

Nahuel Moreno

**THE CHINESE AND
INDOCHINESE
REVOLUTIONS**



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Foreword to the First Spanish Edition

It is no coincidence that today we reissue in booklet form this work by Nahuel Moreno on the Chinese Revolution.

Although it was prepared in 1967 at the request of Ernest Mandel (who directed the publication of the book “*50 Years of World Revolution 1917-1967, An International Symposium*”, Merit Publishers, New York, 1968) there are several reasons for now publishing it on its own.

Firstly, we believe it is useful from a methodological point of view. There are so many charlatans who pass as serious Marxists or theoreticians of note, we think it right that the workers’ and student’s vanguard know this publication. In its first chapters, Moreno deploys these methodological guidelines to which we refer. His opposition to neo-revisionism of a Wright Mills, a Sartre, a Sweezy and a Debray, is based on scientific grounds. The law of uneven and combined development and the theory of permanent revolution are not infallible dogmas, but extraordinary contributions that serve to explain the “new” without the need of relying on empiricism and pragmatism. The class characterisation of this kind of neo-revisionism, independently of the fact that it has a more positive sign than the old revisionism, has the same origin: the influence of the intelligentsia and Western students, impacted by the global revolution. Unfortunately, in our country this influence has also been, and is felt. Although in recent times as a result of successive defeats of rural movements and the upsurge of the urban masses, another kind of “theorising” has emerged especially on urban guerrilla. No one can hide the fact that there is an entire current that mechanically applies the Chinese experiences to our own reality.

This is another reason that leads us to publish this booklet. Often there are those who set Mao at the height of a Lenin or a Trotsky, ignoring the development of the Chinese Revolution, its links with the global process, the role played by the American masses themselves and the dynamics of China. Hence the need for this work. You may agree or not with it, but no one can deny that its conclusions are based on elements given by the class struggle itself. And its value is not historical but current. It has to do with the need to develop a strategy and tactics for the American revolutionary process. We cannot ignore that there are revolutionaries who want to “copy Mao” without knowing, in our opinion, basic issues.

It is justified, then, that *Editorial Pluma* reprint this work by Nahuel Moreno, and it accompanies it with an appendix devoted to the Cultural Revolution composed of various articles in different times, in the workers’ and student’s information weekly, *La Verdad*.

Editorial Pluma, Buenos Aires, 1973

The Chinese and Indochinese Revolutions

It is not my purpose to argue whether the Chinese Revolution was more or less important than the Russian. Together they constitute without doubt the two most transcendent revolutionary events of the century.

While the October Revolution began the epoch of world socialist revolution, the Chinese Revolution definitively broke the imperialist equilibrium. It temporarily transferred the centre of the world revolution to the underdeveloped and colonial nations. It ended the isolation of the Soviet Union and thus posed an immediate possibility of a Federation of Eurasian Socialist States, a possible bridge to a World Federation of Socialist States. It forced Yankee Imperialism to develop a worldwide strategy to confront the colonial revolution. It indirectly produced two counter-revolutionary wars, the Korean and Indochinese. It has made the destruction of imperialism within its own borders, as the only way to avert a nuclear war, an urgent necessity on the world political agenda. Finally, it has posed the problem of problems, that of a unified strategy and organisation by which the revolutionaries of the entire planet may confront imperialism.

The existence of People's China, with all of its crises and contradictions, as evidenced by the Cultural Revolution, again raises in all its acuity the problem of the method and form of government most effective to cope with the transitional stage from capitalism to socialism, especially in the backward countries. And it demonstrates that there can be no solution other than workers' democracy to avert or overcome the grave economic, political, and cultural crises.

The present Vietnamese war, an indirect consequence of the Chinese Revolution, involves the fate of China and the world revolution. The Indochinese workers and peasants have demonstrated, arms in hand, that imperialism can be faced and defeated. This defeat will, in all likelihood, mean the beginning of the end for imperialism.

The Chinese Revolution and modern revisionists

Mao's victory not only meant what we said earlier, it was also a source of study and teachings for revolutionaries around the world. However, it has a peculiarity. The Chinese revolution is seemingly heterodox, compared to the only existing contemporary international Marxism, Trotskyism, compared with the traditional course of all previous workers' revolutions (except the Yugoslav), compared with the forecasts of more than a century of Marxism. And as all subsequent successful revolutions resemble it, it has created a new kind of revisionism.

It is well known that the Chinese revolution, and also its younger siblings (the Yugoslav, Korean, Indochinese and Cuban revolutions) move to ecstasy the "New Left" that takes them as an example of the failure of "traditional" Marxism in the best of cases and, often, of Marxism plain and

simple. Did the Chinese revolution— they say— not confirm the definitive failure of the industrial proletariat, of the urban population, of the class struggle in industrialised countries, of the forecasts of Marxism and — therefore of it— as a method, of Trotskyism as program and world party of socialist revolution, which was not able to lead any of these revolutions? And— they go on— is it not obvious, on the contrary, the importance of the revolutionary will against objective factors and dynamics, of the students and the petty bourgeoisie (including the peasantry) as the only revolutionary classes or sectors of classes? Does this not show that the backward countries are and will be the vanguard of world revolution? That military organisation and guerrilla warfare are the only organisation and revolutionary method?

We call this current revisionism, because just as Social Democratic and Stalinist revisionism, it commits the same methodological error: it generalises momentary trends of reality, not seeing or hiding the general Marxist laws in which these trends are framed. Let us see: revisionism of the Second International based its analysis in the context of the development of capitalism and the improvement of the situation of the working class in the metropolitan countries, forgetting (!) to discover and point out that capitalist contradictions were exacerbated when moving to the imperialist stage. Stalinist revisionism concluded, based on the true fact that the USSR had been isolated (not realising this was a result of momentary retreat of the world revolution) that socialism in one country was possible, and on that basis, they elaborated their entire theory. Modern revisionism generalises the features that the current stage of world revolution has. Since the Chinese revolution its epicentre has been the colonial countries; the peasantry played a major role in the victory and its method was guerrilla warfare.

What method do these New Leftists advocate instead of Marxism? Something that has long been superseded by empiricism and pragmatism. For the analysis of what has already happened, empiricism coupled with an elitism of the worst kind: he who has triumphed was and always will be right. For the future, the will, doing it, pragmatism without any scientific basis, which they call praxis.

When they are asked to materialise their program and form of organisation for the world revolution, they take refuge in a cautious negative, since the revolution is “the new”. They are open to “the new”. How to anticipate and act on the “the new” scientifically? Nobody can say that because this is precisely “the new”. According to them, the Chinese and Cuban revolutions are there to prove the reason for their new religion.

This modern revisionism has with the old, as it could not be otherwise, another point in common: their social base. We do not mean, of course, the reformism of the privileged workers and labour bureaucrats, but Bernstein’s revisionism from the end of last century. This revisionism found its social base in the German intellectuals who joined the Social Democratic Party as a result of its successes. Modern revisionism finds its social base in the same sectors, the intelligentsia and Western students, impacted by the global revolution.

But unlike the latter, this revisionism is relatively progressive, revolutionary, since it bases its analysis not on the consolidation of imperialism but in its crisis and defeat, in the solidarity with the colonial revolution, even if they forget the revolution in their own country because it is metropolitan.

A sector of this revisionism is composed by the authentic colonial revolutionaries. Their revisionism is not only progressive, revolutionary, but of a great dynamism: instead of being merely supportive of the colonial revolution, as metropolitan revisionism, it approaches increasingly, by the logic of action and thought, to the orthodox Marxist position. It is a pre-Trotskyist revisionism of genuine revolutionaries. Thus, the permanent revolution is being rediscovered by different segments of them. So far they have come, at most, to a revisionist and evolutionary variation of this theory: the revolution will advance inexorably from the countryside to the city, from colonial to industrialised nations, from guerrilla to taking of power, refusing to consider it in all its dialectic and amplitude. Thus they refuse to consider the possibility that the world revolution advance in leaps and that the vanguard switch lanes: from rural guerrilla to urban struggle, from the peasantry to the proletariat, from the backward to developed countries. It will suffice that it starts to happen for them to definitely rise to a total understanding of the theory of permanent revolution.

The laws of the new are Marxist laws

This current of contemporary thought, represented from Wright Mills to Sartre, through Sweezy and Debray, refuses to clarify the general laws of their new religion: “the new”. Thus they fall, whether they like it or not, in a variation of irrationalism. Marxism has posed from the beginning the problem of a scientific and historical law to explain the leap to the new. It found a general law in the jump of quantity into quality of Hegel, brought down to earth by Marx and Engels. The dialectic discovered by Marx between the development of productive forces, the relations and struggle of classes and the superstructure, is the ultimate key to the revolutionary transformations of a society into another. These, however, do not explain fully the new in history and the world.

Trotsky, with his discovery and formulation of the law of uneven and combined development, manages to give a more general law for understanding the emergence of the new: it is the combination or crisis of unevenly developed segments of society. The jump of quantity into quality is to the law of uneven and combined development what the law of gravity is to the law of relativity.

Both the Chinese revolution, like the Russian, cannot be understood without this law. How to explain it without understanding the combination of the following processes: a traditional peasant revolution headed by a formally Stalinist party, of Marxist heritage and plebeian features, which organises a modern army with a revolutionary military strategy to face the colonisation of a monopolist imperialism such as the Japanese, and subsequently the agent of the US and the landowners, Chiang Kai-Shek.

But just as the law of uneven and combined development serves to explain in general the new in society and nature, there is a socio-political theory closely linked to it to explain the current stage of transition to socialism on a scientific basis and to act accordingly: the permanent revolution. This theory explains— while at the same time it demands its fulfilment— how in the present historical stage of class struggle any triumph of the workers has posed to combine itself, seamlessly, with a higher stage until achieving workers’ power in the country and the triumph of the socialist revolution in the world. Specifically, the democratic, national and agricultural tasks of backward countries are part of the socialist revolution nationally and internationally. As we see, a theory that explains the new, the revolution and socialist society in its development and triumph as a permanent revolution.

The paradox of the “wrong” Marxist forecasts

“The classical scheme of world revolution admitted that the victory of socialism would occur first in the industrially more developed countries to set an example for the least developed. ‘The most advanced countries show the most backward their own future’, Marx wrote. Marxism held, in a general way, that to ensure the victory of socialism it was needed a highly developed industrial base and a powerful proletariat, as well a strong and politically conscious worker’s movement, and that these objective and subjective preconditions could only appear with the full development of capitalism.

“It is true that after the revolution of 1848, Marx voiced some misgivings about one of the political assumptions underlying this schema; namely, the capacity of the bourgeoisie to carry out a classical bourgeois-democratic revolution in countries where capitalism is still immature but where a modern proletariat already exists. Later Engels further undermined this schema when he pointed out that the relative weakness of political consciousness among the British working class was due precisely to the fact that Britain was the most advanced capitalist country, holding a world monopoly on high productivity.”

“At the beginning of the twentieth century, Trotsky in 1905 in his theory of permanent revolution which held that the working class would find itself compelled to carry out tasks historically belonging to the bourgeoisie, and Lenin in 1914 in his theory of imperialism, which included the view that the imperialist chain would break first at its weakest link, showed that they had come to understand the main consequence of the law of uneven and combined development; namely, that the proletariat might well come to power first in a backward country as a result of the contradictions of the world

capitalist system as a whole. Both Lenin and Trotsky were firmly of the opinion that the victory of the revolution in such circumstances would prove to be only the prelude to the victory of the socialist revolution in the key capitalist countries and a means of facilitating the final outcome. It was in this spirit that the Bolsheviks took power in October 1917 and founded the Third International in 1919.”¹

Thus one of the most important documents of Trotskyism characterises the wrong Marxist forecasts. This would only be sufficient to rebut any attack to Marxism, as this believes that reality is always, without exception, richer than all previous analysis, than all previous law, precisely because human reality is always new in a sense. This problem of the “wrong” forecasts of Marxism would not be important if the “New Left” had not taken it as unequivocal proof of the falsity of the Marxist method and as a demonstration of the validity of its pragmatism.

The paradox is that “wrong” forecasts did not prevent Marxism and Leninism to become, after these forecasts, much more powerful than previously. Marx predicted the proletarian victory in the industrial countries of Western Europe. This triumph occurred in the Russia of the Tsars and yet as of the Russian revolution Marxism not only became a truly universal movement, encompassing all or nearly all colonial countries, ceasing to be a movement of only civilized countries, but a Marxist state arose, the USSR. The same happened with Lenin. What he expected did not take place: that Russia would be the prelude to the triumph of the revolution in Western Europe. And yet, Leninism became, undisputedly, contemporary Marxism, as the Social Democrats abandoned Marxism, and Leninism spread more than ever. Why?

The secret of this paradox has to do with the success of the method and program of Marxism. First of all, with the forecasts themselves. These, contrary to what revisionism might believe, even if they do not occur, have been correctly elaborated. Any forecast is a historical possibility, it is a battle of classes to be given and its correctness is not measured by the success or otherwise of the latter. The issue is the possibility of this battle, the rest, the history, is made by the classes with their struggles. A forecast is neither correct nor incorrect by its success, but rather whether it meets certain conditions to be scientific and revolutionary.

The paradox of the Marxist forecasts is that they have been correct because they were made with a method (Marxist) and a just objective: world revolution. Any forecast to be valid, must be a certain and immediate prospect of class struggle at the time it is made, that satisfies the best alternative for the development of the world revolution.

The prospect of revolution in the countries of Western Europe was the only and certain perspective that occurred at the time of Marx. The Paris Commune is there testifying it. That it has not occurred does not mean it was not an objectively possible perspective at the time. The revolution in Western Europe was the most immediate possibility for the development of the world revolution at the time of Lenin. This revolution took place and failed because of the betrayals of the social reformists, but it took place.

That the method of the greats of Marxism is, as we say, scientific, based on a careful analysis of reality, without false schemes, is proven by the hypothesis they considered when, at certain times, they thought they saw different alternatives to what they had been advocating. No doubt they embraced these new alternatives. Didn't Marx consider the idea a capitalist stage would not take place in Russia as a result of the triumph of European socialist revolution? Didn't Lenin study the possibility and advocate guerrilla warfare after the 1905 revolution? And, didn't Trotsky have an inkling in 1919, with the possible reversal of the European revolution, of the possibility that the epicentre of the revolution would move to the East? And finally, didn't the Trotskyists report in 1938 that “one cannot categorically deny in advance the theoretical possibility that under the influence of completely exceptional circumstances (war, defeat, financial crash, mass revolutionary pressure, etc.) the small parties bourgeois, including Stalinism, can go beyond what they themselves want to break with the bourgeoisie”.²

1 “Dynamics of World Revolution Today”, resolution adopted by the First (“Reunification”) Congress of the United Secretariat (Seventh World Congress), June 1963, *International Socialist Review*, Volume 24, No. 4, Fall 1963, p. 114.

2 Leon Trotsky: *The Transitional Program for Socialist Revolution*, Pathfinder Press, New York, 1973, p. 95.

This proves, without doubt, that Marxists bet their forecasts and hypotheses on the actual course of the class struggle at a given time and to the goal of developing the world revolution. Why is it strange, then, that the triumphs of the world revolution develop Marxism?

The “mistakes” of Trotsky and Trotskyism in China

Deutscher has described the controversy between Trotsky and Chen about the prospects of the Chinese proletariat. Chen argued against Trotsky that in the immediate revolutionary struggles of the late 1930s, the Chinese working class would have no participation as a result of the dismantling of the industry by the Japanese. Leaving aside the intellectual honesty of the late author (he insists on the circumstances that led, almost miraculously, to the triumph of Maoism; he stresses that in the agricultural field Mao was carrying out Trotskyist politics without knowing it) from his comments it arises that the hopes of Trotsky in the Chinese proletariat were wrong.

Contrary to what it might seem, Deutscher is not right and quite possibly Chen either. Trotsky's forecasts, as those of the Trotskyists or of Marx and Lenin, cannot be isolated, from the character they have of having been developed by analysts and strategists of the world socialist revolution, of which the Chinese revolution is a very important part, but only part.

Seen from this angle Trotsky forecasts were correct, because the same happens to them as with other Marxist forecasts. Trotsky's analysis of each of the stages of the world revolution was as follows: until 1928 against the Stalinist reaction in the USSR firstly and, secondly, for the development of the German revolution, the British general strike and the Chinese revolution. After that year for the formation of workers' united fronts to defeat the march towards power of Western fascism through the permanent mobilisation of the proletariat. All his partial, national forecasts, including on China, have to do with these global general analysis.

Let us think what would have happened if the Soviet proletariat had halted the rise to power of Stalinism before 1927. Or if the German proletariat had prevented the rise of Hitler with class methods, or if the Spanish workers had won in their civil war against Franco, or if the French working class had transformed their great strikes in social revolution. The course of the Chinese revolution would have completely changed, as well as the role of the working class and its parties.

This we say of Trotsky's analysis of the Chinese revolution, we can generalise to the Trotskyist movement after his death. This adopted the certain prospect of workers revolution in Europe as a result of the upsurge of postwar and the debacle of bourgeois power. This probable prospect, immediate and most beneficial for the world revolution, it also would have been so for the Chinese revolution. That it has not happened does not mean it was not a proper analysis and policy, which, for profound reasons (the Stalinist betrayal) was postponed.

