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THE THIRD CHINESE REVOLUTION AND ITS COMMUNES

By Arne Swabeck

Our general outlook and theoretical concepts have always been firmly rooted in the indisputably mighty reality of world economy and world politics. This is at the foundation of our internationalism and our program of international proletarian revolution. Every decisive event on the world arena, be it crisis, war, revolution or the socialist reorganization of society, serves to underline the dialectical interdependence between our party programmatic position and the class struggle everywhere.

Our Marxist internationalism we have never construed to be a one-sided affair. We have not been preoccupied as commentators of events or of problems elsewhere without recognition of their close interconnection with our problems here on national grounds. On the contrary. We have always interpreted our internationalism, firstly, as imposing the necessity of analyzing and understanding events or problems elsewhere in order to apply the lessons learned to our tasks in American life. Secondly, we have consistently conceived our internationalism as collaboration with our co-thinkers in other countries, directed toward joint solution in action of our common problems.

On this solid foundation we were able to maintain a correct position in defense of the Russian revolution through the continued imperialist slanders, lies and attacks. We were able also to defend its revolutionary essence against Stalinist bureaucratic revisionism, perversion and brutality. And only by remaining continually on this solid foundation is it possible to understand and evaluate correctly the Chinese Revolution through its various stages of development, including the present socio-economic phenomenon--the Chinese Communes.

After all is said and done, the position that we adopt toward this important phenomenon, will, in the final analysis, have far-reaching consequences in relation to our problems of the class struggle at home.

In the first place, the Chinese revolution should be viewed as a continuation and an extension of the Russian revolution. May more than that, it is a continuation and an extension also of the process of transition from capitalism to socialism, unfolding, however, on a grander scale and at a fantastically accelerated tempo

From one successive stage to the next, the Chinese revolution has advanced since the overthrow of the Kuomintang regime and the expulsion of the imperialists through the confiscation of capitalist property, redistribution of land to collectivization of peasant plots, now culminating in the combining of collectives into the broader framework provided by the rural Communes. For a backward country like China, this culminating point should be understood as the most essential and fundamental part of the socialist transformation.

In combination with industrialization progressing side by side with these developments in which the Communes already now form an indispensable link, the motive force for cultural elevation exists. And out of that arises the only conceivable basis for socialism.

These important considerations should serve as the starting point for our analysis of the origin, the role and the function of the Communes. But this is evidently not the case. What we have is three rather fundamentally different views introduced into the discussion of this subject. There is the view presented by the draft resolution adopted by the Political Committee; the view contained in the

draft resolution submitted by the N.C. members of Los Angeles; and the position taken by Comrade Peng -- which is seconded by Mei-Lei-tar.

However, before I attempt to compare these contrary views, I believe a further examination of the role and function of the Chinese Communes, based on such information as is available, will prove helpful.

Lessons of Soviet industrialization have underlined most emphatically the immensity of the job involved. China enjoys the great advantage of these lessons in addition to substantial support, economic and know-how, from the Soviet Union. Nevertheless, the construction of heavy industry, its modern complex mills and factories, take considerable time to complete and put into operation by an agrarian society. They require great amounts of capital, raw materials and technical resources.

So, with the tremendous source of energy and ingenuity set in motion by a continually rising revolution, and plenty of man power available, peasants and artisans acted to fill the time gap; they turned the village workshops into small and medium industrial enterprises, and they created new ones. These embraced a great variety of purposes; they were based on simple technique and on local resources. The most celebrated were the home-made blast furnaces, constructed according to do-it-yourself diagrams in newspapers.

Even the Rand Corporation -- a band of scientists paid by the U.S. Air Force to gear its thinking to unpleasant realities -- is fully aware of the economic and military significance of this miniaturization of modern industry. It is considered to be "extraordinarily resilient under enemy attack...less sensitive to hazards of military conflict...well adapted to the task of recuperation in a post-attack period." For China, under constant threat from the imperialist Seventh Fleet, these are considerations of no mean proportion.

One example of local energy and ingenuity is reported by Gerald Clark of The Montreal Star, who recently visited China. In one remote village the people wanted a spur line on the railway. There wasn't any local steel, so they made cast iron rails, and, to prevent splitting, used thousands of wood ties, spacing them a couple of inches apart.

