

Communist Party Marxist - Kenya defends counter-revolutionary Maoist strategy against Trotskyism—Part 4

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This is the fourth part of a five-part series. Parts one, two and three are available here.

The Stalinist betrayal of the Chinese Revolution and the birth of the national democratic revolution

The historical verdict on the National Democratic Revolution is written above all in the defeat of the Chinese Revolution of 1925–27, one of the greatest strategic experiences of the twentieth century.

The revolution began as a mass eruption of the Chinese working class against imperialism, warlordism and capitalist exploitation. In May 1925, after British police opened fire on workers and students in Shanghai, killing 12 and wounding dozens, a strike wave swept the country. Some 125 strikes involving 400,000 workers broke out, followed by mass protests, riots and the Canton Hong Kong general strike, in which 100,000 workers left Hong Kong and organised a boycott of British goods through an elected strike committee with thousands of armed pickets.

By 1927, this movement had reached revolutionary proportions. In Shanghai, 800,000 workers joined a general strike and armed insurrection, crushed the warlord forces and took control of the city. In Hunan, Hubei, Wuhan and Changsha, millions of peasants entered associations, drove out landlords and began functioning as local authorities, while workers raised demands for control over factories and shops.

The democratic tasks of national independence and popular representation were thus immediately combined with social demands which only a socialist movement of the working class, leading the peasantry, could fulfil. The decisive question confronting the Chinese revolution was whether it would carry out this programme through the formations of workers' and peasants' soviets, or be strangled through subordination to the bourgeois Kuomintang led by Chiang Kai-shek.

Stalin and Bukharin, expressing the interests of the rising Soviet bureaucracy and its nationalist repudiation of world socialist revolution, answered by subordinating the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) to the Kuomintang through the "bloc of four classes." In practice, it meant politically disarming the Chinese working class before Chiang Kai-shek.

Trotsky and the Left Opposition warned that imperialist oppression did not lessen China's class antagonisms, but intensified them. The "national" bourgeoisie feared the revolutionary mobilisation of workers and peasants far more than it opposed imperialism. This warning was confirmed in April 1927, when Chiang massacred the Shanghai working class. Stalin then repeated the betrayal by ordering the Communists into the "left" Kuomintang in Wuhan, which likewise crushed the workers'

and peasants' movement.

Kaluka and "Building the Vanguard" omit the 1925-1927 revolution because to examine it seriously would expose the NDR as a counter-revolutionary strategy for blocking the independent mobilisation of the working class. Both documents cite China, but only to discuss the alliance between the Chinese Communist Party and Chiang Kai-shek's Kuomintang during the 1937-1945 war against Japanese imperialism as an example to follow.

Kaluka claims that the CCP had "won over the working class, the peasantry, and other progressive forces" and ensured that the alliance against Japanese imperialism was "under the leadership of the working class and its Party."

This is a falsification. After the crushing of the 1925–27 revolution, the Chinese Communist Party retreated from the urban centres to the countryside, increasingly basing itself on the peasantry. Its class axis shifted away from the proletariat, while its Stalinist two-stage programme was infused with peasant populism, guerrillaism and continued class collaboration with the national bourgeoisie. Mao would be a fervent defender of the line taken by Stalin and Bukharin.

Assuming the leadership of the CCP in 1935, Mao published *The Chinese Revolution and the Chinese Communist Party* in 1939, which argued that imperialism had made China a "semi-feudal, semi-colonial" country, whose "basic contradictions" lay "between imperialism and the Chinese nation" and "between feudalism and the great masses of the people."

On this basis, Mao proposed a "national revolution to overthrow foreign imperialist oppression" alongside a "democratic revolution to overthrow feudal landlord oppression." He insisted that the "national bourgeoisie can become a revolutionary force" distinct from the "comprador big bourgeoisie."^[1]

Trotsky recognised China's war against Japanese imperialism as a "legitimate and progressive national war," but insisted that this did not lessen the need for complete political independence from the Chinese bourgeoisie, represented by the Kuomintang: "We need have no illusions about Chiang Kai-shek, his party, or the whole ruling class of China," he wrote, describing Chiang as "the executioner of the Chinese workers and peasants." Trotsky's conclusion was that the working class "must preserve their entire political independence of the Chiang Kai-shek government."^[2]

Mao did the opposite. Following Moscow's line, the CCP entered a Popular Front with Chiang, renounced its land reform programme and abandoned the independent interests of workers and peasants so as not to offend its bourgeois allies.

After the war, the CCP still sought to preserve its alliance with the Kuomintang, even as Chiang Kai-shek, backed by US imperialism,

prepared a renewed offensive. In his *The Fight for a New China* written in 1945, Mao insisted:

It is a law of Marxism that socialism can be attained only via the stage of democracy. And in China the fight for democracy is a protracted one. It would be a sheer illusion to try to build a socialist society on the ruins of the colonial, semi-colonial and semi-feudal order without a united new-democratic state, without the development of the state sector of the new-democratic economy, of the private capitalist and the co-operative sectors, and of a national, scientific and mass culture, i.e., a new-democratic culture, and without the liberation and the development of the individuality of hundreds of millions of people—in short, without a thoroughgoing bourgeois-democratic revolution of a new type led by the Communist Party.^[3]

Mao called for the overthrow of Chiang's regime only in October 1947, when the CCP faced possible military annihilation in Manchuria, reviving land reform to mobilise peasant support. Chiang's collapse flowed not from Mao's supposed strategic genius, but from the rottenness of the Kuomintang regime: corrupt, bankrupt, dependent on imperialism and confronted by a vast revolutionary upheaval of workers and peasants. The People's Republic was proclaimed in October 1949 after Mao's armies swept south with little serious resistance.

