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CHINA, HUNGARY AND MARXIST METHOD

by V. Grey

THE QUESTION OF CHINA

by John Peterson

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## CHINA, HUNGARY, AND THE MARXIST METHOD

By V. Grey

Comrade Swabeck has raised the question of the Minority's method ("Marxist Method and the Lessons of the Hungarian Revolution"). In doing so he, of course, invites some inquiries into his own method and into that of the Majority. In attempting to discover the basic "fault in the Minority's method he refers to the record of past positions and particularly to China.

Now how was it possible for Comrade Swabeck to be five years late by his own reckoning in discovering that China was a workers state? (The Majority decided in 1955 that China became a workers state sometime in 1950 or 51.) -- It was possible for one thing, because of a non-dialectical, or non-Marxist method.

"The value and the power of the dialectic" says Comrade Swabeck, "lies primarily if not exclusively in its application." (page 2) And it was not a deficiency of the dialectic that caused the tardiness of Comrade Swabeck with respect to China, but a deficiency in its application.

The Majority's method in China was pragmatic and empirical. In Hungary it was pragmatic and impressionistic. In China it is possible to demonstrate this point by point because China developed more or less rationally according to the predictions of the Minority. In Hungary this is more difficult because the bourgeois counter-revolution was snuffed out and the analysis of the Minority cannot now be empirically verified (in the disappearance of nationalized property, etc.). However, by comparing China to Hungary from the point of view of method, we may be able to discover the essential approach of both Majority and Minority.

One of Comrade Swabeck's key paragraphs, one which really reveals his false method in the case of China (unfortunately duplicated in Hungary) is the following:

"Marxists view the revolution as a process of development. And in the case of China a drastic change toward measures of expropriation of capitalism had to take place before we could recognize a qualitative change in the character of the regime. That change followed several years after the seizure of power, and as a result of the dialectical interaction of contradictory forces." (page 4.)

But this cuts the very heart out of the dialectic! It cuts the heart out of the revolution itself. This is the bourgeois theory of social evolution (evolution -- not revolution) with some dialectical sounding trimmings! The revolution is a "process of development!" -- Of course, the revolution is a process in the same sense that everything in the universe is a process. But what revolutionists have to understand is that a revolution is the violent end of a process. It is the result of a process. It is the qualitative explosion after a long series of quantitative social changes. It is the final

battle of the class war. And the climax of that battle is the insurrection in which the oppressed class seizes the power from the oppressor class. If the revolution takes place in the form of a civil war, the victory of one side over the other corresponds to the successful insurrection. -- In both cases, this is called the victory of the revolution.

For months, years, and even decades after such an event there will be new laws passed, new property forms created, new social institutions established -- and plenty of "dialectical interaction of contradictory forces." But when the oppressed decisively defeat and smash their oppressor they set up a new regime, whose social roots make it qualitatively different than the previous regime.

The contrary is equally true. A counter-revolution can be a "process of development," too. There has been a 34 year period of "development" of it (degeneration) in the Soviet Union. But the completed counter-revolution requires an actual overthrow of the regime. The overthrow by the bourgeoisie would be the victory of the bourgeois counter-revolution, even if property relations remained temporarily the same.

Trotsky comments on both sides of this contradiction as follows:

"When the Third Estate seized power, society for a period of years remained feudal. In the first months of Soviet rule, the proletariat reigned on the basis of bourgeois economy. (To a considerable degree it does so even now.) Should a bourgeois counter-revolution succeed in Russia, the new government for a lengthy period would have to base itself on nationalized economy. But what does such a type of temporary conflict between economy and state mean? It means a revolution or a counter-revolution. The victory of one class over another signifies that it will reconstruct economy in the interest of the victory." (Emphasis in original) (Internal Bulletin, No. 3, December, 1937.)

Comrade Marcy, on the basis of Trotsky's class criterion, on the basis of the dialectical interaction of forces at the time -- was able to understand what happened in China somewhat nearer to the time it happened than Comrade Swabeck. The new Chinese state was established at the end of September and the beginning of October 1949.

"The political power of the former ruling class has been shattered, their 'body of armed men' disarmed or destroyed, and their main source of strength and recuperative power, their nexus to and dependence upon imperialism, shattered. China is a workers state because the fundamental obstacle to the rule of the workers and peasants, the bourgeois-landlord-imperialist alliance has been swept away, and a new alliance -- based on workers and peasants -- erected in its place. It is not a chemically pure dictatorship of the proletariat, as no social formation ever is, but its fundamental class content is beyond doubt." (Marcy Memorandum, November 1950, page 4.) (Emphasis in original).

In China the masses had been struggling for twenty-four years (1925-49) under the mis-leadership of the Stalinists to smash the capitalist regime and set up their own. After a struggle more tragic, more heart-breaking -- much more costly in human life and treasure than even the Russian experience, the Chinese masses, misled though they were, at last succeeded in smashing the enemy they had taken on a whole generation before. After they had done this, after they had taken the social power (and catapulted a Stalinist leadership into the political power) "the victory of one class over another" signified, as Trotsky put it, that it would "reconstruct economy in the interest of the victory."

But Comrade Swabeck says that nothing happened! It was not a class victory at all! "We could not recognize a qualitative change in the character of the regime!"

And why had nothing happened? Because the Stalinists had a false program. Because there was no "drastic change (in the minds of the Stalinists?) toward measures of expropriation."

This is not the method of Marxism. This is the method of formalism. It is formalism because it disregards the class essence of the struggle and its implications -- and sees only that the form of working class rule (nationalized property) is lacking.

