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MEMORANDUM ON "MAOISM RUN AMOK"

by Harry Turner

SPARTACIST #8 (Nov.-Dec.'66) is notable for a number of outstanding pieces, namely, "Declaration of Principles of the Spartacist League", "Political Revolution in Hungary--Ten Years After", and the editorial, "Revolution and Truth". "Maoism Run Amok" is also a highly informative and well-written article. However, it has some weaknesses which I believe to be derived from an insufficient allotment of specific weight to international factors and which, therefore, creates a myopic focus on the internal situation and an over-emphasis of the irrational aspects of the "Great Cultural Proletarian Revolution."

On the question of Chinese nuclear arms, the article states that:

"the success of the latest nuclear test cannot be viewed as an uncomplicated triumph once the economic meaning of that test is clear..."

and that:

"...such a serious disbalancing of the economy cannot create a military power capable of defending the Socialist gains of the third revolution."

A logical although unstated corollary would seem to be that the Chinese deformed workers' state should not have attempted to develop its own nuclear defenses, either at the present rate, or at all, given the enormous cost to a country so industrially backward.

Greater clarity as to the Spartacist League's position on defense of the workers' state, including military defense by the workers' state, would seem useful in order that possible interpretations of this position which might encourage pacifist illusions might not occur.

Clausewitz's dictum, "War is the continuation of politics by other means." recognizes the dialectical unity and interpenetration of military and political measures. The history of proletarian struggles will bear witness to the effect that military measures alone have never been "capable of defending the socialist gains", beginning with the Paris Commune and the October Revolution. Revolutionary politics, which harnesses all the social forces possible, internally and externally, to the side of the proletariat of the workers' state and toward the internat'l revolution is alone indispensable, and, basically, the only way to achieve security for workers' states--still fortresses under siege by world capitalism.

It would be wrong to conclude, however, that military defense, including arming with the latest weapons that technology can devise, and to the maximum extent possible necessitated by the threat to the workers' state should be given consideration, only if "serious disbalancing of the economy" were not to take place.

That the threat to the Chinese is indeed menacing can be seen by recent reports concerning information given to U.S. officials by the Soviet Foreign Minister, of concern with growing Chinese nuclear strength, of Soviet "fear of a Chinese nuclear attack", of the shifting of special units to the Chinese frontier, and of increased preparation by the Soviet Union against nuclear attack.

When these reports are coupled with the recently increased efforts by the Soviet leadership to read the Chinese out of the international Communist movement, what seems to emerge is a psychological preparation of the Soviet people and their supporters internationally for the decision by the Soviet leaders to be benevolently neutral on the side of U.S. imperialism when the U.S. attacks the Chinese and their nuclear armaments centers. It is also possible that the Soviet leadership has also concluded an agreement with the U.S. to use this attack as the moment for its own military intervention with the intention of replacing Mao with a pro-Soviet leadership.

The Soviet version of "socialism in one country" and of "peaceful co-existence" with imperialism thus promises to become more openly counter-revolutionary, in line with the recent first step backward internally toward the restoration of capitalism, Libermanism.

Soviet-style "socialism in one country" has always meant the deliberate sacrifice of the other Communist movements and the international working-class struggles by the Stalinist bureaucrats beginning with the second Chinese Revolution in 1926-27, as the article "Maoism Run Amok" correctly noted. It should also be noted that 1958-59 was not only the beginning of the "Great Leap Forward"; it was also the beginning of a new Soviet campaign for "peaceful coexistence" which was to culminate in the meeting of Khrushchev and Eisenhower in Sept. 1959. The "Spirit of Camp David" was being promoted at the same time that the menace to China by the U.S. continued unabated. It would seem logical to assume, therefore, that the "Great Leap Forward" was dictated not only by internal considerations and pressures, but also by the machinations of the Soviet leadership with U.S. imperialism at China's expense--although open attacks on the Soviet leaders did not begin until 1960.

The refusal by the Soviet leadership to complete its contracts with China in 1960 and the withdrawal of Soviet technical personnel leaving hundreds of factories unfinished and further worsening the economic situation in which the "Great Leap Forward" had placed the country, seems to have been finally occasioned by the definite refusal to help China develop its own nuclear armament, as part of the pending deal with the U.S.

