

# INTERNATIONAL INFORMATION BULLETIN

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THE THIRD CHINESE REVOLUTION  
AND THE TASKS OF THE REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNIST PARTY

-- Submitted by the Editors  
of the Party's Organ as a Basis for Discussion --

THE THIRD CHINESE REVOLUTION IN ITS DEVELOPMENT

The collapse of the Kuomintang regime, which was founded on the butchery of the people and ruled over China for 22 years, closed the historical period beginning with the defeat of the Second Chinese Revolution, and opened a new chapter in the history of China. This is the first victory of the Third Chinese Revolution.

The civil war which resulted in the overthrow of the Kuomintang regime and which enabled the Chinese Communist Party to conquer power, originated from the profound class contradictions of Chinese society. In the Resistance war against Japan, the rank and file masses who rose spontaneously to resist the enemy were mainly composed of the peasants, organized by the remaining cadres and veterans of the peasant war from 1927 to 1937 as the nuclei. Under the leadership and control of the Communist Party, they organized and grew into the people's resistance guerrillas and established their own power in the regions of the vast countryside. These guerrillas and their district organs never envisaged a revolutionary perspective or posed a revolutionary program, but, driven by the logic of the class struggle, inevitably came into opposition and collision with the native landlord-bourgeoisie and the official power of Japanese imperialism. After the conclusion of the Resistance war, the aggravated oppression imposed on the people by the landlord-bourgeoisie and the reactionary measures taken by the Kuomintang regime in order to annihilate by force the existing dual power provoked the civil war which was largely suppressed for a certain period only to break out ferociously afterward on a nation-wide scale. In the course of this civil war, the leaders of the peasant armies, pressed by the situation, gave up the policy of land reform and appealed to the peasants to expropriate the land of the landlords. They abandoned illusions of reconciliation with the Kuomintang regime, and transformed the peasant guerrilla war which was still partial and obscure in its objectives into a revolution to overthrow the rule of the bourgeoisie and landlords at home and foreign imperialism abroad.

But this revolution is not a normal revolution. It is a distorted revolution. This kind of distortion is characterized by the uneven development and insufficiency of the mass movement, and the absence of a free and expanding class struggle. The whole working class has not exercised any positive role in this revolution, and the closer the transfer of power approached, the weaker became the workers' movement. The agrarian struggle in the countryside always came in the wake of the military action of the overthrow of the Kuomintang regime, and became its supplement. The areas south of the Yangtse River were liberated purely by military force from the north. All forms of mass struggle were subordinated to the military activities of the peasant army. It is only due to the general decline of world capitalism and the over-rotteness of the Chinese bourgeoisie that this distorted revolution, assuming the principal form of a peasant war, could achieve the first stage of its victory.

The establishment of the new regime does not mean that the revolution has reached an end. A purely military campaign can overthrow a reactionary power which has become an obstacle in the path of the revolution, but it can never carry through the revolutionary tasks. Since this revolution broke out as the result of profound social contradictions, it is absolutely necessary to mobilize a mass movement to make up for the deficiency of the military struggle. Despite its attempt to blunt the revolutionary aspirations of the masses, the Chinese CP is still not able to replace the mass actions by purely bureaucratic administrative measures; it can only limit and delay the movement. The struggles for the reduction of rent and interest, the liquidation of the vicious gentry class, and the equal distribution of the land carried on in the vast countryside are precisely the expressions of this mass movement.

The struggle of the urban workers has far from arrived at a development parallel to that in the countryside, and has not yet passed beyond the policy of "equal concern for both the state and the private enterprises; equal share of profits between capital and labor." However, the working class is relatively more active than in the past. Their interest in politics has been promoted, and their impulse to intervene in social life is kindled anew. These provide the preconditions for the workers to move forward to positive actions.

The remnants of the old regime -- the reactionary bureaucrats, the secret agents of the Kuomintang, and the notorious military officers -- are being liquidated by the new regime. The anti-imperialist struggles, appearing mainly in the form of the campaign against American aid to South Korea, have been and are still unfolding. These struggles are constantly rallying the masses, especially the intellectuals, to participate in the fight.

All these signs indicate that the revolution still exists, and is developing. What direction it will take and what its final form will be depends on the living process of the class struggle in the days to come.

This revolution was engendered by the contradiction between the capitalist productive forces and the pre-capitalist obstructions. Its immediate tasks are to realize national independence and solve the agrarian problem. Therefore this revolution is a bourgeois-democratic revolution. The chief motive force of this revolution is the huge exploited lower layers of the urban and village petty-bourgeoisie. Due to the complete corruption of the bourgeoisie today and the inevitability of a social revolution, this revolution which depends on the petty-bourgeoisie for its major dynamic force cannot possibly open the road for bourgeois democracy. On the contrary, this revolution actually won its first victory through the mortal struggle of the toiling masses against the bourgeoisie and its policy. Henceforth, in order to assure the fruits of victory, it is not only possible but also necessary for this movement to become the prelude to the proletarian socialist revolution. Hence, this revolution is the first stage of the victory of the permanent revolution.

#### THE CHINESE COMMUNIST PARTY

The Chinese Communist Party has a long tradition of organization, and at the same time, it has been supported by the Soviet

bureaucracy which, for the past twenty years, has safeguarded itself with the prestige of the October Revolution. Since the defeat of the Second Chinese Revolution, the Chinese CP threw all its strength into the countryside to engage in guerrilla war, and has derived its deep traditions and rich experiences from the peasants and its military struggles. The members and ranks of this party have made numerous sacrifices in the struggles against the expedition of the Kuomintang army and the invasion of Japanese imperialism. For that reason, it could build up its prestige in various degrees among the huge masses, especially among the peasants and intellectuals. Since this revolution was launched from among the peasants and assumed the principal form of military activities, the Communist Party was enabled without difficulty to seize the leadership in the first stage of the revolution.