A few years later, after seeing some nationalized property (pathetic nationalization by the Stalinists!) Comrade Swabeck -- in retrospect -- concludes that China is now a workers' state. This is the method of pragmatism -- because it judges the state only by its results, solely by what it does, not by its class content and class origins. It cannot recognize an apple tree by its trunk, its bark and its leaves. It has to wait to see if there will be any apples!

Comrade Swabeck also uses the method of Marxism (by referring to the laws of the Permanent Revolution and the historically fundamental character of property forms.) But he used it electically (in a mish-mash of Marxist and non-Marxist methods).

Unfortunately many comrades make the same theoretical errors in the case of Hungary as in the case of China.

In China the Stalinists announced they were still for capitalism. The Majority concluded China was a capitalist state.

In Hungary, the Nagy capitalist restorationists all swore an oath to socialism. The Majority concluded Hungary was still a workers' state.

In China the Majority held a pragmatic thermometer under the tongues of the Stalinist leaders to determine when or whether they would nationalize. (The Minority knew the Stalinists would have to nationalize before the Stalinists knew it themselves.)

In Hungary the only reason the Majority did not hold the same pragmatic thermometer under the tongues of the Nagy government to determine if they would de-nationalize, was that the Majority light-mindedly dismissed this government as not an essential factor in the situation.

In China the masses smashed a capitalist state. And they took the social power. They put their party in the seats of power. This party was a workers party with a false program -- even a counter-revolutionary program. That was the deformation of the new state.

In Hungary the masses smashed an already deformed workers state. And they elevated to power not their party, deformed or otherwise. They elevated not a re-formed workers government, not a Bolshevik government, not a Stalinist, not even a Menshevik government, but a capitalist coalition government -- the "restorationist elements" that Comrade Swabek so lightly says, on page 8, "rallied to the Nagy government" (In Nagy's last cabinet, November 3, they were in the majority!)

Now it is true, that after the Nagy government had already made several shifts to the right, the workers councils became more powerful. But it has to be recorded -- and emphasized -- that these councils at no time condemned the rightist actions of Nagy. We Marxists are very well aware that workers councils in Hungary, America or the Soviet Union are potentially a workers' state. But the task of Trotskyists is not only to mention this as an interesting dialectical fact, but also to try to lead these councils, to overcome the influence of alien classes upon them, to try to give them a revolutionary program, and make the potential a reality.

The workers were instinctively trying to take advantage of the situation, and instinctively establishing the potential organs of their own rule. But to conclude from this that: "The decisive role of the working class during the events in Hungary is beyond dispute. It strove for the creation of authentic organs of revolutionary power -- the Soviets. This is what determines fundamentally the character of the Hungarian revolution" (page 9). -- To conclude this is merely to make an unwarranted statement that has nothing to do with dialectics -- or facts.

The fact is that the Hungarian masses, -- the Hungarian nation, as opposed to the workers, had already created an "authentic organ" of counter-revolutionary power. Far from playing the "decisive role" the workers' councils were still passively supporting this organ -- the Nagy government. Later, they even actively supported the idea of its return -- after it was overthrown.

Where Comrade Swabek could not recognize an apple tree until he saw the apples (pragmatism) in China, he thought he saw the whole tree in the person of the seed -- the workers councils, in Hungary. This would not be so bad, and would only be a sign of really dialectical optimism, if that were the whole reality, or the major part of it. If the workers councils had truly organized the insurrection under a proletarian program, whether it were successful or not, and

whether the program were fully spelled out or not, that would have been the beginning of the political revolution.

But Comrade Swabeck blurs over the main events of the Hungarian uprising, -- that is, the period Oct. 23 to Nov. 3. He blurs over, or disregards, the enormous popularity of the Nagy government and the "restorationist elements." According to Peter Fryer, an on-the-spot observer: "this coalition (of Nagy-type Stalinists, bourgeois and Social Democratic parties - V.G.) was more truly representative of the Hungarian people than any government since 1947 (when Hungary was still capitalist -- V.G.); it was a real people's front government, and if the matter had been put to the test, would undoubtedly have enjoyed the trust of the national committees." (Hungarian Tragedy, p. 74)

There may be some dialectical and contradictory content in the popularity of the pro-bourgeois Nagy government. And no doubt there is. But it should be the first duty of the Majority to explain this, not blur it over. Instead, Comrade Swabeck explains what every Marxist knows: namely that workers councils are potentially a workers state.

The method of Comrade Swabeck is to disregard the unpleasant facts and over-emphasize the pleasant ones. This results from a combination of wish-thinking and formalism. -- Formalism, because it makes a purely formal comparison with the workers councils of 1917, without examining the limits of the comparison, and without appreciating the actual class forces in Hungary. Wish-thinking, because it does not admit the grim truth that the representatives of capitalism had taken over the government itself.

The method of the Majority, generally, is to look for nationalizations and de-nationalization to prove the existence of a revolution or a counter-revolution. Fortunately the comrades of the Majority do not always take their class position on the basis of this un-dialectical method. Certainly the Majority comrades, had they been in China in 1948 or 1949, would have courageously fought in the Chinese Red Army against Chiang Kai Shek. But could they have done so on the basis of their method? -- Since we are here discussing method, it would not be at all academic to inquire into this.

If the victory of the Chinese masses (as represented in the Chinese Red Army) over Chiang Kai Shek is not a class victory, -- in spite of the deformation, -- if the state ensuing from this victory is another capitalist state with the Stalinist leaders of the army acting as capitalist caretakers, why join in the struggle that is to produce the "Stalinist" state? -- Why was such a state at all superior to the state led by Chiang Kai-Shek?