The Chinese leadership would seem, therefore, to have had no choice but to try to develop its own nuclear shield in as short a time as possible, and cannot be criticized for so doing. The Spartacist League has always supported the nuclear arming of the Soviet Union, recognizing that its nuclear weapons act as a deterrent to imperialist attack. It is for this reason that we have demanded that a nuclear defensive shield be extended to North Vietnam, and by extension, to any workers' state menaced by imperialism. We have also recognized, that, at most, such weapons buy time--time for the world proletariat, particularly in the advanced capitalist countries, to achieve the social revolution, ending the threat of war forever--and time for the workers in the degenerate and deformed workers' states to achieve a political revolution against their bureaucrats, whose counter-revolutionary policies help to extend the life of world capitalism, and the continuing menace to their existence.

The Chinese practitioners of "socialism in one country"--Chinese version, bear almost the same degree of responsibility for the Indonesian debacle as Stalin and Bukharin bore for the destruction of the second Chinese Revolution--the difference being that Ch'en Tu-hsiu opposed the policy of subordination to the

Kuomintang, whereas D. N. Aidit was an ardent practitioner of subservience to the Indonesian bourgeoisie. It was after the Indonesian slaughter of Communists and their supporters, and the roll-back of the so-called colonial revolution in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, that the Chinese workers' state became so vulnerable to imperialist attack.

The role of the Chinese bureaucracy in "disbalancing the economy" needs to be given greater emphasis. A fourth entirely man-made disaster must be added to the "three years of natural disasters" which the bureaucracy uses as their cover-up for bureaucratic mis-management. The conception and execution of the "Great Leap Forward" and, therefore, the inevitable failure of this left adventure must be laid squarely at the door of the Chinese bureaucrats. Were only "sufficient risks" involved in the leap forward to "Communism in one country", without any recognition of the need for the preparation of the necessary material, technical, and cultural conditions, and in ignoring the class differences between petty-bourgeois producers and the working-class? A catastrophic fall in the productivity of the peasant, and, therefore, of the worker, was inevitable under conditions whereby the peasant individualistic accumulative instincts were banished by fiat along with his garden plot, family dining, and the cooperative, and where he was forced to spend valuable time and energy in operating back-yard furnaces for making steel, while also working in the field under military barracks regimentation.

The bureaucracy because it controls, not only the state but production, bears a heavy responsibility for the success or failure of the general plan of production. Its tendency to try to bulldoze its way through difficulties without taking into account all aspects of the situation, including the psychology of the producers, and its tendency to violate the requirements of labor power and technique, plus its proclivities toward the consumption of an inordinate portion of total production, continually acts to produce, not an optimum development of industry, but rather enormous dislocations, disproportions, and vast waste.

Had a revolutionary leadership been in power, the heavy burden of arming the nation with all necessary and possible arms could not have been avoided, but workers' democracy and control would have eliminated the heavy bureaucratic overhead cost in the development of industry, and, thereby, a far more rapid growth of industry; not to speak of the unleashing of the creative abilities of the producers freed from the heavy hand of bureaucratic control. The involvement of the Chinese masses at each stage of the process of production, and in the planning in the first place, would have made such disastrous adventures as the "Great Leap Forward" out of the question. Of course, the workers in power would have seen the real defense of their state, along with the most rapid solution to the problems of industrialization, achieved on the basis of the international proletarian revolution.

Another issue is posed by the article's de-emphasis of the importance of the political identification of Mao's opposition by merely pointing out that some "wanted closer ties with Russia, and even with the U.S.; but other have protested the lack of workers' control over the state apparatus," while underscoring the common "disagreement with the control clamped on the party, and with bureaucratic anti-intellectualism."