Out of such needs arose the backyard blast furnaces. Iron ore and coal abound in many rural areas, furnishing the basis for hundreds of thousands of such contrivances set up to hasten the flow of steel for mechanization. The iron and steel produced, some of low quality to be sure, is still good enough, according to the Montreal reporter, to fill the pressing need for simple plows and other farm implements. And the reporter adds, crude ingots go to the great steel mills of Shanghai and Manchuria. Similarly Clark noted how ingenuity makes up for lack of formal education. In one area the peasants built see-saws for their children in the farm fields. Now the kids, while bobbing up and down, are pumping water for irrigation.

The vast network of miniaturized rural industry evidently received its real stimulus from the commune form of organization which alone made it possible. In the pace of their rapid extension throughout the country, the Communes became synonymous with what is called the great leap forward. Arising out of the need to enlarge the too narrow framework of the collectives, the Communes provided that broader field required for the fullest mobilization and application of labor. They represent the greatest source of manpower and human energy ever harnessed anywhere

at any time in history.

The immense economic achievements of last year demonstrate the powerful interaction between the needs that brought the Communes into being and the success imparted by them, in turn to the tasks to be performed. They enabled large scale utilization of cooperative labor, more rational division of labor and more rational planning of projects to be undertaken within the community. By their new productive forms combining work in rural industry with agriculture the Communes largely account for the impressive advance recorded in the great leap.

In this manner China has revolutionized the feeding of its millions. Food grain production in 1958 reached the astounding total of 375 million tons, doubling the 1957 output of 185 million tons. With this the teeming, crowded population has advanced from the malnutrition and famines of yore to a living diet today. This is confirmed by Lord John Boyd Orr, world authority on food and population, who declared upon return from his recent visit, that China is solving its food problem. The commune system, he said, gives China a foundation of flexible industrial and social units that are largely self-supporting and integrated as to industry and agriculture.

Among other most important production goals, steel at 11 million tons was double that of the 1957 output; cotton at 3.5 million tons doubled the 1957 figure; and production of coal more than doubled in 1958. Overall industrial output showed a gain of about 50%.

No less significant is the vast public projects made possible by the Communes. Huge work teams have opened up 69 million acres to new irrigation; but this is not to be understood a finished and completed irrigation. Water is made available in reservoirs or ponds with various pumping devices in the process of installation. As one concrete example that witnessed by the Montreal reporter can be mentioned: A huge dam and reservoir near Peking, completed in the phenomenally short time of 160 days by 400,000 "volunteers." (The quotation marks are his.) To this can be added the immense vistas of mountain terracing, afforestation, soil improvement and a beginning of flood control, all in all serving to increase the future production potentials. For historical materialists, it cannot be too often repeated that the economic yardstick of these facts and figures is the basic measure of progress.

In addition to the demonstrated economic gains, cultural advance is symbolized by an increase of primary school pupils from 64.3 million in 1957 to 84 million in September 1958. Secondary education has been marking similarly rapid progress alongside of expanding technical culture. And in the whole country 90 million adults are learning to read and write. The rise of the Communes has accelerated the liberation of women from domestic slavery and served to narrow the age-old cultural gulf between city and country.

Moreover, by their large scale utilization of cooperative labor and the resulting agricultural surpluses, the Communes help to speed up the accumulation of capital imperatively needed for China's industrialization. In this way they make an indispensable contribution to the building of the economic basis for socialism.

These various factors, taken out of actual life, and attested by all objective observers, demonstrate beyond any shadow of doubt that the Communes are a superior type of socio-economic organization; they surpass any yet installed in a predominantly peasant country. Their role and function lifts the Chinese revol-

ution upward to a qualitatively higher stage. They represent a gigantic and indomitable movement of the popular masses engaged in a powerful and irresistible sweep to overcome their backward heritage. Despite the forced march at which they have been established, the Communes mark a great advance for China, for the colonial peoples, and for the working class of the world.

On this important question the draft resolution adopted by the PC seems to imply that the Communes were organized from above. I refer to the phrase, "... the 'rural peoples communes' sponsored by the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party in August 1958..." Is there any compelling need to give the CP leadership this apparently undeserved credit? Is it not a better policy to accept the facts of life as presented? For the weight of the available information indicates that the original impulse for the formation of the Communes came rather from the peasants themselves.