Nothing of what we have been saying is intended to cover the gaps in the analysis and program of international and Chinese Trotskyism. But these errors are tangential and obey the own uneven development of the world revolution, the tremendous weight of the triumphs of the counter-revolution from 1923 to 1943, which had several consequences intimately linked. They prevented the formation of solid revolutionary Marxist parties that were capable of capturing in all its richness the course of the revolution in their national details and lead its early stages. The revolution occurred in the immediate postwar led by Stalinist parties that kept its mass base during the retreat. The working class could not play its historic role of vanguard of the global and colonial revolution.

Seen this way, the gaps and weaknesses of Trotskyism in China and other countries, as well as it not being able to take power to date in any country are transient phenomena in the early stages of the world revolution which temporarily combined the revolution with parties which were not revolutionary Marxists, which had been consolidated in the previous counter-revolutionary stage. That is, the revolution was sufficiently strong and imperialism weak to allow the revolutionary triumph, under a party that was not revolutionary Marxist, but it gave no time to forge this party, which would have avoided the mistakes of Trotskyism and the rugged march of the revolution itself.

The Chinese Revolution is a Victory of the World Revolution as a Whole

The world revolution has followed an uneven and combined course. China, despite its colossal importance, is no more than a part of this process. For, contrary to what the heroic Chinese revolutionaries and the New Left which echoes them may think, the victory was won not only by the Chinese revolutionaries and the Chinese masses but by all the exploited of the world. Without the consciously or unconsciously revolutionary action of the workers of the entire world, and principally those in the metropolitan centres, it could not have triumphed.

The history of the Yugoslav Communists has been repeated. Moshá Pijade wrote a pamphlet entitled *The Fable of Soviet Aid*, in which he proved that the Yugoslav Revolution had received no aid from the USSR. What was left in the pipeline, the pamphlet that needs to be written about the victory of the Chinese and Yugoslav revolutions is not yet begun: the truth about the aid to them from the world revolution. When Mao and Giap, in accordance with protocol, say that they were victorious thanks to the aid they received from the USSR and the other socialist countries, they are telling a half-truth. It is the most pernicious of lies because it masks the crucial factor: the revolution or pressure of the Western masses.

The Second Chinese Revolution (1925-27) began as a reflection of the revolutionary upsurge in the period of the first post-war and the Russian Revolution. The retreat of the world revolution brought on the victory of Stalinism, and this produced the failure of the British General Strike and of the Chinese Revolution, which was moving towards a seizure of power by the proletariat. From 1935 to 1939 there was a renewed revolutionary upsurge with the Spanish Civil War, the great French strikes, and the massive unionisation of the industrial workers in the United States. In China the struggle against the Japanese invaders and the civil war formed part of this new upsurge of the world revolution. In contrast to Western Europe, this new upsurge was not defeated or derailed.

With the conclusion of the second imperialist world war, a new revolutionary upsurge began—caused by the spectacular crisis of imperialism and by the new revolutionary wave in Western Europe. The new civil war in China and the victory of the Third Chinese Revolution were directly related to this new upsurge. *Mao's triumph cannot be explained except by the revolutionary pressure of the European workers and the attitude of the Americans in the armed forces.*

The sectors of world imperialism that survived the crisis, and Yankee imperialism in particular, concentrated all their forces on halting the workers' revolution in Western Europe, primarily in France and Italy. The working class of these countries had *de facto* power in their hands when, at the Kremlin's order, the liberation movements and the Communist parties— together with the national bourgeoisies and Yankee imperialism— prevented the seizure of power. The price imperialism had to pay for this was to let the USSR hold sway in Eastern Europe and allow the Chinese and Yugoslav revolutions to triumph.

In this, the American workers, so much defamed by the New Left, played a role of the first magnitude. The fact that our American class brothers have not posed the question of power in their country has often been mistakenly construed to mean that they have played no role in the revolutionary triumphs of the postwar period. How then can it be explained that Yankee imperialism did not convert China into another Vietnam at that time? The answer is none other than the American workers in the ranks of the armed forces were not ready to serve, once the war was ended, as a counter-revolutionary force. Yankee diplomacy then found itself forced to take into account two factors in its China policy. First, that its main objective was the halting of the workers' revolution in Western Europe and the reestablishment of capitalism there. Second, that it was impossible to mobilise Yankee soldiers for a counter-revolutionary war. Without these two factors, the Chinese Revolution would not have been able to win so easily in the civil war or to take the cities. The Yankee army had more than enough material power to maintain itself in the big cities of the coast on a much grander scale than Japan had. If it did not do so, it is not for the reasons adduced by the American reactionaries — that Truman and Marshall were some kind of imbeciles — but because they were aware that it was impossible to pursue such a policy at that time.

If today they are able to follow such a policy in Vietnam, this also is a consequence of the state of the world revolution and of its uneven development: the class struggle in Europe and the United

States has been stabilised; there is no immediate danger of workers' revolution in Europe or of mass desertions by the Yankee soldiers. Thanks to having restored order in their rear the imperialists can mount a brutal attack on the colonial revolution, as they are now doing in Vietnam.

The Second Chinese Revolution

In 1911 the fall of the last emperor marked the beginning of the bourgeois revolution in China. The corrupt comprador class and the rachitic national bourgeoisie were to prove incapable of resolving the historic tasks on the agenda: national independence and agrarian revolution. More than that, their impotence would be manifested in a retrogression: China was in fact divided into regions controlled by warlords subservient to the various imperialisms. Thus, the Revolution of 1911 instead of resolving the two great historic problems posed, added yet another: the achievement of national unity.

The First World War produced the Second Chinese Revolution. It began in 1919 with a fervent anti-imperialist mobilisation of the students and professors, the May Fourth Movement against the Treaty of Versailles. The war brought about a considerable industrial development, which led to an increase in the proletariat from one to two million between 1916 and 1922. At that time, 200,000 workers had been sent to work in France. When they returned, they served as the leaven of the working-class ferment. In 1918 the first modern trade union was founded in China. In a short space of time, in 1919, the trade-union movement joined with the May Fourth Movement in a series of strikes in Shanghai and other cities.

Linked to all this was the influence of the triumphant Russian Revolution. Marxism, in its Leninist form, began to penetrate China. The leaders of the May Fourth Movement, with Chen Tu-hsiu at their head, became Marxists, and in 1921 founded the Communist Party with about fifty members. Chen was elected secretary general in absentia. The Kuomintang, the bourgeoisie's party led by Sun Yat-sen, was also to experience a resurgence. This is explained by its change in policy. Although bringing up the rear, still it felt the influence of the new revolutionary process. Its former policy had been to try to play one warlord off against another, and it had failed and been totally prostrated until 1919.

The backbone of the entire new revolutionary process opening was the working class, and it was joined shortly by the peasant movement. It was to be a workers' and peasants' revolution led by the proletariat. In January 1922, the strike of the Hong-Kong longshoremen broke out, ending in victory in March as the British were forced to recognise the union and grant a wage increase. In 1922, as a consequence of this working-class upsurge, the first national congress of trade unionists was held under the leadership of the victorious longshoremen. This congress represented about 230,000 members. In central and northern China, the organisation of the workers revolved around the railway men, who held their first congress in 1924. In Shanghai, China's largest city, there were 40,000 workers organised in 24 unions at the beginning of 1923.

Isaacs describes the situation this way: "In 1918, according to incomplete reports, there were twenty-five recorded strikes, involving some 150,000 workers in all parts of the country. The movement grew with astonishing rapidity and militancy. On May Day 1924, 100,000 workers marched through the streets of Shanghai and twice that number in Canton. Contemporary reports describe how in Wuchang, Hanyan, and Hankow, despite martial law, red flags appeared over working-class quarters".³

Like its shadow, the peasant movement began to raise its head, at the beat of the workers' movement. In 1923 there was already in Kwantung province, in Canton, a Provincial Peasant Association.

The Chinese Communist Party was forced by the Russian emissaries, who in turn reflected the Stalinist bureaucracy, to enter the Kuomintang and accept the political and organisational discipline imposed on them, first by Sun Yat-sen and, after his death, by Chiang Kai-shek. Soviet Stalinism, moreover, established close and direct contact with the Kuomintang and with Chiang Kai-shek,

3 Harold R. Isaacs, *The Tragedy of the Chinese Revolution*, Secker and Warburg, London, 1938, p. 70.

whom it helped in founding the Whampoa Military Academy in 1924. This capitulationist policy was pursued in the name of the opportunist theory propagated by Stalin that a bourgeois democratic revolution was in the agenda in China, to be led by the bourgeoisie. The independence of the workers and peasants and that of the Chinese CP was sacrificed to this conception and program.

In the meantime, the working class and peasants moved further and further away from the bourgeois nationalist party. Throughout 1925 there were great working-class struggles. In April a strike broke out against the Japanese factories in Shanghai. The Yankee and English police fired on the anti-Japanese demonstrators, killing several. In repudiation, the workers declared the general strike of June 1. Meanwhile, strikes began to break out against the Chinese bosses. This upsurge culminated, from June 19 to October 10, in a general strike in Hong Kong and a boycott of British goods in Canton. This movement left the actual power in the hands of the workers'-pickets, the strike committees, and the revolutionary cadets of Canton.

In March 1926, Chiang Kai-shek counterattacked, turning the Second Congress of the Kuomintang into a *coup d'état* within the party and the government. He demanded that the Communists cease campaigning for their views inside the party and that they turn over a list of all their members. And, under the pretext that he was preparing a military invasion of the north against the warlords, he succeeded in being granted full powers. Stalin forced the Communist Party to accept these conditions. Stalin's agent Borodin counselled that those Russian advisers who had incurred Chiang's displeasure be removed and replaced with more amenable colleagues. On July 29, Chiang declared martial law in Canton. All activity by the workers' movement was forbidden and more than fifty workers were murdered. The landlords began a counteroffensive in the countryside.

Shortly after March 1926, the political bureau of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, with Trotsky voting against, approved the admission of the Kuomintang into the Communist International as a "sympathiser party". The request made by Chen, the Secretary General, to the Russian emissaries in Canton that the workers' movement be given 5,000 rifles from the Russian arms in the city, was denied.⁴ In October of the same year the Soviet Communist Party leadership sent a telegram to the Chinese Communist Party ordering it to rein in the peasant movement in order not to frighten the generals. On January 1, the Chinese national government was organised in Wuhan and its head, Wang, a representative of the left Kuomintang, appointed two Communist ministers. From this moment on, the Left Opposition in Moscow raised a hue and cry demanding that the Communist Party break with the Kuomintang and prepare to seize power. Karol points out that "Trotsky was also the first in the Comintern to speak of the necessity of creating the 'peasant soviets' dear to Mao".⁵

The march of Chiang's army towards the north provoked, however, a new revolutionary wave. In Hunan, the trade unions spread out to several districts and increased their membership from 60,000 to 150,000. In Wuhan, after the advance of Chiang's army, their numbers reached 300,000. These peasants did not lag behind. At the end of November in Hunan fifty four peasant districts were organised with a total of a million members. In January 1927, this number rose to two million.

"Now at the end of three months, the Communist Party had organised 600,000 workers in Shanghai and found itself in a position to issue a general strike order. (...) The first insurrection failed. Without arms and without training the workers did not know how to make themselves masters of the city. They had to learn by experience the necessity of forming a nucleus of armed workers. (...) Chou En-lai and the famous Shanghai leaders, Chau Shinh-yen, Ku Shun-chang and Lo Yi-ming succeeded in organising 50,000 strike pickets and in finding centres in the French concession where 2,000 militants received secret military training. An 'Iron Troop' of 3,000 riflemen armed with contraband Mausers was formed and this was the Shanghai worker's sole armed force. On March 21, 1927 the Communists launched a strike which led to the closing of all the factories and brought the workers for the first time in their lives to the barricades. First they took the police headquarters, then the arsenal, later the military barracks, and they won the day. There were 5,000 armed workers; they formed six battalions of revolutionary troops and proclaimed 'citizens power'. It was the most notable *coup*

4 These arms were meant for delivery to Chiang. Karol cites Edgar Snow. Cf. note 3.

5 K. S. Karol, *La Chine de Mao: L'autre Communisme*, Laffont, Paris, 1966.

d'état in modern Chinese history". Thus Karol recounts the workers' triumph in Shanghai, which left the power in their hands.

One day later Chiang entered the city and was given a hero's welcome by the Communist Party. This is how he was able to prepare his *coup d'état* against the workers at his case and convenience. It came on April 12 and took the form of a massacre comparable to that of the Indonesian Communist Party in 1965. This *coup* definitively decapitated the Chinese working class.

The Lessons of the Failure

The Stalinist betrayal, the unconditional support to the Kuomintang, was carried out under the direction of the Chinese Communist Party leadership, who was unaware of Trotsky's views. The formation of the party had been taking place during the heat of the worker's and peasants' mobilisation. From a membership of fifty in 1921, it had risen to lead the Shanghai insurrection. The development of its leadership had proceeded apace with its growth in numbers and influence. This leadership had formulated a theory and program for the revolution very similar to that of Trotsky. A Western scholar has called it proto-Trotskyism. Both Chen and his disciple Peng maintained that what was in the agenda in China was a workers' revolution against the bourgeoisie, a revolution which would carry out the bourgeois-democratic tasks. At every opportunity they stressed the need of cutting-free from the Kuomintang and adopting a revolutionary line towards the taking of power.

Another tendency with its own coloration began to develop within the party, Maoism. This tendency placed great stress in the peasant movement. It worked perfectly well within the party, which had a Bolshevik structure, of ample internal freedom and discipline in action. The outlook was for an even greater integration of these two tendencies under hegemony of the undisputed leadership of Chen.

On the basis of the discipline of the Communist International and the prestige of the USRR, Stalin unfortunately succeeded in imposing his line. In the face of such pressure, Chen gave in to Moscow's order. Thus a contradictory situation developed: Stalin succeeded in imposing his policy but not his men, for Chen's prestige was too great and the workers' movement too strong for Stalin to be able to force acceptance of his "made-in-Moscow" bureaucrats. Moreover, the Communist International was not entirely bureaucratised at that time.

The Second Chinese Revolution not only showed that a workers' movement could lead an agrarian and national revolution, but that the formation and development of a highly qualified revolutionary Marxist party is possible in a short time, in the course of the revolutionary process itself. The theoretical, political, and organisational richness of the Chinese party proved this. The Stalinist betrayal produced a historic working class defeat, and as a consequence the chance was lost to complete the construction of a Chinese Bolshevik party.

In this sense, the consequences of the defeat of the Second Chinese Revolution are opposite to those of the Russian Revolution of 1905. This revolution did not remove the Russian proletariat from the scene. On the contrary, in the historic sense, it strengthened its influence and helped bring the formation of the Bolshevik Party to fruition; in a certain sense it created it. The ultimate cause of these combined misfortunes is not to be sought in the defeat of the Chinese working class (it was to demonstrate on several occasions its capacity for recovery) but in the triumphant course of the world counter-revolution and its reflection in the international workers' movement, Stalinism. It was Stalinism which was directly responsible for the fact that the Chinese failure in 1927 did not have the same effect as the 1905 Revolution.

We note this because various theories have been propounded to explain the reasons for the failure of the Chinese workers and why a revolutionary Marxist party could not be formed. Because the proletariat was not a revolutionary class; because there was not sufficient cultural tradition for the development of Marxism; or because the geopolitical structure (a vast country without unity or a national political life) blocked the political development of the proletariat and its party. The Second Chinese Revolution, at once magnificent and tragic, proves all these theories profoundly false. Social, cultural, or geographical-political factors do not explain why the Chinese proletariat did not raise its

head again and why it did not complete the organisation of a revolutionary Marxist party. Stalinism and world counter-revolution are the true explanation.

The Consequences of the Defeat

Stalin responded to failure by ordering a putschist line: strike for the seizure of power. This line, which takes no account whatsoever of the setback the workers had suffered, was to be the source of new disasters for the mass movement.

The workers and militants responded empirically to the counter-revolution. Rather than allowing themselves to be liquidated, the Communists in the army chose to revolt along with their troops, and began the armed struggle. Thus they seized the city of Nanchang and created the Red Army. Peng Pui, the party's peasant leader, joined the Red Army and retreated with it to the peasant zones of Haipeng and Lupeng and there founded the first Soviet government, organising peasant militias and dividing up the land. Mao began to develop peasant soviets in violation of the Stalinist line, which did not authorise them until September, and launched a peasant insurrection in Hunan, the August Harvest Rising, which failed. This, together possibly with his audacity in the launching of peasant soviets, cost him his posts in the party leadership and even put his party membership in jeopardy. This new course culminated in the Canton putsch ordered by Stalin in an attempt to salvage his prestige. It was a total failure.

Instead of changing, Stalinism adopted on a world scale an adventurist and putschist line, seeking in this way to respond to the counter-revolutionary danger represented in the USSR by the Kulaks and in the West by Nazism. The Communist parties received the order to strike for power, to ignore the workers' minimum demands, to refuse united fronts with other working-class and anti-imperialist currents and not to work in the reformist trade unions, which embraced the majority of the workers.

This policy had disastrous consequences for the Chinese Revolution. Instead of unifying all the movements opposed to Chiang and the Japanese colonisation then underway, Stalinist ultraleftism either left them each to their separate fate, isolated, or else, lacking the least appreciation of the relationship of forces, it flung them in offensives against the cities. This was the opposite of the revolutionary movement's previous course, which had been bringing together in a single process the anti-imperialist struggle, the workers' movement, the revolutionary soldiers, and the peasant movement. Chiang proceeded to defeat each revolutionary sector separately at his convenience, for the Stalinists were floundering in a vacuum of orders issued from Moscow which had no relevance to the Chinese reality.

