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THE ALVIN-REED SCHOOL OF QUOTATIONS

OR

HOW TO CHARACTERIZE THE CCP WITHOUT MENTION OF THE REVOLUTION

by Hilde MacLeod

"Men will not receive the truth from their enemies and it is very seldom offered to them by their friends, on this account I have frankly uttered it."

Alexis de Toqueville, Preface
to Democracy in America, Vol II

If I were an enemy of Trotskyism, I could ask for no more potent weapon against it than the contributions of Comrades Alvin and Reed in Discussion Bulletin, Vol 22, #28.

Translate these articles into Spanish and Portuguese, present them as the position of Trotskyism on the third Chinese revolution and its CCP leadership, distribute them widely to the revolutionary-developing forces throughout Latin America; this would fatally damage any prospective influence Trotskyism might attain in this revolutionary-pregnant area. The effect would be particularly devastating in Cuba.

The Cubans know the Chinese revolution and its leadership. Members of the Castro regime, many Cuban government functionaries, teachers, trade unionists, technicians, artists, have visited China and have seen for themselves the fruits of the Chinese revolution. They study this revolution, its history, the record of its leadership, its methods of work, its program. Raul Castro tells of the 26th of July cadres studying guerrilla warfare from Mao Tse-tung's writings when they were getting their military training in Mexico under the instruction of a veteran of the Spanish Civil War.

One might even suspect that the Cuban revolution was modeled on the third Chinese revolution. For just as Mao Tse-tung began the struggle for power in China with a small band in the Ching-kang mountains, so did Fidel Castro begin his in the Sierra Maestra. And just as Mao Tse-tung and Chu Teh began organizing for the struggle by winning the leadership of the rebellious peasantry, defending their rights against the feudal landlords, giving them military training, establishing schools to wipe out their illiteracy and hospitals to eliminate the debilitating diseases which tortured them, so did the Castro leadership.

The strong bond between the Cubans and the Chinese is demonstrated today in the curriculum of the Cuban Schools of Revolutionary Instruction, where the texts used are from the writings of Lenin, Fidel Castro and Mao Tse-tung. The Cubans are now adopting the Chinese system of "emulation campaigns" in industry, and the Chinese method of a month's stint at manual labor for intellectuals and government functionaries. A close liason is revealed in the constant exchange of missions of various kinds: trade union delegations, agricultural and industrial technician exchanges, cultural delegations, celebration of special events in common. No doubt this bond has been firmly cemented during and since the recent Cuban crisis.

In the face of this evidence of firm comradeship between Cuba and Red China, would not the presentation of these Alvin and Reed articles as the line of Trotskyism on the Chinese revolution and its leadership be revolting to the Cubans?

Cuba is the predominating influence in the leftward moving masses throughout Latin America. How Cuba goes will be decisive there. Reports now indicate that Cuba is on the side of China in the Peking-Moscow ideological dispute. This is bound to influence revolutionary thinking in the rest of Latin America. That China is already a potent magnet in this revolutionary-pregnant area, is revealed in the attitude of Francisco Juliao, the "Castro of Brazil". He is reported to have declared upon his return from a visit to China in 1962: "Mao Tse-tung is the greatest living human being... Brazil and the Soviet Union have much to learn from China."

Do you believe that Francisco Juliao can be convinced that Mao Tse-tung is the class collaborationist, treacherous, corrupt, self-seeking bureaucrat that is pictured in the Alvin-Reed statements? And that the Mao regime should be overthrown? If he should listen at all, no doubt he would ask: "Where is your proof?"

In 1924 Trotsky predicted the possibility that, because of the conservatism of the western working class "The center of gravity of the revolutionary movement will be transferred to the East." That prediction is a living reality today. Eye witness reports by observers of the calibre of Tibor Mende and Felix Greene have told us "Peking is the new Mecca for millions of Asians, Latin Americans, Africans." And a hostile witness, ace reporter Denis Warner, describes the evidence:

"October 1, 1960. Across the people's square in Peking students shouldered a model of the world surmounting a burning torch. Following them with an immense dummy

of Mao Tse-tung's Fourth Volume of Selected Works embedded in a trough of roses, came the staff of the New China Printing Press. Two thousand foreign guests from seventy different countries rose in the reviewing stands to cheer. Tall sallow Arabs stood beside their darker brothers from Central Africa. Southeast Asians mixed with Japanese and Latin Americans. Though they came from different corners of the earth, spoke different tongues and had different customs, this was something they all could understand. The flames that licked around the globe were Mao's flames; the book told how they should be lit." (Hurricane from China.)

