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THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL AND THE CHINESE "CULTURAL REVOLUTION"

By Jan Garrett

The Marxist evaluation of any process must proceed first of all from its setting in the context of the world struggle between capitalism and the forces striving for socialism. It must stand in defense of positions already won in the struggle and it must combat all forms of privilege, ignorance, backwardness, disorganization, etc. in the workers camp. It starts on a scientific basis to analyze the real forces in combat; it uses the historical materialist method developed by Marx and Engels and kept up to date by the revolutionary Marxist tradition since then. Its opposition to false consciousness is conducted not in the spirit of individual or group self-righteousness but of loyalty to the truth.

An evaluation of the Chinese "Cultural Revolution" (CCR) that does not take this approach sufficiently, that omits to analyze the social forces involved and develop the dynamic of the contradictions of the social order under discussion, will be inadequate, misleading as an example of how to look at contradictory processes, and in error as to certain conclusions.

The Chinese Revolution, comrades will remember, took power in a country which had not progressed under Chinese control for centuries. China's irrigation-based Asiatic culture, which underlay the highest technological development in history prior to capitalist Europe, was destroyed and the country's internal forces drifted backwards. The country was systematically robbed by Japanese, European and American imperialism. It was ravaged by war and civil war throughout the first half of the twentieth century. When revolution lifted it out of the capitalist camp, it entered the noncapitalist one with tremendous economic problems, which could not be overcome even in the space of two decades without economic assistance on a massive scale from the advanced industrial countries. The lack of this assistance, not to mention the withdrawal by the Soviet Union of economic and military aid after 1960, predetermined the rise of an internal crisis the outcome of which could not be 100 percent in line with the socialist ideal, especially given the lack of a genuine Marxist leadership of the country.

What Are the Differences between the Documents?

It is not possible to make a comparison of the SWP's and the United Secretariat majority's positions unless we first determine what is said in the one that is omitted from the other, and vice-versa, because the positions may appear so close on first reading that taking the

"gist" of either is not sufficient. In the next few pages, this approach will be attempted.

The SWP draft resolution, printed in International Information Bulletin No. 5, contains a section on foreign policy not found in the United Secretariat majority document (page 3, middle to bottom of 2nd column). In my opinion, this section (1) implies "equal blame" to the Soviet and Chinese bureaucracies for the recent stages of the Sino-Soviet dispute and its consequences on the state level. (It is not true that "the initiative in extending the Sino-Soviet rift to the governmental level was taken by Peking." Who cut off economic aid?) This section (2) underestimates the objective ties of China to the colonial revolution.

The SWP draft gives more description of the Red Guard movement (page 5, middle of third paragraph, column 2, through top of page 6). These lines were omitted from the United Secretariat majority's document. I think this is because the SWP tends to exaggerate the relative importance of certain superficial aspects of the Red Guard movement in a way that does not distinguish us from bourgeois commentators clearly enough.

The party's draft has two paragraphs (second and third on column two, page 7) of attacks on the cultural aspects of the CCR. There is nothing wrong with this per se, but it suffers from journalistic hyperbole (e.g., "in the style of primitive religion") and confuses our stand a bit with the type of intellectual who sees primarily this aspect of the CCR.

The SWP draft contains a half paragraph (paragraph four, column two, page 8) which states that the CCR "has ended in the construction of democracy and the fortification of the positions of one faction, etc." The second part is true, but how has democracy been constricted? Was it greater just before or during the CCR? This statement contradicts what both documents say (SWP: page 5, column one):

"In China today, the mobilizations of the masses under the impetus of the upheaval, limited and episodic as they have been, have altered the relationship of forces between the bureaucracy and the people to the advantage of the latter. The movement of the masses weakened the bureaucratic regime."

The SWP draft contains a section on Peking's "real policy" of "peaceful coexistence" with U.S. imperialism (page 9, bottom of column one). This is definitely an example of what the European comrades

have referred to as sectarianism on the question. (1) "Peaceful coexistence" between states we have never in principle opposed. (2) China could never afford to capitulate to the United States the way the USSR has through its "peaceful coexistence" policy. I speak here of objective possibility not subjective desires.

