

Shanghai's Fall Shows Urgent Need of Mass Action To Stop Japan

By Li Fu-jeu

Nearly five months have elapsed since Japanese imperialism embarked on the current phase of its military campaign to subjugate China and convert it into a colony of Japan. Assembling a mighty war machine, Japan has driven forward relentlessly to establish its control over the northern provinces of China and the vital area of the Yangtze. The oppressed Chinese masses have received innumerable fresh lessons in imperialist fright-

fulness. Death and devastation on a fearful scale have accompanied the Japanese campaign to imbue the victims with Japan's "friendly" intentions.

In the path of the Japanese invaders, the Kuomintang government of Chiang Kai-shek has strewn soldiers by the hundreds of thousands. On the North China fronts these troops have proved totally incapable of even holding up the Japanese advance. Provincial soldiery, ill-trained and poorly-armed, proved no match for Japan's mechanized war machine. After brief and sanguinary encounters, they usually fled in disorder before the advancing hosts of Japanese imperialism. Today the Japanese armies are in possession of all Hopei province, all Chahar, most of Suiyuan, a large part of Shansi, and a portion of Shantung. Military conquest of the latter province has been delayed by the Japanese hope that they may be able to buy over the provincial governor, Gen. Han Fu-chu, and thus avoid a costly military campaign.

Shanghai Falls, Too

At Shanghai, the Chinese resistance to the invaders has been much more real. For approximately three months Chinese forces largely drawn from Chiang Kai-shek's own armies held the invaders at bay and prevented them from gaining a strong foothold on the Shanghai peninsula. Trained by German military specialists, better armed than the provincial forces, they fought with unmatched heroism and at tremendous sacrifice to hold their defense lines. But at Shanghai, too, the technical superiority of the Japanese forces, rich in such telling armament as airplanes, tanks, armored cars, heavy artillery—not to speak of warships which were able, unhindered, to blast at the Chinese lines from the Whangpoo River—had finally to prevail.

From Shanghai, on November 8, the Chinese commenced a retreat many miles west of the city to fresh and supposedly stronger defense positions designated by Chiang Kai-shek as China's "Hindenburg line." Latest press dispatches indicate, however, that line has been broken through at several vital points. The city of Soochow, key point of the line, was apparently surrendered to the Japanese without a shot being fired in its defense. It is clear that the retreat from Shanghai is in danger of developing into a rout. The Japanese forces are sweeping forward on several encircling fronts towards Nanking, the capital, from which the Kuomintang government has fled precipitately to remote points up the Yangtze River.

Several important conclusions can be drawn from these developments. It has been once more

demonstrated that a backward country, with a feeble industry, poor in modern heavy armament, cannot long prevail in a purely military-defensive war against a more powerful adversary. Revolutionists have always contended, and the experiences of the Russian Revolution proved, that the weaker side can make good the technical deficiencies of its defense only by the development of an all-sided political campaign, having as its immediate object the disruption of the enemy forces. The Bolsheviks, pitting themselves against the interventionist forces, not of a single imperialist power but of all the leading imperialist powers, were probably no better supplied with armaments than China is today. But the Bolsheviks knew how to appeal to the class sentiments of the soldiers in the armies of their opponents. Revolutionary propaganda so weakened the interventionist forces that they could no longer be relied upon to fight and had to be withdrawn.

A backward, ill-armed country must pit against a well-armed enemy the superiority of its cause—a cause which must serve as the basis for rallying the entire nation for defense, a cause which, by reason of its essential rightness and progressiveness, will sustain the national morale, inspire the masses to that self-sacrifice, solidarity and unbounded initiative of which, as history has demonstrated over and over again, they are capable, and which would evoke actions of international solidarity in the enemy country.