The political conflicts within the Soviet bureaucracy were always minutely scrutinized by Trotsky. The Transitional Program, largely written by Trotsky in

1938, makes the point that these conflicts "mirror the contradictions between the bureaucracy and the people as well as the deepening antagonism among the 'people' themselves." At a time when "the Thermidorian oligarchy" could be described as "reduced mainly to Stalin's Bonapartist clique", the Transitional Program noted that "all shades of political thought are to be found among the bureaucracy: from genuine Bolshevism (Ignace Reiss) to complete fascism (F. Butenko). The revolutionary elements within the bureaucracy, only a small minority, reflect, passively it is true, the socialist interests of the proletariat." Also posed was the question of of "'united front' with the Thermidorian section of the bureaucracy against open attack by capitalist counter-revolution", even if it meant that the revolutionary wing "would find itself temporarily an ally of Stalin", while making clear that "the chief political task in the U.S.S.R. still remains the overthrow of this same Thermidorian bureaucracy."

This question is not of idle interest to Trotskyists today, in connection with events in China. In circumstances whereby the Soviet bureaucracy is preparing to deliver up the Chinese workers' state to U.S. imperialism, "closer ties with Russia, and even with the U.S." means the sacrifice of that workers' state, either in the near future or the not-too-distant future. It would seem, therefore, that the Mao faction stands in a similar relationship to the capitulatory elements of the Chinese Communist Party as the "Stalin Bonapartist clique" stood to its right wing in 1938. It would also follow that Trotskyists would have to firmly oppose the capitulatory wing, although it would be entirely in order to cooperate with all forces in the C.C.P. for the purpose of achieving democratic rights within the party as part of the struggle for workers' democracy and control of the workers state. Would they, on the other hand, seek a united front with Mao's wing? Only in the event of "open attack by capitalist counter-revolution", which, it would seem, is to be openly aided by the Soviet bureaucracy. In that event, the revolutionary wing would find itself temporarily an ally of Mao. However, it is the counter-revolutionary policies of Mao which has helped bring the Chinese workers' state to its present isolation and danger. The chief political task in China as in the Soviet Union remains the political overthrow of the ruling bureaucracy.

A united front of China and the Soviet Union to help the Vietnamese Revolution against U.S. imperialist attack is needed. To pose this question as the Pabloites now operating as the "United Secretary of the Fourth International" do, "in spite of their ideological differences" is to make manifest their own puerility. At a time when the Soviet bureaucrats are maneuvering to sell out the Vietnamese Revolution as part of its deal with the U.S., an appeal to them and to their best interests has the quality of ingenuousness. United front or not, what prevents them from infusing the Vietnamese struggle with massive injections of the latest military weapons, troops, and from offering the protection of its nuclear shield to North Vietnam and China? What stops the Chinese from giving large doses of aid to Vietnam? The counter-revolutionary meaning of "socialism in one country" becomes crystal-clear, except, it would seem, to the centrist pundits of Pabloism, who should have understood its import long ago. It is significant that their appeal printed in *The Militant*, Nov. 28, 1966 has not a word to say about the need for a Leninist vanguard party to overthrow the bureaucrats of the deformed and degenerate workers' state.

A closer examination of the history and development of the third Chinese revolution, and of the C.C.P. as a faithful disciple of Stalin, would also be useful in throwing light on the nature of the third Chinese revolution and the present situation in China.

The Chinese Stalinists, following the failure of the Canton uprising, literally tore the C.C.P. away from the working-class in order to lead a peasant war under the banners of the Red Army in areas they designated as "Soviet."

Having lost its proletarian base, the CCP, however, did not simply become a representative of the peasantry, even though it achieved a high composition of peasants in the period from 1927 to 1949. The leaders of the CCP were notable, as were the leaders of every Communist Party, under the domination of the Kremlin, for their ability to follow every shift in policy dictated by Soviet bureaucracy. The shifts in the CCP's policy have to be seen in this historical context, and not only in domestic terms.

The organization of peasant Soviets was projected in the ultra-left period of Stalinism following its betrayal of the second Chinese revolution. The shift to Peoples Frontism by the Comintern after the victory of Hitler (which it also helped prepare) and the growing threat of Japan in the east, was also reflected in China by the Mao leadership's call for a "united national-revolutionary front" with the Chinese "national" bourgeoisie, which was followed by an accord with the butcher Chiang Kai Shek after the Sian incident. People's Frontism was implemented by the scuttling of the policy of seizing the land of the landlord and distributing it to peasant, for one of reducing rents and interest. The slogan of "Peoples Republic" was advanced in 1935 to replace that of the "Workers and Peasants Republic".