The SWP draft contains a section on the appeal of Maoism to newly radicalized youth. It poopoo's a little too much the appeal of Maoism and overstates its inability to create a sizable youth movement (page 9, column 2). We should not be in such a hurry to write off the "left" CP in India, the UJCM in France, or the Black Panthers in the USA. The United Secretariat majority's draft makes it plain that it is the orthodox Maoists who've been unable to stabilize youth formations.

The United Secretariat Majority resolution correctly characterizes the CCR as expressing "an important weakening of that bureaucratic regime, both as the result of its inner contradictions and of a widespread mobilization of the masses."

This resolution goes on to say:

"The sharpness of the innerbureaucratic struggle in China and the large-scale intervention of the masses in that struggle, can only be understood against the background of objective contradictions and problems which accumulated, since the end of the fifties and the beginning of the sixties [that is, after the end of the ultraleftism of the Peasant Commune experiment. J.G.], a growing trend of conflicts in Chinese society and a growing discontent among the Chinese masses."

The United Secretariat majority describes the internal dynamic of Chinese society during this period -- the major contradictions which Germain had described in the International Socialist Review (July-August 1968). The SWP should have considered these observations public property of the International and incorporated them in the original draft which our leaders wrote (pages 10-11 of International Information Bulletin No. 5).

These contradictions, explains the United Secretariat majority, "created an explosive situation in the country, in which a process of political differentiation and increased political activity of the masses became possible. In this situation, conditions for a genuine political revolution against the ruling bureaucracy matured. [It is obvious that one condition, the revolution party, is glaringly absent.] The "cultural revolution" constitutes objectively an attempt by the Mao faction to divert the social forces pushing in that direction from an overthrow of the bureaucracy into a reform of the bureaucracy."

Note that not only do the United Secretariat majority leadership not fear to talk about political revolution, but they are quite capable of characterizing the crisis in relation to that problem. (I hope no one will venture to misconstrue the phrase "reform of the bureaucracy" into "reform of the bureaucracy out of existence.")

Next the United Secretariat majority correctly places the CCR in its proper international background, where correct proportion is preserved with regard to the treason of the Soviet bureaucracy on the question of economic and military aid and with regard to the objectively more radical line of China on certain issues in 1968 (page 11, middle of column one to next-to-last paragraph in column two).

The United Secretariat majority gives an explanation of Mao's victory, whereas the SWP is incomplete in this (page 12, column two, paragraph three).

The SWP draft, for all its opposition to Maoism, waxes unusually indignant about the destruction of the old-bureaucratic CP majority. So far has this gone that it appears to believe that the army has actually substituted itself for the old "civil" bureaucracy, whereas the army is not and cannot be anything but a reflection of the social forces in China and their relative relations of power. The United Secretariat majority clarifies this point by adding:

"However, Mao tends to reduce again this great weight gained by the army during the previous period, by putting the emphasis on the reconstruction of the party as the mainstay of the regime and the necessity of a single central leadership for all power apparatuses." (Page 13, last third of paragraph one, column 2.)

The end of the CCR is explained as containing elements of compromise between the bureaucratic factions (second half, second paragraph, page 16, column one).

The line on the image of Peking in the world today (page 16, column two, third paragraph, second half) -- "the sharp campaign which Peking unleashed against the right-wing CP's following Moscow's lead and against some key features of bureaucratic rule in E. Europe, has objectively contributed to the world crisis of Stalinism and to facilitate the upsurge of a new youth vanguard the world over" -- is in better proportion than the SWP's comments on the same subject.

The SWP's reference to Peking's bloc with Tanzania is uncritical whereas the United Secretariat majority correctly points out that it is of a kind with Peking's bloc with Pakistan today and In-

donesia yesterday (page 16, column two, fourth paragraph).

The Question of Self-Determination

The right of the Chinese people to self-determination was not settled for all time either by the 1949 victory or by the defeat of U.S. imperialism in Korea. Chinese self-determination is threatened by the presence of the U.S. bases which surround the country on three sides, as well as the U.S. military aggression in Vietnam. Since 1960 the Soviet bureaucracy has also violated the Chinese right to self-determination by withholding economic and military aid to a brother power in order to force China to follow its line.

Self-determination of nations is not a question of rights of small nations, not to be exploited by big ones; it is a question of economically weak nations' right not to be exploited or bullied by stronger ones. This aspect of the fight for self-determination applies to China today as much as any other time in this century. It is a point we should not forget at any time when we deal with the Sino-Soviet conflict.

