

# The Draft Program of the Comintern

CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS ISSUE

## 3. DEMOCRATIC DICTATORSHIP OR A DICTATORSHIP OF THE PROLETARIAT?

What was the decision of the last Plenum of the E.C.C.I. on the experiences of China, including the experiences of the Canton insurrection? What further prospects has it outlined? The resolution of the February (1928) Plenum, being the key to the corresponding parts of the draft program, says concerning the Chinese Revolution:

"It is wrong to characterize it as a 'permanent revolution' (the position of the representative of the E. C. C. I.). 'The tendency of skipping (?) through the bourgeois democratic phase of the revolution with a simultaneous (?) appraisal of the revolution as a 'permanent revolution' is a mistake similar to that which Trotsky made in 1905 (?)'."

The ideological life of the Comintern since Lenin's departure from its leadership that is, since 1923, consisted primarily in a struggle against so-called "Trotskyism" and particularly against "permanent revolution". How could it happen that in the main question of the Chinese revolution not only the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, but even the official representative of the Comintern, that is, the leader who was especially instructed for the job, should have fallen into the same "error" for which hundreds of people are now being exiled in Siberia and put in prison? The struggle around the Chinese problem has been raging already about two and a half years. When the Opposition declared that the old Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (Chen Duxiu) under the influence of wrong instructions from the Comintern, conducted an opportunist policy, this was declared to be "slander".

The leadership of the Communist Party of China was declared flawless. The well-known Tang Ping-san clamored with the general approval of the Seventh Plenum of the E.C.C.I. that:

"As soon as the first manifestations of Trotskyism made their appearance the Communist Party of China and the Young Communist League immediately adopted a unanimous resolution against Trotskyism." (Stenographic Report, Page 205).

When however, notwithstanding these "achievements" events have unfolded their tragic logic which at first led to the first and then to the second, even more terrific, ruin of the revolution, the leaders of the Communist Party of China were rechristened in twenty-four hours from being model leaders to Mensheviks. At the same time it was declared that the new leaders fully represented the line of the Comintern. But as soon as another serious phase came it was found that the new Central Committee of the Communist Party of China is guilty, as we have already seen, not in words, but in action, of having adopted the position of the so-called "permanent revolution". This is the path chosen also by the representative of the Comintern. This surprising and unbelievable fact can be explained only by the glaring "scissors" between the instructions of the E.C.C.I. and the real dynamics of the revolution.

We will not dwell here upon the myth of the "permanent revolution" of 1905 which was cast out in 1924, in order to sow confusion. We will limit ourselves to an analysis of how this myth broke down on the question of the Chinese revolution.

The first paragraph of the February resolution, from which we have taken the above passage, motivizes its negative attitude to the so-called "permanent revolution" as follows:

"The present period of the Chinese Revolution is a period of democratic revolution which has not been completed either from the economic viewpoint (the agrarian revolution and the abolition of the feudal relations) or from the viewpoint of the national struggle against imperialism (the unification of China and the establishment of national independence), or from the viewpoint of the class nature of the government (the dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry)."

This motivation is full of blunders and contradictions.

The E.C.C.I. taught that the Chinese revolution must guarantee an opportunity for China to develop along socialist lines. This could be done only if the revolution would not stop at the solution merely of the bourgeois democratic task but by growing over from one stage into another, that is, by constantly or permanently developing, would lead China towards socialist development. This is precisely what Marx understood by the term "permanent revolution". How then can one, on the

## A CRITICISM OF FUNDAMENTALS

By L. D. Trotsky

one hand, speak of a non-capitalist path of development of China and on the other deny the permanent character of the revolution?

