

Down with Deng's Bloody Repression— For Workers Political Revolution in China!

The following statement was published by the Bolshevik Tendency in July 1989:

The Bolshevik Tendency condemns the criminal June 4 massacre of protesters in Beijing by the leaders of the Communist Party of China (CCP). Revolutionary Marxists denounce the executions and continuing repression of Chinese workers and students by which the Deng Xiaoping regime seeks to reassert its control. The barbarous actions of the Chinese government and its on-going vendetta against those who dared to challenge the CCP's political monopoly are violations of the most basic principles of socialism.

The revolution of 1949 brought real gains to the Chinese working people: the rule of the landlords, big capitalists and foreign imperialists was overthrown and the productive wealth of the country was collectivized. Yet while the revolution uprooted neo-colonialism and did away with many reactionary semi-feudal hangovers from the past, it left the top echelons of the peasant-based CCP with a monopoly of political power. Contrary to popular opinion, the People's Republic of China is not now and never has been a "socialist" society as envisioned by Marx and Lenin. Instead it is a *deformed workers state* ruled by a parasitic Stalinist bureaucracy. The task of establishing the direct political rule of the working class in China remains to be accomplished. Revolutionists defend the social gains of the Chinese revolution, but we do so knowing that this defense requires a *political revolution* to shatter the CCP bureaucracy and to lodge political power in the hands of democratic workers councils.

The powerful explosion of protest which rocked China for seven weeks this spring was directed against the incompetent and corrupt CCP bureaucracy. Yet the "democracy movement" never posed a clear alternative to the prospect of continued Stalinist rule. The protests which began with the death of Hu Yaobang—a "liberal" bureaucrat who had been disgraced for handling an earlier wave of student demonstrations too leniently—quickly spread to workers in dozens of cities across China. The participation of millions of workers transformed the character and the significance of the demonstrations. The student leaders had only intended to pressure the government for a bit more political space, a few educational reforms and perhaps a few personnel shifts among the ruling elite. But the social forces aligned behind their movement had the potential to achieve far more fundamental changes in Chinese society. The CCP leadership correctly perceived the mass participation of the workers and unemployed as a potentially revolutionary threat to their rule. This potential was undermined when, for a few short weeks, popular support for

the demonstrators neutralized the People's Liberation Army units sent to break up the protests.

What is a Political Revolution?

Various impressionistic self-proclaimed "Trotskyists"—from Ernest Mandel's United Secretariat to the Spartacist tendency—declared that a full-fledged political revolution was underway. While the upheavals were enormous in scope and certainly *potentially* revolutionary, they did not constitute what Trotskyists could characterize as a political revolution. First, any serious attempt to replace the CCP would require revolutionary institutions capable of challenging and ultimately replacing the existing bureaucratic state power. The Hungarian Revolution of 1956, which was an attempted political revolution, threw up workers councils, which could have become the main institutions of *state power* had the workers prevailed. But the Chinese "democracy movement," despite the mass enthusiasm it generated, and the panic it created among the doddering old men who rule the Middle Kingdom, created no organizational forms which could have constituted a framework for state power. The aim of the movement was not to destroy but to *reform* the institutions of bureaucratic rule.

Secondly, a political revolution in a deformed workers state would aim to throw out the bureaucracy, while preserving state ownership of the means of production. The "democracy movement" possessed no such clarity regarding its objectives. Due in large measure to the bureaucracy's exclusion of the masses from political life, and the anti-political climate which resulted from the bitter experience of the Cultural Revolution of the 1960s, Chinese students and workers battled government troops and tanks without the benefit of a definite program. From beginning to end, the "democracy movement" remained politically amorphous. But if it is premature to label the anti-bureaucratic protests this spring as the "beginning of the political revolution," the claim that they represent an attempt at capitalist restoration is even wider of the mark.

'Democracy' vs. Communism?

Both the western media and the Deng regime falsely depict the conflict between the "democracy" movement and the Stalinist oligarchs as a struggle between capitalism and communism. As part of its attempt to justify the bloody repression, the Chinese bureaucracy has been publicizing the presence of Taiwanese intelligence agents among the demonstrators. While it would be absurd to imagine that the demonstrations were initiated or directed by a handful of capitalist agents, it is

highly probable that such elements were present. The politically amorphous character of the “democracy” movement meant that it was open to participation by those who would like to see a restoration of capitalism. A key task of a Marxist intervention in such a situation is to *polarize* the movement between those who wish to democratize political decision-making while preserving the system of collectivized property, and their class enemies whose agenda calls for social counterrevolution.

Although the “democracy” movement was contradictory in its objectives, it was clearly *not* anti-socialist in its overall character. The thousands of students in Tiananmen Square who were hailing a replica of the Statue of Liberty were simultaneously singing the “Internationale,” the anthem of communism. By contrast, it is positively perverse that Deng Xiaoping’s faction which for a decade has been busy de-collectivizing Chinese agriculture, promoting private enterprise and forging a military alliance with U.S. imperialism should try to portray itself as the guardian of socialism.

Even though this round of struggle did not reach the level of *dual power*, a characteristic of revolutionary situations, it did represent a profound social crisis. What gave the student-initiated protests their impact was that they tapped widespread resentment and anxiety among Chinese workers at the effects of Deng Xiaoping’s market-oriented economic “reform” program. The Chinese leadership refers to this as “building socialism with capitalist methods.” But for millions of Chinese working people the erosion of the “iron rice bowl” policy which, since 1949, guaranteed employment and the basic necessities of life, is a matter of life and death. The restoration of market economics has gone much farther in China than in the Soviet Union, and tens of millions of workers and poor peasants are suffering from the widespread unemployment, 30 percent inflation and rampant corruption which the “reforms” have spawned.

