the explanation from the manager of the textile mill in question. The manager said:

"It's like this. At the time of Liberation we were an old factory, the equipment was old, and the workers relatively old. In fact, we called ourselves 'the three olds.' In China's conditions, it was impossible to discard the factory and equipment, but the big problem was the attitude of the workers. . . . It never occurred to



them that the machine or process could be improved -- let alone that they themselves could do it.

"It would have taken too long to give them a full technical education. . . . Political indoctrination was the answer. The workers studied the works of Chairman Mao and gradually their political awareness improved. They said, 'we must build a new country.'

"Before they did not think it was possible to improve their lot. . . . Now Chairman Mao has liberated their thoughts. With this new spirit they look to see how they can improve their work and knowledge. Their thirst for knowledge is met by the sparetime schools and universities -- so bit by bit their technical competence also improved. Once they believed it was possible to innovate they found many places in the factory where simple innovations improved quality and productivity. One worker studied the problem of the spinning machines and found a way to increase the speed from 9,000 to 13,000 revolutions per minute." (Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, June, 1966)

Obviously the study of Mao Tse tung's thought inspires confident self-reliance in the minds of the people. They now link their work to the country's progress and the advance of the world revolution.

The People's Daily, June 8, declared: "The 700,000,000 Chinese are all critics . . . China's peasants, workers, soldiers, revolutionary intellectuals have begun to criticize the old world . . . using as their weapon the thought of Mao Tse-tung. . . . We criticize the old system of exploitation, the exploiting classes, imperialism, modern revisionism . . . bourgeois scholars and authorities. We criticize the bourgeois concept of history, of pedagogy, journalism, art and literature. . . . We want to create the new ideology and culture of socialism and communism so we must subject the old bourgeois ideology and culture, and the influence they exert, to thoroughgoing criticism and clear them out."

The cry is heard in China for real socialist education which can develop a new kind of intellectuals who would not in one generation become part of a new privileged group, but link with the future communist man, equally at home in manual and mental labor.

Imagine the electrifying and wholesome effect if similar demands were to arise in the Soviet Union: demands for real socialist education; for a wide and deepgoing study of Lenin's thought; using Lenin's thought as the weapon to criticize all the habits, methods and concepts of the bourgeois world which seep into Soviet society through every pore of the bureaucratic superstructure; using Lenin's thought as a weapon to criticize modern revisionism. The most magnificent effect would be the elimination of bureaucratic rule in relatively short order.

When assuming state power the CCP leaders maintained their basic concept of the Chinese revolution passing through two major stages of development -- the bourgeois-democratic and the socialist; they

viewed these as two essentially different processes. Carried out in actuality, the bourgeois-democratic revolution became the necessary preparation for the socialist revolution, and the socialist revolution was the inevitable sequel to the democratic revolution. As it unfolded, the democratic stage grew logically and without pause into the socialist stage, thus affirming in life the permanency of the revolution. The relationship between these two stages corresponded to Mao's conception of "two parts of one organic whole, guided by one and the same communist ideology." Correct leadership in this development the CCP attained through its clear understanding of both the differences and the interconnections between the democratic and the socialist revolutions.

The permanent revolution has not up to now been explicitly projected in formal text beyond these stages into the cultural arena. Nevertheless, this further extension was implicit in its basic premises. And the Chinese have now entered actively into this further stage of development of the permanent revolution. The socialist cultural revolution, the leaders declare, is the ideological reflection of the political and economic revolution and is in their service, preparing their further advance.

But this concrete reality of the permanent revolution illustrates no less graphically the operation of the dialectical law of uneven and combined development. This law, which is rooted in features common to all processes of growth in nature and society, applies equally to the course of progress or retardation in the nascent socialist world. It is demonstrated most clearly in a comparison between China and the Soviet Union.

Unevenness, the most general law of the historic process, shows up in the internal Soviet structure. While economic and technological developments have reached high levels, the socialist advance, which should logically follow, has been definitely retarded. The most serious impediment is the contradiction of a bureaucratic political regime, based on the privileged strata, and superimposed on the foundation of nationalized property and state planning.