With this was combined the Stalinists' struggle to transform the Chinese Communist Party into a Stalinist party. Prior to 1927 they were unsuccessful. The CP applied their policy but it was not a Stalinist party. Stalinism fundamentally is neither a theory nor a policy but a bureaucratic apparatus, a privileged caste which draws its political and social privileges from its intimate and dependent connection with the Soviet bureaucracy. For this reason, Stalinisation of any national party means domination of its party apparatus by a privileged bureaucracy dependent on the Soviet bureaucracy and trained in Moscow. The 1927 defeat began this stage in the Chinese CP. Moscow was no longer content with imposing its policy; it imposed its right-hand men. On August 7, 1927, Chen was removed from his position as secretary-general, thus beginning the march of Moscow's men toward total control of the Communist Party. The Sixth Party Congress was held in Moscow from July to September 1928 and completed the total Stalinisation of the party.

The first great Stalinist crime had to do with the labour movement. After the defeat, the latter took refuge in the Yellow or reformist unions and from there defended itself against the bosses' offensive in a series of economic strikes. In 1928 in Shanghai alone, 120 strikes for better wages and reduced working hours broke out. The Stalinist CP, which was busy trying to send its own red unions into ill-fated political strikes, did not even take part in these economic struggles. The Chinese Trotskyists headed by Chen, persecuted as they were both by Chiang and the Stalinists, could do little. Thus the opportunity presented by this revival in the workers' movement was lost.

In 1931, the Japanese occupation of China began, starting in Manchuria. Stalinism refused to see that the immediate enemy of China was Japanese imperialism. "All imperialisms are the same and as such should be treated", they said. When the Japanese army laid siege to Shanghai early in 1932, the Chinese army force stationed there rebelled against Chiang's order to evacuate the city and resisted heroically for two months before retreating. This roused a wave of anti-Japanese fervour throughout China. Stalinism paid no attention to this anti-imperialist movement, which they categorised as social-democratic, and gave no help or support to the rebellious army, allowing Chiang's forces to crush it mercilessly. Moscow's men were too busy with their revolution against all national and foreign exploiters to see the importance of the national movement of resistance to the Japanese occupation.

This policy will be catastrophic for the peasant movement, which from 1925 on had continued ceaselessly to develop by leaps and bounds. After the defeat, it resumed its course. Along with the first Soviet government founded by Peng Pai, we find the peasant base established by Mao in the mountains of Ching-Kang-Shan with his remaining troops. From there the movement steadily advanced. A year later it had already occupied a part of Jiangxi province. Unlike Peng Pai's peasant movement it gives a great importance to the military aspects of the struggle and on the method of guerrilla warfare. This would permit it an ever greater development.

Stalinism, whose policy kept them from linking up this struggle with the workers' movement in the cities, almost brought disaster on the red peasant armies. In mid-June 1930 they ordered the Red Army to begin an offensive against the cities. Thus, they occupied the city of Changsha. Six days later they had to evacuate it, but they laid siege to the city. Imperturbable, Stalinism ordered Mao's forces to assist in the siege. Thus the Communist armed forces on orders from their leaders left their peasant bases to engage in a military adventure. On September 13, Mao broke the Stalinist discipline and returned to his peasant bases. This saved the peasant movement, and, on the basis of the guerrilla warfare method, it continued its expansion. This violation of Stalinist discipline in China soon permitted the creation of the Soviet Republic of China on November 7, 1931, in Juichi. It was not an artificial creation of Mao, for, according to Karol, it exercised "real control over one-sixth of Chinese territory, commanded an army of 145,000 men which was soon to double its 'effectives'".⁶ Its policy on the land question was directly revolutionary: "The land of the large landowners was to be purely and simply confiscated, while that of the rich peasants was to be distributed but not in its entirety: the rich were authorised to keep enough land to feed their families".⁷

At the time, despite his position as president of the Soviet Republic, the Chinese and worldwide Stalinist movement considered Mao a second-rate figure. The bureaucrats carried much more weight in the party hierarchy and they continued with Moscow's cherished policy of making a revolutionary impact on the cities. Mao repaid this attitude by not letting them participate in the formation of the Soviet Republic. There were in fact two factions in the Communist Party which completely ignored each other: Moscow's men in the cities and the Maoists in the countryside.

By the end of 1934, Chiang had succeeded in decisively defeating the peasant Soviet Republic, forcing Mao to withdraw to the north. The Long March signified the historic defeat of the peasants of the south, which brought to a close the cycle opened by the Second Chinese Revolution. It was the Stalinist policy that brought on this series of defeats of the working class, the anti-imperialist movement, the Communist armies and, finally, the peasant movement. But Mao's policy was also responsible because it disregarded the importance of building a revolutionary party, unity with Chen's Trotskyists, and struggle against the Stalinists' criminal policy in order to unite all the revolutionary movements against Chiang and the Japanese imperialists.

But neither the Stalinist policy nor Mao's or Chen's errors by themselves totally explain the 1934 defeat. All in all, Mao had a force equivalent to the force which later, in 1945, enabled him to defeat Chiang. The reason is that in 1934 the counter-revolution was on the offensive throughout the world and, as a consequence, the Chiang regime and imperialism were much more formidable. In 1945, it was Chiang and the imperialists who were in decline and the revolution which was on the rise.

⁶ K. S. Karol, op. cit.

⁷ Ibid.

During the Long March, the Chinese Communist Party, which had led the Shanghai insurrection and which had produced Mao's Soviet Republic, was reduced to almost nothing. Chiang had succeeded in defeating the workers', anti-imperialist, and peasant movements and had virtually liquidated the CP. On a dead body the parasites die. Thus with the practical extinction of the Chinese Communist Party, Moscow's men disappeared. Leadership of the party fell into the hands of the Mao wing which, basing itself on its armed forces and the peasantry succeeded with great hardship in surviving as a nomadic party and army. After 1935, when Mao took over the leadership of the party, there were no more Stalinist leaders in China, no more bureaucratic agents of the Kremlin.

With this statement we return to our original definition: Stalinism is not a theory of the revolution or a conception of the party but a parasitic excrescence, a social phenomenon, a bureaucratic apparatus dependent on Moscow. While Maoism may have all of the Stalinist vices and conceptions, it was not the same thing — to the good fortune of the Chinese Revolution—, it could never be a parasitic, bureaucratic excrescence dependent on Moscow. Its defining feature was to have not a Stalinist bureaucratic, but a revolutionary agrarian character.

In China, world Stalinism would have to be satisfied with imposing its policy on, or advising it on, men who were not its own. Thus the previous relationship with Chen was to be repeated: Moscow commanded not its own men but a handful of agrarian revolutionaries with a Marxist past and Stalinist ideological and organisational concepts. One of the effects of the final defeat of the Second Chinese Revolution was to be the disappearance of the Chinese Stalinist bureaucracy.

The Objective Bases of the Third Chinese Revolution: Decline and Permanent Counter-revolution

The capitalist and imperialist regime is characterised by systematic upsets of the equilibrium and *status quo* it has achieved, a logical consequence of its own laws. Such changes may be either quantitative or qualitative. The offensive of the Yankee exploiters against their workers during the 1920s represented quantitative change; the change that produced the great crisis of 1929 was a qualitative one. If we give the name counter-revolution to the leaps and qualitative changes, the abrupt breaking of the equilibrium that the exploiters execute in their relationships with exploited classes and peoples, we must recognise that there is an uneven and combined development of it. There are some countries, mainly the most backward, which are mercilessly and unceasingly punished by the exploiter's offensive. China is the most compelling example of this. From 1911 on, imperialism, the bourgeoisie, and the landlords were unable to achieve equilibrium, however unstable, for any number of years. From 1911 on, the counter-revolutionary offensive constantly provoked national and civil wars.

Under the regime of the imperialists and national exploiters, the situation of the Chinese workers steadily worsened. The regime, as Isaacs has said, offered them no alternative but an ever worsening situation. Let us take a look at this process, which is key to an understanding of the Chinese Revolution. With regard to imperialism, the fall of the Empire meant a turn for the worse. China was forced to abandon the offensive posture it had assumed as a semicolonial country trying to recover its independence by liquidating the foreign concessions and had to go over to a defensive posture, avoiding total colonisation. Through the agency of the warlords there began a stage of semi colonisation of different regions, of Latin-Americanisation, of division into spheres of influence with military chiefs who reflected the interests of the various imperialisms. This process acquired its full scope as the move towards colonisation crystallised in the Japanese invasion, which baldly and directly aimed at making China a Japanese colony.

Instead of achieving national independence and unity, the putrid Chinese bourgeoisie had brought the country to the point of direct colonisation. The imperialist regime produced in turn the following stages in China: from the preceding century to the fall of the dynasty, semi colonisation (principally of the port cities); after the fall of the dynasty, dismemberment of the country and semi colonisation of its territory by means of the warlords; after the failure of the Second Revolution, direct colonisation by Japanese imperialism.

With regard to bourgeois development, the situation was similar. The great industrial development in the coastal region, sparked by the First World War, soon turned out to be ephemeral. First, the great 1929 crisis and, later, the Japanese invasion wiped out Chinese industry, although a great Japanese industry developed in Manchuria. In the aftermath of the Second World War, this situation was aggravated by the hopeless crisis of the bourgeois economy, which was manifested in the most galloping of inflations.

“(…) 70 percent of the budget was devoted to the army. (...) One American dollar was worth (in Chinese dollars) – in June 1947, 36,000; August 1947, 44,000; October 1947, 165,000; May 1948, 1,000,000; beginning of August 1948, 10,000,000.”⁸

“The inflation led to complete prostration of business. ‘Production is paralysed’, wrote the correspondent of *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, October 17, 1948, ‘because of the lack of raw materials. The peasant producers refuse to sell their product so long as they cannot buy foods at official prices’. Fear of inflation led to a heavy disinvestment of capital. Such capital, transformed into gold bars or dollars, moved into Hong Kong, the United States, Latin America. Plant equipment deteriorated. Machines were no longer repaired. Capital ceased to be renewed. Inflation devoured what reserves remained intact in the country. Coal production fell to half the pre-war level; textile production to a similar level. Throughout Manchuria industrial production in 1948 stood at 10 percent of its normal level. (...) Great stocks of foods and cotton accumulated in the villages of Manchuria and northern China, while famine reigned in the cities. At the same time, huge stockpiles of coal accumulated in mining centres, while the peasant population suffered terribly from the bitter cold of winter”, Germain tells us.⁹

This overall situation— Japanese occupation, the liquidation of industry, the crisis of the Chinese bourgeois economy — would bring about a transformation in the character and structure of the government and the bourgeoisie. The further Chiang went from the coast, the more his government transformed itself into a Bonapartist government reflecting the interests of the most reactionary landlords of the interior and its effective master, Yankee Imperialism.

This Bonapartist character developed to such an extent that when it returned to the coast it no longer represented the interests of the industrial and commercial bourgeoisie there, but served as the bourgeois intermediary between imperialism and the Chinese economy. Thus a monopolistic concentration of the economy in the hands of bureaucratic capitalism developed to an extent much greater than anything known in the capitalist countries of the West. Specifically, the old Chinese industrial and commercial bourgeoisie was replaced by a new bourgeoisie intimately bound up with the state, which used it to control the key positions of the economy. This bureaucratic bourgeoisie, made up of only four families, virtually controlled, in conjunction with the state, the entire Chinese economy: 60 percent of the metallurgical industry; 53 percent of the petroleum industry; 55 percent of the textile industry; 70 percent of the machine industry; 62 percent of the electrical industry; 72 percent of the paper industry; 37 percent of the cement industry; 89 percent of the chemical industry.

There existed then a Bonapartist government, agent of the most reactionary landlords and Yankee Imperialism, which created its own capitalist base in order to free itself from the pressure of the old sectors of the bourgeoisie and to enrich itself through the exercise of power. That is, instead of bourgeois development in the hands of a modern bourgeoisie intent on accomplishing the national democratic tasks, we see a new bureaucratic bourgeoisie eager on guaranteeing the landlords the greatest possible exploitation of the peasants and continuing its promotion of the penetration of Yankee Imperialism.

This general crisis of the Chinese bourgeois regime was more clearly reflected in the situation of the peasantry than in that of any other sector of society. The peasants’ situation had been steadily deteriorating since 1911. Towards the end of Chiang’s regime it was catastrophic. Let us take a look: “Interest was extremely high and did not cease to mount in later years. On the eve of the war, it reached 40 to 60 percent a year. During the war it exceeded 100 percent for *three months*”.¹⁰

8 Ernest Germain, “The Third Chinese Revolution”, *The Fourth International*, Sept.-Oct. 1950.

9 Ibid.

10 Ibid.

At the same time the system of military requisitions of manpower and agricultural products which drained entire regions was established and extended. In the already cited article by Pei Wen-chung, it is related that in 1946 in the province of Hopei no one would accept a *mou* (about 0.15 acres or 666 square metres) of land as a gift since the special tax exceeded the income which could be gotten from it. Belden cites cases on the Chengdu Plain where the tax on the land exceeded its annual production by 100 percent.¹¹ And in the province of Honan, the same writer discovered a case in which the Kuomintang's military requisitions were 1,000 times the tax on the land. This had a very precise meaning: not only did the peasants lose their land, their food and their clothing; they also had to sell their women and sons as concubines or servants to the tax collectors or requisition agents. This is how Germain describes the situation: "Numerous villages were depopulated — the number of farmers who died of starvation during and after the war is estimated at ten to fifteen million! (...) Hundreds of thousands of small and middle peasants were dispossessed. (...) Thus the war and its immediate aftermath created on one side a new layer of speculators and parasite owners and on the other an enormous mass of expropriated peasants".¹²

This economic decline and the implacable offensive against the workers, as well as against the bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie, at the end of the war came in conjunction with the weakening of the world imperialist regime: the disappearance of Japanese imperialism, anaemia of European imperialism (including the British), and the weakening of Yankee Imperialism as a result of the aid it was obliged to give to European imperialism in order to prop it up and thus avoid the total collapse of capitalism in that continent. Chiang's relations with imperialism and Stalinism were additional factors. Because of his character as the agent of the most reactionary landlords, it was impossible for him not to make war on the agrarian revolution. For this he counted on the support of Washington and Moscow. But for the same reason, the Yankees were unable to impose their policy of a national-unity coalition government as they had in Europe, since Chiang represented the reactionary landlords who would accept no change in the agrarian regime. At the same time, however, they had to support Chiang who was also their agent. Nevertheless, they could offer him neither massive aid nor soldiers. Their economic aid went primarily to Europe to build up the bourgeois economy.

In this way, the intolerable situation of the peasantry and of Chinese society in general was transformed into an irresistible revolutionary thrust against a regime rotten to the core and a weakened imperialism. The hour of victory had arrived.

Revolutionaries have much to ponder on these objective conditions that led to revolutionary victory. They must also compare them with those which existed in Russia. Russian conditions were as nothing in comparison with those in China. Russia had not been clutched in the years-long grip of deepening peasant poverty, implacable imperialist colonisation, or of a bureaucratic bourgeoisie which gorged itself on the national economy — nor was there an ever before seen inflation or such a weakening of imperialism. But, nonetheless, the Russian Revolution won a rapid victory and with much greater ease. One fact explains this: in Russia there was a Bolshevik Party, in China there was not.

The Triumph of the Third Chinese Revolution: A Plebeian National War Becomes Transformed into an Agrarian Revolution

From 1935 on, the situation of the mass movement began to change. The Japanese occupation after 1937 would accelerate this change. It extended through the north, the coast and along the railway lines, provoking the flight of the Kuomintang (unable to offer the least resistance) and an uprising of the population, primarily of the rural population, against the occupation forces. The form this resistance took was guerrilla warfare. This must be emphasised because there is a tendency to think that the resistance to the occupation was purely and simply the work of the Communist Party. The truth is quite different. The occupation produced a vast movement of popular and peasant resistance outside the control of the Communist Party. This mass reaction can be explained as an effect of the

11 Jack Belden, *China Shakes the World*, Harper and Brothers, New York, 1949, p. 74.

12 Ernest Germain, op. cit.

uneven development of the Chinese Revolution: the Second Revolution had left the population or the south, where the process had centred, exhausted, but it had left the north virtually untouched. The revolutionary potential of the northern population was still intact when they were forced to confront the Japanese invader.

Jack Belden, the John Reed of People's China, reported this movement in great detail. He quotes a former Kuomintang supporter, who had gone over to the movement, as telling him, "(...) 'I found that the people had already organised several bands of their own and had, with the disappearance of the Kuomintang officials, elected several county governments'. (...) In the summer of 1939, there were therefore two governments existing side by side, two district managers, two county heads and two mayors of each city, Lu and Shih did not recognise the elected government of the people and the people did not recognise the government of Lu and Shih".¹³ This patriotic war against the invader gave rise to *de facto* dual power between Chiang and these new organs of plebeian power.

The Communist Party became the leadership of this movement. As Belden emphasises, "No one seemed to realise that many Chinese supported the Communists because the Communists were supporting the governments which the people themselves had formed during the Japanese war".¹⁴

Mao accepted the new worldwide Stalinist line of popular fronts with the democratic bourgeoisie and came to an agreement with Chiang, recognising him as the sole ruler of China. Mao's republic and army became part of Chiang's China. In order not to frighten the bourgeoisie and the landlords, the Kuomintang support base, he abandoned agrarian reform. As an old Communist related it to Karol: "Before the Sian incident (preceding the deal with Chiang) a very radical agrarian reform had been enacted in the north of the province which was controlled by our supporters and was beginning to be applied, but after the agreement with the Kuomintang the redistribution of the land stopped".¹⁵ The flag of People's China still bears the four stars which stand for the famous "bloc of four classes" (the national bourgeoisie, the urban petty bourgeoisie, the workers, and the peasants). But, unlike the situation in the 1920s, Mao did not subordinate himself organisationally, militarily, or politically to the Kuomintang. Formally, he accepted the Stalinist line, but he continued to retain full independence. On the other hand, this popular front was really an anti-imperialist front against the Japanese invader who, as the Trotskyists had emphasised in opposition to the sectarians, was China's main enemy at that time.

