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THE CLASS CHARACTER OF THE CHINESE STATE

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"Now brother, you don't understand. There are two classes, don't you see, the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. We --

"Oh I know that silly talk," broke in the student rudely. "A bunch of ignorant peasants like you, hear somebody bawling a few catch-words. You don't understand what they mean. You just echo them like a lot of parrots." The crowd laughed. "I'm a Marxian student. And I tell you this isn't socialism you are fighting for."

". . . You are an educated man, that is easy to see, and I am only a simple man. But it seems to me -- "

"I suppose," interrupted the other contemptuously, "that you believe Lenin is a friend of the proletariat?"

"Yes, I do," answered the soldier, suffering. . . it seems to me that what he says is just what I want to hear, and all the simple men like me. Now there are two classes, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. . . "

"There you go again with your silly formula," cried the student.

" -- only two classes," went on the soldier doggedly. "And whoever isn't on one side is on the other."

From "Ten Days that Shook the World"

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THE CLASS CHARACTER OF THE CHINESE STATE

By V. Grey

For A Sharp Characterization

China is a deformed workers state. It is the dictatorship of the proletariat, though bureaucratically expressed, in a backward country. This state, this dictatorship, was set up by the masses at the end of September 1949 when they expelled the bourgeois-landlord armies of Chiang Kai-shek from China, and set up a new regime. The date is crucial because it involves the criterion for determining a workers state. The weakness of the Plenum Discussion Draft on China (Discussion Bulletin A-31, October, 1955) seems to flow from a hazy, or wrong criterion and an unclear concept of the state in general.

The leadership and administration of the Chinese state is Stalinist. But the state is primary and its personnel is secondary. A bureaucracy is merely "the tool of classes" as Trotsky put it. The great fundamental historical reality is the state itself.

True, in a period when there is a blind worship of the bureaucratic leadership, and a misty, utopian attitude toward the "socialist" reality, such as there was in the nineteen thirties, it is necessary to put a great deal of emphasis on the deformation. The workers must know the bitter truth. They must not overestimate their gains.

In a period of great reaction, such as the Stalin-Hitler Pact period, and such as the present day -- in a period when the workers do not over-estimate but greatly under-estimate their gains -- it is necessary to put the emphasis on the class nature of the Soviet Union, and on every other victory of the working class, no matter how provisional or how deformed.

Amid the crescendo of bourgeois howls about "godless communism, Russian and Chinese imperialism," etc., we must tell the masses what is most important, namely: that the Soviet Union and China are historic gains of the working class, and they must be defended as such. And nobody but ourselves will tell them this. Needless to say, we do not cease to criticize the bureaucracy, but only from this point of view: that the bureaucracy cannot be trusted to defend these gains, or fight for others.

We are for the union and against the bureaucracy. But class is primary and bureaucracy is secondary. The revolution is primary and the leadership is secondary. These propositions are rock foundations of Marxism. Therefore, we must turn to the class analysis of China -- and of the inner forces and world forces of the Chinese Revolution, rather than to Stalinism as such -- to clearly understand the events and the nature of the new state. Our position, our defense, or non-defense of the state must flow from the class analysis rather than from our estimate of the Stalinists or of the character of Stalinism.

Importance of Theory to Practise on the Question of China

Some comrades may say: "We all defend China. Why the crucial importance of a precise analysis of the Chinese state?" But the question arises -- where do we stand on North Viet Nam, which became

an independent state in 1954? Or where would we stand on Malaya, supposing there were an overturn and a new state, say, in 1957? Must we wait until the new leadership undertakes those tasks which we consider to be the tasks of a workers state before we apply our definition? And practically speaking, or at least politically speaking, how long must we wait, how long must this state wait before we defend it?

Some comrades might say in answer to this: "We will defend all these states as we defend colonies from imperialist powers."

But suppose China should march against North Viet Nam. (There are a number of developments that could lead to this.) If China were a workers state and Viet Nam still capitalist would we not defend China? On the other hand, if both China and Viet Nam are workers states (the present author believes they are), we would of course defend Viet Nam as an expression of our opposition to bureaucratic totalitarianism while supporting the principle of a workers state.

A war of China against India is not beyond the bounds of probability. India is in reality a semi-colonial country in spite of its sovereign form. India obviously retains far more the status of a colony than China does. If China were to attack India which side should a class-conscious worker defend? Only a firm position on the class nature of the state and a clear understanding of the class nature of these particular states can provide the answer to this question. Here the exact degree of nationalizations, five-year plans, etc. is not the point at all. Not abstract economic analysis, but only a class approach can answer the crucial question: "Which side are you on?"

Moreover, there are other countries besides the colonies. Suppose a revolution occurs in some other, more advanced country, under a leadership other than our own? Shall we defend the new state which comes out of this revolution immediately, or await the judgment of later events before taking a position? These questions appear to be abstract in peacetime. But in time of war the ability or inability to answer them will spell the life or death of our movement.

Marcy's Position in 1950

What Comrade Marcy said about China in 1950 is particularly important from the above point of view; that is, not merely because of its theoretical correctness but because of its political correctness at the time.

"Itself issuing from a mighty revolutionary wave, originally impelled by the great October Revolution, the coming to power of the Mao Tse-tung regime is the greatest rupture in the imperialist chain since the victory of the Bolshevik revolution of 1917. Whoever does not see that the bourgeois-landlord-merchant-compradore class alliance, the main and fundamental prop of imperialism in China, has been broken and shattered, and a new class power erected, cannot hope to understand the evolution of present day society. A new class power, basing itself fundamentally on the workers and peasants, has seized the reins of power, and is now attempting to shape the destiny of China in a new direction. That bourgeois relations still

predominate in industry and agriculture is incontrovertible. But what is of greatest moment is that the political power of the former ruling class has been shattered, their 'body of armed men' disarmed or destroyed, and their main source of strength and recuperative power, their nexus to and dependence upon imperialism, shattered. China is a workers state because the main fundamental obstacle to the rule of the workers and peasants has been swept away, and a new alliance -- based on workers and peasants -- erected in its place. It is not a chemically pure dictatorship of the proletariat, as no social formation ever is, but its fundamental class content is beyond doubt."

(Memorandum on the Unfolding War and the Tasks of the Proletariat in the New Phase of the World Permanent Revolution -- Marcy, November, 1950.)

This estimate is a short and compressed one. The events since the time it was made, however, have filled it out and verified it. The analysis which follows, reviews, recapitulates and summarizes the Marxist propositions upon which the estimate is based. But first:

The Evidence of Common Sense

It is really self-evident today, six years after the defeat of Chiang Kai-shek and the revolutionary establishment of "People's China" -- it is self-evident now, that China is a workers state, although bureaucratically deformed.

It is evident objectively in what the Chinese state is actually doing today. It is evident in the abrogation of the unequal treaties with the imperialists, in the ejection of foreign capitalists not only from the country but from the economy, the cooperative building of great dams, the nationalization of the land, the great steps toward complete collectivization, the expropriation of "bureaucratic capital" (which included the bulk of the biggest enterprises of China), the increasing nationalization of production, etc., etc.

It is evident subjectively in the following interesting way: Every tendency in the radical movement today believes that China is a social formation parallel to the Soviet Union. The Shachtmanites believe it is "bureaucratic collectivist;" the "state capitalists," that it is state capitalist; the Stalinists that it is a socialist "democracy," where Utopia has nearly arrived (without quite the perfection it has achieved in Moscow to be sure).

This "subjective" evidence of common sense has to be carefully weighed of course. Just because all the world thinks that a thing is so, that does not make it so. But it is not only the socialist movement that sees this parallel with the Soviet Union, each section through its own respective eyes. The bourgeoisie, in each of its sections or factions, also duplicates in its estimate of China, its estimate of the Soviet Union. The bourgeoisie did not have to read Marx to realize that China was "lost" to capitalism. The not-usually-impulsive New York Times as early as October 3, 1949, branded China a "communist state," and sweepingly characterized the three bourgeois members of the top governing body (including Madame Sun Yat-sen) as so much "window dressing." (Just as we do when a couple of Stalinists

enter the government of a capitalist state -- and just as correctly.) The N.Y. Times correctly did not regard Guatemala, or British Guiana as "communist states." Their criterion was not the criterion of Marxism, but the criterion of class interest.

To anyone who believes the Soviet Union is a workers state it is self-evident that China is a workers state. But this "self-evidence," on the basis of similarities and on the basis of positive actions and achievements, implies only a pragmatic criterion for determining the class nature of the state; particularly the workers state. The question it does not answer is when and how did China become a workers state? At the first beginnings of nationalization? After a certain percentage of nationalization, etc.?

What Is A State? How Does It Become A State?

But a state is not just a mode of production. A state is not a "government" or cabinet, or parliament. It is "a special organization of force; it is the organization of violence for the suppression of some class." (State and Revolution, Chapter II.) The state must of course be in harmony with the forms of production of the ruling class. But as Trotsky says: "A workers state does not build a new society in one day." Trotsky takes up this vital point as follows:

"But does history really know of cases of class conflict between the economy and the state? It does.

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

The last sentence of this quotation is the key to understanding why the deformed workers state of "People's China" was in fact established in September 1949.

The victory of one class over another is a social revolution. And yet at the moment of the victory and perhaps even "for a period of years" the social institutions, property forms, etc., may remain to a great degree as of old. How can we be sure that the property forms will really be changed? For that matter, how can we be sure that the "victory of one class over another" has really been achieved? Or even if this class or its representatives really will "reconstruct economy in the interest of the victory"? All of history provides a clear-cut answer to these at first sight challenging questions. Every single social revolution under no matter whose immediate leadership -- all answer unanimously that Trotsky's formulation is correct.

In China the worker and peasant masses fought the native ruling class and the foreign imperialist ruling class continuously from 1925 to 1949. When the only large instrument of their struggle -- the Red Army -- smashed the armies of the ruling class and assumed state power, this was a social revolution. If it was not, then there is no such thing as a social revolution. At least not in China.

Nor can the question of Stalinist leadership be allowed to detract from the magnitude of this revolution, or from its social and historical character. On the contrary, the revolution assumes all the more grandeur, and all the more amazing internal forcefulness when one considers the Stalinist incubus it bore upon its back during all stages of the tragedies, zig-zags and epochal heroism from 1925-1949.

The dazzling movements of the leadership provided the materials for bourgeois and Stalinist historians. But it was the movement of the classes, put into motion as early as 1919 by the impact of the Russian Revolution, which provided the materials for history itself.

The revolution is the final political outcome of the class struggle. If the class struggle is valid, then a hundred times more valid is the revolution that grows out of this struggle. If we support a strike led by counter-revolutionary trade union bureaucrats, then a hundred times more do we support a general strike or revolution that might grow out of the first strike. In general, we know that these bureaucrats, by training and tradition, by "instinct" and above all, by material interest, will not lead the struggle all the way to power. And that is why it is so important to replace them. But if in a special set of conditions, people with a counter-revolutionary ideology and program are compelled to lead a revolution, we do not for that reason label the revolution a "counter-revolution." Nor do we change our opinion of these leaders or their ideology. At the same time, we hail every revolutionary victory as a class victory, not a bureaucratic victory.

Lenin's View of This Question

Would Lenin agree with Trotsky's formulation: "The victory of one class over another signifies that it will reconstruct economy in the interest of the victory?" Absolutely! Completely! Lenin shows that the victory of a social revolution is first and primarily validated by the political and military victory of the oppressed class and that this victory contains within itself the new social property forms.

". . . the state is a 'special repressive force'. . . It follows from this that the 'special repressive force' of the bourgeoisie for the suppression of the proletariat, of the millions of workers by a handful of the rich, must be replaced by a 'special repressive force' of the proletariat for the suppression of the bourgeoisie (the dictatorship of the proletariat). It is just this that constitutes the destruction of the 'state as the state.' It is just this that constitutes the 'act' of the 'seizure of the means of production in the name of society.'" (My emphasis -- V.G.) (State and Revolution, Chapter I.)

This deeply dialectical, thoroughly revolutionary concept of Lenin's sums up in one paragraph the fundamental character of the political overturn in the social revolution. And life verified Lenin's lines soon after they were written. The actual, full "seizure of the means of production" did not take place for many months after the insurrection of October 25, 1917. But it did take place, and in a simple, logical, predictable way. Why? Because the new and revolutionary "special repressive force" was set up on October 25. That is why we mark the establishment of the Russian workers state precisely on that date.

Trotsky on the Non-"Gradualness" of Revolution

Trotsky applies this same thought again and again in different ways throughout his works. In speaking of England, for example, he says: "Now England, like all other capitalist countries, needs an economic revolution, far exceeding in historical significance, the industrial revolution of the Eighteenth Century. But this new economic revolution, a reconstruction of the entire economy according to a single socialist plan cannot be put through without a preceding political revolution." (Whither England, pp. 49-50.)

Trotsky obviously means that this "political" revolution is the most important and crucial aspect of the social revolution. Of course we are well aware that not every political revolution is a social revolution. But every social revolution requires a political revolution. That is, a struggle, an upheaval, a transference of basic political power. And the political revolution, the overturn, is the qualitative change which ushers in the era of social changes consistent with the rule of the new class which has seized power.

The new class cannot enter upon its rule in an unobtrusive, gradualistic manner. The old capitalist state does not "wither away." It is smashed. The concept of China changing from a capitalist state after the political overturn of 1949, into a workers state sometime in late 1950 or 1951, is a concept of "gradualism." It is a concept that concedes too much to the social-democratic idea of the gradual, parliamentary method for the fundamental changes of history.

In a certain sense of course everything is gradual. Everything develops slowly, in the over-all sense. But the essence of Marxism is its understanding that a long series of gradual changes finally erupts into a "sudden," explosive, qualitative change. In the field of sociology this change is called a revolution. And such was the change that was consummated in China in September 1949.

Take the case of England again, this time the England of the bourgeois revolution. Even bourgeois historians mark the beginning of the new era in England with the occasion of Charles I being executed. In doing so they combine literary dramatization with social reality and a true class instinct.

The same sword which cut off the head of Charles the First also cut the ground from under the monarchical absolutism which he represented. (This, after nine years of "gradual" fighting between whole classes of course.) During an earlier period, English kings were killed off almost as rapidly as Roman emperors and their demise had little significance. But in the case of a social revolution, the

revolution of a new class, the elimination of the king was the final scene of the last act of ending the system that the king stood for. All social measures after this act, all "gradual" changes in the direction of full capitalist rule, were logical, rational, even "lawful." But they were not revolutionary -- in the fullest, most precise meaning of the word.

Trotsky nails down this idea very neatly as follows:

"From the point of view of the Puritan effort to smash all parts of the old Government machine, it was quite a secondary matter that Charles Stuart was a hare-brained, lying, cowardly cad. The Puritans dealt the death blow not only to Charles I, but to royal absolutism as such, and the preachers of parliamentary and gradual changes are enjoying the fruits of their act to this day." (Whither England, p. 41.)

Now our party cadres are fully aware of the fallacies in the "gradualist" theory when applied to the "norm" of a revolution, or when applied to past history. How are we to avoid the trap of a "gradualist" concept in regard to this abnormal, deformed revolution in China? The answer lies partially in the class nature of the state. Let us review it.

The Class Theory of the State

The state is the instrument the ruling class employs to maintain and extend its power. And this function requires above everything the employment of armed force. The state has been the instrument of the feudal nobility, the bourgeoisie, the proletariat. It can be the instrument of a coalition of feudal nobility and bourgeoisie. But there can be no such coalition unless both these oppressing classes more or less equally fear the oppressed. And neither of these ruling classes can include the workers in such a coalition of state power, because this is just the point of a ruling class exercising state power in the first place: to keep order among the oppressed classes and obviously to keep them disarmed. (The state is first of all armed power.) Governments, cabinets, parliaments are of course not states, but only "the trappings and the outward show" as Lenin proves again and again.

Every state originates in an act of force, a conquest, a revolution, or a counter-revolution. Even a serious modification of the state requires forcible action. (France 1830, 1848; Germany, 1848, 1918; Russia, Feb. 1917, etc.) The state cannot be transmuted from bourgeois or bourgeois-feudal into proletarian without the intervention of force, and the break-up of the old state. All this is ABC in our movement. The question of when, at what point China became a qualitatively different form of state, the state of a new class, is bound up with this proposition.