The peasantry, being secluded in the countryside, is not able to concentrate its strength, and therefore lacks political independence. Before the movement of the urban proletariat arose and could give the peasants leadership in time, the sporadic and intermittent peasant revolts were not adequate to shake the rule of the bourgeoisie. But during the past twenty years, especially under the conditions of the Resistance war against Japan, through the efforts of the Chinese CP as their organizer, the peasants, though dispersed, yet hungry for the land and bitterly hostile towards the imperialist aggressors, have formed into an army. From the moment of its appearance, it not only became the chief weapon of the peasant revolt, but in turn became the leading force to manipulate the peasant revolts.

In the beginning, the leaders of this peasant army were revolutionary intellectuals and workers from the cities. All of them were members of the Communist Party. This party, depending upon the peasants, organized them into armies as the instruments of the peasant revolt. But through a long period of guerrilla warfare which has become a kind of vocation, and at the same time under the influence of the ideology of the Soviet bureaucracy, this party has been brought up on a tradition of empiricism and bureaucratic centralism. By virtue of this tradition, the Chinese CP held the fate of the peasant army in its hand, used this army as a tool, to ride on the shoulders of the peasants, and thus became the omnipotent commander of the peasant struggle, exercising a strict rule over the process of this struggle, and regulating its physiognomy from time to time. When this army emerged from the stage of scattered guerrilla wars and plunged into a nation-wide struggle for power, the Communist Party, again with this huge army, drawing behind it the bulk of the peasant masses, suffocated or suppressed the free unfolding of the already enfeebled struggle of the urban working class, and dragged all forms of the mass struggle into the channel of its military struggle. After its ascent to power, it reigned over the whole nation with the same weapons.

Due to the intricate historical relations among the elements of the peasant struggle, the peasant army, the working class movement, and the Communist Party, this revolution has suffered a serious distortion -- the distortion of Stalinism.

In the whole course of the civil war, the Communist Party hindered the complete class awakening of the masses, prevented them from

recognizing the precise objects of their struggles and the final goal, while it deluded the masses with rotten "theories" of class collaboration and revolution by stages, and forbade them to crush once for all the power of the exploiting class. At the time when the bourgeoisie was already corrupt to the core and utterly impotent, the CP still tolerated it, and established a government together with it. Yet, in spite of all these things, the Communist Party is not a bourgeois party. The elements composing this party are neither of bourgeois birth nor under the ideological influence of the bourgeoisie nor being bribed by the bourgeoisie. It is a petty-bourgeois peasant party. In the past ten years, under an unfavorable relation of forces, it made several attempts to compromise and even to submit to the big bourgeoisie in order to gain certain social reforms and democratic rights. The complete decay of the bourgeoisie deprived this reformism of its foundation, and hence forced the CP not to give up its armed troops, its local administrations, and its basis among the peasants, even at the time of its most shameful political capitulations. Its party composition, social roots, its origin, its historical tradition and its international background, all pushed the CP to the crossroad of "march on, or die," and finally to the ascent to power. It is also due to the above elements that fourteen months after its conquest of power, it has not yet assimilated itself into the bourgeoisie, even though in ideology and above all in living conditions, it has been deeply affected by the bourgeoisie. On the contrary, the CP has been consciously seeking for a social basis among the working class, and looks upon the bourgeoisie as "alien."

After the seizure of power, the CP will not be able to maintain its petty-bourgeois basis in the long run. It is obliged to seek for its basis either in the bourgeoisie or in the proletariat. If eventually it chooses the former, it would lose all its "revolutionary" color. If it chooses the latter, then it must (since it is already in power) cut off all ties with the bourgeoisie and liquidate it as a class. And since it has come to power and if it has transformed itself into a proletarian party under conditions of a rising and not an ebbing tide (as was the case with Stalin's bureaucracy), as the ruling party the CP will then be obliged to concede proletarian democracy and hence will be further obliged to break away from the reactionary traditions of international Stalinism. At the turning point of this transformation, the CP will be compelled to purge the opposite section inside the party. Which of these two classes the Communist Party will "choose" is a question which will be determined less by the objective will of its leadership than by the social struggles and the influence of this leadership in relation to the masses.

#### THE CHARACTER OF THE NEW REGIME AND ITS INTERNAL CONTRADICTIONS

The old state apparatus (the army, police and bureaucracy, etc.) was destroyed in the civil war; the new state apparatus is based on the leadership of the peasant army as its trunk, and is being created anew by absorbing a small part of the remaining elements of the old state apparatus.

Since the new regime was established immediately upon the military victory of the peasant army and after its establishment permitted the peasants to enter upon land reform in various degrees, it

naturally relies on the peasant armed forces as the major prop of its power, and in the last analysis, also reflects the demands of the peasants, and has won direct and indirect support from the latter. In the cities, it attempts to get support from the working class, and is consciously strengthening its originally very weak relations with the working masses. Its social reforms have begun to remove the past dissatisfactions of the urban workers and poor masses. The broad layers of intellectuals, inspired by revolutionary enthusiasm, claim to be the advocates of the interests of the workers and peasants, gather around the Communist Party, and participate ardently in the work of social reform. The bourgeoisie has a few representatives participating in the government (mainly in the provincial governments and the higher organs), and still maintains certain weak connections with the former bureaucrats, the Kuomintang army, and the police. But it can exert influence on the policy of the new regime only through its weight in property relations, but has no power of control or determination. The bourgeoisie by participating in this coalition government, aims solely at maintaining their traitor's role in the highest ranks, in order to usurp power from within by taking the advantage of the insufficient awakening of the masses and the compromising policy of the CP. Therefore, viewed from the angle of its class basis, the new regime is principally based on the masses of peasants and urban petty-bourgeoisie, but owing to the lack of a complete awakening of class consciousness among the masses and of a full development of the struggle of the working class, the Chinese CP is still able to carry out its compromising policy towards the bourgeoisie, to tolerate and to make concessions to it.