At the end of the war, the power of the peasant communes and the zones liberated from the enemy under Mao's government extended over 100,000,000 inhabitants. Stalin, in conjunction with the Yankees, handed over the cities of Manchuria and the arms there to the Kuomintang's troops. At the same time, they both pressured Mao to capitulate to Chiang by accepting a government of national coalition headed by the latter. Mao yielded.

"On October 11, 1945, an accord was concluded between the Kuomintang and the Chinese CP, proposing the convening of a popular consultative conference for the purpose of ironing out all differences. This conference met in Chungking in January 1946, and after twenty-one days of discussion adopted a series of resolutions on the organisation of a coalition government, reconstruction of the country, the military questions, the calling of a constituent assembly, etc. There was no question of a radical reform (General Albert C. Wedemeyer, *United States Relations With China*, pp. 135-140). Finally, on February 23, 1946, under the aegis of General Marshall, who had come to China as a mediator, the Kuomintang and the Chinese CP concluded an agreement for the unification of their armed forces. The road to 'social peace' seemed open (*United States Relations With China*, pp. 140-143.)".¹⁶

The outbreak of the civil war came at Chiang's wish and against the desires of the Communist leaders. Chiang felt himself sufficiently strong to launch an attack on the zones under Mao's control and to abrogate the agreement reached in the Popular Consultative Conference. As Chu Teh said, "If the Kuomintang had put into effect the decisions of the Popular Consultative Conference, there

13 Jack Belden, op. cit., p. 74.

14 Ibid. p. 169.

15 K. S. Karol, op. cit.

16 Ernest Germain, op. cit.

would have been no civil war". Chiang's offensive plunged the Maoist leadership into a sea of doubts. On the one side, the poor and landless peasants were pressing for a solution of the land problem; on the other Chiang was making war on them to recover the liberated zones. The landlords and rich peasants in the liberated zones were the potential or real allies of Chiang. Mao and his group were profoundly reluctant to break their alliance with the national bourgeoisie in their zone. Belden has described these doubts in this way:

"The Communist Party delayed. In the meantime, it called back local cadres and began to collect their experiences trying to wrest from the welter of details a proper course of action. Autumn 1945 passed. The demands of the peasants grew more urgent. Winter 1946 came and went. Still no decision. Spring came. Time for planting. Time for decision. Still the Communists held back. The delay made everyone feel more keenly the menace of Chiang Kai-shek's armies battering on the threshold of the Border Regions. The Communist Party, hovering on the brink of this historic decision, was like a soldier waiting to cross the line into enemy territory. One step forward, or one step backward and the thing is over and done with, but it is the waiting that frays tired nerves, starts up uneasy thought and makes one wonder what is on the other side of that line. One longs to go over that line and find out what is there. Just so the Communist Party stood on the borderline between the past and the future — and waited. One step back — peace with the landlords; one step forward— war with feudalism. Truly a terrible decision to make. In the summer of 1946, messengers brought down to the county Commissars the word: 'Divide the land'. The party had cast the die. From now on there could be no retreat".¹⁷

The agrarian revolution which had been decreed produced a mobilisation of the poor peasants against the rich, which led to the constitution of poor-peasant bodies and transformed these into the *de facto* power. "So long as it was only a question of rent or settling with traitors, the upper circle of the peasantry had played a prominent role. But when the land began to be divided and when both the landlords and the tenants lashed out in a fury of violence, the rich peasant began to look with distrust and fear at the spread of the movement, not knowing where it would end".¹⁸

"Fighting for the land, the peasantry created its own leading bodies — peasant unions and tenant associations. (...) The agrarian reform posed the question of power. In thousands of villages it brought an already existing struggle out into the open. Because of the agrarian reform, the peasants were forced to continually ask themselves: Who will have the power? We or the landlords? (...) The division of the land, in doing away with landlord rule, laid the possibility for elections and thus put village government in the hands of those favourable to the Communist cause".¹⁹ Thus Belden describes the consequences of the agrarian reform.

We need to add that, because of lack of information, this extraordinary journalist has not sufficiently highlighted that the struggle waged by the poor peasants was directed against both the landlords and the rich peasants. Years later the president of People's China was to make clear the fact that the revolution of the poor peasants was spontaneous and it had been carried out against the will of the Communist Party:

"In the period between July 1946 and October 1947 in many regions of North China, Shantung and Northeast China, the peasant masses and our rural militants were not able (!), in carrying out the agrarian reform, to follow the directives published May 4, 1946 by the Central Committee of the Chinese CP, directives laying down as inviolable in the main the land and property of the rich peasants. They did it according to their own ideas and confiscated the land and property of rich peasants as well as the big land holders."

"(...) we authorised the peasants to requisition the land and excess property of the rich peasants, and to confiscate all the property of the big land owners to satisfy in a certain measure the requirements of needy peasants so that the peasants would join with greater revolutionary enthusiasm in the people's war of liberation." ²⁰

¹⁷ Jack Belden, op. cit., p. 169.

¹⁸ Ibid. p. 173.

¹⁹ Ibid. p. 202.

²⁰ Speech by Liu Shaoqi on June 14, 1950, to the national congress of the political consultative committee on the agrarian reform law, which was finally adopted on June 28, 1950. Quoted by Ernest Germain, op. cit.

What is important is that the movement of resistance to the Japanese invader by the patriotic peasant communes, as a result of the civil war, became a poor peasants' revolution against the rich peasants for agrarian reform. The Communist Party could not halt it and it was obliged to accommodate itself to it. At the beat of the agrarian reform, there was a resurgence of the peasant associations, and they took power in the villages. This in turn accelerated the civil war. Chiang plunged into a violent offensive against the peasants and the Communist Party which represented them. This was Chiang's final offensive, and it ended in definitive defeat for him and victory for Mao throughout China. Mao's triumph, leaving out of consideration the talents of the Communist generals as strategists, was essentially owed to the fact that his armies were, to a certain extent despite him, the standard-bearers of agrarian revolution. It was the revolutionary mobilisation of the poor peasants that wrecked Chiang's army. On October 1, 1949, a new stage opened up in the history of China and of mankind. A new state was born that definitively broke the imperialist equilibrium and gave new impetus to the colonial revolution.

The Class Dynamic: Substitutionism or Socialist Agrarian Revolution?

How should we define the dynamic that carried the Chinese Revolution to victory, and its permanent course toward transforming China into a workers' state? Isaac Deutscher²¹ believed that what occurred was a typical case of substitutionism. The Communist Party, although the working class were not actively involved in it reflected its interests, and was a workers' party. In leading the peasant revolution, it gave it a working-class direction, an unconscious direction of permanent revolution. Trotsky many years before had discussed this conception of the Stalinists. "In what way can the proletariat realise 'state hegemony' over the peasantry, when the state power is not in its hands? It is absolutely impossible to understand this. The leading role of the isolated Communists and the isolated Communist groups in the peasant war does not decide the question of power. Classes decide and not parties".²² It is interesting to note that all serious interpretations of the Chinese Revolution accept its uninterrupted, permanent course. The only point at issue is its class dynamic.

In the Trotskyist view, the key to the entire Chinese Revolution and its subsequent socialist course lies in the revolutions of the poor peasants in the north and earlier in the south. Trotsky, in his letters to Preobrazhensky, had noted that "the Chinese Revolution ('the third') will have to begin the drive against the kulak at its very first stages".²³ From this fact and from the struggle against imperialism and its agents he concluded that the Chinese Revolution would be much less bourgeois than the Russian, that is, more socialist from its outset.

He thus stressed a profound difference from the Western agrarian revolutions in whose first stage the peasantry as a whole attacked the feudal landowners. Since there were no great feudal landowners in China and the real exploiters of the peasants were the usurers and the rich peasants closely linked to them, the first stage of the agrarian revolution would have an anticapitalistic and not an anti-feudal character. In making this assessment, he repeated the analysis Lenin had made for Russia. Lenin said in reference to the Bolshevik effort to mobilise the poor peasants against the kulaks: "It was only in the summer and fall of 1918 that our countryside experienced its October Revolution".²⁴

It is our hypothesis, which better documentation might disprove, that there occurred in China a great agrarian socialist revolution in the sense which Lenin gave this definition: the poor peasants along with their organisations seized *de facto* power locally in the countryside in order to move against the rich peasants. This struggle became an essentially socialist struggle.

The Communist Party did not initiate this revolution. On the contrary, it attempted to contain it, to play the role of arbiter among all the peasant and "democratic" (anti-Kuomintang) strata.

21 *Fichas de investigación económica y social* [Datashets of Economic and Social Research], No. 5, March 1965.

22 Leon Trotsky, *Problems of the Chinese Revolution*, Pioneer Publishers, New York, 1932, p. 239.

23 Leon Trotsky, "On the Canton Insurrection: Three Letters to Preobrazhensky", *New International*, New York, Vol.3 No.2, April 1936.

24 Leon Trotsky, *Quatrieme Internationale*, Nos. 1 and 2, January-February 1949.

The poor peasantry, despite the Communist Party, with which it had its frictions, made its October Revolution before the proletariat in the cities took power. This socialist character of the agrarian revolution existed already in embryo in the agrarian Communist movement led by Mao and Peng prior to 1935.

The great development of the agrarian Communist government, its growing influence, is explained by the vanguard character of the class struggle in the Chinese countryside, the struggle of the poor peasants against the rich, which the Maoists were able to impress on the peasant movement of the south before Mao was won over to the ideology of popular-frontism. The soviet socialist program of Maoism at this time was suited to the socialist character of the Chinese agrarian revolution. This was the basis of its formidable expansion and the enormous force it was able to acquire.

It is true that both Trotsky and Lenin always considered that only the industrial proletariat of the cities could lead this agrarian socialist revolution. On the other hand, the schematists refuse to consider that this anticapitalistic agrarian struggle is defined as socialist by the character of its “historical agency”. From the sociological point of view, the poor and landless peasants must be considered petty bourgeois. But, leaving aside the theoretical task of defining the landless or starving peasants with full “sociological” precision, we feel that some indications or intimations demand consideration.

Capitalism arose because it was able to create a gigantic industrial reserve army from the peasantry uprooted from their lands or sunk in extreme poverty on little plots, who had to sell their labour power to live. Marxism defined this social phenomenon and this newly developing class in accordance with its dynamic and not its past. For Marxism, it represented unemployed labour-power and not an impoverished petty bourgeoisie, an industrial reserve army and not a peasantry wandering along the roads or dwelling on the outskirts of the cities. The contradiction exhibited by China and many other backward countries is that the penetration of capitalism has created a giant reserve army of outcast peasants, which cannot be utilized because of the crisis of capitalism worldwide and nationally and the consequent lack of industrial development. As a result of these historical circumstances, these poverty stricken peasants, exploited by the rural capitalists, become a reserve, agents of anti-capitalist revolution in their villages, soldiers of the revolutionary armies, Communist militants or future workers of primitive socialist accumulation. They are potential workers who become a vehicle of socialist revolution. Thus a historical leap occurred.

Instead of going through the phases traversed by their brothers in the West — from landless peasants to workers “in themselves” in manufacturing and the factories to workers “for themselves” in the trade unions or workers’ parties — they skipped over the stage of being factory workers “in themselves” to become anti-capitalist revolutionaries locally and nationally. Moreover, this was a class phenomenon since the majority of the Chinese peasantry was poverty-stricken or landless. That is, the Chinese Revolution was essentially a revolution of poor peasants against the rural Chinese bourgeoisie; it was an agrarian revolution which took power on the local level in villages or small zones. The peasant, petty-bourgeois past of these revolutionaries manifested itself in the character of their revolution, which was primitive, barbaric and, most important, lacking in centralised organs of power. The leading bodies of this revolution, the poor peasants’ associations, had no democratic central body; they were merely local.

In its pursuit of victory this revolution became intertwined with the women’s revolution against the authentic survivals of China’s past, paternalism, the struggle in Chiang’s zone against the landlords and against the bureaucratic Capitalism which dominated almost all Chinese industry and, ultimately with civil war against the dictatorial regime of Chiang, the agent of Yankee imperialism. But in all this revolutionary fabric, the crucial factor was the poor peasant revolution against the rural bourgeoisie.

The actual dynamic of the Chinese Revolution followed the lines predicted by Trotsky: in the countryside the struggle of the poor peasants, the vast majority, against the agrarian capitalists and Chiang became a struggle against imperialism and Chinese capitalism. The Communist Party tried to play an arbiter’s role in this whole combined process but it had to yield to the anti-capitalist socialist dynamic that the Third Chinese Revolution of the poor peasants imposed upon it.

From its initial stages as a civil war, the Third Chinese Revolution was a socialist revolution with an uneven development that would mark its entire future. The industrial proletariat played no role in the winning of its victory; the poor peasantry was its vanguard. Since for geographic and demographic reasons no possibility existed in China for the transformation of the poor peasantry into a new class of relatively stable farmers, the struggle of the poor peasantry continually accelerated the course of the revolution, though showing a historical weakness in its inability to create a central leading body of power. The need for industrial proletarian leadership of the poor peasantry was not operative in achieving the victory of the Third Chinese Revolution, but it is more and more so for solving the economic and political problems of the poor peasantry, the real authors of the Third Chinese Revolution.

People's China

After the war, a new working-class revival began in the big cities, but it was mercilessly crushed. As a result, it played no role in Chiang's defeat and Mao's triumph. The Chinese People's Republic was proclaimed at the end of 1949 as a consequence of the mass movement's uneven development. The agrarian revolution of the poor peasants in the north, whose organs of power were the poor-peasants' associations, along with the revolution against feudalism, bureaucratic capitalism, and Yankee Imperialism in the south. The two processes were intimately related but the primary one is that which has been noted. The Maoist leadership strove to keep the revolution within the bounds of a democratic revolution. It was unable to achieve this, however, because of the logic of the socialist revolution in the countryside, which produced a state with a workers' and peasants' government. This is a social definition of this regime since, politically, it was typically Bonapartist, a personal regime based on the party and the army.

This Bonapartist dictatorship was revolutionary, however, not counter-revolutionary like the Stalinist one. It was not based on the victory of counter-revolution but on the uneven development of the revolutionary process itself, which gave no time for the emergence of organs of power of the industrial proletariat. Only the semi-proletarian sectors in the countryside were able to develop organs of power, and these only on the local scale, leaving the regional, provincial, and later the national levels to the Party and the Army.

The Maoist bureaucracy is a political phenomenon with profound political and social causes: the backwardness of the landless peasants, petty-bourgeois influences, the weakness of revolutionary Marxism, the decline of the industrial proletariat, and the pressure of Stalinism. It is not, like the Russian bureaucracy, a privileged economic caste raised to power as a reflection of world counter-revolution. As a Bonapartist government, it reflects the contradictions between the various classes and in turn attempts to keep these differences alive so that it can play an arbiter's role. During the resistance against the Japanese occupation forces, it balanced itself on the landowners, the agrarian bourgeoisie, and the poor peasants, and after the start of the civil war it balanced itself between the agrarian bourgeoisie and the poor peasants. This policy of balancing between the poor peasants and the rich failed in the north, where the poor peasants imposed their revolution, but it was successfully applied throughout the rest of China.

Nothing is more demonstrative of this than the Mao's team's eagerness to prevent it reoccurring in south China in 1950: the leaders issued strict directives in favour of the rich peasants and to block any action by the poor peasants. "The principal agency for land redistribution was the peasant association and one third of these organisations was to be made up of middle-class peasants, including upper-class peasants. (...) The law also officially sanctioned the employment of labourers"²⁵. The revolutionary process which had been effected by the peasants in the north also developed in the south, but with greater slowness. This role of arbiter of the leadership was reinforced by the beginning of the growth and organisation of the working class, by the appearance of the privileged sectors typical of a transitional economy – the bureaucracy, and by its attempts to

25 Hugues, T.J. and Luard, D.E.T., *The Economic Development of Communist China 1949-1958*, London, Oxford University Press, 1962.

conciliate the democratic bourgeoisie (“It is the very task of the New Democracy we advocate (...) to guarantee that the people can freely develop their individuality within the framework of society and freely develop such private capitalist economy as will benefit and not ‘dominate the livelihood of the people’, and to protect all appropriate forms of private property.”).²⁶

This government was to be revolutionary because it would unify the nation for the first time and free it from imperialism; basing itself on a mass mobilisation, it would halt inflation and thereby regularise the functioning of the economy and eradicate hunger in China. Led on by the logic of the revolution that brought it to power, it began to organise the workers’ movement in the cities, enacted a timid agrarian reform in the south, and expropriated the bureaucratic capitalists, thus bringing China to the threshold of transformation into a workers’ state. From the beginning the government showed that it was revolutionary as well as Bonapartist by fighting against the corruption, bourgeoisification and bureaucratisation of its cadres.