One thing should be crystal clear about China. That there was a great civil war from 1946 to 1949. That this civil war was not between parties but between classes. The ruling class lost the war. Their armed forces were crushed and banished. And thus the rulers lost the essence of their state. With what was this state replaced? With the "self-acting armed population" which Lenin speaks of in explaining how a healthy workers state will look? No! And that does

not exist today either. In fact, it most probably exists to a considerably less degree today than it did in 1949. The old state, the old armed power was replaced, however. And it was replaced by a new armed power, the armed power of a new class. (The present armed power in China is essentially the same as it was in September 1949. If it is a deformed workers state today, then it was a deformed workers state at that time also.)

The old bourgeois-landlord state in China rested directly on an army -- even more so than the "normal" bourgeois state does -- because the class contradictions in China were even more naked, more irreconcilable, than in the average "normal" bourgeois country. Now the new state rests also on an army. Even those who do not think this new state came into being until late in 1950 or 1951 agree with this. There can hardly be any argument at all that the old state was smashed when Chiang's army, the army of the old Chinese ruling class, was so decisively defeated and expelled from China in the fall of 1949. The only question is -- what replaced this bourgeois state at that time?

Lenin says: "The transition from capitalism to Communism will certainly bring a great variety and abundance of political forms, but the essence will be only one: the dictatorship of the proletariat." (State and Revolution, Chapter II.)

Must we revise Lenin with respect to China? Or does this fundamental concept not apply to the "transition" period in China? Is there a new form of transition period? That is, the period from the time the old Chiang Kai-shek-led state was defeated until late in 1950 or 1951? Was this a new kind of capitalist state in this period?

No such revision is necessary because the new state was in fact established -- the deformed workers state was established -- at the end of September 1949.

Let us look once more at the class concept of the state. It is a "special repressive force." But it is the force of some class "for the suppression of some class." Let us look at this armed force in the framework of its class character and its class connections.

The problem of the state in China affords us once more an opportunity to look into the nature of this ruling armed force and try to unravel the many threads that connect it to the class which utilizes it. The class theory of the state is not a bookish definition for us. It is the summing up of the experience of the class struggle and its outcome in revolution.

It is significant that Lenin emphasized over and over again in "State and Revolution" that the essence of the state is "armed bodies of men." Trotsky, in "In Defense of Marxism," placed nearly all the emphasis on the "complex of social institutions," the planning commissions, nationalized property, monopoly of foreign trade, etc. But Trotsky had no disagreement with Lenin on the state. Lenin was looking at the state in 1917 mainly from the point of view of overthrowing it; Trotsky, in 1940, from the point of view of defending it. But in both instances the essence of the state is the fact that a certain class is in power.

Trotsky emphasized the property forms, the planning institutions, etc. as the social gains to be defended, and also as the proof that a workers state still in fact existed. Neither Trotsky nor Lenin would have dreamed of saying this in November 1917 in calling upon the world proletariat to defend the infant workers state because it simply was not true. On the other hand, neither would they have said that the Bolshevik party was identical with the proletarian revolution or the proletarian state. And yet they confidently called upon the workers of the world to defend the Soviet Union as a workers state. Why? The answer is simpler than the question. The theoretical difficulty lies in the posing of the question not in the simple class answer.

Let us pose it rather in the following way: A stable capitalist state and a "stable" workers state, both are distinguished by certain social institutions, primarily flowing from the specific property forms. But what is the state during that historically brief period after the armed bodies of the new class have destroyed the armed bodies of the old class without yet destroying the property forms the defeated army has defended? What is the state during this period when the old social institutions, or at least their outward form, are still intact, while the new armed bodies are in power -- i.e., immediately after October 25, 1917 and after September 24, 1949?

A firm answer must be given to this question. Any wavering on it, or misapplication of dialectics ("the state is, and it isn't," etc.) during this period of organized violence on a nation-wide basis, when the revolutionary forces are in undisputed power, would result in revisionism and confusion.

The state is the dictatorship of the class which those armed bodies of men represent. In this case, when they had taken over in China in September 1949, they were politically already the dictatorship of the proletariat (although a deformed one), which in turn was sociologically a promise, or an objective obligation to history, to begin the socialization of production. "The victory of one class over another signifies that it will reconstruct economy in the interest of the victory."

Why Must the Economy be Reconstructed in the Interest of the Victory?

Many comrades who now believe China is a deformed workers state have the general opinion (or at least leave the question open) that after the Mao Tse-tung government took power in 1949, the government might just as easily not have proceeded to nationalize the production. The point of this essay is that the government had to proceed so, and that this was predictable at the time of the revolution, because the revolution created a workers state.

Some comrades thought at that time that to predict that this government would be compelled to nationalize and socialize would be to give political confidence to the Stalinists. Not at all. It was possible to predict what the Stalinists would do before they themselves "decided" to do it. Trotsky made such predictions about the revolutionary (though criminally bureaucratic) collectivizations in the Soviet Union. He did not thereby give political confidence to Stalin.

But here let us simply follow out the logic of the armed power of a class. Let us examine for the moment not so much what class the Chinese Red Army represents, but rather the proposition that a revolutionary army does have this compulsion upon it -- or better still, a "built-in" compulsion -- to change society in the interest of the victorious class. In other words, let us take up the question of the state in terms of the revolution that creates it, rather than the question of the state in terms of the revolution that destroys it.

A State on Wheels

When Napoleon said that "an army is a state on wheels," he may have had in mind only the administrative complex, the summary and unappealable character of the army's actions. When Trotsky repeated the phrase, however, he certainly had in mind the social character, the social essence of an army. Now the army of an already established state, a state about whose class character there is no argument, tends to carry out the rule of that state upon its own bayonets into foreign areas. It carries with it the possibility of setting up new states in the territories it conquers. And while it can refrain from setting up any state -- and remain merely an army of occupation -- when it does overthrow the old state and set up a new one, the new one must be essentially an image of the parent state of which the army is the instrument.

But what about the army of a revolution? What about the army that represents no actual concrete existing state, but demands, consciously or unconsciously, by the objective logic of its very existence, to set up a new state? Can't we say that such an army is also a state on wheels? Certainly, being the instrument of a great social revolution -- of whatever class -- its social compulsions are more dynamic, more urgent, more desperate, than those of the army of an already existing state.

The already existing state has the advantage of social inertia, it is true. That is, it has already stabilized its own territory, introduced order, its own class order. It taxes all sections of the population in the interest of its class. It can draft its army from all classes in the population, etc. But a revolutionary army does not usually have this advantage. A revolutionary army has to depend on that section of the population which is most revolutionary. For every revolutionary soldier there has to be ten to a hundred revolutionary-minded civilians behind him.

In China, the great peasant masses gave food, clothing and shelter to the Red Army. Even the small guerilla bands, the offshoots of the army, could not endure without the cooperation of the landless poor of the country-side. The Red soldiers were like fish in the sea, and the peasantry like the sea itself, as Mao put it. Jack Belden shows throughout his whole book, "China Shakes the World," how groups of villages, and whole provinces, united to support and build the army. Workers, as well as students, boys and girls, men and women, even very old people, increasingly left the cities during the war with Japan and afterward. Not all of these became fighting personnel, although most of them may have been technically "soldiers of the Red Army." Many became teachers, instructors of the village poor, not merely teachers in the "cultural" sense of the word, but teachers of soil conservation, animal husbandry, sanitation, as well

as the Chinese ABC's. All this was part of the base of the army. All this, and more.

A revolutionary army, all the way from its first formation to its ultimate victory, must express more or less the class interests of the revolutionary class. Its policy and strategy may be quite wrong, but its very existence is a challenge to the ruling class, and its successful clashes with the army of the ruling class inevitably advance the interest of the revolutionary class.

Cromwell's Puritan army, for example, was composed of petty-bourgeois fighters, small merchants, artisans, particularly the important cavalry of the small farm-owning gentry. They began by fighting a war against Charles I's cavaliers. The intention of the bourgeois Parliament under whom they fought was to force Charles to grant a constitutional monarchy, i.e., to force a shift in the composition of the already existing state in the direction of a coalition of bourgeois and semi-feudal rulers. They did not intend to establish a republic (a fully bourgeois state). But the intransigence of the old ruling class and the logic of the struggle finally forced the army to purge the conciliatory Parliament, cut off Charles' head and proclaim the republic.

The army was based on the most radical section of the great middle class of the country. This radical section expressed its radicalism in religious form. And the army was not its military hireling, but the most radical, i.e., most religious grouping of this class.

The army did not regard itself as the instrument of a republic, or a bourgeois dictatorship, but as a convocation of the "saints," the elect of God, who were predestined -- not to bring about the rule of capitalism but the victory of God's own religion(s) against the Episcopalists who supported the absolute monarchy. When the army took power it legalized and encouraged the growth of the new religious sects it was based upon. The army established the "Monarchy of Jesus" which it regarded as incompatible with the monarchy of Charles I. Although it did so in "ecclesiastical disguise," it created the political basis for the development of capitalism.

Since the army had a class base and was the instrument of a class, it made no difference what religious language it employed to conceal its own class content. When it destroyed the monarchy, its class destroyed the monarchy. It fulfilled immediately and consciously its military task which was its own conscious aim. But, in making the conquest for the new religions, it was compelled to carry out its historic task: setting up the state of the bourgeoisie.

In China the army consciously and immediately proceeded to nationalize the land -- and less consciously, less immediately more reflexively (in response to foreign pressure and internal need) began its real historic task to socialize all basic production, and collectivize the land, thus insuring the rule of the working class. In each case the army was the instrument of a different class than it appeared to be. And yet it was faithful to the interests of the class it was most intimately related to. (We will discuss in a later chapter the Chinese Red Army's relationship to, and dependence upon the working class even more fundamentally in the long run than upon the peasantry, its immediate supporter.)

The new state led by the petty bourgeoisie in 1649 could not help but be the instrument of big capital. But the point is that it was a new state from the moment it took power (a capitalist state) because it had been an incipient state while it was still in army form. In this sense, a revolutionary army in a revolution not yet completed is more of a state than the army of an already existing and stable state. It is bound up more closely, more irreversibly, with the class it serves, having already risked everything by constituting itself as an army of rebellion. It is both a state on wheels and a state without wheels -- that is, without "stable" supports. It is not a state in being, but a state in becoming.

After it takes power, after it begins to transform society in its own image (its real image, and not what it imagines its image to be), the army loses some of this dynamic character as its successful struggles become crystallized in new social institutions.

The army was the main political as well as military instrument of the revolution in England as well as in China. But most modern revolutions are different. In the Great French Revolution (1789-94)-- more advanced, more complex, more political, and more conscious, than the English, the physical struggle is just as decisive, but the place of Cromwell's army is occupied by the Jacobin Clubs, and the Commune of Paris, always remembering that the Commune itself was armed. The Soviets filled this role in the Russian Revolution, a fully political and conscious role, though of course their relationship to "their own" armed force was close and intimate.

What is common to all these great instruments of revolution, civilian or military, in the field we are now discussing? This is common: That in each case they are the living, human substance of the revolution, not a disconnected super-imposed "leadership." The problem of the revolution as far as they are concerned is "simply" that of taking power in their own name. The problem of what class they represent has already been decided by history by the time they actually take the power, although Marxists and anti-Marxists may still debate the question for many years.

One of the most absurd questions, but one of the most difficult, that is addressed to a revolutionist is this: "How do we know you won't do just like all the rest when you are in power?" In a time of peace and stability, it is hard to convince a worker that he will be in power, the revolution will be in power.

The whole Chinese Communist Party was not over a million strong in 1945. But the administration of the present state must number at least ten million. These ten million are new elements. They emerge from a fighting, demanding population. They have to be responsive to its demands. (For example, the judges in the mass trials of the landlords which were still taking place long after the defeat of Chiang.) The new state apparatus emerges out of the whole revolutionary class, has intimate ties to the class, at least during the revolutionary period, the crucial period when the new authorities must use a stern broom upon the "old crap," and are thus compelled to begin erecting social institutions consistent with the revolution which put them in power.

In the early stages after the revolutionary victory the leaders of collectives, the administrators of factories, etc., will come from the revolutionary class and be outstanding fighters -- and to the extent they are not, for technical reasons of skill, literacy, and so on, they will be closely supervised by those who are. (Not only by means of "commissars," but by the masses themselves.) The revolution does not end the moment the old class loses power. This is because the people who made the revolution are still there. They do not tell the Stalinists or the Trotskyists or anyone else: "There it is, now. It's your baby." The revolution to them was not a sudden theatrical, apocalyptic event, an "epic struggle" for a Hollywood movie camera to take, record, and then stop recording. The revolution is the struggle for land, bread, etc., not for some "leadership." How many times after Chiang was defeated and the new regime installed, how many times we read: "Three thousand more landlords executed after mass trials." And then the Stalinist leadership would announce: "No more landlord trials." But a month or so later we would read that a new batch of the former oppressors had met their reward. The new regime did not issue a sweeping decree of land nationalization the moment it came to power. It usually did so province by province, and then only tail-ending the masses' own actions. But it did do so. And today it is proceeding with collectivization at a furious pace.

Thus China really provides a more decisive refutation to the absurd question of the backward worker than even the Russian Revolution itself. For in Russia the leadership had had an honorable tradition, impeccable in every respect, and the leadership during the revolution was generally as revolutionary as the masses were. But in China the imperious demands of a world historic revolution obviously made even the Stalinists carry out its basic social tasks -- once the revolution put them in state power.

"State and Revolution" Again

We have been reviewing the state from the point of view of the revolution that creates it. To understand the state from the point of view of the revolution that overthrows it -- that is really another, although closely connected, problem. In China this problem was solved in action without having been raised in theory. Lenin shows that the old state must be smashed. Its "bodies of armed men" must be disarmed, disorganized, and only reorganized under working class command. For this reason the old state must be viewed primarily as "armed bodies of men," although in fact it is also a "complex of social institutions."

But the "armed bodies of men" concept is not quite so crucial to understand, if you are already fighting a civil war against these armed bodies of men. Lenin was explaining the "armed bodies of men" concept to opponents who did not want to fight these armed bodies, and concealed their cowardice with theoretical formulas of "gradualism," parliamentarism, etc.

The Chinese Stalinists repeated the Menshevik errors concerning "gradualness," "revolution by stages," etc. in theory. But by all the force of circumstance and the logic of history, they found themselves locked in a death struggle with the very class whose regime they themselves expected to keep alive, and to endure for a "stage." Chiang and Mao could make all sorts of agreements, arrangements and

nuances of arrangements -- and did so. But neither of them at any time could even consider giving up his army. In this was expressed not the intransigence of two military leaders, but the objective irreconcilability of the opposing classes upon which they and their armies based themselves.

The Chinese Stalinists, in spite of reading "State and Revolution," probably did not understand the intimate connection between Chiang's army and the social institutions of capitalism. They probably did not immediately understand that these institutions were left standing in mid-air by the same death-stroke that defeated Chiang Kai-shek's army. They may not have understood that in destroying the capitalist army they destroyed the capitalist state itself. They may not have realized that they could not build a replica of this state upon their own social foundation. But it is not necessary for us to be mind-readers. The point is that when the whole remaining capitalist army retired to Formosa, the victorious army did not choose to liquidate itself.

By September, 1949, the essence of the old state, its "armed bodies of men," was only a matter for students, not strategists. The armed bodies of men were already destroyed. Their former connection with property was destroyed at the same time. The fact that this was less than conscious on the part of the Stalinists is another matter.

"The problems of state power now turn everything upside down, including their own (the Stalinists') theory. State power has a relentless logic of its own, as Stalin found out long ago. It has already compelled the new "Mensheviks" to do strange, un-Menshevik things. But regardless of the character of the new state, all its pressures and needs cannot transmute themselves into a revolutionary theory in the heads of the new ruling group, nor make this group fully capable of solving the tasks history is about to impose upon them." (Case of Owen Lattimore by V. Grey, Fourth International, January-February, 1953.)

~~But~~ we are not concerned at this moment with how much consciousness or ability the Stalinist leaders of the state may have, but with the class nature of the state itself and of the revolution that created it -- and the fact that this revolution did occur when we say it occurred.