The first Commune, named the Sputnik, was organized in Honan Province in April 1958; but many of its essential elements of cooperative labor were fashioned during the preceding fall and winter. From this Province the similar formations spread rapidly through the country. And at the Central Committee meeting of the CCP in August, the establishment of Communes was recognized in a resolution adopted as "the logical result of the march of events."

The Communes are still in flux. Changes and modifications have already been introduced; but their general character and function are reasonably clear. In these huge impersonal complexes every peasant becomes three beings at once: farmer, industrial worker and soldier.

Besides this combination the Communes appear to be local self-governing political entities into which is merged the collective ownership of land, local public works, livestock, heavier agricultural implements and local industry. Each Commune plans and executes its own agricultural, industrial, commercial, housing, medical, sanitation and educational, etc., activities, including military training. The administrative Councils of the Communes are elected bodies with the right of vote beginning at 16 years of age. And the "elders" do not occupy an immutable position by birth. On the contrary the accent everywhere seems to be on youth. The young people are in the lead in all ventures; they are responding to the immense tasks at hand, displaying in the words of one observer, "a fanatic desire to convert bullock carts into atomic piles."

In view of such objective evidence what can one say about Comrade Peng's position? In his letter to J of April 7, he writes: "At present, the Chinese Peoples Commune is like a kind of concentration, or forced labor camp. The people are forced to work and their work is arranged at the will of the bureaucracy. This is a new form of slavery under Stalinism. If we talk about socialism and the liberation of mankind, we have to denounce this new form of slave system." And Mei-Lei-tar, writing from Hong Kong, amplifies, "...slave conditions which are worse than any that could have existed in ancient Rome."

If these conclusions are based on information obtained at Hong Kong, I am tempted to invoke the judgment of its value expressed by Gerald Clark of The Montreal Star: "A day of personal observation in Peking yields more than a year of second-hand guessing in the listening post of Hong Kong."

I am tempted further to ask Comrade Peng and Mei-Lei-tar; what accounts for this incredible comparison with ancient Rome? As is well known, during the entire Roman epoch, very little progress was registered in the sphere of production.

The tools of the cultivator retained their primitive form. Profit in slaveholding kept the labor process confined largely to coarse, crude and not easily breakable tools. The slave system could survive and prosper only by deliberately blocking the technical and intellectual development of its victims.

How does this compare with the giant strides made in Chinese production which includes the ingenious methods applied in the rural Communes for better tools, for mechanization; fashioning their own simple ball-bearings, do-it-yourself gas generators, blast furnaces, bike-like rice seeders and small, simple power plants, among other ingenious contrivances?

Compulsion means stress, sometimes explosions follow, but stress cannot be hidden from any reasonably intelligent observer. We are still painfully aware of the near fatal consequences of Stalin's forced collectivization. In the case of China, however, all objective observers testify that there is no evidence so far of mass coercion by the Peking government, but considerable evidence of voluntary peasant cooperation.

According to Professor J. Tuzo Wilson, President, International Union of Geophysics, voluntary cooperation appears to extend to the cities as well. Some of his impressions about a visit to Lanchow are reported in The New Scientist, London:

"Around the clock, thousands of workers dig ditches fifteen feet deep to contain water and sewer mains while power lines are strung in all directions. The Professor was puzzled by the conspicuous absence of foremen or supervisors, let alone soldiers or armed guards. The only stimulus he witnessed was strident music broadcast by loud-speakers hung on street corner lamp posts."

Is this the form of slavery imputed by Peng? And what is one to say about alleged slaves in the Communes electing their own administrative councils, not to mention their planning and executing their own activities? It looks more like a reasonable form of democracy. An explanation of this should include also how involuntary slaves come to participate in military drills, carry arms and practice shooting to the extent that arms are available. Even American bourgeois periodicals have published pictures showing peasants working in the fields with their guns stacked in close proximity.

Thus all the facts of life refute the position of Comrade Peng. His condemnation of the Communes can lead him fatally astray unless he effects a timely change. But this is not our position. We have supported the Chinese revolution since its inception.

And yet, the draft resolution adopted by the PC equivocates on the question of the Communes. If the Communes are not progressive in nature, then we are obliged to say what they are. In which direction are they headed? Is their role and function a retrogressive one? Moreover, the perfunctory statement in the final paragraph of the draft -- "wishing them success," is outweighed by a whole series of not too well-founded criticisms.

