

EDITORIAL NOTES

THE MEMBERSHIP CAMPAIGN

Twelve new members have been enrolled in the New York branch of the Communist League since the national conference. In this can be seen the first tangible result of the emphasis placed by the conference on the organizational side of our work.

The American section of the International Opposition has conducted three years of solid propaganda work. By this an unshakable foundation of principle has been laid under the organization, and a fairly wide circle of sympathizers have been gained for the Marxist program.

The discussion now taking place in the Spanish section of the Opposition on the character of the Left faction has an interest for us. The circumstances and the relation of forces are not the same here as there.

Our own experience over a period of three years, on a smaller and more limited scale, argues against ultra-conservatism on the question of recruitment. In the formative period of our movement, it is true, we made a somewhat strict and narrow selection of forces.

York branch, especially, it can be said that a number of the best workers and defenders of our cause belong to this category. Lack of party experience undoubtedly has its shortcomings, and some very glaring ones.

The strength of the Marxist Opposition lies first of all in the system of ideas which lie at its foundation. This has been said many times and cannot be repeated too often.

The acceptance of uneducated but conscientious workers, who want to become Communists, does not present the dangers mentioned above. The League, for such workers, can and will become a school serving a double purpose wherein they will acquire their education in the elementary questions of Marxism at the same time they assimilate the standpoint of the Opposition on the more complicated problems which have divided the Communist since Lenin departed from its leadership.

It is to be hoped that all the branches of the Communist League will see the question as the National Committee sees it and begin an earnest campaign for new members among the sympathizing workers. Every honest worker who has given practical indications of his friendship for our cause should be invited to join the organization.

-J. P. C.

The Chinese Revolution

The Permanent Revolution & the Canton Insurrection

By Leon Trotsky

The following is a chapter, "The Permanent Revolution and the Canton Insurrection", from the book on the Chinese Revolution to be issued in the near future by the Pioneer Publishers. We reprint this chapter now by L. D. Trotsky because of the general interest in the subject, and particularly because December marks the anniversary of the Canton Insurrection.

carrying out this revolt, is that it did not understand the meaning and the consequences of the defeats of Shanghai and Hupeh. There can be no other interpretation of it. But the lack of understanding can all the less excuse the leadership of the Communist International, since the Opposition had warned in good time against the new situation and the new dangers.

The resolution of the Sixth Congress confirms the fact that an inadequate resistance to "putschistic moods" produced the fruitless uprisings of Hunan, of Hupeh, etc. What is to be understood by "putschistic moods"? The Chinese Communists, in conformity with the directions of Stalin and Bukharin, judged that the situation in China was directly revolutionary and that the partial revolts had every chance of being extended successfully to the point of becoming a general insurrection.

At the same time the resolution of the Congress says: "The Congress deems it entirely incorrect to attempt to consider the Canton insurrection as a putsch. It was a heroic rear-guard (?) battle of the Chinese proletariat, fought in the course of the period which has just passed in the Chinese revolution; in spite of the crude mistakes committed by the leadership, this uprising will remain the standard of the new Soviet phase of the revolution."

Why is the appeal to insurrection denounced as putschism after the experience of Canton? Because thanks to this experience, the inopportune nature of the uprising was confirmed. The leadership of the Communist International had need of a new lesson by example in order to discover what already appeared quite clear without it.

Lominadze, one of the infant prodigies of revolutionary strategy, swore at the Fifteenth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union that the Canton insurrection was necessary, right and salutary, precisely because it inaugurated an era of the direct struggle of the workers and peasants for the conquest of power.

However, not after "many years" but after a few months, it had to be acknowledged that the political situation had declined abruptly, and that before the Canton insurrection. The campaigns of Ho Lun and Yeh-Tin were already developing in an atmosphere of revolutionary decline, the workers were separating themselves from the revolution, the centrifugal tendencies were gaining in strength.

Let the Chinese Communists ask themselves now: Would they have dared to decide upon fixing the Canton insurrection for December had they understood that for the given period the fundamental forces of the revolution were exhausted and that the great decline had commenced? It is clear that if they had understood in good time this radical break in the situation, they would in no case have put on the order of the day the appeal for the armed uprising in Canton.

