The Historical and International Foundations of the Socialist Equality Party (Canada): Part 1

Socialist Equality Party (Canada)
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Delegates to the Socialist Equality Party's founding congress held in Montreal from August 22 to 24 unanimously adopted the following comprehensive document outlining the party's Historical and International Foundations. *The World Socialist Web Site previously published a report on the congress, which marked a major milestone in the struggle to build the world party of socialist revolution, as well as the SEP Canada's* Statement of Principles.

The Principled Foundations of the Socialist Equality Party

1. World capitalism is in the throes of a systemic crisis, the scope and scale of which dwarf even that which ravaged the planet for three decades beginning with the outbreak of the First World War. This crisis is multi-faceted, encompassing everything from the rampant growth of oligarchy and the bourgeoisie's revival of fascism to environmental destruction. Its most menacing expression is the development of a third imperialist world war. Only the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of socialism through the unified global struggle of the working class can prevent humanity being thrown into the abyss.

2. The crisis of world capitalism is rooted in the two basic contradictions of this outmoded social order. The first is that between the private ownership of the means of production and the ever more socialized character of production. The second is the irreconcilable conflict between global economy and the division of the world into rival nation-states, which has reached a qualitatively new stage as a result of the development of globally-integrated production beginning in the mid-1970s. There are only two solutions to this crisis, flowing from the incompatible class interests of the two fundamental classes of contemporary society: the bourgeoisie and the working class. The first is imperialist war, through which the ruling classes of the rival great powers seek to reorganize the world in their respective interests. The program of world socialist revolution is the working class' answer to this same breakdown of the world capitalist order.

3. Crisis-ridden capitalism is impelling ever wider layers of working people into struggles of a revolutionary character. History, however, has conclusively demonstrated that the working class cannot spontaneously produce a program to secure its interests, nor generate the revolutionary political leadership capable of fighting for it. As Lenin explained in his masterwork *What is to be done?*, "The spontaneous development of the working-class movement leads to its subordination to bourgeois ideology."[1] Trotsky, who like Lenin grasped the unique role of political consciousness and revolutionary leadership in the socialist revolution, wrote three decades later, "The class, taken by itself, is only material for exploitation. The proletariat assumes an independent role only at that moment when from a social class *in itself* it becomes a political class *for itself*. This cannot take place otherwise than through the medium of a party. The party is that historical organ by means of which the class becomes class-conscious."[2]

4. Trotsky founded the Fourth International in 1938 to defend, develop, and win the global working class to the program of world socialist revolution, which had been ignominiously betrayed first by the Second or Socialist International and then by the Stalinized Third International. Since 1953, the Fourth International has been led by the International Committee of the Fourth International. The SEP is being founded as the Canadian section of the ICFI.

5. Working under the political leadership of the ICFI, the Socialist Equality Party/Parti d'égalité socialiste (Canada) has the basic task of winning the Canadian working class to the program of socialist internationalism. None of the great problems of the 21st century, world war, ever-escalating social inequality, the climate change catastrophe, and the threat of fascism and dictatorship, can be resolved on a national basis or within the framework of capitalism and its political institutions. The task before the Socialist Equality Party (Canada) is—working in the closest collaboration with our co-thinkers in the United States, Latin America and internationally—to mobilize all sections of the working class, French and English-speaking, immigrant, and Indigenous, in a unified revolutionary struggle for socialism. This entails an unrelenting fight to unmask the fraudulent proponents of "left" Canadian and Quebec nationalism. These forces claim that their respective "nations" represent a more benign form of capitalism than the rapacious Dollar Republic to the south, and that their "sovereignty" within the capitalist nation-state system constitutes a progressive antipode to US imperialism. Canadian nationalism seeks to deny and obscure Canada's imperialist character as part of its mystification of class relations and promotion of a supra-class Canadian identity. It as an ideological barrier to uniting the workers of Canada with the international working class, especially their most proximate allies, the workers in the US, and serves to bind Canadian workers to the bourgeoisie and to its predatory actions on the world stage.

