

## Lessons of the Chinese Revolution

## The Constituent Assembly and Soviets

By ARNE SWABECK

The epoch-making events in India today compel even the "theoretical" pigmies in the Stalinized Comintern, to cast an occasional glance at the historic lessons of the Chinese revolution of 1925-27. Unfortunately they continue to sink into the quagmire of their own confusion.

For the working masses who may not be able to follow the rapid changes of leadership in this "third period" we volunteer the information that Earl R. Browder is the latest Stalinist appointee to the position of superficial political director and "theoretician" in America. In 1927 he spent several months in China during the height of revolution and beginning of its defeat. Upon his return Browder wrote the pamphlet "Civil War in Nationalist China". In its foreword he promised an extensive work on the "more fundamental aspects of the Chinese revolution". We venture to predict that Browder will not keep his promise for fear of exposing the whole house of cards built up of the Stalinist policies.

## Browder—Professional Confusionist

On the Chinese lessons and the standpoint of the Left Communist Opposition Browder says in the *Daily Worker* (6-6-30), in an article entitled "Opportunists and India":

"On China, where the revolution is in a much higher stage of development than India, Trotsky also issues the slogan of Constituent Assembly, putting it up against the slogan of 'Soviets' as organs of power of the democratic dictatorship of workers and peasants."

And further:

"The Trotskyites cover up their own surrender to the bourgeoisie in India and China with 'very left' phrases about the dictatorship of the proletariat, violent opposition to the slogan 'democratic dictatorship of workers and peasants' and then practically replace both with the open bourgeois slogan of 'Constituent Assembly'."

(Could opportunist confusion be more "eloquently" put?)

Browder goes on to explain that in a period when the bourgeoisie is historically a revolutionary class overthrowing feudalism, the Constituent Assembly is a revolutionary measure. But today the bourgeoisie as a class, as well as its organ, the Constituent Assembly, is reactionary standing in the way of the completion of the "bourgeois democratic revolution". Proceeding from this he draws the conclusion that the Left Opposition has united with the Right wing, and he then repeats all the cheap calumnies always held in stock for the Left Opposition hoping thereby to prevent the revolutionists from engaging in an objective study of the Chinese lessons.

Browder, in these passages quoted, commits one "little" error. He completely confuses the question of the essential character of the Chinese revolution with the question of a slogan to be applied at a certain stage of its development. To make our case clear let us recall a few important factors in the Chinese developments.

## Browders' Confessions

In his pamphlet, "Civil War in Nationalist China", Browder tells of reports of Chinese trade union and peasant union leaders on March 16, 1927: "The countryside is in terror, the Kuomintang (revolutionary army) has turned against the people. At Kanchow, the second division has assassinated the secretary of the General Trade Union and occupied the union offices; the leaders are all in hiding and communication with the city is cut off." This is one side of the picture showing the so-called Right wing of the Kuomintang in its actual role, later repeated precisely by the so-called Left wing. For the other side of the picture Browder reports that during the northern expedition (from Canton to Shanghai), when the nationalist armies captured half of China, all the military victories were accomplished by the revolutionary masses who even overthrew and drove out the military rulers before the nationalist armies arrived. There were 2,300,000 trade union members and 10,000,000 members of the peasants union, several hundred thousand of them under arms, pledged to the revolution.

What do we find in these reports? In the first half of the picture those upon whom Stalin and Browder had pinned their hopes as liberators of the working class, and harbingers of the proletarian revolu-

tion and supported by the Stalin policies the Kuomintang, first its "Right" wing and later its "Left" wing, were already then beginning to show themselves in their true role as the hangmen and butchers of the Chinese revolutionary workers and peasants. In the second half of the picture we note the wide mass ferment, the mounting revolutionary wave of workers, peasants and soldiers; the ruling classes collapsing and power slipping out of their hands with a systematic struggle for power begun by the workers—the conditions for organization of Soviets as organs of power. But what in this situation was the policy of Stalin and Browder?

