

What's Happening in China?

A Question That Every Communist Must Ask Himself and Answer

Among the telegrams of Pravda there has been communicated many times during October in the smallest type that an armed Communist detachment under the command of comrade Tchu-Deh is advancing successfully towards Tchao-Tcho (Kwantung), that this detachment has increased from 5,000 to 20,000, etc. Thus we learn, "in passing", from the laconic telegrams of Pravda that the Chinese Communists are conducting an armed struggle against Chiang Kai Shek. What is the meaning of this struggle? Its origin? Its perspectives? Not a word is breathed to us about it. If the new revolution in China has matured to the point where the Communists are taking arms, then one would think that it is necessary to mobilize the International in the face of events of a decisive historical importance. Why then do we hear nothing of the sort? And if the situation in China is not such as puts on the order of the day the armed struggle of the Communists for power, then how and why has a Communist detachment begun an armed struggle against Chiang Kai-Shek, that is, against the bourgeois military dictatorship?

Yes, why have the Chinese Communists risen in rebellion? Perhaps because the Chinese proletariat has already found the time to heal its wounds? Because the demoralized and feeble Communist Party has found the time to stand erect again thanks to the new revolutionary wave? Have the city workers assured their contact with the revolutionary masses of the country? Have strikes spread throughout the country? Has the general strike pushed the proletariat to the insurrection? If such is the case, then everything is in order. But then why does Pravda communicate this fact in type used for small announcements?

Zinovievs Analogy

Or perhaps the Chinese Communists have risen in rebellion because they have received the latest comments of Molotov on the resolution on the Third Period? It is no accident that Zinoviev who, in distinction to the other capitulators, still pretends to be alive, has made a sortie in Pravda with an article which shows that the domination of Chiang Kai-Shek is entirely similar to the temporary domination of Koltchak, that is, is only a simple episode in the process of the revolutionary drive. This analogy is naturally quite fit to rewarm the soul a little. Unfortunately, it is not only false, but even stupid. Koltchak organized an insurrection in one province against the dictatorship of the proletariat already established in the greater part of the country. In China, bourgeois counter-revolution rules in the country and it is the Communists who have stirred up an insurrection of a few thousand people in one of the provinces. We think, therefore, we have the right to pose this question: does this insurrection spring from the situation in China or rather from the directions concerning the Third Period? We ask what is the political role of the Chinese Communists Party in all this? What are the slogans with which it mobilized the masses? What is the degree of its influence upon the workers? We hear nothing of all this. The rebellion of Tchu-Deh appears to be a reproduction of the adventurist campaigns of Ho-Lun and Ye-Tin in 1927 and the uprisings in Canton timed for the moment of the expulsion of the Opposition from the Russian Communist Party.

Or perhaps the rebellion was let loose spontaneously? Well and good. But then what is the meaning of the Communist banner unfurled above it? What is the attitude of the official Chinese Communist Party towards the insurrection? What is the position of the Comintern in this question? And why, finally, in communicating this fact to us, does the Moscow Pravda abstain from any comment?

But there is still another explanation possible, which is perhaps at the same time the most disquieting: Have the Chinese Communists risen in rebellion because of Chiang Kai-Shek's seizure of the Chinese Eastern Railway? Has this insurrection, wholly guerilla in character, as its only aim to cause Chiang Kai-Shek the greatest possible uneasiness at his rear? If that is what it is, we ask who has given such counsel to the Chinese Communists? Who bears the political responsibility for their passing over to guerilla fighting?