6. The SEP is a party of history. Its program is of a principled, not a conjunctural character. It is based on an analysis of the crisis of global capitalism and the assimilation of the strategic experiences of the world working class and the international socialist movement over more than a century-and-a-half. As is stated in the founding document of the SEP (US), which the Canadian section of the ICFI also considers foundational for its own work, "Revolutionary socialist strategy can develop only on the basis of the lessons of past struggles. Above all, the education of socialists must be directed toward developing a detailed knowledge of the

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history of the Fourth International. The development of Marxism as the theoretical and political spearhead of socialist revolution has found its most advanced expression in the struggles waged by the Fourth International, since its founding in 1938, against Stalinism, reformism, the Pabloite revisions of Trotskyism, and all other forms of political opportunism."[3]

World War I and the Russian Revolution

7. The outbreak of World War I in the summer of 1914 and the working class' conquest of political power in Russia through the 1917 October Revolution marked the opening of a new historical epoch, the epoch of imperialism—defined by Lenin as an epoch of war and revolution—that continues to the present day. The Russian Revolution substantiated the revolutionary role of the working class anticipated theoretically by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in the *Communist Manifesto* as early as 1848. Under the leadership of the Bolshevik Party of Lenin and Trotsky and fighting on the basis of the perspective of world socialist revolution, the working class across the vast expanse of the Russian Empire rallied all the oppressed in revolutionary struggle against the Russian bourgeoisie, the remnants of the Czarist regime, and the coordinated intervention of the imperialist powers to establish and defend the first workers' state. The revolution was the working class' response to the same objective crisis of world capitalism that drove the ruling classes of the imperialist powers into the barbarism of world war.

8. World War I arose out of the irreconcilable contradictions of capitalism, exacerbated by the emergence from the late 19th century onwards of imperialism. The most explosive contradiction of all was that between the development of world economy and the division of the world into competing nation-states, the most powerful of which—the imperialist states—were compelled to strive for world domination. "The European and world war," declared Lenin in a resolution elaborating the Bolsheviks' response to the war's outbreak in August 1914, "has the clearly defined character of a bourgeois, imperialist and dynastic war. A struggle for markets and for freedom to loot foreign countries, a striving to suppress the revolutionary movement of the proletariat and democracy in the individual countries, a desire to deceive, disunite, and slaughter the proletarians of all countries by setting the wage slaves of one nation against those of another so as to benefit the bourgeoisie—these are the only real content and significance of the war."[4] In his seminal *War and the International*, issued several months later, Trotsky explained, "The forces of production which capitalism has evolved have outgrown the limits of nation and state. The national state, the present political form, is too narrow for the exploitation of these productive forces. The natural tendency of our economic system, therefore, is to seek to break through the state boundaries. The whole globe, the land and the sea, the surface as well as the interior has become one economic workshop, the different parts of which are inseparably connected with each other. This work was accomplished by capitalism. But in accomplishing it the capitalist states were led to struggle for the subjection of the world-embracing economic system to the profit interests of the bourgeoisie of each country. What the politics of imperialism has demonstrated more than anything else is that the old national state that was created in the revolutions and the wars of 1789–1815, 1848–1859, 1864–1866, and 1870 has outlived itself, and is now an intolerable hindrance to economic development."[5]

9. Canadian imperialism was a major belligerent in the war, and profited handsomely from it. Indeed, the First and Second World Wars were the two periods of the most rapid Canadian capitalist economic and industrial growth in the Twentieth Century. Through its junior partnership with Britain, then the world's foremost capitalist power, the emerging Canadian bourgeoisie had been able in the latter half of the 19th Century to resist absorption into the United States, which was rapidly emerging as the world's most dynamic industrial power, and lay claim to the northern tier of North America. This involved the brutal subjugation and dispossession of the native population. Through war and state-organized famine, the Canadian state imposed capitalist property relations, stripping the native people of their lands, and shunting them onto reservations—a crime whose consequences persist into the 21st century. To paraphrase Marx, Canadian capitalism emerged "dripping from head to foot, from every pore, with blood and dirt."[6]

10. The Canadian nation-state was consolidated with Confederation in 1867, the purchase of the Hudson Bay lands, and British Columbia's entry into Canada in 1871. This was contemporaneous with and rooted in the same fundamental socio-economic processes that led to the unification of Germany and Italy, Japan's Meiji Restoration, and the US Civil War—that is the forging of the modern capitalist nation-state system. Confederation was a business deal, not a popular movement, organized by railway promoters and the Baring Bank under the aegis of the British Colonial Office. As they created the new Dominion of Canada, the Fathers of Confederation underlined their opposition to the revolutionary-democratic principles that had animated the two American bourgeois democratic revolutions. Whereas the American Declaration of Independence affirmed the "inalienable rights" to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" and Lincoln cast the Civil War that destroyed the Southern slavocracy as "a new birth of freedom," the "Fathers of Confederation" declared their fidelity to the British Crown and proclaimed capitalist Canada the realm of "peace, order and good government."