Overthrowing a state and making a social revolution are one and the same thing insofar as the armed struggle is concerned. (Palace revolutions, etc. never overthrow the state or destroy the existing armies.) Therefore, once the revolution is on, once the insurrection has begun, all arguments about the state would be merely superfluous from any practical point of view, in spite of their intense theoretical importance in the preparation of future struggles. The problem of the state in practice, that is during the revolutionary uprising, the armed struggle against the state, is simple. It is a matter of war -- war to the end, simple and terrible. The hard thing politically is to get this final struggle under way. Once such a fight is begun, the question is answered with fire power and will power.

After the victory for the revolutionary side in such a contest, even poor old "common sense" can recognize a successful revolution and a new state no matter what it calls the state. The task of theory

is to unravel the contradictions, to absorb the history of the past, including the immediate past, i.e., the Chinese revolution itself and "extract from it the necessary formula for action" in future revolutions.

The Concept of Nationalization, etc.,
and the Concept: What Class Is In Power?

To return to one of our opening theses: China became a deformed workers state in September 1949. The date is very important because it involves the class concept of the state. The old state power was smashed at this time and a new one erected.

The Plenum Discussion Draft -- "The Third Chinese Revolution and its Aftermath" -- discusses the question of the time of the over-
turn in only one paragraph:

"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 foundation 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." (Discussion Bulletin A-31, October 1955.)

The first of these two paragraphs apparently deals with the time of the establishment of the workers state in China. It seems to say that China became a workers state sometime late in 1950 or 1951. The implication is that it became a workers state "when the ties with capitalism were cut." But this is not a criterion for a class position.

In the first place, China still has "ties with capitalism," but it is a workers state. There are many capitalist enterprises left in China, some of a rather sizeable character (for China). And in 1950-51 there were a great deal more. But this is not decisive. The class that is in power is decisive.

The Council of People's Commissars in the Soviet Union passed the following resolution in 1921: "To approve in principle the granting of oil concessions (to imperialism -- V.G.) in Grozny, Baku, and other functioning oil fields, and to start negotiations which shall be expedited." (Lenin, Selected Works, Vol. IX, p. 96.)

The imperialists did not take the Soviets up on this offer, even with the guarantee of "hundreds of percent profit" -- (Lenin.) But if they had, this would not have changed the class character of the state. This is not merely because the Bolsheviks were genuine working class leaders. It would not have changed the class character of the state under Stalin either.

True, the new Chinese state cut certain "ties with capitalism" immediately; namely, the unequal treaties with imperialism that facilitated the economic penetration of China, etc. But this was already done by October 1, 1949. If the Chinese should now establish new "ties with capitalism" along the lines of the Grozny-Baku proposition, this would in no way alter the class character of the state.

In the second place, the Chinese Stalinists still cling to their theory of a "revolution in stages." At least they have not rejected it to this day. But of course they cannot put the theory into practice, and could not ever since September 1949.

In the third place the imperialists and their war did not create the new Chinese state, or cause the Stalinists to create it. The revolution had already created it in 1949.

The Discussion Draft, to repeat, implies that China became a deformed workers state when "the American military forces drove toward the Yalu and the imperialists clamped an economic blockade on China." In January, 1953, the present author wrote on this theme in the following way:

"Lattimore, like his attackers, sees China's alliance with the Soviet Union, the socializing of so many projects, the creation of state industries -- and concludes in his own mind that the CP have now become communist revolutionaries where they were not so before. His accusers say that this was the fact all along. (Both sides of course are wrong.) He only adds that the stupid policies of the American reaction have forced the Chinese CP to become communist when they could have been weaned away from this path with the proper tactics. (Present emphasis.)

"But this is not so. Yes, U.S. imperialism pushed the new Chinese regime to the left (that is, farther to the left). But it did so because imperialism is imperialism, and it must act in a certain way toward colonial countries in revolt. And the imperialists did not create the revolutionary government as Lattimore half believes. Their actions only hardened the new Chinese regime, forced them into the alliance with the Soviet Union sooner rather than later, compelled them to divide the land faster to create a greater military base among the peasantry. But the McCarthys can hardly be blamed for the division of the land itself. A democratic capitalist regime in China, if there could be any such animal, would find it utterly impossible to do such a thing under any circumstances." ("The Case of Owen Lattimore" by V. Grey, Fourth International, January-February, 1953.)

To say as the Discussion Draft does that it was not the revolution, but the pressure of imperialism upon the will of the Stalinists that created a workers state is to stand everything on its head. Suppose the United States were to attack capitalist Britain: Could

the Tory party proceed to expropriate the industries in order to conduct the war more effectively? Just to ask the question is to answer it.

The writers of the resolution are of course anxious to avoid conciliation with Stalinism and wish to emphasize the enforced character of the Stalinist leaders' actions in the field of property relations. This enforced character indeed did exist, but the force acting upon them was not at all the force of imperialist war as such, but the force of the revolution. One might ask the writers of the paragraph quoted from the Draft: If the Chinese armies poised at the Yalu in November 1950 were capitalist armies, the instrument of a capitalist state, how did they change into workers armies, the instrument of a workers state? By virtue of the fact that they started to fight "the American military forces (which) drove toward the Yalu" (p. 9.) Because back home the Stalinists began to seize the imperialist assets and open up anti-capitalist campaigns? To agree to this would be to give an actually supra-historical character to the Stalinists. The best revolutionary leaders can only legislate and execute within the framework of the class state they find themselves at the head of. But here, we are told, the worst leaders, with a counter-revolutionary program at that, vigorously changed a capitalist state into a workers state. Moreover they would appear to have done this without a revolution -- merely by executive decree in "their" state.

The authors of the Discussion Draft obviously do not mean to say this. But such is the inescapable conclusion from their thesis.

The Importance of Program and the Logic of the Struggle

It may appear to the casual reader that we are belittling the importance of program. Not at all. Without program (and a party to embody the program), there can be no successful world revolution, and thereby no socialism. The truth of this statement, however, lies not in the fact that we say it is true, but in the actual objective complexities and requirements of the struggle, requirements that generally preclude success without a conscious Trotskyist leadership.

Program is decisive. But it is decisive precisely on the question of taking power. We live in a period of the crisis of leadership. This crisis is most sharply expressed in the fact that there is no leadership capable of leading the masses to victory and taking power.

Why is leadership so crucial? Because the revolutionary class so often has every objective means to win out, except a leadership. This is as true today as it was in 1940, despite the experience of China. It is a life and death question for the revolution that the Marxists should understand this.

At the same time, however, in those cases where the class wins without the leadership, or against a wrong leadership, it would be very sterile to say: "Program is decisive. Therefore the oppressed class could not have won."

Marx and Engels did not proceed this way. They immediately recognized the Paris Commune because of "the class forces lodged

within it" (Trotsky), in spite of the fact that non-Marxists and anti-Marxists led it. And even twenty years before this concrete experience, Engels outlined in advance the logic of the situation. After listing all the things a workers state should do, he says:

"It is impossible, of course, to carry out all these measures at once. But one will always bring others in its wake. Once the first radical attack on private property has been launched, the proletariat will find itself forced to go even further (my emphasis -- V.G.) to concentrate increasingly in the hands of the state all capital, all agriculture, all trade." (Principles of Communism.)

Engels wrote this 100 years before the Chinese Revolution. He did not see the revolution following an apriori plan (even in the advanced countries), but tried to lay bare the logic of its probable development, given the minimum of consciousness and program on the part of the workers, and assuming the Marxist party was not in the leadership. He might have been talking about the Chinese Revolution.

Leadership is more crucial in general today than it was in Engels' time, precisely because the state is more difficult to overthrow today than it was in his time. This is no less true than it was before the smashing of Chiang Kai-shek, but it must be recognized that Chiang -- and his state -- was smashed.

Did Engels mean, even at that time, however, that a revolution is spontaneous and springs out of the ground without leadership? Or that it goes on and on, unrolling like the Hegelian absolute? Of course not. But there are degrees and degrees to consciousness. There are many kinds of leadership. Even misleaders can on occasion give a certain kind of leadership. Every trade unionist is familiar with the grudging strike-talk and the forced militancy (often extremely demagogic and fiery) of the worst type of bureaucrats. And when misleaders lead a civil war -- for whatever reasons -- they must in the long run end with defeat or victory. The victory, if there is a victory, will be a class victory. And the new state will be the state of the victorious class, not the mere political expression of these misleaders.

Trotsky on the Logic of State Power

In outlining his concept of the necessity for the dictatorship of the proletariat in Russia (Our Revolution, p. 107), Trotsky analyzes the class forces, the compulsions upon any revolutionary government that takes over in Russia (a country somewhat like China in this respect). The new government may think it is bourgeois, but it must act quite differently, he says.

"Let us take the case of an eight hour work day. It is a well established fact that an eight hour work day does not contradict the capitalist order. . . Imagine, however, its realization in a revolutionary period, when all social passions are at the boiling point. An eight hour work day law would necessarily meet with stubborn and organized opposition on the part of the capitalists -- let us say in the form of a lockout and closing down of factories and plants. Hundreds of thousands of working men would be thrown into the streets. What ought the revolutionary government to do? A bourgeois government however radical. . . would be powerless against the closing of

factories and plants. It would be compelled to make concessions (to capital -- V.G.). The eight hour work day would not be put into operation, the revolts of the working men would be put down by force of arms. . . .

"Under the political domination of the proletariat, the introduction of the eight hour work day must have totally different consequences. The closing down of factories and plants cannot be the reason for increasing labor hours by a government which represents not capital but labor, and which refuses to act as an 'impartial' mediator, the way bourgeois democracy does. A labor government would have only one way out (my emphasis -- V.G.) -- to expropriate the closed factories and plants and to organize their work on a public basis."

Trotsky is talking here about the logic of the actions of a workers state in which the "bourgeois tasks" are not completed. He does not emphasize the pressure of the working class as part of the compulsion upon the leadership. He assumes that the leadership is honestly pro-labor with no ax to grind. He is not thinking of Stalinists in power (writing in 1903), but possibly some kind of revolutionary-minded Mensheviks or something of the sort. But he does see the compulsion of the whole situation upon the leadership. He is saying that a revolutionary labor government which has assumed full responsibility for the organization of society, whether it call itself a trustee for the bourgeoisie or not, is compelled to eliminate the bourgeoisie.

"Or let us take another example," Trotsky continues, "A proletarian government must necessarily take decisive steps to solve the problem of unemployment. Representatives of labor in a revolutionary government can by no means meet the demand of the unemployed by saying that this is a bourgeois revolution (my emphasis -- V.G.). Once, however, the state ventures to eliminate unemployment -- no matter how -- a tremendous gain in the economic power of the proletariat is accomplished." And further on:

"In agriculture similar problems will present themselves through the very fact of land expropriation (my emphasis -- V.G.). We cannot imagine a proletarian government expropriating large private estates with agricultural production on a large scale, cutting them into pieces and selling them to small owners. For it, the only way open is to organize in such estates cooperative production under communal or state management. This, however, is the way of socialism." (Emphasis in original.) (Dispatches from Hong Kong to the N.Y. Times on January 22 and March 5 of this year, concerning the phenomenal growth of cooperatives -- and collectives -- fulfil Trotsky's predictions for Russia, even more conclusively in China.)

Now it may be objected that Trotsky speaks throughout of a "labor government" -- a "proletarian state," etc. -- and the proletarian character of the state in China is just what we are trying to prove. But Trotsky also was trying to prove -- in advance -- the proletarian character of the revolution in Russia and the proletarian character of the state that would be erected after the revolution. He was speaking against opponents (including even Lenin) who thought to one degree or another that the workers and peasants would make the revolution, take power (which was just what happened), but that the new power would not be the dictatorship of the proletariat.

The point to remember is Trotsky's insistence on the social logic of state power. He obviously bases himself on the idea that the dictatorship of the proletariat exists before the social "reforms" it undertakes, exists in fact, from the moment the revolution puts it in power. And, he continues,

"At which point the proletariat will be stopped on its march in this direction (after taking power -- V.G.) depends upon the constellation of forces, not upon the original purpose of the proletarian party. (My emphasis -- V.G.)

"It is therefore absurd," he goes on, "to speak of a specific character of proletarian dictatorship (or a dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry) within a bourgeois revolution, viz., a purely democratic dictatorship. The working class can never secure the democratic character of its dictatorship without overstepping the limits of its democratic program. . . "

The "democratic" character of the Stalinist dictatorship in China also could not be secured without "overstepping the limits of (their) democratic program." But this fact was predictable. It was predetermined, not by Trotsky's theory, but by the same historical forces which determined the theory. The fact that the Stalinists were blind to all this is another (although very important) matter.

The foregoing thoughts of both Engels and Trotsky are continued and deepened by Trotsky after the Second Chinese Revolution.

"There is not and there will not be any other "democratic" dictatorship except the one exercised by the Kuomintang since 1925." (Problems of the Chinese Revolution, p. 128.)

". . . the Third Chinese Revolution, in spite of the extreme backwardness of China, or more correctly, because of this great backwardness, as compared with Russia, will not have a 'democratic' period, be it even for six months, as was the case in the October Revolution. The direct expropriation of the foreign capitalist enterprises and later also the Chinese capitalist enterprises, will most likely be made imperative by the struggle, on the very morrow of the victorious insurrection." (Same source, p. 132.)

Nor does Trotsky merely make a bald prediction on this point. He takes up the whole question of the defeated Canton Commune, and shows (in addition to analyzing its errors) how the actual experience laid bare the proletarian content of the revolution of 1925-27, and of the Chinese Revolution in the historical sense.

"Notwithstanding the fact that the instructions of the ECCI said nothing about the proletarian dictatorship and socialist measures; notwithstanding the fact that Canton, when compared with Shanghai, Hankow, and other industrial centers of the country, has more of a petty-bourgeois character, the revolutionary upheaval effected against the Kuomintang led automatically to the proletarian dictatorship which at its very first steps, found itself compelled by the entire situation to take more radical measures than those with which the October Revolution began." (Same source, pp, 130-31.)

A "Peasant" Army in our Epoch Must Be
Either Bourgeois or Proletarian

Some readers may believe that the preceding quotations from Engels and Trotsky are too abstract and cannot describe a historical process whose details neither of these geniuses could foresee in their entirety. Let us return then once more to the concrete development of this state.

The present Chinese state is the product of a revolution. It was set up and supported on the bayonets of a great revolutionary army, which in turn was supported by a many-millioned revolutionary population. Since every army is a "state on wheels" -- including revolutionary armies in the sense we have explained -- and since this revolutionary army was mainly peasant in composition, perhaps it was a peasant state on wheels? And then the state it established and crystallized itself into must have been a peasant state? (And would still be a peasant state of course.) This would be the worst kind of formalism -- even to pose the question in this manner.

The American army can be composed overwhelmingly of workers, and it is still a capitalist army. The Soviet Red Army of 1918-22 was composed overwhelmingly of peasants -- and it was a workers army. Everything we know about the age of imperialism, even if we knew nothing at all about the theory of the permanent revolution, tells us that a great army composed of peasants must in essence be a workers army or a bourgeois army.

This, it may be objected, is an abstraction. So it is. But it is a very useful abstraction that will aid us in our concrete estimate of the Chinese Red Army.

A formalist might say: "Trotsky maintained the peasants cannot fight the agrarian revolution to victory without a proletarian leadership. They had no such leadership. Therefore the agrarian revolution did not take place." Since the agrarian revolution did take place, and since we are not formalists, let us look for the workers leadership or working class content in the army, which, according to theory and past experience, was absolutely essential. Therefore we should make a brief review of the inception and growth of this army -- its purpose, Chiang's purpose, the character it thought it had, and the character it did have.

After the defeat and decapitation of the Chinese proletariat in the Revolution of 1925-27, thousands, in fact tens of thousands of the most resolute, the most hounded and the most desperate of the city workers and miners, the unemployed, etc., left (one might even say, "fled") the cities, under the banners of Chu and Mao, and other commanders, to continue the fight, or at the least to "hold out" on the countryside, until the next resurgence of the proletariat. (They mistakenly believed that this would come very soon.) Nor did they have a crystallized plan to lead a peasant war. Mao and his co-thinkers were not agreed on such a concept. And it is not very likely that Mao himself had any pre-vision of the ultimate march to power in that early period, notwithstanding what his biographers now claim.