For example, the draft asserts that "the unplanned and unforeseen institution of 'rural people's communes' indicates a certain breakdown in overall planning insofar as it affects the balancing of relations between industry and agriculture. This is evident in the assignment of industrial tasks to the rural organizations. What industry cannot supply to agriculture, agriculture must supply

for itself"?

If we attempt to understand the realities of China, the question occurs: What is wrong with this latter point? Construction of modern heavy industry takes considerable time. Meanwhile the Communes mobilize their labor power and create small and medium sized industry to bridge the time gap and help agriculture along. What other measures could be proposed?

But the draft resolution adopted by the PC insists on the alleged breakdown of overall planning and cites as evidence the tasks specified by the Chinese party leadership for the communal kitchens to run their own vegetable gardens, bean-curd mills, bean-noodle mills, etc. And what is wrong with that? Here in the U.S., to be sure, we get all the items for the table pre-packaged from the supermarket. But, appreciating the realities of China, these assigned tasks would seem to be just what the communal kitchens, based on cooperative labor, should perform. To cite this as an example of a breakdown of overall planning is to stretch unfounded criticism to an absurdity.

The existence of the Communes, their assuming the responsibility for planning an execution of plans for the local communities, seems to me to indicate the exact contrary -- it creates the possibility of more comprehensive planning. As one observer puts it: Local planning by the Communes is integrated with the overall national planning. It is linked up with planning for heavy industry which is the responsibility of the central authority. Besides, the very existence of the Communes and their manner of functioning clearly indicates the possibility of a considerable degree of participation, of initiative and control of planning from below.

How thorough-going and breathtaking the dimensions of national planning are, is illustrated by one item in Professor Wilson's observations. He describes an extensive scientific project of mapping the frequency and intensity of earthquakes. Inasmuch as many parts of China are known to have severe earthquakes from time to time, this project became part of the overall planning to allow suitable precautions in erecting dams, bridges, buildings, railways and so forth. A remarkable report has already been submitted tracing the history of earthquakes back as far as 1189 BC. For general scientific development of China, a twelve-year plan has been worked out.

Stresses and strains in planning are quite inevitable under pressure of vastly accelerated economic growth arising out of a backward agricultural society. No doubt, there are plenty of gaps and serious disproportions in the economic developments, existing alongside of very real hardships. It would be a miracle if there were none. But such manifestations lend no weight or substance to the alleged contradictions between industry and agriculture and between the proletariat and the peasantry, claimed by the PC draft resolution.

The rise of the communes serve precisely to narrow existing gaps and disproportions between the two major segments of the economy. By providing more food, better tools and implements, housing, etc., for higher living standards, the Communes serve to strengthen exchange relations between agriculture and industry. The Communes serve, moreover, as already mentioned, to accelerate the capital formation so essential to industrialization. And, in a country where the two classes are of such disproportionate size and social weight, are not the Communes with their various important functions, precisely what is needed to cement the indispensable alliance between the proletariat and the peasantry?

But this is not how the PC draft resolution views the Communes. Though "wishing them success" the main concern seems to be with their limited usefulness of "reveal(ing) on a new plane and in a still more glaring way the empirical, manueverist, nationalistic and bureaucratic character of a petty-bourgeois leadership trained in the school of Stalinism." Anti-Stalinist factionalism, as Liang correctly said, here takes precedence over scientific analysis.

Invoking this comparison with Stalinism is mechanical and misleading. Moreover, permitting formalistic methods of thought to take the place of a dialectic evaluation of the profoundly revolutionary significance embodied in the Communes and their relation to the ruling regime, can have the most deleterious effect upon our movement. There can be no denying the Stalinist bureaucratic deformation imposed by this regime, especially during the earlier stages of the Chinese revolution. But this has occurred in a different historical era, and to the extent that it still exists it reflects entirely different material conditions, with consequences not at all the same as such were for the Soviet Union.

As is well know, Stalinism arose in the Soviet Union out of an ebb in the revolutionary tide, internally and on a world scale, occurring side by side with the other decisively contributing factors which need not be mentioned here. After seizing the power, the Chinese CP leadership, originally trained in the Stalin school, faced an entirely different situation-- internally a continually rising revolutionary tide of mass pressure and initiative, stormy economic, social and cultural advance, with repercussions extending throughout the underdeveloped and colonial world.

