

IN THE INTERNATIONAL OF LABOR
Reviews and News of the Working Class and Revolutionary Movements

What Really Happened at Shanghai

Japanese imperialism has succeeded in breaking the heroic struggle of the Shanghai masses, in taking Shanghai and the surrounding territory. This success was not due simply to the technical and military superiority of Japanese imperialism. The Chinese counter-revolution under the leadership of Chiang Kai-Shek capitulated before the enemy because of the fear that the steadfast struggle of the Shanghai workers would in the end be directed against them.

How much confidence can a Communist have in the data furnished by the Comintern leadership regarding the existence of a Soviet China in part of the country? Who will believe Muenzenberg, the General Secretary of the "League Against Imperialism and Colonial Oppression", an organization which according to the conceptions of the Comintern leaders is to lead the anti-imperialist struggle, when he says at a public meeting: "In China we have a Soviet Republic with 70,000,000 inhabitants and with a Red Army of 300,000 men." We ask:

Is there a Communist party in these territories? If not, then under whose leadership are the Soviets and the Red Army? Soviets without Communists are not executive organs of a proletarian dictatorship. A Red Army without Communists cannot be red, cannot be an army of the proletarian revolution. There must be a Communist party there. The Stalinist strategists cannot deny that. If that is the case, we ask: Wasn't it possible to send Communist cadres from the Soviet territories in China to Shanghai, there where your criminal policy in its time gave Chiang Kai-Shek the possibility to slaughter the elite of the

C. P. of China? You will not say that such an action was impossible because of technical reasons, and transport reasons. For revolutionaries there are no such obstacles.

Are the data furnished by Muenzenberg correct? Or are they only another link in the chain of deceptive reports? The party comrades must know the truth. Revolutionists do not fear to realize their own weakness. Self-deception is the greatest disaster for the Communist movement. We have had enough disappointments. Think of Lenin, who set up the principle of openly pointing out our weakness before the mass—not only before the members of the party. Therein lay the tremendous strength of the Leninist party and its superiority over all enemies.

-R. WELL.

Developments in Spain

MADRID, March 24, 1932

The Communist Party of Spain has just held its Fourth National Convention at Seville. The few Spanish workers who even after the regional conferences still believed that the convention would mean the preparation for a strong Communist party and the first decisive step toward Communist unification have seen their hopes shattered. The convention of official Spanish Communism was a real "anti-Trotskyist" gathering. Only that part of the Open Letter of the Communist International, which calls upon the C. P. S. to undertake a forceful attack against the Communist Left Opposition was under discussion. We witnessed there how the leaders of the C. P., without any transitory topos, gave up their conception concerning the "insignificance of Trotskyism in Spain" and adopted the point of view that Spain is the only country in which the Communist Left is actually important. They declared that it was a serious mistake on their part to disregard the enormous importance that "Trotskyism" had acquired in this country. The regional conferences which preceded the National Convention were dedicated almost entirely to the discussion of the "Trotskyist" problem and the National Convention only presented a resume of the regional conferences.

ment, still under the "Leftist" label, embodies the preparation of the coming into power of a government which, apart from being reactionary in general, will be particularly anti-working class in character and at that in a less concealed form.

Unemployment is becoming more acute every day. In spite of the depression within the labor movement, strikes have not ceased to appear, although they give evidence of less intensity than several months ago. The labor crisis will continue to grow from day to day and the workers' movement will very soon re-emerge with even greater combativity than heretofore. The workers will defend their right to live and will engage in struggles of even greater importance and sharpness than those in the past. The anarchists and the anarcho-syndicalists have showed that they are incapable of leading the proletariat to victory. Although the anarchist working class elements have showed an admirable spirit of militancy and heroism. Nothing can be expected from the social democratic traitors. The hope of the working class rested with the Communist party and the latter deceived it in its hope. This is the great responsibility of the Stalinist bureaucracy. This responsibility signifies incompetence and a lack of understanding on the one side; sectarianism, arrogance and the lack of the most elementary notions of responsibility, on the other hand. The Stalinist leaders have not been able to wrest away the masses from the influence of the democratic illusions, denying these democratic illusions and prescribing a leap in one step and without any transition, from the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera to a Soviet regime, although at present they lose themselves in the biggest confusionism with regard to slogans of a democratic character and believe that in order to come to the proletarian dictatorship it is necessary to "pass through the democratic stage of a workers' and peasants' government" (the same slogan that "guided" the Chinese revolution of 1926-27). They are the only ones responsible for the masses turning, after losing all their confidence in the present republic, to the bourgeois "leftist" radicals. The establishment of the "left" radical bourgeoisie as a party defending the democracy is something for which the Stalinist bureaucracy is largely responsible. The leadership of the C. P. S. was unable to explain to the masses the deception of bourgeois democracy. It merely aggravated things, when at the time the masses were intoxicated with the notion of democracy, it demanded "all power to the Soviets", to Soviets that did not exist except in the fancy of the Spanish disciples of Stalin.