True, the Majority called it a revolution, before they knew what kind of a state the revolution created. But what kind of a revolution was it? A peasant revolution? But we are taught that a peasant revolution must be either bourgeois or proletarian -- that is, led by the bourgeoisie or the proletariat -- otherwise it is nothing but an uprising.

A colonial revolution? The eight-year war with imperialist Japan was the colonial revolution. But what about the three-year civil war, 1946-49? What was the class character of this war against the state of Chiang Kai-Shek? Why was it progressive? Should Trotskyists have fought in a revolution that would inevitably put the treacherous Stalinists in power? And in a capitalist state at that? Purely on the basis of the Majority's method we would have to give a very un-revolutionary answer to these questions.

Let us take another aspect of nationalization and de-nationalization. Suppose the present Polish regime, under internal and external pressures, consents to a further de-nationalization -- this time, of industry as well as farm-land. Does Comrade Swabek think Poland would then automatically cease to be a workers' state? If so at what point? After how much de-nationalization? In Yugoslavia, the factories and trusts are already competing with one another although they are under workers' control. There is less than 17% collectivization in the country-side. Is Yugoslavia still a workers' state, or not?

(In the Soviet Union itself a serious degree of de-nationalization would indeed be the living counter-revolutionary restoration. After 40 years of construction, the "restorationist elements" are concentrated chiefly in the bureaucracy. A bureaucratic de-nationalization would obviously be in the direct interest of a growing section of the bureaucracy -- the technical and managerial aristocracy in particular. We firmly believe, however, that any such development would be met by civil war.)

But consider Hungary itself: if the Hungarian workers' councils had made the revolution against either the Nagy regime or the Kadar, and had suppressed the bourgeoisie, arrested all the restored bourgeois officials (as well as the bureaucrats) -- Kovaks, Tildy, Mindszenty, Kovago, Bibo, Kiraly, etc. -- if they had set up a workers' council government, or even tried to on this basis -- would we have needed any assurance about nationalized property from the workers' councils, to conclude that this was indeed the political revolution? And even if such councils in power were forced to declare an N.E.P. -- because of economic necessity, and retreat further than Lenin did, giving up central economic planning altogether, restoring private enterprise throughout the economy, retaining only "workers' control" -- what then? What class would be in power? Would Comrade Swabek say that this was a capitalist state? Surely he would not. His revolutionary instinct would outweigh his formalistic approach, and his pragmatic criterion of nationalized property.

Comrade Swabek concedes that the Minority comrades are "Trotskyists." So he surely does not mean to slander them by the following remark. "In China the seizure of power by the Stalinist leadership on a certain date, regardless of whether or not it signified a social transformation, that was to be interpreted as the rise of a workers' state." (p. 11) This accusation has been pithily expressed by other comrades of the Majority as: "Stalinism in power equals workers' state."

One might ask Comrade Swabek: with your criterion of nationalizations equalling a workers' state, aren't you giving the Stalinists the credit for establishing a workers' state of their own free will in China? -- since it is certainly true that they conducted the nationalizations. Why are Stalinist nationalizations better than British Labor Party nationalizations? -- Here again the reason you recognize the revolutionary character of the nationalizations is not because you are a Stalinist conciliationist, but because your class instinct tells you that the working class was basically in power in China before the Stalinists nationalized -- where the capitalists were the real power in England.

True, Comrade Swabek emphasizes the enforced character of the Stalinist nationalizations in China by referring to the exigencies of the defense against imperialism in Korea. But Chiang Kai-Shek and his regime, under the pressure of an eight year war of defense against Japanese imperialism, did not find himself compelled to make this kind of nationalization. Nor did capitalist Egypt under the pressure of British and French (and now American) imperialism, turn itself into a workers' state. Judging purely by Comrade Swabek's method and logic it appears that he is saying that the Stalinists can turn a capitalist state into a workers' state, -- under a little external prodding, to be sure.

Comrade Swabek may reply that this was a unique situation. It was indeed. But if China was still a capitalist state in 1950 after having smashed Chiang Kai-Shek's armies, this means that a workers' state was established without a revolution (since none occurred in 1950 or '51). It means that the Stalinists established it! -- and by virtue of a few decrees on partial nationalization. -- Certainly no Trotskyist believes such a thing. But this conclusion flows directly from Comrade Swabek's logic.

Many capitalist states have been under great pressure from nations at war with them, and they have never turned themselves into workers' states. Comrade Swabek is not only implying that this can now be done. But more than that, it can be done without any change of the state apparatus at all -- without revolution, -- and by the Stalinist bureaucrats!

Actually, the Minority has dealt very precisely with the accusation -- "Stalinism in power equals workers' state" -- in "Class Character of the Chinese State" (Bulletin, April 1956). But the point here is this:

It has apparently not occurred to Comrade Swabek that this question is also important for the Majority to answer. That is: why doesn't "Stalinism in power equal workers' state"? So far, only the Minority has given any theoretical answer to this question. Of course the Minority does not accuse the Majority of intending in any way to give exaggerated credit to the Stalinists. But the above un-dialectical, half-thought out approach does exactly this, by implication.

"Stalinists in power" has utterly nothing to do with determining

the class nature of any state. We have a class criterion, not a leadership criterion, for making such a determination. One might say that the Stalinists were "in power" today in the Indian State of Kerala. (They are the leading party and they run the government.) But Kerala is not a workers' state. If they were "in power" in the same sense over all India, India would not then be a workers' state either. And even if Trotskyists ran the Indian Government on that basis, India would not even then be a workers' state.

