

# SWP

# discussion bulletin

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## THE SWP POSITION ON CHINA

(P.C. Draft Resolution)

The Third Chinese Revolution is now thirteen years old. During that time, and especially since our conclusions were codified in the resolution adopted by the SWP National Convention in September 1955 and ratified by the 1957 SWP National Convention, all our official activities and writings related to that colossal event have been directed in accord with the following guidelines.

### 1. The Significance and Achievements of the Revolution.

The Chinese Revolution converted China from a capitalist-colonialist country to a workers state by overthrowing Kuomintang rule, ending imperialist domination, unifying the nation under a central government, wiping out provincialism and warlordism, nationalizing the land, banks and major means of industrial production, monopolizing foreign trade, planning the economy, and reorganizing agrarian relations through a series of steps culminating in the "People's Communes."

This radical transformation of China's social and political organization has brought about remarkable progress in many fields in the face of immense obstacles. The new regime has taken measures to improve food, clothing and shelter, stabilized the currency, cleaned up prostitution and beggary, promoted literacy, education and science, expanded public health and medical services, introduced social benefits for the aged and disabled, broken down the patriarchal family, giving greater freedom and equality to the women and youth, built up and beautified many cities. These changes and many others associated with them testify to the gains made through the revolution which has released enormous popular enthusiasm and energies.

The Chinese Revolution is not only the major turning point in modern Chinese history; it is the greatest blow against capitalism since the Russian Revolution of 1917. It is a continuation and extension of that first socialist victory. The progressive consequences of the overturn have not been confined within China's boundaries. The successes of the Chinese Revolution have affected the whole of world politics, especially in the colonial areas, and will have even more profound impact in the next decades. The isolation of the Soviet Union has been broken. The balance of forces between the capitalist and the anti-capitalist camp has been altered to the advantage of the latter.

New China has become the central powerhouse of the colonial revolution, especially throughout Asia. It is popularizing socialist ideas and methods among the underdeveloped nations and providing them with an example to follow in overcoming their backwardness and modernizing themselves. In the Korean War China proved a major deterrent to the further penetration of U.S. imperialism into the Far East. The People's Republic of China is emerging as a military and diplomatic power of the first rank, while it is only at the threshold of its assertion in international affairs.

2. The Class Nature of Communist China -- and its Political Structure. These mighty accomplishments, their international radiations, and the prospects of progress opened up for the 700 millions of China and the rest of humanity have determined our fundamental attitude toward the Third Chinese Revolution and our definition of the social structure and state which have issued from it. We are firm partisans of that workers and peasants revolution, defenders of its social forms and conquests against all internal and external enemies and supporters of its advances. Our party has demonstrated its solidarity with revolutionary China in

the struggles against Chiang Kai-shek, then in the Korean war, and most recently in the India-China border clash.

We have sociologically characterized China as a workers' state resulting from and based upon the fundamental social achievements of the revolution -- expropriation of the landlords and capitalists, nationalization of the means of production, state control of foreign trade and planning of the economy.

At the same time we have noted that the political system of the People's Republic is not in harmony with its socio-economic foundations. It has been subjected to grave bureaucratic deformations. These were brought into the revolution by the Stalinist background, training and methods of the Chinese Communist Party, which organized and directed the civil war, set up the new regime, and has monopolized all political activity from its birth.

The CCP did not follow up the victory of the workers and peasants and its own assumption of power by establishing, developing and strengthening organs of popular control. The bureaucratic tendencies present from the first have been subsequently reinforced by China's poverty and cultural backwardness. The predominance of the peasantry over the workers, the insistent demands of extensive and accelerated capital investment in economic development, the sustained scarcities of consumer goods, including food and other elementary necessities, coupled with the authoritarian, ultra-centralized character of the regime has fostered the growth of inequalities. There are no democratic curbs upon the arbitrariness and appetites of the ruling stratum in the government, party, army and economic enterprises. Although their privileges may appear slight compared with the exorbitant parasitism in the wealthier workers states, they can loom large amidst the extremely low level of subsistence.