Nine Years of the Struggle of the Left Opposition: - 1923

The first struggle in the Russian party around which the Left Opposition took shape occurred in 1923 between the 12th and the 13th party congresses. It was concerned with four questions of fundamental importance: (1) the relations between the city and the country, the key question for the proletarian dictatorship in Russia which is based upon the alliance of the workers and the peasants; (2) the problem of a plan in the development of economy, which continues to run through all the subsequent internal struggles like a red thread; (3) the question of the internal party regime, which the passage of the years has only rendered infinitely more acute; and finally, (4) the questions of revolutionary strategy raised by the abortive German revolution of 1923 and the Bulgarian revolution of the same year. The last point we will deal with in our next article. Here we will occupy ourselves with the first three points which are so inextricably intertwined.

of the former. To draw together the blades of the scissors, that is, to bring the prices of agricultural and industrial products into greater harmony, became the intensely urgent problem of the Soviet power, particularly calculated to establish a corresponding political harmony between the proletariat and the peasantry on the one hand, and between both of them and the Soviet power on the other hand.

Although the 12th party congress in April 1923 had dealt formally with the question, not a single practical step had been taken to solve the problem. To the contrary: the summer and fall crisis was proof that the situation had worsened. Industries, finding it hard to dispose of their products, slowed up their production and consequently found it increasingly difficult to pay wages regularly. When they were paid it was in the form of a depreciated money which could not satisfy the needs of the workers. The number of unemployed was on the increase. Manufactured goods, therefore, were not only unavailable to the peasants, but also to the workers. To add to the difficulties, strikes—a phenomenon rare and alarming under the Soviets—broke out in various parts of the country.

The mounting dissatisfaction of the workers found expression in the party, too. In distorted form, it was reflected notably in the formation of two secret groups, the "Workers' Group", with distinctly Menshevik ideas, and the "Workers' Truth Group", with anarcho-syndicalist ideas. Even when the groups had been discovered and their leaders expelled, the questions nevertheless remained: How shall their appearance be explained? And the answer which met with growing agreement was that these phenomena were the result of the internal party regime of "war Communism" which continued to live after the period of war communism in the country had died out.

Trotsky's Intervention

On October 8, Trotsky wrote to the Central Committee to express his opinion on the whole matter. In it he pointed out that repressive measures alone could not solve the problem. The crisis was due to the inadequate application of the 12th congress decisions on the organization of industry, especially with regard to the concentration of industry and the necessity of a plan. (Here, by the way, can be traced the origin of the struggle for a plan in economy which the Bolshevik-Leninists commenced and which the bureaucracy resisted for years afterwards.) Finally, he showed, the crisis was due to the inability of the party masses to exchange views, to exercise any influence upon the leadership, or to participate in the affairs of the state—a condition resulting from a hierarchical and bureaucratic regime in the party with the principal mass of the officials appointed from above instead of elected by the membership.

How serious the bureaucratic distortion of the party had become may be seen even more clearly from the following two incidents. Lenin, desperately ill, was unable to participate directly in the affairs of the party but even from his sick-bed, he was in a position to see how matters stood and how great was the danger to the party and the revolution. Late in 1923, only a very short time before his death, he drew up one document after another directed against the secret clique of Stalin-Zinoviev-Kamenev-Bucharin which had already constituted itself with the determination to perpetuate themselves in control. It is in this period that Lenin wrote his numerous letters against Stalin, then the letter breaking off all personal relations with Stalin, and finally the famous "testament" in which he proposes that Stalin be removed from the post of party secretary. In one of the documents he wrote at that time, later known to the party as "Better Less and Better", Lenin wrote scathingly about the "Rabkrin" at the head of which stood Stalin: "Our new Commissariat of Workers' and Peasants' Inspection, we hope, will leave behind the quality which the French call pruderie, which we may call a ridiculous affectation and a ridiculous self-importance, which is the last degree characteristic of all our bureaucrats, Soviet bureaucrats and party bureaucrats alike. In parenthesis he said that we have a bureaucracy not only in the Soviet institutions but in the party too."

How far the bureaucratism had already gone in the party was described at that time, among others, also by Bucharin, who was one of the leaders in the fight against Trotsky and the Opposition.

