

Nine Years of the Left Opposition

The Tragedy of the Chinese Revolution

When the full history is written of the second Chinese revolution (1925-1927), it will stand out as an everlasting monument of condemnation to the leadership of Stalin-Bucharin in the Russian party and the International. For the first time in history was it given to the young proletariat of the Orient to take the power into its hands. Such a victory would have extended the Soviet power from the frontiers of Poland to the Pacific coast, brought together close to a third of the world's population under the triumphant banner of Bolshevism, and given such a mighty impetus to the world revolution as it has not had since October 1917. Victory lay within reach of the hand for the Chinese workers and peasants, but something unprecedented in history took place: the leadership, clothed in all the formal authority of the Russian revolution and the Communist International, stood in the way like a solid wall. Stalin and Bucharin prohibited the proletariat from taking power. In the Chinese revolution the epigones played to the end, and with tragic results, the role which Lenin's struggle in the Bolshevik party in April-May 1917 prevented them from playing in the Russian revolution.

The policy of the ruling faction during the most decisive period of the Chinese revolution was, as Trotsky puts it, a translation of Menshevism into the language of Chinese politics. The theory of Stalin, Bucharin and Martynov can be summed up as follows:
The Stalin Theory
They proceeded from the standpoint that China, as a semi-colonial country, was being submitted to the yoke of imperialism which pressed down upon the whole nation, and upon all the classes in it with equal severity. On this ground, the bourgeoisie was conducting a revolutionary war against imperialism and had to be supported by the masses of workers and peasants, in a struggle which was to be carried to victory by the establishment of a "democratic dictatorship of the workers and peasants". The "revolutionary anti-imperialist united front" was to be constituted as a "bloc of four classes"—composed of the workers, the peasants, the petty and large bourgeoisie. The embodiment of this "bloc" was the bourgeois Kuo Min Tang, the party of Sun Yat Sen, and after his death, of Chiang Kai-Shek and Wang Chin Wei. The Kuo Min Tang according to Stalin, was a "revolutionary parliament", a "workers' and peasants' party" into which all the Chinese Communists had to enter as a subordinated group. Even after the Shanghai coup d'Etat of Chiang Kai-Shek, Bucharin shouted that "we shall never surrender the blue banner" (that is, the banner of the Kuo Min Tang).

Since the bourgeoisie, according to this conception, was conducting an anti-imperialist war against the foreign brigands, the class struggle at home was considered liquidated. For the workers and the Communists to make any serious attacks upon the Chinese bourgeoisie would be to disrupt the "bloc of the four classes". That is why Stalin compelled the Chinese Communists to submit quietly to the decisions of the Nationalist government which established compulsory arbitration in strike struggles. For the same reason, the peasants movement was checked with an iron hand in telegraphic commands from Moscow. Similarly, the Communists were instructed not to organize Soviets, first, because Soviets are the instruments of power of the proletarian dictatorship and "not of the democratic dictatorship", and secondly because to form Soviets would mean to overthrow the "revolutionary center", as Stalin called the Nationalist government of the bourgeoisie.

The principal arguments of the epigones against the Left Opposition were that "Trotsky did not understand" the "peculiar" position of China as a semi-colonial country where the revolution was "particularly distinguished" by the fact that it was anti-imperialist; further that Trotsky did not understand that this was a "democratic and not a socialist" revolution, consequently that its aim was a democratic and not a proletarian dictatorship; finally, that to "break the united anti-imperialist front" would be to alienate the bourgeoisie and "skip over stages".

This was the guiding line of the leaders of the Comintern. Its practical effects led directly to the victory of the bourgeois counter-revolution and the massacre of the vanguard of the Chinese proletariat and peasantry by the very "allies" whom Stalin had chosen for them.

The "Bloc of Four Classes"
What was the "bloc of four classes" in actuality? It was the form selected by Stalin and Co., in which the Communists, that is, the genuinely revolutionary vanguard, was subordinated, bound hand and foot, and delivered to the Chinese bourgeoisie. In the "bloc" the Chinese Communist Party did not retain a shadow of its own independence. The party, in a joint manifesto with the Kuo Min Tang, announced that it differed with the latter only "in some details", that the "united anti-imperialist front" had to be maintained at all costs, and that the Communists pledged themselves not to criticize the petty bourgeois doctrines of Sun Yat Senism. At the height of the revolutionary storm the Communists played such an insignificant independent role that they did not possess a daily paper of their own, and even their weekly periodicals—we shall say nothing of their contents—were published irregularly. In whole sections of the territory conquered by the Nationalist armies of Chiang Kai-Shek, the Communist party and the trade unions continued to remain illegal. The party, instead of becoming the leader in

arousing and preparing the masses against the bourgeoisie, became the instrument of the bourgeoisie restraining the workers from striking against their bourgeois "allies" and preventing the peasants from rising to take the land and drive out the kulaks. Rendered impotent in the revolutionary situation, Stalin nevertheless left the Chinese party sufficient strength for it to hand over to the bourgeoisie the proletarian and peasant masses it should have led against Chiang Kai-Shek and Co.