When we speak of "power", there is of course some ambiguity. It is possible to say that the Republicans or Democrats are "in power" in Washington. But this is a kind of slang. What we really mean is that they are in office. The real power, the state power, belongs to the capitalist class. The state is the weapon of a class. And neither the Stalinists nor any other political party constitutes a class.

In America, the proletarian revolution, no matter how overwhelming a majority supports it, must smash the capitalist state, and establish a new state. Such a state will be a workers' state as soon as the revolution establishes it. The Trotskyists and their allies will be in office. The working class will be in power. The class character of the state will not be determined by the character of the leadership, but by the class character of the revolution that creates the state.

But all this is absolutely ABC to anyone who bases himself on the class forces in their living, dialectical reality, rather than on formal static norms.

Because we said that in China, leadership proved to be secondary, Comrade Swaback detects a great inconsistency in the Minority because we said that in Hungary the lack of leadership proved to be primary. The contradiction, however, was in life itself, not in the method of the Minority. (Actually the question of leadership is always a primary question -- in a revolutionary and strategic sense, if not in the historic sense.)

But the differences between China and Hungary do not turn on the question of leadership, important as that question is. The basic difference is the difference in the objective characters of the social revolution, the political revolution, and the social counter-revolution. The following points may illustrate this briefly:

1. China was a social revolution. It was a war of one class against another. The decisive defeat of one class contained within itself the victory of another. This was a fact, independently of our thesis.
2. The political revolution is a war of one class against its own treacherous leadership. There has to be a leadership both to lead the struggle and replace the old leadership.
3. Besides the existence of one class and its false leadership, there exist other classes, who may be in the majority, who are not

necessarily neutral, and who in fact may begin a revolution for other reasons than political. -- ie a social counter-revolution.

4. It was not the lack of a Marxist party in Hungary that made the events a counter-revolution. That is only Comrade Swabeck's formalistic interpretation of our position. The counter-revolution existed by virtue of its own social forces. But a Marxist party could have battled for the leadership of anti-Stalinist workers to give revolutionary content to their anti-Stalinism -- to win them away from the leadership of the bourgeois anti-Stalinists, -- to lead them toward the regenerated dictatorship of the proletariat.

The class character of a social revolution or counter-revolution is not determined by its leadership, either in China or Hungary. It is significant however, that a treacherous workers'-party leadership in China blinded the Majority to the class character of the epic struggle it led. Whereas a capitalist leadership, taking over the actual government in Hungary, with the consent of the majority of the country, was dismissed by our Majority as of no account -- because workers' councils existed! This can only be called self-delusion.

#### What Actually Happened?

Since Comrade Swabeck mixes up the events of October 23 - November 3 with the subsequent events, it is possible that he means the political revolution really started after the "short-lived Nagy regime" (p. 6) (Why was it short lived?) was overthrown. Then, it is true, the workers' councils were fighting against the bureaucracy, and vice versa. But whether one regards Oct. 23 - Nov. 3 as a political revolution or a social counter-revolution -- it is equally obvious that the Soviet Army entered Budapest Nov. 4 in response to the Oct. 23 - Nov. 3 events. Therefore Comrade Swabeck's vagueness and diffuseness about these events is not at all helpful. We have to know precisely what happened at this time.

Here is some of the contribution of Comrade Swabeck to understanding the events of Oct. 23 - Nov. 3, under the promising title: "Interaction of Social Forces." (p. 8).

"Ten years of the repressive Stalinist regime compressed all forms of dissatisfaction into open rebellion spreading to all layers of the population, including the rank and file members of the Communist Party. But revolutions set all social forces into motion, reactionary as well as progressive. And this was no exception." (All very true) "Capitalist restorationist elements appeared alongside of worker revolutionists." (But who were these elements? Did the workers recognize them? Where were their forces? What banner did they fight under? Do you mean they were only a few hooligans, looters, anti-semites, etc.? Do you mean they fought in the same ranks as the "revolutionists"? If so, why?)

"Yet although of short duration because of the bloody Kremlin intervention, the Hungarian revolution became a process of development obeying its own laws. The validity of the laws of causality was here fully vindicated. There was an inner connection of events and an interaction between the forces in motion and in conflict. The

bureaucracy was compelled to shift the reins of the regime from the Rakosi-Gero sector to the forces around Nagy in order to conciliate the masses." (But the "forces around Nagy" were the bourgeois Smallholders Party, the bourgeois Petofi Peasant Party, the Social Democrats and the Church. How could this "conciliate the masses" if the masses were making the political revolution?)

"At the same time the mass movement, initiated by the student and intellectual circles, took on more concrete and more definite form and direction when the workers went into action." (How more concrete? In political line? If so, where?) "Alongside of the shift in the regime the authentic mass movement shifted from the intellectual circles to the working class. The intellectuals and peasants became allies of the workers." (Or did the workers become allies of the intellectuals and peasants? How do you tell? The "intellectual circles" raised the slogan of "free" (bourgeois) elections. Did the workers' councils repudiate this or any other of the "intellectual circles'" bourgeois demands?)

"While the restorationist elements -- not at all a decisive force -- (they merely had the government in their hands!) -- rallied to the Nagy government, the revolutionary workers took the lead through their Workers Councils (Soviets)" (How do you mean "took the lead?" Did the Hungarian army, for example, take its orders from the workers' councils or from the "not at all decisive" Nagy "restorationist elements?") "And the workers formulated their demands and their programmatic declarations on a constantly rising scale of political consciousness." (As late as Nov. 12 the principal workers' council of Budapest demanded the freedom of "the members of the Imre Nagy government which was elected by the revolution." They regarded the "restorationist elements" as "elected by the revolution!" Is this the rising scale of political consciousness you are referring to?) "The dialectical interaction had produced a constantly clearer line of demarcation between the social forces that were set into motion." (Where was this line of demarcation? Between whom? Were the workers' councils fighting against the bourgeois forces? -- If so, where, in the person of whom? -- Names, dates, places!)

