

From the archives

SWP resolution: The Third Chinese Revolution and its Aftermath

9 October 2019

Below is the resolution adopted in 1955 by the Socialist Workers Party, then the Trotskyist party in the United States, on the 1949 Chinese Revolution. As the introduction to the resolution explains, the document reflected the detailed and lengthy discussion within the Trotskyist movement of the significance of the Chinese revolution and the deformation that resulted from its domination by the Stalinist leadership of the Chinese Communist Party.

The Third Chinese Revolution drove out the Kuomintang regime, ended a century of imperialist freebooting in China. It carried through the tasks of the belated bourgeois democratic revolution, put an end to the country's dismemberment, uprooted the landlord and usurer domination of agriculture, destroyed the Asian relations in the family and swept away other feudalistic rubbish. The country has advanced materially and culturally; has undertaken a struggle against illiteracy, campaign against filth and vermin, etc.

The Third Chinese Revolution has abolished the capitalist state, instituted planning on the basis of government ownership of the key branches of industry, finance, credit, and introduced the monopoly of foreign trade.

By reason of its conquests, the revolution tore China out of the orbit of imperialism, dealing world capitalism an irreparable blow. It drastically altered the world relation of forces between:

- a) The imperialist powers and the colonial and semicolonial countries;
- b) The capitalist countries and the Soviet bloc;
- c) Stalinism and the Social Democracy; and finally
- d) Confronted Stalinism with changing interrelations and new contradictions within its worldwide apparatus.

For the revolutionary vanguard a number of new problems have been thereby posed. We must assay the scale, weight and tempo of the Third Chinese Revolution and the resulting class relations, as well as the limitations imposed by the Stalinist leadership, by the country's heritage of backwardness, by the continued pressure of imperialism and the Kremlin bureaucracy.

The fate of the Third Chinese Revolution, as of mankind, hinges on the extension of the revolution to the advanced capitalist countries. This in turn depends in no small measure on the ability of the workers vanguard to defend the revolutionary conquests in China as elsewhere, to foresee the dangers to them, internally and externally, warn against them in time, and in general guide the workers toward fusing their socialist struggle with the conquests of the Soviet and Chinese masses, thereby assuring the final triumph of the world socialist order.

The Chinese Revolution and Imperialism

In the sphere of international politics the Third Chinese Revolution has determined in a new way the post-war class relations and forces.

China was the chief prize for which the US had fought the war in the Pacific. With the defeat of Japan, the US monopolists expected to take over China and rule the country through Chiang Kai-shek. In this spacious, undeveloped land they saw a solution to the post-war economic problems of American capitalism. Here was a matchless field for capital investments, a potential market for consumer goods, a rich reservoir of raw materials, an overflowing source of cheap labor. What the US believed it had won in the war and at Yalta, the revolution took instead.

The overturn of 1947–49 blotted out the political and territorial isolation of the Soviet Union. It added almost four million square miles and a population of over 550 million to the Soviet pole of world economy. China and the USSR together represent an unbroken land mass of 12.2 million square miles, nearly one-fifth of the earth's surface, with a combined population of over 750 million. These bare statistics indicate the international impact of the third Chinese revolution.

This revolution proved its power on the world arena. It was China's revolutionary armies that hurled MacArthur's forces back from the Yalu and compelled the US to abandon its plans for the conquest of all Korea. It was the material aid furnished by China, not to speak of the inspiring example her revolution furnishes, that helped the Viet Minh to score its victory over imperialism.

The emergence of China, through the revolution, from semicolonial degradation to the position of a world power—and by this token the tearing from the imperialist orbit of a huge human and land mass, along with Manchuria, Tibet, North Korea, North Indo-China—has modified the international relationship of forces, especially the social relations throughout the colonial pole of capitalism.

The impact of the Chinese Revolution on the colonial masses has forced the native bourgeoisies to raise the banner of "neutralism." Nehru personifies this neutralism on the world arena today, just as Gandhi personified passive resistance on Indian soil, and for the same reason, fear of the masses. The native bourgeoisie can remain in power only insofar as it is able to neutralize the Chinese revolution, that is, keep the permanent revolution confined within China's borders.