Shortly after coming to power, it had to confront Yankee imperialism in Korea. This confrontation forced the regime’s policy leftward and compelled it to attack the bourgeois remains in the country. Then began the great trials of counter-revolutionaries and the confiscation or transformation into mixed companies of the bulk of the capitalist enterprises in China. Thus the most populous country on earth was transformed into a workers’ state. While sociologically the emergence of a workers’ state meant that the regime became a dictatorship of the proletariat, this did not change its Bonapartist character. On the contrary, due to the onset of the stage of primitive socialist accumulation, this was accentuated.

So it was that China became a workers’ state with profound bureaucratic deformations but with a revolutionary Bonapartist regime, not a counter-revolutionary Bonapartist regime as in the USSR. The deformation of the Chinese workers’ state was the result of the revolution’s uneven development, in which the industrial workers’ movement had played no role.

After 1953 the stage of primitive socialist accumulation began. The successes were truly spectacular: the atom bomb and a steady economic progress greater than any yet known. One fact can illustrate this: in 1958 China overtook Great Britain and West Germany to become the world’s third-ranking coal producer, with 270 million tons. China benefited from the existence of the USSR and the other workers’ states, not only from the aid they extended— which however great was always of minor importance— but from the example and lessons of the five-year plans.

The successes attained in the first five-year plan began to produce new problems and contradictions for the Chinese Revolution. Most important was the advance and increased social weight of the working class. The number of waged workers neared 20 million. “An article in *People’s Daily*, August 1957, described a trip of 2,500 miles by a lower-ranking official of the Chinese Federation of Labour Unions accompanied by a member of the Chinese government. They visited ten cities from Peking to Canton. Some of the union members in Canton complained that their union functionaries kept close ties with the administration. In Canton, Changsha, Wuhan, and the other cities, the labour unions were known as the tongues of the bureaucracy and the tails of the administration and the Department of Workers’ Control. It was said that the trade union functionaries never really fought for the workers’ interests. Many times they found dreadful working conditions— excessive hours and crushing pressures on the workers—and the labour unions never did anything to alleviate such conditions. Later some trade-union leaders complained that if they did what the workers asked, they got no answer from the government functionaries and were liable to be considered agitators or ‘tail-enders’.”²⁷

The rise of the Chinese workers’ movement was given a boost by the workers of Poland, Hungary, and East Germany, and by the Khrushchevite course. In 1956 and 1957 the leadership set a democratic course: the Hundred Flowers campaign.²⁸ Like any democratic orientation of a

²⁶ Mao Tse-tung, “On Coalition Government”, April 24 1945, *Selected Works*, Lawrence and Wishart, London, 1956, Vol. IV, p. 273.

²⁷ Hugues, T.J. and Luard, D.E.T., op. cit.

²⁸ In January 1956, Mao called to promote “a hundred flowers bloom and a hundred competing schools of thought”. Immediately, a spokesman for the party said: “to the artists and writers we say, may a hundred flowers blossom. To scientists we say, may a hundred schools of thought compete”. On April 30, 1957 was authorised the realisation of an

bureaucratic and Bonapartist government, however much based on a workers' mobilisation, it had an inviolable limit: total democratisation of the state, transforming it into a workers' democracy, cannot be achieved by Maoism. In the face of the wave of criticism provoked by this call to democratisation (often from the counter-revolutionary right) and the pressure from the workers' movement, which began to organise factory committees, the government retreated; and in 1958 it began its famous "Great Leap Forward"²⁹ to transform China into a great industrial country like England, and started the "People's Communes".³⁰ These two policies failed completely and their failure was aggravated by three years of natural calamities (droughts, floods, etc.). This forced the government to retreat again.

In the meantime the Maoists' relations with the Soviet bureaucracy were becoming continually more strained until they produced the final break. This serves as yet another proof that these tendencies represent two distinct bureaucracies and regimes, not only with respect to their policies but with respect to their origins and patterns of development. After 1960, this rupture became ever more acute.

The failure of the "great leap forward" and the droughts forced the regime to give again higher priority to agriculture and the production of necessities. The Chinese atom bomb is, nonetheless, a demonstration of the enormous potential of economic planning in a workers' state. However, the present confusion of the leadership is shown by the fact that the third five-year plan has been drawn up without a public statement of its goals.

The disaster suffered by the Indonesian Communist Party,³¹ brought on by the suicidal policy pursued by its leadership (with the Maoists' blessing), dangerously isolated China in face of the threat of world imperialism. Precisely because of this defeat, Yankee Imperialism has been able to step up its intervention in Vietnam. Thus Yankee soldiers and airplanes have recently been encroaching on the Chinese frontier.

Primitive socialist accumulation in China, an extraordinarily backward country, has inevitably brought a whole series of mounting contradictions: continuing differentiation of the peasantry into bourgeois and poor peasants (Karol estimates that the average incomes in the countryside range from 160 to 600 yuan from commune to commune, and Chinese functionaries themselves refer to associations of poor-peasants);³² bureaucratisation of state, party, industrial, and military functionaries; growth and reinforcement of the industrial working class; greater weight of the cities as against the countryside. The first two phenomena are negative and harmful to the workers' state. They put it in constant danger since they produce counter-revolutionary strata or sectors. Such elements can only be defeated on the basis of the political development of the industrial working class in alliance with the poor peasantry. This requires the most extensive workers' democracy. As long as this is not attained, the contradictions engendered by primitive socialist accumulation under

extensive campaign by the press, meetings, etc., so that all criticism surfaced. But on June 8 the *People's Daily* started the counterattack and in few months hundreds and hundreds of critics were drawn into public discussions and forced to make confessions and humiliating self-criticisms.

29 The "Great Leap Forward" was an attempt to super accelerated industrialisation made during the years 1958-59, i.e. during the Second Five Year Plan. While major industrial targets for 1960 were reached, agriculture experienced a serious failure. This seriously affected the Chinese industrial plans for 1960-1962, forcing to spend all existing currency in the purchase of food and also affecting export plans of processed agricultural products. So much so that the combined value of Chinese production for 1960 was significantly lower than that of 1957.

30 In August 1958, the CPC Central Committee reported the realisation of communism in China is no longer a remote event. We should actively use the form of the People's Communes to explore the practical way of transition to communism. Based on this wilful proposition Cooperative Unions were hastily constituted that brought together up to 2,000 households of peasants who wanted to achieve in three or four years ownership of the entire people. The failure of this experience was also the failure of the "Great Leap".

31 The Indonesian CP was the largest and strongest of all existing outside the "socialist bloc". Under the leadership of its Secretary General Aidit, it sided firmly behind the Maoist positions. This alignment did not prevent it from developing a policy of conciliation with the bourgeois nationalist regime of Sukarno, who was called "brother" and attended as guest of honour CP congresses. Despite having para-military forces, the Indonesian Maoists did not raise the seizing of power, but a policy of "pressure" on the democratic sectors of the bourgeoisie. This orientation was to blame for the massacre unleashed by the Army in October 1965 (the victims have been calculated on half a million people), which found the masses totally unprepared.

32 K.S. Karol, op. cit.

a Bonapartist government, however revolutionary, will become ever more severe; for the Bonapartist government is the reflection of these contradictions and the impossibility of their resolution under such a regime.

The Cultural Revolution is a demonstration of the fact that all these tendencies have produced a crisis, and that the Bonapartist regime, which succeeded in keeping all these contradictions alive and in drawing its sustenance from them, has entered into crisis along with Chinese society.

Maoism

Maoism can be considered from various angles. One of its most important facets is the enormous contribution made by its political-military-social theory of guerrilla warfare to the program of permanent revolution. Maoism incorporated its own experience into its theory. This experience was based on the obvious phenomena of Chinese reality, which Maoism combined. First, in a country that has not achieved its bourgeois unification, there are geopolitical margins for the revolutionary struggle in areas remote of the centre. Put another way, the weakness of bourgeois development leaves loopholes non-existent in an advanced capitalist country for struggle and revolutionary agitation. Second, that the peasantry is a class apt to join anytime the revolutionary process. Third, the previous two conditions allow the implementation of a military strategy of guerrilla warfare, which has its own dynamics but should always be combined with the previous two factors. We can say that the Maoist theory is an enrichment of great importance to the Transitional Program, which Trotskyism acknowledged by incorporating it into the same.

“This union attains one of its highest expressions in guerrilla warfare, which — against the armed forces of imperialism and of the bourgeois state— proves itself to be a powerful factor of struggle and a no less powerful factor in political organisation.”

“Guerrilla formations of this type can live, develop, and win only when composed of individuals with a very high revolutionary morale, and when connected with the masses of the country. That is to say that they tend to become a select vanguard that elaborates and applies a policy corresponding to the interests of the masses.”

“In addition to its vital political importance, the guerrilla has also proved itself to be an ‘economical’ form of warfare, needing only limited cadres, a small number of troops, little material equipment, yet that paralyzes considerable enemy forces.”³³

Maoism represents, to some extent, a repetition of the case of the *Narodniks*. The latter contributed to Marxism through the influence on the formation of the Leninist concept of a centralised party of professional revolutionaries. Although Maoism is not Trotskyism, i.e., revolutionary Marxism, it has contributed the programmatic elements noted to the program of the world socialist revolution.

We can also consider Maoism from the standpoint of its method, thought and most apparent characteristics. In this light, it is provincial, backward, empirical, pragmatic, half reformist and half revolutionary, with an ideology at once Jacobin, Stalinist, and Marxist; it practices armed struggle; a revolting cult of semi-barbarous features of Mao’s personality, coupled with a paternalistic attitude.

None of this is Marxism. We must study the growth and dynamic of Maoism in order to be able to understand its contributions, its characteristics, and its crisis. Its development has four clearly delineated stages: the ideological imprint of the CP up until 1927; the revolutionary socialist agrarian tendency until 1935; the official leadership of the CP and government of the liberated areas, which reflected the agrarian national movement of resistance to Japanese imperialism and world Stalinism, up until 1945; the government of People’s China which was borne to victory by the revolution of the poor peasants in the north of China. Of these four stages, the first two are prehistory. However, it is from those stages that Maoism’s contributions of Marxism stem: the geopolitical concept of guerrilla struggle as class struggle in the countryside prior to a seizure of power by the proletariat.

Present-day Maoism is the result of the struggle and victory in the zones liberated from the Japanese occupation. In these zones there arose a plebeian people’s state, turned in on itself, with a

³³ “Documents of the Fifth World Congress of the Fourth International”, *Fourth International*, No. 1, 1958, p. 24.

primitive economy in which the landowners and rich peasants wielded an influence. Though linked to world Stalinism, this state was totally independent of imperialism. The government of Mao and the CP in this zone was revolutionary and Bonapartist. It was the guarantor of the unity of all classes and their united struggle against the Japanese occupation.

In this stage Mao went over ideologically and organisationally to Stalinism. He accepted the concept of revolution by stages, in which the first stage would be a democratic revolution of all national classes against feudalism and imperialism, and the second socialist phase was left to the distant future. Organisationally, he consolidated a typical Stalinist party without internal democracy and topped by a party oligarchy. This does not mean, however, that the Kremlin controlled it; it remained independent. The lack of imperialist influence and the absence of a substantial regional bourgeoisie gave the Maoist regime and party a thoroughly independent character which complemented its primitive, barbaric, peasant, and Jacobin-populist features. Its centralisation and Bonapartism derived not only from its role as arbiter between Stalinism and the masses and among the various agrarian classes, but from the atomisation of the peasants.

A product of isolation, of its role as arbiter among classes, sections of classes, and regional peculiarities, Maoism in turn became a superstructure whose survival depended on such conditions and tended to generate them.

Maoism is a consequence of the retreat and uneven course of the world revolution, which brought about first the isolation of the revolutionary resistance to the Japanese occupation, and then the isolation of the revolution of the poor peasants from the workers of China, Asia, and the metropolitan centres. It was a provisional, episodic combination in the course of the world revolution that consolidated itself and formed an apparatus.

This explains Maoism's similarities and differences with Stalinism and Castroism. For contrary to what many commentators on the Chinese Revolution believe, Mao's justification of Stalin is not a tactical error. Maoism's Stalinist characteristics stem from its development in the Stalinist phase, from the character of the Chinese mass movement during that phase, and from the deep impression left by the retreat of the world workers' movement. Its differences from Stalinism derive from its role in leading a process of revolutionary guerrilla warfare first against the Japanese, and later of the poor peasants against Chiang and what he represented.

Its differences from Castroism result from the fact that Castroism developed in a directly revolutionary stage, untrammelled by counter-revolutionary Stalinism or an advancing world reaction. Hence Castroism's dynamic is less provincial, less nationalistic, and has a less bureaucratic and Bonapartist character. The stages in which these two movements developed explain both their profound, essential differences and their similarities: both reflect the revolutionary advance of the colonial masses following the method of guerrilla warfare. To sum up: Stalinism is the product of counter-revolutionary pressure on a victorious workers' revolution; Maoism is the product of a provisional combination of counter-revolutionary Stalinism and the uneven development of the Chinese mass movement; Castroism is a direct result of the advance of the world revolution.

The Cultural Revolution is a desperate attempt to contain the contradictions produced by the course of the world revolution, the counter-revolutionary advance of Yankee imperialism in Vietnam consequent to the reactionary victory in Indonesia, and by the internal problems resulting from the growing strength of the proletariat and the hopeless crisis of the poor peasantry. We do not know which in this explosive combination of contradictions is the most important. But we do know one thing for certain: these contradictions are the backdrop for the grave political crisis that has been shaking Maoism and China since the beginning of the Cultural Revolution.

The current Maoists' attempt to repeat history is condemned to failure unless extraordinary factors again intervene (such as a new imperialist war against China), which would delay for a time a new upsurge of the Chinese proletariat. When this upsurge, of which there are symptoms, comes, it will be the disciples, party and method of Chen Tu-hsiu, and not those of Mao, that will come to the historical forefront; for the unevenness in the Chinese Revolution between the development of the peasantry and the working class will have ceased to exist. The tragedy of Maoism is that it set in motion the forces of permanent revolution, of the Chinese and world workers' movement, which will in the end, incorporate Maoism as a stage in its development and go beyond it.

The War of National Liberation in Vietnam and the Agrarian Revolution

The victory of the Chinese Revolution was followed by the National Liberation War in Vietnam. In a certain measure the sequences of the Chinese revolutionary processes were repeated. The people and the peasantry responded to the permanent offensive of the colonial powers by defending themselves with determination and valour, using the same method of the Chinese — guerrilla warfare. There are, however, certain specific characteristics that mark this struggle. Stalinist influence has been much greater on the Indochinese Communist Party than on the Chinese. This is because communism in this region has had much closer ties to the West, mainly to the French Communist Party. This gave it a much more opportunistic character. On the other hand, the influence of Trotskyism was much stronger and more important in Indochina, and among the Indochinese exiles in France, than it had been in China.

“The initial phase of the Japanese occupation was marked by important uprisings: October 1940 in Tonkin, November 1940 in Cochin China, January 1941 in Annam. The Japanese and French imperialists united in fierce repression of these people’s movements. It was then that the Viet Minh was set up. It was formed by two nationalist parties, embracing the petty bourgeoisie and the left wing of the liberal bourgeoisie; two communist parties (the Stalinists and the Trotskyists); and by women’s, peasants’ workers’, soldiers’ and youth organisations. The program which it formulated in 1941 was a program of democratic freedoms. It did propose agrarian reform, but this meant only confiscation of the property of the Japanese, the French and Indochinese ‘fascists’, and the Church. It had the same effect however, because all the possessors collaborated with the Japanese occupation forces and accommodated themselves to the Petain government. The second major point of the program was armed struggle against any invader country”,³⁴ thus a document by an Indochinese Trotskyist published in 1945 describes the situation.

Japan’s defeat produced a popular upsurge and gave rise to people’s organisations that took local administration into their hands. The Viet Minh remained the sole central government. It sought to demonstrate its “seriousness” to the French imperialists by dissolving the people’s organisations. In Paris, Ho Chi Minh’s comrade, Maurice Thorez, was minister of state and tried by every means to keep Indochina inside the French empire as an “associated state”. Ho Chi Minh’s government’s negotiations with the French government failed, despite the fact that the French and Indochinese Communists did not demand independence. This policy of Stalinism drove the majority of the Indochinese workers in France into the ranks of the Trotskyist movement. The Trotskyists alone called for full independence for Indochina.

French imperialism, which also expressed the interests of the other great colonial powers, could not permit the existence of an independent national government like Ho’s. It began a gradual military occupation of Indochina, starting from the south. After November 1946, it stepped up its offensive against the north which was totally controlled by Ho’s forces. Ho strove to maintain his alliance with the shadowy national bourgeoisie, which participated in his government of national unity. This reformist line led him to a dangerous postponement of the launching of agrarian reform. The guerrilla struggle was waged in the name of national unity with the bourgeoisie. Giap conceded that “in 1953, the party and the government decided to carry out an agrarian reform to liberate the productive forces and give more powerful impetus to the resistance”. From this moment on, the Vietnamese guerrilla war was changed from a war of national liberation into an agrarian revolution. In the last analysis, this explains the legendary heroism of the Vietnamese fighters.

The talents of the party leaders as strategists, together with the combativity of the peasants and guerrilla fighters, enabled the Viet Minh to defeat French imperialism at Dien Bien Phu. The Geneva Accords recognised this victory and divided Indochina into two parts until 1956, when general elections were to be held to unify the country. In the south, a puppet government was imposed, an agent of French imperialism and in the short term of Yankee imperialism.

The Yankees ordered their puppet of the time not to observe the Geneva Accords in the south, thus assuring total colonisation of South Vietnam. The National Liberation Front developed in response to this colonisation and began guerrilla warfare against the agent of Yankee Imperialism.