When the landless, homeless peasants began to inundate the army, they did not drown out this proletarian cadre. They were drawn into

the general nation-wide revolutionary aims of the struggle. They did not of course become transformed into city proletarians. But their orientation was revolutionary, on the basis of their own conditions, as well as the proletarian concepts of the Red Army.

"There is no land-owning caste in China in opposition to the bourgeoisie. The most wide-spread, generally hated exploiter in the village is the usurious wealthy peasant, the agent of urban banking capital. The agrarian revolution has therefore, just as much anti-bourgeois, as anti-feudal character in China. The first stage of our October Revolution in which the wealthy peasant marched hand-in-hand with the middle and poor peasant, and frequently at their head, against the landlord, will not, or as much as will not, take place in China. The agrarian revolution there will be from the very beginning, and also later on, an uprising not only against a few landlords and bureaucrats, but also against the wealthy peasants and usurers. If in Russia, the poor peasant committees acted only in the second stage of the October Revolution, towards the middle of 1918, in China they will appear on the scene, in one form or another, as soon as the agrarian movement revives. The breaking up of the rich peasants will be the first and not the second step in the Chinese October." (Problems of the Chinese Revolution, p. 131.)

This discription of the extremely pauperized peasantry in China explains why the "peasant" cadres could join the army on an essentially working class basis.

For several years this working-class army aimed at recapturing the cities and rekindling the proletarian revolution there. Trotsky condemned this strategy as ultra-leftism. And so the events proved it -- to the hilt. The city proletariat had suffered too much, lost too much in the defeats of 1926-27. And Chiang had consolidated himself too well on the debacle of Stalinist policy for the revolutionary perspective to be anything but that of slow, patient work of a trade union, and democratic character.

But although the ultra-left policy of the Stalinist-led Red Army was wrong, harmful, and had appalling results at times, this policy did not by itself deprive the army of its class character. When Chiang Kai-shek pursued the Red Army to the "border region" in 1928-31 with his hundreds of thousands of troops (who, by the way, were mostly peasant in composition), he did not understand his own action as a war against peasant rebels, but as a mopping-up campaign against the workers -- a hang-over from his mopping-up campaign in Shanghai, Hankow and Canton, also Changsha as late as 1930.

Chiang at that time feared the possibility of new outbreaks in the cities and regarded Chu and Mao's troops as the yeast for the city risings -- as Chu and Mao did also (too much so). And the peasant protection for the troops, the peasants provisions for the troops, the peasant reinforcements to the troops, and even the peasant risings themselves seemed at this early period only supplementary to the workers revolution, prostrate as that revolution still was.

The climactic event of this period was the attack upon and occupation of Changsha, a city of 500,000 in 1930. This resulted in a defeat and a terrible blood letting by the reaction -- a smaller edition of the Canton Commune. But 3,000 of the most advanced work-

ers of Changsha left with the retreating army. This was repeated several times again on a smaller scale. This series of attacks was adventurist and criminal. They tended to weaken the already defeated city proletariat, although not to as great a degree as the 1925-27 honeymoon with the hangman, Chiang, whom they were now fighting.

Two important conclusions flow from the above facts, however. (1) That the Red Army was still attempting at this time, however wrongly in method, to link itself up to the city proletariat, and showing that it understood the importance of the cities. (2) That many advanced proletarians of the cities identified the Chinese Red Armies with the workers.

There were repeated journeys from city to country by workers, unemployed, and students. For long periods, sometimes for years, this trickle all but stopped. But during the war with Japan, it swelled into a mighty river, and in the later period of the final civil war (1947-49) it became an irresistible torrent. Isaacs describes the first of these armed elements as large bands of "lumpen-proletarians." This is true to some extent. Especially to the extent that they were unemployed. Unemployed workers and "unemployed" peasants were preponderant in the Red Army. But it must be noted that these were not lumpen-proletarians in the sense that they were a few broken-down inhabitants of "skid-row," demented, useless, alcoholic, etc. One hardly thinks of thirty or forty thousand "little Red Devils," age 12 to 16 years of age, for example -- runaway apprentices, homeless peasant orphans, manfully marching thousands of miles with the army, as "lumpen-proletariat" in the ordinary sense. They, and the others, were only lumpen-proletariat in the sense that they had been "dislodged from their class groove" as Lenin phrases it in another connection.

Isaacs shows how the "lumpen-proletarian army cannot have a proletarian character, cannot fully organize the peasantry and lead it to victory. But it did do just this. The number of city workers was of course always a small minority after the first year or so of the exodus. . . . But no one would demand that they be in a majority in order to lead. The point, to any Marxist, must be: how could they put a proletarian stamp on the armies they led?

Isaacs, who adhered to Trotskyism in 1938, when he wrote "The Tragedy of the Chinese Revolution," observed about the period, 1928-1932: "No more brilliant pages have ever been written in the history of peasant wars than those which must record the exploits of the Chinese Red Armies engaged in a civil war against enemies five, six, and seven times their number, and a thousand times their superior in armaments. For more than five years, the Red Armies outmaneuvered and defeated five successive Kuomintang campaigns against them. Because of the incomparable advantage of the support of the population, their superior mobility and generalship, their knowledge of the terrain, the Reds cut off and defeated division after division of Chiang Kai-shek's best troops and armed themselves exclusively with the weapons they captured. The slogan of land to the peasants and freedom from the rapacity of the Kuomintang regime plowed like tanks through the columns of Chiang's hired soldiers." (Tragedy of the Chinese Revolution, Isaacs, p. 411.)

And at the end of this period, when Chiang had put over a half-million men in the field, 300 Italian and American planes in the air,

and exterminated whole sections of the insurgent peasantry -- still the core of the army escaped, retreated and continued its stubborn existence.

But why "have no more brilliant pages ever been written in the history of peasant wars"? Because the peasants were revolutionary? But peasants were also revolutionary in less brilliant, and less successful wars. Because Chu Teh was "one of the most remarkable military leaders in all history"? (Isaacs.) This estimate of Chu is not an exaggerated one. But everyone now understands that Napoleon too was also "one of the most remarkable military leaders in all history," but that he would never have been even a colonel had it not been for the Great French Revolution.

Chu Teh's command rested upon that first workers' cadres, "lumpen-proletarian" as many of them may have been, and upon peasant revolutionaries who had divorced themselves from the peasantry and taken upon themselves a proletarian outlook, by leaving their homes, if they had any, thousands of miles behind and fighting no longer in the interest of a single or isolated peasant uprising, but for the country-wide agrarian revolution.

Here, we cannot help recalling the stubborn-minded soldier in John Reed's report who answered the educated Menshevik so well. The Menshevik informed him: "This isn't socialism you are fighting for." The soldier agreed that the student was much more educated than he. "But there are only two classes, the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, and whoever isn't on one side is on the other." This soldier was already beginning to exercise power and yet according to the context of the story, he himself was a peasant.

It is only too obvious that the great bulk of the Chinese Red Armies was peasant. But did the great mass of rural youth in the army traveling thousands of miles from their birth place, into lands of strange dialects and different climates, fighting for years against the landlords, then the Japanese, then the landlords again and Chiang Kai-shek armed with American guns -- did these "peasant" soldiers become more peasant-like, more local in their outlook, more land-hungry, etc., or less so? Did the proletarians or "lumpen-proletarians," who left the cities to join the Red Army, lose their proletarian character and acquire a peasant character merely because of the large proportion of peasants in the army? Did they acquire a peasant outlook, that is, become personally land-conscious, land-hungry, etc.? No, it is self-evident they did not. But why not?

Suppose a proletarian army left their machines and went to a land, if there were one on our planet, totally unconnected with capitalism. And suppose this "workers army" was totally severed from all connections with its home country. Then this army, composed completely of workers, would cease to be a workers army. It would have no class connections, no class roots, no class compulsions. It would be merely a group of military adventurers who would win or lose only according to the relationship of military forces.

But when these proletarians of the Chinese cities left the cities, they did not go to such a land. No matter how many thousands of miles they traveled from the cities into the vast hinterland, they went to China. They could not get away from the domination of

capital over the countryside. Organizing in the form they did, fighting the enemy they were compelled to fight, they could not acquire the economic outlook of the classical Chinese two-acre peasant. They at all times travelled, fought, confiscated, ruled, in China, a country so riven internally, so pressured externally, flooding over with opposition to the feudal landlord, opposition to the capitalist money lender (usually the same person) hatred of the imperialist allies of both -- that the sole army of opposition, even were it one hundred percent composed of peasants, would have to measure forces with all these enemies. These compulsions, these pressures upon the worker cadres, and indeed upon the peasant cadres also, proved in the long run more powerful and more decisive than the pressure of peasant outlooks and purely local peasant demands.

And yet the pressure of the peasantry in general, was the pressure of an irresistible flood -- a flood upon whose tide this army was finally washed into power. The army destroyed the armed power of landlordism which contained within itself also the armed power of capitalism. The army and its leadership only discovered this fact in retrospect, and perhaps even now are somewhat hazy about it. But leaving aside the role of consciousness, or rather of unconsciousness, it is important to add, that the peasantry by themselves, in support of strictly peasant demands, and with only a peasant outlook, could never have accomplished this dual task.

Since the army had a Stalinist leadership, intransigent purists may demand a conclusion that either the Stalinists have become revolutionaries in the Marxist sense, or that there simply was no revolution. This demand is obviously the ultimatum of badly thought-out readings of history and theory. Life and the class struggle itself have resolved the dilemma in such a way that no serious Marxist should really raise it.

In the Revolution of 1925-1927, the CCP remained inside the Kuomintang under Chiang Kai-shek. In doing this they were subordinating the proletarian revolution to the bourgeois. They explained and motivated this treacherous strategy on the ground that the revolution in China was not proletarian, but bourgeois -- that it was the proletariat's duty to fight the bourgeois revolution under bourgeois command. As a direct result of this pernicious approach to the struggle, the proletariat were overwhelmingly defeated. The CP itself was decapitated and decimated. Following this, the CP refused to alter its general characterization of the strategic tasks. But it regarded the bourgeois revolution as incomplete in spite of the victory of the Kuomintang. This was right. Meanwhile it continued to maintain that the proletariat could only come to power by "stages," that is, that the real bourgeoisie, the "progressive" bourgeoisie would still have their turn. This was wrong.

Now Chiang Kai-shek, by defeating the CP did "correct" one important aspect of their strategy. That is, he forcibly ejected them from the bourgeois Kuomintang and began a death struggle against them. They were impelled to be independent -- as they were also impelled to form an independent army, if only for self-protection. Thus, if the CP would not follow Trotsky's advice to break from the Kuomintang, Chiang Kai-shek, more successfully than Trotsky, reoriented them somewhat, by his campaigns of extermination.

Trotsky said in 1927, "In its present form, the Kuomintang is the embodiment of an 'unequal treaty' between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. If the Chinese Revolution as a whole demands the abrogation of unequal treaties with the imperialist powers, then the Chinese proletariat must liquidate the unequal treaty with its own bourgeoisie." (New International, 1938, page 124).

It proved to be the bourgeoisie not the proletariat, who liquidated the "unequal treaty." But it was liquidated.

The die having been cast by the beginning of civil war, never again was it possible for the army of the CP to have real organic unity with the bourgeoisie of China -- certainly not with its armies. (During the war with Japan this was supposed to happen. But in reality, the Red Armies of China were never demobilized or really reintegrated with Chiang's troops.) The Chinese CP made all the zig zags that every other Stalinist party made. But the die had already been cast when they formed a big army and engaged in civil war. The terms had already been set, the objective rules of the game already decided. Namely, that in the end there must be a complete destruction of the army, or it must take the power.

This is the objective, materialist view of the question. But if we approach it formalistically, in a purely programmatic way, we are confronted with the following absurd contradiction: 1) That the CCP was a genuine Marxist party before 1927 and a Stalinist party afterward. 2) The Marxist party followed the policy of class collaboration and the Stalinist party followed the policy of class struggle. (All the Stalinist attempts to liquidate the struggle notwithstanding.) But this is all nonsense!

We are not interested at this point in the character of Stalinism but in the class character of the Stalinist-led Red Armies who spear-headed the Chinese Revolution and set up the new state. Whatever differences there may be about the matter today, there is no doubt that the CCP was a workers party in 1927 when it formed the nucleus of the Red Army. The cadre of that army were workers, and the aims of that struggle against Chiang Kai-shek had to be the aims of the proletarian revolution, whatever the ideas within the heads of Chu and Mao.

After Chiang's 5 campaigns of "annihilation," in 1934 the Stalinist leaders decided, probably after much disagreement and debate, to retreat still further from the cities, to go in fact, thousands of miles inland, regroup their forces, gain more peasant allies, lead the struggle against the landlords, build a territorial base, as the only way to preserve the army.

We have said that the workers were not swallowed up by the peasantry or turned into locally oriented peasant rebels. This famous "Long March" in its own way proves this again. All students of the Chinese Revolution join in applauding the epochal heroism of this March. The Long March was not a rout, in which the cadres were lost, or melted away. In spite of the terrible losses from cold, hunger, disease, it was one of the great triumphs of the human will. The cadres were not swallowed up by the vast countryside. On the contrary they took the city to the country. Wasn't this symbolized in the sewing machines and the lathe spindles, the hand and machine tools that these heroic soldiers strapped to their backs to carry so

many gruelling miles across desert and mountain -- to set up cooperatives in cave cities, and schools for modern living in semi-feudal villages?

Anyone who has ever marched just one day with any baggage at all on his back knows the irksomeness of every single extra ounce. What are we to say about undernourished, underweight, underclothed thousands, carrying such articles as these under such conditions? Only that the army had a social consciousness. And it was not the consciousness of the peasant.

This consciousness does not need to be deduced or inferred merely. The following account from a Stalinist apologist who was also an upholder of the world bourgeois status quo, is one of many such reports.

"Everywhere that youth has any solid political beliefs in China, the impact of Marxist ideology is apparent, both as a philosophy and as a kind of substitute for religion. Among young Chinese, Lenin is almost worshipped, Stalin is by far the most popular foreign leader. Socialism is taken for granted as the future form of Chinese society." (Red Star Over China, page 369, 1938).

"When they shout, 'Long Live the World Revolution,' and 'Proletarians of the World Unite,' it is an idea that permeates all their teaching and faith, and in it they reaffirm their allegiance to the dream of a socialist world brotherhood." (Same source, page 371).

We can see the force of Edgar Snow's impressions in the foregoing quotes from his book, without sharing his ideas about the connection between Marxism and religion, or taking it for granted that the proximity of Stalin's name to Lenin's means that the masses are not revolutionary. We do not need to believe that the Chinese Stalinist party was a genuine party of world revolution, to believe that Snow was telling the truth in the above comments about the youth of the Chinese Red Army among whom he lived for a time.

It is idle here to speak of whether 10 per-cent or even only 5 per-cent of the remaining army were workers by 1936 and 37, when Snow wrote his book. (That is Mao's method, not ours.) That is, it is idle from the point of view of explaining the class nature of this specific army, standing as it did upon the foundation of the Chinese Revolution as a whole, fighting as it did and more especially, as it would do in 1947-49, against the whole Chinese bourgeois-feudal ruling class.

It was important at that time to sound a warning that the army might fail, because the growing preponderance of peasant strength within the army might rebel against carrying out a nation-wide struggle to nationalize land on a broad basis. It might rest content with overthrowing its own sectional landlords, taking a little land for itself, etc., etc. But this did not happen.

Was Chinese Stalinism a Peasant Force?

The Stalinist character of the leadership in itself is a refutation of the fact that the army ever became a really peasant force. For example: The army created and supported peasant soviets up to so late as 1937 -- expropriating the landlords altogether wherever it could. But after 1937 and the Sian agreement with Chiang Kai-shek, the Red

Army for years followed the policy of only reducing rents on the land and even liquidating the peasant soviets. Thus the peasants lost the land that they had fought for. Would a peasant leadership, of purely peasant cadres, revolutionary peasant cadres who had fought so furiously and heroically, (presumably for their own land) possibly stand for such a thing? No. This betrayal came straight from Moscow. It could be put across because the cadres who led the army, and were its core, were working class revolutionaries and allied peasant revolutionaries with a working-class outlook -- both of whom identified the Moscow bureaucracy with the Russian Revolution and thereby with the Chinese.