But—objects the resolution of the E.C.C.I.—the revolution has not been completed, either from the viewpoint of the agrarian revolution or from the viewpoint of the national struggle against imperialism. Hence the conclusion about the bourgeois democratic nature of the "present period of the Chinese revolution". In reality the "present period" is a period of counter-revolution. The E.C.C.I. apparently wants to say that the new rise of the Chinese revolution, or more correctly, THE THIRD CHINESE REVOLUTION, will be of a bourgeois democratic character, in view of the fact that the second Chinese revolution of 1925-1927 has not solved the agrarian problem nor the national problem. However, even with this correction, this argumentation is built on a complete failure to understand the experiences and lessons both of the Chinese as well as of the Russian revolution.

The February revolution of 1917 in Russia left unsolved all internal and international problems which led to the revolution—serfdom in the villages, the bureaucracy, the war and the economic ruin. Based on this, not only the S. R.s and the Mensheviks, but also a considerable section of the leaders of our own Party tried to show Lenin that the "present period of the revolution is a period of the bourgeois democratic revolution." In its general aspect the resolution of the E.C.C.I. merely copies the objections raised against the struggle for the proletarian dictatorship waged by the opportunists against Lenin in 1917. Furthermore, the bourgeois democratic revolution proves to be unaccomplished not only from the economic and national viewpoint, but also from the "viewpoint" of the class nature of the government (the dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry). This can only mean that it has been forbidden that the Chinese proletariat fight for power so long as there is no real democratic government in China. Unfortunately it is not pointed out where that is to come from.

The confusion is further increased by the fact that the Soviet slogan was rejected for China in the course of two years on the sole ground that Soviets can be organized only during the transition towards the proletarian revolution (Stalin's "theory"). But when the Soviet Revolution broke out in Canton and its participants arrived at the conclusion that this is the transition to the proletarian revolution, they were accused of "Trotskyism". Can a Party be trained in such a way and can it be helped in this manner to solve the greatest tasks?

To save a hopeless position the resolution of the E.C.C.I. without any contact with the entire trend of its thought, gives its last argument—from imperialism. We find that the tendency to skip through the bourgeois democratic phase:

"is the more harmful because such a formulation of the question excludes (?) the greatest national peculiarity of the Chinese revolution being a semi-colonial revolution."

The only meaning that these words have is that the imperialist yoke will be overthrown by some other and not the proletarian dictatorship. But this means that the "greatest national peculiarity" has been dragged in at the last moment only in order to present in bright colors the Chinese national bourgeois or Chinese "petty-bourgeois democracy." They can have no other meaning. But this only "meaning" we have sufficiently examined in our chapter concerning the "nature of the colonial bourgeoisie" and there is no need to return to this subject.

China is still confronted with an enormous, terrific, bloody and prolonged struggle for such elementary objects as the liquidation of the most "Asiatic" forms of slavery, such as national emancipation and unification of the country. But it is from here, as the march of events has shown that further petty-bourgeois leadership or even half leadership in the revolution is impossible. The unification of China is now an international task. It is no less international than the existence of the

U. S. S. R. This task can be solved only by means of a desperate struggle of the suppressed, hungry and downtrodden masses under the direct leadership of the proletarian vanguard, not only against world imperialism, but also against its economic and political agency in China—the bourgeoisie, including also the "national" and democratic bourgeois flunkies. And that is the road leading towards the proletarian dictatorship.

Beginning with April 1917 Lenin explained to his opponents who accused him of having adopted the position of the "permanent revolution", that the dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry was partly realized in the epoch of dual government. He explained later that it was further realized during the first period of Soviet power since November 1917 until July 1918, when the peasants, together with the workers, effected the agrarian revolution while the working class had not yet proceeded with the confiscation of the factories and plants, but experimented on workers' control. As to the "class nature of the government", the democratic S. R.-Menshevik "dictatorship" gave all that it could give—the dual government misarrangement. As to the agrarian revolution, it gave birth to a healthy and strong child, only the proletarian dictatorship acted as the midwife. In other words, that which in the theoretical formula of the dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry was united, was disunited in the course of the actual class struggle.