The Chinese Revolution and the Imminence of War

The Third Chinese Revolution had other consequences. The war time alliance between the "democratic" imperialists and the Kremlin bureaucracy broke up when the imperialists decided they no longer needed the Kremlin's aid in containing the European revolution. The imperialists were prepared to take the offensive against the European working class, when the Asian masses imposed on them a struggle on another front. In this struggle, the cold war became punctuated by bloody localized wars—Indo-China, Korea, Malaya, etc.

The Asian masses were mainly responsible for the postponement of the projected imperialist assault upon the USSR; the US has been forced instead, to prepare for a war of far greater scope.

With the new world relation of forces determined in the main by the Third Chinese Revolution the imperialists could no longer be sure of victory in World War III. US strategy, military and diplomatic, has consequently pursued the attainment of overwhelming global superiority.

The Chinese Revolution and the Social Democracy

The Stalinists in Peking, as in Moscow, have used and will continue to use the Third Chinese Revolution in order to improve their relations with the Social Democrats in Britain, as elsewhere. There is nothing the classic reformists hate and fear more than the revolution. They demonstrated this in the course of the Chinese upheaval. They supported the imperialist intervention in Korea. Therein was expressed their dread of the spread of the Chinese Revolution. They could make peace with the Chinese revolution and pretend friendship for it only after Peking avowed its narrow nationalist objectives and when it served the interests of their respective bourgeoisies. A junket to China, an appeal for coexistence, is a cheap price for a left cover, especially when Peking foots the bills.

The Chinese Revolution and the Kremlin Bureaucracy

The Chinese Revolution has confronted the Kremlin bureaucracy with new interrelations where previously it had ruled unchallenged and uncontrolled within the monstrous international apparatus of Stalinism. The Kremlin bureaucracy was the sole "world leader," lone repository of all knowledge, wisdom, authority, etc., etc. Moscow's political monopoly has been irretrievably lost. Today Peking has at least equal voice and weight.

The world "monolith" of Stalinism has already been carved up into respective spheres of influence by Moscow and Peking, creating unforeseen problems for both partners. Mao & Co. is as nationalist as Khrushchev & Co., but each operates on a different national soil. Imbedded therein are seeds of dissension. The very fact that Peking must rely so heavily on Moscow for economic and military equipment makes Mao & Co. more dependent on the one hand and more resentful on the other.

In line with Stalin's program of socialism in one country, the Communist parties the world over subordinated their interests to the diplomatic requirements of the Kremlin. The Mao bureaucracy, too, aims to build "socialism" in its country. It can no longer subordinate its interests to the interests of the Kremlin. Its material base is no longer derived from Moscow but from its own state power.

The Chinese Revolution has imposed on the Kremlin an alliance with the most populous agricultural nation on the globe which has weighty needs—capital goods, heavy equipment for industry, for transportation, mining and agriculture plus equipment to modernize her armed forces. All the things the Kremlin urgently needs for itself. After decades of effort to compress Soviet productive forces into the narrow national limits, the Kremlin bureaucracy is suddenly faced with the need to plan in accordance with its new inter-state obligations, in the first instance to China.

These are new contradictions shearing the web of the old contradictions of Stalinism and aggravating its crisis.

The Permanent Revolution on Chinese Soil

The Trotskyist line in China flows from the following basic propositions:

The Chinese bourgeoisie, represented by the Kuomintang, would not and could not carry through the tasks of belated democratic revolution, first and foremost solve the land problem and unify the country.

This could be accomplished only by class-struggle methods, only in head-on struggle against imperialism and against the native bourgeoisie, a temporary, unreliable ally at best.

Regardless of the episodic leadership at the time, once the revolution

entered its democratic sequences, it could not be restricted within capitalist limits, but would transgress and transcend them.

Once the revolution unfolded on Chinese soil, it could not remain within national boundaries but would leap over into other lands.

Finally, the triumph of the Chinese Revolution depends on the victories of the workers in the advanced countries.