Nevertheless, if authors Reed and Alvin believe the evaluation of the third Chinese revolution and its leadership presented in their quotations, to be correct, and that it is necessary for the Mao regime to be overthrown, it is their duty to say so to the Castro regime and to other Latin American revolutionary leaders such as Francisco Juliao. They should be warning these people of the danger to their own revolution by close collaboration with such "treacherous scoundrels," such "betrayers of the working class" as the Mao regime. I repeat, if they believe their own statements, it is their revolutionary duty to give this warning. Why are they not doing so?

Comrades Alvin and Reed do not make specific mention of it, but no doubt they know that the third Chinese revolution really "happened". Thus in characterizing the Mao regime anything of a concrete nature such as quotations from the Mao program and how the victory was won, is avoided. Ignored also is the huge volume of factual information now available concerning the political and military means for winning the civil war and the actual march of events of the revolution; in short, the kind of concrete evidence so lacking in the quotations relied upon in their articles, which were written long before the events.

As has been pointed out elsewhere, there may have been ample excuse at the time of the horror of the Moscow Trials for such a judgment of the CCP as presented in these quotations they offer as authoritative evidence. At that time there was reason to believe that the CCP was Stalinist in spite of the meagre information available. But now history has rendered a contrary verdict on the Mao Regime. It carried through a mighty social revolution which today is "shaking the world." To present today these views of years ago as the position of the SWP on this mighty revolution, (as must presumably be the intention of Alvin and Reed) can be considered nothing less than slander -- yes, vile slander - of a great revolution and a great revolutionary leadership.

No revolutionary party -- or revolutionist -- can do that with impunity. Such error can eat at the vitals of a party, vitiating its viability.

Comrade Evelyn Reed must have read only the bibliography of my bulletin, Red China, Catalyst of World Revolution, judging by some glaring errors made:

1. Not a single Trotskyist was quoted. (answer) I quoted Trotsky himself on two most important points contained in Mao's program: Trotsky's advocacy of a united front with Chiang Kai-shek in the war with Japan, and Trotsky's recognition of the necessity for the Chinese revolution developing in two stages.
2. Some Stalinist authorities are quoted. This charge demands the naming of them with concrete evidence to substantiate.
3. Some authors quoted have Stalinist bias. Answer same as number two above. Both contentions are wrong.
4. All authors quoted are biased against Trotskyism. Some may be, but practically all of them are indifferent to Trotskyism, considering the Trotskyist role in the Chinese events inconsequential.
5. Not one Marxist is quoted. Astonishing! Aside from Trotsky, I quoted Mao Tse-tung extensively. Mao is not only a Marxist but one of the world's great Marxists. A study of his writings would make this apparent to anyone with Marxist understanding. Moreover, such a study is a requisite for a correct appraisal of the third Chinese revolution.
6. No Trotskyist author is listed in the bibliography. To my knowledge no Trotskyist has written a book on the third Chinese revolution. A sad state of affairs. For is it not the duty of revolutionists to study revolutions? The great Marxist teachers did this exhaustively. But for the most part, the third Chinese revolution has been vilified, not studied in our movement. The writings, the program of Mao Tse-tung, the leader of that great revolution are held in disdain -- without reading them. Surely not a scientific attitude!

How is it possible to understand this mighty revolution -- the continuator of the 1917 Bolshevik revolution -- without studying the actual CCP program as well as the actual march of events as they were written in life? Would we attempt to understand the Bolshevik revolution without studying the history of the Bolshevik Party, without a study of the writings of the leaders of that revolution, Lenin and Trotsky? But in our ranks it seems that the

label "Stalinism" is sufficient to explain all things concerning the third Chinese revolution.

Can it be that we are to consider Trotskyists as "not as other men" and their unsupported word not to be questioned?

One might surmise this to be the case from the fact that we have been told -- some of us -- that only the testimony of the Chinese Trotskyists are to be considered in judging the third Chinese revolution.

Before writing my documentary history I read practically everything that had been published in our press, including internal bulletins, on the third Chinese revolution. With a few exceptions -- Germain's articles in the magazine being the best -- these writings are sweeping statements consisting chiefly of condemnation of the CCP. No eye witness reports of the actual "march of events" are related, no examination of the CCP program as it was written and widely broadcast by Mao Tse-tung. I had to look for the actual record elsewhere.