“Market Socialism” is Anti-Socialist

The capitalist media contend that the market “reforms” in China and the USSR prove that “socialism” has failed. But Marxists have never believed that socialism could be achieved within the framework of a single backward country. Socialism, as envisioned by Marx, Engels and Lenin, is premised on the elimination of scarcity and thus requires a level of material production which can only be achieved by a *worldwide* division of labor and the application of the highest existing levels of technology. It is Stalinism, *not* Marxism, which advocates the autarkic and reactionary utopia of “socialism in one country” as a nationalist, anti-Marxist ideological cover for the preservation of the privileges of the ruling bureaucratic elite.

The contradictions and irrationalities of bureaucratic planning within a single country have driven both Deng and Gorbachev to set out on the road of “market socialist” economic reforms. In China these “reforms” have promoted the growth of a layer of some twenty million “self-employed” entrepreneurs ranging from individual craftsmen to commodity speculators and factory owners. Today there are “self-employed” farmers in China

who have 500 employees! This “self-employed” stratum, which has benefitted from Deng’s reforms, is uneasy with the political power of the party bureaucrats, and looks forward to the “normalization” of capitalist social relations—i.e., full-blown capitalist restoration. The CCP bureaucrats balance between this layer (and their imperialist big brothers) and the restive plebian victims of the growth of market relations.

The Beijing massacre and subsequent crackdown have been portrayed by the bourgeois media as part of an ongoing epic struggle between heroic classless democracy and evil, tyrannical Communism. Yet, while anxious to draw the anti-communist “lessons” of the bloodbath in Tiananmen Square, American policy-makers have been restrained by the fear that an overly harsh reaction could push the Chinese back toward the USSR, which would represent a major strategic setback for imperialism.

Gorbachev, for his part, has been careful to abstain from any criticism of the CCP rulers and has treated the brutal massacre of students and workers for demanding a little “glasnost” as a strictly internal Chinese affair. Moscow’s Cuban allies, perhaps wishing to send a message to potential domestic dissidents, chose to endorse the Chinese leadership’s actions. The 18 June issue of *Granma* featured an account headlined “Disturbances were aimed at overthrowing socialism.” It asserts that it was “the lynchings and ruthless attacks by antigovernment forces on the troops, which forced the government to order strong measures to stop the chaos.”

For the moment Deng & Co. have suppressed the opposition with superior firepower, but the deep social tensions which produced the resistance in the first place remain. Moreover, the widely publicized factional divisions within the CCP leadership over how to handle the “democracy movement” reflect the profoundly unstable character of the parasitic Stalinist ruling caste. The potential for future outbreaks is obvious. Certainly one of the most important casualties of the massacre at Tiananmen Square was the aura of political legitimacy which has traditionally surrounded the CCP and its People’s Liberation Army. The Big Lie propaganda barrage on state-controlled radio and television alleging that the demonstrations were violent provocations initiated by counterrevolutionaries will scarcely affect the attitudes of the hundreds of thousands of witnesses and participants.

For a Trotskyist Party in China!

What is vitally necessary in China is the creation of a nucleus of militants fighting for a program of *political revolution* to overturn the rule of the anti-working class CCP parasites while defending collectivized property. An authentically communist opposition to Stalinist rule would vigorously counter the racist mobilizations against African students that took place this past winter in Nanking at which the slogan, “Kill the Black Devils” was raised. Another component of the program of a genuinely socialist opposition to Deng & Co. would be a repudiation of the anti-communist alliance between the Beijing Stalinists and the U.S. imperialists sealed in

the blood of the Angolans/Cubans, Vietnamese and the Afghans.

Without a party consolidated around this perspective to spearhead the anti-bureaucratic struggles, the working class elements in the opposition can become demoralized. Some may even be seduced by pro-capitalist elements, whose program, though counterrevolutionary, is at least clear. The socialist reconstruction of China requires a working-class uprising which breaks the grip of the CCP oligarchs and commits itself to *extending* the social gains of 1949. This means a political struggle against the narrow nationalism of Mao Tse-tung and his heirs, and a recognition that socialism can only be established in China through the extension of workers revolution to the citadels of imperialism—most immediately the powerful industrial economy of Japan.

Chinese workers and leftists must be introduced to the revolutionary alternative to bureaucratic misleadership. The authentically *communist* alternative to Stalinism was led by Leon Trotsky, who, with Lenin, led the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917. After Lenin's death, Trotsky waged a heroic struggle against the Stalinist perversion of Marxism. Trotsky consistently exposed the opportunism and political zigzags of the Stalinists, including the disastrous policies which led to the crushing defeat of the Chinese working class in 1927. Trotsky's

analysis of the degeneration of the Soviet state retains all its validity today and remains the only coherent analysis of the social contradictions in the degenerated and deformed workers states. The program elaborated by the Fourth International under Trotsky's leadership, for the restoration of the historic revolutionary mission of the Soviet workers state through proletarian political revolution, illuminates the path forward for the workers movement in China. This is the program which the Bolshevik Tendency stands on and fights for—the program of militant international communism.

- ***Down with Deng's martial law! For the immediate release of all pro-socialist political prisoners!***
- ***Repudiate Beijing's anti-Soviet alliance with U.S. imperialism! For proletarian political revolution in China to oust the Stalinist parasites!***
- ***Down with "market socialism"—For the socialist reconstruction of China within a Socialist Federation of the Far East!***
- ***For a Trotskyist party in China! For the rebirth of the Fourth International—World Party of Socialist Revolution!***