"But the most decisive factor here is the appearance once again on the historical scene of the Workers Councils, appearing as the organs of the workers struggle for power." (Why is the appearance of the workers' councils the "most decisive factor"?) "As in Russia, they arose directly out of the workshops when the mass movement entered the openly revolutionary stage; and they became the pivot around which the toilers united in their struggle against the regime." (And "as in Russia" they began by supporting the bourgeois government) "Moreover, the selection of the delegates to the Workers Councils was carried out once again under fire, in a red-hot atmosphere." (But was this the "red-hot atmosphere" of the political revolution or the social counter-revolution? That is what we want to find out.)

"But the Workers Councils appeared also as an affirmation of working class determination to maintain and to extend the proletarian

forms of property relations." (Were the de-collectivizations and the revival of bourgeois parties and their passive and ever active support by the workers' councils a sign of "determination". . . to extend the proletarian form of property relations?) "This was made amply clear by the councils at the very outset. Their existence was a demonstration of workers democracy in life; and their struggle resulted in nothing less than a duel power situation."

### The Dialectic

Comrade Swabek understands the dialectical method very well. It is a sharp knife. But he is holding it by the wrong end, and only cutting himself. Above all, the dialectic is concrete. The fact that everything is simultaneously coming into being and passing away; the fact that everything is implicit with its own opposite, does not mean that reality is a soft mish-mash upon which we can butt our heads with no harmful effects.

At any given moment one must be able to tell the difference between friend and enemy -- especially in a dark alley or on a battle-field. All states are undergoing a "process of development" toward their own negation. But at any given moment a revolutionist must know his position with respect to each one of them. And precisely because the revolutionist understands the contradictions inherent in reality, precisely because he is a dialectician he takes a firmer, harder, and more consistent view than anybody else.

There is nothing more dialectical than the physical laws that determine an explosion -- such as gives power to a bullet. But any fool can shoot a gun. And his least dialectical victim knows immediately when he is hit. -- Were the victim killed, it would not help him much for us to refer to the fact that death is a "process", true as that fact is. The dialectic enables us to see the potential before others can see it. But we must not for that reason confuse the potential with the actual.

Many Majority comrades made reference to the dialectic in 1952 and 53 when discussing the Chinese state. That is, they saw the actual but thought it was only potential. The state was in "transition," they said at that time. They saw an "interaction of social forces." Some thought the state was neither a capitalist state nor a workers state, etc. However, there was a very real state in existence in China at that time. Of course it was in a "process of development," but it was necessary to say what stage of the process had been reached. Actually, it was already a workers' state, as the comrades later concluded. This is an example of how one can speak in the name of dialectics, even imagine he is employing the dialectic, and still be proceeding as a pragmatist or impressionist.

The comrades are making the same false use of the dialectic in Hungary. But where in the case of China they were five years too late in seeing the social revolution, in Hungary they are -- let us hope not as much as five years -- but considerably early -- in seeing the political revolution.

In Hungary they say the revolution was very complex, with Nagy-restorationists on one side, workers councils on the other and an "interaction of social forces." There was dual power, etc. -- and this is all very true. -- But the point is: What was the class nature of the Nagy regime? And in spite of the fact that the workers' councils were potentially a new regime themselves, were they acting like one, or were they supporting the bourgeois, counter-revolutionary Nagy regime? These questions must be answered clearly and sharply.

Comrade Swabeck ends his discussion of the "interaction of social forces" where he should begin it, with the creation of dual power. It requires no dialectics to notice the empirical fact dual power existed. The bourgeois reporters made the same observation. As a matter of fact there was a triple, if not a quadruple power: 1. The Nagy government. 2. The Gyor government, the "national committees" together with the "Freedom Fighters". 3. The Workers' Councils. 4. Kadar, the bureaucracy, and the Soviet Army.

It would be helpful if Comrade Swabeck explained which dual power he is talking about. There was at first the Nagy government and the Gyor government -- then the Nagy government and the workers councils. There was also, after the overthrow of the Nagy government, the workers' councils and the Kadar bureaucracy.

In order to understand what happened October 23 - November 3, we must examine the dual power that existed between Nagy and the workers' councils. Which classes were represented in this duality? Which side of the duality was uppermost?

The councils were working class, The Nagy government was capitalist. The Nagy government spoke to the world in the name of the Hungarian nation. It had the army, the Defense Minister (Malter), the "freedom fighters", the bourgeois and Social Democratic parties all behind it.

The workers councils did not condemn the Nagy government. But even if they had done so, this would not automatically have given the workers councils hegemony over that government. It would have made the duality more sharp and clear. It would have drawn the class line between the councils and the government, between the workers and the bourgeoisie. It would have made the "clearer line of demarcation" that Comrade Swabeck is talking about.

Needless to add: if the councils had fought against the bourgeoisie, if they had not been disoriented by the bourgeoisie, if they had not been still supporting the "restorationist elements"-- the later struggle against the Soviet Army would have been progressive. -- It would have been the regenerated proletarian revolution struggling against its bureaucratic incubus. -- And Comrade Swabeck's references to Trotsky on the Red Army suppressing a revolution in India etc., (P. 10) would have made some sense.

