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FOR NC INFORMATION:

[The following is being circulated among National Committee members at the request of Comrade Arne Swabeck.]

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To National Committee Members at the Plenum Nov. 18, 19, and 20.

Dear Comrades:

Because of misleading assertions made in subsequent articles by Comrade Novack, and contained also in a resolution adopted by our co-thinkers, I submit for your further consideration this addendum to my original statement of September 28, on The Socialist Cultural Revolution in China.

Arne Swabeck

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An Addendum

to

The Socialist Cultural Revolution in China

Comrade Novack uses as a basis for his "analysis" of the Chinese socialist cultural revolution numerous quotations from the most lurid stories manufactured in Hong Kong and echoed by the Kremlin. These stories picture the young Red Guards as ravaging vandals who beat and torture people, tear off their jewelry, mutilate their haircuts, smash classical Greek, Roman and Buddhist statues, ransack homes of old revolutionaries and suppress all dissent while meeting resistance from workers and peasants and running into bloody clashes with the armed forces. These stories have nothing else to recommend them but their bias of extreme hostility to China. Their veracity is on the level with the story from Riga, in 1918, actually "quoting" a Soviet decree for the nationalization of women.

That some excesses have occurred in China need not be disputed. Some people may have been hurt. Where resistance is encountered a revolution cannot be as gentle, polite, refined and temperate as a Greenwich Village teaparty. But far more important for a serious

analysis is the basic trend of ideological persuasion, which is clearly evident in China.

Wherever the smallest excess occurs it serves to feed the imagination of the hostile axe-grinders in the imperialist camp. Taking their stories at face value is another matter. In the case of Comrade Novack it betrays his panicky attempt to bolster the utterly indefensible party position of political revolution for China. Besides this, his polemics sink to the venal level of the axe-grinders. This is completely unworthy of the Marxist method of analysis.

In their studiously contrived villification of the Red Guards the Novack articles constantly resurrect the ghost of Stalin. Thus we are informed that "Mao's regime sticks to the accursed tradition of Stalin," and it is "retaining Stalinist ideas and methods."

Picturing the socialist cultural revolution as a device to prepare the people for resistance to American imperialism -- which is one of the elements involved -- Comrade Novack describes this as similar to Stalin's efforts in WWII to cement the solidarity of the Russian people "while tightening his bureaucratic grip upon the country." The resolution adopted by our co-thinkers at the meeting held in July, on The Latest Developments in the International Situation, adds its bit about "the stifling of dissent by Stalinist-type violence."

The proletarian revolution is a process, not an event. It unfolds through many stages and different phases. When Stalin tightened his bureaucratic grip upon the country, the Russian revolution entered its stage of degeneracy. His instrument of execution was the GPU -- a monstrous all-pervasive police force, which operated in the most brutal fashion through frameups, murder and armed assaults. This formed the essence of the Stalinist method.

What about China? What are the means employed in continuing the process of uninterrupted, or permanent revolution which is now entering the cultural arena? Reliance is not placed on the police force -- that is nowhere in evidence -- but on the people, especially the young Red Guards, the sons and daughters of workers and peasants. Their organization arose spontaneously at the Peking University. From that point of inception the organization spread like wildfire throughout the country. The Red Guards are officially recognized as the living critics of the old world and the builders of the new world.

This is not a struggle of a day or a year, say the Chinese; it will take generations for its completion. But it starts out now on the road to transform education, literature and art and all other parts of the superstructure that do not correspond to the socialist economic foundation. It takes on the form of a combined political, moral, ethical and social reshaping of attitudes in order to bridge the gap between the feudal and bourgeois superstitions and the modern scientific socialist concepts.

One of the potent slogans in the present campaign is: Let the masses educate themselves in the revolutionary movement and raise their political consciousness to higher levels. And this slogan is addressed also to the party in order to promote a continued internal party rectification.

Trotskyists should have no difficulty distinguishing this method from that pursued by Stalin. What is required is an effort to make an objective Marxist analysis. To smear the developments in China with the brush of Stalinism is not very helpful for a serious study. Empirical attempts to reconstruct events there in terms of the Russian "model" are bound to fail; and the facts of history cannot be squeezed into the narrow mold of preconceived notions.

