

How Stalin-Bucharin Destroyed the Chinese Revolution

Dear Comrades!

Since I followed our comrades to found the Chinese Communist Party, I sincerely executed the policy of opportunism of the international leaders, Stalin, Zinoviev, Bucharin and others making the Chinese revolution suffer a shameful and sad failure. Though I have worked night and day, yet my demerits exceed my merits. Of course, I should not imitate the hypocritical confessions of some of the ancient Chinese emperors: "I, one person, am responsible for all the sins of the people," take upon my own shoulders all the mistakes that caused the failure. Nevertheless I feel ashamed to adopt the attitude of some responsible comrades at times—only criticizing the past mistakes of opportunism and excluding oneself. Whenever my comrades have pointed out my past opportunist errors, I earnestly acknowledged them. I am absolutely unwilling to ignore the experiences of the Chinese revolution obtained at the highest price paid by proletarians in the past (from the "August 7" conference to the present time, I not only did not reject proper criticism against me, but I even kept silent about the exaggerated accusations against me.)

Not only am I willing to acknowledge my past errors, but now or in the future, if I have or should have any opportunist errors in thought or action; likewise, I expect comrades to criticize me mercilessly with theoretical argument and fact. I humbly accept or shall accept all criticism but not rumors and false accusations. I cannot have such self-confidence as Chi-Chiu Bai and Lee Li San. I clearly recognize that it is never an easy thing for anybody or any party to avoid the errors of opportunism. Even such veteran Marxists as Kautsky and Plechanov committed unpardonable opportunism when they were old; those who followed Lenin for a long time like Stalin and Bucharin, are now also committing shameful opportunism; how can superficial Marxists like us be self-satisfied? Whenever a man is self-satisfied, he prevents himself from making progress.

Even the banner of the Opposition is not the incantation of the "Heavenly Teacher" Chang (the head of the Taoist religion who has the "power" of driving out devils). If those who have not fundamentally cleared out the ideology of the petty bourgeoisie, plainly understood the system of past opportunism and decisively participated in struggles, merely stand under the banner of the Opposition to revile the opportunism of Stalin and Lee Li San, and then think that the opportunist devils will never approach they are under an illusion. The only way of avoiding the errors of opportunism is continually and humbly to learn from the teachings of Marx and Lenin in the struggles of the proletarian masses and in the mutual criticism of comrades.

I decisively recognize that the objective cause of the failure of the last Chinese revolution is second in importance, and that the chief point is that the error of opportunism is the error of our policy in dealing with the bourgeois Kuo Min Tang. All the responsible comrades of the Central Committee at that time, especially myself, should openly and courageously recognize that this policy was undoubtedly wrong.

* Stalin said: "Was the policy of the Bolsheviks in 1905 correct? Yes it was correct. But why did there exist Soviets and the correct policy of the Bolsheviks, but yet the 1905 revolution could not succeed? This was because the power of the feudal relics and the despotic government was stronger than that of the revolutionary movement. Cannot we say that the policy of the Chinese Communist Party has not improved the fighting power of the proletariat, made the relations between the proletariat and the broad masses more intimate, and increased the prestige of the proletariat among the masses? Very evidently, we cannot say so." The correct policy, of course, is not the only guarantee of success but erroneous policy is the chief guarantee of failure. If we think that the power of the enemy is stronger though there is a correct policy, and yet the revolution cannot succeed, then the failure of the Russian revolution in 1905 and the failure of the Chinese revolution in 1927 and all other failures of the workers' revolutionary movement, are pre-destined. I do not want to have Stalin defend the Chinese Party like this, and am even more unwilling to defend myself with Stalin's words.

A LETTER BY TCHEN DU HSIU

But it is not enough merely to recognize the error. We must sincerely and thoroughly acknowledge that the past error was the internal content of the policy of opportunism, what were the causes and results of that policy, and reveal them clearly. Then we can hope to stop continuing the errors of the past, and the repetition of former opportunism in the next revolution. When our Party was first founded, though it was quite young, yet, under the guidance of the Leninist International, we did not commit any great mistakes. For instance, we decisively led the struggle of the workers and recognized the class nature of the Kuo Min Tang. In 1921, our Party induced the delegates of the Kuo Min Tang and other social organizations to participate in the Far Eastern Workers' Conference, which was called by the Third International. The resolutions of the conference was that in the colonial countries of the East, the struggle for the democratic revolution must be carried out, and that in this