To be sure, the Maoists' ultraleft verbiage on the question of a united front with the Soviet Union has made it easier for the USSR to betray the cause of revolution. But if the ultraleft verbiage were missing, does anyone believe that the Soviet bureaucrats would give up peaceful coexistence in those countries (Indonesia, Iran, Western Europe) where the Maoists' line is considerably to the left of theirs? Would the USSR be significantly more loyal to the common nuclear defense? If we think about it carefully, we know time has not reduced the situation to one of "equal blame,"* because time has not given the Chinese bureaucracy equal strength or equal margin for maneuver. The SWP document appears to imply that we think so.

Black nationalist-internationalists will notice this failure to take China's vulnerability into account as will every other pro-colonial revolutionary who is

*To anyone who cherishes this illusion, we can argue as Trotsky did with Burnham-Shactman. If the objective basis for our earlier position (in the one case, the defense of the USSR, in the present one, critical support to China in the Sino-Soviet dispute) has changed, it is up to the comrade who argues change to demonstrate when, how and why the change occurred. By the way, there is no contradiction with critical support to one side in the dispute and total abstentionism from the criminal armed conflict at the border!

not motivated to be pro-Maoist out of pure factional loyalty. That is why the International's position must be more careful in its phrasing than our draft was.

Why Not to Follow Peng Shu-tse's Advice

Comrade Peng has advised the International to give critical support to the Liu Shao-chi faction. This was not unprincipled on his part, for one has a right to take sides in an interbureaucratic struggle if one thinks the fight for political revolution could be promoted by so doing. (After all, SWP members supported Abel critically the time he ran against incumbent USW bureaucrat Philip Murray.)

The emphasis of the SWP document, like Peng's (though perhaps toned down just a little), is overwhelmingly anti-Mao-Lin Piao. There is one paragraph criticizing the Liu Shao-chi faction which seems a bit out of place in the SWP document, unless our party meant to endorse the Peng position of critical support. I get the feeling that our party's position is somewhat eclectic, giving in to the explicit position of the United Secretariat majority (non-support to either side) in words but not spirit.

The emphasis of the United Secretariat majority document does not cut across the explicit stand of support to neither faction. But it would be useful to restate why a critical support position was not desirable at all. In my mind, the struggle was conducted in such a cloud of ideological smoke that it was impossible to advance the cause of socialism by taking sides. The number one priority was to clear the smoke. That, in itself, would assist a general regroupment of the revolutionary elements now entangled on both sides and it would make possible a political, if not organizational intervention by our tendency.

By its lack of a deep enough analysis the SWP draft fails to clear the smoke sufficiently.

Has the "Cultural Revolution" Been "Entirely Negative"?

This is certainly the case if we take the Maoists' word that it is a cultural revolution. But we are under no obligation to do this.

The least generous comparison we might make to the social and political process of the CCR is to compare it to the ultraleft swing of Stalin in 1928-33. Even then, our movement recognized that the brutalities that accompanied the Stalin collectivization and destruction of kulakism were necessitated at that point by

years of delay. Having fought against this delay, we had even more right than we do now to criticize. (I do not recall the SWP's ever -- in the years 1960-69 -- criticizing the retreat from the Great Leap Forward from the point of view of its going too far in the opposite direction. In fact the whole Chinese bureaucratic structure made a gradual correction of this inevitable problem impossible.) As a reaction to growing inequalities in the country, the CCR was made even more inevitable than the Stalin ultraleft swing in 1928 because of the increased danger of a war with the United States developing over Vietnam. The danger, from the point of view of the worker state, of decentralization* of the social surplus was very real.

Instead of fighting this danger with a revolutionary party against the majority of the party-state bureaucracy, the Mao-Lin Piao faction -- itself a section of the bureaucracy -- resorted to more manipulable sections of the Chinese mass. We can accuse Mao of not fighting the bureaucracy with a revolutionary party or the core of the working class; we can accuse him of not doing so on a principled basis or with the proper political preparation. We can accuse both the factions of arbitrary, bureaucratic practices and resorting to ruses. But we cannot really view with indignation the dismantling of a section of the bureaucracy, against the whole of which we ourselves have promised political revolution for years!

What Can We Lose...?