Marxism is always concrete. And, as Trotsky taught, in order to judge the character of a revolution one must understand the "social mainsprings". For this understanding a concrete picture of the "march of events" is essential. "Only on this basis," wrote Trotsky, "it is possible to correctly appraise political programs and the slogans of struggling parties, which ...are its most manifest signs." (Introduction to Harold Isaacs' Tragedy of the Chinese Revolution)

* * * *

Epithets are no substitute for political analysis. Too often the term "Stalinist stooge" has been used in that way. For instance, most of the authors I quote in my bulletin are biased in favor of capitalism. On what political basis can one call Brandt, Fairbank and Schwartz of the Harvard Research Studies, Stalinist stooges? The idea is laughable. The same can be said for Linebarger of Johns Hopkins, Robert Carver North of Stanford and Herbert Feis of Princeton. No doubt Theodore H. White, best seller author of The Making of a President would be astonished to learn that he is a Stalinist stooge. Likewise Harrison Forman, Gunther Stein, Jack Belden and others who reported the Yen-an story and gave eye witness reports of the strategy and tactics of the CCP and the Red Army as carried out in action. The only axe these ace bourgeois reporters had to grind in this instance was the telling of a good story, and an important story as they saw it.

These bourgeois reporters -- most of them -- had

known from first hand experience the totalitarian Stalinist regime in the Soviet Union. To them, this regime was Communism. The very different CCP regime, democratic and dynamic, they saw in Yen-an and the Red Army; the enthusiastic support given it by the liberated peasants, the attraction it had for thousands of students who made the dangerous trek through the Chiang Kai-shek blockade to Yen-an, this to them, could not be Communism. So they dubbed the CCP "agrarian reformers."

This judgment of the CCP as agrarian reformers was shared by Service and Davies of the U.S. State Department. Do Comrades Alvin and Reed want to join the McCarthyites in calling Service and Davies Stalinist stooges?

In the National Revolutionary Martyrs Memorial Park (China's Arlington) outside Peking there is a simple marble cenotaph inscribed: "Agnes Smedley, Revolutionary Writer and Friend of the Chinese People." This tribute tells what the leaders of a mighty revolution think of Agnes Smedley. Does this not deserve our consideration?

Agnes Smedley is one of only two foreigners and the only non-communist foreigner buried there. This daughter of poor white Missouri pioneers and one-eighth native Redskin, in reality gave her life for the Chinese revolution. She marched with the Red Army, shared its terrible hardships, nursed its wounded in Red Army field hospitals. This ruined her health and in the end brought about her untimely death.

Her autobiographical novel, Daughter of Earth, is the story of the making of a revolutionist. In her childhood and youth she experienced the workers' struggle at its most bitter in the Rockefeller mining camps of Colorado. Here she acquired a hatred of capitalism with the air she breathed.

Agnes Smedley earned in revolutionary struggle her honored niche in history.

Slander of her reflects only upon the slanderer.

And as for Edgar Snow upon whose head the Alvin-Reed wrath descends with special fury: he is, by his own testimony, in politics, a Fabian, Nehru being his ideal statesman. Snow's reporting did not please Stalin either. Stalin kicked him out of the Soviet Union.

The sad fact of the matter is, Snow's reportage of the events of the mighty third Chinese revolution and the character of its leadership -- not ours of a deformed revolution -- has stood the test of time. History confirms this and history is the final arbiter.

So let's be done with this childish nonsense of calling anyone who reports favorably on the third Chinese revolution and the Mao regime, a Stalinist stooge.

Such documents as the U.S. Department of State "White Paper", written for the information of the ruling class must report accurately events of importance for these to be of any value to the capitalist rulers. In 1944, the "White Paper" reported the following from its career officer, Service:

"Reports of two American officers, several correspondents and twenty odd foreign travelers regarding conditions in the areas of North China under Communist control, are in striking agreement. This unanimity, based on actual observation, is significant. It forces us to accept certain facts, and to draw from these facts, an important conclusion."

Should we dismiss these facts because of the bourgeois source, or should we give them thoughtful consideration?

These facts (which I presented in my bulletin) can be summarized as follows:

1. The leaders of the CCP were honest, incorruptible, enormously competent men, self-sacrificing, living a spartan life, sharing the hardships of the masses and dedicated to the socialist revolution.