When their top leadership told them that the war against Japan could only be won by compromising with their own landlords, they thought that this was so. And even though tens of thousands of these landlords turned collaborator with the Japanese, the army cadres held in general to the new policy and continued to trust the Stalinist leaders, who in spite of their specifically Stalinist crimes, continued to show tremendous strength and resourcefulness, in organizing the forces of struggle. Just as John L. Lewis could uphold the Republican Party, the capitalist system, and still lead a heroic fight against the system in 1943, so Chu and Mao could still lead a tremendous struggle even though they generally mislead it.

Were it not for the Stalinist policy in the national war against Japan, the war might have almost at once assumed the character of a working class war. The whole historic pattern might have changed, the whole Second World War might have been transformed into a class war -- the U.S. coming in on the side of Japan, instead of the side of China, and trying to take on the Soviet Union as well. But, of course, this is exactly what Moscow feared, and moved heaven and earth to prevent. And that is why the Chinese Stalinists, who followed Moscow, were willing to sell out the peasant struggle and the class struggle in general at that time, in the interest of the war against Japan (which was admittedly a progressive war).

But if the Stalinists made the betrayal, they must have possessed the initiative to make it. That is, they led the army. The leading cadres of the army still identified the Stalinist leadership with the general revolutionary aims of the army. And even if we allow that these aims had changed from revolutionizing the cities, to "only" expropriating the land of all China -- the second aim is fully as much of a working class aim as the first -- from the historic point of view, in China.

It is not necessary to make any such allowance, however. At all times the CCP still spoke in the name of socialism, however cynically. The army still regarded itself as a socialist army -- in spite of the false theory of the "revolution by stages" and the Menshevik concept of historical evolution. Why should the army study pamphlets and listen to lectures on socialism? Why should it be so interested in the progress of the Spanish Civil War (1936-39) -- from a Stalinist point of view of course. Why should it print currency with the picture of Karl Marx on it? If it was a peasant army, bent only on getting the land in a peasant way -- that is by simple division of the land and a subsequent sanctification of the new private property -- then to what end was the socialist phrasemongering of the Stalinists? Was it not merely holding back and distorting the peasant struggle, antagonizing

the peasant leaders by talking of socialism, etc.?

This contradiction in Stalinism which can so easily express itself in weird political follies and wild fantasies -- derives from the simple but profound contradiction of the Moscow bureaucracy and the world CP's in general. Every CP in every country appeals to the revolutionary section of the working class and peasantry, at the same time that it carries out the counter-revolutionary policies of the Soviet bureaucracy. The difference in China was that the workers and peasants were already fighting the revolution before the comintern became completely Stalinized, and during the long years of Stalinist zig-zagging, they were already engaged in a great armed struggle. Their revolution could not be zig-zagged out of existence, as it could in a country where the whole problem is to get the oppressed class into motion and under arms. It is not that the CP had any different program in China than elsewhere. But as Trotsky points out in discussing the Moscow bureaucracy, the same reactionary policy can ruin things completely in one case, and only distort or deform them in another. It depends somewhat on the "resistivity of the material."

Did the CCP "Substitute Itself for the Working Class?"

Benjamin Schwartz, a bourgeois professor, has assembled a few documents and quotations to "prove" that the working class had nothing to do with the revolution in China -- and that it is only a Marxist litany to say that it did. (Chinese Communism and the Rise of Mao). The key to his thinking, and to his thesis is this: He also believes that the more specific intervention of the workers in Russia, 1917, more consciously, more numerous, more in the struggle at every step, was a mere coincidence. The real essence of both the Chinese and Russian Revolutions, according to him, was the small party of professional revolutionaries who led them. Leninist here, Stalinist there. This is basically the old instinctive reaction of any boss to a strike. "It's outside agitators." The workers, you see, didn't really have very much to do with it. They were "stirred up." And China at first glance, seems to provide a classical proof of this point ... at least to an academician.

But who "stirs up" the agitators? This neither the bosses nor their professorial servants can answer. The agitators in the American industrial organizing drive of 1934-41 are numbered in the thousands and tens of thousands. In the Chinese Revolution, they can be counted by the hundreds of thousands, and even the millions. The agitators only articulate the already existing "elemental drive," only popularize a program derived from the already existing objective conditions, only lead, because there are men to follow. The Stalinists "organized" the peasant masses. So did the Murray bureaucracy "organize" the steel workers. And it would be permissible to remove the quotation marks from the word, if it were first completely clear just what the real limitations of the organizing role consists of.

Schwartz doesn't really contend that the C.P. "substituted itself for the working class." He contends that the C.P. played the same role in China which Marxism "pretends" that the working class played in Russia.

Like all the rest of the bourgeoisie, Schwartz is not at all concerned with the positive social character of the new Chinese regime ("whether it is a workers state," a "peasant" state, "state capitalism,"

etc.) He, like them, is only concerned with its negative character. That is, the fact that it has been taken away from capitalism, that it challenges the world status quo, which he defends. Thus his anxiety, which is not at all professorial, to isolate the terrible cause of it all. This, he happily finds, not in the world conditions, not in the colonial contradictions, not in the heroic struggles of the masses, nor in anything that would presage the doom of capitalism in general -- but in the Stalinists themselves. (If this were so, there would be hope for Schwartz's masters indeed). "Voila L'ennemi" -- There is the enemy, he cries out. Like a good laboratory man, he has isolated the infection, so he claims. But the fact that he equates Stalinism, or Maoism as he calls it, with Leninism, as the fundamental dynamic element in each revolution, is in itself the tip-off to his abysmal ignorance of the historic process -- in both countries.

Certainly it is true that the leaders of great armies, whatever their class base, can often for a time, rise above this base, and act in an autocratic manner -- against the best interests of the class they serve. (The length of this time is sharply limited, however.) But this autocratic phenomenon never deludes Marxists into supposing that the autocrat is the class, or really substitutes himself for it.

Let's look at one of the more glaring types of autocratic acts of the Stalinist leaders. The city workers welcomed the Chinese Red Armies as they entered the cities. They stopped work, paraded, etc. Very often, in the middle of the welcome, the Stalinist army leaders harshly told the workers to go back to work. What does this prove? It proves the bureaucratic nature of the Stalinists. It proves their fear of the bourgeoisie, and their more or less conscious belief that they were setting up some kind of bourgeois state. It proves they envisioned a long period of conciliation with the bourgeoisie. It demonstrates how the Stalinist leaders regarded the workers. But it also demonstrates how the workers regarded the Red Army. The workers had not supported Chiang Kai-shek's army. They had sabotaged it in a hundred ways. And they welcomed the Red Army. Obviously they did not welcome it in its character as a Stalinist army, nor even in its character as a peasant army, but in its character as a workers army.

The workers could have been wrong in this of course, although subsequent events proved them right. One must remember that this army had been in existence for twenty two years at this time. The city workers had been rejoicing for some years at the blows which this army was dealing to Chiang Kai-shek, their mortal enemy. Even if they regarded the army as a peasant army, they would conclude that the peasants' enemy was their enemy also. But it is not fair to the Chinese workers -- especially at this late date -- to make it appear that they were passive from 1937 to 1949. The anti-Japanese resistance that grew up in the cities after 1937, particularly in the occupied cities, took on a more and more revolutionary character as time and conditions deepened the desperation of the population. The military prestige of the Stalinist-led armies did not fail to impress these city workers. And precisely for this reason the city workers began joining the CCP in large numbers again and joining the army also especially in the years 1946-49.

The moment the new state was established, it called upon the workers to consolidate the regime which was already erected only with their

cooperation and consent. The state called upon the workers to police and prosecute the 3-Anti and 5-Anti movements against the remaining capitalists of China. Even before this, shop committees had to be set up for the management of the newly-expropriated "bureaucratic capitalist" enterprises. The leadership even experimented with giving ten votes to every worker, to one for every peasant. This was not because the Stalinists had some constitutional disposition to double-cross the peasantry. Nor was it because they had any particular love for the workers. It was because this was the logic of state power based on a revolution whose whole national and international expression had to be that of the working class.

Schwartz understands very well of course that the capitalists do not have the state in China. His point is that neither do the workers. Schwartz believes that a bunch of Stalinists went to the countryside, whipped up a peasant war, put the proletarian stamp (or Stalinist stamp -- the difference is immaterial to Schwartz) upon the consequent revolution, simply in their character as Stalinists. Actually, Schwartz's position would be equally false, and anti-materialist even if the leadership had been not Stalinist, but Trotskyist. And he would, of course, maintain his position equally in this case too.

The fundamental theoretical difficulty of Schwartz and all the others, however, is their recognition of the peasant war, the agrarian revolution and their non-recognition of the role of the working class. The role of Stalinism blinds them to the logic of the Permanent Revolution which dictates that not the bourgeoisie, but only the proletariat can lead the agrarian revolution. They cannot understand that there is no such thing as a Stalinist army. They cannot conceive that a "peasant" army in our epoch must be either bourgeois or proletarian.

The peasant revolution is the easiest thing to see about China. But it is also necessary to see the working class essence beneath the peasant form. It is only this way that the revolution can be dialectically, that is, concretely understood. And the state which this revolution, peasant though it might "logically" be, is in reality something very different.

If the Stalinists could have led a peasant revolution as such, and led it to power, then of course China would now be a "peasant state" -- that is if we remain on the ground of Marxism. BUT -- had the historical situation been ripe for a peasant revolution as such -- had the peasants been able to take power in their own name -- had the unborn infant in the womb of history been a peasant state, the revolutionary midwife could not have changed the infant's class character, after all the social processes had already formed it, in its long gestation period. True, a Stalinist mid-wife might have strangled it at birth (as in 1925-27) or dropped it on its head. But it could not change the fundamental social character of the infant once it was born. A peasant state it would have been, Stalinists or no Stalinists.

If, for historical reasons, the state had to base itself on the class interests of the peasants, as we understand "peasants" in the classical sense (a nation of small landholders as the ruling class), it would have made little difference how democratic the state forms might have been (under Trotskyists for example). The proof that this

was not so, however, is contained in the fact that the Stalinists undemocratic, unprincipled, and bureaucratic, were compelled to carry out more and more measures of a working-class character. These facts are self-evident today. But the explanation of them was just as true six years ago.

On the Formula: "Stalinism in Power Equals Workers State."

Here, a word is in order about the above "formula." It is a bad formula. Even when it is employed as "terminological terror" to refute the foregoing analysis, it reveals a faulty approach to history.

Would Marxists ever say: "A labor union bureaucracy in power equals a labor union?" It is true that no labor bureaucracy is in power without there being a class organization (a union) to support it. It is true that were we to hear that the Dubinsky bureaucracy were in complete "power" over the workers in the southern textile mills, we might well assume that there was a union there, and not a company union, even if we know nothing about the activities of the workers. But this would only be a temporary deduction based on what we previously knew about the class struggle. It would have to be verified by our knowledge of the new struggle itself. (Needless to say we were not in such abysmal ignorance about there being a broad struggle in China). In general, it would be a terrible way to confuse the workers and mislead them as to the essence of a social conflict, to make such a formulation. It would really be falling into the most common mistake of the backward worker: identifying the class with the leadership; identifying the bureaucracy with the union.

We say that the union movement is the instrument of the class struggle at a certain definite stage of its development. And that the bureaucracy is the result of certain contradictions in this struggle -- the divisions among the workers, the bribery of the upper layers by the crumbs of imperialism, etc. We say it is the workers in power in the sense that the strike is in power, in the sense that a contract with the company validates a degree of partial power for the workers. When the bureaucracy says "the union is you" they are telling the truth more than they realize.

The bourgeoisie glorify or calumniate the Reuthers, Lewises, and Meaney's. The bourgeoisie refer to these gentlemen as "Labor." But that term is false. The workers are "Labor." The class is primary. The bureaucracy is secondary -- even when it is occasionally compelled to play a progressive role.

The formulation, "Stalinism in power equals workers state" is just another attempt "to shock our imagination by opposing a good programmatic norm to a miserable, mean, even repugnant reality" (In Defense of Marxism). But in this case the attempt is not nearly so well based as the one Trotsky was answering (about the "counter-revolutionary workers state"). It would seem that the "good programmatic norm" which is implied by such an outrageous formula is that "Trotskyism in power does equal workers state."

Of course, if Trotskyism were in power as the result of a proletarian revolution which put it in power, then there would surely be a workers state. But the Trotskyists would not equal a workers state. A state is an organization which includes millions, literally millions, in the exercise of power and administration of justice in the interests of a class.

If a Labor Party were in power as the result of a proletarian revolution -- if for that matter -- an anarchist party (which doesn't believe in the state at all) were in power as the result of a proletarian revolution, there would still be a workers state, regardless of the subjective wishes of the leaders. These events are both extremely unlikely in America. But the speculation is in order since the introduction of such a formula as the above one, indicates a weakness on the historical materialist view of the class struggle.

The proletarian revolution in power equals a workers state. This is the formulation that corresponds most closely, and sums up most comprehensively, the foregoing analysis of the class nature of the state. Comrades who reproach this analysis seriously with the "Stalinism in power" formula, are frightening themselves rather than the author. At any rate they reveal a tendency to see the Chinese revolution not so much a movement of the classes, as a movement of parties, leaderships and personalities.

The Permanent Revolution in China

We have dealt a great deal with the specific character of the army in the framework of the class character of the Chinese struggle. And we have spoken at length on the proletarian character of the revolution as opposed to the Stalinist character of the leadership. We began this way, not because it is the whole answer in the historic sense, but in order first to emphasize the sharpness of the break with the old regime in September, 1949, and to reassert the doctrine of the class character of the state -- in general. We wished to show that the class conscious worker should take his position the moment of the successful revolution rather than long afterward. Needless to say, the class conscious worker who is on the scene of action (and making the revolution) is not late in taking his position. But a class struggle is also an international struggle.

But here let us not so much insist upon the necessity of taking an immediate position on the nature of the state, as to show how the nature of the new state flows legitimately out of the whole previous historical struggle. It is this previous historical struggle, however, which had already shaped and predetermined the direction of the new struggles, before the final victory in 1949, and even before 1925. And it is the knowledge of this previous development that made it possible not only to see that some class was victorious in September 1949, but to see what class was victorious.

This fact might at first appear to be one of those very self-evident facts, rather tedious to expound upon. We now take it for granted, for example, that the coming revolution in the United States will be proletarian, on the basis of the whole Marxist concept of previous history and present development. The Russian Revolution also proved by its objective development, that the Trotskyist pre-concept of its proletarian nature was correct. But what about China?

The masses of China have been in continuous, mortal conflict with their rulers for decades. This was no exotic, "Oriental," "Chinese" conflict, but a conflict within which was a denominator common to the whole capitalist world. For over a hundred years the Chinese have known the armies and navies of the "civilized" countries. For three

decades they have been acquainted with the Western airplane. Not, to be sure, with its benign gifts of travel, communication, crop-dusting, flood service, etc., but with its malignant gift of bombs. It was impossible for the Chinese to fight a revolution without fighting world capitalism.

The historical forces which conditioned the 1925-27 Chinese Revolution, had already predetermined that the bourgeoisie could not establish a democratic bourgeois state, with land to the peasants, etc. These same historical forces continued to operate in 1949. These forces did not enact the revolution of course. Human beings did that. But these forces acted upon the revolution. They created the basis for it. They determined its class character. They are the specifically Chinese expression of the same world forces, which have historically conditioned the class consciousness of the modern worker in such a way, that any national mass eruption of this consciousness onto the public forum of history is nowadays a proletarian revolution (regardless of whether it is successful or not).

The world historical forces did not penetrate into China in the form of some mystical miasma. They penetrated first in the form of commodities, in the creation of a money economy. They asserted themselves in the form of enormously increased exactions upon the Chinese masses. The Chinese masses did not have to become world thinkers to fight the imperialists. Their conditions of existence compelled them more or less directly to do this.

The Communist Manifesto, without supplying the full answer to the problem of colonial development that Trotsky has given us, very clearly states the nature of these forces in their first beginnings:

"The bourgeoisie, by the rapid improvement of all instruments of production, by the immensely facilitated means of communication, draws all nations, even the most barbarian, into civilization. The cheap prices of its commodities are the heavy artillery with which it batters down all Chinese walls, with which it forces the barbarians' intensely obstinate hatred of foreigners to capitulate. It compels all nations, on pain of extinction, to adopt the bourgeois mode of production...." (Communist Manifesto).