The False Comparison Between Moscow, 1905 and Canton, 1927

It is radically false to compare the Canton insurrection of 1927 with that of Moscow in 1905. During the whole of 1905, the Russian proletariat rose from one plane to the other, wresting concessions from the enemy, sowing disintegration in its ranks, concentrating around its vanguard ever greater popular masses.

immense victory, having a world historical importance. The Russian proletariat had its own party, which was not subordinated to any bourgeois or petty bourgeois discipline. The self-esteem, the intransigence, the spirit of offense of the party, rose from stage to stage. The Russian proletariat had created Soviets in dozens of cities, not on the eve of the revolt but during the process of a strike struggle of the masses.

In China, the events developed in a directly opposite way. The Stalinist policy of the Chinese Communist Party consisted of a series of capitulations before the bourgeoisie, accustoming the workers to support patiently the yoke of the Kuo Min Tang. In March 1926, the party capitulated before Chiang Kai-Shek; it consolidated his position while weakening its own; it discredited the banner of Marxism; it converted itself into an auxiliary instrument of the bourgeois leadership.

No, all this does not resemble the insurrection of December 1905 at all.

An Inopportune Insurrection

If an opportunist calls the events of Canton an adventure it is because it was an insurrection. If a Bolshevik employs the same designation for these facts, it is because it was an inopportune insurrection. It is not for nothing that a German proverb says that when two men say the same thing it does not mean the same thing.

In March 1921, the Communist Party of Germany sought to engage in an insurrection by basing itself upon an active minority of the proletariat in the face of the passive spirit of the majority, which was tired, distrustful, expectative, as a result of all the preceding defeats. Those who directed this attempt at this time also sought to take shelter behind the heroism of which the workers gave proof in the March battles.

From July 1923 on, we demanded, to the great astonishment of Klara Zetkin, Varski and other old, very venerable but incorrigible social democrats, that the date of the insurrection in Germany be fixed. Then, at the beginning of 1924, when Zetkin declared that at that mo-

ment she envisaged the eventuality of an uprising with much "more optimism" than during the preceding year, we could only shrug our shoulders.

"An elementary truth of Marxism says that the tactics of the socialist proletariat cannot be the same in face of a revolutionary situation as when this situation does not exist." (Lenin, Works, Vol. XV, page 499.)

Today, everybody acknowledges this A B C verbally, but how far they still are from applying it in reality!

The Tasks of the Leadership

It is not a question of knowing what the Communists must do when the masses are rebelling of their own accord. That is a special question. When the masses arise, the Communists must be with them, organizing and instructing them. But the question is posed differently: What did the leadership do and what should it have done during the weeks and months that immediately preceded the Canton insurrection? The leadership was duty bound to explain to the revolutionary workers that as a consequence of defeats, due to an erroneous policy, the relationship of forces had veered entirely in favor of the bourgeoisie. The great masses of workers who had fought tremendous battles, dispersed by the encounters, abandoned the field of battle. It is absurd to believe that one can march towards a peasant insurrection when the proletarian masses are departing. They must be grouped together again, fight defensive battles, avoiding a general battle, which obviously does not hold out any hope. If in spite of such a work of clarification and education, contrary to it, the masses of Canton had rebelled (which is very unlikely) the Communists would have had to put themselves at their head. But it is just the reverse that happened.

Does all this signify that the Canton insurrection was only an adventure, allowing of but one conclusion, that is, that the leadership was entirely incompetent? No, that is not the sense of our criticism. The Canton insurrection showed that even after enormous defeats, with the manifest decline of the revolution, even in non-industrialized Canton, with its petty bourgeois traditions of Sun Yat Senism, the proletariat was able to rise in revolt, to fight valiantly and to conquer power. We have here a fact of enormous importance. It shows anew how considerable is the weight of the proletariat in its own right, how great is the political role which it can eventually play, even if the working class is relatively weak in numbers, in a historically backward country, where the majority of the population is composed of peasants and scattered petty bourgeois. This fact, once more after 1905 and 1917, completely demolishes the philistines a la Kunitsin, Martinov and consorts, who teach us that one cannot dream of speaking of the dictatorship of the proletariat in "agrarian" China. Yet the Martinovs and the Kunitsins are at the present time the daily inspirers of the Communist International.