11. Canadian capitalism has historically been characterized by monopolies and a heavy concentration of capital in the banking and financial sector. By the turn of the 20th century, there was a wave of corporate consolidation leading to the emergence of trusts, paralleling processes in the US and Europe. The Canadian bourgeoisie, exploiting its ties to British capital, was, like its US rivals, also increasingly active in the Caribbean and Latin America (areas that remain important arenas of Canadian foreign investment to this day.) Working-class resistance, meanwhile, was frequently met with state violence. In the years prior to World War One, the increasing assertiveness and global ambitions of the Canadian bourgeoisie found expression in the emergence of rival factions of the Canadian elite espousing competing forms of Canadian nationalism. One faction, the so-called "imperialists," argued that Canada needed to assume a greater role in the British Empire and should even aspire to ultimately supplant Britain as the seat of that empire. The opposed camp pressed for Canada to act more independently of Britain. When war erupted in August 1914, the two factions were united in their enthusiastic support for Canada's participation. Canada's ruling class waged World War I with extreme brutality, abrogating democratic rights at home and mobilizing hundreds of thousands to serve as cannon fodder. Well over half-a-million Canadian soldiers, in a country with a total population of less than 9 million, were deployed overseas. More than 60,000 soldiers, close to 1 percent of Canada's population, perished on the battlefields of Europe.

12. In 1914, under conditions where the parties of the Second or Socialist International abandoned socialist internationalism and supported their respective bourgeoisies in waging the first imperialist world war, Lenin and the Bolsheviks assumed responsibility for the building of a new International. They rightly regarded this struggle as the cutting edge of the political-theoretical fight to transform the world war into civil or class war so as to carry through the revolutionary proletarian overthrow of all the belligerent capitalist governments. Lenin's analysis of imperialism as the highest stage of capitalism and the epoch of wars and revolutions was

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inextricably bound up with his struggle to draw the lessons of the collapse of the Second International and lay bare its political and socio-economic roots. He demonstrated that its betrayal of proletarian internationalism and embrace of national chauvinism were due to "the actual prevalence in it of petty-bourgeois opportunism," whose exponents had promoted a national liberal-labour policy in opposition to the class struggle and socialist revolution; and against whose "bourgeois nature and … danger…the finest representatives of the revolutionary proletariat of all countries" had long warned.[7] Lenin further demonstrated that the same social processes that had led to the world war had given rise to a labour aristocracy, nourished on the profits of imperialism, and which constituted the social base of opportunism.

13. The Russian Revolution was the product of a systemic crisis of world capitalism announced by the eruption of the First World War, but it was only realized because it was theoretically anticipated and politically prepared. Decisive in this and the subsequent struggle against the revolution's Stalinist degeneration was Trotsky's formulation of the strategy of Permanent Revolution. Recognizing that the development of world economy and class struggle had changed the dynamics of social revolution in the epoch of imperialism, Trotsky explained that the tasks historically associated with the democratic revolution would and could only be accomplished in Russia through a working-class-led socialist revolution that tied its fate to the developing European and world socialist revolution. Of no less enduring significance was the concept of the vanguard party that Lenin developed in a sustained and persistent political, theoretical and organizational struggle against opportunism—that is the influence of alien class forces over the working class—and which was embodied in the Bolshevik Party.

14. The Bolsheviks' strategic conception of the October 1917 Revolution as the "opening shot of the world revolution" was rapidly vindicated. In Germany, the world war ended in November 1918 with a sailors' mutiny that ignited a working-class revolution, during which workers formed Soviets (councils) in an attempt to follow the example of their Russian class brothers. However, because of the counter-revolutionary role of Social Democracy—throughout Europe, but most infamously in Germany where it ordered the murder of Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg—and, even more critically, the lack of Bolshevik-type parties rooted in the working class and steeled in the fight against national-opportunism, the world bourgeoisie was able to withstand the revolutionary storm. Through the founding of the Third International in 1919, Lenin and Trotsky sought to create the conditions for the forging of revolutionary leaderships in every country through the assimilation of the lessons of the October Revolution and the criminal betrayals of Second International social-democracy. However, as Trotsky would later explain: "After the war, the proletariat was in such a mood that one could have led it into decisive battle. But there was nobody to lead and nobody to organize this battle—there was no party. … Insofar as there was no party, victory was impossible. And, on the other hand, one could not maintain the revolutionary fervour of the proletariat while a party was being created."[8]