Heads For Defeat

Five months of the Far Eastern conflict have shown, however, that the Kuomintang government is totally incapable of conducting the war in this manner. It is heading China's cause to defeat. Revolutionists cannot be surprised at Chiang Kai-shek's inability to appeal to the revolutionary sentiments of the oppressed Japanese soldiers, the vast majority of whom are drawn from the poorest layers of Japan's peasantry, any more than they were surprised at the inability of the Spanish bourgeois government to issue revolutionary appeals.

Neither is there anything extraordinary in the fact that the Kuomintang regime, through five months of warfare against a powerful foe, has kept the Chinese masses immobilized and has clamped down on any suggestion that the population be armed and drawn into country-wide guerilla warfare against the Japanese invaders. The Chinese bourgeoisie and its government fear the armed masses more than they do the Japanese imperialists.

With defeat piling on defeat, it is no wonder that the morale of the population is wilting. Despite the irresponsible chatter of the Daily Worker about all China

being united against the invaders, there are already evidences that the struggle is beginning to be looked upon as lost and that the lack of any hopeful perspective is engendering opposition to further sacrifices. We learned, for example, that the Chinese "Dare-to-Die" battalions who fought rear-guard actions in Nantao to cover the retreat of the Chinese army from Shanghai were met by hostile Chinese demonstrators at the gates of the French Concession when they turned over their arms and abandoned their two-day struggle. The demonstrators, residents of Nantao, had watched their homes and possessions go up in smoke and splinters as Japanese airplanes bombed the positions taken up by the "Dare-to-Die" men. "If you had withdrawn with the others," they were heard to say, "this disaster would have been spared us."

Treachery And Corruption

At the commencement of the Shanghai hostilities, when such a move was still entirely possible, Chiang failed to block the Whangpoo River at its mouth. Such an act would have bottled up the Japanese naval units already at Shanghai and prevented any further ships from reaching the city. But it would also have interfered with the shipping of "friendly" powers and drawn protests from London, Washington and other capitals. And since the Kuomintang government chose to repose its main hopes in intervention by Japan's rivals, the river was left open to the free movement of the Japanese navy.

Truth Must Be Told

There are those who will say that we are painting the situation in too dark colors. Revolutionists, however, must never fear to face unpleasant truths. Once again it must be said that China's national independence can be gained only by wresting the conduct of the struggle from the hands of the Kuomintang and the Stalinists, who can organize only defeats. The struggle against imperialism must be combined with the emancipatory struggle of the exploited Chinese masses—against the bourgeoisie, against the landlords, against the Kuomintang, against the Stalinists. While participating in and supporting the present military struggle against Japan, the revolutionists will tirelessly expose all acts of treachery. In this way they will earn the confidence of the masses, build a revolutionary party, and lead the masses to the conquest of power. Only a revolutionary government of the Chinese proletariat, leading behind it the millions of exploited and oppressed in city and country, will be able to conduct a war to the finish against imperialism.

Letters from Our Readers

An Open Letter to Norman Thomas

Comrade Bennem, of Rochester, has sent to us for publication, the following letter addressed to Norman Thomas.—Ed.

ROCHESTER, N.Y.

November 15th, 1937

Mr. Norman Thomas,
Chairman N. M. C. Socialist Party
206 E. 18th St.
N. Y. City

Dear Norman:

I am writing you this open letter, addressed to the Socialist Appeal and the Socialist Call, I sincerely hope the Call will see fit to print it, otherwise it will be necessary to give it to the Rochester Press and the N. Y. Times in order to set the public right on the misinformation being given out to them by the faction with which you are allied. I feel sure the public press will be glad to publish it, in as much as it has been suppressed by our own party organ.

Please understand I am writing this letter, not with bitterness nor a feeling of revenge, but with a feeling of deep disappointment and amazement to think that persons who have been known to the nation as Socialists, and claim they are working for World Socialism will carry their inner-party differences to the non-Socialist public in a red-baiting and disgraceful manner instead of being sufficiently loyal to the most noble movement in the world, if not to the party, to settle those differences within the party in an honorable manner.