What conception did the Opposition defend? It took as its point of departure the fact that the semi-colonial position of China made the struggle against foreign imperialism an immediate task of the democratic revolution. But, it pointed out it is precisely this position with relation to imperialism that makes inevitable the coming agreement between the national bourgeoisie—seeking customs autonomy—and the imperialists, both of them bound together by a common fear of the Chinese masses. The democratic revolution sets the task not only of liberation from the imperialist yoke but also the solution of the agrarian question. In China, however, the country usurer and landowner is so intimately bound up with the urban big bourgeoisie, the compradors, and in the last analysis, the foreign bourgeoisie, that the agrarian revolution can only be carried out in violent struggle against all these elements. Will the bourgeoisie or even the petty bourgeoisie lead the masses in solving this problem? Quite the contrary. Only the proletariat of China can lead the peasantry in the struggle for liberation and the establishment of their own power. In this struggle, it is necessary to establish a bloc with the petty bourgeois masses, but a bloc which is led by the proletariat whose vanguard is organized into a separate Communist party, subordinated to no other party and acting independently.

What guarantees must the Communists establish for the victory of the revolution? Primarily, to rely upon themselves, upon their own armed forces, upon their own apparatus, and in the end, upon their own state machinery. The Canton government is not our government just as the Nationalist armies are not our armies and the Kuo Min Tang is not our party, but the armies and party of the bourgeoisie. The same holds true of the Wuhan government, established by the "Lefts" after Chiang Kai-Shek's coup d'Etat in Shanghai. Everywhere, therefore, the workers and peasants must form Soviets, for which they are already fighting instinctively.

The Smashing of the Opposition
For advocating this course of action, the whole apparatus of the Russian party and the International was converted into a machine to crush the Left Opposition. From Stalin and Martynov down to the last functionary an international campaign was conducted to prove that Chiang Kai-Shek was a reliable ally, and after he had drowned the Shanghai proletariat in its own blood, his place of honor in the campaign was taken by Feng Yu-hsiang and Wang Chin Wei. The whole Communist press lauded the bourgeois generals as "our own". The Kuo Min Tang, which the Russian Political Bureau had decided (against Trotsky's solitary vote) to admit into the Communist International as a "sympathizing" party, was presented to the world as only one step removed from Communism. To such lengths had Stalinism gone in the International that when Chiang Kai-Shek's armies entered Shanghai to consecrate in proletarian blood the victory of the counter-revolution, the French Communist party sent him a telegram of congratulations on the formation of the "Shanghai Commune".

The proposals of the Opposition for an independent Communist party in China were denounced without stint. This meant, cried Stalin and Bucharin, to leave the Kuo Min Tang, to "desert our allies", to drive away the bourgeoisie from the "united front", to "skip over stages". The bourgeoisie had to be supported, they contended, and the bloc maintained. It is true that in the "bloc" it was the bourgeoisie who ruled and the proletariat who served, but this fatal "detail" was overlooked completely in the interests of the "national revolution".

Even after the Chiang Kai-Shek coup (and it was not his first sign of counter-revolutionism), Stalin doggedly maintained his course. Only in place of support to the "Kuo Min Tang center" of Chiang Kai-Shek which was supposed to be leading the "anti-imperialist revolution", was now put the "Kuo Min Tang Left" of Wang Chin Wei, which was supposed to be leading the "agrarian revolution". After Chiang Kai-Shek had led his troops to Shanghai in order there to join forces with the foreign imperialists against the Chinese masses, the government of the "Left" bourgeoisie was set up in Wuhan. In this case too the ghastly experiment in Menshevism was continued on a "higher scale". Stalin called the Wuhan government of bourgeois politicians the "revolutionary center" of the South. According to Stalin, the Wuhan clique was nothing more nor less than the "democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry". And if this was the case, the proposal of the Opposition to form Soviets in the Wuhan territory was, you see, a criminal adventure. For if we already have the "democratic dictatorship" set up, what purpose is there in organizing Soviets, which are organs of power and must consequently be aimed at overthrowing the existing regime? This is how the Stalinists argued.