## Stalin for Hankow

As late as the E.C.C.I. plenum, May 18, 1927, the Stalin policy still held to the theory of the Chinese revolution as based upon four classes (bourgeoisie, petty-bourgeoisie, workers and peasants). The plenum decided that the organizing center of the revolution must be the Hankow government of the Kuomintang, the hangmen of the Chinese workers. It hog-tied the Chinese Communist Party in subordination and political subjection to the Kuomintang. We quote from the resolution adopted:

"The E.C.C.I. regards as incorrect the view which underestimates the Hankow government and which in fact denies its great revolutionary role. The Hankow government and the leaders of the Left Kuomintang by their class composition represents not only the peasants, workers and artisans, but also a section of the middle bourgeoisie. Therefore the Hankow government being the government of the Left wing Kuomintang, is not yet the dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry, but is on the road to it and will inevitably, in the course of the victorious class struggle of the proletariat and in discarding bourgeois camp followers, develop in the direction of such a dictatorship. (1)"

"The E.C.C.I. calls the particular attention of the Communist Party of China to the fact that more than at any other time is it now necessary to maintain the closest contact between the revolutionary government and the masses of the people. Only if such close contact is maintained—and obtained primarily through the Kuomintang—only by maintaining a determined course toward the masses, will it be possible more and more to strengthen the authority of the revolutionary government and its role as the organizing centre of the revolution. (2)" (1927—Emphasis ours—A.S.)

Trotsky, speaking for the Left Opposition view at that plenum, demanded

the striking out of these paragraphs and all references of support to the Hankow government and the Kuomintang; to openly fight this center of counter-revolution and to proceed to organize Soviets as the revolution.

Whom did history, that is the actual revolutionary experiences, prove correct? The policies of Stalin, Bucharin and the Menshevik, Martynov, who had fought Bolshevism for twenty years? No! Their policy of strengthening the enemy led to disastrous defeat. The Hankow government established the organized bourgeois counter-revolution and drowned the workers and peasants in blood. Only after the turn downward, with the disarming, defeat and slaughtering of the workers and peasants, did Stalin propose the organization of Soviets. But then—too late.

It could lead then only to miscarriages and blunders culminating in the Canton insurrection—to adventurism as a product of opportunism. Yet even the Canton insurrection holds valuable lessons forged in the fire of revolution. It became a curtain raiser for the third Chinese revolution. Despite all its weaknesses and mistakes it indicated definitely this next stage. The shortlived Canton Soviet, not elected but merely appointed from above, proceeded to confiscate feudal lands, establish workers control of industry, nationalize big industry and banks and confiscate bourgeois dwellings and all property for the benefit of the laborers. Automatically it led to the proletarian dictatorship.

Browder in his present *Daily Worker* article, either in blissful ignorance, or else in a deliberate attempt to obscure all these historical experiences, proceeds to outline the tasks of the Indian and Chinese revolutions as follows:

## The Bourgeois Democratic Revolution

"Revolution in India and China today has as its first task the completion of the bourgeois democratic revolution, that is, to carry out in India and China those measures which were the characteristic feature of the transition from feudalism to capitalism—national independence, distribution of the land among the peasants, breaking the power of the feudal elements, establishment of certain popular rights of organization and individual liberties." (So, this is the task!) He adds that it cannot be carried out by the bourgeoisie but only the workers and peasants can carry out the bourgeois democratic revolution.

This is the crux of the problem. Here we see that Browder like Stalin, still holds to a policy which could only spell another defeat for the Chinese workers and peasants.

## Independent Workmen's Circle on the Coast

Comrades:

For the last several months I have read your weekly steady. I am a member of the Independent Workmen's Circle, refusing to join the International Workers Order—believing that we can do plenty of work in the ranks of the Independent. The Stalinists as you call them began calling me and my comrades names like renegades, traitors, Lovestoneites. It opened up my eyes. I began looking for the truth—who are these renegades and traitors, Lovestoneites and Trotskyites. I went over to the stand to buy a *Revolutionary Age* when I also noticed the *Militant*. I bought a copy—compared it with the *Revolutionary Age* and remained a steady reader of your paper.

Coming down to brass tacks the situation stands this way: The I. W. C. branches are hopelessly split. Branches which have been always Left, branches (5 of them) that have given money and energy towards the Communist movement are now split in half. They hoped to take away full branches, but instead they only got about 250 out of 500 members. They kicked us out of the Co-operative Centre which we have built and kept up. They refused to take our donation for the *Frehelt* when we were in Los Angeles. By the way on an

income of \$2,400 they have had an expense of \$1,000. They also made Olga a "proletarian" suit of clothes which amounts to \$90 which was charged to the expenses of the *Frehelt*.