15. The war and the October Revolution had an immense impact on the class struggle in Canada. The years 1917-21 witnessed a hitherto unprecedented wave of industrial unrest and political ferment, including the proliferation of politically influential agrarian-based protest parties. The most class-conscious workers turned to the building of a revolutionary socialist party of a "new type" patterned on the Bolsheviks—the Communist Party. Mounting opposition to the war, and all it entailed, from high prices, shortages, and speed-up to war-profiteering, became focused on the ruling class' drive to impose conscription. At its September 1917 convention, the conservative craft-based Trades and Labour Congress (TLC) threatened, then shelved a call for a general strike against the imposition of conscription. In its stead, the TLC proclaimed the founding of a Canadian Labor Party, which it subsequently refused to support. This would prove to be a pattern. The unions would promote "political action" as a safety-valve, in opposition to class struggle—not as an instrument to fight for workers' power, but to block such a struggle by diverting it into parliamentarism and electoral politics. To push through conscription, the dominant faction of the ruling class rallied behind the newly established Union (Conservative-Liberal coalition) government, its flagrant manipulation of the rules governing the December 1917 "khaki election" and incitement of anti-French chauvinism. The Quebec-based opponents of conscription, led by the French-Canadian clerical nationalist and former Liberal MP Henri Bourassa, made no appeal to the mass anti-conscription sentiment in English Canada. Horrified by the "Bolshevik threat," the Catholic Church, supported by Bourassa and those under his influence, intensified their efforts to build Catholic unions to inoculate French-Canadian workers from the class struggle and divide them from workers across North America. On this basis, the *Confédération des Travailleurs Catholiques du Canada* (CTCC, forerunner of the CSN) was established in 1922.

16. The Canadian ruling class responded to the Russian revolution and the growing challenge from the working class at home with violence and repression. Canadian imperialism joined the major European imperialist powers, the US and Japan in invading revolutionary Russia in support of the Whites, although its intervention quickly became fraught after soldiers being deployed as part of the Canadian Siberian Expeditionary Force mutinied, amid the growing social-political unrest. The War Measures Act remained in force until January 1920, and the government's emergency powers were repeatedly invoked in 1918 and 1919 to suppress strikes and outlaw socialist and worker organizations. In parallel with the Palmer raids in the United States, socialist-minded immigrant workers were targeted for mass deportation.

17. The formation of the Communist Party of Canada (CPC) at a clandestine convention in May 1921 and of the Workers Party as its legal expression in 1922 under conditions where the CPC was illegal represented an important advance in the fight to win the working class to the program of world socialist revolution. Those who rallied to the CPC responded to the call issued by the Third or Communist International (CI) at its founding in March 1919. Written by Trotsky, the CI's "Manifesto to the Workers of the World" declared, "Our task is to generalize the revolutionary experience of the working class, to purge the movement of the corroding admixture of opportunism and social-patriotism, to unify the efforts of all genuinely revolutionary parties of the world proletariat and thereby facilitate and hasten the victory of the Communist revolution throughout the world."[9] The CPC emerged out of a political struggle stretching over several years in which the most politically far-sighted and courageous workers, joined by other revolutionary-minded elements, strove to assimilate the lessons of the world war, the collapse of the Second International, the Russian Revolution and the mass working-class struggles that had erupted across Canada under the impact of war/revolution and post-war economic crisis. These events had demonstrated the fatal inadequacies of all previous socialist-worker organizations, particularly the Social Democratic Party of Canada (SDPC), the Socialist Party of Canada (SPC), and the anarcho-syndicalist, IWW-influenced One Big Union Movement. The leaders of the politically heterogeneous, reformist-led SDPC dissolved the party in 1919 and placed its assets at the disposal of the union bureaucracy and their efforts to create a reformist labour party, due to fear of losing control to rank-and-file members who wanted to affiliate to the CI. In 1921-22, the majority of SPC members joined the CPC in defiance of the party leadership, which delayed and obstructed holding a party referendum or party convention on affiliating with the CI because of their vehement opposition to the conception of a vanguard party based on the struggle against opportunism and rooted in the struggles of the working class. SPC militants were in the

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leadership of the May-June 1919 Winnipeg General Strike, which for a period of over a month convulsed Canada's then third largest city. But having been schooled in the party's doctrine which entirely separated socialist education from class struggle, they were completely passive, leaving the initiative in the hands of the reformist right-wing and the ruling class. Workers were instructed to stay home and await the outcome of negotiations; nothing was done to coordinate with the sympathy general strikes that erupted in other major cities, including Vancouver; and no preparations were made to meet the inevitable counter-attack of the state.

