

## THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION

In all the great bourgeois revolutions, and in the first proletarian revolution in backward Russia, the period of intense forward motion was followed by a decline and a partial reaction. Marxists call such a period Thermidor, after the month during the French Revolution when the political reaction asserted itself, restored much of the old society, but was unable to overthrow the class foundations of the new bourgeois state.

In China, this period of reaction was **anticipated** by the revolutionary leadership, who called on the masses to meet and defeat it with the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. The Cultural Revolution was almost universally condemned at the time—first of all by the world bourgeoisie, who slandered it as “anarchy” and “chaos”—but also by the CPs lined up with the Soviet leadership and even by those tendencies who considered themselves to the “left” of the Communist parties.

Workers World, however, hailed the Cultural Revolution as an “earnest effort” to bring into practice new, revolutionary socialist ideas, habits, and customs to conform to the socialist foundations of China. In a series of articles in Workers World, beginning Jan. 20, 1967, Sam Marcy explained that the Cultural Revolution was a genuinely leftist development that found inspiration in the first workers’ government, the Paris Commune, and that it was responding to the rise of a restorationist element in China that had become so strong within the party and in the positions of authority that a situation of dual power had been created.

Workers World Party supported the momentous effort of the leftists—particularly the Red Guards and units of the People’s Liberation Army—under the leadership of Chairman Mao Tse-tung and Defense Minister Lin Piao to rouse the masses in this struggle against reaction and bourgeois restoration.

It was at this very moment in history that the leaders in the Soviet Union took another step fatal to the revival of Sino-Soviet collaboration. While visiting Britain in February 1967, that is, while in the capital of an imperialist country, Premier Kosygin told the press, “We are aware there are today in China, in the Communist Party in China, and in the Chinese government, people who are struggling against the dictatorial regime of Mao Tse-tung. We sympathize with them. . . .”

This counter-revolutionary attack on the leadership of the Chinese Revolution was made in a period when the USSR, not China, had

made an accommodation with the U.S. It was followed by yet another blow against People’s China: an agreement in 1968 between Washington and Moscow preventing the “proliferation” of nuclear weapons to their allies—an agreement that it is obvious today the U.S. never intended to keep, since it has provided Israel, Taiwan, south Korea, and others with nuclear capabilities.

The tremendous heightening of tensions that followed these events led ultimately to an actual military clash along the Sino-Soviet border—a disastrous development not only for these two socialist countries, but for the solidarity and consciousness of the world proletariat and the oppressed nations.

## THE BORDER DISPUTE

While the parties that were lined up with either the Soviet or Chinese leaders at that time took sides on the border dispute, Workers World called for a peaceful solution of the conflict. In an editorial on March 20, 1969, we said, “The continuation of the border conflict between the Soviet Union and the People’s Republic of China can serve no useful, genuinely progressive purpose. If it is not terminated soon, it will divert the struggle against imperialism, confuse large masses of progressive people everywhere, diminish the political consciousness of the working people, and inflict untold damage on the cause of world socialism.”

This position did not ignore the role that Soviet revisionist policies had played in provoking the border clash. “The fundamental responsibility for the border clash rests . . . on the Soviet leaders,” we said. But we believed that the Chinese Communist Party, as the party that had been “the standard bearer for the revolutionary cause,” had “the duty to the world movement to see to it that the border conflict does not divert the main revolutionary struggle against imperialism.”

The border dispute did not turn into the all-out war between the Soviet Union and China that the bourgeoisie so hoped for, predicted, and incited. But it did raise the spectre of such a war on both sides and gave impetus to those elements in China who had been characterizing the Soviet Union as “social-imperialist.” It had only been a year earlier that Peking Review had for the first time declared that capitalism had been restored in the Soviet Union. Even then, it had run it alongside a quote from Mao Tse-tung advising that “the masses of the Soviet people and of Party members and cadres are good, that they desire revolution and that revisionism will not last long.”