The empty shell of the half government was provisionally entrusted to Kerensky and Tseretelli; the real kernel of the agrarian democratic revolution was in the hands of the victorious working class. This dialectical disappointment of the democratic dictatorship, the leaders of the E.C.C.I. failed to understand. They have landed in a political blind alley mechanically condemning any "skipping through the bourgeois democratic phase" and endeavoring to guide the historical process by means of circular letters. If we are to understand by the bourgeois democratic phase, the completion of the agrarian revolution by means of a "democratic dictatorship" then no other but the October Revolution rashly "skipped" through the bourgeois democratic phase. Should it not be condemned for having done so? Why is it that that which was historically inevitable was the highest expression of Bolshevism in Russia, whereas it proved to be "Trotskyism" in China? Apparently owing to the same logic on the basis of which the theory of the Martinovs, who for over twenty years have fought Bolshevism in Russia, was declared suitable for China. But can such a comparison at all be made with Russia? The slogan of a democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry—what was built up by the leaders of the E.C.C.I. exclusively and entirely by the method of analogy, but a formal and literal analogy and not a material and historical analogy. An analogy between China and Russia is absolutely admissible if we find the proper key to it, and this analogy was excellently made use of by Lenin and not post factum but beforehand, as if he had foreseen the future blunders. Lenin had to defend the October revolution, that is the conquest of power by the proletariat, hundreds of times, NOTWITHSTANDING THE FACT that the bourgeois democratic tasks had not been fulfilled. Precisely BECAUSE OF THAT, PRECISELY FOR THE FULFILLMENT OF THAT, replied Lenin, in answer to the pedants who in their arguments against the capture of power referred to the economic immaturity of Russia for socialism which was "unquestionable" for Lenin. (Vol. 18, Part 2, Page 119). In reply to this pedantry Lenin said on January 16th 1923:

"It does not even occur to them for instance that Russia, standing on the border of civilized countries, and countries which were for the first time by this war definitely drawn into the vortex of civilization (all Eastern countries, the non-European countries), therefore could and should have manifested some originality along the general lines of world development by distinguishing its revolution from all preceding revolutions of the Western countries and introducing certain new elements in approaching the Eastern countries." (Ibid., page 118).

The "originality" which brings Russia CLOSER to the Eastern countries was seen by Lenin in the fact that the young proletariat had at an early stage to take hold of the broom so as to clear the road from feudal barbarism and every other kind of rubbish for socialism.

If, consequently, we are to proceed on the basis

## Stalin Gains a New Friend

THE Stalinite press has not wearied of repeating that the "bourgeoisie and the entire counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie press has welcomed the renegade Trotsky to its bosom." It is entirely true that there is no basis in fact for this statement. On the contrary, as we have already proved in previous issues of *The Militant*, all the forces of reaction within and outside the labor movement have rejected the program of Trotsky and the Opposition. The bourgeoisie correctly see in Stalin their hopes for a "moderate course" in the Soviets and the Comintern and that is why they are stacking their chips on the Centrist regime. We are now able to point out another friend that Stalin has gained among the bourgeoisie by his exile of Trotsky. In *Current History* of April 1929, the organ of the big bourgeoisie owned by the reactionary New York Times, there appears an article entitled "Trotsky's Banishment by Soviet Dictators" from which we take the following characteristic excerpt:

"As regards the present trend of policy in Russia under Stalin's leadership, Trotsky's analysis confirms the general impression that the Soviet regime grows continuously more conservative. The issue between the Stalin and Trotsky factions is joined over the agrarian policy and the treatment of the peasant landowner. The Trotsky faction has demanded dominance for the industrial wage earner in politics and rigorous suppression of peasant individualism in the economic structure of the country. The policy of the Stalin group has been opportunistic rather than doctrinaire, but has tended to concede greater freedom of action to the peasant, with a resultant increase in his economic and political power. Trotsky condemns this as a 'zig-zag policy back to middle class domination.' Taking account of the strenuous