18. Under the leadership of Lenin and Trotsky, the Communist International set about building a unified combat party of the international working class based on the assimilation of the lessons of the collapse of the Second International and its various national parties. Chief among the strategic conceptions that animated its work and which were elaborated at its first four congresses held between 1919 and 1922 were: 1) that the opportunists and centrists had to be systematically purged from the revolutionary movement, not just politically and theoretically refuted; 2) that the imperialist world war and the October Revolution had cast the question of revolutionary leadership in an entirely new light, demonstrating its pivotal role in politically preparing and mobilizing the working class for the conquest of power and rendering the pre-1914 conception of Karl Kautsky, the theoretical leader of Social Democracy, that it was a revolutionary party "but not a revolution-making party" utterly obsolete; and 3) that the working class must be guided by a world revolutionary strategy to which all national tactics need be subordinated and need flow. The work of the CI provided a powerful foundation for the political clarification and education of the revolutionary-minded elements who had taken up the banner of the October Revolution and established the CPC. However, this process would be disrupted and ultimately short-circuited by the bureaucratic degeneration of the first workers' state, of which the rise of Stalinism was the political expression.

The emergence of the Stalinist bureaucracy and the Left Opposition

19. Stalinism was a nationalist reaction against the October Revolution and the internationalist program that had animated it. This was epitomized in the credo of "socialism in one country" adopted by the privileged bureaucracy that usurped power from the working class in the newly established Soviet Union under conditions of the revolution's isolation in a backward, predominantly peasant country. First promulgated in 1924 by Stalin, who emerged as the bureaucracy's political leader, it would serve as the political justification for the transformation of the recently founded Communist Parties into instruments of a nationalist Soviet foreign policy. The Communist International's sections were subordinated to the bureaucracy's efforts to secure its privileges through opportunist maneuvers on the world arena, including by boosting the supposed revolutionary capacities of non-proletarian forces and exerting pressure on their "own" bourgeois governments. Herein lay the political origins of the class collaborationist policies that would eventually transform the Stalinist parties into instruments of political counterrevolution.

20. "Socialism in one country" represented a fundamental revision of the political precepts of Marxism outlined in the *Communist Manifesto*, and developed and enriched by Lenin and Trotsky in response to the development of imperialism. In claiming that socialism could be built within the narrow confines of the USSR, the Stalinists repudiated the objective scientific foundations of proletarian internationalism in the basic contradictions of capitalism, the historic necessity of socialism as a higher stage of development than capitalism, and the character of the working class as an international class. Internationalism is not a phrase, based on feelings of sympathy or even general class solidarity. It is a revolutionary program rooted, as Trotsky wrote, in "the insolvency of the national state, which has long ago outlived itself and which has turned into a brake upon the development of the productive forces."[10]

21. The roots of the Trotskyist movement lie in the struggle initiated by the Left Opposition at its founding in October 1923 against the bureaucraticization of the CPSU and Soviet state, and the associated adaptation of the party leadership to the consequences of the New Economic Policy (NEP). The latter was a temporary retreat toward market relations made necessary by imperialist encirclement and the delay in the world revolution. It was aimed at reviving a Soviet economy ravaged by world war and civil war so as to strengthen the revolutionary alliance between the working class and peasantry upon which the revolution had been based. The bureaucracy spoke for more privileged layers of the population attached to the ruling party and state and those profiting from the NEP, including better-off peasants and petty-bourgeois traders who became known as NEP-men. With Stalin at its head, the bureaucracy grew in confidence following the missed German revolution of 1923 and Lenin's forced removal from political life by illness and death. In fighting for inner-party democracy, economic planning and industrialization, and against the abandonment of a socialist-internationalist strategy, Trotsky and the Left Opposition articulated the interests of the international and Soviet working class, which had been weakened due to the massive sacrifices made during the years of revolution and civil war, and by the defeats of the revolution in Europe.