These fundamental propositions of Trotskyism were confirmed in the negative during the second Chinese revolution, and during the mass upsurges up to 1947; they were confirmed in the affirmative by the third Chinese revolution of 1947–49 and its aftermath. The 1925–27 revolution was wrecked by the Menshevik theory of "revolution by stages" which proclaimed that China was not ready for proletarian dictatorship, that the native bourgeoisie had a progressive mission and a leading role to fulfill in the democratic revolution. The Stalinist class-collaborationist line of the "bloc of four classes" completely subordinated the working class to the bourgeoisie and rejected and resisted agrarian reform in order to enlist the landlord support.

In the struggle of the Russian Left Opposition against Stalinist degeneration the issue of China was next in importance only to the USSR. The split of the world Communist movement came as a consequence of it, a split that led to the founding of the Fourth International.

The defeat of the second Chinese revolution imposed the bloody dictatorship of Chiang Kai-shek for the next twenty years. In the course of these decades, the Chinese bourgeoisie exposed itself as an agency of foreign imperialism; the enemy of the Chinese masses incapable of granting any concessions or reforms, or ruling by democratic means; so inept and corrupt that they lost all support in the population remaining in power only thanks to US imperialism on the one hand, and Stalin, Mao & Co. on the other. Washington supplied funds and arms for Chiang's bloody dictatorship, the Stalinists subjugated the masses to him by their policy.

Mao & Co.—A Fetter on the Chinese Revolution

By the end of 1936 the Japanese armies conquered the coastal areas of China and extended their tentacles into the mainland; the masses were in open revolt against Chiang. Thousands of strikes of students and workers took place in the cities; the peasants rose in the countryside. The struggle against the foreign invader thus tended to merge with a war against the native oppressor. Chiang took to the hills, with a section of the Chinese bourgeoisie; the rest, the landlords in particular, cuddled up to the Japanese. Everything that was vigorous and resolute in China surged from the cities and towns into the countryside to fight this national revolutionary war.

Meanwhile, Chiang was personally directing the war not against the Japanese but against the Stalinist-dominated territories. He was arrested by the Sian garrison. It was Mao, Chou & Co. who liberated him. Precisely at the height of this movement of the masses the Stalinists also abolished their "Soviets," dissolved their "Red Army," abandoned land reform, in brief, subordinated everything, once again, to class collaboration, in the name of the anti-Japanese struggle. They pursued this line, a component part of the Yalta agreements, throughout the war.

Following the Japanese surrender, the US, with Stalin's agreement, sought to impose the old Kuomintang order. A new upsurge came of the Chinese masses, part of the post-war world revolutionary wave. Once more the Chinese Stalinists, as the Stalinists in Western Europe, resisted the pressure of the workers, peasants, students who rallied under their banner for the showdown fight against the existing order. But unlike the European bourgeoisie, who to save their rule welcomed the Stalinists into their cabinets, Chiang repulsed their advances. Instead he opened a war of annihilation against Mao & Co.

But as late as March 1947 (the occupation of Yen-an by Chiang's troops), the CCP still did not raise the slogan for the overthrow of Chiang's regime; did not offer the program of agrarian reform. Only on

October 10, 1947 was a manifesto issued in the name of the “People’s Liberation Army” openly advocating the overthrow of Chiang, the building of “New China,” and announcing agrarian reform through the expropriation of the land of the landlords and the rich peasants, while exempting the land which belonged to “industrial and commercial enterprises.”

Even when in self-defence they were compelled to break openly with the Chinese bourgeoisie and landlords, the Stalinists tried to do so within the framework of their bankrupt line of “bloc of four classes.” The exigencies of the civil war imposed upon the CCP the carrying out of democratic tasks, the agrarian reform, the destruction of feudal relations, etc.

Throughout the revolution, Mao & Co. continued to impose arbitrary restrictions and limits upon its course. The agrarian reform was carried out “in stages” and was completed only when the assault of American imperialism stimulated the opposition of the landlords during and after Korea. By imposing arbitrary restraints on the revolution Mao & Co. thereby safeguarded their bureaucratic control over it.

They came into collision with the masses at every ascending sequence of the revolution, at every critical stage. Their objective was to restrict the struggle as much as possible to the military plane. It was above all in this way that they could prevent the Chinese workers from emerging on the arena as an independent force.