It is not long ago that we decisively condemned the ramblings on the necessity of handing over so important an instrument as the Chinese Eastern from the hands of the Russian revolution to those of the Chinese counter-revolution. We called to mind

the elementary duty of the international proletariat in this conflict to defend the Republic of the Soviets against the Chinese bourgeoisie and all its possible instigators and allies. But, on the other hand, it is quite clear that the proletariat of the U. S. S. R., which has the power and the army in its hands, cannot demand that the vanguard of the Chinese proletariat begin a war at once against Chiang Kai-Shek, that is, that it apply the means which the Soviet government itself does not find it possible, and with reason, to apply. Had a war begun between the U. S. S. R., and China, or rather, between the U. S. S. R. and the imperialist protectors of China, the duty of the Chinese Communist would be to transform this war in the shortest time into a civil war. But even in that case the launching of the civil war would have to be subordinated to general revolutionary policy; and even then the Chinese Communists would be unable to pass over arbitrarily, and at any moment at all, to the road of open insurrection, but only after having assured themselves of the necessary support of the worker and peasant masses. The rebellion at Chiang-Kai-Shek's rear, in this situation, would be the extension of the front of the workers and peasants of the Soviets; the fate of the insurgent Chinese workers would be intimately bound up with the fate of the Soviet Republic; the tasks, the aim, the perspectives would be quite clear.

The Perspective of the Adventure

But what is the perspective opened up by this uprising of the today isolated Chinese Communists in the absence of the war

Schlesinger Prepares His Dress Strike

While Foster Almost Changes the Line--with the Help of a Cable from Losovsky

A classic example of how the American labor bureaucracy, even its so-called socialist wing, conducts the struggle for the "improvement" of the conditions of the workers is afforded by the present campaign of Schlesinger, Dubinsky and their colleagues to organize the dressmakers of New York into the International Ladies Garment Workers Union. The New York Times reports on the negotiations between the union officials and the various bosses' associations read like reports of two boards of directors in different branches of an industry meeting in conference to settle minor questions of dispute for the purpose of improving the productivity and profits of business. Here is a typical news report from the Times (November 15, 1929) which speaks volumes for the level to which the "socialist" leaders of the I. L. G. W. U. have sunk:

"Asserting that the general strike of all dressmakers in the city appeared inevitable as a means of forcing non-union shops to join the respective employers' associations (!) in the industry, Benjamin Schlesinger, president of the I. L. G. W. U. who headed the union contingent at the conferences, appealed to the employers to embrace the union's program and 'do for the dress what has so successfully been accomplished for the cloak trade'. . . . The result of both conferences was an agreement by the employers to follow the example of the 'inside' manufacturers and participate in the appointment of joint sub-committees of representatives of employers and the union to work out basic agreements which would serve as a foundation for reorganization of the industry when the strike is called."

The Class Struggle is Over!

The labor leaders of our new era have abolished the very annoying business of class struggle and wiped out the clash of interests between the slave of the needle and the master. In its place they have substituted a miraculous brotherly love and a peace that passeth all understanding. All the troubles of the dressmakers are now to disappear with a wave of Schlesinger's magic wand. The workers will carry on a bitter struggle—to force all bosses to join the bosses associations. The employers will agree to carry on a similar struggle to have the workers join the Right wing union. And why not? The bosses know that as long as the Schlesingers are running the union they have nothing to fear from the "union shop". Schlesinger will see to it that the dressmakers get what "has so successfully been accomplished for the cloak trade". And what has been done there, as every cloakmaker knows, is the legalization by the union of sweat-

shop conditions, winking at the rotten piece work system, the institution of the boss-favored "impartial" chairman, and the like.

and the revolution? The perspective of a terrific debacle and of an adventurist degeneration of the remains of the Communist Party. In the meantime, it must be said openly. Calculations based upon guerilla adventure correspond entirely to the general nature of Stalinist policy. Two years ago, Stalin expected gigantic gains for the security of the Soviet State from the alliance with the imperialists of the General Council of the British trade unions. Today he is quite capable of calculating that a rebellion of the Chinese Communists, even without any hope, would bring some "profit" in a precarious situation. In the first case, the calculation was grossly opportunist, in the second, openly adventurist, but in both cases the calculation is made independent of the general tasks of the world labor movement, against these tasks and to the detriment of the correctly understood interests of the Soviet Republic.