## The Wallace Question

Considering that one of the party's main objectives in its present campaign is to get closer to the ex-Wallace-ite youth (according to the resolution on Regroupment), it is strange that Comrade Swabeck has no embarrassment in bringing up Marcy's position of 1948. This position was to give critical support to Wallace. To support him "as a rope supports a hanged man." Why? -- in order to "reach out our hand towards elements of our own class we could not reach in any other way." (Global Class War and Destiny of American Labor, May 1953).

Comrade Marcy at the time (1948) held out no perspective of great upsurge or great success in recruiting from the Wallace Party. -- And this was a realistic estimate. Comrade Swabeck by his own admission did err on the side of misjudging the whole situation, seeing the Wallace Party as an emerging labor party, thus visualizing a period of upsurge.

Comrade Swabeck states (p. 4) that he withdrew his own proposed critical support to Wallace because such a course "carried dangers of adaptation to the dominant trend of reaction."

Considering that the whole Wallace movement was literally red-baited to death, this is a totally unrealistic statement, whatever position one might hold on the actual class character of the Wallace movement. -- Our own petitioners found great difficulty getting Comrade Dobbs on the ballot in Pittsburgh last year because so many people remembered (8 years later!) how the Pittsburgh papers had printed the names of hundreds of signers for Wallace's candidacy, hounding them out of jobs, etc.

The CIO bureaucracy expelled the Stalinist-led unions precisely over the issue of support to Wallace. All throughout the country the Wallace-ites were labelled as "communist", harrassed, persecuted. -- One of Comrade Marcy's motives in advocating critical support to Wallace was to harden our party, to meet the red-baiting head-on. The fact that Wallace himself was a capitalist was secondary. The movement was "essentially a Stalinist-directed working class and middle-class movement with an essentially working class character." (Global Class War, May '53, p. 17)

Comrade Swabeck says he thought the Wallace Party was the beginning of a labor party. It goes without saying that a genuine mass labor party at that time would have had a much more innocuous program (wouldn't have touched the Soviet question with a ten-foot pole, or would have been anti-Soviet). And however much more potentially radical it might have been than the Wallace movement, it would have been far easier to support. No, -- critical support to the Wallace movement did not carry very much "danger of adaptation to the dominant trend of reaction."

Finally, on the phrase of Marcy's which Comrade Swabeck quotes as a first class example of the awful results of a rigid sectarianism: "The Wallace movement was merged with a current

that was global in character. What gave it such a character? It was the Stalinists." -- The word global here of course does not mean "good", or beautiful. Venereal disease is also global. The Marcy bulletin from which Comrade Swabek quotes this remark is saturated with the idea that the Stalinists are counter-revolutionary, but in the revolutionary camp -- that we must be where the Stalinists are, -- meet them in combat, not ignore them in isolation. They are a global current. So are we. We are infinitely superior, but not yet stronger, than they. "We are in global competition with them as one global current against another for hegemony of the world camp of all the proletarians and oppressed peoples." (Global Class War, May '53 - p. 23)

### The Global Class War

Comrade Swabek has dealt with the concept of the global class war in a peculiarly off-hand way when explaining the concept itself. But he has devoted nearly the whole of his document to attacking the Minority's "rigid" use of the concept.

Comrade Swabek agrees that we should "characterize this war, its initial Korean phase and the present cold war as a global class conflict" -- and this does "not really represent anything new," (p. 2) And he further states, "there has been no difficulty among us in recognizing the two main forces in the sense of the mutually antagonistic social relations existing within the Soviet orbit on the one side, and in the capitalist world on the other." (p. 2)

But unfortunately, says Comrade Swabek, Marcy's and Grey's method "starts out from the rigidly conceived concept of the global class forces. It is to them a criterion that applies equally at all times and in all situations; the relationship within the proletarian forces remains unchanging as it was once laid down in this schema. If the historical process does not conform to this schema, that is just too bad for the historical process. Events have to be painted in such colors as to fit the schema" -- etc., etc. (p. 3)

Now just where was it "laid down in this schema" that the "relationship within the proletarian forces remains unchanging?" And just how does the Minority's concept of the global class war exclude the necessity for political revolution? Comrade Swabek fails to make this clear.

Certainly if the Minority is serious about winning the global class war, and certainly if the Stalinist bureaucracy is as conservative and nationalistic as we all know it is, then the political revolution is required, and in fact made indispensable, precisely by the needs of the global class war.

If, in trying to be on our own class side in this war we support the bureaucracy as such, and we oppose any working class move to overthrow the bureaucracy, then surely we would be taking

the best way to lose the global class war. Surely the crushing of the (real) political revolution in Hungary would be a terrible set-back for our class side in the global war.

Comrade Swabek has his "schemas" somewhat twisted up. Actually, according to the "schema" of the global class war, there should have been a political revolution in Hungary (and still should and will be in the whole Soviet bloc). But unfortunately "the historical process (did) not conform to this schema." There was a counter-revolution where there should have been a revolution. -- That was the tragic reality.

The schematic thinking is all on the side of Comrade Swabek and the Majority. They figured we were in the era of the political revolution (which we are). Therefore any uprising was ipso facto a political revolution. And therefore the Hungarian uprising was a political revolution. It is important to note that the Majority felt it was a political revolution before there was prominent mention of workers' councils -- at a time when the capitalist governments were forming and re-forming, each one further to the right -- and Nagy was calling for "free elections" and asking the intervention of the U.N.