The Chinese workers, in big cities and small alike, were demoralized and rendered apathetic by the bureaucratic-military conduct of the civil war, by the deliberate discouragement of workers struggles, by orders to await liberation through the arrival of the “Liberation Army,” by the courting of the “industrial and commercial” capitalists, etc.

The Stalinist Deformation of the Third Chinese Revolution

The Third Chinese Revolution was deformed by the Stalinist leadership and control. The agrarian reform was made to appear as a gift from the bureaucracy to the landless and poor peasants; so was the “liberation” of the workers; so was the overthrow of the Kuomintang regime; so was the subsequent unfolding of the revolution—beyond the democratic sequences, beyond capitalist relations—and the proletarian conquests it brought.

The Stalinist deformation of the revolution rendered its development more costly, convulsive and protracted. The armies and regime of Chiang could have been knocked down like rotten pieces of wood had the CCP at any time summoned the masses in the cities to rise. The Chinese Stalinists were able to ride into power because the Chinese working class had been demoralized by the continuous defeats it suffered during and after the second Chinese revolution, and by the deliberate policy of the CCP, which subordinated the cities, above all, the proletariat, to the military struggle in the countryside and thereby blocked the emergence of the workers as an independent political force. The CCP thus appeared in the eyes of the masses as the only organization with political cadres and knowledge, backed, moreover, by military force.

The CCP leaders are declassed petty-bourgeois, their cadres were trained in the course of the long history of CCP’s struggles against the permanent revolution, coupled with the systematic physical annihilation of Trotskyists. Schooled in Stalinism, they started taking shape as a bureaucracy in the course of this struggle.

After the defeat of the second Chinese revolution, they withdrew from the cities and established an armed peasant base. For a span of over 20 years, they used this armed power to rule over the backward and scattered peasant masses. In this manner the uncontrolled, cynical, self-willed bureaucracy consolidated. They applied to the revolution the methods of deceit and ultimatism, in order, at every stage, to safeguard *their* interests, *their* power, *their* privileges. Each success rendered them more contemptuous and fearful of the masses, more convinced they could cheat the class struggle with impunity.

Their great asset was the link in the popular mind with the 1917 Russian Revolution. The masses felt they were repeating on Chinese soil what the Russian workers and peasants had done. The prestige of the Soviet Union, coupled with Soviet industrial successes and Soviet victories in World War II proved decisive in aiding Mao & Co. to maintain their political monopoly over the revolution. To safeguard this monopoly they physically annihilated every oppositional element, first and foremost the Chinese Trotskyists. The blowing up of Chen Tu-hsiu’s grave epitomized the Maoist fear of the day of reckoning for their crimes of 1925–27, repeated from 1936–47, which sustained Chiang’s rule so long.

The Permanent Revolution Prevails

What prevailed in China was not Mao’s program; not the line of coalition with Chiang, but that of struggle against him; not the solution of democratic tasks hand in hand with Chiang, but by class-struggle methods, even though deformed against Chiang, against the landlords, against the “bureaucratic” capitalists—and against imperialism.

Despite Mao’s schema that “New China” would follow a course different from that of the 1917 Russian Revolution, in China, as in the USSR, the revolution could not be kept within the capitalist framework, especially not after US military assault and blockade. Mao, who began by nationalizing “only bureaucratic capital” had to turn against his capitalist allies, nationalize the key branches of economy, impose the monopoly of foreign trade, institute planning, and mobilize the workers to save the revolutionary consequences.

Despite Mao’s attempts to confine the revolution within China’s borders and effect an agreement with the imperialists, the revolution could not be contained, the imperialists could not be neutralized.

And finally, the revolution had to be defended against the counterrevolutionary intervention on Korean soil of a coalition of imperialist powers headed by Washington.

The collision of Stalinism with each of the sequences of the permanent revolution on Chinese soil has deformed the revolution and obscured its proletarian nature.