Stalinist Ministerialism

Into the Wuhan government were sent two Communist ministers, one as the minister of labor and the other, Tang Ping Shan, who had already distinguished himself in Moscow and China in the struggle against "Trotskyism" because it "under-estimated the peasantry", as minister of agriculture. How did this bourgeois government, the "organ of the agrarian revolution", proceed to act? In the customary manner of all bourgeois governments that exist only by grace of the ignorance, disorganization and weakness of the revolutionary masses. It sought to crush the workers' and peasants' movement, and in this task it found the signal support of the two Communist captives who served the Chinese bourgeoisie as ministers under instructions from Moscow. Wuhan proceeded to "organize the agrarian revolution" by sending the Communist minister and anti-Trotsky expert into the countryside at the head of an armed division for the purpose of suppressing the insurrectionary peasants! In this one episode is illuminated the whole counter-revolutionary course which Stalinism pursued in the Chinese revolution. The Communist vanguard was transformed by Stalin into the club with which the bourgeoisie smashed the masses into submission.

It must be acknowledged that Stalin's allies in the camp of the Chinese bourgeoisie proved to be less faithful to him than he was to them. Practically at the moment when he was sharpening the knife for the neck of the Shanghai proletariat, Chiang Kai-Shek was being lauded in Moscow by Stalin, who proclaimed him a loyal ally, and condemned the Opposition for proposing measures against him. Stalin suffered the same inevitable disappointment with the Wuhan government. It followed with almost staged accuracy in the footsteps of Chiang Kai-Shek. The "Left Kuo Min Tang" leaders proved to be not one whit more revolutionary than their Right wing brothers-under-the-skin. The fantastic "democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry", which Lenin had kicked into the dustbin of history in April 1917, proved to be, in China of a decade later, a reactionary noose around the necks of the proletariat and peasantry.

With his "workers' and peasants' party", with his "anti-imperialist united front", with his "bloc of four classes", with his "revolutionary parliament" of the Kuo Min Tang, with his "democratic dictatorship" and opposition to the formation of Soviets under proletarian leadership—with all this Stalin played the reactionary part in China which Tsarist and Chernov sought unsuccessfully to fill in the Russian revolution of 1917. This is the only way in which the tragedy of the second Chinese revolution will be recorded in history. At every stage in the struggle, the Opposition defended the tested doctrines of Marxism, of Bolshevism. The Centrist apparatus crushed the Left Opposition. But in doing so it only crushed the Chinese revolution.

—SHACHTMAN.

The next article will deal with the struggle of the Opposition for the planned industrialization and agrarian collectivization in the Soviet Union.

The Situation in Italy

(Continued from page three.)
The change in policy that took place in March, 1930 and the Fourth Congress which met in the early part of 1931, were not due to a re-examination of the Italian situation but were the result of a general change which occurred in the policy of the C. I. and prove with what lack seriousness the leaders of our party concern themselves with the destinies of the proletarian revolution in Italy. And that what we had occasion to say was equally true, was shown by the fact that at the Fourth Congress, organized by the leadership that expelled us they were forced by the Congress to condemn several false political positions defended by them one year ago against us—and having accepted our position—they have not failed to slander us at this Congress. Nevertheless the fact remains very important for us that at the Fourth Congress, the leadership which expelled us from the party was forced to recognize the political positions defended by us as correct. If we had been able to participate in this Congress we would certainly have demolished the other false political positions which the leadership succeeded in getting adopted. In fact, the full responsibility for the Fourth Congress rests upon the shoulders of the party leadership which organized it after having estimated the situation correctly and after having put the party on guard against the "democratic" danger, for retaining the false theory of "social-Fascism" and following from that, in persisting in the repudiation of the Bolshevik-Leninist tactic of the united front.

The Communist party should become the most powerful motive force in the Italian situation for the mobilization and the unification of all the forces of the movement against the Fascist dictatorship. It can be the center of attraction for all the working masses by aiding them in the efforts they are making to rise against the Fascist dictatorship. And in the course of the large movement which will multiply and gain leadership over it in a firm fashion. "But only on the condition that they do not turn their backs on the problems of democracy" (Trotsky), by giving up the absolutely negative policy towards the other anti-Fascist parties.

