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The Prospects of the Revolution in China
Speech Delivered in the Chinese Commission of the E.C.C.I.
November 30, 1926

Comrades, before passing to the subject under discussion, I think it necessary to say that I am not in possession of the exhaustive material on the Chinese question necessary for giving a full picture of the revolution in China. Hence I am compelled to confine myself to some general remarks of a fundamental character that have a direct bearing on the basic trend of the Chinese revolution.

I have the theses of Petrov, the theses of Mif, two reports by Tang Ping-shan and the observations of Rafes on the Chinese question. In my opinion, all these documents, in spite of their merits, suffer from the grave defect that they ignore a number of cardinal questions of the revolution in China. I think it is necessary above all to draw attention to these shortcomings. For this reason my remarks will at the same time be of a critical nature.

I

CHARACTER OF THE REVOLUTION IN CHINA

Lenin said that the Chinese would soon be having their 1905. Some comrades understood this to mean that there would have to be a repetition among the Chinese of exactly the same thing that took place here in Russia in 1905. That is not true, comrades. Lenin by no means said that the Chinese revolution would be a replica of the 1905 Revolution in Russia. All he said was that the Chinese would have their 1905. This means that, besides the general features of the 1905 Revolution, the Chinese revolution would have its own specific features, which would be bound to lay its special impress on the revolution in China.

What are these specific features?

The first specific feature is that, while the Chinese revolution is a bourgeois-democratic revolution, it is at the same time a revolution of national liberation spearheaded against the domination of foreign imperialism in China. It is in this, above all, that it differs from the 1905 Revolution in Russia. The point is that the rule of imperialism in China is manifested not only in its military might, but primarily in the fact that the main threads of industry in China, the railways, mills and factories, mines, banks, etc., are owned or controlled by foreign imperialists. But it follows from this that the questions of the fight against foreign imperialism and its Chinese agents cannot but play an important role in the Chinese revolution. This fact directly links the Chinese revolution with the revolutions of the proletarians of all countries against imperialism.

The second specific feature of the Chinese revolution is that the national big bourgeoisie in China is weak in the extreme, incomparably weaker than the Russian bourgeoisie was in the period of 1905. That is understandable. Since the main threads of industry are concentrated in the hands of foreign imperialists, the national big bourgeoisie in China cannot but be weak and backward. In this respect Mif is quite right in his remark about the weakness of the national bourgeoisie in China as one of the characteristic facts of the Chinese revolution. But it follows from this that the role of initiator and guide of the Chinese revolution, the role of leader of the Chinese peasantry, must inevitably fall to the Chinese proletariat and its party.

Nor should a third specific feature of the Chinese revolution be overlooked, namely, that side by side with China the Soviet Union exists and is developing, and its revolutionary experience and aid cannot but facilitate the struggle of the Chinese proletariat against imperialism and against medieval and feudal survivals in China.

Such are the principal specific features of the Chinese revolution, which determine its character and trend.

II

IMPERIALISM AND IMPERIALIST INTERVENTION IN CHINA

The first defect of the theses submitted is that they ignore or under-estimate the question of imperialist intervention in China. A study of the theses might lead one to think that at the present moment there is, properly speaking, no imperialist intervention in China, that there is only a struggle between Northerners and Southerners, or between one group of generals and another group of generals. Furthermore, there is a tendency to understand by intervention a state of affairs marked by the incursion of foreign troops into Chinese territory, and that if that is not the case, then there is no intervention.

That is a profound mistake, comrades. Intervention is by no means confined to the incursion of troops, and the incursion of troops by no means constitutes the principal feature of intervention. In the present-day conditions of the revolutionary movement in the capitalist countries, when the direct incursion of foreign troops may give rise to protests and conflicts, intervention assumes more flexible and more camouflaged forms. In the conditions prevailing today, imperialism prefers to intervene in a dependent country by organising civil war there, by financing counter-revolutionary forces against the revolution, by giving moral and financial support to its Chinese agents against the revolution. The imperialists were inclined to depict the struggle of Denikin and Kolchak, Yudenich and Wrangel against the revolution in Russia as an exclusively internal struggle. But we all know—and not only we, but the whole world—that behind these counter-revolutionary Russian generals stood the imperialists of Britain and America, France and Japan, without whose support a serious civil war in Russia would have been quite impossible. The same must be said of China. The struggle of Wu Pei-fu, Sun Chuan-fang, Chang Tsolin and Chang Tsung-chang against the revolution in China would be simply impossible if these counterrevolutionary generals were not instigated by the imperialists of all countries, if the latter did not supply them with money, arms, instructors, “advisers,” etc.

Wherein lies the strength of the Canton troops? In the fact that they are inspired by an ideal, by enthusiasm, in the struggle for liberation from imperialism; in the fact that they are bringing China liberation. Wherein lies the strength of the counter-revolutionary generals in China? In the fact that they are backed by the imperialists of all countries, by the owners of all the railways, concessions, mills and factories, banks and commercial houses in China.

Hence, it is not only, or even not so much, a matter of the incursion of foreign troops, as of the support which the imperialists of all countries are rendering the counter-revolutionaries in China. Intervention through the hands of others—that is where the root of imperialist intervention now lies.