The Class Character of China

When the CCP established itself in power in the fall of 1949, it continued to cling to its program of a “bloc of four classes” and its theory of a “revolution in stages,” i.e., the passage of China through an allegedly “new” stage of capitalist development. The ties connecting China with capitalism were cut when the American military forces drove toward the Yalu and the imperialists clamped an economic blockade on China. The CCP was then left no choice except to seize the imperialist assets in the country and to open, at the same time, a campaign against the native capitalists (the “Three-Anti and Five-Anti” movements).

The course of the civil war had, at a preceding stage, forced the Mao bureaucracy to abandon its efforts at a coalition with the Kuomintang and to assume power instead. The objective dynamics, the inner logic of the struggle against imperialist intervention forced the bureaucracy to break with capitalism, nationalize the decisive means of production, impose the monopoly of foreign trade, institute planning, and in this way clear the road for the introduction of production relations and institutions that constitute the foundations of a workers state, which China is today, even though a Stalinist caricature thereof. China is a deformed workers state because of the Stalinist deformation of the Third Chinese Revolution.

The contradiction between the conquests of the revolution and the bureaucratic rulers is the central internal contradiction of Chinese society, determining its movement. At the same time, it is the point of departure for the Trotskyists to base their policy for China.

Revolutionary China is today characterized by the following contradictory relations:

- 1) China’s productive forces are backward; in industry the light

goods sector predominates; the economy remains overwhelmingly agricultural and raw material producing; in consumer goods, trade and other fields capitalist relations dominate “as per plan”— in brief, China’s productive forces are far from adequate to give the statized property a socialist character.

2) The tendency toward capitalist accumulation on the part of native capitalists plus the tendency toward primitive accumulation created by universal want seeps through innumerable pores of the first Five-Year Plan.

3) Norms of distribution preserve a bourgeois character and are at the bottom of a new differentiation of Chinese society.

4) The economic growth, while slowly battering the situation of some sections of the toilers, promotes a swift formation of privileged layers in city and village.

5) In agriculture the ever increasing demand the regime is compelled to make upon the peasants while it is unable to supply them with manufactured goods is bound to bring it into head-on collision with the peasantry.

6) Exploiting the social antagonisms, along with their prestige as leaders of the revolution, the Chinese Stalinist bureaucracy has entrenched itself as an uncontrolled caste alien to socialism.

7) The revolution, deformed by the ruling bureaucracy, manifests its proletarian character in the new property relations and planning; the superiority of these new productive relations and institutions is bound to assure a stormy growth of industry and of the Chinese proletariat, numerically and qualitatively, increasing its specific social weight and bringing it into conflict with Stalinist methods of rule, management and administration; in these new conditions, the young Chinese proletariat will grow not only in skills and culture but above all in socialist consciousness.

8) The Mao regime which appears popular today must come into an ever growing conflict with the workers who are first awakening to their central role in Chinese society, and who do not suffer from the feeling of isolation and the succession of world defeats which the Russian bureaucracy was able to exploit so successfully.

9) Today the Third Chinese Revolution is at an historic turning point, with the Mao leadership seeking to impose on revolutionary China the nationalist course of Stalinism in the Soviet Union.

10) A further development of the accumulating contradictions can just as well lead to socialism as back to capitalism.

11) On the road to capitalism the counterrevolution would have to break the resistance of the awakening and growing Chinese proletariat.

12) On the road to socialism the workers would have to abolish the bureaucracy along with the Mao leadership that now heads it.

China’s Future Course

In terms of political organization the Mao bureaucracy succeeded in the very course of the Third Chinese Revolution in imposing a totalitarian state power. They are now seeking to entrench this bureaucratic superstructure on the proletarian foundation, on the conquests of the revolution. This insolvable contradiction, which characterizes the USSR, and which renders the regime that of permanent crisis, is now being reproduced on Chinese soil, posing before the Chinese workers the iron necessity of political revolution against the bureaucratic caste.

So long as the Chinese Revolution faced the tasks of the belated democratic revolution the Peking leadership was able to display unity and cohesion. But the revolution has a logic of its own. The 1955 split in the leadership came precisely at the moment when the regime had to tackle the unpostponable task of industrializing the country.

It had to decide how this was to be accomplished in so backward a

country. The Chinese Revolution found no extension into the advanced countries.

