

The Significance of the October Revolution for the Orient

By LO SEN

Few were the countries under imperialist domination which failed in the post-war years to react to the revolutionary stimulus which radiated from proletarian Russia. The war had strained the imperialist world until it broke at its "weakest link." This breach once made, the tide of revolt rose in the whole colonial and semi-colonial world. The October Revolution led not only to convulsions in Europe but directly opened the path to national revolutionary struggle in Turkey, Syria, Arabia, Egypt, Afghanistan, India, Indonesia, Indochina, Korea and China.



Arrests in the streets of Shanghai. The police belong to the International Settlement.

It was in China that this ferment developed to its greatest dimensions. China was in many ways—and still is—the key to the national emancipation movements throughout the vast domains of imperialism. Upon the outcome of the struggle there depended in large measure the correlation of class forces not only in the colonial world but between the struggling Soviet state and its enemies in capitalist Europe.

Reaction in Russia—Revolution in China

The revolutionary wave in Europe was already declining; the Soviet state, isolated and embattled, had been compelled to retreat to the New Economic Policy, when the wave of struggle began to rise high in China. The Chinese Revolution threatened imperialism with a new, and perhaps this time mortal blow. Victory for the revolution in China could have broken down the isolation of the Soviet state. Events instead harshly decided that the disastrous defeat of the Chinese Revolution should itself become one of the most ghastly consequences of proletarian Russia's isolation within a rim of hostile, capitalist states. The bureaucratic stratum which had begun to solidify on the outer crust of the newly-formed Soviet state took Russia's national isolation as its starting point. To justify itself it erected the theory of socialism in one country, the well-spring of Stalinism. In this culture the germs of opportunism thrived and waxed strong. The Soviet bureaucracy turned to the East not to help apply there the lessons of the Bolshevik victory but to seek allies in the national bourgeoisies of the Eastern countries. Toward this end it draped the mantle of Lenin around the death's head of Menshevism and made it large enough to provide shelter for the national bourgeoisies of China. From this source flowed the policies which led to the ghastly tragedy which in 1927 plunged China into the maw of reaction.

It was China's tragedy to receive the lessons and experiences of the October Revolution refracted through the dirty lenses of Stalinism. For these "lessons" the Chinese masses were forced to pay a frightful price. Today an understanding of the real relationship between the October and China's revolutionary future has to be restored. A re-evaluation of the historical and theoretical lessons to be drawn from that relationship is imperative if the red day of revolution is ever again to dawn for China.

The Bond Binding both Revolutions

Between the Chinese and Russian revolutions there is an organic bond, welded by the past and linked to a common future. The fate of the two countries is joined, in the first place, by a contiguous frontier which crosses Asia for a distance of almost 6,000 miles. There is, moreover, no real dividing line, either in the geographical or in the ethnical sense. The two countries and the two groups of peoples do not clash at a barrier, but tend gradually to merge, the one into the other.

Great similarities exist in the social composition of the two countries. In both there are a large number of races and nationalities with specific characteristics and cultures. In both the agrarian population overwhelmingly predominates and the proletariat is a small but decisive minority. Like Tsarist Russia, China is a backward nation in which the beginnings of capitalism are entwined with feudal forms of exploitation which hold the peasantry as a whole in their grip. Whereas in Russia the autocracy acted as a break on the growth of productive forces and

Lenin's Bolshevism and Stalin's Menshevism-- Victory in Russia and Catastrophe in China

perpetuated the barbarism of the past, in China imperialism in a far more drastic manner paralyzed the country's social and economic growth. The backwardness in economy and social organization condemned the masses of both countries to conditions of helotry supported by the blackest of superstition, ignorance and the burden of tradition centuries old.

In Russia the comparatively small and youthful proletariat smashed the shackles of the old society and established its own class dictatorship. With state power in its hands it unleashed creative energies which opened the way for the industrialization and modernization of the country. It elevated the cultural level of millions of people thus lifted from the dregs of darkness to a new life illumined by science and by education. China's victory still lies ahead, but in the experience of the Russian working class there are lessons of precious and vital significance without an understanding of which the Chinese proletariat will be unable, in its turn, to fulfill its historic mission.