The malignant character of this contradiction prevents the uprooting of bourgeois ideology and the remoulding of the consciousness of the people. It stands in the way of the creation of a socialist culture -- the indispensable prerequisite for genuine socialist advance. The international policy of peaceful coexistence with American imperialism is the political reflection of this relationship. It aims to perpetuate bureaucratic privileges at the expense of revolutionary struggles in other areas.

China is not as advanced economically or technologically as is the Soviet Union. But it has become a besieged fortress, ringed with imperialist military bases and subjected to a counterrevolutionary assault through Vietnam. It is obliged to fight the perfidious Kremlin revisionism as the only means to counter effectively the imperialist onslaught.

This puts China face to face with tasks that can be solved only

by the most up-to-date political methods, i.e., Marxist-Leninist methods. Internally the attempts toward a solution has served to blend backward elements with the most modern factors. Workers and peasants who are still confined in certain areas to shoulder poles and wheelbarrows, exuberantly enlist in the service of the great cultural revolution. The economic features of a lower stage are merged with the political and ideological features of a superior social order. These present themselves as two different and vastly dissimilar, yet integrally connected and interpenetrating aspects of reality. And this combined development is producing a qualitative leap by which China, economically more backward, is enabled to outdistance the Soviet Union in genuine socialist advance.

In China the socialist cultural revolution is rolling on with the force of an avalanche. Its long range goal is the remaking of the mind of man, a revolution to change the motivations and habits established by feudalism and capitalism for thousands of years, and replace them by motivations and habits suitable to building socialism and later advancing to communism.

This development demands from us the most serious attention and careful study. To do so will be entirely in accord with our tradition and our history. Examples were set in the past which should be followed now.

During the first half of the twentieth century the "Russian Question" formed the central axis in world politics. In our ranks the most extensive and intensive discussion and study became necessary to assimilate the lessons of Soviet developments from the victorious proletarian power to its Stalinist degeneracy. Many members floundered and failed to pay heed to these lessons. But the correct interpretation at which we arrived, under Trotsky's guidance, served to strengthen the party's revolutionary foundation, and enhance its theoretical clarity.

The "Chinese Question" has become the central axis in world politics in the second half of this century. However, while our earlier study and discussion concerned the phenomenon of a victorious revolution degenerating, in the case of China we witness the revolution marching on triumphantly toward social and cultural levels never yet experienced in history. This should demand from us at least equal efforts to study, to understand and assimilate its lessons.

As it advances to higher levels, the impact of this cultural revolution on the international proletarian movement is certain to be tremendous. It should be a great inspiration to all Marxists. The Chinese are creating a veritable powerhouse of the world revolution which will have much greater impact on all future working class and colonial struggles. But we should be equally aware that this occurs at a time when American imperialism is headed inexorably on a course of open, direct and violent collision with revolutionary China.

For our party this presents a real test of capacity to orient and act according to working class needs regarding these develop-

ments. One point, however, should be made crystal clear: the propensity of the majority leadership for using every possible occasion to hurl polemical brickbats at China, its regime and its ideological dispute with the Kremlin, is only a hairline removed from the danger of giving aid and comfort to the imperialist enemy.

Our majority leadership has up to now misread all the signals available from China. Correspondingly it has miseducated the members. These are the poisonous fruits from the policy of political revolution in China.

Let us not forget that this policy was put to the test once and it failed. After the proletarian victory in 1949 the Chinese Trotskyists, located in Hong Kong, proclaimed as their program the overthrow of the new regime. They declared their readiness to lead the struggle for its realization. What happened to them? Some of them went back to China to enter the CCP and work for the revolution, but for the others -- political oblivion became their fate.

The revolutionary quality of the Socialist Workers Party, once established, cannot long endure without a complete political reorientation on this vital question.

Arne Swabeck

September 28, 1966