No, it is the Minority that examined the events themselves and the real "interaction of social forces." True, the Hungarian uprising had to be analyzed on the basis of external forces as well as internal. But the first thing in the analysis of any event is to observe what happened, -- then to determine the forces that caused it to happen.

Having observed the nature of the internal forces, partly on the basis of what happened, partly on the basis of knowing something about the classes in Hungary, their history, the crimes of Stalinism, etc., having observed first that there was a counter-revolution -- it was easy to predict that these forces would join the wrong side in the global war. But we did not make this prediction on the basis of identifying the bureaucracy with the working class.

If U.N. forces had invaded Hungary on November 1 after Nagy had invited them to, the ensuing war with the Soviet Army would have been a class war. Comrade Swabek of course would agree. And the comrades of the Majority would have taken a correct position. -- But at that same moment, 90% of the Hungarian people would have sided with the U.N. (This is largely due to the crimes of Stalinism, of course). The mood of the Hungarian nation was anti-soviet and anti-communist as well as anti-Stalinist.

Comrade Swabek disagrees. However, the Majority's misjudgment of this mood, even their wrong analysis of the event is after all only an episode. There will be genuine political revolutions in the future -- and even greater social revolutions. In spite of other differences, there will be no doubts or debates among revolutionaries as to the class character of these revolutions. Especially when we are engaged in a revolution of our own,

especially when we can sharpen the blade of the dialectic on the whetstone of our own great events, the "process of development" will be a great deal clearer to everybody. At that time, in retrospect, all revolutionaries will agree on the character of the Hungarian counter-revolution of 1956.

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May 10, 1957

## THE QUESTION OF CHINA

By John Peterson

As of now the party discussion on China has been weak in three areas:

1. The taking power of the Stalinists.
2. What the development of Chinese economy will lead to if present world conditions remain as they are.
3. The perspective of revolution in Asia and the role of Japan.

To examine the question of how the Stalinists took power in the Third Chinese Revolution, it is necessary to examine the condition of the country and the pattern of previous revolutions, those of 1911 and 1925-27. In the two previous revolutions we did not see the conventional picture of revolution seen in western countries. We saw instead a series of mass actions culminating not in the people overthrowing the central government, but in the intervention of military force from without.

This military force marched in. It was able to take power because of the ideological weakness of the leaders of the masses. In 1911, the Republicans put up the ideological facade for military adventures; in 1925-27 the Communists played this role. These military forces, which twice intervened — where did they come from? They sprang from China's lack of national unity. They developed out of China's internal chaos, the varying political composition of the numerous armies that actually controlled China. This backward political picture was superimposed over China's lack of modern transport. This led to political events in Trotsky's own words:

"The fundamental conditions of the East, its immense expanse, its countless human masses, its economic backwardness, give these processes (revolutionary processes) their slow drawn out character."

For example, one of China's major problems was banditry, a problem usually solved even under feudal regimes. In 1911 we see the Republicans rise only to finally lose out in the struggle for state power to military adventures. However, they retained a shadow of power in the Canton area. In 1925-26 we see the Communist Party go from a strength of 800 to 30,000 in months against a background of strikes, boycotts and insurrections. Stalin then uses the authority of the Comintern to strangle the CCP, forcing it into a bloc with the Kuomintang and Chiang. Then, when Chiang turned against them, instead of striking out for an independent course, the CCP was forced into a bloc with the left wing of the Kuomintang, the Wuhan group.

Finally, the great Stalin decides on a switch toward ultra-leftism. The result, the Canton Commune, followed by the massa-

cre of the Commune. But then the physical characteristics of China resulted in a different end for the Chinese Communists than that of their comrades in other countries who were also subject to Stalinist misleadership. After the failure of the Canton insurrection, the Chinese Communist Party, under the impetus of the third period theories took to the countryside. Their first center of power was in the south, Fukien province. The Chinese peasantry, the most impoverished in the world, supported the Communist movement to the hilt. The partisan Communist groups slowly united into the Red Army. In China, and only there, under the conditions of lack of national unity and the extreme conditions of life, for example, tremendous masses always on the borderline of starvation, could partisans unite, form an army, and take hold of a fragment of state power. Then came the long march from Fukien to Yen-an. It is easy to see the reason why this long march took place. The cementing of the partisans into the Red Army holding a definite area, Soviet China, led to Chiang Kai-shek's no longer having to engage in mobile warfare.

Chiang was able to lay siege to Soviet China and force the Red Army to go on the long march. If the Communist Party had had forces in the cities, it could have jammed communications and prevented Chiang's massive, slow-moving forces from concentrating. It would then have been possible for the Red Army to destroy Chiang's army piece by piece. However, the CCP did not develop its forces in the cities but instead continually drew the most able into the Red Army. Thus, Chiang's hold on the cities was not challenged even during the Third Chinese Revolution. Cities were taken, not by revolution from within coordinated with military efforts from without, but by siege.

The shift of the Red Army to the north saved it at the cost of isolating it from the main centers of China. Chiang hoped to bargain with the Japanese. However, if he gave them all they wanted, he would incur the enmity of the other imperialist powers who would then back some other war lord. Thus Chiang was forced to resist the Japanese. During this period, the CCP wanted unity with the Kuomintang to fight the Japanese. Finally, after Chiang began to resist Japanese aggression, unity was established. The CCP cut the heart out of its propaganda, upheld capitalism, and suppressed the peasants.