The absence of workers and peasants councils, freedom of organization and political expression, the suppression of revolutionary Marxist opinion and groups, the total fusion of the party with the state apparatus, the exclusive possession of all the instrumentalities of power by the CP have given a special stamp to the new Chinese regime. It is a workers and peasants state by virtue of its property relations and major social tendencies. But it is a deformed workers state because of the lack of any means of popular control over its policies and administration. In political terms, it is not, as its leaders claim, a "People's Democracy," but a bureaucratic autocracy elevated above the worker-peasant masses in whose name it rules.

3. The Nature of the Chinese C.P. The Chinese C.P. leadership was formed in the Stalinist school, imitated its methods, and followed the twists and turns of the Kremlin's foreign policy until 1947. However, even before the revolution, the Mao leadership showed certain signs of mistrust and independence of Moscow because of its experiences with Stalin, its illegality, its hard struggle to survive, its isolated stay in Yen-an, and the closeness of its cadres to their peasant base.

Riding the irrepressible peasant uprisings from 1947 to 1949, the CP broke with Stalin's Menshevik line of collaboration with the national bourgeoisie and conducted the civil war to its logical conclusion by organizing, mobilizing and leading the armed masses to the conquest of power.

Installed at the head of the new revolutionary regime, the Chinese C.P. entered a new stage of its development. As a sovereign power with enormous prestige and popularity and an independent base of operations in the most populous country, it was no longer subordinate to the Soviet bureaucracy but on a par with it.

Despite its present hostility to the Yugoslav C.P., the Chinese C.P. has many features in common with it. Since it won supremacy through leading an authentic popular revolution which overthrew the old order and opened the road to socialism, it is much closer to the masses, is more responsive to their demands, and more susceptible to their pressures than the C.P. leaderships placed in power by the Kremlin in Eastern Europe. The growing strength of the Soviet bloc, the spread of the colonial revolution, and the direct menace of U.S. imperialism has partially radicalized the foreign policies of the Chinese C.P., although it still collaborates politically with colonial bourgeoisies, as in the case of Indonesia. Inside China the impetus of the unfinished revolutionary process has impelled it forward.

Nevertheless, the Chinese C.P. has not cast off its Stalinist heritage. It is bureaucratic in its inner life as in its methods of governing the country and administering its economy and culture. All major policy decisions are settled by a few top leaders and handed down to the cadres who have no right of initiation or dissent.

The period since 1956 has been a crucial test of the revolutionary socialist quality of all the regimes and parties in the Soviet orbit. How has the Chinese C.P. met this test?

In 1956-57 the Chinese leaders backed the Kremlin in its suppression of the Hungarian revolution and cast its weight against the workers' efforts to throw off bureaucratic rule in Eastern Europe. In 1957, after a brief attempt at relaxation in the "Hundred Flowers Bloom" experiment, in which Mao went so far as to justify the workers right to strike, his regime abruptly halted the "Bloom and Contend" policy and cracked down on the students and intellectuals for fear of further and more deep-going expressions of mass discontent.

Since then Peking has resisted and opposed the extension and deepening of the de-Stalinization processes in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. It regards Khrushchev's reforms, not as inadequate concessions to the demands of the people, but as adaptations to alien class forces leading toward the restoration of capitalism. It is in a de facto bloc with the Stalinist diehards who want to contain and reverse the trends toward liberalization.

Within China, despite spasmodic promises of toleration of dissent, the C.P. continues to silence all criticism, even when presented from a socialist standpoint. Although the regime campaigns furiously against "rightists," it has collaborated with right-wing groups while hounding and imprisoning Trotskyists.