These are the qualitatively different conditions that invests all social relations in China with their own special internal dynamic. With irresistible momentum these conditions, as they unfold, draw the CP leadership closer to the masses and dictate a far greater responsiveness to their needs and demands than was the case of the Stalin regime in the Soviet Union.

It is true that our 1955 resolution on The Third Chinese Revolution and Its Aftermath said that, "The collision of Stalinism with each of the sequences of the permanent revolution on Chinese soil has deformed the revolution and obscured its proletarian nature." When the CCP established itself in power it continued to cling to its program of a "bloc of four classes," and its theory of "revolution in stages," i.e., the passage of China through an allegedly "new" stage of capitalist development.

But we affirmed also in that same resolution that the permanent revolution had prevailed. Faced with the U.S. military assault and blockade, "Mao...had to turn against his capitalist allies, nationalize the key branches of economy, impose the monopoly of foreign trade, institute planning, and mobilize the workers to save the revolutionary conquests."

To be sure, the Third Chinese revolution did unfold in stages, but in stages opposite to those of capitalist development. Collectivization of the innumerable small peasant holdings had to be undertaken next. And now these efforts have culminated in the merging of collectives into the broader and far more effective Communes -- a higher stage of revolutionary development, a greater height of triumph.

This is what Trotsky predicted when he wrote in The Third International After Lenin: "...the third Chinese Revolution, despite the great backwardness of China, or more correctly, because of this great backwardness as compared with

Russia, will not have a 'democratic' period...but it will be compelled from the very outset to effect the most decisive shake-up and abolition of bourgeois property in city and village."

Writing further on the possibility of a socialist development, Trotsky declared: "This goal could be achieved only if the revolution did not halt merely at the solution of the bourgeois democratic tasks but continued to unfold, passing from one stage to the next, i.e., continued to develop uninterruptedly (or permanently) and thus lead China toward a socialist development. This is precisely what Marx understood by the term 'permanent revolution.'"

Insofar as we are concerned we must now reaffirm our position of 1955, and say: The higher stage today, signified by the Communes, is the latest manifestation of the process of permanent revolution which continues to assert its power despite the deformations and limitations imposed on its unfolding by the Communist Party regime.

Nevertheless, the socialist reorganization of China cannot be completed within its own national boundaries. Its completion depends, in the final analysis, upon timely help from the socialist revolution in the more advanced industrial countries. And this also is entirely in accord with our concept of permanent revolution. Trotsky took particular pains to emphasize this point against Stalin's theory of socialism in one country which in reality meant no socialism elsewhere -- a renunciation of struggle for the world revolution.

Reiteration of this point today in a ritualistic fashion is meaningless; and it is subject to reproof when used as a cover-up for failure to recognize and support the uninterrupted revolutionary advance in China. Any Chinese worker or peasant would be fully justified in replying: "Yes, Comrades, I agree with this need for timely help from the socialist revolution in the more industrially developed countries. That would mean, above all, in the United States. When do you suppose we can count on that? And what do you propose we do meanwhile?"

Marx summed up the experiences of 1848-49 and formulated the basic concept of the permanent revolution in his address to the Communist League in 1850. "For us," he said, "the issue cannot be the alteration of private property but only its annihilation, not the smoothing over of class antagonisms but the abolition of classes, not the improvement of existing society but the foundation of a new one." For the working class, Marx advised, "Their battle cry must be: The Revolution in Permanence."

When in exile Lenin opposed the Menshevik view of a bourgeois revolution in Russia under the leadership of the liberal bourgeoisie supported by the working class. In its place Lenin advanced the slogan, "Democratic Dictatorship of the Proletariat and the Peasantry." Trotsky agreed but he posed the question: to which class will the real dictatorship belong? And Trotsky elaborated further the theory of permanent revolution, one of the important features of which was the alliance of the workers and peasants under leadership of the former.

But the permanent revolution did not unfold on Chinese soil exactly in the form thus foreseen. Historical developments do not always conform to patterns or norms that we visualize. Sometimes these developments make detours, as was the case in China.

Its second revolution of 1925-27 suffered defeat primarily due to the Menshevik policy pursued by Stalin's leadership; this brought a terrible blood

letting of the proletariat in the urban centers. The Communist Party withdrew to the hinterland, basing itself on a constantly growing peasant army. For the overthrow of Kuomintang rule and the expulsion of the imperialists the peasant army was sufficient. For the preservation and the extension of the revolutionary conquests the Peking regime had to mobilize the workers.

