

## C O P Y

### THE CONFLICT IN THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL AND THE POSITION OF THE SWP ON THE CHINA QUESTION

The open split in the Fourth International between Comrade Pablo and his supporters and the majority of the United Secretariat, may appear as shocking news, especially so soon after the Unification Congress. Noting, however, that the political division -- which is the real division -- occurred along the lines of the Sino-Soviet ideological dispute, the split is not so surprising, for the issues involved in this dispute concern the fundamental problems of our epoch.

What is surprising is the position of Comrade Pablo. In his view the Khrushchev bureaucracy not only represents de-Stalinism in the USSR but it promotes a revolutionary course internationally, including "defense of the world revolution." This course, says Pablo, is "essentially revolutionary and to the left."

Whatever prompted Pablo to draw this conclusion, it certainly is not the Marxist method of analysis with which it has nothing in common. Nor does it correspond to the actual facts of life.

Quite naturally the United Secretariat interprets Pablo's position to mean a call for critical support to Khrushchev. This it rejects; its own answer is critical support to the line advanced by the Chinese.

These two diametrically opposed positions reflect on the one hand, the revisionism of the Kremlin bureaucracy and, on the other, the revolutionary policy pursued by the Chinese. While certain qualifications on secondary points are in order what is involved is a conflict between revolutionary policy and opportunism.

The struggle between the revolutionary position of the Chinese and the revisionism of Khrushchev and Company is in essence a continuation of Lenin's struggle against the revisionism of Kautsky and Co., and Trotsky's struggle against Stalinism. These same basic questions now have to be fought out again, and in such a conflict no Trotskyist can remain neutral.

Pablo and his supporters are obviously guilty of infraction of the norms of democratic centralism. Yet it would be false to

reduce the dispute on fundamental political problems to the dimensions of an organizational disagreement. Regardless of organizational measures, the issues in dispute remain and the political conflict within world Trotskyism will continue. The only real difference is the growing fragmentation of the international Trotskyist movement, already accentuated by the split in the Ceylonese Trotskyist Party where the majority entered the bourgeois coalition government. Several groups, all claiming the Trotskyist banner, will be engaged in mutual rivalry and public debate.

The real cause of the trouble is the failure of our movement to properly assimilate the lessons of the post-war revolutions, -- the Chinese, the Cuban and the Algerian. To one degree or another this has already been argued against the general outlook of the British Labor League and the Posadas group in Latin America, but it extends much further. The resolutions adopted at the last SWP convention make patently clear that the lessons of the Chinese revolution have not been assimilated by the majority leadership of our party; nor are the momentous issues involved in the Sino-Soviet dispute correctly understood. Like a Supreme Court, the majority leaders have presumed to sit in judgment, handing down credits or rebukes, but remained disdainful of participation in the revolutionary regeneration initiated by the Chinese.

The majority party leadership has pretty well held to its view that the ideological dispute is a mere "conflict between two bureaucracies", hence the party need not take sides. However, the comrades of the United Secretariat have shown themselves capable of a far broader comprehension of the Sino-Soviet dispute than has been the case in SWP headquarters.

This is not to say that the arguments made by the United Secretariat are without flaws or contradictions. At one point, for example, referring to the backward conditions of China giving constant rebirth to bureaucracy, it is said that "the particular conceptions of the Chinese CP even encourage these tendencies in many fields." The United Secretariat does not specify what these conceptions are. It would have been more appropriate to lay emphasis on the outstanding phenomenon of the Chinese Communist Party's actual practices, which are matters of common knowledge. Its intimate relations with the mass of the people is maintained in all fields; it displays a ready response to the needs of the working people and it continues this with the integrated commune management and political administration at the foundation of the socio-economic structure. Taken together these factors amount to a conscious effort to combat bureaucratic tendencies.

Nevertheless, the general approach and the method of analysis of the United Secretariat presents a healthy contrast to what we experience in the SWP. In fact, its criticism of Pablo's allegations about entrenched bureaucracy and Stalinism in China applies in equal measure to similar charges made by the majority leaders of our party.

On the claim that the Sino-Soviet dispute is merely a conflict between two bureaucracies, the United Secretariat grants that in the final instance social layers are involved. But such a definition, it is stated, assumes quite different meaning when used as a scientific criterion for investigation rather than as a sectarian pretext for not taking a position. It is the sectarian attitude that has been dominant in leading party circles here.

Moreover, the United Secretariat insists that it is not enough to speak about a conflict between two bureaucracies for this "combines with the conflict between the Soviet bureaucracy and the Chinese workers state, the Chinese revolution and in a certain measure the whole colonial and world revolution as such."

This is entirely correct. In a very large measure world revolutionary perspectives are involved in the Sino-Soviet dispute. The Chinese workers state, where the revolutionary fires still burn brightly, defends these perspectives theoretically, and as a matter of practical tasks, it attempts to translate them into reality.

The United Secretariat gives numerous examples from the more material aspects of the Sino-Soviet conflict as reasons for taking sides. It declares it cannot remain neutral in regard to Khrushchev's impermissible method of violating the Sino-Soviet agreements, his hostile economic moves against China, his reneging on the promise to share Soviet atomic secrets with China, and the underhanded support of Nehru in India's conflict with the Peoples Republic of China. Similarly, the United Secretariat declared: we are not neutral in determining the normal right of the Chinese or any other workers tendency to freely distribute its literature in the Soviet Union; nor are we neutral concerning the attitude that grossly slanders the Chinese as "belligerent" as does the Khrushchevist press in the USSR and elsewhere.

Proceeding thus from its own recognition of what is involved in the dispute, the United Secretariat concluded that "independently of our appreciation of the Soviet and Chinese bureaucracies, the line

of the 'Chinese' merits our critical support, above all in relation to how it objectively affects the progress of the world revolution within the workers international movement."