The following document, originally entitled "Appeal to all the Comrades of the Chinese Communist Party", is of enormous importance to every revolutionary worker throughout the world. That is why the Militant has decided to publish it in full despite its length. The Stalin-Bucharin apparatus has for years suppressed the point of view of the Bolshevik Opposition on the Chinese revolution. With equal ruthlessness, it has sought to prevent the movement from knowing just how it destroyed the Chinese revolution with its Menshevik policies. The document by comrade Tchen is a contribution of primary importance towards clarifying the concealed points. It is interesting to observe that comrade Tchen was not only the founder and leader of the Chinese Party for years, but its secretary at the time of the 1925-27 revolution. As he relates he carried out the Stalin-Bucharin policies faithfully, and earned some very sharply critical remarks from Trotsky at that time. All the more significant now is his acknowledgement of the correctness of comrade Trotsky's viewpoint and criticism. The Chinese, the Indian—in fact, all the colonial and semi-colonial—revolutions cannot be understood today, or the correct policies adopted for their victory without understanding the yesterday. The Stalinists—for cause!—sought and still seek to conceal their disgraceful record of yesterday, and thus prevent progress for today and tomorrow. Comrade Tchen's document, on the contrary, helps make possible tomorrow's success. We urge all readers to follow it closely.—Ed.

revolution peasant Soviets should be organized.

In 1922, at the second conference of the Chinese Party the policy of the joint front in the democratic revolution was adopted, and based upon this we expressed our attitude towards the political situation. At the same time, the representative of the Young Communist International, Dalin, came to China and suggested to the Kuo Min Tang the policy of a joint front of the revolutionary groups. The head of the Kuo Min Tang, Sun Yat Sen rigidly refused it only allowing the members of the Chinese Communist Party and the Youth League to join the Kuo Min Tang and obey it, denying any union beyond the Party.

Soon after the adjournment of our Party conference the Communist International sent its delegate, Maring, to China inviting all the members of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party to hold a meeting at the West Lake of Hangchow, in Chekiang Province, at which he suggested to the Chinese Party that it join the Kuo Min Tang organization. He strongly contended that the Kuo Min Tang was not a party of the bourgeoisie, but the joint party of various classes and that the proletarian party should join it in order to improve this party and advance the revolution.

At that time, all the five members of the Central Committee of the Chinese C.P.—Lee-Shu Chang, Chang Teh Li, Tsai Ho Sung, Kan Chiun Yu and I—unanimously opposed the proposal. The chief reason was: To join the Kuo Min Tang was to confuse the class organizations and curb our independent policy. Finally, the delegate of the Third International asked if the Chinese Party would obey the decision of the International.

Thereupon, for the sake of respecting International discipline the Central Committee of the C.P.C. could not but accept the proposal of the III International and agree to join the Kuo Min Tang. After this, the international delegate and the representatives of the Chinese Party spent nearly a year to carry on the reorganization movement of the Kuo Min Tang. But from the very outset the Kuo Min Tang entirely neglected and refused it. Many times Sun Yat Sen said to the delegate of the International: "So far the Chinese C.P. has joined the Kuo Min Tang; it should obey the discipline of the K.M.T. and should not openly criticize it. If the Communists do not obey the Kuo Min Tang I shall expel them from it; if

Soviet Russia stands on the side of the C.P.C. I shall oppose Soviet Russia at once."

At this period the Chinese Communists were not very much tainted with opportunism so that we could conduct the strike of the railroad workers on February 7, 1923, and the "May 30th" movement of 1925, since we were not hindered by the policy of the K.M.T. and at times severely criticized the compromising policy of the K.M.T. As soon as the proletariat raised its head in the "May 30th" movement, the bourgeoisie was immediately aroused.

At the enlarged conference of the Central Committee of the C.P., held in Peking in October of the same year, I submitted the following proposal to the Political Resolution Committee; Tai Chi Sao's pamphlets were not accidental but the indication that the bourgeoisie attempted to strengthen its own power for the purpose of checking the proletariat and going over to the counter-revolution. We should be ready

immediately to withdraw from the Kuo Min Tang. We should maintain our political countenance, lead the masses and not be checked by the policy of the Kuo Min Tang. At that time both the delegate of the III International and the responsible comrades of the Central Committee unanimously opposed my suggestion, saying that it was to propose to the comrades and the masses to take the path of opposing the Kuo Min Tang. I, who had no decisiveness of character, could not insistently maintain my proposal and respect international discipline and the opinion of the majority of the Central Committee.