2. These CCP leaders organized, trained and led -- led superbly -- a people's army, which in the words of a U.S. Marine officer had "the highest morale of any army he had ever seen." Also this CCP leadership organized and educated the atomized, illiterate peasantry, taught them democratic self-government, schooled them in land reform, built up one of the most barren regions of China from a backward, half-starved community of a few thousand inhabitants into a prosperous (for China) self-sustaining economy of nearly 110 million people in ten years. This was accomplished despite the enormous handicap of the tight blockade of this Border Region, as it was called, first by the Japanese Army and then by Chiang Kai-shek. And all the time they were fighting a tough guerrilla warfare.

Was this the work of Stalinists?

If the SWP majority rejects this evidence of eye witness reporters and insists still that the Mao regime is Stalinist, with all that Stalinism implies, then it is obligatory to present some concrete evidence that these observers were either liars or dupes -- or both.

If such concrete evidence cannot be produced, and yet it is maintained the revolution was deformed by Stalinism, then it is obligatory to explain theoretically and factually, how Stalinism could establish a democratically-flourishing oasis at Yen-an in a sea of chaos and hunger and terror that was Chiang's China.

But much more than that, it is incumbent upon Alvin-Reed to explain how a "rotten, counter-revolutionary, class collaborationist, crassly cynical, treacherous, deadly foe of the toilers, the greatest obstacle in the path of revolutionary development, a too corrupt ever to redeem itself bureaucracy" could make one of the mightiest revolutions in all history and do it in a manner which won the respect and admiration of observers unsympathetic to communism.

One would assume from the arguments presented in his bulletin article that Comrade Alvin views the party position on the character of the CCP as the same now as at the time of the revolutionary take-over in 1949. So it is pertinent to review what was said at the time on this subject. Here are a few excerpts from our publications:

The Militant, Jan. 31, 1949. The policy of the Chinese Stalinist leaders is to try to confine the revolution to the peasantry and to prevent a working class uprising. Consequently their policy and that of British and American imperialism coincide.

The Militant, May 2, 1949. Special report from the Chinese Trotskyists: "Here then is the Stalinist type of revolution led by the very people who fear it like death itself. The Chinese peasant movement is being betrayed....Tomorrow Mao Tse-tung will be obliged to deal with foreign imperialism as his sole savior to disentangle him from the multitudinous and almost insoluble financial and economic difficulties which his coming to power will confront him with."

SWP Fourth International, June, 1949, Editorial: "The future of class relations in China, the policies and strategy of Stalinism are being subjected to a decisive test...CCP measures, taken to protect the political rule of the Stalinist regime, are not to be identified with a social revolution....A political not a social overturn is occurring in China in which the Stalinists have utilized agrarian reforms and a minimum of revolutionary measures to bring them to power. But since the Stalinists are neither the legitimate representatives of capitalism nor of the proletariat whose interests they have betrayed again and again, their rule can be only transitory and an interim state in the development of the class struggle in China.

"The Stalinists can remain in power only until world imperialism -- perhaps with an agreement with the Kremlin -- frees its hands in the West to once again reorganize the forces of capitalist reaction in China, or until a new upsurge of the proletariat takes place under the leadership of the Chinese section of the Fourth International in alliance with the great peasant masses. These remain the only basic alternatives for the Chinese revolution. Whatever its duration or vicissitudes, the Stalinist rule is nothing more than a caretaker regime for one or the other."

This monumental error in judgment and wrong prognoses concerning the Mao regime should remind us of what Lenin said to Radek when looking over some past Bolshevik writings: We wrote a lot of foolish things in those days, didn't we?

But at the time, this judgment of the CCP and the revolution remained unshaken even when news arrived of the tremendous outpouring of hundreds of thousands of enthusiastically cheering Chinese masses on October 1, 1949, in Tien An Men Square in Peking; hundreds of thousands of voices shouting, "Mao Tse-tung, Wan Shui!" (Long Live!); hundreds of thousands of voices thundering the anthem which has been sung for fifteen years all over China:

"Arise you who refuse to be slaves,
Our very flesh and blood will build a
great new wall.
A savage indignation fills us now,
Arise! Arise! Arise!"

For this stirring event of world wide importance did not rate a single line at the time in the pages of The Militant.

China was far away. Moreover, the Yugoslav-Stalin break was an urgent problem of the hour. The SWP was deeply immersed -- rightly so -- in that development. As part of the agitation around the Yugoslav question, the Schactmanite ISL was condemned for withholding support from Yugoslavia. The Militant, November 28, 1949 declared: "Why...does it (the ISL) withhold support from Yugoslavia? The answer will be found in the Stalinophobia which increasingly dominates the ISL's politics and strategy. Demoralized by the degeneration of the first workers state and departing from the class analysis of events and movements, they make the presence or absence of 'democracy' (divorced from its class content) their supreme criterion for arriving at political positions...they keep repeating that Titoism is Stalinism, despite the unique origins of Titoism in the independent insurrectionary mass movement in Yugoslavia during the war

and despite the fact that "Stalinism minus Kremlin control" is by its very description something new and different on the scene. Their view that Titoism equals Stalinism not only relieves them of the need to analyze the direction in which Titoism is moving...it also dictates that they cannot have any more to do with the one than with the other."