Permanent Revolution—1905 Lesson

Both the events and the governing ideology of the Russian revolution at its various stages exercised a direct influence upon the development of the Chinese revolution. Russia's 1905 was one of the world factors which directly contributed to the explosion in China in 1911 which toppled the Dragon Throne of the Chings. From the 1905 experience Lenin and Trotsky had already arrived at the conclusion that the task of realizing the bourgeois democratic revolutions in the backward countries—and carrying them through to their end—devolved in the present epoch of world capitalism not upon the bourgeoisie but upon the proletariat allied with and leading the peasantry.

This tremendous concept, the very essence of Leninism and of the theory of the permanent revolution, possessed for China and for Russia, a decisive significance. By 1911 the productive forces of China had not reached the point where it was possible for this idea to find expression in the actual relationship of class forces. Indeed, the state of productive forces was such that neither the bourgeoisie, stifled by imperialism, nor the proletariat, scarcely yet born, were in a position to replace the Manchu Dynasty by any new, unified-class rule. Power,

therefore, fell to the militarists whose warring satrapies became masks for the interplay of imperialist antagonisms in China itself.

But the 1911 revolution had nevertheless ushered in a new, transitional epoch involving not the rise of a new dynasty but the transformation of the economy and class structure of the country and of the state superimposed upon it. The dismal failure of two attempts, in 1916 and 1918, to restore the monarchy, showed that China had rounded a decisive mile post in her history.

Proletariat Emerges in China

In the war years great changes took place. The imperialist grip, tighter after 1911, relaxed. Productive forces leaped spectacularly forward. A modern Chinese proletariat came into being, seemingly overnight. But the whole historical development of the Chinese bourgeoisie condemned it, even in the period of its relative growth, to the position of a vassal dependent upon imperialism. This meant that the task of ultimately emancipating China would fall to the proletariat as part of the whole task of liberating Chinese society from the chains of its past and leading it to its new place in a new, socialist world. In 1917, in the struggle against Tsarism, the Russian pro-



The first and one of the few anti-Japanese demonstrations — at Shanghai on September 26, 1931.

letariat showed exactly how this could be done. The Bolsheviks, under Lenin and Trotsky, translated during their time into dazzling reality. October blazed the way for China and all the "backward" countries of the world.

The validity for China of the underlying strategic-theoretical concepts of the October Revolution was not immediately perceived. But the October itself, far more immediately and directly than in 1905, became a mighty stimulus to a new revolutionary upheaval in China. The

war, the growth of productive forces expressed in the creation of modern industry, had set all classes in motion in China and out of this movement a social, literary and cultural renaissance emerged as the herald of the second Chinese revolution. When the intellectuals and then the workers began to intervene in the march of events and to seek to mold them in their own interests as they saw them, it was under the direct impetus and influence of the October Revolution. Even the Chinese bourgeoisie, its hopes for the independent development of capitalist economy revived and fluttering, tried to give its own class aspirations a Communist coloration—as Lenin foresaw it would—and its most conscious representatives sought the prestige of Russia's support and put themselves at the head of the spontaneously growing movement of the workers and peasants.

Lenin's Teachings

Here the fundamental requirement of the Chinese proletariat was a party of its own, deeply impregnated with the experience and fundamental strategy of the October Revolution. Such were the parties for the Eastern countries envisaged by Lenin at the Second Congress of the Comintern in 1920. At that Congress Lenin had given the strategic lead to the East, particularly to China where the development of class forces already provided the most fertile ground for the planting of the Bolshevik seed. Imperialist domination, he pointed out, stifled the forces of production and therefore the proletariat had to take the lead in the struggle against it—"but from this it does not follow at all that the leadership of the revolution will have to be surrendered to the bourgeois democrats." To the contrary, the Communists must prevent the bourgeoisie from securing control of the national movement. They must develop the class consciousness of the masses, lead them to the organization of soviets and with the help of the proletariat of the advanced countries, to Communism. In this process the Communists would find it "useful" and even necessary to ally themselves to the national revolutionary movements, "not however amalgamating with them, preserving the independent character of the proletarian movement, even though it is still in its embryonic form." They must put the masses on guard against the attempt to cloak a bourgeois demo-



Execution of workers outside a Hankow factory by a Kuomintang officer.