Just because this revolution, from its very beginning, has suffered serious Stalinist distortion, and the initiative of the masses has been suffocated, especially because the consciousness and actions of the class struggle of the working class have been baffled, and the mass movement has not been able to enjoy the opportunity of a free development, this revolution, although having arrived at the stage of overthrowing the old regime, has not yet brought to birth the unified organization of mass struggle -- the soviets. Therefore, viewed from the angle of the form of administrative power, the new regime created by this revolution is clad with Bonapartism. This Bonapartist power raises itself up above the whole nation and conceives of itself as a non-class supervisor of the historical process. It attempts to follow the schema of historical development set forth in the so-called "New Democracy." On the one hand, this theory aims to carry out anti-feudalist social reform under the iron control of the bureaucracy; on the other hand, to co-ordinate and to mitigate the contradictions between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, and to dream of developing into Socialism "peacefully" after several decades.

Under such conditions, the position taken by the new regime of not transgressing the property rights of the bourgeoisie in general has special importance. Since the new regime is not directly based on the mass organizations of the toiling masses, since the vast masses have not even the most elementary class democracy, and are not allowed to intervene directly in social life; since the working class cannot exercise a universal and close supervision and control over the state and the means of production, then this regime will be constantly submitted to the powerful influences of the material and ideological

sway of the bourgeoisie, and will thus give the bourgeoisie a possibility of restoring its rule by peaceful means.

In fact, the question at issue here is not one of determining the temporary strategy of a worker and peasant power and its stages of revolution against capitalist property, but rather one of using these facts to make a final estimate of the class nature of the new regime. From the social point of view, the new regime is a bourgeois regime.

From all these characteristics, it is clear that the regime is in itself full of explosive contradictions, and contains two absolutely incompatible tendencies. It will feel the ever-intensifying pressure from both the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, and find that the room for the oscillation of its policies is constantly shrinking. The contradiction between the revolutionary origin of the class foundation of this regime and its social and economic basis and the conflicts among the different class origins of the diverse elements composing it demand a thoroughgoing solution. Either it will be overthrown by one of the two major opposing classes in order to "solve" the internal contradictions within the regime, or it must completely lean on one side. And this solution will at the same time put an end to the present petty-bourgeois Bonapartism.

### THE ECONOMIC SITUATION

The collapse of the Kuomintang regime and all the subsequent political and social reforms have not yet given rise to a fundamental qualitative change in Chinese society. Since this new regime is by no means a proletarian power, it follows that its policy cannot consciously suppress the growth of capitalism. In fact, private property is generally maintained at present, and the state enterprises as well as private enterprises cannot escape the domination of the law of profits. The land, both in the new and old liberated areas, is still in the hands of individuals, and it can be disposed of through the right of free purchase. Exchanges in the market, in the cities or in the countryside, unfold according to the capitalist law of supply and demand. All these fundamental factors clearly indicated that China is still a backward capitalist country.

The first victory of the Third Chinese Revolution has won political independence for this nation, and opened the road for the solution of the agrarian problem. But it has not created sufficient conditions to complete these two historical tasks, and to assure Chinese society a rapid development of its productive forces. The problems confronting industrial production in China are not the problems of breaking through barriers preventing its expansion, but how to expand its own productive forces to satisfy the demands of the swiftly swelling market, that is, how to proceed immediately with capital construction. But this capital construction will require accumulation outside the process of industrial production.

Under the policy of maintaining private ownership of the land and encouraging "thrift and prosperity" of the peasants, the capital accumulation resulting from small-scale agricultural production, on the one hand, will create new class differentiations in the countryside, and even the formation of a new landlord class, and will also restrict continuous increase in agricultural production and capital

accumulation. On the other hand, since this capital accumulation stays in the hands of the kulaks, under unstable conditions of society, it will be transformed into commercial speculation. Instead of being transformed into industrial capital, it will on the contrary, relatively weaken the accumulation of industrial capital, and threaten industrial development.

Private capital absorbs a great amount of surplus value, a part of which is exhausted in luxury, consumption and commercial speculation, and the other part, being invested in the process of industrial production, due to the blind control of the law of profits, will tend to burden light industry. This planless distribution of surplus value is not only unable to harmonize with the development of heavy industry on a national scale, but will also deepen the competition between the state enterprises and private enterprises, weaken the capital accumulation of the latter, and at the same time aggravate the disequilibrium in the national economic development.

At present, the ominous symptom of the "scissors" has already appeared in the disparity of prices between industrial commodities and agricultural products. Should the agrarian reform be completed, the rural economy secure stability and rehabilitation, and the productive potentiality of the original industrial equipments be consummated, then the gap between the two parts of the scissors would be enlarged and result in a serious economic crisis. The city and the countryside would be placed in opposition to each other. The rich peasants would store up farm products and boycott industrial goods. Industry would collapse in the absence of raw materials and a market. The capitalists would join the rich peasants in demanding free foreign trade by all means, the restoration of private operation of state industry and commerce, and would call upon the state to withdraw its superintendence and control over the market.

This would be the time for a thoroughgoing solution of the contradictions and the conclusion of the transitional situation. Either capitalism would restore its control over the whole nation and swallow up all the first conquests of the revolution; or private property would be expropriated, the free purchase of land prohibited, the properties of the rich peasants be limited and confiscated, the state monopoly over the foreign trade be thoroughly carried out, and control and supervision of the working class over the industry be realized. Either of these two alternatives would simultaneously bring about a corresponding change in class relationships and the structure of power.

#### PERSPECTIVES OF THIS REVOLUTION

The economic and political conditions and class relations all reveal the contradictions and transitory character of the entire present situation. This situation cannot last for an historical period but is only an episode in the course of historical development. In the next stage, the probable perspectives for China will be as follows:

(1) Under conditions of the suppression and decline of the mass movement, the bourgeoisie would utilize its property influence and its ideological sway to corrupt the greater part and the leadership of



the Chinese CP, transform it into a party which would consciously serve the interests of the bourgeoisie, and this new party would in turn reorganize the government and readjust all social and political measures according to the will of the bourgeoisie. This means that the bourgeoisie would restore its rule by peaceful means, and that today's revolution would become an aborted revolution. In sociological analysis, this perspective is possible. But under the conditions of the general decline of capitalism, this perspective is merely probable.

