

What Is Going On In China?

SHANGHAI—

The year 1922-29 may be described as a period of a certain economic revival of the Chinese bourgeoisie. Three conditions aided the bourgeoisie to restore its economy: a prosperous gain in agricultural harvest in the second half of 1927 and the first half of 1928; the ebb tide of the strike movement as a result of the proletariat's defeat; the temporary cessation of the civil war and the restoration of inland communication. The Chinese bourgeoisie, taking advantage of this good situation, restored its economic power. Up to 1930, the bourgeoisie had wholly recovered in the factories destroyed by the war. The general profit of the principal industry—textile—had surpassed the record after the war, while the import and export of merchant ships had increased by 20 percent higher than before, and domestic and foreign trade had increased proportionately. But the rise came to an end with the civil war and agrarian famine at the beginning of 1930.

In 1929, the war between Chiang Kai-Shek and the Kwangsi clique broke out. In 1930, the Chiang-Yen Sih-Shan war broke out. In the consideration of the latter, there are two different opinions: the one of Lee Li-san, the present leader of the Chinese Communist Party, the other is that of the Leninist Opposition.

According to Lee Li-san, this is a war of the classes, that is, the revolutionary high wave, because, according to his "analysis", the participants in the civil war represent different classes: Feng Yu-Hsiang represents the petty bourgeoisie; Kwangsi, the landlords; and Chiang the national bourgeoisie.

The National Action Committee of the Chinese Bolshevik-Leninists (Opposition) has already declared that such wars are unavoidable results after the fall of the proletarian forces. The imperialists in China and their agents, the Chinese bourgeoisie are intoxicated with the desire to split up China still further because the local governments established by these splits are the only safe guarantee for the exceptional power and interests of the imperialists and the government of Chiang Kai-Shek is the "provisional government" supported unanimously by the imperialists and the local bourgeoisie as well in order to suppress the revolutionary forces after the exhaustion of the proletariat and the forces under its leadership; but the full attention of the imperialists and the whole local bourgeoisie is concentrated on the splitting up process: the civil war is only a means for the purpose of split.

Since the "provisional government" (Nanking) has succeeded in its role and task of suppressing the revolutionary forces, then its power must be weakened by civil wars to the level of the former Peking government, while the local powers must also be reduced to the "Tuchun" period before 1925. All these are natural phenomena under the regime of different imperialists. The temporary (and only temporary) restraining of the militarists from civil wars is possible only under the most reactionary regime which suppresses the workers and peasants completely. But this is a temporary restraint which only means the preparation of new and more violent wars. The complete elimination of civil wars among the militarists is conceivable only through the seizure of power by the proletariat in the coming, third revolutionary uprising.

Under the condition of permanent civil war the masses are impelled to recognize the real political countenance of the Communist Party and to turn towards the Left. It is inevitable that during this period the bourgeois groups in opposition to the one in power, will hide themselves more cunningly behind the "Left" mask in order to betray the masses. Here one may assume two alternatives for the near future: The "reorganizationists" and the "West Hill Conference group" will put aside their own reformist platforms in order to unite with Yen Sih-Shan, Feng Yu-Hsiang, Kwangsi war lords, and organize a government whose

policy will become more reactionary than Chiang Kai-Shek's. The Centrists of the Kuo Min Tang like the so-called board of "New Life"* will surely stand in opposition to this bourgeois government under the mask of a "Left" turn. Or some of them will split from the ranks of the "reorganizationists" to oppose the policy of Wang Chin Wei and Co. This is the first possible alternative.

The other one would be more dangerous to the proletariat. The Left bourgeoisie with its existing organizations and under the mask of an "ultra-Left" turn will con-

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This letter represent the point of view of the "Our Word" group of the Left Opposition in China. The Militant disagrees seriously with a number of statements and opinions expressed by comrade Peter in estimating the present situation in the country, with particular regard to the guerilla warfare, on which we have already written and will continue to write in future issues. Nevertheless, the first-hand account of the situation in China which this letter offers makes its publication in the Militant of great interest and value.