³⁴ *Quatrieme Internationale*, Nos. 22, 23 and 24, September, October, November 1945.

The rest is recent history. Faced with the collapse of its agents and the South Vietnamese army, the White House threw the weight of its army and air force into the war to teach the colonial revolution an exemplary lesson. Before our eyes the most colossal counter-revolutionary war in history is taking place. Neither the USSR nor China was ever subjected to anything like it. Despite this the NLF masses and North Vietnam not only continue to resist but are slowly beginning to turn the tide of the war. And this is being achieved by a small people in a small country. The creation of several Vietnams, as Che Guevara proposed, is both possible and indispensable.

Thus far the USSR and China have refused to join in a political and military united front of total support to North Vietnam and the guerrillas in the south. Only the Castroists, the revolutionary intellectuals of the West, some black leaders, Korea, North Vietnam, and the Fourth International have proposed such a united front. The USSR continues unperturbed its diplomatic strategy of peaceful coexistence with imperialism. Its aid to North Vietnam is just a tactical expedient in the context of this strategy. Mao's China has rejected a united front under the pretext of its pretended revolutionary policy which dangerously isolates China from the revolutionary forces of the entire world. The victory of the Vietnamese revolutionaries will not only mean a disaster for imperialism but also for the policies of Moscow and Peking.

The October Revolution and the Chinese and Indochinese Revolutions

On the fiftieth anniversary of the October Revolution, we must make an assessment of it in comparison with the results of the Chinese Revolution. The first thing that strikes one is that as a result of the Russian Revolution a new revolutionary international, the Third International, sprang into existence with Communist parties in all, or almost all, countries.

This new organisation was to be a decisive factor in world politics. Its role ranged from the development and organisation of national revolutionary parties and of support to the world revolution in Lenin and Trotsky's time; to aid to the counter-revolution or bureaucratic defence of the USSR under Stalin's aegis. This democratic-centralist Bolshevik international embraced the revolutionaries of the entire world. It was as important or more important an achievement than the workers' conquest of state power, although the two phenomena were interconnected. The Russian Bolshevik party was conscious of the revolution's international character. Therefore, from the very first it gave top priority to a program and organisation for revolutionaries throughout the world. Its policy and organisation were subordinated to the goal of world revolution, and, most important, revolution in the metropolitan capitalist countries.

The Chinese Revolution, which has meant many successes for the world revolution, such as the struggle of the heroic Vietnamese guerrillas, has not succeeded, nor has it attempted to achieve what Lenin and Trotsky achieved: a revolutionary socialist international and national parties. This is because the leaders of the Chinese and Indochinese revolutions, themselves a part of the international socialist revolution, have not understood the dialectic of this revolution. The victories in the colonial world are, in the last analysis, tactical successes of the world revolution. The revolution's strategic objective is no other than victory in the metropolitan capitalist countries, primarily in the United States. So long as this is not achieved, the colonial revolution will always be in danger; there can be no respite for it because the international class struggle will continue to mount in intensity.

The legacy of the Russian Revolution has had a peculiar history. The legitimate and direct heir of its revolutionary socialist program and organisation is Trotskyism. But its heirs in the attainment of revolutionary victories of the post-World War II period are narrowly nationalistic parties like the Maoists, which propose no program or organisation for the international socialist revolution. They have stubbornly refused to accept and advance the real heritage and lesson of the Russian Revolution: its militant internationalism. This contradiction, as Mao's China shows, cannot long persist, since it is a transitory consequence of the very world situation that is being transformed.

Everything indicates that now, fifty years after the Russian Revolution, hundreds of thousands of revolutionaries throughout the world are preparing to accept its heritage: the urgent necessity to strengthen the revolutionary Marxist international. §

Addendum

The Chinese Cultural Revolution

(From *La Verdad*, #102, August 12 1967)

How we should analyse the phenomenon

First of all we must reach agreement with respect to how we are going to study the phenomenon of the Cultural Revolution. There are those who study it from the point of view of the similarity between the “cult of Stalin” and the “cult of Mao”. As the two cults are very similar, possibly worse than that of Mao (under Stalin it was never said that thanks to the study of his works the world championships in any sport were won), the cultural revolution of Mao would be as bad or worse than Stalinism. The process of Cultural Revolution would be something similar to the process which culminated in the Moscow trials and the liquidation of the Bolshevik party. In an eagerness to make analogies, this conception is forced to put an equal sign between the Bolshevik Party of Lenin and Trotsky and the Chinese Communist Party. Mao equal to Stalin, both parties also equal.

We are against this conception. What is decisive is not, nor can it be, the resemblance between the cults of Stalin and Mao. What is decisive is to find out what social phenomena are hidden behind these cults, what is behind events such as the Cultural Revolution, which have caused and continue to cause mobilisation of millions of students and workers.

Taking into account these considerations, it will emerge clearly whether similar facts, the cults of Stalin and Mao, hide the same or diametrically opposed phenomena.

Key to understanding Maoism: the world revolution

The first thing to note, when comparing the two cults, and by logical consequence consolidation of Stalinism and the triumph of Mao, is that both phenomena occur in a diametrically opposed international context: Stalinism is consolidated when the world counter-revolution advances; Maoism, when the world revolution has achieved huge successes (which does not prevent major defeats of the mass movement).

The cult of Stalin was accompanied by a strengthening of the apparatus of the Russian state and party bureaucracy (Stalinist monolithism triumphed). In China, by contrast, we see a diametrically opposite phenomenon: a monolithic party and state, formally similar to Stalin, suddenly, as a result of the Cultural Revolution, shatters, countless tendencies arise that political, intellectual and militarily fight among themselves. The consequences of Stalinism and the Cultural Revolution, whatever the intentions of their authors, are also different. In one case, under Stalin, the most colossal monolithism known to modern history was consolidated; on the other, the Cultural Revolution broke a previous monolithism, the Chinese CP. Moreover, the intentions of the authors of both movements, objectively, were clearly different: Stalin carefully avoided going against the party apparatus. On the contrary, he was his fiercest defender against the workers; Mao appealed to the students first and

then the workers to pressure the state and party apparatus. It is precisely this appeal what started to shatter, possibly against his wishes, the monolithism that characterised his cult and his regime.

To understand what is happening in China we have to start from the following facts. First: that the revolution in China did not essentially rely on the working class to gain power, but depends increasingly on the working class to develop the revolution. Unlike the Russian revolution that left exhausted the working class; in China the revolution has been fortifying from the beginning the morale and political and organisational strength of the workers, albeit very slowly. Second, that the world revolution, and especially the heroic Vietnamese resistance to Yankee imperialism, boosts the morale of Chinese workers immediately.

These two events are essential to understand what is happening in China. But let us totally clear, essential does not mean they alone explain what happens in China, since to do so it is imperative that we understand the serious internal and external contradictions that gnaw the current Chinese society.

The bureaucratic cancer

Of these contradictions, the most serious for any backward country entering primitive socialist accumulation, i.e. its transformation into developed country, under workers' leadership, is the bureaucracy. It is the same evil of every trade union when it becomes powerful but the workers are forced to control their leaders.

Today there are some testimonials that demonstrate the extent to which bureaucratic evil has gnawed Chinese society. The "Red Rebels of Canton" in number 3 of January 15 this year, condemned an old friend of Mao, in these terms:

"In order to satisfy his new desire for pleasure, Tao Chu had built a large number of hotels and luxurious country homes out of the public purse. Not only had he several residential houses on an island, but also a magnificent farmhouse near the hot springs of Tsinghua. But he was not satisfied with all that. He also had various 'black houses' as well as a 'floating club' and a "crystal palace".

"The privileges of Tao Chu, regarding these plans were more severe than those of the emperors of the past. In order for Tao to be able to go three times to the hot springs of Tsinghua one hundred workers had to work in supplementary form for several days to build a bridge. Three million Yuan (Chinese currency) were spent at this point."

"Tao was also a fanatic of dance. In order to create a place for dance, he spent four million yuan to build a dance hall. "

Not all examples of bureaucracy would reach such a magnitude, but the facts are categorical. The most obvious of all, since the case of Tao may be anecdotal, is that by decision of the Council of State of July 18, 1955 the wages paid in public administration are in a ranking from 1 to 26. Said in other words, there are huge differences in favour of the high bureaucratic layers.

This situation has been exacerbated in recent years, with the improvement of the Chinese economy. On the one hand peasants and bourgeois incomes were improved and, on the other hand, wages were frozen (since 1959).

This is the sharpest contradiction of current Chinese society, which is accentuated by the trust and political progress of the workers. But there are other contradictions in addition to those already named.

The generational and other conflicts

As far as we know, it corresponds to known Trotskyist theorist Ernest Germain having first pointed out the generational phenomenon. In China there are 20 million students and there is only the possibility of 5 million jobs, the vast majority of which are already taken. This causes a tremendous anguish for the studious youth who do not see prospects for their generation to find work in their professions and have no other choice but to return to the countryside after graduation.

This contradiction is compounded by the traditional contradiction in all peasant countries that have entered the path of socialist primitive accumulation: between rich and poor peasants in the countryside, and between all peasants, as proprietors, against the state which gives them less than what they delivered it to develop the industry. A dispatch from the Shanghai's H.N.A. from April 4, 1967, recognised that "the poor and lower middle peasants around Shanghai have fully answered the call of Chairman Mao". That is, the very own officials sources acknowledge that there is a profound social and economic differences within the Chinese countryside.

The international situation

The international situation of China has deteriorated in recent years in a very dangerous way, bringing it closer to the possibility of war with Yankee imperialism. The main blame for this lies with the Russian bureaucracy that has done everything possible to isolate the Chinese revolution. Given the increasingly hinted advances of Yankee imperialism and its escalation in Indochina, the Russian government has systematically refused to state that any imperialist attack on China will be considered an attack against the USSR. In opposition to this China, although a little later, on March 24, 1966 stated in a letter to the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, that any imperialist attack on the USSR shall be considered an attack against China and therefore it would defend Russia. Parallel to this refusal to defend China from any imperialist attack, the USSR has subjected it to an economic and technical blockade that has dangerously isolated China in this stage of industrial development.

The leadership of the Chinese Communist Party has a great share of blame for the deterioration of the international situation in China. The ultra-opportunist policy it followed in Indonesia was a catastrophe not only for China but for the world revolution

Nevertheless the Vietnamese revolutionaries offset with their heroism, to a large extent, this isolation as they place the Chinese masses in almost direct contact with the most colossal revolutionary struggle that Yankee imperialism has faced.

Although the international situation has not been the determining factor in the Cultural Revolution, but rather, on the contrary, the internal contradictions were, it is important to take it into account as a framework.

People's China: the crisis of the Communist Party

Analysing the crisis currently underway in the Chinese Communist Party is an ordeal. A total lack of workers' democracy in the country is compounded by the lack of organic life of the communist party itself. This is not a slander against a country that has revolutionised world politics in recent years and, together with the Russian Revolution, has inflicted imperialism with one of the two most terrible blows. Needless to say that this comment does not diminish even for a minute our unconditional defence of China against all imperialist attack and our pride and admiration for a country that has managed to make such a great revolution. No, by noting our criticisms we are merely commenting on categorical facts known by all who fairly know the present history of People's China. An example: there has been no congress of the Communist Party since 1958 and since September 1962, the Central Committee has not met. Our editorial staff, our Party, our readers are not accustomed to any way of telling and commenting other than the truth, however crude this may be. This is where we are going.

The accusations and the possible positions

If we were to summarise the positions of the opponents according to the accusations that the official Chinese press makes, they would be:

1. They doubt the infallibility of Mao Tse-tung. The official press accuses Teng-To as the "leader of the clique of anti-party conspirators". The newspaper quotes the parables written in 1961 as a demonstration of its accusations. In these writings, which are considered today day as proof of his crime Teng said: "It's just a crazy dream of a foolish man to want to know everything and possess an

inexhaustible wisdom”. In another article he criticised a famous prime minister of national history, Wang An-shili, who had great ideas but a big fault, “he was not open to other people’s thinking”.

2. They want more intellectual freedoms, freedom of expression and the right to dissent from the official line. The same author Teng at a meeting of students in December last year urged that a new atmosphere of “hundred flowers” in which everyone could write “according to their own opinions” be created.

3. They have criticised the excesses of the “leap forward” plan and the futile efforts to achieve steel production in ancient furnaces (the Maoist government tried to produce steel in each village, causing such a large and useless effort by the peasants that the plan was shelved shortly after). Teng tells a story of the era Ming about a man suffering from amnesia commenting “those suffering from this disease will detract from their own words and become worthy of complete distrust” and if the symptoms appear in an extreme form “the sufferers will do nothing”, therefore, “the results will be disastrous”. The highly renowned British weekly *The Economist*, believes Teng-To “is probably referring to the partisan attitude after the ‘leap’, their convenient amnesia about their mistakes, their policy changes and their paranoia to the opposition.”

4. They have sympathy for the Khrushchevites. The organ of the army in an editorial on May 4 indicated that the current struggle was linked to “a death struggle against antiparty and antisocial activities of the anti-Chinese choir raised by modern revisionists and reactionaries of all countries, in accordance with the activities of the reactionary classes within the country”.

5. They claim to be better communists than the leadership, try to change economic and agricultural policy and they even suggest that it should be changed because it is already old.

The meaning of the crisis

This quick overview alone indicates that within the Chinese Communist Party there is a serious crisis. The importance of the characters attacked is another demonstration of it. Much more difficult to determine is the nature of the crisis and the tendencies in conflict, as it is very possible that it is not merely one tendency, but several, that the leadership in a typical bureaucratic manoeuvre try to amalgamate.

A specialist on the Chinese question, Victor Zorza, from the *Manchester Guardian*, compares the situation in Peking with the situation of “the Soviet leadership a few months before the death of Stalin”.

The Chinese press, by an indirect route has been responsible for confirming this comparison. In a way that recalls the best times of Stalin, all radio stations and newspapers have launched a campaign to demonstrate the colossal importance of studying the works of Mao to solve all problems. The example given and repeated it is the article written on May 17 of this year by a melon seller, Choti Hsin-Li, as reported on May 19, by Hsin-hua, the official news agency of People’s China, which underlines the crucial importance it had for the increase in selling melons by the author, the reading and study of the philosophical works of Mao. Chou Hsin Li is not alone in his opinion: the best table tennis player in the world, who is Chinese, some time ago stated publicly to the press that “his success in matches is due to a deep study and application of Mao’s thought”.

These tragicomic and superficial aspects of the crisis hide many other deeper, substantive aspects that explain the crisis. The foreign policy of the People’s China government has gone from failure to failure. To the colossal defeat suffered— because of its opportunist political line— by the world’s strongest communist party, the Indonesian, which is closely linked to the Chinese party, is to be added the increasing isolation, within the communist camp, of the Maoist leadership as a result of the sectarian policy of refusing to propose or accept a united front with Russia to help North Vietnam. It is known that the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party is of the opinion that the United States and Russia are practically the same, that the two countries should be treated equally. The own North Vietnam moves away day by day from People’s China. Evidence of this: the attendance of Ho Chi Min’s party to the conference of communist parties in Moscow, which was boycotted by the Chinese. The bureaucratic sectarianism combined with an opportunistic policy has led to disaster for the workers and colonial movement, like in Indonesia, and these disasters isolate more and more

the Chinese sectarians from the revolutionary movement. This isolation accelerates sectarianism. The result is an infernal circle: the bureaucratic sectarianism isolates them and isolation isolates accelerates their sectarianism.

Internally the Chinese bureaucratic regime is beset by the serious problem of international isolation that poses a constant threat of armed intervention by Yankee imperialism. This threat forces it to bear on the development of its economy the heavy ballast of increasing a strong arms industry. This ballast causes major contradictions.

Needless to say, the Soviet bureaucracy is the main culprit in this situation and these contradictions of the Chinese economy and policy. With its policy of peaceful coexistence with Yankee imperialism, with its lack of full support for the war of the Vietnamese fighters, the Soviet bureaucracy facilitate the counter-revolutionary war of imperialism and isolate People's China. But the Chinese, in their way, pander to this reformist and, even further, counter-revolutionary line of the Soviet bureaucracy.

The organ of the Chinese army has fully understood the deep meaning of the current crisis by systematically comparing it with the crisis that preceded the Hungarian councils against the Soviet army and the role of Chinese intellectuals with the famous Petofi circle of Hungarian intellectuals.

A balanced solution to all the problems the Chinese revolution faces would be possible with a correct international policy of total support to every revolutionary movement in the world, of united front with Russia and all the workers' states to support North Vietnam with weapons and soldiers, combined with the opening of workers' democracy within China: that every tendency that accepts the regime and the revolutionary structure be entitled to express its positions and form its own party.

This solution, the only viable, will not be achieved under the government Mao, despite the progressive character that has played in history for being the initiator of the socialist revolution in the largest country on earth, but by a new workers', student and peasant vanguard. Whatever its momentary outcome, and even if it causes an episodic strengthening the bureaucracy, this crisis is registered in this perspective. §

Draft Resolution on China

(Presented by Livio Maitan, in March 1967, to the International Executive Committee (IEC) of the Fourth International)¹

The Plenum of the International Executive Committee ratifies the declaration adopted in November 1966 by the United Secretariat, which gave a correct analysis of the Chinese Revolution genesis, of its early stages and its most important implications and that synthesised the attitude of the Fourth International given the most pressing problems it posed to the communist movement in China and at a worldwide scale.