At the very time the above lines were being written, the "Chinese Walls" of exclusiveness had fallen so low in China that world capitalism had already begun to remake China into a qualitatively different kind of country than it had found it a few short decades before. British trade was being firmly established. Christianity, the colonial "fifth column" of capitalism, had already been legalized. And the once-proud Manchu regime was on the verge of impotence. The "cheap prices" of British commodities had brought the ruination of millions of peasants and tens of thousands of artisans. The first world trade crisis of 1847 produced such a flood of cheap goods that the supposedly stable moorings of society in the distant hinterland of China were snapped forever, and the first basically modern tide of revolt swept over that land for about 16 years. This was the Taiping Rebellion. It began about 1848 and lasted to 1864. It involved millions of people and half the land mass of China.

World Causes of the Taiping Rebellion

Hand weavers who had produced $3\frac{1}{2}$ million pieces of cloth in 1819 could only export 30 thousand pieces in 1833, and almost zero in subsequent decades. Cheap cloth goods from England totally ruined this wide-spread industry and pauperized the weavers in one generation, thus accomplishing ever more swiftly what it had done in the home country. At the same time, in a more indirect way, this capitalist penetration deprived hundreds of thousands of peasants of their land -- also in the space of one generation. As the imperialists made capital investments and trading stations in China, their Chinese lackeys, the so-called "compradore" brokers and merchants, unable to compete industrially with the foreigner, but enriched by their graft and brokers fees, turned to the only field open to them for investment of their cut from the surplus-value the British squeezed out of the Chinese masses. They invested in land and in mortgages. They raised the rents. They raised the rates of interest. They turned the screw several threads tighter on the already desperate peasantry.

Contradictions of the Taiping Rebellion

The ensuing great rebellion, however, was directed not at these money-lending, land-holding Mandarins, but at the Manchu dynasty. It followed the pattern of all the ancient peasant revolutions in this respect -- aiming to overthrow the dynasty and set up a new and "better" one. Unlike all previous peasant wars in China, however, it lacked any substantial leadership from the landlord class or gentry. Formerly a clique of dissatisfied gentry, frustrated by the corruption of the court, previously relegated to the outer circle, out of favor with the "ins" etc., would promise the peasants the moon, lead them to victory, set up their own dynasty, divide the lands of a few of their enemies among the peasant fighters, reward their chieftains and settle down to another century or so of dynastic intrigue and corruption.

Why was there not such a leadership -- particularly when the rebellious forces were greater than ever, and the chances for success apparently also proportionately more attractive? Because the landlords were now so much more interwoven with capital than they had been in the past. Precisely those landlords who in olden times would have been most bold against the regime because they were the most financially desperate -- precisely these landlords were in the grip of the city money-lender. Moreover, the agrarian measures of the revolutionary Taipings were more ruthless, more widespread, more effective than previous uprisings. The oppressed were showing a surprising disposition to run things in their own name. The depth of the social crisis beneath the revolution was so great and fearsome, that all sections of the landlord class drew back in fright.

The peasants wanted to divide the land. And they did so over huge areas of China where they gained control. This is a bourgeois measure. But the bourgeois compradores would of course not supply leadership to this movement, since their fortunes were tied up in land and they looked forward to enjoying the income and ancient prestige that accompanied landlordship. This bourgeois rebellion lacked a bourgeoisie.

"The great Taiping Rebellion failed and the status quo was preserved because there was no class in Chinese society capable of leading the country out of its impasse." (Isaacs). And yet the rebellion was in many ways an incipient bourgeois revolution. In the large areas they controlled, the Taipings not only gave the land to the peasants, but stimulated trade and in general pursued a rigid bourgeois code of ethics in setting up market standards, exchange rules, weights and measures, etc. They were at first very much in favor of conciliating the foreigners, not from the compradore point of view, but from the point of view of making China itself a great trading nation. But they also suppressed the Western-dominated opium trade in their territories, as part of their drive for an independent trade relationship with the foreigners.

The opium trade was still too important to the West to think of giving it up at this time. Britain -- and America too -- decided to support the Buddhist Manchu dynasty against the Taiping Christians -- after a period of uncertainty. It was not alone the lucrative opium trade that made them do this. The opium trade only symbolizes and dramatizes the corrupting influence of "progressive" world capitalism on China. Likewise, the fact that the imperialists preferred the somewhat more oriental opiate of Buddhism rather than Christianity, was merely due to a pragmatic choice forced upon them by the situation they were faced with. Like the individual opium seller, in his den, the Western nations felt they could best sell their goods in China to a prostrate people. It was in the fundamental interest of Western capital to make its deals with the Manchus, who were tied by every conceivable thread to the compradore servants of the West, and were the best instrument for foreign capital's penetration -- and domination -- of China.

It is interesting to us that not only did the Taipings conceal from themselves the class content of their revolution in the "borrowed disguise" of a religious war -- they also made some of the most advanced demands of the modern age, such as complete equality for women. Thus they simultaneously imitated the religious battle cries of the early dawn of bourgeois revolutions and put into practice at least one axiom of the proletarian grave digger of the bourgeoisie. But they could not win. "There was no class to lead them."

Rise of the Bourgeoisie and the Proletariat

After the defeat of the Taipings, the imperialists proceeded to carve up China more in accordance with their own inter-relationship of forces, than with any human consideration for the helpless Chinese, or any respect for China. And the Chinese masses went through generation after generation of still more terrible suffering -- their terror-enforced endurance even leading many lightminded Westerners to typify the Chinese as the soul of patience, in place of the ox.

As China developed during this period, the native capitalists took on a still more dependent character. But a minority of them eventually attained some independent strength in home industry. The two big uprisings, the Boxer Rebellion of 1900 and the "Revolution" of 1911, were rather more the expression of this nation-conscious, would-be-independent minority, than any real repetition of the loosing

of the elements that made the Taiping Rebellion. Only in 1925 -- after the organization of the newly-awakened city proletariat under the then-glorious banner of the Russian Revolution -- only then could the bourgeoisie gain a semblance of substance for their struggle. And only then, because the proletariat's logical and necessary historical aims were blurred by the strategy of the CP.

The CP lead the proletarian substance into the bourgeois Kuomintang shadow.

The Chinese proletariat had been growing throughout this whole period, first under the "nourishment" of foreign capital, and during the first world war, stepped up its growth considerably in the rapid native industrial expansion. Numbering several millions, but very small in relation to the huge masses of the country, at first unconscious of its own mission, it responded like a giant tuning fork to the Western thunder of October 1917.

In 1918 the Chinese workers made their first real attempts at union organization. Just seven years later they attempted to storm the heavens of capitalism itself. We are well acquainted with the errors and betrayals of the leadership of the workers in 1925-27, that is, the whitewashing of Chiang Kai-shek, the liquidation of the CP into the bourgeois Kuomintang, etc., etc. But no one can read about the events without being struck by the proletarian character of the rank-and-file actions. The movement was characterized by strikes and by general strikes. The Canton Commune, moreover, although ultra left, adventurist, and criminal (the revolution having already been defeated when the Stalinists initiated the idea for the Canton Commune) -- was an absolute proof of the proletarian content of this revolution.

At the same time (1925-27) the peasants too began to lift their heads once more, and rise in numbers that had not been seen, and with a fury that had not been shown, since the Taiping Rebellion. Although the peasantry may not have fully understood it this way, they had now found "a class to lead them." The Stalinist leadership of this leading class, mised the struggle to be sure. But basically and objectively speaking, the working class began to assert its potential leadership at this time.

The Stalinist leadership of the Chinese workers was only the negative side of the great historical current that moved the workers in the first place; namely, the Russian Revolution. It was inevitable that the Chinese workers at this time would place their confidence completely in Moscow, and follow its leadership completely. Although the Chinese Revolution was marked by an inherently independent and internally proletarian character, there are strong reasons why the leadership had an "external" character. There are strong reasons why so mighty a revolution stooped so low to bend its ear to the proletarian pygmy, Borodin, messenger from Moscow.

Why No Real Native Leadership in 1925?

The Chinese situation in 1925 was something like the Russian in 1917. Why then had not the Chinese not produced great independent proletarian leaders? Why no Lenin or Trotsky? They had no history of

Bolshevism or Menshevism. No Kautskys, no Liebknechts. The trouble was that the resemblance to old Russia was a negative one insofar as the development of leadership was concerned. The Russian workers and the Chinese, both lacked a long background of trade union "gradualism" and democratic development. They both lacked parliamentary illusions. But the Russians did have more than a generation's experience of illegal strikes behind them. The Marxist movement, also illegal to a great degree was more than two generations old by 1917. This movement in turn, rested on a previous and still existing national revolutionary opposition against semi-feudal Czarism. Lenin and Trotsky grew from this soil. All this was lacking in China, or at best only palely reflected. Russia had been backward, China was still more backward. Just as Russia in 1917 could not pause to imitate a century or two of Western European development, so China could not pause in 1925 to recapitulate the forty years of Russian Marxism. The Chinese Revolution literally exploded out of the realm of the possible into the domain of the real, in the short period 1918 to 1925.

China thus made a tremendous leap, more foreshortened, more astounding than even the Russian. But it made this leap under the impact of the Russian Revolution -- more so, and more directly so than any other country. And it paid for its impulsiveness by failing to bring forth any native Marxists remotely able to analyze the Chinese background or lay down with any independence a strategic Marxist line for China. It had to pay still more, by saddling itself so firmly with the Stalinist incubus, that from that time on, there was no longer the possibility of any other workers party gaining the leadership.

The city proletariat in China never again regained the revolutionary initiative and elan it showed in 1925-27. This is not to belittle or denigrate its role in 1946-49. But the fact remains that it was not primarily the uprisings of the cities which provided the revolutionary force to oust Chiang Kai-shek. It is not necessary to distort this fact however to maintain that the general character of the revolution was proletarian. The so-called "peasant war" was not an independent unconnected phenomenon, but very clearly an extension of the proletarian revolution that had begun in 1925. It was not a simple extension, but a complex one. It was not a logical extension, but a dialectical one. The victorious workers did not go to rouse the reluctant peasants, but the peasants, fighting under the leadership of a workers-cadre (in turn the residue of a defeated revolution) came back to the towns to aid the once-defeated workers. All this, in addition to the Stalinist character of the leadership, caused the new state to be deformed. But it dictated also, with iron logic that its class character would be proletarian.

But is it not crystal clear that the constant civil war with all its ups and downs, its betrayals, its zig zags, its Stalinist leadership and misleadership, was one basic revolution from 1925 to 1949? Is it not also clear that our first duty is to recognize the revolution, take our place beside it, fight in its ranks, and then take up the question of the nature of Stalinism, etc.?

The Stalinist leadership made their flip-flops and their zig-zags. They deceived their own ranks as well as the masses in general. But in a civil war of 24 years duration, all the "gimmicks" disappear. Only what is lawful remains -- that is -- what really grows organically

out of the whole broad social situation -- that is the only explanation for people fighting so heroically by the millions, and continuing to struggle through from the past to the future, -- in spite of and against Stalinism though it was.

The inner forces of the Chinese Revolution developed both with their own rhythm and with the rhythm of the world revolution in such a way as to make this a proletarian revolution. In a sense, the struggles of the last decades in China were very like the struggles of the Taipings a hundred years ago. The same slogans were often upon their lips. But even this aspect, the peasant aspect, is the same, and yet not the same. "A man cannot step into the same river twice," said Heraclitus. Nor could the Chinese peasants fight the same war today they did a century ago. And although a "peasant" army may move through space, e.g. from Kiangsi to Yen-an and under certain conditions, remain the same army -- it could not, in China, move through time, from the age of the Taipings to the age of the Russian Revolution without changing from a bourgeois army into a proletarian army. The "Permanent Revolution" does not mean that the revolution is permanently the same -- but that it is constantly developing -- constantly pushing toward the proletarian revolution.

The Stalinist leadership may call the revolution "bourgeois," but this cannot change the social character of the forces they led, any more than the Taiping religious slogans could change the incipient bourgeois character of their revolution. The Stalinists succeeded in taking power where the Taipings failed. This was not because the bourgeoisie after a hundred years of evolution and devolution found a more progressive leadership, but because the vast sea of peasant revolt joined forces with the proletarian revolution to establish the dictatorship of the proletariat and solve the bourgeois tasks -- not in "stages" as the Stalinists predicted, but side by side with the proletarian tasks as Trotsky foretold.

The Role of Moscow

The Moscow bureaucracy dictates the line for every national Communist Party. Did Moscow have anything to do with the Chinese Revolution? Did Stalin, the "organizer of defeats," have anything to do with the Chinese victory? Let us not merely reassert the counter-revolutionary character of Moscow here. Let us examine the facts, and see if the facts bear out this counter-revolutionary character.

The Moscow bureaucracy apparently benefitted from the Chinese Revolution. It speaks for China, even pleads for China in the UN. It leads the whole anti-capitalist bloc including China. It aided China in its own small begrudging way in the Korean war. It has a strong material link with China, not only in the legal sense established by the Mutual Assistance Pact, but in the actual concrete sense that roads, mines, bridges, dams, etc., are built in common with Soviet assistance. All this is so self-evident that it would appear that Moscow actually encouraged the Chinese Revolution, aided it, and in some respect or other, even led it. Actually the Moscow bureaucracy did not play any active role in the smashing of the Chinese state. But the above connections do exist, nonetheless. This is best explained by Marcy's formulation:

"In the diplomatic relations of Moscow and Peiping are not only interlacked the sordid interests of the two bureaucracies, but also the inner needs for development of their respective states. We must draw a sharp line between the conflicting needs of Stalin and Mao for the perpetuation of their privileges, and the imperious demands for the mutual development of China and the Soviet Union as geographically contiguous and socially harmonious state formations. The frictions and conflicts are all between Mao and Stalin, not between China and Russia." (Vol. XIII, No. 4, Internal Bulletin, November 1950).

This is the fundamental explanation of the connection. But it must be understood that the bureaucracy, although a brake on production, is not yet an absolute brake, and is compelled to reflect to some extent the social needs of the system it rests upon. The question here, is, could it reflect these needs so faithfully as actually to give the signal for revolution in China? The answer is no. But the fact remains that Stalinists did take power in China.

This leads some radicals to pose the following questions:

If the Chinese Stalinists are really Stalinists --

If the Kremlin is still the Kremlin -- as we all understood it twenty years ago --

How is it that the blind forces of even the greatest revolution could have overcome the false program of the Stalinist leadership -- or the Chinese leadership have overcome the misleadership of the Kremlin?

Pablo answered this question by saying that the world revolution was so "irreversible" (which it is in the historic sense) that a Marxist strategic leadership is no longer necessary -- that the Stalinists had become "non-Stalinists" because of the demands of the revolution -- and later that the Kremlin was no longer really the Kremlin.

Each of these points is false.

At this late date, nearly three years after a new right turn of Moscow beginning with the Korean Truce, rapidly followed by the sell-out of the French General Strike, the shooting down of the East German Uprising, the betrayal in Iran, the new flip-flop in India, it should hardly be necessary to refute this Pabloist concept. But in order to clarify the purely theoretical side of the problem of Stalinism in China, let us rapidly review our position on the Soviet bureaucracy.

The Soviet bureaucracy is unlike any other labor bureaucracy in that it has all the responsibility and irresponsibility inherent in state power unrestrained by internal democracy of any kind. But it is very much like any other labor bureaucracy in its class character, its outlook, its tendency to self-perpetuation, its zig-zags, etc. It "veers between classes" -- but "has under it the soil of a Soviet regime." (Class Nature of the Soviet State -- Trotsky). The American labor bureaucrats also oscillate to the left and right. They too are defenders of the status quo. But having their roots and material interests bound up with a working class force, the unions, they are

compelled at times, not only to support strikes, but even to call them. But although the implicit logic of every strike is for it to expand into a general strike, the bureaucracy will move heaven and earth to prevent this happening. Why? Because a general strike poses the question of revolution itself, and the possible end of the status quo -- i.e., the end of fat salaries, expense accounts, etc.