STRIKE STRATEGY

by LEON TROTSKY

(Continued from last issue)

According to the testimony of Communist workers (cf., say *Der Rote Aufbau*), there is a great deal being said in factories to the effect that the sectional strikes have no meaning at present, and that only a general strike could lead the workers out of their troubles. "The general strike" here signifies: the perspective of struggle. The workers are the less apt to become inspired by disparate strikes because they have to deal directly with the state power; monopolistic capital speaks to the workers in the language of Bruening's emergency decrees.

At the dawn of the workers movement, in order to draw the workers into a strike, the agitators often refrained from launching into revolutionary and social perspectives, in order not to scare the worker away. At present the situation bears just the opposite character. The leading strata of the German workers can decide upon beginning a defensive economic struggle only in the event that they are clear about the general perspectives of the subsequent struggle. They do not feel that these perspectives obtain among the Communist leadership.

UNEMPLOYED AND EMPLOYED MUST BE UNITED
In relation to the tactic of the March days, 1921 in Germany (to "electrify" the minority of the proletariat instead of capturing its majority), the writer spoke at the III. Congress as follows: "At the time when the overwhelming majority of the working class takes no account of the movement, does not sympathize with it, or is doubtful of its success; then the minority rushes ahead and by mechanical means strives to drive the workers into strikes, then this impatient minority in the guise of the Party can fall foul of the working class and break its own head."

Does this mean that the strike struggle should be renounced? No, not renounced, but it should be sustained by creating for it necessary political and organizational postulates. One of these is the restoration of the unity of the trade unions. The reformist bureaucracy, of course, is averse to this. The split has hitherto assured its position in the best manner possible. But the immediate threat of Fascism is changing the situation within the trade unions to the detriment of the bureaucracy. The gravitation to unity is growing. Should Leipart's clique try under present conditions to prohibit the restoration of unity, this would immediately double or triple the Communist influence within the unions. Should the union materialize, nothing could be better; a wide sphere of activity would be opened to the Communists. Not half-way measures are urgent, but a bold about-face!

Without a widespread campaign against the high cost of living, for a short working week, against wage cuts; without drawing the unemployed into this struggle hand in hand with the employed; without a successful application of the policy of the United Front, the improvised small strikes will not lead the movement out to the open road.

LUXEMBURGISM—OR BUREAUCRATIC VILLIFICATION?

The Left social-democrats chat about the necessity of resorting to the general strike "in the event that the Fascists come into power." Very likely, Leipart himself flaunts such threats within the four walls. On this account, *Die Rote Fahne* makes reference to Luxemburgism. This is villifying the great revolutionist. Even though Rosa Luxemburg overestimated the independent importance of the general strike in the question of power, she understood quite well that a general strike could not be declared at one's whim, that it was prepared for by the whole preceding course of the workers' movement, the policies of the party and the trade unions. On the lips of the Left social democrats however the mass strike is more of a consoling myth superimposed over sorry reality.

For many years, the French social democrats had promised that they would resort to the general strike in the event of war. The Basle Congress of 1912 even promised resorting to a revolutionary uprising. But the threat of the general strike as well as of the uprising assumed in these instances the nature of theatrical thunder. What is here involved is not the counter-position of the strike to the uprising, but the still-born, formal and verbal attitude to the strike as well as to the uprising. The reformist armed with the revolution in the abstract—such in general was the Bebel type of social democrat prior to the war. The post-war reformist brandishing the threat of a general strike is again a live caricature.

The Communist leadership, of course, bears to the general strike an attitude that is much more conscientious. But it lacks clarity in this question also. And clarity is urgent. The general strike is a very important weapon of struggle, but it is not universal. There are conditions under which the general strike may weaken the workers more than their immediate enemy. The strike must enter as an important element into

the calculation of one's strategy and not as a panacea in which is submerged all other strategy.

Generally speaking, the general strike is the weapon of struggle of the weaker against the stronger; or, to put it more precisely, of the one who at the beginning of the struggle feels himself weaker against him whom one considers to be the stronger; seeing that I myself cannot make use of an important weapon, I shall try to prevent my opponents using it; if I cannot shoot from cannons, I shall at least remove the gun-locks. Such is the "idea" of the general strike.

The general strike was always the weapon of struggle against an entrenched state power, that had at its disposal, railroads, telegraph, police and army, etc. By paralyzing the governmental apparatus the general strike either "scared" the government, or created the postulates for a revolutionary solution of the question of power.

FOR THE DEFENSIVE OR FOR THE OFFENSIVE?