(2) The bourgeoisie has still another road to pursue to reinstate its whole power, that is, with direct military and economical aid from imperialism, the different sections of the bourgeoisie would form into an allied force exploiting the diverse difficulties of the new regime, overthrow the Chinese CP in power by joint forces at home and abroad, and re-establish the brutal rule of the bourgeoisie. In order to accomplish this bloody business, the bourgeoisie must not only smash the military resistance of the Chinese CP and the new regime, but must also crush the mass movement of the workers and peasants which would rise spontaneously or be initiated by the Communist Party. There would have to be a bloodbath on the battlefield of the class struggle. If the bourgeoisie does unfortunately succeed, the Chinese workers and peasants would pay for this with countless victims, and China would once again be thrown back into a long period of chaos. Then this revolution would once again be a defeated revolution.

(3) Under more favorable conditions, the working class movement could rise again at the opportune time, and respond immediately to the peasants' struggle for the expropriation of land. On the one hand, it would intervene directly against the property rights of the capitalists; on the other hand, it would revolt against the Bonapartist rule of the Chinese CP. Under the leadership of a revolutionary Trotskyist party, this mass movement would be able to push the revolution to the stage of completion, i.e., overthrow the present regime of the Chinese CP (if this party stands on the side opposing the mass movement), build up a proletarian dictatorship, and achieve the transmutation of China into a worker's state. In the course of this broadening and deepening of the revolution, differentiation would inevitably appear in the Chinese CP. The revolutionary sector would stand at the side of the workers and peasants and struggle for the completion of the socialist revolution. This perspective will also require bloodshed but it will open the highway to the ultimate liberation of the Chinese people.

(4) Under the stimulus of the intensified differentiation inside the international class struggle and Stalinism, the ever-increasing menace from the part of the bourgeoisie and imperialism, and the pressure from the worker and peasant movement, the Chinese CP would come to purge the right wing within the party, tolerate or even mobilize the workers' and peasants' mass movement, gradually concede class democracy to the people, exclude elements representing the bourgeoisie in the government, expropriate the properties of the bourgeoisie, and eventually transmute this country into a worker's state. This road will cost less bloodshed, yet it would not be a peaceful quantitative transformation, but a qualitative change. In this case, it would indicate that the Chinese CP had begun to break away from the

yoke of international Stalinism and its ideology. It would also show that under indomitable historical laws, even the Chinese CP would be forced step by step to take the road already pointed out by Trotsky, if it is still unwilling to be isolated from the masses and to ruin itself. In such a situation the Chinese party of the Fourth International would fight together with this party if it shows willingness to take the road of proletarian dictatorship, and would complete the revolutionary tasks in joint action, while criticizing and correcting its mistakes in the course of this fight.

Which of these will be the most probable perspective of the Chinese revolution is not clear yet. It will be determined by the evolution of the class struggle on the international plane, the conflicts between the U.S. and the Soviet Union, the conditions inside the Stalinist camp, the relationship of China towards imperialism, the process of the struggle between the workers-peasants and the bourgeoisie, economic conditions in China, and the inner development of the Chinese CP.

#### THE ESSENTIAL TRAITS OF THE SITUATION AND THE TASKS OF OUR PARTY

The present stage is a transitional stage between two revolutionary upsurges. It is mainly characterized by the following features:

- (1) The landlords are or will be fundamentally liquidated as a class; the bourgeoisie has suffered a tremendous defeat on the political arena and its economic system is at stake. The power has been transferred from the big bourgeoisie into the hands of the poor peasants, especially the leadership of the peasant revolt based on the peasant armed forces.
- (2) In relation to imperialism, China has gained its political independence; the agrarian reform is still in operation; and the revolution is in development.
- (3) The development of the mass struggle is very inadequate and uneven; the struggles carried on by the peasants for agrarian reform have not yet broken out of the orbit marked out by the Chinese CP, and the "steps" fixed for them. The struggle of the urban workers has not yet been coordinated with the peasant struggle to reach the level of sharp class struggle. It is still limited within the framework of "an equal share of profits between capital and labor." The masses of the country have not yet passed beyond the ideological realm of Mao Tse-tung's "New Democracy" and have not accepted or consciously taken the road of proletarian revolution.
- (4) In the course of the revolution up to now, the mass movement has lacked the opportunity of free development. The masses have had no class democracy nor even broad civil rights. There has not yet been created a unified national organization of struggle of real mass character and internal democracy for the workers, peasants and soldiers.
- (5) The Chinese CP and its new regime can still control the masses and hold the initiative in its hands by using the halfway, illusory and reactionary scheme of "New Democracy" as its guide. It

regulates every concrete step of the anti-feudal and anti-imperialist struggle of the masses, it impedes and suppresses the struggle of the urban working class against the bourgeoisie. It rules over the whole nation by its Bonapartism, and does not grant even the least democracy to the masses. Yet in the process of development, it will inevitably be submitted to pressure from two opposite sides -- the bourgeoisie and the proletariat -- and must eventually surrender to one side or the other.

(6) The most revolutionary party, the Chinese RCP, is still very weak in numbers and suffering the cruelest persecution. It has not a deep foundation in the masses and so is not yet able to play a decisive role.

In view of the above-stated traits, the main tasks of the Chinese Revolutionary Communist Party should be the following: to promote the consciousness of the masses, to initiate and guide the class struggle of the proletariat to a higher level, to enable the masses to extricate themselves from the ideological trap of "New Democracy," and push the masses forward to complete the revolution, that is, to rout out the already bankrupt political influence and crumbling economic power of the landlord-bourgeoisie, to establish the proletarian dictatorship, to transform the distorted bourgeois revolution into a socialist revolution, and to transmute China into an independent and unified Soviet state.