In Oct. 1947, the CCP broke with their policy of trying to maintain a coalition with Chiang Kai Shek and called for a struggle against him, without breaking from the conception of a "national united front" to include the "national" bourgeoisie, i.e., a bourgeois coalition government. Only the feudal elements and the "bureaucratic" bourgeoisie were excluded from participation in the Peoples Republic of China formed in 1949. Throughout this period, the interests of the peasants were subordinated to the needs of the Soviet bureaucracy, and, therefore, to the class interests of the landlord and the bourgeoisie. The more militant attitudes expressed by Mao in 1947, and the return to a more radical policy on the agrarian question can be related, not only to the refusal of the peasantry to be put off with minor reforms after the surrender of Japan, but also to the start of the cold war in 1946 and to the needs of the Kremlin.

The Soviet bureaucracy, who did not wish a genuinely revolutionary policy for China, and, in fact, feared it, were interested mainly in implementing their deal with imperialism, consummated at Yalta and Potsdam, to return Chiang to power. In 1946, with the cold war, Chiang in power was felt to be a danger to the Soviet bureaucracy. It was, therefore, not averse to the Mao regime taking the power in order to act as a caretaker for the bourgeois state machinery and the "bloc of four classes".

The CCP came to power, therefore, not balanced between classes, but as an already formed Bonapartist bureaucratic formation raised above the peasantry and ready for a similar role in relation to the other classes. It was reared as a docile instrument of the Soviet bureaucracy, and geared to adjusting to every shift in direction signaled by the Kremlin.

As a result of the advanced decay of imperialism, and the weakening of its grip on the industrially backward areas, and with the working-class of these areas still passive, a petty-bourgeois radical formation is able to raise itself on top

of a peasantry whose role as a petty productive, individualistic, and politically amorphous formation lends itself to bearing the programmatic imprint of other classes. The theory of the Permanent Revolution, which takes the nature of the peasantry fully into account, is further validated, under new conditions, in its conception that "the complete and genuine solution of their [colonial and semi-colonial countries] tasks of achieving democracy and national emancipation is conceivable only through the dictatorship of the proletariat as the leader of the subjected nation, above all of its peasant masses."

Quantity does change to quality, as dialectics maintains. With the Korean war, and increasing danger to the borders of China, the CCP was forced to junk the coalition with the bourgeoisie. In 1952, it began the first five-year plan and the collectivization of agriculture and the nationalization of surviving bourgeois industry. At this point, as a full-fledged Bonapartist bureaucracy with an independent base in a workers' state, the CCP began to come into ever increasing conflict with its Soviet counterparts.

The training that the CCP received in subservience to the Soviet bureaucracy was not, however, without its effect. Under the impact of the disastrous setbacks internationally, the major portion of the CCP evidently decided to capitulate to the Kremlin. The Mao faction was in danger of losing its control over the party. What is bound up in this question is not merely "the hierarchical succession", but the maintenance by the Mao faction of the basis of its power, a deformed workers' state, as against the capitulators who were ready to sacrifice it to imperialism via the Soviet bureaucracy. In this circumstance, the Mao faction by-passed the CCP and the YCL, and utilized the army and the unsophisticated youth, capable of being mobilized by appeals to militancy, against the party majority. The Red Guards are not simply a pliant tool in Mao's hands. That it is also capable of being a double-edged sword, is seen by its spontaneous demand for an end to the subsidies of the "national" bourgeoisie. It is, therefore, necessary for Mao to strike out against his left wing, in order not to be out-flanked from the left, and to eliminate a possible focus of revolutionary opposition, now and in the future.

Finally, the article, "Mao Runs Amok", in discussing the question of "proletarian culture", simply opposed the idea that the proletariat had to destroy the cultural achievements of the past. It missed the opportunity of bringing Trotsky's contribution to this discussion, and, at the same time, refuting the recent slander of Pravda associating Trotsky with the theory of Proletkult. Trotsky pointed out that the proletariat, after the conquest of power, had the responsibility of not only assimilating all that was worthwhile in bourgeois culture, but of developing a socialist culture, a human culture in a classless society. The proletarian dictatorship is a transitional one, on the road to the withering away of the state as the result of the elimination of class divisions in society.

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