Kaluka presents Mao's *On New Democracy* (1940) as proof that Maoism provided a road to socialism. But Mao's argument was explicitly framed as a two-stage perspective. The Chinese Revolution, Mao wrote, had to pass first through "the democratic revolution" and only later through "the socialist revolution," the two being "different revolutionary processes." Its immediate aim was not the dictatorship of the proletariat, but a "new-democratic republic" based on the "joint dictatorship of several revolutionary classes"—the proletariat, peasantry, petty bourgeoisie and national bourgeoisie.

Mao wanted to preserve capitalism, declaring that the new state would "neither confiscate capitalist private property in general nor forbid the development" of capitalist production that did not "dominate the livelihood of the people," while allowing a rich-peasant economy in the countryside.^[4]

Nine years after writing this, the CCP in power was forced to go beyond Mao's framework spelled out in *On New Democracy* because it was driven by forces it did not control. Kaluka omits this completely. The revolutionary expectations of workers and peasants, the collapse of the old regime and the danger of imperialist intervention during the Korean War (1950-1952) compelled the Stalinist bureaucracy to complete the expropriation of the landlords, move against sections of the bourgeoisie in the "Three-anti" and "Five-anti" campaigns, and, by 1953, extend nationalisation through the first five-year plan.

The Trotskyist movement characterised the state that emerged from the 1949 revolution as a deformed workers' state. The Chinese Revolution had overthrown landlordism and capitalist property relations, nationalised the major means of production and established a planned economy. But political power was not exercised by the working class through soviets or any other democratic organs of proletarian rule. From its birth, the new state was dominated by the Stalinist-Maoist bureaucracy, resting on the peasant-based CCP apparatus and hostile to the independent mobilisation of the working class and the perspective of world socialist revolution.

The character of the regime was clearest in the CCP's attitude to the urban working class. As Mao's armies entered the cities, the party did not encourage workers to seize control of production, form councils or assert political power. It imposed order, restricted strikes and suppressed

independent workers' activity. Its hostility to proletarian independence found its sharpest expression in the persecution of the Chinese Trotskyists, who had maintained an orientation to the working class after the defeat of 1927 and were repressed from 1949 through the mass detentions of 1952.

China was therefore not a socialist state, but a bureaucratically deformed workers' state, whose contradictions could only be resolved either through political revolution by the working class to overthrow the bureaucracy and establish genuine workers' democracy, or through the bureaucracy's restoration of capitalism.

Kaluka's silence on this historical balance sheet demonstrates his political bankruptcy. He invokes Stalin and Mao as authorities but avoids any serious accounting of where their programmes led. The nationalist programme of "socialism in one country" produced a bureaucracy that ultimately dissolved the Soviet Union and restored capitalism.

Maoism followed the same road. The capitalist restoration initiated after 1978 transformed China into a vast cheap-labour platform for world capitalism. The influx of foreign investment turned the country into the "sweatshop of the world," producing staggering economic growth on the basis of brutal exploitation and the enrichment of a new capitalist oligarchy. When the Chinese working class sought to resist the social consequences of restoration, the CCP bureaucracy answered with the Tiananmen Square massacre of June 1989. What began as student protests over democratic rights drew in the working class on a mass scale, including the emergence of independent workers' organisations, strikes and demonstrations.

The International Committee of the Fourth International explained at the time that it was this independent movement of the working class that "struck panic into the hearts of the ruling bureaucrats," who responded with ferocious repression. The massacre cleared the way for the accelerated integration of China into world capitalism, confirming that Maoism, no less than Soviet Stalinism, led not to socialism but to capitalist restoration.

To be continued.

Mao Zedong, (1939, "The Chinese Revolution and the Chinese Communist Party", in Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung, Vol. II, Marxists Internet Archive, https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-2/mswv2_26.htm.

Leon Trotsky, (1937) "On the Sino-Japanese War," 23 September 1937, in Writings of Leon Trotsky (1937-38). Available at Marxists Internet Archive: <https://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1937/10/sino.htm>

Mao Zedong (1945), "On Coalition Government", political report to the Seventh National Congress of the Communist Party of China, April 24, 1945, in Selected Works of Mao Tse tung, Vol. III. Available at Marxists Internet Archive: https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-3/mswv3_25.htm

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[1] Mao Zedong, (1939, "The Chinese Revolution and the Chinese Communist Party", in Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung, Vol. II, Marxists Internet Archive, https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-2/mswv2_26.htm.

[2] Leon Trotsky, (1937) "On the Sino-Japanese War," 23 September 1937, in Writings of Leon Trotsky (1937-38). Available at Marxists Internet Archive: <https://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1937/10/sino.htm>

[3] Mao Zedong (1945), "On Coalition Government", political report to the Seventh National Congress of the Communist Party of China, April 24, 1945, in Selected Works of Mao Tse tung, Vol. III. Available at

https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-3/mswv3_25.htm

[4] Mao Zedong (1940) “*On New Democracy*”, in *Selected Works*, Vol. II, Marxists Internet Archive,

https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-2/mswv2_26.htm



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