The preliminary conditions for accomplishing these tasks are as follows: to secure class democracy for the workers and peasant masses, which will open the way to free development of their struggle against feudalism, the bourgeoisie and imperialism; to demand for them freedom of speech, assembly, publication, organization, residence, employment, strike, demonstration and the right to arm; to advocate the legal existence and the freedom to win mass support for all parties which base themselves on and speak in the name of the workers and peasants; to link every step in the political and economic struggle with the slogan of organizing workers, peasants, and soldiers' committees, and to link this central slogan with all the individual demands. The appearance of workers, peasants, and soldiers' committees will signify that the revolution has reached its climax. The establishment of the workers and peasants' government would then become the most urgent task.

Today, the Chinese RCP has not yet sufficient strength to intervene in events, and is still an underground organization, the object of persecutions by the new regime. Yet our party will resolutely and boldly engage in all existing anti-feudal, anti-bourgeois, and anti-imperialist struggles (despite the weakness of these struggles and the form they take) in order to push the mass movement to a new upsurge, and to win the confidence of the masses. In the meanwhile, if the Chinese CP mobilizes or supports this struggle, our party would fight side by side with it, while maintaining our political criticism; if the CP stands on the side of the bourgeoisie, or opposes this struggle in order to protect its Bonapartist rule, our party would unite with the worker and peasant masses against the interference and suppression imposed by the CP or its regime.

The policy of the Chinese RCP has not yet been understood or accepted by the general masses so our present task is to explain patiently and flexibly to the masses, including the rank and file of the Chinese CP. We believe that all real revolutionists and the huge masses of workers and peasants will accept our program, because our program is the conscious expression of the objective necessity of the historical development and the class interests of the worker and peasant masses.

In the following, we propose a series of demands and slogans around the slogan of workers, peasants, and soldiers' committees, which forms our central political slogan (as the program to unite the mass struggle in the present period). (The central part of the program is finished, and the individual demands and slogans will be put forward afterwards.)

# # #

WHY IS THIS CIVIL WAR CALLED A REVOLUTION AND  
THE IMPORTANCE OF THIS RECOGNITION

--A Point of Departure for the Re-appraisal of the Chinese Events--

By Maki

Almost one year ago when the Special Committee of the Kwangtung Province initiated the discussion on the program of action, I wrote a thesis entitled "A Review of the Chinese Events and the Tactics of our Action" in which I stated my opinions. At that time I expected that an enthusiastic discussion would rapidly unfold in order to arrive at a profound understanding of the Chinese events, to draw rich lessons in regard to tactics, and thus to formulate the program of action of our party for the immediate present. But this discussion has not been broadly opened and did not even go very deep in the Special Committee itself (since nobody had any mature ideas). Afterwards, on the ground of the need for action, without a thorough examination of the events in their entirety and the present situation, a series of concrete demands were roughly worked out. These demands were designed as the program to guide action. As a result, they not only failed to influence the action of the party, but even the program itself was not completed! In this regard, I myself was responsible; but after a moment of reflection today, in view of the fundamental mistakes made in the manner of applying this program, it would have had no value for practical action even if it had been completed.

Now the discussion of the program of action is set forth once again, and the Editors' Board of the Party Organ has already presented a draft resolution as the basis for discussion. This time the discussion should not be so fruitless as the former one. Moreover, a set of new ideas is being posed by this draft which should help all comrades re-evaluate the Chinese events. Whatever the results, this discussion will be an epoch-making landmark in the history of the ideological development of our party. On this question, my views have also changed much recently. My new ideas have already been published in my personal draft: "The Tasks of the Proletariat in the Present Revolution," and now I am going to explain the essential points of my views. The present article will deal especially with the first point, which is also the point of departure for my view as a whole.

In the process of elucidating my point of view, it will be inevitable to criticize the past conceptions which I consider to be wrong, and this criticism might even appear to be severe. In order to avoid any misunderstanding, I state in advance that my criticism is not aimed at justifying my own point of view, and even less at attacking certain individual comrades. In fact, the whole party is responsible for most of the important errors, and I myself was sometimes at the extreme of these erroneous positions.

A Fundamental Conception

The victory of the "People's Liberation War" not only demonstrates that we have committed serious errors in political evaluation, but

also reveals lack of sensitiveness on our part to the actual development of events. We have been too absorbed in abstract theories, and have paid too little attention to the objective development of these events. We have not sufficiently taken into account the peculiar combination of the concrete conditions, nor have we measured the subjective and objective significance of the existing movement in the present situation, nor made a scrupulous analysis of the relative weight of the diverse tendencies in the present movement. We have only sketchily applied one or two abstract principles to the concrete events. As the movement does not conform to our idealized norms, we shrug at it with contempt. Despite the fact that the sky and earth have been turned upside down, we disdainfully remark, "No way out," and turn our heads back to work in a small circle, quietly awaiting another revolutionary storm which would burst forth outside of this existing movement.

Until the Kuomintang regime was overthrown by the mass movement under the CP leadership, we still did not proceed to a thorough examination and re-appraisal of the events in order to push the revolution to the end by adjusting ourselves to the tempo of the march of the masses. On the contrary, all we did was to condemn the movement as being "halfway," "reactionary," "paralyzed," and "hysterical," and predicted from day to day the collapse of the new regime. We were delighted by the disappointment of the masses and dejected when the masses cheered.

This complacent, abstentionist mood, however, cannot resist the pressure of the masses. Blinded by the dazzling light of events, some of our comrades have begun to waver, others are more than ever tending to shrink into a solitary corner in order to maintain their own inner equilibrium and avoid contact with the outside world. We have paid a heavy price for this fault of sectarianism. When we re-examine the Chinese events and review our tactics, we must first of all clear away this harmful heritage of dogmatism and sectarianism.

The supreme merit of Marxism is its application of dialectical logic to understanding objective reality in its development. That is why Marxism is ever-young and ever-developing. Whoever conceives Marxist theory as a never-changing dogma already violates the fundamental spirit of Marxism. In fact, every important historical event adds something new to Marxism or renovates a part of the old. Since a world-shaking event has occurred in China today, this event will naturally more or less modify the contents of Marxism.