This question has been asked in a somewhat pragmatic way by less experienced comrades who don't want to take sides on this question without seeing a substantial danger in the SWP's difference on this question with the United Secretariat majority. However, it is better to correct an error before the potential dangers get large enough to manifest themselves clearly in practice. Many times our movement has gone around in debate with comrades who held a state capitalist view of Russia, although these comrades insisted that they came to the same conclusions for action that we did.

But there is an area where a certain amount of harm is done. Actually, we have been erring a wee bit in this respect for years. Our fights with Marcy and Swabeck seem to have preconditioned in us a slightly sectarian attitude towards individuals influenced by Maoism. I think it was Comrade Cannon who wrote that no party ever corrects a mistake, it always over-corrects it. The more experience a party

embodies, the less extreme the overcorrection is likely to be; I think we are fortunate in having the benefit of the International's experience on this question.

We have been quite fair to PL and the other Maoist groups, but the slightly formalist conception of Maoism that we hold may have hindered us in relating to individuals impressed by aspects of Maoism -- including the wrong aspects for the right reasons such as Mao's "struggle" against "bureaucracy." This is especially important in regard to black nationalists and Third World radicals in general. A more flexible conception of Maoism in relating to them does not at all necessitate any concessions to residual Stalinist habits. The fight against concrete vestiges of Stalinism can be conducted without hyperbole in characterization. In the present epoch and for some time to come, Stalinist traits will be combined with every conceivable good political trait (recall the complexities of the Escalante trial in Cuba!) and we will have to have the dexterity to separate the wheat from the chaff.

The way to deal with Maoism is to lay bare its sociological origins and the dialectic of its current aspects, not to write jokes about it,* or give a blow by blow account of troop movement and alleged bloody battles instructive though these facts may be about the depth and direction of the current crisis. Even the reports about the negative cultural and educational aspects of the CCR and the contrasting of them with the traditional norms of Marxism does not do the main job.

Engels explained once that false ideology is best destroyed by explaining its origins in a scientific fashion. That is what we should do. That, I think, is what the United Secretariat majority tried to do.

NOTE: This document is presented at this early stage of the preconvention discussion because I felt that to delay would be possibly to truncate the discussion in a short period toward the end of the summer. I have not had time to collaborate with comrades in other locals who might be disposed to agree with the United Secretariat majority. Nor have I had the opportunity to review in depth the past discussions our movement has had on China. By presenting the argument now, I hope to stimulate some critical thought on the question and provide comrades with a framework -- at least a partial one -- for the debate.

* Prior to 1966, economy was even more decentralized in China than the USSR. The weaker the industrial sector, the greater the danger posed by a given amount of decentralization to the survival of a workers state.

* Would it have been funny if it had been closer to home, say, in Cuba?!

As background reading, I would suggest:

E. Germain, "The Third Chinese Revolution," Fourth International, September-October 1950 and January-February 1951.

Nahuel Moreno, "The Chinese and Indo-Chinese Revolutions," Fifty Years of World Revolution.

E. Germain, "The Cultural Revolution," International Socialist Review, July-August 1968.

I am sure the draft writers for the party will suggest some additional ones.

Twin Cities
June 9, 1969

THE STUDENT UPRISING AND THE TRANSITIONAL PROGRAM

By Milton Alvin

The school term ending this month has witnessed a growth in the number and extent of student struggles. These have spread to all parts of the country. They have taken place in public as well as private schools, in high schools as well as colleges and universities.

In the overwhelming majority of cases the issues raised were around the question of racism as it is practiced on the campus. Most of the struggles were initiated by black and Third World students attempting to get more minority students admitted to the universities, to get special departments established that would teach what they wanted to learn, to control this part of the school, to recruit more minority faculty and, in some cases, to get financial aid for students.

Needless to say, these demands are fully justified and have been energetically supported by the SWP and the YSA. (Other campus struggles and activities, such as organizing antiwar actions, opposition to ROTC, etc., are not dealt with in this article.) However, it appears that in supporting the many actions that have taken place, our people, wherever they took part, did not go beyond the demands raised by those who initiated the actions in the first place. I do not mean to imply that we must in all instances "go them one better." There are many struggles both on and off the campus where we can support demands of others without trying to raise new demands. The question I am raising here is whether or not we should raise such ideas as go beyond those of others without necessarily insisting upon making them into demands for a given situation. In other words, should we try to utilize a particular struggle in order to bridge the present consciousness of the participants with the socialist revolution, that is, use the Transitional Program in the way it was intended.