This is contrary to the position of the SWP majority leadership. The resolution adopted at our last convention calls for a political revolution in China. It projects the idea of a new party to conduct the struggle; and it even adds that this cannot be done in a peaceful way.

Thus we have two positions that are wholly incompatible. The contradiction between them cannot be bridged. The United Secretariat gives critical support to the line of the Chinese. The line of the Chinese springs directly from their position as catalyst in world revolutionary developments; it is, of course, the line of their leadership, and this leadership the SWP majority wants to overthrow.

The United Secretariat rejects the Pablo contention that China is going through a Stalinist type crisis. Some bureaucratic manifestations, it says, one could label as Stalinist characteristics. "But it would be a grave error to identify this with Stalinism as it existed in the Soviet Union." Attention is called to the fact that Stalinism was a "product of twenty uninterrupted years of defeat of world revolution." Whereas today, "in a climate of permanent revolution, on a world scale as well as in China itself," a renaissance of Stalinism is "absolutely impossible."

This sounds very much like what the Swaback-Liang tendency has maintained all along. We do not say that the United Secretariat has adopted our position, but its basically correct analysis stands out far above the theoretical poverty that has become so characteristic of any comments on this subject from the SWP national office.

As could be expected, the United Secretariat condemns the Chinese defense of Stalin as reactionary. But it adds the very significant statement: "Can we seriously make our position hinge on the fact that the Chinese defend Stalin as a person? This would be unworthy of the objective Marxist method which we must apply in studying all phenomena of social life."

Our tendency long ago rejected the Chinese efforts to rehabilitate Stalin, but we made it clear that far more basic criteria are necessary for a serious analysis of the Chinese revolution and the Sino-Soviet dispute.

That the United Secretariat recognizes, in its own way, the great importance of the revolutionary regroupment initiated by the Chinese in the dispute with the Kremlin is evidenced by several concrete illustrations. For example, voicing the determination to fight against the Chinese campaign to rehabilitate Stalin, the United Secretariat says: "We are certain that in doing this we will establish an alliance with all the young, viable forces, the Communist tendencies of the pro-Chinese left." Another point spells this out in greater detail:

"Comrade Pablo is also mistaken when he declares that the 'Chinese' have everywhere expelled the 'Trotskyists' from the 'left currents' which they inspired and that collaboration is impossible with these currents from now on. Practical experience has shown to the contrary that within these tendencies differentiation inevitably appears around the problem of Stalin -- on condition that we approach them from a position of critical support without condemning them as a whole in sectarian fashion as Stalinist."

This sounds as if it had been addressed to Tom Kerry in reply to his article "Maoism and the Neo-Stalin Cult" that appeared in a recent issue of International Socialist Review. If this was not intended, it should certainly have been so addressed, for the article violates the United Secretariat's warning. Progressive Labor -- an integral part of the left currents mentioned by the United Secretariat -- was condemned in this article in sectarian fashion as Stalinist. Comrade Kerry hinges his position, and his whole argumentation, on the fact that Progressive Labor defends Stalin as a person. This is precisely what the United Secretariat holds to be "unworthy of the objective Marxist method."

But this is not just Kerry's position. It is that of the majority party leadership. Its open hostility to Progressive Labor has become part of a deliberate policy and this in spite of the fact that Progressive Labor has proclaimed its purpose to help build "a vanguard Leninist Party that can lead millions in mass movements against imperialism."

The repeated efforts by Progressive Labor to encourage student defiance of the Cuba travel ban presented us the possibility of participation, provided the majority party leaders had adopted the attitude that such activity requires an attitude of friendly collaboration. Here was an excellent chance for young Trotskyists to study a revolution at first hand, in actual life, and take part in an effective anti-imperialist action. Although the opportunity was twice available, the majority leaders failed to take advantage of it.

Exposing and combatting the Kremlin bureaucracy has been always considered an historically indispensable task for Trotskyists. It is now being done on a far greater scale by the Chinese Communist Party. The existence of what the United Secretariat calls the "young, viable forces, the Communist tendencies of the pro-Chinese left," is a fact. More and more these forces take on the characteristics of a world-wide movement of revolutionary regeneration. Progressive Labor is the American expression of this development. If we stand aside and ignore this movement history will pass us by, and we shall be reduced to an impotent sect.

Trotskyists are internationalists above all; this is deeply embedded in our tradition. If we are to live up to this tradition, we must strive to reorient the party on the Sino-Soviet dispute. We must realign our position to harmonize with the new world reality and the regroupment of revolutionary forces. This requires an attitude toward Progressive Labor of comradely collaboration in the practical tasks of the class struggle as we explore the possibility of fusion into a larger and more effective American party.

However, a further note is necessary on the United Secretariat's advice on how to approach the left currents, and its reference to differentiations around the problem of Stalin. Inasmuch as efforts have been made to rehabilitate Stalin, Trotskyists have an obligation to make their views known. But it would be incorrect to limit ourselves to this one matter. More important is the general objectives of the living movement arising out of the revolutionary reorientation and regroupment inspired by the Chinese.

The increasing fragmentation of the world Trotskyist movement -- together with the internal slump in the SWP -- is due largely, we repeat, to lack of assimilation of the lessons of the postwar revolutions and failure to draw therefrom the necessary practical conclusions. We are, in effect, abstaining from the world-wide revolutionary regroupment initiated by the Chinese because of political prejudices that have nothing in common with Marxism. Active participation in that regroupment could become the cohesive element binding together the genuine revolutionary elements which are now splitting apart in many different directions. Much more is needed than mere critical support to the regroupment. Trotskyists everywhere should be its most active protagonists. Bystanders never make history.

s/ Arne Swabeck  
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