But Menshevism Leads in China

These were the clear and unequivocal terms in which Lenin laid down for the East the essential lessons of the October Revolution. But by the time the workers of the East, particularly of China, were ready to absorb and apply these ideas, Lenin was gone. The thoroughly reactionary concept of socialism in one country had replaced Leninist internationalism. A bureaucracy which hoped for nothing better than a Chinese Kemal Pasha had replaced the leaders who looked not for national but for class allies. A mechanical, non-dialectic theory of stages replaced the historical dynamics embodied in the theory of the permanent revolution. The Menshevik ideas, which might have wrecked the Russian revolution had it not been for Lenin were dragged out of the past by the same men who had defended those ideas against Lenin in 1917, the Stalins, the Bukharins, the Martinovs. This Menshevik baggage was labelled with Lenin's discarded slogan of the democratic dictatorship, decked out with devious, tortuous interpretations which outraged Lenin's very memory. Thus fortified, and backed by the prestige of the whole Russian proletariat, the Borodins and the Voltinskys came to China to teach the Chinese workers that the "national" struggle for liberation preceded the class struggle of the working masses against their own exploiters.

This was the monstrous thing, that from the land of the October came men who taught that imperialism had the effect of welding into a common front of struggle against it all the classes of Chinese society except the old feudal militarists. From this to the "bloc of four classes," the stifling of the mass movement wherever it menaced bourgeois interests and therefore the "national united front," the recognition of and subordination to bourgeois leadership through the Kuomintang, from all this to the shattering catastrophes of Can-

Executioners in Russia and Orient

ton, Shanghai, Wuhan, Changsha it was but a step—a step taken over the dead bodies of the flower of the Chinese proletariat and peasantry. When against this betrayal Leon Trotsky raised the voice of the Opposition, the voice of Marx, of Lenin, of the October, he and his adherents were driven from the party by the club of the apparatus, driven into prison, into graves or into exile. How bitter it is to think that while in China workers, peasants and intellectuals, victims of the Stalinist betrayal, went down under the lash of the terror wielded by Stalin's great and good allies of yesterday, the Chiang Kai-Sheks, the Wang Ching-wei, the Feng Yuxiang; in Russia Stalin used the apparatus of the Soviet state to whip the Leninists who had tried to save the Chinese workers from the Cavaignacs and Gallifets into whose hands he, Stalin, had delivered them!

The course of the post-revolutionary period, the inevitable lurch to insane adventurism, from August, 1927, to the end of 1930, and the subsequent attempt to cloak an insurgent peasant movement with a proletarian garb, only led to new disasters, to new blind alleys. It did not lead to the Chinese October. Instead it has only fed the finest fighters of the revolution into the maw of Kuomintang reaction. It only facilitated the Kuomintang's betrayal to imperialism and its destruction of the very lifeblood of the Chinese people.

For an end to this tragedy, too long, too costly! Like everywhere else Stalinism in China has left only smoking ruins and the bodies of heroic dead in its wake. Its dead hand must be torn away from the throat of the world proletariat. In China as elsewhere we must build a new revolutionary party, the party of the Fourth International, a party which will know how to face the problems of the Chinese revolution with a real understanding of the significance, for China, of Russia's October.

Comrade Candide and Comrade Browder ... A Tragi-Comedy

Being the Story of an Honest Worker Who Fell into a Coma in the Twilight of the "Third Period"

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Daily. For example, there's the appeal to the patriotic traditions of the American people. At Cleveland, you quoted from the 'new fascist program for the S. P.,' presented by Joseph Sharts, which read: 'These great traditions cluster around the Stars and Stripes and make it worthy to be fought for, regardless of the capitalist connections in recent years. Not by the pacifist but by the patriotic approach lies our path to power and freedom.' And then you said: 'It would be difficult to improve on Mr. Sharts by quoting directly from Hitler.' (p. 78.) How can we imitate the fascists by such appeals to patriotism?"

Browder: "That is the American approach to the problem of Bolshevizing the masses."

Candide: "The American approach! Why, that was the slogan of Budenz, one of those left social-fascists whom you called 'the most dangerous enemies of the workers' struggles today.'" (p. 76.)

Browder: "Not so loud, comrade. Budenz is in the next room."

Candide: "There are lots of other things in the Daily Worker I don't understand. The editorials call upon the Roosevelt government and the League of Nations to invoke sanctions against Fascist Italy. You taught us that the Roosevelt administration is 'the beginning of the introduction of fascism.' . . . The New Deal was in political essence and direction the same as Hitler's program.' (p. 20-21.) How can we, a working class party, call upon one semi-fascist government to stop another Fascist state from conducting an imperialist war? Aren't we playing the game of the imperialists, instead of pursuing an independent working class policy?"

Browder: "We're utilizing the contradictions between the imperialist powers, just as the Soviet Union is doing in the League of Nations."