22. The Left Opposition challenged the nationalist-opportunist line that the bureaucracy imposed on the Comintern. Especially consequential were the disputes over revolutionary strategy in Britain and China. Before, during, and after the May 1926 British general strike, the Stalin faction ordered the British Communist Party (CPGB) to promote the authority of the reformist trade union leaders, summed up in the notorious slogan: "All power to the General Council" of the Trades Union Congress (TUC). Deeming the Communist Party too small to exploit the crisis provoked by British imperialism's precipitous post-World War I economic decline, Stalin and Zinoviev claimed that the trade unions could serve as an alternative instrument to "revolutionize the masses" and fight for workers' power. Even after the TUC leaders' predictable betrayal of the general strike, the Kremlin refused to denounce them or break the Anglo-Russian Committee—a temporary bloc of the Soviet and British trade unions to oppose war and promote amity between Britain and the USSR. Anticipating the approach of a revolutionary crisis, Trotsky, beginning with the publication in May 1925 of *Where is Britain Going?*, sought to focus the CPGB's attention on the need to systematically expose the trade union and Labour Party "lefts" as they were integral to the system of betrayal upon which the entire edifice of bourgeois rule wrested. "The whole of the present-day 'superstructure' of the British working class—in all its shades and groupings without exception—represents a braking mechanism on the revolution," he explained.[11] Trotsky's urgings were suppressed, rejected and denounced by the CPSU and the Comintern. Consequently, when the "lefts" proved pivotal in shutting down the general strike, the working class and its most advanced elements organized in the CPGB were completely unprepared. Trotsky didn't claim that a correct CPGB policy would have ensured the strike's victory, but it would have served to politically educate the working class and raised the party's authority among the most advanced workers. Instead, the ruling class was provided with the most favourable political conditions for navigating its historic crisis. "The revolutionary workers," wrote Trotsky, "were thrown into confusion, sank into apathy and naturally extended their disappointment to the Communist Party itself, which had only been the passive part of this whole mechanism of betrayal and perfidy. … [T]hanks to a radically false conception of the party, the greatest movement of the English proletariat, which led to the General Strike, not

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only did not shake the apparatus of the reactionary bureaucracy, but, on the contrary, reinforced it and compromised Communism in Great Britain for a long time."[12]

23. In China, the Stalinists' revival of the Menshevik two-stage theory of revolution prepared and facilitated the crushing of the 1925-27 Revolution at the hands of the bourgeois-nationalist Kuomintang (KMT). Soon after its formation, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) came into the leadership of a working class upsurge. But the Stalinized Comintern compelled the CCP to dissolve itself into the KMT, which it characterized—in defiance of Marxist sociology, the Russian Marxists' struggle against Narodnism and the theory of permanent revolution— as a "workers and peasants party"; submit to its discipline; and refrain from forming soviets or otherwise challenge the KMT for the leadership of the peasant masses. Chiang Kai-Shek, the Kuomintang leader who would oversee the butchering of tens of thousands of workers in Shanghai in April 1927, was even named an honorary member of the CI. Based on the "block of four classes," Stalin asserted right up until the very eve of Chiang's bloody massacre that as a representative of the national bourgeoisie, Chiang was an ally of the working class, peasants, and petty-bourgeoisie in the anti-imperialist, democratic revolution purportedly being led by the KMT. In the massacre's aftermath, the Stalinist bureaucracy continued this disastrous line, ordering the CCP to transfer its allegiance from Chiang to the "left" Kuomintang under Wang Ching-wei, who followed in Chiang's bloody footsteps only a few months later. Throughout the two years of revolutionary upheaval, Trotsky defended and developed the program of permanent revolution, insisting that, as in Russia in 1917, only through a working-class-led socialist revolution could China be freed from imperialist domination, and the social and democratic aspirations of its workers and toilers be realized. Summing up the lessons of the defeat of the Second Chinese Revolution, Trotsky wrote in 1928:

"To present matters as if there must inevitably flow from the fact of colonial oppression the revolutionary character of a national bourgeoisie is to reproduce inside out the fundamental error of Menshevism, which held that the revolutionary nature of the Russian bourgeoisie must flow from the oppression of feudalism and the autocracy.

"The question of the nature and the policy of the bourgeoisie is settled by the entire internal class structure of a nation waging the revolutionary struggle; by the historical epoch in which that struggle develops; by the degree of economic, political, and military dependence of the national bourgeoisie upon world imperialism as a whole or a particular section of it; finally, and this is most important, by the degree of class activity of the native proletariat, and by the state of its connections with the international revolutionary movement.