We have not at our disposal all the necessary data for a definite conclusion. That is why we ask: What is happening in China? Let it be explained to us! The Communist who does not pose this question to himself and to the leadership of his Party will be unworthy of the name of Communist. The leadership that would like to remain discreetly on the side in order, in case of a defeat of the Chinese guerilla, to wash its hands and transfer responsibility to the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party—such a leadership would dishonor itself—not for the first time, it is true—by the most abominable crime against the interests of the international revolution.

We ask: What is happening in China? We will continue to pose this question as long as we will not have forced a reply.

L. TROTSKY

Prinkipo, November 10, 1929.

A NEW ADDRESS

All comrades and friends are requested to note our change of address. All letters for The Militant or the Communist League or any of the officers of the organization and the paper should from now on be sent to our new address:

The Militant
25 Third Ave.
Room 4
New York, N. Y.

mendous harm to the Left wing in the needle trades market. It was met with distrustful silence by the Left wing rank and file. Now comes the Daily Worker of Nov. 21, 1929,—five weeks later—and in its leading editorial it denounces the previous decision, as per Losovsky's latest cable! Says the Foster-Bedacht-Wicks organ:

Yesterday's Wisdom Now a Trap

"Neither can we consider as anything but a tumble into the trap set by the bosses and their agents such statements as 'remain at work' or the still worse elaboration of this statement into 'stay on the job in the shops we control'—statements made by some (!) left wing comrades. . . . The leadership (of the Left wing union) should undertake at once the organization of rank and file committees composed of members of the I. L. G. W. U., of unorganized workers and of members of the revolutionary union."

This belated bit of "criticism" fails to point out that it was not "some left wing comrades" who advocated the "remain at work" policy, but the official leaders of the union, the expelled Lovestonite Zimmerman as well as the stamped and approved Stalinites Gold, Wortis and Burochovitch. That this policy was formulated by the official leadership of the Party and put through in the Joint Board by one Party fraction. That this policy was given the seal of approval by an official organ of the Party, the Morning Freiheit. That five weeks passed without anyone but The Militant as much as whispering a word of criticism. That Foster, Browder and Co. were so busy denouncing the "counter-revolutionary Trotskyites" for our position on the Party's line that they could not see daylight until Losovsky jerked them up a bit.

However, the policy now adopted is a step forward. That the cable-suspended Party leaders will be unable to make any genuine progress in the dressmakers' situation, if they continue with their "new line", is nevertheless also true. Foster's substitute for the previous policy of capitulation and passivity, is to enter the Left wing union in an adventurist race with the Right wing as to who will be first to issue the strike call leaflet. What is needed, badly needed at the present moment is a genuine movement for a united front of the workers in the dress trade, a closing of the ranks, a fraternization of the Right wing and Left wing workers for a shoulder-to-shoulder organizing campaign and strike against the bosses and their agents in the ranks of labor, for the unionization of the industry and the improvement of the workers' lot.

The present policy of the Party bureaucrats rules such a line of action out of consideration. The Left wing workers must fight for it in spite of the bureaucrats because that is the way the Schlesingers will be smashed, the Left wing built and the workers' conditions bettered. Foster's policy has led to the weakening of the Left wing and the strengthening of the Right wing union. Scores of Left wing workers are registering with the Schlesinger's Right wing union. Well known officials are doing likewise. There is Tunick of Local 6 (a Party member); Martin Feldman, delegate to the Joint Board from local 6 and member of the T. U. E. L.; Faber, former business agent of Local 22; Goldstein, another business agent of Local 22; Horowitz, manager of Cutters Local 6 (ex-Party member); Reichel, Executive Board of Local 6 (a leader of the Party fraction); Sam Weisdorf, Local 2 (Party member); and these are only a few.

Unless the Left wing makes the necessary turn in the right direction, these signs of disintegration will multiply and willy-nilly it will add fuel to a fire that warms hearts only of Schlesinger and the boss' associations.

An entertainment and dance for the benefit of the MILITANT will be held Saturday, December 14th 1929 at 8 P. M. at the Hungarian Hall, 323 East 79th Street, New York City. The affair is under the auspices of the New York Branch of the Communist League of America (Opposition).