We are all thoroughly familiar with the conditions out of which Stalinism arose. We analysed and we interpreted this development on historical materialist grounds. For us the rise of Stalinism signified a parasitic growth which is not endowed with any quality of permanence. Much less is such a monstrosity, or any part of it, likely to be reproduced elsewhere under different historical conditions. To maintain that this has happened in China nevertheless, that Stalinist methods flourish there, is to violate our own well-established materialist conception of history. The continued harping on this theme will reduce the function of the majority party leaders to prayer meetings fervently pleading that Stalinist manifestations may actually appear in China.

Sad to say, the resolution of our co-thinkers continues the faulty position toward China that was adopted at the Reunification Congress -- a thinly disguised variation of the SWP policy of political revolution. Thus our co-thinkers have further vitiated the correct attitude they previously maintained.

Although the resolution points to the specific failures of the Kremlin which encourage the American imperialist aggression, it charges the Chinese leaders with "ultraleftism . . . on the question of the united front with the Kremlin and their attempt at militarizing the whole of social life in China which is their bureaucratic attempt to secure the defense of the revolution in the face of the threat from the Pentagon."

This statement seems a bit obscure but what stands out clearly enough is the charge of bureaucratic militarization of social life. And this is about the meanest and most pernicious kind of misrepresentation possible; it is a mockery of the real situation in China.

What actually is taking place is the arming of the people to withstand imperialist aggression. Officer's ranks have been abolished in the standing army, and commanders and soldiers eat out of the same rice bowl. Felix Greene reports that the people's militia now numbers about 100,000,000 men and women; a force than can be mobilized within three hours through a modern radio communication system reaching into the remotest villages. Members of the militia take their guns home, he states, in order to be ready at a moments notice.

This is the reality of a people in arms ready to defend their revolution; and certainly, bureaucratic tendencies do not thrive under conditions where the broad mass of the people possess arms. Moreover, this is a splendid example of pursuing a Marxist-Leninist policy of revolutionary defense. The tragedy is that those who are supposed to be the heirs of Trotsky's views and methods fail to comprehend it.

Returning to the articles of Comrade Novack, I notice his concern for those who he thinks are being victimized in China and who he assumes to be struggling "for greater democracy and a more correct course." Says Novack: "We are on their side." Oh yes, this is the question that is being asked by the Red Guards: which side are you on? Are you on the side of those who want to build a new society or among those who want to cling to the old?

Do we here in the U.S. want the party to be committed to the support of those who obstruct the process of uninterrupted revolution in China? Those who are eager to conciliate the Kremlin? It may prove increasingly difficult to sell this fraudulent notion to American radicals who become attracted to revolutionary ideas.

Comrade Novack does grant the need at some time in the far distant future for a "thoroughgoing reconstruction of human relations, customs and habits, art and culture." But this, he says, "can only be the ripened achievement of a wholly reconstructed social order, based not only on new economic foundations but on an unprecedented flow of wealth. . . ."

Insofar as the ripened achievement or the actual consummation of a socialist culture is concerned there need be no serious disagreement; but this is not the point at issue. The proletarian cultural revolution is itself a process that is sure to be infinitely more difficult and protracted than was the struggle for power in China. The Chinese leaders lay particular stress on their view that the changes they seek in men's minds will take many succeeding generations for their completion, and pass through a series of historic stages. They are convinced, however, that the present transition period calls for the preparation of the ground upon which the socialist culture of the future can flourish.

But the question is when does this process begin? Comrade Novack presents a rather formalistic interpretation of the Marxist concept of revolution. He fails to view it as a dynamic and uninterrupted process which must be carried forward ever more widely and deeply on all fronts.

If the beginning of the cultural revolution is to be delayed until a wholly renovated social order, based on an unprecedented flow of wealth, has been established, dangers of a relapse from the revolutionary path to revisionism are more apt to multiply. Attempts to construct a wholly renovated social order are sure to be vitiated by the renewed growth of remaining feudal and bourgeois

attitudes, i. e., unless these are effectively combatted and changed.