Candide: "I can understand why the Soviet state must try to utilize

these contradictions in diplomatic maneuvers with the imperialist powers, but how can the Communist parties ask the cooperation of their own ruling class to fight another? How does such class-collaboration look to the Italian workers?"

Browder: "Would you have us isolate ourselves from the organized workers by opposing sanctions, which is the only way to avert war and oppose Fascism? Why, only the counter-revolutionary Trotskyites are against sanctions. We've won over all the trade unions, almost all the Socialist parties to our policy."

Candide: "That's just the point. You said that both the A. F. of L. and the company unions were governmental agencies of the capitalist class, just as the Fascists and social-fascists were the twin political agencies of the capitalist class. (p. 28-29-30.) If the A. F. of L. is a semi-fascist agency of the Roosevelt regime, more dangerous than the company unions, then it naturally follows that its leaders would sanction the imperialist policy of the American government."

Browder: "You're living in the past, comrade. A new progressive movement has sprung up in the A. F. of L. headed by such people as John L. Lewis, Francis Gorman and Sidney Hillman, and that's why we're advising all our members to join it."

Candide: "Lewis heading a progressive movement? Why you coupled him with Green in 1934. And you're liquidating all the T.U.U.L. unions? Why I remember how my heart beat with pride as I listened to you describe the amazing progress made by the revolutionary trade unions of the T.U.U.L., 'by developing the whole mass movement of resistance to the NRA and the whole capitalist offensive, in the development of the strike movements,' (p. 36) while the Trotskyites and Musteltes sold out the workers in Minneapolis and Toledo. I remember that slogan you gave

us: 'to unite the independent unions with the revolutionary unions into a single Independent Federation of Labor.'" (p. 38)

At this point Candide broke into hysteria and fell to the floor in a dead faint. We are informed that he has remained unconscious and delirious ever since. In that unfortunate condition, we must regretfully leave him.

Chapter III

PLAUSIBLE as it seems, we cannot, of course, vouch for complete authenticity of the above story. We can, however, guarantee the authenticity of the quotations from Browder. They will be found in the "Report of the Central Committee of the Communist Party to the 5th Convention, delivered by Earl Browder," published by the Worker's Library of New York, 1934. We recommend it for entertainment and meditation these sombre days.

Candide, the honest Stalinist worker, was completely bewildered by the contradictory lines of the Communist Party, and could find no explanation for them. Bewildered and confused by his leaders, who tell him one thing today and its opposite tomorrow, he relapsed into unconsciousness. Politically conscious workers, however, will want to know why the Communist Party has followed such completely contradictory policies in the past period.

To us, the reasons for the somersaults of the Stalinists are clear. It would be pointless to look for them in Browder's psychology or American conditions. These have nothing to do with the case. Browder, the leader of the C.P.U.S.A., is a political master-mind in only one sense: he reflects what goes on in the mind of his master, Stalin, who in turn translates into political terms the needs of the Soviet bureaucracy. We must, therefore, look abroad to the Soviet Union and the international scene to understand what has allied the Com-

intern in the past thirteen years, years of great opportunities and tremendous defeats for the revolutionary working class.

As we view the history of the Third International, it has passed through four phases.

1. The heroic period from the Bolshevik revolution in October, 1917 to the death of Lenin in 1924. In these years the Third International was built; its revolutionary program formulated in the first four Congresses; the task of winning over the working class of the world to revolutionary struggle under the banner of Marx and Lenin begun. However, the destruction of the flower of the Russian proletariat in the civil wars, then the economic collapse which necessitated the introduction of the New Economic Policy in 1921 produced a widespread passivity in the exhausted Russian working class. Reflecting this passivity, the Soviet bureaucracy, whose control was centralized in Stalin's hands, developed and strengthened its grip upon the Communist party and the state apparatus during this period—and turned its face away from the international revolution. The post-war tidal wave of revolution led by the Third International was broken by the retreat of the Communist leaders in Germany in the face of a revolutionary situation in October 1923 (this was under Stalin's orders), which was preceded by the defeat of the Bulgarian insurrection in 1923 and followed by the crushing of the Revval uprising in Estonia. The breaking of the revolutionary wave in Germany and elsewhere paved the way for the reorganization and strengthening of European capitalism with the aid of American capital.