A sampling of articles in The Militant from the issue of February 21 through that of April 25, 1969 -- 10 issues that were published during the middle of the

semester just ending -- yields 42 articles that deal with those aspects of the student uprising that we are discussing. The articles deal with events on 19 college campuses; 6 articles deal with high school actions.

It appears from these articles that our people were participants in the struggles described or were very close to the events. In any case, none of these articles raises demands or puts forth ideas that are not already a part of each struggle. It is clear, judging from the sampling, that other ideas that go beyond those raised already, did not occur to the writers of the articles. At the same time such other ideas could not have been raised by the participants themselves or they would certainly have been reported.

The uprisings that have taken place have often resulted in concessions, of one kind or another, granted to the students. These have been won from individual school administrations and are largely in the area of slight increases of black and Third World admissions, some additional faculty appointments of the kind demanded and the establishment of new study departments. The administrations have strongly resisted giving up control of admissions, faculties and new departments. The victories won up to this time are important and significant, not so much for the actual concessions won, which are meager, but for the implications for the future.

Virtually all the struggles that have taken place on campuses up to now have suffered from a certain parochialism in the sense that they have each been directed against the particular administration of the school involved. Even though many struggles have been supported by students and others who were not on the particular campus involved, this aspect seems to have been fairly consistent.

The vast extent of the total number of struggles and campuses suggests that some ideas that would unify the struggles, generalize from them and lift them to a

higher political level, are in order. It is one thing for students to organize a fight against a hide-bound administration in their own school, and even to win some concessions as they have, and quite another to look around at the vast number of such struggles and the need to draw some political conclusions from them.

The demand raised, for example, to admit another few dozen or even a few hundred additional black students to a particular school, suggests that all young people who want a college education should get one. The latter idea, of course, is not realizable in any one particular school; it must be raised as a demand on the government, on the state.

This demand, for universal higher education, with the students' living expenses paid by the government, has been an unused part of our program for a long time, gathering dust on the shelf somewhere. But it could be used to good advantage in the kind of struggles taking place now. It need not be used as a concrete demand in any particular situation; it should and must be put forward as an idea that generalizes the problem and puts it on a political plane where it belongs. It bridges the gap we spoke of earlier.

Despite the fact that all radical tendencies participate in the student uprisings to one extent or another, none of our opponents that I know of has raised such a demand.

Similarly, the demand raised by the students for control of black and Third World study departments suggests that the students and faculty, who are the real university, should control everything. Boards of trustees and regents are not part of the university; they are the owners or controllers who contribute nothing to the field of knowledge. They should be challenged on the wider field of control of the university in its entirety and not just of the one new department.

I think the raising of these two ideas, universal free college education with financial expenses paid by the government and faculty-student control of the university would get a good response. In any event, it would serve to raise the consciousness of thinking students to the role of the state, the nature of the so-

ciety we live in, etc. It would place their attention on political solutions of their problems rather than on only the limited solutions that can be expected on any single given campus.

Certainly it is our duty to raise the idea of universal higher education among high school students. This layer of the population has nothing but a dismal future as things are at present. The boys can look forward to being drafted into the armed forces; the girls to looking for jobs or home life. This idea should be particularly appealing to minority high school youth who in many cases cannot even finish high school. The demands raised so far in the black and Third World actions do not encompass all youth, only a relatively small number.

The student struggles have received significant faculty support on many campuses. The younger teachers often identify with the rebellious students, take part in their activities and sometimes organize actions of their own in support of the students. This layer of the faculty obviously takes a serious view of the question of the nature of the university itself, of who should control, of who should attend and so on. The demand for faculty-student control of the university, counterposed to the present control by outsiders, should get a good reception from these elements.

The transitional demands we are discussing should get a good reception from the general public, especially its poorer sections. Sometimes a demand is made that the war in Vietnam be ended and the money spent on it should be allocated to social welfare needs. This can be done in connection with the idea of government financing of universal higher education. A tie-in of the opposition to the war and the draft with education is good propaganda. The idea of learning and not killing and dying should have a wide appeal.

Finally, the advantage of using the slogans we are discussing is mainly that it puts the problem on a political plane, raises it from the area of an isolated instance in one or another school, and develops it as a broad social problem that can only be solved by the intervention of the state.

Los Angeles
June 1969