The C.P.'s "commandism" and its harmful consequences was exhibited in the "Great Leap Forward" and the conduct of the People's Communes during 1958-59. The reckless haste and disregard for the welfare of the peasant population set back economic development for a period. The almost military mobilization of the labor force, the excessive prolongation of the working day and elimination of needed days of rest led to passive resistance and a drop in production. Although the C.P. has not resorted to the violence of Stälin's forced collectivization and retreated in time, it has maintained an attitude of bureaucratic paternalism toward the workers and peasants. The worse excesses of the Great Leap Forward have since been corrected -- but as bureaucratically as the original policies were instituted and applied.

The Chinese C.P. justifies its dictatorship under the pretense of building socialism in one country, preparing more bitter disappointments for the masses inculcated with this illusory perspective. It miseducates the revolutionary masses by confusing Marxism with Stalinism and upholding

Stalin as a continuator of Lenin. Since it does not have a Marxist program and does not follow a consistent revolutionary course either in its domestic or foreign policies, it cannot be regarded as the true representative of the workers vanguard in China.

4. The Permanent Revolution in China. In contrast with the negative results of the Chinese Revolution of 1925-27, the progress of the Third Chinese Revolution has supplied massive positive confirmation of the laws of the permanent revolution.

a.) It passed over from the bourgeois-democratic stage in tackling the problems of national development (national unity, independence from imperialism, the uprooting of feudal survivals, land reform) to the proletarian-socialist stage (nationalization of industry and the banks, state monopoly of foreign trade, planning, and collectivization of peasant holdings) in an uninterrupted sequence of action.

b.) Victory for the people was achieved and the foundations of a new order established, not by political subordination to the "progressive" bourgeoisie but by armed struggle against the national bourgeoisie based on a revolutionary alliance of the workers and peasants.

c.) The revolutionary regime has proceeded to reconstruct the old order at an accelerated tempo in one field after another.

d.) The triumphant revolution has tended to extend self into the neighboring lands of Tibet, North Vietnam and North Korea, to spur revolutionary movements in Asia, and colonial revolutionary forces from Algeria to Cuba.

However, the process of permanent revolution is far from ended within China itself. The world revolution leading to socialism requires not only the destruction of capitalist relations on a national and international scale but the



creation of democratic relations within each workers' state and fraternal relations among them. The struggle for workers democracy against bureaucratic overlords is an indispensable aspect of the total process of permanent revolution.

The transition from capitalism to socialism and on to communism necessitates the transformation of politics and culture as well as economics. This must be based upon the fusion of politics with production and consumption in a regime under the democratic direction of the producers. Workers control over the productive processes and plans, and over all facets of political activity and civil life, is not a luxury to be deferred to some remote future but a necessity of economic progress and the fulfillment of the aims of socialism. It is central to the cultural elevation of the masses demanded by socialism.

The existing political structure of China is in conflict with the further requirements of the socialist revolution. The most crucial of all the internal contradictions in the country is that between the inherently democratic tendencies of the popular upsurge and the autocratic character of the regime. The Marxist vanguard has to indicate the progressive solution of this conflict.

5. Main Tasks of the Trotskyists. A realistic revolutionary leadership has to take into account the objective necessities of the given situation and elaborate a practical

set of proposals to meet the problems posed at the specific stage of revolutionary development. The Marxist vanguard in China is obligated to support every forward impulse of the revolution from the masses and every progressive measure of the regime. However, it does not confine its action within the limits prescribed by the ruling party which insists that the masses await its directives or secure permission before voicing criticism or taking steps to correct evils and abuses.

While recognizing the positive contributions Peking is making in the struggle against Moscow's opportunism on the international arena, revolutionary Marxism must criticize the shortcomings of Peking's foreign policy and present a program for democratizing economic and political life. The Chinese people can move forward to a genuine socialist democracy through the creation of workers and peasants councils exercising full powers, through democratic administration of the Communes, through workers administration of industrial enterprises. The trade unions should be independent of the state and have the right to strike. There should be freedom for all scientific and artistic schools, the right of other socialist tendencies to exist along with the right of criticism within the C.P.

