

C O P Y

ON KHRUSHCHEV'S DOWNFALL

To the Political Committee

Dear Comrades:

The declaration by the United Secretariat on "Khrushchev's Downfall," (The Militant, Nov. 2, 1964) urges all Communist militants to "press for full and free discussion of every single issue involved." That advice could very well be addressed also to Trotskyist militants. Our comprehension of the real meaning of this event is no less pressing. Its impact on further world developments bids fair to be as deep-going as were the Khrushchev revelations, made in 1956, of the murderous Stalin regime.

On that occasion we made a thorough analysis. We characterized the concessions wrung by the Soviet workers from the bureaucracy as a new stage in the continuing development of the Russian Revolution. We interpreted this as a consequence of the growing power and pressure of the Soviet masses upon their bureaucratic rulers.

Today a thorough analysis of Khrushchev's dismissal is as essential as was the case of his revelations. To understand in order to foresee is an important part of the Marxist method; and for the leadership of a revolutionary party the Marxist method remains paramount.

The declaration by the United Secretariat, aside from certain points of confusion, contains some preliminary estimates on the Khrushchev downfall and the need for restoration of Soviet democracy. What has happened, however, calls for more extensive analysis, and it calls for prognoses of its logical consequences. With this in mind, I submit for consideration by the Political Committee some observations and some views on the question.

The basic reason for the Khrushchev downfall must provide the key to an understanding of the logical consequences and developments that are bound to follow. A number of factors were involved, such as failures in agricultural policy; questions of investment in heavy industry vs. consumer industry, and the military needs; the retreat made on the missiles in Cuba, and the general zigzag course of policy. Whatever degree to which such questions played a part in the action taken, they were clearly only contributory in nature.

Unquestionably, the overriding issue far outweighing all others in the Khrushchev ouster, was the unparalleled dilemma to which his policy had led the Kremlin in the ideological dispute with Peking. Directly involved in this dilemma was the outrageous

violation of the Sino-Soviet economic agreements, the abrupt withdrawal of Soviet technicians, the renegeing on the promise to share atomic secrets with China, and the underhanded military aid to Nehru in India's conflict with the Peoples Republic of China. But, above all, at Khrushchev's projected world conference it was intended to read the CCP out of the fraternity of Communist parties.

For the Kremlin rulers the Sino-Soviet dispute had led to disaster. The Communist parties in most of the East European buffer states, and in most other countries refused to go along with the policy of breaking off relations with the CCP. As a result the influence and prestige of the CPSU suffered serious loss. Peking gained wide sympathy for its militant anti-imperialist policy among peoples struggling for national liberation; and the Soviet leaders faced the disturbing prospect of complete disintegration of their authority among Communist parties. Keeping this in mind, the dismissal of Khrushchev should not be viewed as surprising.

By the same token, the declarations made by Brezhnev and Kosygin that the foreign policy pursued by Khrushchev is to remain in effect, should not be taken at face value. Without doubt these are intended to allay apprehension in imperialist circles, and to bolster hopes of some basis for bargain with the Chinese. (Both aims would run true to the character of Kremlin bureaucrats.) However, if there is to be no change in policy the question arises: why dismiss Khrushchev? He was completely identified with this policy, and he would be the most competent to execute it. If there is to be no change in foreign policy, how is the Kremlin to recover its great loss in influence, prestige and authority? Moreover, the overthrow of the very top party and state functionary, without any grounds of policy change, would set an exceedingly dangerous precedent, imperiling all bureaucrats in high circles.

Obviously, the professed intention for foreign policy to remain unchanged cannot be taken seriously. It was the head-on collision with China that brought disaster to the Kremlin; and the collision involved all the main points of foreign policy, peaceful coexistence with imperialism, relation to world revolutionary struggles, and relation with states of a socialist structure, etc. And so, it is precisely in this area that changes have become mandatory.

The logic of this situation points clearly to the removal of Khrushchev as not merely the downfall of the head of the party and the head of state, but the downfall of the policy with which he was definitely identified. To make more certain of this, a clean sweep has been made of his ouster; all that he represented is now denounced.

The United Secretariat declaration makes the mistake of assuming that there will be no change in Soviet foreign policy, i.e., neither in collaboration with American imperialism or with the colonial bourgeoisie, but merely some modification of Khrushchev's more scandalous ways. Implicitly, if not explicitly, the Kremlin bureaucracy is presented as incapable of making such change. But this assumption ignores the relation between party and class, and the relation between the party regime and the lower units. The bureaucracy can no longer act independently of these relationships.

The analysis we made at the time of the Khrushchev revelations apply with equal force today at the downfall of Khrushchev. It signals a new stage in the continuing development of the Russian Revolution. In this lies its real significance; and this also is a consequence of the growing power and pressure of the Soviet masses upon their bureaucratic rulers. But this time a new element had to be taken into consideration. The pressure of the Soviet masses was reinforced by that of the verile and active colonial revolution, by the Cuban revolution, and, above all, by the powerful pressure from the revolutionary position of the Chinese.