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sent to the bourgeois democratic revolution and to the "democratic dictatorship of the workers and peasants", to the slogan "Unite with the Soviet Union" only under the condition that the property of the Chinese bourgeoisie is not confiscated. Then, under this mask, the "ultra-Left" bourgeoisie will again be able to betray the proletariat and get material support from the Soviet Union.

"Can it be considered that the revolution of 1925-1927 has at least partly satisfied the basic interests of Chinese capitalism?" said comrade Trotsky in his criticism of the Comintern program. "No. China is now just as far from national unity and from customs independence as it was prior to 1925. But as a matter of fact the creation of one home market and its protection from cheaper foreign goods is for the Chinese bourgeoisie a question of life and death. It is a question only second in importance to that of maintaining the basis of its class domination over the proletariat and the rural poor. But also for the Japanese and for the British bourgeoisie, the maintenance of China in its colonial state is a question of no less importance than the question of economic independence is for the Chinese bourgeoisie. That is why the Chinese bourgeoisie will still display many zig-zag moves towards the Left in its future policy. For those who like united fronts there will still be many chances in the future."

The present task of the Chinese Opposition is to avoid the two dangers mentioned above by all means. So that the most important work to be carried out is the slogan of a national (Constituent) Assembly through which we may sharply disclose all the deceivers of the "opposition" bourgeoisie. On the other hand, with the aid of this slogan, we must try our best to carry on a propaganda for the dictatorship of the proletariat and nationalization of the means of production, establishing firmly the real program of the proletariat which will be contrary to the obscure "bourgeois democratic" platform of the Stalinists.

In the Party

In recent months, the official Communist Party, with the opportunist program adopted by its sixth congress under the leadership of the ultra-Right winger Lee Li-san, came to an agreement with the reorganizationists, compromising the struggle between the poor peasantry and the Kulak. But under the "Left" turn of Stalin, this ultra-Right policy was wiped out by diplomatic decree of the Comintern. Chi Chiu-

* Theoretical organ of the Kuo Min Tang Centrists, whose task is to explain their theories by a "materialism" and "Marxism" of their own.

Bai and Mif, after their arrival in China, formally criticized the former policy of agreement between Lee Li-san and the reorganizationists. Nevertheless such a "Left" attempt does not correct the fundamental principle error of the Party line, since with a course based on the "bourgeois character" of the revolution, "temporary" agreements with the liberal bourgeoisie are a natural conclusion.

At present, the Party regime is still under the influence of the Lee Li-sans. That the powerful Lee agrees to publish the criticism of Chi Chiu-Bai and Mif in the official Party organ is only a false demonstration to the Comintern. But it does show that the ultra-Right spirit of Lee Li-san has prevailed strongly in the whole Party. For instance, the serious struggle between Tchu-Deh and Mu Tse-tong in the Red Army. Comrade Mu Tse-tong is more to the Left and may stand on the side of the Party masses against Tchu-Deh. But the Central Party regime of the ultra-Right wing has decided to replace comrade Mu Tse-tong with the follower of Lee Li-san, Yun Tai-in.

The history of the Russian revolution teaches us that in the ranks of Menshevism there were many differences, especially on the question of relations with the constitutionalists. The Mensheviks were divided into cooperators and opponents. But on the fundamental problems of the revolution they unanimously opposed the Bolsheviks. So does Chinese Menshevism. The reorganizationists are clearly no other than the Chinese Constitutionalists, the most dangerous enemy of the proletariat. Therefore on the question of relations with the Chinese Constitutionalists, whatever differences exist among the Chinese Mensheviks like Chi Chiu-Bai and Lee Li-san the Bolshevik Opposition can never come to agreement with them. They are for the road of the "bourgeois character" of the revolution and the "democratic dictatorship", while we are for the proletarian dictatorship and nationalization of the means of production.