The Cooperative Restaurant existing for over a year has been brought to a dangerous condition by the same Stalinite leadership. It is about to fail utterly and miserably. The Cooperative Bakery fired the day shift and only works two men at night—in a city of nearly 100,000 Jews. The newly opened barber shop lost in its honeymoon months—\$30 the first month and \$50 the second month. The whole Cooperative movement including the Center is on the verge of failure and closing up entirely.

The Imperial Valley strike for which six of our best fighters were sentenced to one half year at San Quentin and Folsom was nothing but a fiasco, it never materialized; a bunch of inexperienced boys were sent down there, with no experience in union work—and how to conduct it.

In my branch of the Independent Workmen's Circle I am pushing the *Militant* all I can, and hope to organize a fraction here of the Communist League.

Yours for a clean Bolshevik policy,  
Los Angeles, Calif. RO—EIN

## Lenin on the "Democratic Dictatorship"

It was precisely on the problem of the bourgeois democratic revolution that Lenin, upon his return to Russia in April 1917, took such decisive issue with the views of the Pravda fraction, and Stalin as the editor of the *Pravda*. The Pravda fraction, through its spokesman Kamenev, demanded the completion of the bourgeois democratic revolution—that is the carrying out of the measure listed by Browder—Lenin replied that the bourgeois democratic revolution could find its solution in the proletarian revolution. Referring to those "old Bolsheviks" who more than once have played a sorry role in the history of our Party when they repeated a formula, once acquired, without thinking, instead of studying the peculiarities of new living realities" he added:

"He who now speaks of 'revolutionary democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry' only, is behind the times, is therefore in practice on the side of the petty bourgeoisie and against the proletarian class struggle; such a one should be placed in the archive of Bolshevik pre-revolutionary antiques (it may be called the archive of 'old Bolsheviks')." (Lenin, Letters on Tactics, Vol. 20 part 1.)

The bourgeois democratic revolution took place in China in 1911 and was completed in so far as a bourgeois democratic revolution in China could be completed, sufficient to prove that its problems could not be solved under the leadership of the bourgeoisie. The second revolution in China proved that the solution of these problems could be found only in the proletarian dictatorship. It further proved that it could not remain in the state of the bourgeois democratic revolution but would have to become transformed in the permanent revolution to find its final solution on the world arena. In 1927 the proletarian dictatorship in China was raised by history up to the first point on the order of the day. Its realization was sabotaged by the Stalin policy. The organization of Soviets was rejected by Stalin who chose the bourgeois leadership of the Kuomintang. The revolution, with the decisive sections of the masses of workers and peasants in revolutionary ferment, therefore took the road of the only other alternative—the establishment of the bourgeois counter-revolution which still rules today.

## A "Revolutionary Upsurge" Here and in China

Browder now speaks glibly, in the seventh Party convention thesis, about the "revolutionary upsurge of the working masses of the United States" while demanding the bourgeois democratic revolution for China. Adventurist phraseology on an opportunist basis. He is now riding the peak of this "revolutionary upsurge in the United States" which may soon collapse because it rests on nothing but paper.

The actual revolutionary upsurge of the Chinese masses in 1927 Browder failed to recognize and understand correctly therefore he is now trying to turn its history backward.

Did the democratic revolution in Russia solve its problems—that is, the measures listed by Browder. No. These problems were solved by the dual power, by the rising proletarian revolution based upon the Soviets and culminating in the proletarian dictatorship. We repeat—from history these pigmy theoreticians have learned nothing.

The problems of the Chinese workers and peasantry, including the measures listed by Browder, which will rise more in the coming third Chinese revolution can find their solution only in the proletarian dictatorship. Since today, under the established rule of the bourgeois counter-revolution, it cannot be expected that the Communist Party can arrive at the seizure of power in one jump—the slogan of the Constituent, or National Assembly becomes a correct slogan to mobilize the masses.

It was after the establishment of the bourgeois democratic revolution in Russia that the Bolsheviks demanded the speediest convening of the Constituent Assembly. This as well as its final dissolution proved a correct tactic. And as Trotsky now points out: "The millions of the toiling masses (of China) can come to the dictatorship of the proletariat only on the basis of their own political experience and the National Assembly would be a progressive step on this road."