Chiang in return fought the Japanese in such a lackadaisical way that they advanced whenever they wanted to make the effort. This was true right till late 1944. The peasantry under Chiang during the war were treated worse than ever. During the war Chiang also attacked small units of the Communist Army whenever he had the chance. But still the Red Army and the CCP held a fragment of state power. The top leadership of the CCP was for a popular front at all costs. However, it dared not go too far with the rank and file who retained a revolutionary outlook. During the war between China and Japan, Chiang lost much of his power. Japan controlled most of the industry of China and at certain times probably a larger Chinese population than Chiang did. With the close of the war the CCP moved quickly into Manchuria and Northern China. The Red Army enlarged its power tremendously.

The CCP leadership demanded of Chiang only some reforms. Meanwhile, the Chinese economic situation reached bottom, the corruption of government in every field reached such a point that entire departments would cease functioning.

Inside Chiang's army even generals started to desert him. The country was ripe for revolution. The CCP as a party could not have taken power. However, it already had a fragment of state power. Under these conditions in understanding Chinese history, it is easy to see why and how the CCP took power. Having already a fragment of state power it was compelled to act in the same way that holders of state power have acted in the past. Inside the territory it controlled, the pressure of the peasantry could not be resisted too long, because of the effect resisting the peasants too long would have on the peasant Red Army. With Chiang standing firm against any reform, and the revolutionary temper of the peasantry and the Red Army rising, the CCP was compelled to propagate its land reform laws in 1947. Not propaganda and insurrection but laws and military power were the forces that the CCP used. After the passage of the land reform laws Chiang's power faded rapidly. A program that would not have sufficed for a political party to overthrow Chiang was successful when brought on bayonet point. However, as Cannon's China Bulletin shows, the victory of the CCP only signified success in the first phase of the Chinese Revolution. Since the CCP took power it has been forced to expropriate the bourgeoisie. Industry has been nationalized and agriculture collectivized.

### The Prospects of Chinese Economy

The rapid development of the Chinese economy has, to an extent, blinded us to certain facts. The most important of these are China's immense population and the low starting point, China's weak industrial economy which will, in a year or two, reach the level of Russia's industrial output in 1928. Under present conditions we can expect at best an increase in the output of heavy industry of something like 100% every five years. Agriculture and light industry, of course, will lag far behind these figures. This, of course, is something beyond capitalism, even at its high point of growth, and development.

But what is the social effect? A Swiss Trotskyist put it this way. The dynamics of economic growth more rapidly develops needs than it permits their fulfillment and while it slowly improves the living condition of the workers it rapidly develops a privileged stratum. This was characteristic of the Russian state after the revolution. Lenin and Trotsky saw the road out of this situation in the expansion of the revolution to the more advanced countries. The key to saving socialist democracy in Russia was a Communist Germany. If this was true of Russia, how much more then is it true of backward China? Bureaucracy in China developed from the very beginning.

In Asia the question of socialism or capitalism is most sharply posed at present. In Asia even the Hungarian events did not lower the prestige of the Communist Party. The recent election in India, the situation in Indonesia, the continual Malayan crisis, all show that even during the present capitalist boom the situation is ripening rapidly. The Chinese masses' struggle for socialist democracy can be brought to a successful culmination only by an expansion of the revolution. During the entire period 1905-1945 China and Japan were economically linked. The one big heavy industrial area in China was Manchuria, Japanese ruled. Japan's industrial development during the period between World War One and World War Two was more rapid than that of any capitalist country. Today Japan's industrial economy is almost completely dependent on imports. Coal mines have closed down and American oil has taken its place. Only against a background of capitalist boom can Japan survive. The first wave of depression would throw the country into a tremendous economic decline.

Japan is the only really industrially developed country in Asia. The working class is more or less quiescent. However, sympathy and interest in socialism and the Chinese revolution is universal. Under these conditions the possibility of building a revolutionary socialist party in Japan is greater than in any other important Asiatic country. The victory of the working class in Japan would push Asia on to the path of socialist revolution. The first task of Chinese socialist democracy, if it is victorious in China before there is revolution in Japan, is to aid the revolution in Japan. The victory of the workers in Japan can only be accomplished by a revolutionary socialist party. The Japanese Communist Party must be turned left and the bureaucrats in it turned out. To do so is the task of the Japanese Trotskyists. In America it is our task to explain the Chinese state to the vanguard of the working class, its successes, its contradictions and its prospects.

#### Proposed Resolution on China

1. The SWP considers the victory of the Third Chinese Revolution a great step forward towards the goal of world socialism.
2. However, the SWP sees that the state in China is bureaucratically deformed.
3. The policy of the CCP both internal and foreign is a break on the development of socialism in Asia. Internally, the iron control of the bureaucracy over the economy suppresses workers' democracy. Externally, the policy of peaceful co-existence prolongs the life span of capitalism in Asia.
4. While the rank and file of the Peoples' Liberation Army played the big role in the first phase of the revolution, the completion of the Chinese Revolution, the struggle

for socialist democracy, requires the mass action of the workers and peasantry against the bureaucracy.

5. The Chinese Revolution is only the first phase of the Asian part of world socialist revolution, both the bourgeois democracies and the capitalist dictatorships in Asia are incapable of solving the problems of Asia, relative over-population, lack of industry and imperialist control over the economy. This failure is vividly demonstrated by the feeble scale of India's Five Year Plan.
6. The only really developed and industrial country in Asia is Japan. Thus Japan is the key to proletarian revolution in Asia. The Japanese workers cannot take power without a revolutionary socialist leadership. This can only be provided by the Japanese Trotskyists. The bureaucracy controlling the Communist parties in Asia, must be turned out. This can only be done by conscious leadership. This task requires that the Asian Trotskyists display a degree of energy in accord with their revolutionary theory.

May 15, 1957.