"Reorganizer" Finds Branch Solid

At last Friday's meeting, Hans Esters, who had been in town for several days interviewing party members, (and enjoying the hospitality of the home of "Trotskyites") greeted me like a long lost friend. He informed me he had been sent to perform a task he had voted against, the removal of our charter and the reorganization of the local, but that he believed a new local was out of the question as every one he had contacted was solidly behind the Appeal. I told him "fine", that as long as things were that way and we were both working for Socialism, I hoped he would go his way and I would go mine with Local Rochester in the building for Socialism, that any newspaper scandal would be harmful to the movement.

He was courteously granted the floor several times as was Hal Siegel a few weeks previous, the roll was called and with the exception of Warren Atkinson, (You may recall that his sympathies were with the Old Guard in the last split, until through my insistence he attended the Buffalo N. E. C. meeting) and aged James Oaks, every one present voiced their solidarity with the Appeal Group. Comrade Niemeyer moved that we not recognize the authority of the State committee until after the Chicago Convention next month. Nothing was said about expulsions and none of us have received any notice of charges or expulsions.

Imagine my surprise when looking at the morning paper I find that Brown, Jacobs, (who is a member of Local Minneapolis) and myself are expelled as "Trotskyites", plus a lot more scandal written up by a former Hearst reporter, quoting James Lipsig. On top of this I find we have been labeled as red-baiters on

the strength of a letter written to Lipsig by James Brewer, a Stalinist Liberal. Really Browder could not have done a better job.

Just to mention a few of the acts of the "New Old Guard".

At the Chicago Convention you assumed an arrogant attitude nearly equal to that of O'Neal and Lee at Buffalo, using threats, "If you do not do as I say, I will not be your leader". Autocratic mass expulsions of the opposition, without hearing. Revocations of State charters, arrests of officers, expulsions of Y. P. S. L. members, holding up of applications, gerrymandering of members and falsifications of stamps records in order to control the Y.P.S.L. Convention. Partiality toward such groups as Wisconsin, misuse of the party press by presenting your factional side and suppressing that of the opposition, printing inner-party affairs in the Capitalist Press. (Is this aiding Socialism or feeding fuel to the fires of Fascism and Stalinism? Personal names are soon forgotten by the public, but the thoughts of disagreement and autocracy in the Socialist Party remain.) Opposition to the publishing of the Appeal, after failure to comply with convention orders in the publishing of an inner-party organ. (Remember, Local Rochester helped you to launch the illegal Call).

Imitating Old Guard Methods

Where the Old Guard went to Abe Cahan for financial assistance, you went to Valenti and outside Communist sympathizers, or rather you brought them to your house. Where the O. G. dubbed you Communist, you use the C. P. cry of "Trotskyites," and "Sectarians". You violated party democracy; the Labor Party, the People's Front, the Trade Union, and the Spanish Resolutions. You defended the butchers of the Spanish Workers, (Read the articles of Sam Baron. You denied these acts when the Appeal Group told you this was going on, and by the way, now that Baron is a "Trotskyite" C.P. style, aren't you just a little afraid using that term so loosely might act as a boomerang?)

You cry "Sectarian". You told me in 1936 your best meetings were in Rochester, Minneapolis and Lynn, not in Milwaukee, Buffalo, Boston or any of the Right-wing strongholds. Did you ever come into Rochester in the last 5 years when we did not have all the meetings you could cover, and if we are sectarian, why do we have in my files letters from the four last state Secretaries and from Paul Porter and Clarence Senier commending Local Rochester on the good work accomplished? We are the only functioning upstate local today.

How about all the new locals organized by the left wingers in Minnesota and California?

Who Wants the Split?

We all deplore the idea of splits. You will recall I was the first to appeal to you and others of the leadership for a special Convention to settle the differences then arising. Instead of your sanctioning this idea or attempting to get the different factions together, you ignored the flood of requests of the Locals throughout the country for a referendum on this and other things and aligned yourself with the reformist faction.

Yours Truly,

—B. C. BENNEM