But these bureaucrats, counter-revolutionary as they surely are, anti-class struggle as they are, do call strikes, and do on occasion, lead phases of the class struggle. Very often one of them gives from "his" treasury anywhere from 50 thousand to 500 thousand dollars to help out another phase of the struggle.

This point, simple and familiar though it is, is extremely important -- not in order to prove that bureaucrats can lead a revolution -- but in order to thoroughly understand the dual role which flows from their contradictory, and in the long run, untenable position.

A trade union bureaucracy can support a strike. But they cannot support, and must oppose a revolution, because although the revolution is only an extension of the strike, the revolution is also absolutely incompatible with the further existence of the trade union bureaucracy.

The Soviet bureaucracy, quantitatively vaster, mightier, but qualitatively the same as a union bureaucracy can under certain circumstances "support" a revolution. But they cannot support, and must oppose the world revolution, even though this be only the logical extension of the isolated revolution (China) -- because the world revolution is absolutely incompatible with the further existence of the Soviet bureaucracy.

Both bureaucracies are counter-revolutionary. But they both play a dual role.

Did Moscow Give the Signal?

But although Moscow "supported" the Chinese revolution finally, fearsomely, and reluctantly, it did not in any way give the signal for it, nor even the signal for the actual taking of power. The revolution in China had been going on actively for over two decades and was in preparation for a century. Moscow had thoroughly betrayed the Chinese Revolution once, and diverted it at least twice again. But in 1946, when the die was cast, and the three year finale of civil war to the ruin of one or another of the contending classes was begun -- in 1946 Moscow was in no position to stop or betray the revolution. This was the plain, concrete situation, as a result of world forces. Moscow did not give any real leadership to the Chinese masses even at this late date, nor did it for that matter give much leadership at this point to the Chinese CP. But it did not use its great prestige at any time after 1946 to block the Chinese Stalinist drive to power. (As it might have by engineering a new split, etc.)

True, Moscow told the CCP to accept the coalition with Chiang which Marshall had proposed (1946). But Chiang now demanded the real demobilization of the Red Army whose further existence was now absolutely incompatible with the existence of Chiang Kai-shek's regime.

(At least this was Chiang's opinion, obviously -- whatever illusions the Stalinists might have had on the score.) The CCP, and no doubt the Red Army itself, refused. But Moscow said no more. Future revelations may reveal otherwise. But we already have the interesting account of Tito. Stalin told him sometime before 1948 that Moscow was wrong and the Chinese were "right" about making a fight for power.

There are all kinds of speculations and reminiscences about Moscow's real attitude after this real, final, civil war began. But the objective facts and the forces are more important than anything else in understanding Moscow's real role here. No one could ever accuse the Kremlin of having any theory, doctrine, or apriori concepts. It never proceeds from any other consideration than that of its own needs, its own bureaucratic interests. The fact that these interests are interwoven to a great extent with the interests of the workers state itself, is of course, not the point with the bureaucracy. As a bureaucracy, it is against the workers. From its own point of view it is in power over the workers and co-incidentally, as it were, is compelled to defend the Soviet Union -- in order to stay in power and keep its privileges.

Some comrades, basing themselves on the truism that the bureaucracy is a mere transmission belt for class influences -- from either major class -- may conclude that the Kremlin gave in to the powerful pressure of the Chinese Communist Party, which in turn transmitted the enormous "irresistible" pressure of the Chinese masses themselves. But this is equivalent to saying that the Kremlin must give in to the national CP's whenever the revolutionary pressure is strong enough. And it also raises the question: How is it that the Kremlin did not "give in" to this "pressure" in 1925-27, when the workers in China were pressing much harder? It raises the concept of a "new world reality" that some Pabloites have -- that nowadays revolution has a different way of communicating itself to the brains of men that it used to have -- concluding therefrom that it is theoretically possible for the Stalinists to lead the world revolution. But this is false.

The real facts and forces which influenced the conservative Kremlin were very similar in quality to those which influenced it in 1925-27. But they were now operating in a different way.

To put it very briefly -- with the customary risk of oversimplification in such capsule comments:

In 1925 Moscow was afraid of a war with England if the revolution succeeded. In 1946, the same counter-revolutionary Moscow was afraid of a war with the United States if the revolution failed. (This does not mean they were really for the revolution's success.)

The Kremlin never actively encouraged the Chinese Revolution, but in the last stages it took no further decisive steps to discourage it. And as events proved, the victory of the Chinese masses did lead to a minor war with the United States (with Moscow still sitting it out).

The Kremlin's World Power Problems

How did matters appear to the Kremlin in 1946-49? Moscow's policy toward China had always been one of making an alliance against an

aggressively anti-Russian Japan. Stalin was interested in a strong united Chinese state which would be independent enough to resist the drive of imperialism (which might eventually reach the Soviet borders) -- a China under a leadership obligated to him and friendly to him. But he did not want China so strong or so independent as to invite a war with imperialism. A war which might easily involve the Soviet Union.

The question of the interests of the Chinese masses never entered Moscow's calculations at all. Nor did it in 1949, nor has it now. But the actions of the masses, their decisive strength, were, of course, Moscow's strongest card, pitting their strength for so long in almost any direction Moscow willed acting as it did with the stolen authority of the Russian Revolution.

In 1945 at Potsdam, Stalin continued the old policy described above in relation to Chiang. And counting on the stability and independence of Chiang Kai-shek's government, having no faith in the Chinese masses or the Chinese CP, he wooed Chiang, denigrated the Chinese CP. Retrospective arm-chair strategists of the bourgeoisie now conclude that Stalin was pulling the wool over Chiang's eyes. But that was not so. Stalin was doing what every bureaucrat always does -- practicing the art of staying in power -- buttering up his most powerful ally or potential ally. If he could have kept Chiang on his side as the strong leader of a strong independent bourgeois China, he would have cheerfully expelled the whole Chinese CP to do so.

But this, as we know, was impossible. Chiang, as Trotsky had long before predicted, on the basis of Chinese and world conditions, became a mere stooge for American imperialism. And the Chinese Revolution grew so powerful that to bet on Chiang was obviously to bet on the wrong horse. At the same time, Japan, the former threat to the Soviet Union from the east, was now replaced by the United States. The United States in fact was already using Japan as a military base with the most reactionary American general in full charge.

The Cold War was now world-wide. Instead of getting any thanks from the imperialists for selling out the French and Italian revolutions -- and thus virtually saving the whole world capitalist system -- Stalin was being cursed for the back-yard, "bayonet" revolutions in Eastern Europe. Imperialism regarded Stalin as a double-crosser for this. Marxists understand that what happened to the economies of Eastern Europe was independent of the bureaucracy's will. But to the imperialists, that would be beside the point, even if they did understand it. The imperialists had assumed, because of Stalin's sincere genuflections during the war, and because of the sell-outs in France and Italy, that not only the bureaucracy, but the whole Soviet system would be in retreat. Now they saw that the opposite was the case. And they reacted so violently, it appeared that they were ready for a new war immediately. It appeared that way to Stalin also.

Wall Street began to pour hundreds of millions of dollars into Chiang's army against the Chinese Red Army -- giving all kinds of direct assistance, such as flying troops for him in American planes,

etc. By the time of 1946-49, it was thoroughly obvious that Chiang's victory would poise hostile American troops on the eastern borders of the Soviet Union -- as they already were poised on the west. (Germany, Austria.)

To conservative Moscow, this posed a terrible dilemma in power politics. They could no longer support Chiang as a bulwark against a bigger enemy (Japan). He was now the instrument of a bigger enemy still (The U.S.). On the other hand, a successful revolution in China might bring on the same world war they were trying to prevent. Moscow's foreign policy was thus paralyzed precisely because of its conservative, nationalistic, counter-revolutionary character, and it could not act in a counter-revolutionary way.

Just as the Chinese CP never intended to take power in its own name, but always to share it with the democratic bourgeoisie, so Moscow never quite faced up to the world consequences of a possible revolutionary victory in China. But the fact that Moscow has been able to live with it, proves that the victory in China alone, is not incompatible with the further existence of the bureaucracy. And for pragmatic Moscow, that is the proof of the pudding.

Has the Kremlin Changed?

But if Moscow can even permit a revolution to succeed, by whatever series of accidents or conjunctures, isn't this a matter of saying that it is no longer counter-revolutionary, but objectively progressive? No, it is not.

The Moscow leadership led the defense of the Soviet Union in 1941-45, in their own horrible way. They played an infinitely more active role in this than in the essentially passive line of begrudging acquiescence they followed in the case of China. World Trotskyism was in a united front with Moscow in 1941-45. We did not for that reason say that the bureaucracy had ceased to be counter-revolutionary, or that their policies, if left unchecked, would not finally wreck the Soviet Union.

Bureaucratic Moscow did lead the progressive war of 1941-45. And they will lead the beginning of the next one, if they are not overthrown first. The sooner they are overthrown by the workers, the shorter will be the coming terrible conflict. But until they are overthrown, they will continue to play out their dual role. Due to the "shrinking" character of the world, the explosive character of American imperialism, and the entrapped, isolated character of the Soviet state (objectively pushing still harder to expand) in spite of the recent additions to the worker state bloc -- this dualism of the bureaucracy has to some extent, been transferred to the world arena.

This is negatively proved by the powerful sweep of the recent right turn -- counter-revolution in Iran, the French General Strike of 53, CP policy in India, election policy in America, etc. If counter-revolutionary Moscow could perforce give a passive "bureaucratic impulse" to the colonial revolution (after strangling it for over two decades) it could, with its renewed prestige, even more effectively strangle it again in other quarters.

As these lines are being written, the famous Twentieth Congress has just been completed in Moscow. And one new revelation follows fast on another's heels. Stalin, who murdered all his former comrades, has now himself been killed -- posthumously by his fellow-bureaucrats. This action is bound to be accompanied by an unleashing of new forces, new questionings, new politicalization, perhaps accompanied by new panicky bureaucratic repressions. At the moment there seems to be a general loosening of the bureaucratic vise inside the Soviet Union. But it is accompanied by a still sharper, or still further, right turn on the world arena.

Moscow is determined to roll back the wheel of colonial revolution, not merely as a matter of counter-revolutionary principle, not merely in its character of being dyed-in-the-wool Stalinists, but because it is terribly frightened by the possibility of war. The military may not be frightened in a military sense, but the political leadership is frightened in a political sense. They do not especially see their own doom in world revolution, but in world war. Therefore, they oppose even the smallest revolution today, for fear it will bring on the war.

The open revision of Lenin on the character of the coming socialist revolution "in a number of countries" is first and foremost a gratuitous gesture to imperialism. But it is not an empty gesture. It is not merely a reassertion of what Moscow is already doing. More is to come. Stalinism revised and reversed Lenin long ago. But this is an extra present to capitalism, a new hostage given to the class enemy, somewhat like the dissolution of the Comintern in 1943 -- a guarantee of good behaviour.

The end of the "leader cult" -- only one aspect of world Stalinism -- can in no way by itself usher in a more revolutionary line for world Stalinism. (It can of course open the doors for the revolutionary workers to break free of Stalinism). On the contrary, the bureaucratic softening in response to the pressure of the workers at home (this is very temporary) is accompanied by a softening in response to the pressure of imperialism abroad. "Socialism in one country" is now transformed, as Deutscher puts it, into "socialism in one zone." The Soviet peace-drive is the drive to maintain the status quo. The "impossibility of atomic war" is only another way of stating the "impossibility" of further revolutions in Moscow's politics.

The turning of Stalin into a super-scapegoat, as they once did to Trotsky, is one thing. But all that goes with the co-existence line is quite another. When the two-faced bureaucracy was actually leading an armed struggle against imperialism, no matter how treacherously (Korea, etc.), it was compelled to show its "left" face. Having now temporarily patched up all these little "differences" with imperialism, and regarding them somewhat as trade union bureaucrats regard strikes -- as unfortunate exceptions to the class collaborationist rule -- and having determined to see to it that no more such exceptions break out, the bureaucracy will show its "right" face more shamelessly than ever.

Moscow has not changed. But the world has. And Moscow is now more dangerous than ever to the world working class because it now has a wider arena than ever. On the other hand, great new events must

surely expose it before the masses -- although these events must necessarily be more explosive than anything that has gone before, in order to break down the false revolutionary prestige of Moscow.

The bureaucratic caste, like the capitalist class, is approaching its finish. But like the capitalist class, it is not aware of it, or sees it only in the form of an impossible nightmare. Having no faith in the international revolution, it has nevertheless renewed its faith in its own conservative functions -- in its bureaucratic "mission," by virtue of the increased power it has now acquired. . . by means of the international revolution!

Just as the bureaucracy becomes more of an anomaly internally in the Soviet Union, since the primitiveness which first nourished it has all but disappeared, so it becomes a more unbearable obstacle internationally, even within "its own" group of workers states -- to say nothing of its strategic leadership of this bloc in the war against capitalism.

All of the "abstract" reasons why the workers should dispense with the bureaucracy, threaten constantly at some yet-to-be-determined point, to become concrete. The bureaucracy, therefore, does not have to read Trotsky in order to fear the revolution -- however much they may warm their hands at its dangerous fire. Pragmatic and empirical to the core, living for the present, engaged only in keeping themselves on top, they oscillate to left and right -- now slightly encouraging, now cold-bloodedly betraying the workers' and colonial struggles of the world.

The (Chinese) Stalinist Party

If Moscow has not changed its basic character, then it is equally true that Stalinism has not changed its character either, nor have the Stalinists. The Stalinists are not by some process of political osmosis, gradually becoming Trotskyists. Those of them who do become Trotskyists, and there will be many, will do so only with a sharp wrench from Stalinism, precisely because of the role of the Kremlin.

The Stalinists are still Stalinists. It is very clear, for example, from the character of the Chinese pact with India -- not only from its diplomatic form -- but from its political essence that they are true-blue Stalinists. (They have actually grossly betrayed their Indian comrades who looked to them for material aid -- in return for the international diplomatic services of the murderer of Indian communists, Nehru.)

Some theorists who take a woodenly materialist view of things, and combine this with a formalistic parallel with the Russian experience, may say: "The Chinese Stalinists were non-Stalinist before taking power, but now, having power in a backward country, they develop along bureaucratic and nationalistic lines. Thus the similar economic soil produces a similar political plant, etc."

This is an attractive and easy way of giving "credit" to the leadership of the Chinese Revolution, who after all were on the whole very heroic and did lead the revolution in the physical sense and did take the power. In one sense -- in the "common" sense -- it is an

absurdity to say that a counter-revolutionary leadership could lead a revolution. (No matter how many times their true counter-revolutionary nature was proved in previous betrayals.) We might explain it all by saying they were Stalinists with a lapse of memory, or a temporary lack of connection with Moscow, etc. Or show how the wireless fell down between Moscow and Yen-an, how Mao was not as close to Moscow's "real" line as Li Li San was, etc., etc. But this would be a light-minded and non-Marxist way of viewing such a great question.

When could the Chinese Stalinists have become anti-Stalinists? Many writers have dug up the differences Mao was supposed to have with Stalin in the early Thirties. To the extent the differences were real, Mao had the better side of the argument. And he proved he could be a leader in his own right. But by 1937 Mao and the whole leadership must have long overcome whatever anti-Moscow orientation they might have had. In 1937 they made the historic deal with Chiang Kai-shek at Sian. This deal was dictated point by point, on the Stalinist side, in Moscow. The principal negotiator for the Red Army was none other than Chou En Lai, the present powerful foreign minister of China. The deal was consummated to the letter by the Stalinist leaders. With their great prestige, they actually stopped the civil war. It was only the intransigence of Chiang and the Chinese capitalist class that reopened the civil war during the Sino-Japanese war.

Then did the Chinese Stalinists become non-Stalinists between the years of 1937-46? But they allowed themselves to be murdered by Chiang in the interests of the united front against Japan. Mao's biographers, both Stalinist and bourgeois, tell solemnly how Mao's own son was killed in one of Chiang's troops' violations of the agreement to end the civil war. As if this showed how principled Mao was. It did indeed show how strongly he adhered to Stalinist principles.