of Lenin's comparison between China and Russia, we must say—from the viewpoint of the "POLITICAL NATURE OF THE GOVERNMENT", all that could have been obtained through the democratic dictatorship has in China been tried out first in Sun Yat Sen's Canton, then on the road from Canton to Shanghai which was crowned by Shanghai coup d'Etat, then in Wuchang where the Left Kuomintang appeared in its chemically pure aspect, i. e., according to the instructions of the E.C.C.I., as an organizer of the agrarian revolution, but in reality as its hangman. The social content of the bourgeois democratic revolution will have to be completed by the first period of the coming dictatorship of the Chinese proletariat and the rural poor. To advance now the slogan of a democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry when the role not only of the Chinese bourgeoisie, but also of democracy has already been tested through and through, when it has become absolutely certain that "democracy" will in the coming struggle play even a more despicable role than in the past, simply means to create the means of covering up the new forms of Kuomintangism and to put up a trap for the proletariat.

Of course it is not by any means a question of calling the Communist Party of China immediately to revolt to capture power. The tempo depends entirely upon the circumstances.

The revolution is now subsiding. The half-concealing resolutions of the E.C.C.I., and the tales about imminent revolutionary onslaughts, while numberless people are being executed and a terrific commercial and industrial crisis rages in the country is criminal light-mindedness and no more. After three overwhelming defeats an economic crisis does not rouse, but on the contrary, depresses the proletariat which, as it is, has already been bled white, and the executions only destroy the politically weakened party, the formation and strengthening of firm organizational links in all spheres of the labor movement. The organization of rural nuclei, leadership and unification of partial, at first defensive and later offensive, battles of the workers and the rural poor is now necessary.

How will a new mass movement begin? What circumstances will give the proletarian vanguard at the head of the multitudinous millions the necessary revolutionary impulse? This cannot be foretold. Whether simple internal processes alone will be sufficient or whether an impulse will have to be given from without, the future will show.

TO BE CONTINUED

socialization program as applied to agriculture by the present Soviet government, we need not accept Trotsky's prediction as to the outcome of the present agrarian policy; nevertheless, it is clear on the record of Russian events during the past year that the destiny of the country is falling into the hands of moderate men, and its economic life is reflecting to an increasing degree the middle class mentality of the small land-owner." (Page 172, our emphasis.)

The New York Times is one of the keenest organs of the American imperialists. When the Soviets, under Lenin and Trotsky, followed a rigid proletarian revolutionary course, the Times led the reactionary press with the most venomous, lying attacks upon Russia and Bolshevism. It knew its enemy well. It still knows its enemy well and it sees him chiefly in Trotsky and the Opposition he leads. It also knows upon whom to lean for support. The Times, the spokesman for American imperialism, is joyous in the knowledge that "under Stalin's leadership... the Soviet regime grows continuously more conservative"; that "the policy of the Stalin group has been opportunist rather than doctrinaire" (read: Leninist); that "the country is falling into the hands of moderate men."

## A Comrade for Minor

In the reactionary anarchist journal, *The Road to Freedom* for March 1929, its editor, W. S. Van Valkenburgh writes a leading editorial on the Kronstadt uprising of 1921 and Trotsky. Van V. is one of those who make up in venom for what they lack in intelligence. He says of Trotsky:

"Oceans of crocodile tears are being shed for this arch fiend of the Bolsheviks—betrayor of comrades, murderer of men, women and children, who, like a petty Napoleon, now resides in exile vainly awaiting a valiant return to the scenes of his erstwhile orgies. The Ides of March have ever boded ill for those who yearn for freedom but not yet has history written down such a wanton welter of useless human butchery as that for which Leon Trotsky is personally responsible."

Van V. should make his way to the editorial office of the *Daily Worker* where he can find his ex-anarchist friend Robert Minor. Minor, at least, does not shed "oceans of crocodile tears for this arch fiend" Trotsky. On the contrary. Should Minor and Van Valkenburgh ever get together to discuss Trotsky what a charming picture of effusive agreement we would have! Minor should really get in touch with Van. He will find in him a co-thinker and a comrade in the war against "Trotskyism."