"A democratic or national liberation movement may offer the bourgeoisie an opportunity to deepen and broaden its possibilities for exploitation. Independent intervention of the proletariat in the revolutionary arena threatens to deprive the bourgeoisie of the possibility to exploit altogether."[13]

24. The catastrophic defeat of the 1925-27 Chinese revolution would cast a long shadow. Not only did it dampen oppositional sentiment within the Soviet working class, allowing the Stalinist bureaucracy to strengthen its grip. It had a major impact on the subsequent evolution of the CCP. Trying to escape the disaster caused by Stalin's policies, the CCP would flee to the countryside, abandon its working-class orientation, and under Mao Zedong enshrine the guerrilla-ist strategy of peasant-based "People's War."

25. An important element in Trotsky's defence and development of the program and perspective of world socialist revolution was the analysis he made in the 1920s of the rise to global power of US imperialism and the implications for world politics and world revolutionary strategy of its drive to establish and maintain its hegemony. The logic of capitalist economics and geopolitics was impelling US imperialism to expand its tentacles ever more tightly around the globe, but in doing so it had to concentrate within itself all of the explosive contradictions of world capitalism. "[T]he more the United States puts the whole world under its dependence," Trotsky wrote, "all the more does it become dependent upon the whole world, with all its contradictions and threatening upheavals."[14] From this, Trotsky drew a number of incisive political conclusions: First that America's rapid expansion was entirely in conformity with the laws of capitalist development, whatever the reformist proponents of "American exceptionalism" might claim, and portended a major crisis and social upheavals. Second, "in the period of crisis the hegemony of the United States will operate more completely, more openly, and more ruthlessly than in the period of boom. The United States will seek to overcome and extricate herself from her difficulties and maladies at the expense of Europe, regardless of whether this occurs in Asia, Canada, South America, Australia or Europe itself; or whether this takes place peacefully or through war."[15] And third, "A major crisis in the United States will strike the tocsin for new wars and revolutions."[16]

26. The Comintern's opportunist orientation had a debilitating impact on the CPC. It exacerbated the pressures exerted on the party by Canada's rapid capitalist growth, fuelled in part by a surge in US investment, and a decline in worker militancy following the defeat of the post-World War I worker upsurge. Of especial importance was the CPC's embrace, with Moscow's enthusiastic support, of Canadian nationalism in the name of the fight for "Canadian independence." The CPC had initially correctly defined Canadian capitalism as an "auxiliary" of British imperialism "in the maintenance of Empire" and an emerging imperialist power in its own right. It counterposed the fight for a "workers' republic" to the bourgeoisie's Dominion of Canada. But a pronounced shift took place in the mid-1920s as sections of the ruling class pushed for more "autonomy" to secure a greater share of imperialist spoils, whether in alliance with Britain or the United States. In the realm of official politics, this "nationalist movement" was identified with the Liberal Party, which held power with Progressive support almost uninterruptedly from 1921-1930. Basing, as it did in the case of Britain and China, the defence of the Soviet Union on opportunist maneuvers, the Comintern leadership exhorted the CPC to promote Canadian independence as a means of weakening British and American imperialism in a series of resolutions and communiqués issued over a half-decade: The CPC "should understand that the question of Canadian independence is the central question of the entire political strategy of our party." (March-April 1925); "the struggle for Canadian independence is exceedingly important in the fight against British and American imperialism" (January 1927); the Communist Party of Canada "must support the already existing independence movement … even in the case of the victory of this movement meaning for the time being nothing but domination by the Canadian bourgeoisie." (April 1928)[17] In keeping with its embrace of Canadian nationalism, the CPC formed an opportunist alliance with A.R. Mosher, the head of the Canadian Brotherhood of Railway Employees, which opposed the International craft unions and their bureaucratic leaderships on a purely nationalist basis. This led to the virtual collapse of any joint work between the CP USA and the CPC in the trade unions. In 1929, the Moscow bureaucracy reversed its stance and the CPC, not without considerable internal conflict stretching well over a year, subsequently affirmed Canada was an "imperialist power" and repudiated its previous claim there was a progressive struggle for "Canadian independence." However, within less than a decade, as part of its promotion of the Popular Front, the Stalinist CPC would be promoting Canadian "patriotism."

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