With a few minor variations this condemnation of the ISL for its attitude to Yugoslavia parallels the attitude of the SWP to China. (This applies to the Yugoslavia of 1949. The Yugoslavia of revolutionary retreat today is another matter.)

"One unexposed and uncondemned error always leads to another, or prepares the ground for it," wrote Trotsky in The Third International After Lenin.

This was demonstrated when the China question came to the fore in the Korean war. Particularly when Red China whipped U.S. imperialism to a standstill in defense of Korea, a reconsideration of the Chinese question was urgent. In 1955 this was attempted in the resolution The Third Chinese Revolution and Its Aftermath. China was declared a workers state, but one deformed by Stalinism. All the old Stalinist filth was attributed to the CCP leadership without giving one item of concrete evidence to substantiate the charge. In fact this 1955 resolution is a prime example of the fewer the facts the more purple grows the prose.

The first step of proclaiming China a workers state having been taken, it was now necessary to explain how a degenerate Stalinist party was able to win the power in a most hard fought, million-massed revolution. This was a large order -- to explain how a party which for long had been proclaimed as counter-revolutionary could make a mighty revolution. If only we could have declared as did Thomas Carlyle of the great French Revolution:

"Whence it cometh? Whither it goeth? These are questions!...The Age of Miracles has come back! 'Behold the World-Phoenix in fire-consummation and fire-creation; wide are her fanning wings; loud is her death melody of battle-thunders and falling towns; skyward lashes the funeral flame, enveloping all things; it is the Death-Birth of a World!'. . .But for the rest, let no man ask history to explain by cause and effect how the business proceeded...(it) is the battle of Fanaticisms and Miracles; unsuited for cause and effect."

This would have looked like the happy ending. But, being historical materialists, the "Age of Miracles" and the "World-Phoenix" would not answer for us.

However, the answers we found were not happy ones. First: the civil war was won by the peasants, forcing the CCP to take power, the CCP given no credit whatsoever. Even as late as 1959 a Militant editorial declared: "When China erupted in revolution, the Mao leadership...was pushed into power almost despite itself."

This explanation resulted in contradictions still not explained. First and foremost, it ignores the necessity of revolutionary leadership. From the beginning the Trotskyists had heaped coals of fire on Mao Tse-tung and the CCP he led for going to the hinterlands and organizing the peasant insurrections; this was "deserting their class" and the Mao-Chu army was even called "Red bandits". The city proletariat, not the petty-bourgeois-minded peasants, must make the revolution; this was orthodoxy. But now life had said otherwise. The peasants had been the battering ram of the revolution -- that was indisputable. They must be given the credit, for to give it to "Stalinists" was inconceivable.

That this explanation gave validity to the theory of spontaneity had also to be ignored.

Now if atomized, illiterate, unorganized, superstitious peasants, beaten and terrorized for generations, fearful and cautious as the Chinese peasants were, could lead a revolution of such enormous proportions, then, pray tell, what becomes of the necessity for building a vanguard of disciplined revolutionists? What becomes of "...that part of Trotskyism which is today its most vital part -- the conception of the labor movement summed up in the question of the party?..." (JPC in Open Plenum, 1953) "At least," said IWW leader Big Bill Haywood, "I always realized that the essential thing is to have an organization of those who know." And what about the necessity for a revolutionary program? Did the Chinese peasantry have a program which they imposed on the CCP?

A second appraisal seemingly tries to get around these contradictions. As expounded by some comrades, it is quite ingenious: it was Permanent Revolution that made the revolution. A theory untouched by human hands, thwarted the evil designs of the CCP and brought the revolution to victory. That the theory of permanent revolution was confirmed in the third Chinese revolution is indisputable. But if the theory without human intervention can win revolutions, we are entitled to ask: where was this disembodied, all-powerful theory in France after World War II when the government was practically lying in the streets of Paris, and the French CP picked it up and handed it back to the French bourgeoisie?