Such a program of struggle for workers democracy would run up against the resistance of the regime. It would be

preferable if the resulting confrontation between the bureaucrats and the people could be resolved by mutual agreement of the contending forces. But, so long as Stalinist methods and concepts dominate the C.P., this is the least likely of variants. Mao's regime tenaciously adheres to the Stalinist dogmas of the inseparability of party and state, the infallibility of the top leadership, the monolithic party prohibiting tendencies, and the impermissibility of rival workers parties. It applies the most stringent forms of thought control, making it risky and even criminal to harbor "dangerous thoughts."

There are no legal means, no institutional channels through which the direction and policies of the one-party state can be changed or corrected in a peaceful way. Today any left socialist tendency which urged the adoption of policies contravening the official line of the movement would be persecuted, outlawed, imprisoned. Any serious sustained effort to modify the political system involving mass action would be met with stern reprisals from the ruling bureaucracy which would smear it as "rightist" and "counter-revolutionary." Thus any consistent attempt at democratization would be transformed by the regime into a revolutionary political encounter, regardless of anyone's intentions or aims. This was demonstrated by the leadership's reaction to the criticisms expressed in 1957.

For these reasons the political line of the revolutionary Marxists remains one of political revolution aiming at thoroughgoing democratization. This requires intransigent opposition to the holders of power, not reconciliation with them or adaptation to their regime. A new party will have to be formed to conduct that struggle. Its elements

will be found in the ranks and lower leadership of the C.P., in the factories, Communes, universities and technical schools, especially among the youth raised under the revolution.

6. The Challenge To Our Position. Numerous tendencies controvert these long-standing positions. They are challenged inside our party in the resolution submitted by Comrades Swabeck and Liang which proposes to replace them on the following key points.

a) The Political Regime. They contend that the People's Republic of China is not bureaucratically deformed but is basically democratic in structure, operation and tendency, despite certain minor bureaucratic manifestations. The government is as responsive to the needs and responsible to the interests of the worker-peasant masses as was the Soviet Republic under Lenin and as is the Cuba of Castro.

b) The Character of the C.P. The Chinese C.P. is not a Stalinist or opportunist party in any way but, according to Swabeck, has been a revolutionary Marxist party since Mao became its head. It is an adequate and appropriate political agency for the promotion and realization of socialism. It resembles the Bolsheviki party of Lenin far more than the Communist party of Stalin. //compare

c) The Trotskyist Line. Swabeck and Liang urge the Trotskyists to abandon political opposition to Mao's regime and extend political support to the C.P. leadership. They propose to endorse with minor reservations the over-all political direction of the ruling party and its dealings with the Chinese people. They counterpose a line of reliance upon a reformed bureaucracy to the line of struggle against it for a fundamental change in the structure, leadership and policies of the regime in accord with the Trotskyist program of workers' democracy and revolutionary internationalism.

7. Reaffirmation of Our Position. We reject these assessments and the proposed revisions of our positions derived from them. They are not warranted by the real situation in China today, in so far as we know it. We reaffirm the main conclusions of the 1957 convention resolution as these have been restated and brought up-to-date in this document.

June 3, 1963

AMENDMENT PROPOSED BY WOHLFORTH TO P.C. RESOLUTION ON CHINA

As it stands, the first sentence of the first paragraph on page 10 reads as follows: "preferable if the resulting confrontation between the bureaucrats and the people could be resolved by mutual agreement of the contending forces." The amendment would replace the following for the rest of the paragraph:

However, this is an impossibility because of the very nature of the CCP and the social forces it represents. The CCP is in essence the representative of the ruling bureaucratic caste which has usurped political power from the workers and peasants and utilizes its monopoly of the instruments of repression to maintain its privileged rule. No privileged strata in history has ever given up its position of dominance peacefully. The Chinese masses will have to wrest political power from these bureaucrats through a revolutionary uprising -- that is through political revolution.

Rejected by P.C.