How then is this industrialization to be accomplished? China cannot tap the capital resources of world economy—these remain in the hostile hands of world imperialism, mainly the US. The Kremlin can supply, at best, inadequate aid. The remnants of Chinese capitalism can contribute little, if anything, to China’s industrialization, despite the new constitution adopted September 1954, which envisages “four economic” categories: state-owned property; cooperative property; ownership by “individual working people [read: well-to-do peasants and bureaucrats]”; and capitalist ownership. (Articles 5, 11, and 12.)

After six years in power the Mao leadership has staked everything on building a self-sufficient industry, with China’s own resources. Unable to find the solution for China’s economic needs along the capitalist road, the Mao regime has taken the Soviet economic road.

But there is another reason for this course rooted in the social nature of Stalinism as a declassed petty-bourgeois formation. “The control of the surplus product opened the bureaucracy’s road to power” (Trotsky). To secure its income, power and privileges, the bureaucracy must assure itself this monopolistic position as the disposer of the nation’s surplus product. “He who disposes of the surplus product has the power of the state at his disposal” (Trotsky). Lacking a base of its own in the productive process, the Stalinist bureaucracy tends to make alliances with the petty-bourgeoisie. But here again the class struggle asserts itself. The bureaucracy quickly comes into collision with the peasantry. In the matter of the national surplus product the bureaucracy and the petty-bourgeoisie, regardless of the national soil of the revolution, quickly change from allies into foes. Such a collision is shaping up today in China. It is a collision with a 400-million mass of individual cultivators of midget plots.

Under different conditions and peculiarities, Peking’s 1955 economic policy reproduces in its basic essentials the economic policy Stalin originally promulgated for Russia, and for the same basic reasons.

The March 1955 Conference adopted a resolution which sets the following objective:

In the course of three Five-Year plans we can build a socialist society. However, in order to build a state with a high level of socialist industry, it will require several decades of stubborn and intense work. We can say that it will take fifty years, that is, the second half of the 20th century. Such is the great historic task—the great and glorious task—which we must solve. (Leading editorial in April 5 *Peking People’s Daily*, as reported by the *Moscow Pravda* on April 6, 1955.)

For the Stalinist line to triumph in the Soviet Union, a counterrevolution was required. This counterrevolution had to destroy physically the entire generation that led the Russian Revolution to victory under Lenin and Trotsky. Before he could impose his bureaucratic regime, Stalin had to destroy the Leninist party and International.

As against this, the same basic cadre under Mao who rode the revolutionary wave to power are now following in Stalin’s footsteps in China. For this reason, the implication and consequences, at home and internationally, of Peking’s shift in line are far more difficult to understand, especially for the Chinese masses and the rank and file of the Chinese Communist Party.

In the Soviet Union, the issues were debated over many years, and the struggle of the Russian Left Opposition, led by Leon Trotsky, illuminated the nature and meaning of Soviet developments, despite all of Stalin’s falsifications, repressions, and frame-ups.

The differences over policy in China have been confined to narrow top

circles. The disputes are shrouded in secrecy, camouflage and misinformation.

The March 1955 Conference ordered the immediate setting up of nationwide purge machinery—via the creation of special “control commissions”—on central, regional, district and local levels. Thus the purge of two of the top leaders (Kao Kang and Jao Shu-shih) signaled the introduction of the purge system.

The similarity between Peking’s internal regime and that set up by Moscow is further underscored by the recent introduction of ranks and insignia in the Chinese armed forces. This rise of an officer caste epitomizes the process of social stratification that is taking place under the Mao leadership. Unable to satisfy the needs of Chinese workers and peasants, from whom fifty years of toil and sacrifice are now demanded, exhausting its mass base, the regime deliberately seeks to create for itself special points of support, above all in the armed forces. This tendency will become more and more pronounced.

The program of industrialization and the crisis in agriculture compel the Mao bureaucracy to seek the active support of the Chinese proletariat. But the interests of the bureaucracy collide with the interests of the workers. Moreover, while carrying out the plan, the bureaucracy compels a section of the workers to toil in capitalist enterprises, under working conditions that assure profit to the private owners.