The Red Army

The Red Army in China is an ever disputed question. In the ranks of disguised Oppositionists in China, the attitude towards the Red army has been falsified by saying that it is simply "an unorganized disturbance of bandits, vagabonds and villains" (Tchen Du-Siu and Liurze groups). The Stalinists are of the opinion that the Soviets of the occupied provinces are the proletarian power, and the Red Army the 100 percent military force of the latter.

As a matter of fact, the present Chinese Soviets are not established on the basis of the class struggle between landlords and peasantry, not to speak of the leadership of the proletariat. The present Soviets are only the jobless grouped in the village in order to obtain a living. Their attitude towards the peasants at work takes the form of a conqueror, so that the Soviets are not considered by the peasant as his own organization. The Soviets can make agreements with the upper classes in the village because of their separation from the sympathetic support of the peasant masses. In most of the Soviet districts, the leadership does not accomplish the division of the land, confiscation of the merchant shops, but, on the contrary, carries out the slogan of "Protect the merchant shops and money-lenders". The leaders, furthermore, do not disarm the bandits in order to arm the poor peasantry, but permits them to rob freely.

But although the Soviets under the leadership of the Stalinists are not the power of the workers and peasantry, they are peasant war groups, depending upon the activities of their leaders, like the group under Hong Siu-Chuan, the Taipings leader. Such groups are able to exist even in the period of the greatest consolidation of the reactionary regime; militarist civil war makes their further growth possible.

In these peasant war groups, the pro-

letariat must by all means acquire the leading position. But the leadership can easily be captured by "populist" parties, which seek to make the peasants independent from the workers. The Stalinists are helping the development of such "populist" parties. First, they attempt to organize purely peasant Soviets under the slogan of the "democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry". Secondly, they do not tell the peasants that the revolutionary situation has weakened, but play up to the narrow-minded and prideful thoughts of the peasantry that the workers in China are much more backward than the peasants. Third, they do not develop the independent spirit of the proletarian struggle, but spread exaggerated news about the Red Army in their organ with the largest type as if its victory were the road out for the workers. In a word, all the propaganda of the Stalinists objectively incites the "populist" ideas of the peasant's independence from the workers. From our point of view, the Stalinists in China are undergoing a process of "Social Revolutionization".

To want to eliminate such peasant Soviets and their struggle in no way coincides with the standpoint of the Opposition. Despite the fact that they are not workers' and peasants' Soviets under the leadership of the proletariat, they are far better for us than the power of the landlords. In the future revolutionary rising wave, such peasants' Soviets will be very easily turned into a workers' and peasants' Soviet power, preparing for the proletarian dictatorship. It is without doubt that during the reactionary period, the organization of workers' and peasants' Soviets is impossible; but the existence of isolated peasant war groups in so widespread a country as China is quite possible. It is the remaining spurt of the village revolution of 1925-27. The duties of the present leadership are to agitate for the more extensive development of the city labor movement, to lead it and to prolong its existence before it is completely exhausted and destroyed by reactionaries.

The Chinese Bolshevik-Leninists (Opposition) recognizes that the significance of the peasant war groups is quite different from that of the workers' and peasants' Soviets. But our sympathy is wholly on the side of such peasant wars. We insistently protest against the shameless stories about them spread by the landlords and the bourgeoisie. We speak to the working classes that these Soviets are peasant war groups, much more advanced than those of landlords and that the workers should unite with them. But we do not betray the workers like the Stalinists do by saying that these are the very Soviets of the future proletarian dictatorship.

The capture of Changsha, capital of Hunan province, by the Red Army has given a great impetus to the demonstration on August 1st in Shanghai. We distributed our leaflets with an "Appeal to the Workers, Peasants and Soldiers of the Red Army for the capture of Changsha". There we declared that the capture of Changsha by the heroic militants in the peasant war deserves the praise of the world proletariat. The heroic Red Army should not only make further attacks on the bourgeois militarists but should also carry out the confiscation of property, Chinese and foreign, divide the land of the Kulak and landlords among the poor peasants in spite of the Stalinist opportunist line etc., etc. We hope to send you a report on the Changsha situation, the present strike movement, etc., within the next few days.

—PETER

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