Today there is a third explanation advocated by some,

who maintain that the CCP leadership was the Stalinist betrayers -- all that we had proclaimed them to be -- right up to about 1947 when they suddenly changed course and turned into their opposite. That a three-million-member party could flop from being a rotten, bureaucratic misleadership into a full-fledged revolutionary one, and do it practically overnight, is truly "Self-reform of the bureaucracy" with a vengeance!

This is much like saying, you can grow figs from thistles; the leopard can change his spots; and the virgin birth is good historical materialism, that is metaphysics, not Marxism.

Let's be done with such absurdities, absurdities which make a mockery of Marxist theory and historical facts.

The civil war in China was won in the only way it could have been won -- in the fighting of it. Surely not as the 1955 Resolution states: "The armies and regime of Chiang could have been knocked down like rotten pieces of wood had the CCP at any time summoned the masses in the cities to rise." Aside from the fact that this demand ignores the Marxist tenet: No ruling class gives up without a struggle -- it might be asked: If, as the Chinese Trotskyists maintained, the city workers were quiescent, were distrustful of the CCP -- let alone the fact that they were unarmed -- would not such a demand under these circumstances, have been declared adventurism? Did the Chinese Trotskyists, who were in the cities, issue such a call?

The third Chinese revolution triumphed in the only way possible for it to triumph in the mass of humanity that was China, under the complex and chaotic conditions prevailing, by a correct Marxist program skillfully wielded by a conscious, well-tested, well-disciplined revolutionary Marxist leadership.

Moreover, it was the creative Marxism of Mao Tse-tung, applying the Marxist method to the concrete social conditions of China, that gave to the peasantry the role of battering ram of the revolution; that saw the necessity for armed struggle.

Such a leadership could not have been Stalinist.

* * * *

In 1956 Comrade Cannon wrote in The Debs Centennial "...the present momentary lull in the class struggle, which gives time for thought and reflection, can be turned to advantage. It can be, and probably will be, one of the richest periods in the history of American socialism -- a period of preparation for events to come."

That "momentary lull" may be drawing to a close. But the "time for thought and reflection" has been little if any realized. In this period of lull what more rewarding subject for thought and reflection could have been had than the study of the mighty third Chinese revolution? (I found it so.)

This ancient land of China wherein an advanced culture prevailed when our European ancestors were still stone age cave dwellers, with justice regarded the Westerners who shot their way into China a century ago, as marauding barbarians. For generations thereafter prostrate China was looted of its exquisite centuries old art treasures; the marvelous architecture of its ancient temples and palaces vandalized; its people kicked around by the mailed boots of "Christians" whose "...barbarities and desperate outrages...are not to be paralleled by those of any other race, however fierce, however untaught, and however reckless of mercy and shame, in any age of the earth." (William Howitt, Colonialism and Christianity, quoted by Marx in Capital)

It was the revolutionary trumpet of the Bolshevik revolution in Russia, in 1917, which awakened this sleeping giant. The story of this awakening, of which Napoleon warned: "Let her sleep. If she awakens she will shake the world," is a revolutionary epic second to none in all history. It staggers the imagination, grips the emotions, fires a revolutionary fervor.

The canvas is so vast, the great stormy sweep of the revolutionary struggle so wide and deep, the thunder of this awakening of hundreds of millions of oppressed people so compelling -- what better instrument could be had to arouse the latent revolutionary consciousness of youth? If a blase bourgeois reporter -- albeit one of sensitive discernment -- such as Felix Greene, could declare: "No experience in my life shook me so deeply as this first visit to China..." how much more profound would be the impact of this mighty revolutionary epic on revolutionary youth?

One who dismisses the third Chinese revolution as just another case of Stalinism is only cheating himself.

Today, like the revolutionary trumpet of the Bolsheviks in 1917, comes the revolutionary call of the leaders of a six hundred and fifty millioned membered mighty revolution that is shaking the world. Does it not demand our serious thought and consideration?

Comrade Joe Hansen in What the Discussion on Cuba Is All About (Discussion Bulletin, Vol 22, No 12, p. 25) wrote: "...we succeeded in handling the case of China.

Our success in handling the truly difficult case of China, let me repeat, enabled us to approach Cuba with relative ease."

This brings up a serious question. If we succeeded in handling the truly difficult case of China, Comrade Hansen should explain: success in handling what in the case of China?

For the shocking fact of history is -- we Trotskyists failed to recognize the social revolution in China in 1949. Moreover, today, non-recognition of the true character of the third Chinese revolution and its leadership still prevails.