2. The second period. The revolutionary ebb and the temporary stabilization of European capitalism gave further impetus to pessimism and passivity regarding the prospects of world revolution in the Soviet bureaucracy, which had usurped control of the Russian

Communist Party and the Comintern. Turning their backs upon the international scene, the leaders of the bureaucracy, Stalin, developed the theory of "socialism in one country" as a justification for their conservative and narrowly nationalistic viewpoint. According to this theory, a classless socialist society can be built up in one single country alone, the Soviet Union, even if the proletariat in the more advanced countries fail to conquer power. From this theory dates the beginning of the degeneration of the parties of revolution in their respective countries to auxiliary arms of the conservative foreign policy of the Soviet bureaucracy. From this fatal theory flows all the blunders, defeats, and catastrophes which the working class has suffered since 1923.

During this second period right-opportunistic policies were substituted all along the line for revolutionary policies. Within the Soviet Union, the bureaucracy leaned upon the Nepman and the Kulak for support in its struggle against the Bolshevik-Leninists; and opposed planned economy, industrialization, and collectivization demanded by the Left Opposition in favor of a course of concessions to Nepmen and Kulaks. In the sphere of foreign policy the Stalinists relied upon the reformist trade union bureaucracy of England through the Anglo-Russian Committee to lead the struggle against imperialist war and for the defense of the Soviet Union; upon Chiang Kai-shek and the Kou-Min-Tang in the Chinese revolution; and upon various unreliable peasant leaders throughout the world. The Communist parties were subordinated to these alliances with alien class elements. The balance-sheet included the betrayal of the English General Strike and the impotence of the British Communist Party; the tragic betrayal of the Chinese revolution; the weakening of the Communist parties and the revolutionary movement throughout the

world. The essence of this course was to preserve the status-quo, while socialism was being built in the Soviet Union.

3. The Third Period.

When this policy culminated in "the bloodless Kulak uprising of 1928," the Stalinists suddenly veered around and transformed all their policies into their opposites. Instead of opposition to planned economy came the first and second Five Year plans with their mad gallop toward industrialization, regardless of costs and consequences, together with the campaign for complete collectivization and liquidation of the kulak. These domestic policies were complemented by the social-fascist, dual red trade union, united front from below policies. It was in this so-called "third period" that Candide received his political education, or rather, miseducation. So different in its form from the second period, the third period continued the same objective: preservation of the status quo—even if the cost involved was to sacrifice the German revolution to maintain the status quo.

4. The Fourth Period.

The adventurous, ultra-leftist line of the third period was abruptly terminated by Hitler's conquest of power as a direct consequence of the fatal policies pursued by the Communist Party of Germany. Panic-stricken at the spectacle of the Fascist monster they had helped create, the Stalinists have thrown away all the theoretical baggage of the third period in the wild flight to the right, which is still under way. This is a return to the fundamental course of the Stalinist bureaucracy, the right opportunist course of 1923-1928, on a wider scale and with more profound consequences. Again, its objective is: the status quo.

Today the Stalinists are again seeking protection in the arms of the social democratic leaders and the reformist trade union bureaucracy, as well as imperialist nations such as France. The sole task of the

Stalinists outside the Soviet Union is to preserve the status quo by means of the Soviet diplomacy of Litvinov or the subsidiary means of the Communist parties. The last remnants of revolutionary working class policy has been abandoned in favor of popular fronts. The united fronts between the Socialist and Communist parties are united fronts of inaction, instead of struggle. The recent Seventh Congress of the Comintern set its seal of approval upon this course. The task of the Third International, which was organized by Lenin and Trotsky to conquer the world for socialism, has been reduced to the pitiful task of "defending the remnants of bourgeois democracy." Since the Stalin-Laval pact, the French Communist Party calls upon the French working class to support its own capitalist government in case of war against Fascist Germany, thus pitting one section of the working class against another, and betraying them both. This is a repetition on a grander scale of the social-patriotic betrayal of the Second International in 1914-1918.

Since 1923 the opportunist leadership of the Comintern had brought nothing but defeat after defeat upon the working class. Although the leaders of the various parties of the Third International still drape themselves in the banner of Lenin, they have violated every revolutionary principle he stood for. The Third International is no longer a revolutionary organization, no longer a progressive force in the labor movement.

The proletarian revolutionists of the world are gathering today under the new banner of the Fourth International. The struggle for the Fourth International is the struggle for the ideas of Marx and Lenin; for the overthrow of capitalism; for a workers' world. Rally to the support of the Workers Party, which has unfurled the banner of the Fourth International in the United States!