At this point the lessons we have learned from developments in the Soviet Union should serve as a powerful warning. On the forty-ninth anniversary of the revolution no signs are visible of efforts toward liberating men's minds from the yoke of bourgeois ideology; but there is evidence aplenty of tendencies working in the opposite direction. Although economically much further advanced than China, the formation of special material privileges and material individual incentives stimulate in the USSR the revival of the old crap. Bourgeois habits and methods seep into Soviet society through every pore of the bureaucratic superstructure. Private peasants' plots supply about half the consumption of meat, dairy products and vegetables, thus perpetuating the personal acquisitiveness characteristic of bourgeois society. The existence of a bemedaled, gold braided and privileged officers corps introduces bourgeois attitudes and customs into what was once the Red Army organized by Trotsky. Bribery, swindle and theft of state property went so far that the death penalty was restored.

The conditions thus created internally find their natural external expression in the treacherous Kremlin policy of peaceful co-existence with American imperialism and the wretched notion that the road to socialism can be opened up through bourgeois parliaments. And the sum total of these factors, together with others that could be mentioned, epitomize the revisionism that has subverted the revolution in the Soviet Union.

We have also the example of Yugoslavia. We did not question the authenticity of the revolutionary overturn when Tito and his associates established the workers state. The course of subsequent developments cannot be blamed on a usurpation of powers, for today the same people are at the helm who led the revolution to victory. While we may not be prepared to say that capitalism has already been restored in Yugoslavia, a definite reversal of the revolutionary process cannot be denied. Tito's valiant effort to link together a so-called third force, composed of the non-aligned or non-committed nations is perhaps the surest sign that Yugoslavia is not committed to socialism. Most certainly, the attainment ever of a wholly renovated social order remains very much in doubt.

The Chinese leaders have watched these developments in the Soviet Union and in Yugoslavia with increasing dismay. They accept the thesis of Marx, Lenin and Mao Tse-tung that until the classless society is finally established, "the spontaneous influence of the petty bourgeoisie will always be directed toward the restoration of the old order." They are perfectly aware that what has happened in these two countries could be repeated in China; and they have stated so more than once. Hence their determination to meet head-on the problem of revisionism in their own country, both within and outside of the party.

The often and fervently repeated calls for the study and assimilation of the thought of Mao Tse-tung are unquestionably intended as an educational insurance against revisionist tendencies, or tendencies toward a relapse to the old habits of life. It is an educational insurance made up of the body of doctrines growing out of the experiences of the struggle conducted by the Communist Party for a new social order -- the body of doctrines which proved to be a successful and reliable guide in the revolution. And the thought of Mao is correctly presented as the form of Marxism-Leninism applied to China.

In addition to this problem there are other imperatives to be considered. The American imperialist intervention in Vietnam poses before the Chinese the confrontation with the strongest military power in the world. This permits no delay in preparations to defend their revolution. In the face of war threats they are compelled to act speedily and resolutely. They have to make sure that only the most determined and wholly dedicated people occupy positions of influence.

This is but one more reason why the Chinese say that the proletarian cultural revolution is a matter of life and death. It is viewed in terms of history, in terms of a process of uprooting those elements of the old feudal and bourgeois culture which now stand in the way of historical progress, and replace them with elements of a socialist content. But it is viewed as a process that must begin now. This is entirely in accordance with their acceptance of both the theory and the reality of permanent revolution. Their understanding that the creation of a socialist culture is, in the final analysis, a universal problem is attested by their repeated statements and actions intended to show that China will "fulfill her international duty."

The socialist cultural revolution is not carried on by command from above but on the basis of the creative activity of the masses, which the leaders encourage and give conscious political direction, as leaders should do. Those among us who fancy themselves as the sole inheritors and exponents of the theory of permanent revolution could do much better if they made a serious attempt to learn from this extraordinarily exhilarating experience of the Chinese.

The transformation of Chinese society from the conditions of its dismal past to those of its great future is a twofold process of change, the one interacting with and influencing the other. Liberation of the mind must necessarily go hand in hand with the physical liberation from exploitation, for the one cannot exist without the other. The socialist cultural revolution draws its inspiration and impulse from the advances made in the economic and the political field. In its turn, the socialist cultural revolution stimulates China's progress on the road toward becoming a modern, scientific socialist state.

Arne Swabeck
October 22, 1966