The Canton insurrection showed at the same time that at the decisive moment, the proletariat was unable to find even in the petty bourgeois capital of Sun Yat Senism a single political ally having a distinct form, not even among the debris of the Kuo Min Tang, of the Left or the ultra-Left. This means that the vital task of establishing the alliance between the workers and the poor peasants in China devolves exclusively and directly upon the Communist party. The accomplishment of this task is one of the conditions for the triumph of the coming third Chinese revolution. And the victory of the latter will restore the power to the vanguard of the proletariat, supported by the union of the workers and the poor peasants.

Rebuild the Chinese Communist Party If "apostasy" must be spoken of, the traitors to the heroes and the victims of the Canton insurrection are those who seek to rid themselves of the teachings of this uprising in order to conceal the crimes of the leadership. The lesson to draw is the following:

(1) The Canton insurrection showed that only the proletarian vanguard in China is capable of carrying out the uprising and of capturing power. The revolt showed, after the experience of collaboration between the Communist party and the Kuo Min Tang, the complete lack of vitality and the reactionary character of the slogan of the democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry, opposed to the slogan of the dictatorship of the proletariat drawing the poor peasants behind it.

(2) The Canton insurrection, conceived and executed contrary to the course of development of the revolution, accelerates and deepens the decline of the latter, facilitating the annihilation of the proletarian forces by the bourgeois counter-revolution. This stamps the inter-revolutionary period with a painful, all this.

* Tchen Du-Siu since then has acknowledged the incorrectness of his position, and accepted the viewpoint of the Left Opposition. His statement has been printed in the Militant—Ed.

(Continued on Page 2)

The Reply of Trotsky to Weisbord

To Albert Weisbord New York, N. Y.]

(Copy to National Executive Committee, Communist League of America (Opposition))

Dear comrade:

I have received a number of documents and letters from you. I apologize for answering so late and in German at that; to write in English would be too long and too ungrateful a task. Now to the point.

I cannot adopt your standpoint. Your criticism of the League seems to me one-sided, artificial and terribly exaggerated. You throw the League and the Right wing together, which shows that you utterly disregard the fitness of things. You make fun of the publishing activity of the League and contrapose your "mass action" to it. Have you any mass activity behind you? Before one turns to the masses, one must construct a principle basis. One begins as a propaganda group and develops in the direction of mass action.

In addition, your international connections, sympathies and semi-sympathies speak against you. For even if I cannot claim to be an adept in present day American affairs, still I know well enough what the Landau group and the other similar groups in Europe mean. "Tell me with whom you go, and I will tell you who you are."

The International Opposition has no use for two organizations in America. Your group is new, has only recently split off from the Right, differs from the Left Opposition on a number of questions and flirts with those elements which split themselves off from the International Left Opposition. Can you ask us to prefer you to the Communist League of America?

You declare yourself obedient to the International Left Opposition. Organizationally this is not the case. This can therefore be understood only in the sense of a general solidarity of ideas. But now you must ask yourself a question, how this will be expressed organizationally. In your letter to the League Conference, you propose a united front but without the leading comrades. This is the famous united front from below which the Stalinists practice (in words) toward the social-democrats and the

trade unions. On top of this you attack the League for not applying the policy of the united front. This does not give the impression of being serious. If the solidarity of ideas with the Left Opposition really means anything to you, you must build a bridge back to the League in common. This by no means excludes internal criticism on the basis of a healthy revolutionary democracy.

With Communist Greetings, L. TROTSKY.

Kadikoy, October 10, 1931

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More active workers have joined The Militant builders and our subscription list is growing. When one of our supporters secures a new reader for The Militant, he has rendered a service to the revolutionary movement and to his class. If he stays actively within the ranks of those building up The Militant circulation, his service will count that much more: it will give more power to our paper. Systematic building of our circulation is what is needed.

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