The most important part of Marxism is the comprehension of the transitional period between capitalism and communism, i.e., the understanding of the process of the proletarian revolution. The most prominent feature is the continuous development of this comprehension. In the epoch of Marx and Engels, this part of their theory had only a few essentials. They pointed out only that this transitional period would definitely give rise to the proletarian revolution and proletarian dictatorship, and when the dictatorship had gradually accomplished its tasks of economic reconstruction, it would also gradually wither away, and eventually enter into the epoch of communism, without class and without state power. They affirmed at the same time that though the beginning of this transitional period would differ from nation to nation, the ultimate completion must be simul-

taneous among all the countries in the world. As to the question of the time of the outbreak of the proletarian revolution in different countries, their reciprocal influences, and the relations between the democratic revolution and socialist revolution, they have given only a few simple indications.

Not until the imperialist epoch, the time of the actual realization of the proletarian revolution were the fully developed theories of the law of uneven and combined development and the Permanent Revolution presented by Lenin and Trotsky. Moreover, Trotsky, after the experience of the USSR, posed the question of the inevitable degeneration of an isolated workers' state, and studied the reactionary role of this degenerated workers' state in the whole process of the world revolution. But as for this last part, there were only some preliminary suggestions in the time of Trotsky.

The maturity of this theory had to wait until the conclusion of the World War II. The recent fruits of the discussion in the Fourth International on the "People's Democracies" of Eastern Europe, and especially Yugoslavia, have added new content to this part of the Marxist theory. We, the revolutionists who live in this transition epoch, who undertake this task of social transformation, must constantly enrich our understanding of the concrete process in this transition epoch through revolutionary practice, and guide the revolutionary work of the next stage with this new comprehension. Only then are we qualified to be called real revolutionists. If we are content with understanding only a general orientation and measure living events mechanically by abstract criteria, and with the attitude of "being unchangeable before all events," wait passively and fatalistically instead of applying flexible tactics of action, then we are not revolutionists but only bigoted pedants. When the fragile door of the pedant's study is unable to withstand the billows of the mass movement, he will shake his head pessimistically, go crazy or even end in betrayal.

The development of the world revolutionary movement, especially that of the Yugoslav revolution, enables us to more adequately recognize the important influence of the Soviet bureaucracy on the world revolution. Stalinism, under the mask of Bolshevism, has seriously affected the revolution in various countries of the world. The proletarian revolutionary movement in many countries, up to the moment of the seizure of power and even in the first period after the seizure of power, continues to suffer from the distortions of Stalinism. Formerly, we assumed that only under the leadership of a genuine Marxist revolutionary party and united around the soviets of the broadest democracy could the proletariat seize power. Now historical events tell us that in the first period of the world proletarian revolution, not everything is worked out in such a perfect manner, but on the contrary contains certain distortions.

To study once again the Chinese events, we must take into consideration the important influence of Stalinism as an objective factor in the totality of the events. In China, as in many other countries, Stalinism (the material force of the Soviet bureaucracy and its serious usurpation and revision of Bolshevism) has hampered the process and the speed of the mass movement, distorted its form and the ideology and political line of the Communist Party, and the form

and composition of the revolutionary organizations. But the Stalinist parties are not a social force independent of all classes; they do not have material interests independent of all the classes. They can only distort or hinder the revolutionary movement, but they are unable to undermine the fundamental laws of the development of the revolution. When a Communist Party leads the mass movement, it nevertheless represents a certain class and carries out a certain social role, and does not simply exploit the masses from a superior position above all classes. In the last analysis, it is not the Stalinist party which dominates the destiny of the movement under its leadership, but it is on the contrary the development of the movement which will determine the fate of the Stalinist party. Therefore in regard to the movement directed by the Stalinist party, besides understanding and criticizing the mistakes of this party, we must (the most important of all) comprehend the objective significance of this movement, and especially its class significance. We must recognize, criticize and attempt to correct, all the distortions, but we should not neglect the essential features by stressing the subordinate traits, or deny the nature of things due to certain distorted phenomena.

### The "People's Liberation War" is the Third Chinese Revolution

The extreme erroneous expression of our dogmatism in the past was in obstinately denying that this "People's Liberation War" was a revolution. At first, we considered that in modern Chinese society, it is absolutely impossible to conquer the power of the whole nation unless there is a movement of the workers leading the peasants. We still insist that these events are not to be called a revolution because they contain all kinds of defects. This attitude is simply to deny the facts which do not conform to our theory. This dogmatism of theory and complete disregard of the real conditions has come to its climax.

The events happening in China are a progressive mass movement which overthrew the old regime by violence from below. These events have already embodied in them the essential characteristics of a revolution. We can give no other name to it except revolution. We have traditionally admitted that the war between the CP and the Kuomintang is a real civil war which is entirely different from the strife among the warlords. A civil war, so to speak, is a class struggle which has developed into an open armed struggle. Today the consequence of this civil war has been the transfer of power to the whole nation. If this is not a revolution, what else is it?

To my view, the revolutionary situation\*

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\*Here we apply the term "revolutionary situation" in the sense of a situation in which the revolution is about to but has not yet broken out; when the rulers are not able to execute their power normally and peacefully, while on the other hand, the "mass movement" has become vigorous. This revolutionary situation is in the sense of what Lenin said, "No revolution will break out without a revolutionary situation"; it is not interpreted as a situation in which the revolution has already broken out. Some people call this situation a "pre-revolutionary situation." I make this remark in order to avoid any misunderstanding.

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already existed in China since the end of the Resistance War against Japan. Although the mass movement suffered a temporary and partial retreat during the latter half of 1946 and the beginning of 1947 due to the opportunist mistakes of the CP (the line of the Political Consultative Conference), the general revolutionary situation did not subside. Beginning in October 1947, on one hand a huge wave of agrarian revolution was aroused under the appeal of the "Program of Land Reform" of the CP, while on the other hand the "Liberation Army" published its declaration of the overthrow of the Chiang Kai-shek regime. Thus the civil war was transformed into an ordinary revolution.