In one of his speeches in 1923, he made these illuminating remarks:

"If you conducted an investigation and inquired how often our party elections are conducted with the question from the chair, 'Who is for?' and 'Who is against?' we should easily discover that in the majority of cases our elections to the party organizations have become 'elections' in quotation marks, for the voting takes place not only without preliminary discussion, but according to the formula 'Who is Against?' And, since to speak against the authorities is a bad business, the matter ends right there. Such is the election of the secretaries of our lower branches."

"If you raise the question of our party meetings, then how does it go here? Election of the presidium of the meeting. Appears some comrade from the district committee, presents a list, and asks 'Who is against?' Nobody is against, and the business is considered finished. With the order of the day, the same procedure. The chairman asks, 'Who is against?' Nobody is against. The resolution is unanimously adopted. There you have the customary type of situation in our party organizations. . . . It goes without saying that this gives rise to an enormous wave of dissatisfaction. I gave you several examples from the life of our lowest branches. The same thing is noticeable in a slightly changed form in the succeeding ranks of our party hierarchy."

It is as a remedy for this whole state of affairs that Trotsky proposed the realization in life of the decisions of the 12th party congress on plan in economy and for a genuine workers' democracy in the country. Let us emphasize here that the demand for workers' democracy raised so pointedly here was presented only as a revolutionary Marxist can: Not as an abstraction, not in the name of that "pure democracy" at whose shrine the Mensheviks worship so piously, but as a concrete need of the hour. Trotsky's demand for workers' democracy was presented in direct connection with the needs of the socialist industry and the satisfaction of the needs of the working class. And when one takes into consideration, further, the fact that Trotsky raised the whole problem in connection with the "scissors crisis" and the discontentment of the peasantry, that he presented the solution with an eye towards strengthening the bonds between the proletariat and the peasantry, it is already sufficient for a refutation of the absurd and unscrupulous inventions about an alleged "under-estimation of the peasantry" which the bureaucrats soon discovered to be the fundamental deviation of "Trotskyism".

-M. SHACHTMAN.

(Continued in next issue)

Imperialist War and Social Chauvinism

(Continued from page 1)

are forgotten as lightly as they were conceived. Instead we read this solicitous advice to the American bourgeoisie concerning the recent Tardieu-MacDonald conference:

"At this conference two questions were discussed simultaneously: the situation in the Far East and the common repudiation of paying war debts to the United States. It is also no accident that the 'attack against the dollar' has been strengthened to an unparalleled degree directly after this conference. The American 'economists' are trying to find the routes of this attack in the collaboration between French and English newspapers. It would be better for them to cast a glance deeper and to look into the Quai d'Orsay and Downing Street, where the French and English foreign policies are worked out." (Our emphasis).

With this paragraph, the statesman of the Daily Worker seeks to do the detective work for the American bourgeoisie, neither more nor less. "On Guard," he cries in effect, "France and England are planning to repudiate your war debts. This is the conference which strengthened the attack on 'our' dollar. This attack is not being conducted by isolated newspapers. The real enemy is the French bourgeoisie, the English bourgeoisie. They are also ones who back Japan. You would be foolish to tolerate Japan's advances upon the Soviets."

Is this the first concrete result of the new Stalinist "temporary alliance"? Has the American party already become diplomatic adviser to the Hoover government? And has a more treacherous trap been prepared in the Communist movement in recent times than this one?

Now the party demand for the "expulsion of all Japanese diplomatic representatives from the U. S." becomes entirely clear—if it ever was obscure. The American party demands of the bourgeoisie that it take steps against the Japanese which the Soviet Union has refrained from taking. But the expulsion of all diplomatic representatives is only the first of many connected steps. To break off diplomatic relations is usually the prelude to a declaration of war. The cruel logic of the party's downright chauvinistic position is that, in the event of the consistent sharpening of the conflict, it would only be stopping "unreasonably" half way along its chosen road if it failed to support the American bourgeoisie in declaring war against the Japanese. This is how the mercenaries of Stalinism are slowly converting the great Leninist slogan to make it read: Transform the civil war into an imperialist war!

In his magnificent criticism of the program of the Comintern, comrade Trotsky pointed out that the nationalistic, opportunistic degeneration of the social democracy led inexorably to August 4, 1914, and he warned against the essential similarity with the poison injected into the body of world Communism by the idea of socialism in one country. Of all the rotten fruits it has born, the present is one of the most monstrous. We say openly: this road leads to a horrible catastrophe for international Communism to its betrayal and crucifixion. Stalinism is driving it to the brink of the abyss. The Communist workers must cleanse the movement of the poison before it is too late.

-M. S.

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