The Plenum considers however that a further analysis is needed, because the Chinese crisis has known reconsiderations and has entered a new phase, where the confrontation of tendencies at the top and in the different sectors of the bureaucracy is increasingly becoming an extremely dramatic conflict that has involved the mobilisation of fundamental social layers, in an unprecedented movement in the post-revolutionary period.

1) Despite the success achieved with the formal decisions of the Plenum of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party in August 1966, with the displacement of some of the main leaders of the Party and the State and with the mobilisation of sections of the student masses, the Mao-Lin Piao group failed to achieve definitive results and resolve the crisis that has lasted since November 1965. In the period from the closing of the Plenum at the beginning of December, the situation did not cease, indeed, to be very precarious and confusing: conflicts that erupted between detachments of Red Guards and workers and peasant groups, divisions that were manifested in the very heart of the Red Guards, a part of which overflowed the slogans laid down from above, groups of the state and the party apparatus touched by the campaign organised their counteroffensive, Mao's tendency oscillated rectifying many times its attitudes.

Fundamentally this tendency was solicited by conflicting needs. On the one hand, as it noted the extent of the resistances and oppositions in the apparatus of the party and State itself (on which it had wanted to be based on the early phases of the crisis) it was compelled to stimulate a mass mobilisation. On the other hand, after the beginning of the movement of the Red Guards it verified this movement, at least in part, tended to develop beyond the frame the tendency struggled to set. The tendency could not but end in new tensions and differentiations that actually divided the own group promoter of the Cultural Revolution.

Obviously, it is difficult to tell what were the exact reasons for this division that, in any case, has manifested itself very quickly and has taken shape not only in the application of different lines but also in the use of different organisational tools.

The problem of the attitude with regard to the main representatives of the other tendencies — Liu Shao-chi and Teng Hsiao Ping— was, without doubt, one of the reasons for friction. But while Mao and Lin Piao seemed to combat attitudes characterised as “centrists”, they were at the same

¹ Unfortunately the original French version or an English translation of this document is not currently available to the editors, and this document had to be translated from its Spanish translation into English. **[Translator's note.]**

time hostile towards those who wanted more draconian methods employed and those who wanted to push further the mobilisation of the Red Guards.

The divisions in the Maoist group— where the vicissitudes of some characters was one of the symptoms— logically favoured the resistance of the other tendencies and the attempts to counter-attack. Once again, it is difficult to state with certainty the course of events given the biased nature of the sources of information available. But the essential results are very clear: in early December, a few months after the irruption of the Red Guards, the Mao-Lin Piao group was far from controlling the situation, from having disarmed their opponents, from having entirely channelled their own troops and “*a fortiori*” of having established a new leadership team sufficiently broad and stable. In a context where the fight becomes increasingly rough (this is probably the stage where the first repressions, recognised later by the same officials, took place) and where, moreover, international factors (the Vietnam War above all) which had played powerfully in the outbreak of the crisis, did not cease to exert a dramatic influence, Mao could not merely apply the line laid down from the Plenum of the Central Committee, but rather he had to take new initiatives to break the impasse.

2) After some preparatory actions, the Mao group eventually made the decision to make a call directly to the workers and peasants masses and at the same time prepared itself to make the Army play— despite persistent divisions— a much more important and decisive role than in the previous phases. The mobilisation of the masses was stimulated with ideological motivations identical or similar to those launched to mobilise the Red Guards: the workers were urged to eliminate supporters of the capitalist route who had infiltrated the political and economic apparatuses, to enforce their will and aspirations, to choose revolutionary committees inspired by the example of the Paris Commune.

As for the Army, it was called not to deviate, but to participate directly in the political struggle, at this time when the lines were faced in a major conflict.

The call by the Mao group matched, indeed, one of the culminating phases of the whole long Chinese crisis. It contributed, in turn, to further deepen the mobilisations that went hand in hand with the intensification of the resistance by their opponents— whose strength in the apparatuses at all levels manifested more and, at the same time, were becoming apparent in much of the country— centrifugal tendencies of different nature and scope. If on one hand those who believed they were being attacked strove to resist and to reply appealing to all their means and using the positions they held, on the other hand, the movement, which emerged as a result of Mao’s calls, had a tendency to develop according to its own dynamics.

All this culminates in the conflicts that have disrupted for a few weeks numerous Chinese cities and regions, in the strikes of Shanghai and other industrial centres and in the movements of certain peasant sectors.

The interpretations that explain events such as the demonstrations in Shanghai— either as a plot by reactionaries and supporters of the capitalist path, or as the result of an action organised by an anti-Maoist tendency characterised as able to influence decisively the masses—, cannot be considered anything but false and tendentious. In fact, the movement has exploded in the context created by the calls to the mobilisation of the masses, similarly to what happened before the student movement sectors. But, since it got in motion, the movement of workers tended rapidly, on a much broader and more concrete base than the Red Guards had, to develop according to a relatively autonomous dynamic with its own objectives and content which went far beyond what was proposed by Mao’s calls, which on the other hand were very vague.

In general, the meaning of events in Shanghai and in a certain number of large cities and rural regions is as follows: the breakup of the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party and the progressive disintegration of the Party and State apparatus at all levels have created a void, a relative lack of power, which has allowed the different social forces in the country to get in motion under the impulses of their own needs and their own objectives.

Thus, a crisis that had begun as a result of conflict at the level of leadership cadres has become a social crisis where all fundamental tendencies of transition from capitalism to socialism were outlined and clashed, beyond the official slogans and tactical manoeuvres of any particular group.

3) The movement of workers in China’s most industrialised city and richest in revolutionary traditions has an undeniable anti-bureaucratic reach. In their attack on those who were held

responsible for the material difficulties and for not giving true proletarian democracy, workers have resorted to traditional struggle tools: suspension of work, strikes themselves, street demonstrations, occupation of government buildings, designation and sending of delegations to regional and central authorities. Their demands concerned, according to the information available here, the level of wages and living conditions. The problem of housing also played an important role, if it is true that people who had bad housing have occupied houses and buildings.

In the countryside, the movement has been very limited. Mostly it took place in the regions closest to the big workers' centres, among politically sensitive layers. Anyway, this made it possible to check what the main tensions that persist in this sector are. Despite the specific features of the Chinese experience and despite the fact that the solutions hitherto adopted by the regime are not comparable to the solutions adopted by the Stalinist USSR, the problem of relations between peasants and the State always remains, since the standard of living of the peasantry remains significantly lower than that of the urban classes. Hence certain claims raised by the mobilised peasants: allocation of a greater share of the product to household consumption, ability to devote more time to the individual plot and equalization of the situation of peasants and city classes. It is understood that in peasant movements of such nature, tendencies are based on legitimate demands of the peasantry and especially of the poorest layers, but run the risk of becoming entangled with the most conservative and even reactionary tendencies.

The layer which during the crisis found itself in difficult conditions, cornered, on the defensive, is undoubtedly the layer of cadres and economic specialists in general. With the exception of restricted groups (geared especially towards investigation of very high level) — which have remained sheltered from the most direct pressures— this layer has been, indeed, under attack from all sides: it began with the Mao group (see resolutions of the industrial conference in the spring of 1966) and it was followed by the mobilised masses. Cadres and economic experts have probably striven to assert their "rights" before the crisis (there were tendencies in the party that reflected their views with regards to the economic orientation) and will, without doubt, again do so at a later stage.

But they could not cope with a crisis that will culminate in mass mobilisations, because of their limited numerical strength and the weakness of their political positions.

The survivors of the old regime do not seem to have played an important role, even when an exceptional fact cannot be ruled out entirely, mainly in the countryside where some of them strove to exploit this confusing situation. In fact, they were the focus of the attacks of the Red Guards in the cities during the early weeks and whatever the formal positions taken in relation to them, for example, the beneficiaries of state interest titles, they will come out of the test probably weakened, and deprived of a part, at least, of the privileges enjoyed until now.

4) As indicated by the statement of the United Secretariat of the IV International in November 1966, there has been and still is in China a Khrushchevian pro-Soviet tendency, which is considered particularly dangerous by the Mao group, especially because of its international links. But as the crisis unfolded, it appeared increasingly clear that it was caused by a division within the same team that, in spite of differences and nuances, it was essentially in agreement with the anti-Khrushchevite line and had the common responsibility of the orientation of the last eight years. The break was probably caused by differences in the assessment of the world situation, on the balance sheet of the policy carried out in a country like Indonesia, on the problem of the united front or of joint action with the USSR in Vietnam. In parallel— and always in relation to the prospect of imperialist aggression— the differences erupted on economic issues and the attitude to take towards the intellectuals. If at the beginning Mao thought that his opponents were mainly in specific layers (a sector of the army, the economic bureaucracy, the broad intellectual layers) and estimated to settle their accounts very quickly with groups that controlled important political positions (see Peng Chen to Peking), he then found that a good part of the apparatus resisted his line, which was reflected in the attitude of men like Liu Shao-chi and Teng Hsiao-ping. Moreover, the best characterised positions and tendentially the closest to a consistent anti-bureaucratic criticism are represented by men best known as journalists or intellectuals, who in the past already had probably expressed in a more complete form, an oppositional platform. Hence the particularly violent attacks in a purest Zdanovian style against

certain characters and certain intellectual groups, mainly accused of wanting to raise an opposition by means of a Chinese edition of “Petofi Circles”.

Then, as we had pointed out, the group promoter of the “Cultural Revolution” split. This process is further accentuated at the time that Mao launched his calls to the workers and peasants, the movements of Shanghai and other cities were taking place and the army intervened directly and with all its weight into the fight. Certain groups were not favourable to the spread of mass mobilisation (explaining that production was locked but who really wanted to avoid overflows; others, including the military, were against the use of the army and the masses and a possible weakening of the army in a dangerous situation for the country).

Shanghai in this area is the theatre of the most spectacular events: given the overflow of the working masses movement, the local leader group— which had been at the beginning of the crisis in November 1966 one of the main supporters of Mao and his tendency— exploded and while a part was opposed to strikes, according to Mao’s position, another part suffered pressure from the rank and file and accepted certain demands of the workers actually making some concessions. In this crucial episode the tendencies at the level of bureaucratic groups intermingled in a process of interaction and mutual influence.

Finally, from late January, after the “conquest of power” in a number of towns and factories, new conflicts arose between the tendencies that wanted to thoroughly attack the apparatuses and old leaders, including cadres emerged from the organisms created in the recent experience and those who endeavoured to channel the movement saving most of the cadres and leaders, integrating them into the new organisms and ensuring the role of Army as “cornerstone”.

5) The events of recent months, mainly the strikes in Shanghai, have allowed checking specifically the reach of the orientations of the Mao group, its nature and contradictory positions.

Upon entering the scene the working and, partly, peasant masses expressed their fighting potential by resorting to their own methods and effectively breaking bureaucratic control. The Mao tendency, after some hesitations acted harshly against the strikes and demonstrations to the point of denying the workers concessions it had given to the Red Guards (sending delegations to Peking, ease of travel, etc.). At the same time it mobilised the Army that, although sometimes confined itself to political action, in the most explosive situations developed a truly repressive action. Forgetting, therefore, everything it had said in its repeated calls on the primary role of the masses, on the need to learn from them and that they matured from their own experience, the Mao-Lin Piao tendency strove to break the movement, to channel it and control it as strictly as possible, using the classic bureaucratic methods, denigrating the objectives of the mobilised sectors and presenting the movement in its propaganda, as a result of a diabolical plot.

It will, however, be difficult to forget that while taking such attitudes to the events of Shanghai and other large cities, the Mao group kept agitating its propagandist and ideological motives and making calls to the formation of revolutionary committees. It also had to do it to counteract the action of other groups and to hit other sectors on the apparatus still on tenterhooks, but not to compromise its relations with the masses, whose support it needed. It is precisely in this phase that particularly significant texts appeared where it was demanded once again the revolutionary democratic tradition of the Commune, noting the need to form new proletarian organs of power and advancing anti-bureaucratic slogans criticising the entire practice of the post-revolutionary period. It is also as a result of this attitude that, despite interventions against the strikes and the officially announced repression, the movement was not drowned, mostly in a series of small cities, but on the contrary, it continued expressing itself in disparate ways (including radical sectors of the revolutionary Maoist rebels) which strove to sweep all apparatuses and to implement certain propagandists slogans of Mao.

It is precisely the development of such tendencies what explains the turn made by the Mao group after late January. The political leitmotif of the Maoist texts becomes the “triple alliance”. This formula anticipates new leadership organs with participation of revolutionary rebels, party leaders and cadres and representatives of the Army. The rectification campaign that followed aimed to recover the vast majority of cadres and leaders by again assigning them an essential role and by confirming, at the same time, the need for intervention and the presence of the Army. The use of the

term “Commune” to characterise the leadership organs of Pekin and Shanghai was abandoned and, more importantly, the leadership functions were entrusted to men appointed from above, of whom cannot be expected to be the direct expression of the mass movement.

Such conditions explain the essential role played by a man as Chou En-Lai, who is probably the one best placed to eliminate the “excesses”, restore some balance, channel the movement, and also prepare a compromise between Mao and Lin-Piao with certain sectors of the old ruling group. There are moreover, other urgent demands that could stimulate a relative normalisation. The reopening of schools, beyond the tactical concerns, corresponds to the need not to cause further delays in the training of cadres and specialists, which is for China one of its major goals. All the more reason why it is essential to avoid lower production, mainly in agricultural activity close to the tasks of spring. It is significant that after some time the emphasis in official texts is placed in boosting production and the realisation of higher levels, essentially by intensifying labour and the elimination of certain bureaucratic obstacles, which represents the most concrete goal to the revolutionary rebels and Red Guards. It is possible that the Mao group, at a given stage, endeavour to channel the movement mainly by setting up the prospect of a new leap forward in the economic sphere, which otherwise could be justified by the development of the world situation and the threats of imperialist aggression.

6) So far the balance sheet of the crisis can be summarised as follows:

I) The leadership which was formed during the war and revolution and which had held its substantial homogeneity in the vicissitudes of the revolutionary period has been dismantled and its eventual restructuring is extremely difficult. This is more serious because the problem of Mao’s succession cannot be ignored and has not been resolved, given that the role of Lin-Piao is not recognised by large sectors of leaders and cadres.

II) The apparatus of the State, the Party and the different organisations (trade unions, youth, etc.) has been totally disrupted and has lost to a large extent its hold over the masses. In this area as well, a recomposition will not be easy, given that a number of ideological motives proclaimed by Mao’s team left in any case their footprints in the most advanced sectors of the masses. The alternative of using repressive methods will not be easily done, because repression should be conducted on a very large scale and the use of the army with this objective would be extremely dangerous in the current international context.

III) Essential changes have taken place in the relations between the masses and the cadres linked with the masses on the one hand, and the leaders and leadership apparatus on the other. This will greatly facilitate the formation of a new revolutionary vanguard.

All these elements must be considered within the frame of a situation where the Mao group, because of its orientation and current conceptions (as has already been indicated by the statement of the Unified Secretariat of November 1966) is unable to provide a real solution to the most urgent problems of the Chinese revolution both internally and at the international level and where, for the first time after the victory of 1949, the masses are mobilised powerfully in a process whose profound logic is that of an anti-bureaucratic political revolution.

7) The International Executive Committee of the IV International vindicates its analyses and attitudes about the Sino-Soviet conflict and the objectively more progressive nature of the Chinese positions that it considers substantially confirmed by the events of the past two years. With regard more particularly to the problems posed by the crisis of 1965-67 the International Executive Committee takes up the ideas expressed in the resolution of the Unified Secretariat and primarily:

“At the present stage, the IV International reaffirms the need to establish a united front of all workers’ states on the platform of a consistent struggle against United States aggression in Vietnam. While the IV International maintains its severe criticism of the main responsible, the Soviet bureaucracy, it considers that the mistrust by China can be explained by an entire series of acts by Moscow (ranging from passive attitude in Vietnam to a mistaken policy in Europe; and from military aid to the reactionary Indian bourgeoisie to the loans given to the military government of Brazil); it considers that a Soviet leadership on a par with its obligations would reaffirm its alliance with China in the hour of danger and clearly point out to imperialism, without any possibility of error, that a war against China will be considered an attack against the Soviet Union, while at the same time it condemns the refusal of the united front and unity of action by Mao-Lin Piao.”

“As for the economic problems, while the IV International rejects any kind of Lieberman type technocratic solution, which actually means strengthening of individual sectors of the bureaucracy and an inadmissible accentuation of social inequalities in a workers’ state, believes that balanced economic growth of China will be possible only through the establishment of workers’ management by applying methods of democratically centralised planning and by the democratic coordination of planning of the workers’ states.”

“The International holds that a workers’ state should support egalitarian concepts— in the specific historic sense pointed out by Marx and Lenin— and abolish all forms of privilege. Regarding the current Chinese Communist Party propaganda, it denounces first the difference between ideological expressions and reality and draws attention to the fact that in the final analysis true communist equality cannot be established unless there is a very high level of the productive forces and the fact that in the transition period the only way to approach this goal is fighting against all forms of bureaucratic domination and leadership and for the amplest internal democracy in the party, the unions, the mass organisations, the state activities and all levels of administration.”

“In the field of culture, the IV International rejects the deformation of the positions of Trotsky and the Trotskyists by the official organs of the Soviet bureaucracy and reaffirms that the fight against the ideology of the past and against possible distortions caused by the influence of the class enemy cannot be effectively conducted through administrative measures and imposition of stereotypical slogans or ossified rules. It must be earned based on autonomous development of the potentialities of the new society, from an expansion of a genuine critical spirit and the free exchange of various concepts and orientations. In particular the practice of cult of personality taken to its most grotesque expression must be condemned in the most categorical way, since its practice threatens to drown the whole spirit of independence, lock all ideological development, making impossible a truly independent life in the workers’ movement and the state.”