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 At various newsstands around Union Square & 14th St. & Broadway; Second & Third Aves. on 14th St.; newsstands in the Bronx, and other stands in New York City and various stands in Brooklyn. Also, at *The Militant*, 340 East 19th St., New York City.  
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## What! No Unity?

As soon as it was announced in the Party press that the Party convention had achieved a blissful unity, it was only natural to expect that a week or two later the new "united leadership of the C.E.C." would publish a declaration against the "remnants of factionalism." We were not disappointed in our expectations. They were fulfilled to the letter by the statement of the Central Committee in the *Daily Worker* of March 23, 1929. After four full columns of windy flub-dub on the world historical import and significance of the achievements of the Party convention, the unparalleled success in liquidating forever and aye the factional struggle, of meeting successfully the burning tasks confronting the Party, the exhausted reader is informed of the shocking fact that:

"It has been drawn to the attention of the Central Executive Committee that, here and there, an insignificant handful of comrades entirely unrepresentative of the spirit and line of the Sixth National Convention which represented the firm will of the membership to eradicate all vestiges of factionalism and fully to unite the Party, are in defiance of the Open Letter of the Communist International and the decisions of the Sixth National Convention, attempting to rekindle the factional strife in our ranks."

Needless to say, something has to be done about this. Can it be possible that the Bittelman-Foster boys are at it again so soon after signing for unity on the dotted line and then swearing to it?

Surely they must be satisfied! Wasn't Union Square filled with jubilant Foster-Bittelmanites—they had united again, you know—only a couple of weeks ago, imbued with the spirit of gaiety and flushed with victory at the thought that Foster was to be made secretary of the Party? Didn't the Party convention go on record against Bucharin and for Stalin, the patron saint of the minority? Didn't these same Fosterites whisper to themselves that everything was turning out beautifully, that a new epoch had opened up in the Party?

We are ready to admit reluctantly that we had a few "reservations." The truth of the matter is that we simply couldn't see it at all. We examined the list of the members and candidates of the new Central Committee of the Party and we uneasily beheld that in the "united" C.E.C. the minority has less members than in the previous C.E.C. In addition, a number of old familiar faces are missing, faces that would help to make up a good picture of a united happy family. Where is Bittelman? Where, we ask, the Aronbergs, Wagenknechts and Costrells, not to speak of the numerous Gomezes? Gone, and almost forgotten. Not one of them was made a member of the C.E.C., nor even a candidate, nor an alternate, a deputy, a proxy, nor an acolyte nor a neophyte.

And in the big "unification" spree a few other heads were lopped off. Wagenknecht has been guillotined and his place in the I.L.D. is to be taken either by Juliet Stuart Poyntz (God help us!) or by J. Louis Engdahl (God help us again!), for both of them are faithful servants of the Lord.

In the T.U.E.L. the gray-haired patriarch of unity, Johnny Ballam, fresh from the California split, has been made national secretary, while those he dispossessed must ruminate on the course of events and the base ingratitude of man. Even Weinstein has been told what's what. He, you must understand, made the fatal error of vacillating a bit during the convention on the question of the Comintern decision regarding Foster. He even had the temerity to form a new faction for half an hour "to support the line of the C.I." Over this erring sinner who is Party District Organizer in New York has now been appointed a new commissar, B. Lifschitz, who is sure to guide the Wobbling William along the straight and narrow.

But surely all these little items should not make the minority to act so violently as to cause the Central Committee to scold and threaten them with such vigor. The minorityites should have even more of the spirit of patience and humility since they have no spirit of struggle. Even now Bittelman is putting his case before Stalin and rest assured that the minority will get a crumb or two. Then they can tighten their belts, put up their collars, bow their heads and prepare for a hard year of ideological and organizational unity under Lovestone and Stalin. They will no doubt be consoled with the thought that the Old Army Game is hard to beat and things could be worse—but not much.