### Criticism on the Opposing Argument

Some would say that, since there was no broad mobilization of the masses in this event, we cannot call it a revolution. This opposition is not able to justify itself. Never has a revolution mobilized the entire population. The definition of revolution does not offer any fixed idea about what percentage of the population should be mobilized. For example, in the Revolution of 1911, only a very tiny number of revolutionaries and members of the "New Army," etc., participated, while the people in general were quite ignorant of what happened. But everyone admits this was a revolution. If we take only the number of masses mobilized as a criterion, then the present revolution is even more normal than the Second Revolution, because the masses organized in the latter numbered only about ten millions, whereas before the "Liberation Army" crossed the Yangtse River there were already more than a hundred million peasants who rose to distribute the land.

Still others would argue: the overthrow of the Kuomintang regime was achieved simply by military power instead of the power of the mass movement. It is therefore not a revolution. This kind of argument also does not merit refutation. The mass struggle takes various forms, and the military struggle is only one of them. The "Liberation Army" grows up through the armed revolts, land struggles, reduction of rents and interest, people's self-defense against the Japanese imperialists and through the other mass movements; it is the armed power to secure and to protect certain interests of the people, hence it is itself undoubtedly one of the forces of the mass movement.

Some people would finally argue: that in this event, the urban population, particularly the workers, played no role at all. It is true that the workers played a very insignificant role. But this argument only demonstrates that this is not a proletarian revolution, and does not prove that fundamentally it is not a revolution. If it is presumed that only a proletarian revolution can be called a revolution, the Permanent Revolution would become meaningless. That would be the same as saying: since only the proletarian revolution is a revolution, therefore all the revolutionary tasks in the backward countries must be accomplished only under the leadership of the proletariat. What a caricature this is of the theory of Trotsky!

To consider this revolution as only a peasant war and not a revolution is to commit a twofold mistake. First, though the peasantry constitutes the major dynamic in this movement led by the CP, this is

not a peasant war. During the years of the post-war period, the mass movement broke out in the cities time after time. The program of the whole movement included the demands of the industrialization of China on a grand scale and there were many other demands of a bourgeois-democratic revolution. It is not possible for a pure peasant war to propose such a program. The CP and a great number of cadres of intellectuals who participated in the movement did not consider the land reform as the sole and final goal, but on the contrary, took it as a means to modernize China (to develop capitalism in China). It is therefore wrong to look on this movement of the CP leadership as merely a peasant war.

Secondly, even if it is a pure peasant war, when it has become a broad movement embracing the whole nation, we may call it a revolution. A simple peasant war however, while it may not become a social revolution, nevertheless might become a political revolution. That is why Engels did not hesitate to call the German peasant war in 1525 a revolution.

#### The Real Causes for Refusing to Call This Civil War a Revolution in the Past

In the past, most of our comrades asserted that this "Liberation War" was not a revolution, that, in fact, there was no serious reason for calling it so. This conception originated on the one hand, from our prejudices against the CP and the peasant movement; and on the other hand, from the fact that we were too far removed from this movement, and understood too little about its actual conditions. We asserted that the CP was an opportunist party, and for more than twenty years we engaged in an incessant struggle against its opportunism. Consequently, we have unconsciously nourished an excessive contempt and hostility towards the CP. At the same time, we conceived the revolution as something sacred. It was therefore very difficult for us to link the sacred concept of "revolution" with the dirty idea of the Communist Party. We felt that it would be an insult to revolution, if we called the movement led by the CP a revolution. This could never be tolerated by our feelings. We cast the same contempt on the movement which supported itself on the peasantry as its major power, and thought that it is not qualified to enjoy such glory. Further, as the base of our party in the "New Liberated Areas" is completely limited, and in the first period of the "liberation" the new regime did not make a good impression on the people (who gave a nickname to the CP, "The Party of More Misery"\*)

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\*In Chinese, this nickname sounds almost the same as the pronunciation of the "Communist Party."

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we have been tending to under-estimate the mass potentiality and the revolutionary character of this movement, and could not recognize it as a revolution even after its victory. But if we first sweep away this narrow-mindedness and then proceed further to carefully examine the course of the concrete development of this movement led by the CP, we would then have no reason to despise it so extremely or to deny that it is a revolution.

The Cause and Seriousness of the Mistake in Our Tactics on the Civil War

Since for a long period in the past we did not realize that a revolutionary situation existed and the existence of the revolution itself, we committed a series of tactical errors. At present, many comrades (perhaps the majority) have admitted that the spectator's attitude and the passive criticism which we adopted in the past towards the peasant movement was wrong, and that our proposal of the slogan of an unconditional peace to both sides was equally wrong. We also consider this attitude not conforming to the official attitude in the "Resolution On the Civil War." But to my view, the mistake lies not only in the deviation in executing the policy, but in the absence of a correct analysis of the situation as the premise for this policy. It is precisely due to the fact that this policy had become something hanging in the air that made us feel it difficult to hold tightly to this policy in practical work. We did not realize that China was in a revolutionary situation after the war, and we did not count on the peasant movement under the CP leadership as a strong revolutionary force in this revolutionary situation. We erroneously identified the post-war peasant movement with the former peasant "Soviets" movement in Kiangsi, and thought it was also a desperate adventurist action. We did not understand that the peasant insurrections from 1927-35 occurred in a period in which the revolutionary situation was non-existent, hence hopeless.\*

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\*To analyze seriously, we should say that only the peasant insurrection before 1929 was deprived of any future, because meantime the revolution was in its ebb tide in the whole nation, and even insurrections in the cities could not bring any results. All these insurrections were not created by the objective situation but by the instructions from the Third International in its "Third Period." But beginning with 1930, the broad unrest among the peasants gave the signal for a revolutionary renaissance. Henceforward, however, we should still consider that the policy of the Stalinists, which being divorced from the workers, intended to support itself solely on the peasant armed struggle to establish a soviet regime was without perspective, but we should have remembered that the peasant movement itself could have its own future. We should have realized that the upsurge of the peasant movement could push forward the urban mass movement, and the peasant insurrections would have been able to subsist up to the time when the proletariat would have enough power to lead it to the conquest of power. Then either the CP would correct its own wrong policy, or the worker and peasant masses would desert it and seek for a correct leadership. We should not have asserted in advance that the peasant movement is without perspective and especially talk to the masses with such a discouraging attitude.