The establishment of the Communes and their multiple functions will tend to proletarianize the peasants and to cement further the alliance between them and the workers in the urban centers. Proceeding side by side with an accelerated tempo of industrialization which provides a stronger foundation for working class rule, this development will serve also to increase and strengthen the working class leadership in the alliance. Thus the real essence and the real content of the permanent revolution is revealed.

If we fail to recognize and comprehend this profound dialectical inter-relationship, and thereby fail to become revolutionary partisans of the Chinese Communes, we will inevitably obscure, if not vitiate, the very nature and spirit of our internationalism. The close inter-connection between these developments in China and our problems and tasks in the United States consists primarily in this: The lessons that we learn from these developments we must apply at home.

Therefore, I think it is in order now to ask a few pertinent questions: Considering our present policy and activities for revolutionary socialist regroupment, how can these activities be carried out and with whom will we regroup if we fail to recognize the profoundly revolutionary character of the Chinese Communes? How can we pursue a correct policy in the every day struggle of the American workers without understanding the Communes as an essentially class struggle issue? And finally, how can we aspire to leadership of the American revolution without unequivocal and clear-cut support of the Chinese revolution through all its stages, including the stage of the Communes? That supreme conquest -- the American revolution -- requires for its achievement a leadership that is capable of understanding and defending every significant international working class advance.

June 6, 1959

MEMORANDUM TO THE NATIONAL COMMITTEE

EXTENDED STALEMATE OR TEMPORARY CONJUNCTURE?

By Bob Chester

Soviet advances in rocketry plus setbacks to imperialism by the advancing colonial revolution have inspired a series of articles in the capitalist press about the "military stalemate." The writers compare the atomic stockpiles in the U.S. and the Soviet Union, the number of ICBM's, planes, submarines and ground forces and conclude that there is not sufficient military advantage on either side to permit the outbreak of war in the next period. What they really mean is that the U.S. finds itself at a relative disadvantage from the military view and stalemate is the term they use to save face.

Attention now turns to economic competition, to means of gaining influence in the underdeveloped countries, to negotiations over trouble spots such as Quemoy and Berlin and to diplomatic maneuvers aimed at easing international tensions.

Does this presage an extended period of stalemate? Such a period would mean basically that social, economic and military relations will remain comparatively stable and in balance for a considerable length of time. On the contrary all the evidence points to the fact that this is just a temporary conjuncture that can be ruptured by any one of a number of factors inherent in the world situation. Imperialism, which has suffered severe setbacks in the past decade, is in for more shocks and at an increasing rate.

Isn't it possible to have a stalemate for a short period even though the world situation is unstable? For short periods, yes. But how short is short? A review of the trends since the end of World War II provides a yardstick to estimate the time element.

U.S. emerged from the war as the undisputed leader of world capitalism and began to "organize the world." It worked out a deal with the Soviet bureaucracy to repress the postwar upsurge in Europe and consolidate the capitalist rule. The bureaucracy agreed in hope of obtaining "peaceful coexistence" during which they could rebuild their war-ravaged country.

This phase ended with Churchill's "iron curtain" speech and institution of the Marshall Plan. Washington's thinking was based on the Kennan Plan of containing Soviet influence in Europe and Asia in preparation to rolling it back through military conquest. The Stalinists were eliminated from the governments of France and Italy and NATO established. Stalinist reaction was mainly defensive in character, taking over the buffer zone to secure its borders and setting up the Cominform. Their hope was to reverse imperialism's orientation at the first opportunity.

We can point to 1948 as the high point of the offensive. U.S. troops were policing the world, with the A-bomb held in reserve as the trump card. The Communist parties in Western Europe began to go into decline. The American labor movement had expended its postwar wave of militancy and was now in retreat under pressure of the Taft-Hartley Act and the witch hunt.

1949 produced two events of qualitative importance. The first was the Chinese Revolution; the second was the Soviet announcement that it possessed the A-bomb, giving the first intimation of its tremendous advances in science and technology.

Korea and Indo-China emphasized the qualitative nature of this change. It might be said that they were the first indication of military stalemate. Imperialism was no longer free to enter into military action in any part of the globe without meeting determined resistance from the colonial people and without coming face to face with the Soviet Union.