The mobilization of the Chinese working class goes hand and hand with ideological terror against opposition from the left, above all, against the Trotskyists. In a programmatic speech before the National Assembly, September 1954, Vice-Chairman of the Central People’s Government Council, Liu Shao-chi said:

In order to undermine our cause in building socialism, our cunning enemies hired certain people who—like Trotskyists and Chen Tu-hsiu-ites—pretend to be “Left” but attack our specific steps and measures in carrying out the socialist transformation of our country. They say that we have “not made a thorough job of it,” that we are “too compromising” and that we have “departed from Marxism.” With such nonsense they try to confuse the people. They suggest that we sever our alliance with the national bourgeoisie and immediately deprive them of all they got. They also complain that our agricultural policy is going “too slow.” They want us to break our alliance with the peasants. Aren’t such ideas sheer nonsense? If we did what they want, it would please only the imperialists and traitor Chiang Kai-shek. (*People’s China*, No. 19, 1954, page 17.)

This latest attack against the Trotskyists represents the bureaucracy’s political preparation for manipulating the struggle of the workers under the new conditions. Mao & Co. never harmonize their program and policies with the tempo of the class struggle, with the needs and aspirations of the masses. On the contrary, the bureaucracy is in constant collision with the masses. Important for the revolutionary left is this, that the bureaucracy itself reveals the profound roots the Trotskyist program has in the working class. And it is this permanent conflict of the regime and the workers that will in the end bring about its downfall.

Peking’s New Policy

The Maoist policy at home finds its extension in the foreign policy.

The Stalinist chieftains in China are animated by a twofold fear: the fear of imperialist assault and the fear of the permanent revolution.

Mao & Co. are now continuing an already well-established line of status quo, “peaceful coexistence, etc., for the next “fifty years.”

This nationalist policy is bound to have the most reactionary consequences in foreign policy. For it means the policy of “neutralizing” the world bourgeoisie, for the sake of China’s industrialization. It means

a deliberate course to convert China from the main bastion of the colonial revolution into a prop for the preservation of imperialist rule in the remaining colonial possessions in Asia and elsewhere and a guarantee to the native bourgeoisie that they can bank on native Stalinists, via Peking and Moscow, to bolster their regime.

The political gist of Peking’s economic policy, formally adopted at the March 1955 National Conference, is summed up in the proclamation of the “theory” of *neutralizing the world bourgeoisie*.

At Bandung in April 1955 Chou served notice that the Chinese Stalinists were prepared to derail the colonial revolution for the sake of “socialism in one country” (China) just as Stalin derailed in the post-Lenin era the proletarian revolutions in Western Europe in the name of “socialism in one country”(Russia).

Conclusion

The impact of the Third Chinese Revolution, the social transformations it brought about, the blows it delivered to world capitalism, have been second only to those of the 1917 Revolution in Russia. The “Russian question” has been the main axis in world politics for nearly four decades; it now has found its extension and deepening in the “Chinese question.”

World imperialism which could never come to any lasting agreements with the Soviet Union is even less capable today of coming to any lasting agreements with the Soviet Union and China who have been thrown together into an alliance which neither Peking nor Moscow dares upset.

If the US imperialists have not waged all-out war against then up to now, it is for one reason, and one reason only—the test of strength on the Korean battlefield convinced them that they could not win such a war at this time. This is the chief reason for today’s stalemate, which can only be temporary. Either US imperialism will plunge into all-out war or the Chinese Revolution will find its extension into other countries, above all, the advanced, capitalist countries and end capitalism forever.

One thing is certain, there is no solution along the course of the Peking and Kremlin bureaucracies. Their narrow nationalist course, their coexistence line, brings them into conflict with the needs of the world socialist revolution, but it will not save them from imperialist assault. The interests of the working class in the capitalist countries, just as the interests of the workers of China and the Soviet Union, are expressed in the program of the permanent revolution, the program upon which the Fourth International is founded.

[Reprinted from SWP *Discussion Bulletin*, A-31, October 1955]

IYSSE lecture series in Australia

Seventy years after the Chinese Revolution: How the struggle for socialism was betrayed

To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

<http://www.wsws.org>