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The peasant insurrections, after the war, broke out in the midst of a revolutionary situation, and were therefore not adventures but on the contrary had great possibilities for victory.

As a result of this error in analysis, our sympathies towards the peasant movement as formulated in the "Resolution On the Civil War" turned out to be quite reluctant and merely a demonstration. Who would offer his ardent sympathy and positive support to a distant movement destined to be without perspective? Therefore we bore a

constant contempt towards this movement. We neither paid close attention to it, nor have we been objective. When the force of the CP and its influence on the mass were increased, we arbitrarily assumed that this was temporary and would inevitably tend to decline. When it suffered defeats, we exaggerated the gravity of these defeats. The most ridiculous thing is to affirm that the CP would at any time abandon the policy of equal distribution of land in order to resume compromises with Chiang Kai-shek, without reflecting that the capitulation of the CP in 1936 was the consequence of the defeat of an isolated struggle, while the whole situation of today is very favorable to the peasant movement under its leadership. It had no reason to capitulate, and even if it did so, the peasant masses would not have compliantly followed it.\*

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\*In 1948 we took the temporary interruption of the agrarian reform in the "New Areas" as the sign of the CP's abandonment of the land reform, and thus exaggerated the significance of this event. In reality, the CP only intended to carry out the land reform "by gradual steps." Generally, in the past, it never started land reform in the regions where its rule was not yet stabilized.

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Superficially, it seems that our mistakes are unconscious sectarian errors (I say unconscious, because our official resolutions are not sectarian. However, the daily propaganda and agitation were full of sectarian colors): to identify the movement with the leadership (the CP), and condemn this movement as without perspective because the policy of the CP was in a blind alley. In fact, the real cause of this mistake is that we did not recognize that China was then already in a revolutionary situation, so we overlooked the profound basis of the movement itself and the possibility of its tremendous development. We thought that this movement was simply manufactured by the CP who would give it up at any time. As to our inability to recognize the existing revolutionary situation, it is because we stubbornly held the notion that only a colossal uprising of the workers' movement would be able to create the Third Revolution. Therefore our sectarian mistake is based upon the wrong dogmatic conceptions.

Due to this mistake in understanding, we often did not put the appropriate emphasis in our criticism of the CP on criticizing the adventurism in its policy, and thus gave rise to such a wrong slogan as "unconditional peace on both sides." But in fact, when we say that the CP policy was an adventurist one, it is simply because the CP attempted to rely on a program of collaboration with the bourgeoisie in order to overthrow a bourgeois power -- hence the adventurism in its policy was based on compromise. Therefore at that time we should have placed our stress on the criticism of its compromising attitude, and appealed to the peasants to carry on a firm and thorough-going struggle. Since we did not recognize a revolutionary situation and the existence of the revolution itself, naturally we could not point out these facts to the workers, or take the opportunity to awaken the revolutionary consciousness and will of the working class, and were far from able to apply a strategy of "United Front" with the CP.

After the revolution broke out, we did not try to enlarge it, and to raise it to a higher level, but dreamed that another independent revolution would rise up under our own leadership. As a result, our

party not only lost a good opportunity for development, but afterwards the confidence of the masses was greatly diminished and the faith of a part of the comrades was also shaken. Moreover, the rise of the workers' movement at that time was more or less hindered. All these mistakes derive from the wrong appreciation of the situation which, however, is not a mistake in principle. But we must admit this was a very serious mistake, or we might even say that it is the greatest political mistake ever committed in the history of the Chinese Trotskyist movement.

### The Importance of an Analysis of the Situation

Not having been able to recognize the revolutionary situation and the existence of the revolution in the past, we have paid too dearly. "The past is already far behind, the future is yet to be pursued." We should now seriously examine the matter, and draw the lessons from the mistakes in the past, and seriously analyze the present situation and estimate its possible perspectives. Trotsky often quoted the saying of Spinoza: "Not to weep, nor to laugh, but to understand" to encourage us. Now this is what we should do. We Trotskyists have persisted in the revolutionary line for more than twenty years, but we could not even recognize the revolution before our own eyes, and lost an important historical conjuncture. To think about this really deserves our tears. But the question is not whether we should cry or not, but to be able to comprehend profoundly and correct the errors thoroughly. If we refuse to admit the mistakes, i.e., refuse to recognize the reality under the mask of "being loyal to our consistent views" and "soberness," we would become hard stones or wooden puppets, not able to weep, to laugh or to understand. Then, it would confirm the accusation thrown on us by the renegade Chen Dou-siou: "Their head is already fossilized, and the organization in ruin."

A correct analysis of the situation is an important part of the art of revolution. This analysis has its own logic. The different analyses will eventually lead to differences in practical tactics, but only from a correct analysis of the situation can one logically derive a correct tactic. If the analysis of the situation is wrong, even though we might draw a correct tactic accidentally, since this tactic lacks the necessary premises and inner cohesive logic, it is not possible to carry it out efficiently. The failure of our tactics on the Civil War is a great lesson for us. In the analysis of the situation, the fundamental judgment is to distinguish a revolutionary situation from a non-revolutionary situation. There lies the great difference between the tactics under a revolutionary situation and that under a non-revolutionary situation. Thus our discussion on the question whether this civil war is a revolution or not is not merely a dispute on terms. This question will be the point of departure in the entire coming discussion. Only through a clear comprehension of this event as a revolution or not can we correctly understand the nature of the present situation, the power of the mass movement and the internal logic of the events (including the direction of the change in the mass psychology, and the possible perspectives of the whole event, etc.). And only through this premise can we orient our line of agitation.

May 17, 1951.