Furthermore, the Stalinists lost the allegiance of many elements among the peasants, and to some extent lost prestige in their own army as a result of the turn. This should have caused any leadership, revolutionary or not, to begin questioning their own policy. This was not done. Certainly not by the tops. On the contrary. There were re-education campaigns, reorientation towards bourgeois democracy, etc. At no time during the whole anti-Japanese war did the Stalinist leadership once revive the slogan of expropriation of the landlords, when the whole logic of the situation was in this direction, and the peasants themselves, with perhaps the lower echelons of the Stalinists, were actually carrying out expropriations. Nor have the Stalinists so far ever publicly questioned this top policy in retrospect.

With the new crisis in world Stalinism brought about after the revelations of the Twentieth Congress, it is possible that the Chinese Stalinists will make still more sensational revelations concerning the role of Stalin. It is possible that they will prove conclusively that they had to fight Stalin from beginning to end in the Chinese struggle. But would such revelations prove that the "Mao-ists" are not Stalinists? Of course not. They would prove the opposite. Because they, like Khrushchev, would only say these things after the time for their saying them as revolutionary oppositionists had passed. They would only say them in order to support the new status quo in the new way.

But -- The Stalinist Parties Are Workers Parties

The Stalinist parties are working class parties in the same general sense that the Socialist parties are, and the Shachtmanites, the Cochranites, etc. From a scientific point of view, internally and within our movement, we brand all these different workers parties as petty-bourgeois monstrosities in different stages of degeneration or adaptation. But they all regard themselves, and are regarded by the class enemy, as parties of the working class. They speak in the name of the working class and regard the working class as the progressive force in modern society.

There are only two things we can mean if we say that the Chinese CP is not a working class party. (1) That it is a peasant party, representing the class interests of the peasants as peasants. (2) That it is the instrument of the Moscow bureaucracy not only in the derivative sense, but in the organic and historical sense, i.e., representing a new class.

From everything that has gone before, it should be plain that the Chinese Stalinists were not a peasant party in the real class sense of the word. And it is only too obvious today, with such a tremendous percentage of peasant holdings being collectivized, that they are not such a party.

The real living question is posed thusly: Are the Stalinist parties still workers parties, as we understood them to be in the Thirties and Forties, or are they the organic expression of the Moscow bureaucracy, the party of a new class?

This way of posing the question leads us back once more to the class character and historical viability of the Moscow bureaucracy itself. All Marxism teaches us that this bureaucracy is not "a viable child of history," that it is in contradiction to the social system upon which it feeds.

There is of course an infinite difference between a workers party and an effective workers party, that is, the workers party. We have already learned from Trotsky that a workers state can be a historical and sociological fact without necessarily being run by the workers, or consciously for the workers. A workers party is very different from a workers state. It is the subjective instrument for creating such a state. It provides leadership, program, etc. But its leadership can be bad, its program can be wrong, wholly inadequate for creating such a state, leading the revolution. And yet it can still be a workers party.

On the other hand, a party is not only "a selection of people according to a program" (Trotsky), it is also the leadership, the apparatus which the ranks of the party support and are welded to by experience in common struggle. (This, incidentally, is the main concrete block in the way of the theory of the "reformation" of the CP's.)

Again and again throughout the Thirties, Trotsky speaks of the conduct of the "workers organizations," the workers parties, etc. This did not put any Trotskyist stamp of approval on these parties. On the contrary. In 1939 Trotsky said categorically, "There are two

completely counter-revolutionary workers internationals." (In Defense of Marxism.) But since the workers are a revolutionary class, rather than a counter-revolutionary one, this is of course a contradiction. The program, leadership, and Moscow connections of the Stalinists are counter-revolutionary. But the workers join them on the basis of socialist aspirations.

If some comrades wish to say that in China alone the CP is not a workers party but a peasant party, then they will have to add that the peasant party led the revolution where a workers party could not. This would be a revisionist conclusion. But of course if it corresponded to life, if life itself revised our theory, there would be very little we could do about it. The point is that it does not correspond to life.

We have always said that a Stalinist party was first loyal to the Kremlin. The Chinese Stalinists passed this "test," as we have tried to show. The fact that they now have a big bureaucracy of their own, that they now are independently influenced by some of the same conditions that made the Stalinist bureaucracy in Russia what it was, the fact that they no longer transmit the Moscow bureaucratic influence indirectly, but begin to partake of the original sin itself, even these indisputable facts do not make them entirely new and original newly-created Stalinists. They are still dependent upon the Kremlin, but in a different way. They are now dependent both from the viewpoint of defense and that of construction. This immense dependency would have no political consequences were the Moscow leadership genuine revolutionaries, or even perhaps, if just the Chinese leadership were genuine revolutionaries. But this is not the case. And the resulting interlinking of bureaucratic policy is too crystal clear to require comment.

It is interesting that every bourgeois newspaper, including the usually cautious New York Times, looked upon the whole Chinese revolution as a plot of Moscow, and at first upon the new Chinese state as a satellite of Moscow. While they saw all this through vulgar anti-Stalinist eyes, they nevertheless saw one side of the actual reality; namely, that the Chinese revolution was not "agrarian" in the sense of being liberal-capitalist. They saw that it was something intimately connected with the Russian Revolution. And they saw this immediately upon the Chinese Red Army's victory. (True, they characterized China as a "satellite" of Moscow, whereas Marcy, employing the Marxist method, stated that: "The alliance between the Soviet Union and the Chinese Republic is an alliance between social classes having identical social aims. . . . The rapprochement between Peiping and Moscow. . . demonstrates that the laws of history are stronger than the bureaucratic apparatus." (Internal Bulletin, November 1950, p. 6.)

The bourgeoisie's criterion, of course, was not the theory of the permanent revolution or the class theory of the state, but the fact that they identified the "Stalinist" state of the Soviet Union with the "Stalinist" state of China. And with this false method they "predicted" that the new state would proceed to nationalize and collectivize, etc.

Trotsky was able to predict that Stalin would collectivize when Stalin did not know it himself. Trotsky predicted this on the basis of the nature of the state and the relationship of the classes. And

he would have made the same prediction, using the same method, in respect to the Chinese Stalinists after they took power in 1949.

Why were the bourgeoisie also correct with a wrong method? First, because they had first-hand information. They knew the facts. They knew their class had sustained a decisive defeat. Second, because where Trotsky would have seen the close parallel between two objective situations, the bourgeoisie saw the parallel between two subjective, distorted reflections of the situations. Their method was wrong not only because it turned reality upside down, but also because they identified the Peking bureaucracy with the Moscow bureaucracy -- as though Moscow had flung a part of itself to Peking to build a social system around itself. They failed to see, particularly at the time, that the Chinese Stalinist party, although completely Stalinist, had finally, after its appalling zig zags, been catapulted to power by a great independent revolution. Nonetheless, the bourgeoisie also recognize in their own way that the Stalinist parties are workers parties, and they saw the basically working class nature of the Chinese revolution, sooner than the Stalinist leaders themselves saw it. The bourgeoisie took it for granted that there would be nationalizations, collectivization, etc., when the Chinese Stalinists were still trying to convince the capitalists -- and themselves -- that the Menshevik theory of "stages" would prevail. (And this after the armed struggle for power was over.)

One might also add that the Shachtmanites too predicted the nationalizations in China. What was their method? Very similar to the bourgeois method, except that where the bourgeoisie said "communist" the Shachtmanites said "bureaucratic collectivist." Of course, to be consistent, the Shachtmanites would have to add that not only the Stalinists were "bureaucratic collectivist," but the revolution itself had an objective drive toward bureaucratic collectivism. To the extent that the Shachtmanites do add this, they in their own way may understand that the Chinese CP only reflects the social process and does not initiate it.

The Stalinist party of China -- before the revolution -- like most other Stalinist parties, and unlike the present Russian party, was not a government party but a party of opposition. What kind of opposition? Bureaucratic opposition as such? Or basically a class opposition with a Stalinist bureaucratized leadership? A working class opposition to the feudal-capitalist state. If, when they united with Chiang Kai-shek, i.e., with the bourgeoisie in 1925-27 we can say they were a workers party, then certainly when they fought in a civil war against him, we can also say they were a workers party.

The Stalinist parties have pretty consistently attracted the most radical sections of the population in most countries. Their betrayals have been demoralizing. But so far these betrayals have not been generally recognized or understood -- outside of our own ranks. This is because of their connection with the Moscow bureaucracy which itself has also not been understood outside of our ranks.

But how can any connection with the Kremlin have anything to do with a party being a workers party? If both the bourgeoisie and the Shachtmanites made the correct conclusion by virtue of their respective theories, perhaps we should conclude that the connection with the counter-revolutionary Kremlin does make the CCPs workers parties?

Such a revolting conclusion shocks our revolutionary instinct as well as our good sense. But we have to look very closely at the Chinese Stalinist or any other national Stalinist relationship to the Kremlin.

It was not the Chinese Stalinist loyalty to the Moscow bureaucracy that made them a workers party. But it was their loyalty to the Russian Revolution which they falsely identified with the Moscow bureaucracy.

In this contradiction, it is possible to see how the bourgeoisie and the Shachtmanites, each following out the false identification, but from an alien class point of view, were quickly able to see what happened in China, in spite of the false labels they used. It is also possible to see why the Chinese Stalinists regarded themselves, and were in fact, on a world basis, and a national basis, a workers party.

Then Why Are the Stalinist Parties Unable to Lead the World Revolution?

It is just the very fact that the Stalinist parties identify the Moscow bureaucracy with the Russian Revolution, which prevents these parties from being able to lead the world revolution. It is just the very fact that they identify Moscow with the Russian Revolution which gives Moscow its enormous power to prevent and destroy revolutions. It is this identification of the revolution with its bureaucratic incubus that prevents the organization of the masses generally, for the assault for power throughout the world. It is this identification which is the ideological stumbling block, just as the bureaucracy itself is the material stumbling block, within the world working class, on the road to world power.

It is the fact that Moscow which controls these parties does not want the world revolution, wants to avoid it at all costs; it is this fact that determines the Stalinist inability to lead the world revolution. It is the fact that Moscow has material interests that are in sharp conflict with the revolution, and even with the successful defense of the USSR in the coming war -- it is this fact which dictates that Moscow will spend all its stolen revolutionary capital and completely wreck the world Stalinist movement before it will consent to the revolutionary overthrow of its own interests. Moscow, like the bourgeoisie, identifies the coming war with revolution and mortally fears the consequence.

Moscow has the same basic effect on the Stalinist parties of the world that it always had. But this is now expressed in a more contradictory, more complex way than in the past. This is the only "new world reality" there is as far as Stalinism is concerned. The idea that Stalinism can lead the world revolution is only the strategic counterpart of the lifeless, wooden, "materialism" masquerading as Marxism, which justifies the degeneration of the Soviet Union by the same objective conditions by which Trotsky only explains it.

The Semi-Stalinists and the Gingerbread Boy

While the Stalinists themselves are the great obstacle to the world revolution within the working class movement, the neo Stalinists and semi-Stalinists, laughable enough in a historical sense, are dangerous in the field of theory. The semi-Stalinists, being more theoretical and logical than the Stalinists themselves, have concluded

that if the Stalinists could take power -- by whatever circumstances -- in China, Yugoslavia, etc., then they can also take power in the United States.

This recalls the story of the Gingerbread Boy. "I ran away from the little old man. I ran away from the little old woman. I ran away from the dog. I ran away from the cat. And I shall run away from you." An admirable piece of reasoning. However, the fox, to whom the Gingerbread Boy expounded this impeccable logic, proceeded to eat him up.

The Pabloites -- and not only the Pabloites -- believe that the coming of war will force Moscow into a thoroughly and consistently revolutionary position even though it be against its will. This thesis has a certain abstract attractiveness. But life has already disproved it. As the present author wrote in 1954:

"The Stalinists could not hold back the revolutionary tide in China. But they have proved again and again and since China, that they are more than adequate in other places to turn victory into defeat. Pablo has failed to notice that -- given the character of the Stalinists and the desperation of the Kremlin -- the imminence of the war, class war though it is, also acts as a brake upon the revolution. Thus each succeeding "repetition" of China (if there are to be any at all) will not increase the contradictions of the ideology of Stalinism as Pablo theorizes, but on the contrary will confront the various national Stalinist leaderships, each time the question of power is raised, with tasks which become more and more impossible without breaking with Stalinism -- not obliquely or by implication, but openly and consciously breaking with the Kremlin (whose material assistance is fully as important to them as the bourgeoisie say it is.) This is not possible without ideological battles in the course of explaining the role of the Kremlin, even while the Kremlin is helping a given struggle; without splits, and the formation of Trotskyist parties. To any serious revolutionary, this means there must be a fighting organization of Trotskyism (the independent party). . . . It is mere speculation whether the experience of China can somewhere, sometime be 'repeated.' The real question is: can it solve the world problem? Is the Chinese method sufficient for the success of the world revolution?" (Some Lessons of the Chinese Revolution, Fourth International, Summer 1954.)

The great majority of the Stalinist party members all over the world yearn for socialism, and will most probably fight in the coming struggle for the socialist outcome. That means that the Stalinists are still a great recruiting ground for us when the conditions are ripe. But it does not follow that our task is to attempt to "capture," or "steer" the Communist Party to power. Our task is to smash the Communist Party as a party to make way for our own genuine communist party. There is no way out of this except by the political revolution in the USSR, which would of course destroy world Stalinism as a political force, and reorient the CP's.

The semi-Stalinists, the impressionists of all hues, say in one way or another: The Stalinists led the struggle for power in China. Therefore they can do it in America. Because China, you see, is a part of the world and we are world strategists, not American exception-alists, etc. This is utter, fantastic nonsense. From the point of

view of revolutionary strategy it wouldn't be worth two pins of consideration. Except for one thing. That many comrades in our own movement, although they oppose this view, they oppose it formally and ritualistically. Moreover, the very fact that some of them feel that the point of view of the present author in some way, somehow, might lead to this wishy washy semi-Stalinist approach to the class struggle -- this very fact should be a warning to us all. It is a product of isolation, of being apart from the struggle, of viewing theory apart from practise.

Just as even the Stalinists most devoted to the Soviet Union are in one way rejecting the Russian Revolution, by their identification of the Kremlin with that revolution; so the semi-Stalinists who identify Stalinism with the Chinese revolution are in a very real sense rejecting that revolution also. Even if this is done in the most "innocent" way, it will in the long run spell the doom of the tendency which does it. Even he who thinks that the blind forces of history made China what it is today and abstracts this concept from the consciously-led Russian Revolution that went before it, and the consciously-led American revolution that will come after it, and insure its victory -- even he who "innocently" does this will disarm himself for the leadership of the coming great struggles. The innocent half-Stalinist of today is like his counterpart of the Thirties who said, "Maybe the Old Bolsheviks were a little bit guilty." He thinks -- "Maybe a little bit of Stalinism is necessary," etc., etc.

One could listen with much more patience to such people if they themselves were revolutionaries, if they even called themselves or thought of themselves as revolutionaries. They characterize China as a workers state in order to justify their own unimportance to history, in order to show that professional revolutionaries are no longer important, Bolshevism is out of date, etc. We characterize China as a workers state in the course of delineating our far-flung task as world revolutionists, preparing the assault on Wall Street, in its character as world ruler, choosing up sides between friend and foe. The two positions are as different as day and night; as Stalinism and. . . . Trotskyism.

Nobody But Ourselves

The Trotskyist position takes infinitely more understanding and will than the Stalinist. Nobody but ourselves possesses the theoretical equipment to understand this matter fully today. Nobody but ourselves can find the revolutionary will to build a leadership today for the titanic tasks of tomorrow. The task of weaning the hundreds of millions of the world's oppressed from the grip of the oppressors, the still tremendous task of weaning the best militant cadres of Stalinism away from the Kremlin -- these tasks will be frightening, even insuperable to anyone less than a Trotskyist. We do not need to "fear" that the Stalinists will lead the world revolution without us. That cannot happen. Life would be much simpler, the revolution much cheaper, if it could. But it cannot. We have still to build the vanguard. And we are still alone.

From the very enormity of the task, but also from its absolute necessity, it follows that only the cadres most eager to fight, most self-sacrificing, most tempered, most trained in the understanding of

our epoch -- only this cadre, only our party as it will develop in the events can lead the struggle to victory. This is not a formula or a guarantee. Its truth is not so merely because we say it is so. We all have still to make it so.

March 22, 1956.