Chiang Kai-Shek's coup d'Etat on March 20, 1926 was made to carry out Tai Chi Sao's principles. Having arrested the Communists in large numbers, disarmed the guards of the strike committees of Canton and Hong Kong of the visiting Soviet Russian group (most of the members of this group were members of the Central Committee of the U.S.S.R.) and of the Soviet advisors, the Central Committee of the Kuo Min Tang decided that all Communist elements retire from the supreme party headquarters of the K.M.T., that criticism of Sun Yat Senism by Communists be prohibited, and that the list of the names of the members of the Communist Party and of the League, who joined the K.M.T. be handed over to the latter. All these we accepted.

At the same time we resolved to prepare our independent military forces in order to be equal to the forces of Chiang Kai-Shek. Comrade Peng Shu Chih was sent to Canton as representative of the Central Committee of the Chinese Party to consult the International delegate about our plan. But the latter did not agree with us, and endeavored his best constantly to enforce Chiang Kai-Shek. He rigidly advocated that we exhaust all our strength to support the military dictatorship of Chiang Kai-Shek, to strengthen the Canton government, and to carry on the Northern Expedition. We demanded that he take 5,000 rifles out of those given to Chiang Kai-Shek and Lee Chi Shing, so that we might arm the peasants of Kwantung province. He refused, saying: "The armed peasants cannot fight with the forces of Chen Chuin Ming nor take part in the Northern Expedition, but they can incur the suspicion of the Kuo Min Tang and make the peasants oppose it."

This was a most critical period. Concretely speaking, it was the period when

the bourgeois K.M.T. openly compelled the proletariat to follow its guidance and direction, that the proletariat was formally declared by us to surrender to the bourgeoisie, to follow it, and be willing to be subordinates of the bourgeoisie. (The international delegate said openly: "The present period is a period in which the Communists should do the coolie service for the Kuo Min Tang.") By this time, the Party was already not the party of the proletariat, having become completely the extreme Left wing of the bourgeoisie, and beginning to fall into the deep pit of opportunism.

After the coup of March 20, I stated in a report to the III International my personal opinion that cooperation with the Kuo Min Tang by means of joint work within it should be changed to cooperation outside the K.M.T. Otherwise, we would be unable to carry out our own independent policy or secure the confidence of the masses. After having read my report, the international put an article by Bucharin in Pravda, severely criticizing the Chinese Party on withdrawing from the Kuo Min Tang, saying: "There have been two mistakes: the advocacy of withdrawal from the yellow trade unions and from the Anglo-Russian Trade Union Committee; now the third mistake has been produced: the Chinese Party advocates withdrawal from the Kuo Min Tang." At the same time, the head of the Far Eastern Bureau, Wu Ting Kong was sent to China to correct our tendency to withdraw from the K.M.T. At that time, I again failed to maintain my proposal strongly, for the sake of honoring the discipline of the International and the opinion of the majority of the members of the Central Committee.

Later on, the Northern Expedition Army set out. We were very much persecuted by the K.M.T. because in The Guide we criticized the curbing of the labor movement in the rear, and the compulsory collection of the military fund from the peasants for the use of the Northern Expedition. In the meantime the workers in Shanghai were about to rise up to oust the Chihli-Shantung troops. If the uprising were successful, the problem of the ruling power would be posed. At that time, in the minutes of the political resolution of the Enlarged Conference of the Central Committee, I suggested:

The Chinese revolution has two roads: One is that it be led by the proletariat, then we can reach the goal of the revolution; the other is that it be led by the bourgeoisie, and thus the latter must betray the revolution on the road. And though we may cooperate with the bourgeoisie at the present we must nevertheless seize the leading power. However, all the members of the Far Eastern Bureau of the III International residing in Shanghai unanimously opposed my opinion, saying that such an opinion would influence our comrades to oppose the bourgeoisie too early. Further, they declared, if the Shanghai uprising succeeds the ruling power should belong to the bourgeoisie and that it was unnecessary to have any delegates of the workers to participate. At that time, I again could not maintain my opinion because of their criticism.

(To Be Continued)

A PILLAR OF STALINISM

One of the principal points of support of Stalinism in Czechoslovakia has been "comrade" Julo Vercik. He was a member of the Central Committee of the Party, Communist International and in that capacity one of the most fearless and consistent knights in the struggle against "counter-revolutionary Trotskyism," against Left dangers and Right dangers, or any other danger his employer told him to fight. His vigor in fighting against deviations from Stalinism was hardly exceeded by that of Browder or Harrison George. Now he has found a new master. The pillar of Stalinism has just shifted his membership to the... Social Democratic party of Czechoslovakia. If it isn't Besedovsky, it's sure to be Vercik.

Subscribe to
the Militant