Admonishing the Socialist Labor League for its failure to correctly appraise the Cuban revolution, Comrade Hansen declared:

"...what is decisive is the revolution itself. A revolutionist who misses the test of a revolution is a failure no matter how well he can quote the texts."
(Discussion Bulletin, Vol 24, No 2, p. 52)

Writing also about the Cuban revolution Comrade Cannon stated: "We are also on trial. What would our talk about revolution be worth if we didn't recognize a revolution when we see it?" (Letter to the PC, May 22, 1961, published in the Socialist Labor League Internal Bulletin, May 1, 1962)

This criterion for a revolutionist as applied to the SLL in the case of Cuba, should also be applied to the SWP in the case of China, should it not?

Fortunately there is still time to rectify this most serious error a revolutionist can make -- failure to recognize a revolution when he sees it. But for this the Stalinophobic blinders must be removed, and with clear vision must be seen the living reality of the mighty third Chinese revolution and the true character of its Marxist leadership.

For today the mainstream of world revolution stems from Red China. If we Trotskyists cannot find our way into that mainstream history will surely pass us by.

February 5, 1963

SELF-DETERMINATION AND THE INDEPENDENT NEGRO STRUGGLE

by Larry Smith

That an independent Negro struggle exists in the U.S. cannot be denied. It is no longer episodic, moving in fits and starts, but is constantly mounting, exerting growing pressures on all levels of government, organized labor, and the country's foreign policies as well. This may well be the first rumblings of socialist revolution in North America. The question for us, the SWP, is how influence it in a Marxist direction?

The movement is still controlled by petty-bourgeois Negroes who, by and large, look for a legal, constitutional solution from the government, to whom they appeal. In their conduct of the movement they've conjured up various passive resistance theories, some of which have been effective in practice. The leadership is lacking, however, in an overall political approach of any kind to this tremendous problem. In short, they hardly know where the struggle is leading and they are not sure that they want to go there. At the same time they are forced to respond to the militancy surging up from the Negro workers and students, exemplified in the Robert Williams tendency and given expression by the S.N.C.C. and to some extent by C.O.R.E. The Black Muslims also contribute to this militancy.

This movement is growing while organized labor is bogged down. Although labor has begun to stir economically in some important instances, politically it sleeps, defaulting on its historic obligations. Labor has yet to challenge American business, and no class can effect the proletarian revolution but the proletariat.

The Negro movement can't endure unless organized labor comes to its aid. Without this help it will succumb; if not to general racist terrorism, then to direct government repression. To the capitalist system, the Negro problem is a serious impediment to its aim of world domination, and its designs against Latin America, especially since the Cuban revolution. The repression will be brutal and vindictive, Nazi-like. This is a sure danger.

The energy and fighting spirit of the Negro people is not boundless. So far their courageous efforts have hardly dented the structure of prejudice in this country. Eventually frustration at failure may sap their determination and will. One thing is certain: we can't succeed under the capitalist system. That is the cold hard truth.

Some years ago through the efforts of one of our leading comrades, I believe it was George Breitman, the "Newark Evening News" dropped its practice of designating "Negro" in its crime stories. For some years it refrained from this practice. Of late, however, they have resumed this hateful policy. This is a relatively small example, but it serves to illustrate the pattern, the nature of gains made by the Black man in this country. That which is granted without a decisive, conclusive struggle is easily withdrawn by the white man whenever it is opportune. Only under socialism will we be guaranteed our emancipation, our rights. We Negroes must fight for that, socialism, ultimately. Presently the struggle takes the form of a demand for democratic rights.

The documents of Bulletin #4 explain the duality of the independent Negro struggle: The fight for democratic rights and emancipation from capitalist segregation and racism (political, social and economic equality); and the Marxist path toward socialism it must, and is now taking unconsciously. However, the elucidation of the democratic, nationalist slogans of self-determination is of the utmost importance. Lenin's analysis of small nations indicates the importance of the Negro Independence movement as a catalyst in the socialist revolution: "The dialectics of history is such that small nations, powerless as an independent factor in the struggle against imperialism play a part as one of the ferments, one of the bacilli which help the real power against imperialism to come on the scene, namely the Socialist Proletariat."

However, this would be especially so if Negroes were to consciously demand the right of self-determination. Today! Now!

Nationalism is described by Trotsky as being inherently revolutionary. This has been proven by Cuba whose nationalist struggle against U.S. imperialism culminated in a workers state. But if the nationalist struggles are to evolve into workers states and the workers states to endure into socialist states, then nationalism must have the active support of the proletariat in the advanced capitalist countries.