Foreign policy is always and everywhere a continuation of domestic policy, for it represents the same class interests and pursues the same historical objectives. From this general condition, Soviet foreign policy is no exception. And in the present situation, if the Communist Party of the Soviet Union is to restore some of its lost influence and authority, it becomes mandatory to change the orientation of foreign policy in such a manner that the Kremlin avoids being outflanked from the left -- being outflanked by the Chinese. Soviet foreign policy is, therefore, compelled to seek some measure of harmony with the policy for which the Chinese have been fighting in the ideological dispute. That means first of all, opposition to American imperialism; and support to colonial revolutionary movements rather than support to the colonial bourgeoisie.

Equally pressing upon the Soviet Union and its bureaucratic rulers is the constant necessity to seek a favorable change in the correlation of world forces. That also demands a reorientation of policy in the direction of harmony with Chinese demands. The international position of the Soviet state is determined far more directly by the victory and progress of the Chinese revolution than by the friendly or unfriendly attitude of the imperialists and the colonial bourgeoisie. This is even more the case since the Chinese have demonstrated the scientific and technological capability of producing the atom bomb.

In the first place, the Chinese revolution breached the imperialist wall of isolation around the Soviet Union. The colonial revolution widened and extended the breach. And to attain a favorable change in the correlation of world forces, the Kremlin rulers are obliged to assist the movements for liberation from imperialism.

In the Soviet Union, the immense strides in industrialization, technology, science and mass education have created a new dynamic of economic and cultural growth, which determines domestic policy. It has produced continuous movement and deep-going changes in the internal relation of social forces. Every forward step has strengthened the working class and weakened the bureaucratic domination. A new working class has grown up and gained the self-assurance and consciousness that comes with better education. It is powerful and carries great social weight. This power, which pierced the heavy crust of Stalinism, broke through much more easily the thin veneer of Khrushchevism.

This breakthrough is a culmination of changes that have already occurred in internal Soviet relations and in external policy; it is also a basis for further changes to come. The continued ferment within intellectual and artistic circles with its criticism of bureaucratism and pressure for greater liberalization, is well known. The tremendous mass acclaim accorded Castro on his Soviet visits, and the surge of worker and student volunteers ready to work all hours to provide speedy material aid to Cuba, points up the genuine desire of the broad masses to support revolutionary developments.

Changes made in foreign policy point in the same direction. We need only recall that the Kremlin rulers became obliged, even though belatedly, to recognize and support the Algerian struggle for independence; they have offered to return Soviet technicians to aid in China's socialist construction; in place of their one time support to UN intervention in the Congo, they now denounce the paratroop "rescue mission" as "imperialist piracy." Most significant, however, is the Kremlin declaration pledging all necessary assistance to the "sister socialist country" of N. Viet Nam if attacked in a U.S. extension of its undeclared war.

The removal of Khrushchev from his high positions and all the directly connected events should be viewed, in fact, as elements of the political revolution in the Soviet Union. Bearing in mind the necessary axiom that the political revolution, like other revolutions, is not an event but a process, its general outline is becoming increasingly clear. It shows very definitely the correctness of Trotsky's

prognosis that the question which way the Soviet Union will, in the final analysis, "be decided by a struggle of living social forces, both on the national and the world arena." The Chinese have challenged its bureaucratic rule, and the monstrous inequalities and the privileged strata fostered by this rule. Moreover, the Chinese have reasserted and reestablished the principles of socialist internationalism. To be sure, the further developments in the struggle to end bureaucratic rule and restore Soviet democracy cannot be separated from the further developments of the Chinese revolution. Nor can they be separated from the further developments of the colonial revolution, or from the basic issues involved in the Sino-Soviet ideological dispute.

Most likely the policy changes implied in the Khrushchev downfall will be carried out in contradictory fashion. What else can be expected from a society beset by the basic contradiction of a bureaucratic political regime superimposed on a socialist economic foundation. Thus, for example, liberalization measures are accompanied by the residue of Stalinist corruption, theft and bribery alongside of reinforced rights of private peasant plots. The long standing peaceful coexistence line will tend to obscure and blur the necessary policy reorientation that demands opposition to imperialism and support of revolutionary struggles. In any event further political changes are inevitable. Social forces are in motion and the Brezhnev-Kosygin regime will undoubtedly prove to be a much briefer intermediary than was that of Khrushchev.

For the revolutionary policy pursued by the Chinese this whole development represents a great victory. The Chinese can be expected to utilize their advantage in stepping up the fight for a Marxist-Leninist policy. The worldwide revolutionary reorientation, regeneration and regroupment, already initiated by them, will gain further stimulus, growth and development from this victory.

Trotskyists cannot afford to stand aside from the revolutionary regroupment, and remain mere critical commentators. That would mean to misread all the signs of history. Trotskyists must become participants in this whole development and make their contribution to it. But the first prerequisite for active participation is to take sides in the Sino-Soviet ideological dispute, in support of the Chinese position.

s/ Arne Swaback

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