This new reality became the dominant factor in Washington's calculations. It could move "up to the brink" but could not risk all-out war with the Soviet Union. This is the real meaning of the "stalemate." Imperialism's plans for organizing the world were thwarted. Instead of mounting an offensive against the Soviet Union they found themselves on the defensive against the colonial revolution. Instead of having the Soviet bureaucracy as an ally in quelling colonial revolts they found the bureaucracy maneuvering with these colonial movements to gain a little advantage at the expense of imperialism. Their timetables for war were constantly thrown out of gear. Now all their plans have been forced into substantial revision.

Even a turn to economic competition works against capitalism. Soviet and Chinese economy is forging ahead while the capitalist economy shows signs of stagnation. Time is working against the imperialists and they will be forced to operate from positions of less and less strength.

As a result of the changed situation new types of thinking are evident in the ruling class. Kennan no longer supports his previous theory of containment but now supports a modus vivendi, at least for the present, with the Soviet Union, making a number of concessions to ease the world tensions. T.V.Houser, Chairman of the Research Policy Committee of the influential Committee for Economic Development observed in its latest survey: "In the first half of the twentieth century we have seen nearly one third of humanity slip away from this Western ideal of freedom to embrace an economic religion that we may term Eastern materialism. . . Another third of humanity -- both thirds are in have-not countries -- tremble on the brink of choice between the two beliefs." (Saturday Review -- Jan. 17, 1959.)

Even Eisenhower is forced to change his tone. His statement to the press after his talk with Mikoyan was that while he was willing to explore all avenues toward peace he "simply won't be pushed around."

What will break the present conjuncture? It will not be any offensive by the Soviet bureaucracy whose whole orientation is basically for "peaceful coexistence" and the status quo. It can be broken by any one of three categories of social development: (1) further extension of the colonial revolution or the growing over of the colonial revolution into more advanced stages of the permanent revolution; (2) a strong leftward movement of the working class in a major capitalist country threatening the stability of capitalist control and its military alliances; (3) or the advance of the political revolution in the Soviet zone that would pose new possibili-

ties of international revolutionary advancement. Conditions are ripening for the development of any one or combinations of all three of these movements.

To forestall these developments we can assume that the imperialists would be willing to enter into negotiations, even to a summit conference, with the Soviet bureaucracy. For its part the bureaucracy has repeatedly indicated its willingness to enter into such negotiations. Can they be successful? It could be possible to enter into limited agreements as was done at the end of the second world war or to settle the Indo-Chinese and Korean conflicts. While they were able to repress the postwar revolution in Europe they were not able to stop the Yugoslav or Chinese Revolutions. The Korean and Indo-Chinese truce did not halt the colonial revolution. The last decade has proven that social pressures have proven stronger than the military power of imperialism or the betrayals of Stalinism. In the next decade their powers of repression and betrayal will be even less effective in halting the social tide.

Thus the decline of the position of imperialism in the last decade is an indication of what is ahead for it in the next decade -- but at an accelerated pace. Under these conditions we can see no prospect of social stability but only a decline in the relative position of imperialism forcing it to retreat from position to position. This, of course, does not exclude the possibility of temporary advances or secondary military or diplomatic victories in the process, or defeats of the working class in one or more countries. The main course of events indicates a continued weakening of imperialism and of repeated opportunities for the working class.

* * *

The constant deterioration of the position of imperialism is bound to have its impact on the American working class. We have seen how the Korean war affected the 1952 elections, where Eisenhower's promise to negotiate a settlement contributed to his victory. Dulles, the architect of the administration's foreign policy, has become probably the most criticized Secretary of State in history. While the major cause of the Democratic victory in 1958 was the recession, the U.S. lag in the satellite race, in education, in economic growth, combined with frustrations of U.S. foreign policy must be considered as a contributing factor.

We can assume that under pressure of retreat that the capitalist class in the U.S. will lose some of its homogeneity, divide into contending factions (those who want an immediate preventive war and those who temporize hoping for a better opportunity) and combined with the underlying contradictions of American capitalism (overproduction, unemployment, inflation, Negro struggle) will open a new phase of American history. When the working class turns to politics in this country it will no longer be simply on the basis of economic experience but on the impact of world politics as well.

February 23, 1959.