Here in the U.S. one of the best ways for the Negro struggle to succeed is for the Negro people to expand this "mood," as Breitman calls it, into a conscious demand. This nationalism is growing. The increased membership of the Black Muslims attests to this. In one of the 1939 discussions, Trotsky, speaking of self-determination, said: "I do not propose for the party to advocate, I do not propose to inject, but only to proclaim our obligation to support the struggle for self-determination if the Negroes themselves want it."

The signs point to the Negroes wanting it. This as yet "mood" only wants for crystallization into a conscious demand for a separate state on the part of the Negro people. The Black Muslims are working on it. This is what the democratic demand of self-determination logically leads to.

For the conscious elements among the Negro people to make this demand is to imbue the whole struggle with a revolutionary consciousness, a sense of destiny and hope which the Negro sadly lacks. It would serve these purposes: Impel the present Negro petty-bourgeois leadership to arise from its passive posture or step down, to be replaced by militant Negro workers and youth; most important, cause eruptions within the labor movement, give it impetus. The Meanys, Reuthers and McDonalds would have to abandon their stance of lip service to equality. They would be forced to show their real concern for their privileged positions as side men of the corporations and American imperialism. They would no longer be able to contain the organized workers demand for action on unemployment; a share in increased production, the shorter work week. Soon thereafter they'd demand the lifting of the nuclear nightmare haunting society.

We must not forget that there are many Negroes in organized labor's ranks.

The Negro Trotskyists should respond to this nationalistic desire. How? By injecting our ideas on self-determination. By taking the position that we as Negroes will do all we can to support the nationalist desires of our people. However, we as Negro revolutionaries should not advocate separatism ourselves, but if a separate state is the desire of the Negro people, we should support this. We should take this position in all organizations in which we're active. This should openly be our position. Moreover we should deliberately strip from the questions of self-determination, nationalism, separatism, all the hokus pokus with which the Black Muslims shroud these issues.

Only the Negro members can do this. Only they can. For reasons clearly explained in Bulletin # 4, the party cannot. Though self-determination is a part of our nationalist program, the party cannot initiate this slogan. Given the fact that the Negro people are for it, the party can support their right and will.

This proposal deserves careful study. Leon Trotsky advised: "Our Negro comrades can say, 'The Fourth International says that if it is our wish to be independent, it will help us in every way possible but that the choice is ours. However, I as a Negro member of the Fourth, hold a view that we must remain in the same state as the whites...' and so on. He can participate in the formation

of the political and racial ideology of the Negroes." The first 1939 discussion, Bulletin # 4.

Trotsky said also: "I can therefore see no reason why we should not advance the demand for self-determination."

In any case if it is true that we should "be where the workers are," with them, then certainly the Negro SWPers should be with their people. As Johnson so aptly put it, "Black and White, Unite" is not enough.

The current of Negro nationalism may well become a tide. It is symptomatic of the deep yearning of the U.S. Negro to be free of white oppression. Through it is released the strangled, pent up desire to "dare carve out a piece of America for themselves," as the old man put it. They now dare! Many Negroes give expression to this feeling by now questioning the efficacy of integration.

There are definitely dangers in our only espousing self-determination. One being that the Muslims may well misdirect this sentiment. After all they are more a sect than a political party. Though they are gaining in support, in the eyes of many Negroes they are suspect. With good reason. The Black man has been through this before. This is more reason why our Negro comrades should take a hand in this.

The most dangerous however is the charge of chauvinism that may be leveled against the Negro by white workers in general and the labor fakers in particular. Meany has endeavored to forge a breach between Randolph's N.A.L.C. and the white unionists. Nevertheless, it is extremely important that the mass of white workers not be alienated.

This, though, has mostly to do with timing. If the independent Negro movement raises the demand for self-determination while in the ascendancy and the organized white workers have made no appreciable gains, then such cries of chauvinism will be of little consequence, because of reasons aforementioned. On the other hand, if Negro nationalist sentiment is carried over into the period of organized labor's inevitable upheaval, the results then could be disastrous. A key factor would be the conscious influence and guidance into the movement by the Negro revolutionary.

If this estimate of an emerging nationalism is correct, among Negroes, then it is imperative that our Negro comrades give it expression and help direct it along the path towards socialist revolution. It is our revolutionary duty.

February 22, 1963
Newark, N. J.

Postscript: Because of the enormity of the subject, I have deliberately not dealt with many important questions connected with it. Here is presented only what I felt necessary in order to introduce my proposal. In future articles I intend to thoroughly treat the premises that support it.