With respect to the orientation of Chinese revolutionary Marxists, the International Executive Committee considers that they should not identify with any of the tendencies that are opposed although there may be elements and groups that express positions approaching revolutionary Marxism, and some sectors of the masses mobilised by Mao are stimulated by demands and aspirations that inspire the action of revolutionary Marxists.

The Chinese revolutionary Marxists must support all mass movements or sectors of masses and engage mainly in any action that allows politicisation of the masses and their intervention to defend their own requirements and achieve their own goals, regardless of any domination or influence of bureaucratic groups. This participation is an imprescriptible obligation, even if certain spontaneous claims are not entirely correct and appropriate.

The revolutionary Marxists will respond to accusations of “economism” and to the characterisation as a labour aristocracy tendency launched against the strikers from Shanghai. Certain criticisms of “economism” may be legitimate to the extent that they target the bureaucratic and technocratic layers preaching the introduction of a certain kind of privileges, but they have a clearly different meaning when applied to the legitimate efforts of the workers to improve their wages and living conditions in general. Wage claims are not necessarily correct— from the point of view of the objective possibilities— at all times of building a socialist economy, but decisions in this regard, that imply decisions on fundamental economic alternatives, on rhythms accumulation, on the distribution of income, etc., should be adopted, rather than by bureaucratic groups from above, by the actual organs of proletarian democracy, where the masses can directly deliberate or be represented by their elected, under constant monitoring and revocable at any time.

The revolutionary Marxists will hold all those who fought for the formation of democratic revolutionary committees elected by the masses and they will explain that the structuring of the state on the basis of such organisms, in the freedom of all proletarian political currents, is one of the essential conditions for a successful struggle against bureaucratism and social stratifications and give a concrete content to the claims of egalitarian nature. They will participate in a full democratic reconstruction of the Party and other organisations where the old methods should be replaced by the application of the criteria of Leninist democratic centralism involving the right to express any

opinion and any criticism— including here, let it be well understood, with regard to Mao— the right to organise tendencies, the regular convening of Congresses and Central Committees, etc.

Trade unions should no longer be strictly subordinated to the State or the Party, and they should play their specific role in defending the interests of workers, including and using, if necessary, the strike weapon.

In the countryside, revolutionary Marxists will fight for a complete democratisation of life in the Communes, which is a condition to counteract a possible development of conservative tendencies. At the same time they will point out that this democratisation must involve effective participation of the peasants in developing an overall economic policy and in the direct verification of priorities imposed for the accumulation at each given stage.

In the analysis of subsequent events and the determination of their attitudes, revolutionary Marxists must not forget the following considerations:

a) The Chinese crisis within falls within the general context of the crisis of the entire bureaucratic system, of which it is, ultimately, one of the most profound manifestations that have occurred so far. Under the conditions of this crisis the bureaucracy differs and is divided at all levels and certain bureaucratic fractions and sectors suffer enormous pressure from the mass movement with which they strive to identify;

b) The attitude towards the tendencies or groups of the bureaucracy must be specified at each stage much more on the basis of the objective scope of their policy and their actions than on the basis of their ideological proclamations;

c) Any revolutionary platform should start from the specific situations given, taking into account at the same time both the specific requirements of the Chinese revolution at the present stage and the level of maturity and understanding reached by the masses or layers of masses that play a vanguard role.

In terms of international issues, the Chinese revolutionary Marxists will resume the positions advanced by the IV International, mainly concerning the need of the united front in Vietnam and the balance sheet of certain capital experiences such as Indonesia.

Livio Maitan

March 1967

A letter on China

Buenos Aires, 3 May, 1967

My dear Comrade Livio,

I thought very well of your idea about consulting us on the Chinese issue. I believe that, as far as possible and given our precarious means, we should use the same system with any other important document. Unfortunately, given my situation, which already lasts for a year, I only received your letter and draft a day ago. Today, to be on time, I give you an answer without being able to research it in any way.

To give you an answer and through you to all the comrades of the Executive Committee, brings up a host of theoretical problems which we have not elucidated nor are very clear to ourselves. Hence, my response will be divided into two parts: one referring to the text of the document and my vote, and another concerning the general structure of another document that I think should be written.

My strict vote regarding this document: I am in favour for the following fundamental reasons:

- 1) It correctly characterises it as an inter-bureaucratic struggle;
- 2) It points to the inevitable future intensification of the leadership crisis of the Chinese Communist Party;
- 3) It refuses to make a formal analogy between Stalinism and the current campaign (formal analogy which would be catastrophic because it would dangerously disarm us for future events);
- 4) An uncompromising critique of all errors and bureaucratic methods of the Chinese leadership;
- 5) An essentially correct program for China and the current situation.

I believe, however, that the document suffers from theoretical shyness and excessive description. Essentially it is “descriptive-analytic” without specifying the broad outlines and analysis of the situation in the framework of the new China, the new government, the new world situation, etc.

It is quite possible that this is due to an attempt to achieve an urgent political document, as well as a fact to me obvious: the retreat of the mass movement in the United States and Europe has caused some defensive mentality in the field of theory. I think this is beginning to be overcome. Two important facts prove it: Germain’s book on economics, which does not shy away from any theoretical problem, in a tone of seriousness, search and modesty, which should be an example; and the polemic between Livio and Jose on the Egyptian perspectives, which to me is not yet finished, because serious theoretical problems to be elucidated were left in the pipeline. The tone of this debate should be an example for all cadres and members of our World Party.

I make these considerations in order to ask for patience, if in the overall consideration of the Chinese problem I engage in serious errors. For years now, with extreme care to avoid friction in the world movement, we have been posing a series of proposals that we believe we need to pose again, because they deal directly with the document and its framing.

The character of China and its government

We believe that a critical element to judge and define every historical phenomenon is its dynamics, its practice, its past and present conduct, along with its social location. We believe that a different definition is granted, which means a policy and a program different from the workers' countries where the revolution was the result of a mobilisation of the masses, and those in which the revolution was essentially made by an alien force, the Red Army of occupation. For us there are three types of workers' countries: USSR, degenerated workers'; Glacis,¹ deformed workers'; Yugoslavia, China and Cuba, workers' country in transition. The differences are "qualitative", not of degree. In the USSR we have a workers' state where the bureaucratic reaction triumphed; in the Glacis a sui generis combination with the workers' revolution from above (essentially the same as the USSR, with the addition of USSR domination); in other countries where bureaucratic reaction has not triumphed the essential has been the mobilisation and organisation with bureaucratic methods and control of the mass movement in its various stages. They are not based in a defeat, in a crushing of the workers' movement, but in the insufficient development, initiative and organisation of the mass movement.

From this essentially different character of each state, the differences between their governments arise. Governments and parties of the reactionary bureaucracy in the first two; governments and parties of "Bonapartist revolutionaries" between the bureaucracy and the masses, or in some cases between the pressure of the USSR (external) and imperialism and the mass movement. If of Stalinism we have been able to say it was a "twin" government, parallel to fascism, not being equal to this because of its social character; of the governments of China, Yugoslav for a stage (we will see later which one) and Cuba (we have to carefully study the case of Algeria) we could say that they are "twins", parallel to the "sui generis Bonapartism" studied by Trotsky for semi-colonial countries that resist imperialist pressure, even if they are not the same because of their different social character.

I believe the theoretical key to understanding the Chinese and Cuban, also the Yugoslav, phenomena is here, in the character of their states, which is what has most graced the face of Chinese Stalinism. Its paternalistic character (there are no real purges) means to us another face, which has, in the Chinese case, horrible Stalinist warts that disfigure, degenerate the true character of the revolutionary government. The personality cult, accompanied by mass mobilisations and new forms of organisation of the masses, as well as empiricism and its aftermath— opportunism, adventurism and sectarianism — reflect the character of these governments, both on a semi feudal and semi bourgeois structure, as on a workers' structure. In this regard, the government of Mao follows more closely the dynamics of government of a Kruman, a Nasser, Paz Estenssoro or Peron in their heyday, than of Stalinism. To say that it is a Bonapartism sui generis of a workers' state, that it is a party and a government that have made the revolution relying on the mobilisation of the mass movement, does not fully explain between what specific contradictions these governments move to acquire this extreme Bonapartist character. We believe that these are precisely Bonapartist sui generis and not the direct rule of the counter-revolutionary bureaucracy that has expropriated and crushed the mass movement as in the USSR, and consequently the principal contradiction in these countries is between the combined external pressure of the USSR and imperialism, and the mass movement; this contradiction is combined with another, internal, between the technical bureaucracy and the mass movement.

Yugoslavia follows a different course, because there was no such contradiction between the imperialist pressure and the mass movement, nor does it exist in Algeria. This is the ultimate explanation of the various courses of these countries.

The reasons of the current crisis

I believe if we accept this theoretical framework to place the current Chinese crisis, we can find its general reasons. They are none other than the increased pressure of Yankee imperialism and "of the USSR itself". Our resolution does not put enough emphasis on the pressure of the USSR.

¹ The "glacis countries" (buffer states), as they were referred to in the Fourth International at the time, were those countries or Eastern Europe occupied by the Red Army. [Translator's note.]

There is no doubt that Moscow has an apparently warm policy towards the Chinese, not as a shrewd manoeuvre to be strengthened in the world Communist movement, but to strengthen within China the bureaucratic sectors in agreement with their line of bureaucratic united front of the workers' states, of peaceful coexistence towards imperialism. There is a curious parallelogram of forces between Yankee imperialism and the USSR to pressure China and Cuba. But while on the latter, the Castro government has close diplomatic and trade relations with the USSR; China, with huge economic potential within its own territory, is increasingly isolated as the main consequence of the Indonesian disaster and the counter-revolutionary victories. This overall situation strengthens externally the Russian pressure and internally the pressure of Chinese bureaucratic cadres, the "specialists". I think very likely there are serious contacts between the two bureaucratic currents.

If so, the Maoist Bonapartism "sui generis" surely has appealed to the youth mobilisation to curb a growing danger: that of the pro-Russian and the bureaucrat, technician sectors, eager for a more "realistic" policy based on the military-economic-technical agreement with the USSR and a direct government of the bureaucracy with all the guarantees for their development as Khrushchevism. Specifically, the roughness of the fight and the magnitude of the crisis indicate there is a serious struggle of the Chinese bureaucracy to liquidate the Bonapartist government oscillating between the masses and the bureaucracy, to impose in its stead a direct government of the bureaucracy. This offensive has forced the representatives of government Bonapartism to gamble on the mobilisation against the growing pressure of the bureaucracy, which is strengthened day by day with the imperialist triumphs and growing pressure from the USSR.

Prospects

If this analysis is correct, the current struggle will be reflected in the international policy of Mao's government during a stage. While the main enemy is the bureaucracy, the government will be inclined towards a policy of development at any cost of a guerrilla line throughout Southeast Asia, mainly in Indonesia and the Philippines. Given the situation in the region, this policy will be greatly progressive. I'm surprised that the document does not even mention the future international policy of the Maoist regime or the possible derivations of the internal crisis in this area. Again I insist: quite possibly the outer face of the "Cultural Revolution" will be total support for the guerrillas. If not so, it would be a significant element of consideration to finish judging the overall situation.

The other perspective has to do with the rise of the mass movement. When this rise occurs, the crisis of Maoist Bonapartism will have an opposite sign and with abrupt swings left and right,

Within this perspective and analysis, the overall program you developed seems incomplete and methodologically completely and utterly wrong. It ignores the decisive issue and our policy with regard to this problem: the "Cultural Revolution". Our militants in China face rallies and demonstrations of thousands of young people. What should they do? Should they repudiate them? Should they critically support them? Support them in full? We must begin to have the theoretical and political courage of not hiding our face to the problems. A current document on China, which does not give a categorical response to this immediate problem, is of little or no use.

If my analysis is correct, "critical support" is appropriate; very critical, however.

The materials with which I move are precarious, and I have done this letter in two hours so that it arrives on time. There may be facts unknown to me, proving otherwise: that the "Cultural Revolution" is a call to lumpenproletariat and petty bourgeois, to liquidate or put pressure on the Party, which would be the vanguard of the whole process.

I hope these views, worthy of a fraternal exchange of points of view among comrades of a leadership organism, which are not meant to be definitive, serve them somewhat. Moreover, I again repeat, given my situation, only now, after sending this letter, I will begin to prepare another more extensive, trying to better identify all problems that I will send you in two or three days.

Nahuel Moreno

Resolution on the Chinese Cultural Revolution

(Adopted by the Central Committee of the *Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores* (Revolutionary Workers Party – PRT) of Argentina, in May 1967.)

Whereas:

The historical importance of the Chinese “Cultural Revolution”;

That the resolution adopted by the IV International on this issue is a preliminary approach to the subject and opens discussion about it;

That this resolution, as we understand, is a compromise to achieve a common action of the International’s cadres while the differences are elucidated;

That this resolution has gaps or dangerous methodological errors, which it is necessary to point out:

a) It does not characterise the precise character of China and its government;

b) It does not emphasise that any inter-bureaucratic difference, when it takes such strong and serious character, exists because it reflects “from the beginning” deep class pressures and not the other way around according to which it would be mere inter-bureaucratic differences of political or tactical character that subsequently acquire a class character;

That we must insist on these methodological issues that make our Trotskyist method: comprehensive theoretical characterisation of the Chinese regime, and *ad nauseum* insistence that any serious inter-bureaucratic struggle reflects from the outset deep class pressures;

That not to uphold and defend this method is to fall into a journalistic interpretation and not a Marxist, class, characterisation of the phenomena;

That if we defend and want to apply this method, which is what has characterised our Party and its leadership, it is to know before anything else how, historically and as a tendency, the working class, the peasantry, the petty bourgeoisie and the bureaucratic caste are reflected in a distorted way in the factions that are faced in the Cultural Revolution;

That Comrade Peng, in a totally wrong way in our opinion, has the merit of having endeavoured to implement this method, identifying in the Mao faction the counter-revolutionary bureaucratic caste;

That for us the bureaucratic caste is essentially reflected in the apparatus of the Chinese Communist Party, as well as the provincial petty bourgeois tendencies of centrifugal character;

That the Mao-Lin Piao tendency reflects Bonapartism between these apparatuses, because of their ideology and social location, Khrushchevite, and the masses of workers and peasants;

That China’s current crisis, covered by the cloak of “Cultural Revolution” is the historical crisis that has erupted between the masses of workers and the bureaucratic apparatus;

That the “Cultural Revolution” is the Bonapartist attempt to avoid this crisis, slowing the offensive of the bureaucracy relying on the masses of workers on the one hand and in the discipline to Bonapartist power on the other;

That Maoist Bonapartism by launching the “Cultural Revolution”, leaving aside all their grotesque, bureaucratic aspects, has played a “progressive” role because it has started a “mobilisation

of the masses” against the bureaucracy that has its own dynamics, independent of the Bonapartist plans of Mao-Lin Piao;

That this mobilisation should be supported conditionally until January 1967 when starts the open attack of the Maoist government against the working masses and left students, specifying its anti-bureaucratic objectives and criticising its terrible limitations, leadership and Maoist ideology;

That this highly critical support should not be a lowering of our active intervention in the mobilisation that the “Cultural Revolution” has caused, since only such intervention along with that of the working masses may exceed in the facts the Maoist leadership;

That we must position ourselves historically in the deep meaning of the “Cultural Revolution”: historic crisis of a Bonapartist government and ideology that reflects the Chinese revolutionary petty bourgeoisie prior to the revolution: Maoism. It is the historic crisis of a Bonapartist government that oscillated between the bureaucracy and the working masses, favoured by the underdevelopment of the two opposing poles of the first phase of revolutionary development in an extremely backward country: modern bureaucracy and technocracy; industrial working class;

That these two antagonistic poles already have acquired sufficient development to be the true structural basis of the current crisis and its historic solution: “workers’ democracy”.

The CC resolves:

1. To approve the above recitals and the letter sent by Comrade N. Moreno to the United Secretariat.

2. To approve as the basis of a united front until the next World Congress the document approved by the IEC at its last meeting.

3. To participate in the discussion for the next World Congress for the additions and comments made in this resolution to be approved.

May 1969

Draft Resolution on China by PRT

(Submitted by the PRT of Argentina in May 1969, at the World Congress of the Fourth International)

1. We need to define the “Cultural Revolution” as a highly contradictory process characterised by:

a) The manipulation and use of student youth by the bureaucratic faction of Mao to dominate the country and the state apparatus, in order to save the bureaucratic caste in power from the insurmountable contradictions in Chinese society caused by the same bureaucracy;

b) To place the mobilisation of Chinese youth and its extension to the workers’ and peasants’ movement as part or initiation (distorted and prostituted by the Maoist bureaucratic caste) of the rise of the global movement of youth and urban masses, especially in the deformed and degenerated workers’ states;

c) In relation to all bureaucratic regimes to note as a general characterisation: the crises between bureaucratic sectors up to the “Cultural Revolution” were located within a context of passivity of the mass movement, whereas they are now located in a completely different context of revolutionary rise, especially of the student youth and the urban masses.

2. Therefore, a “critical intervention” in the “Cultural Revolution” is imperative to prepare the political revolution against the Chinese bureaucracy (represented by Mao’s regime and government, principal enemy of the workers), through fortification and development of our section and the Marxist and revolutionary tendencies that may occur in the process.