The general strike is the most effective method of fighting under the conditions where the masses are united only by revolutionary indignation but are lacking military organizations and staffs, and cannot beforehand either estimate the correlation of forces, or work out a plan of action. Thus, one may suppose, that the anti-Fascist revolution in Italy, after beginning from one or another sectional clash, will inevitably go through the stage of the general strike. Only in this way will the present disjointed proletariat of Italy once again feel itself as a united class and match the strength of the enemy's resistance, whom it must overthrow.

One would have to fight in Germany against Fascism by means of the general strike only in the event that Fascism was already in power, and had firmly seized the state apparatus. But so long as the matter concerns the repelling of the Fascist attempt to seize power, the slogan of the general strike turns out to be just so much space wasted.

At the time of Kornilov's march against Petrograd neither the Bolsheviks, nor the Soviets as a whole, even thought of declaring a general strike. On the railroads the fight was waged to have the workers and the railroad personnel transport the revolutionary troops and retard the Kornilov detachments. The factories stopped functioning only in proportion as the workers had to leave for the front. The industries that served the revolutionary front worked with redoubled energy.

At the time of the October overturn there was likewise no talk of a general strike. The factories and regiments already on the eve of the overturn were recognizing, in an overwhelming majority, the leadership of the Bolshevik Soviet. Under these conditions, to call the factories to a strike meant to weaken oneself and not the enemy. At the railroads the workers strived to aid the uprising; the personnel under the guise of neutrality aided the counter-revolution. The general strike of railroad workers lacked any significance: the question was decided by the preponderance of the workers over the personnel.

Should the struggle flare up in Germany through sectional clashes initiated by Fascist provocation, the call for a general strike would hardly meet the general situation. The general strike would first of all mean that city would be isolated from city, one section of the city from another, and even one factory from the next. It is more difficult to find and collect the unemployed. Under such conditions the Fascists, who have no lack of staffs, can obtain a certain preponderance thanks to the centralized leadership. True, their masses are so disjointed that even under these conditions the Fascist attempt could be repelled. But that is already another side of the matter.

The question of railroad communications, for instance, must be taken up not from the point of view of "prestige" which demands that everybody should strike, but from the point of view of military expediency: for whom and against whom would the ways of communication serve in the time of conflict?

It is necessary, therefore, to prepare not for a general strike but for the repulsion of Fascists. This means that everywhere there should be created bases of operation, shock troops, reserves, local staffs and central authorities, smoothly working means of communication and the simplest plans of mobilization.

—L. TROTSKY.

(From WHAT NEXT—Vital Questions for the German proletariat)

*Some ultra-Lefts (for instance, the Italian Bordist group) holds that the United Front is permissible only in economic struggles. The attempt to separate the economic struggle from the political in our epoch is less feasible in our time than ever before. The example of Germany, where wage agreements and workers' wages are cut by means of administrative decrees should instill this truth even in small children.

We shall add in passing that in their present stage, the Stalinists are reviving many of the early crochets of Bordism. Small wonder that the "Prometo group", which has learned nothing and which hasn't taken a step forward, today, in the period of the ultra-Left zig-zag of the Comintern stands much closer to the Stalinists than to us.

the C. I., at the very moment when the Fascist dictatorship will feel its instability resulting from the fact that it needs to struggle against serious objective difficulties, and against the workers, the peasants and the middle classes of the city, in general, who are seriously beginning to march against it. At the same time, when the social democracy and the other concentrationist parties are pushed by the situation into a "Left" position, that means to lead the party of the proletariat, the Communist party, into isolation and therefore to be able to do nothing serious toward the success of the proletarian revolution in Italy.

—SANTINI.

Bound Volume of Trotsky Pamphlets

THE DRAFT PROGRAM OF THE COMINTERN
STRATEGY OF THE WORLD REVOLUTION
WORLD UNEMPLOYMENT AND THE FIVE YEAR PLAN
PROBLEMS OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE U. S. S. R.
THE TURN IN THE C. I. AND THE SITUATION IN GERMANY
GERMANY—THE KEY TO THE IN-

TERNATIONAL SITUATION
THE SPANISH REVOLUTION
THE SPANISH REVOLUTION IN DANGER
COMMUNISM AND SINDICALISM
The first, third and fifth pamphlets in the above table are out of print and are available only in the bound volumes. Again we wish to repeat that in our opinion these works by comrade Trotsky will be the texts which the coming generations of the revolutionary movement will study together with the works of Marx, Engels and Lenin.
PRICE TWO DOLLARS