Therefore, imperialist intervention in China is an indubitable fact, and it is against this that the Chinese revolution is spearheaded.

Therefore, whoever ignores or under-estimates the fact of imperialist intervention in China, ignores or under-estimates the chief and most fundamental thing in China.

It is said that the Japanese imperialists are showing certain symptoms of “good will” towards the Cantonese and the Chinese revolution in general. It is said that the American imperialists are not lagging behind the Japanese in this respect. That is self-deception, comrades. One must know how to distinguish between the essence of the policy of the imperialists, including that of the Japanese and American imperialists, and its disguises. Lenin often said that it is

hard to impose upon revolutionaries with the club or the fist, but that it is sometimes very easy to take them in with blandishments. That truth of Lenin's should never be forgotten, comrades. At all events, it is clear that the Japanese and American imperialists have pretty well realised its value. It is therefore necessary to draw a strict distinction between blandishments and praise bestowed on the Cantonese and the fact that the imperialists who are most generous with blandishments are those who cling most tightly to "their" concessions and railways in China, and that they will not consent to relinquish them at any price.

III

THE REVOLUTIONARY ARMY IN CHINA

My second remark in connection with the theses submitted concerns the question of the revolutionary army in China. The fact of the matter is that the question of the army is ignored or under-estimated in the theses. (A voice from the audience: "Quite right!") That is their second defect. The northward advance of the Cantonese is usually regarded not as an expansion of the Chinese revolution, but as a struggle of the Canton generals against Wu Pei-fu and Sun Chuan-fang, as a struggle for supremacy of some generals against others. That is a profound mistake, comrades. The revolutionary armies in China are a most important factor in the struggle of the Chinese workers and peasants for their emancipation. Is it accidental that until May or June of this year the situation in China was regarded as the rule of reaction, which set in after the defeat of Fen Yuhsiang's armies, but that later on, in the summer of this year, the victorious Canton troops had only to advance northward and occupy Hupeh for the whole picture to change radically in favour of the revolution? No, it is not accidental. For the advance of the Cantonese means a blow at imperialism, a blow at its agents in China; it means freedom of assembly, freedom to strike, freedom of the press, and freedom to organise for all the revolutionary elements in China in general, and for the workers in particular. That is what constitutes the specific feature and supreme importance of the revolutionary army in China.

Formerly, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, revolutions usually began with an uprising of the people for the most part unarmed or poorly armed, who came into collision with the army of the old regime, which they tried to demoralise or at least to win in part to their own side. That was the typical form of the revolutionary outbreaks in the past. That is what happened here in Russia in 1905. In China things have taken a different course. In China, the troops of the old government are confronted not by an unarmed people, but by an armed people, in the shape of its revolutionary army. In China the armed revolution is fighting the armed counter-revolution. That is one of the specific features and one of the advantages of the Chinese revolution. And therein lies the special significance of the revolutionary army in China.

That is why it is an impermissible shortcoming of the theses submitted that they underestimate the revolutionary army.

But it follows from this that the Communists in China must devote special attention to work in the army.

In the first place, the Communists in China must in every way intensify political work in the army, and ensure that the army becomes a real and exemplary vehicle of the ideas of the Chinese revolution. That is particularly necessary because all kinds of generals who have nothing in common with the Kuomintang are now attaching themselves to the Cantonese, as a force which is routing the enemies of the Chinese people; and in attaching themselves to the Cantonese they are introducing demoralisation into the army. The only way to neutralise such "allies" or to make them genuine Kuomintangists is to intensify political work and to establish revolutionary control over them. Unless this is done, the army may find itself in a very difficult situation.

In the second place, the Chinese revolutionaries, including the Communists, must undertake a thorough study of the art of war. They must not regard it as something secondary, because nowadays it is a cardinal factor in the Chinese revolution. The Chinese revolutionaries, and hence the Communists also, must study the art of war, in order gradually to come to the fore

and occupy various leading posts in the revolutionary army. That is the guarantee that the revolutionary army in China will advance along the right road, straight to its goal. Unless this is done, wavering and vacillation may become inevitable in the army.

IV

CHARACTER OF THE FUTURE GOVERNMENT IN CHINA

My third remark concerns the fact that the theses say nothing, or do not say enough, about the character of the future revolutionary government in China. Mif, in his theses, comes close to the subject, and that is to his credit. But having come close to it, he for some reason became frightened and did not venture to bring matters to a conclusion. Mif thinks that the future revolutionary government in China will be a government of the revolutionary petty bourgeoisie, under the leadership of the proletariat. What does that mean? At the time of the February revolution in 1917, the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries were also petty-bourgeois parties and to a certain extent revolutionary. Does this mean that the future revolutionary government in China will be a Socialist-Revolutionary-Menshevik government? No, it does not. Why? Because the Socialist-Revolutionary-Menshevik government was in actual fact an imperialist government, while the future revolutionary government in China cannot but be an anti-imperialist government. The difference here is fundamental.

The MacDonald government was even a “labour” government, but it was an imperialist government all the same, because it based itself on the preservation of British imperialist rule, in India and Egypt, for example. As compared with the MacDonald government, the future revolutionary government in China will have the advantage of being an anti-imperialist government.

The point lies not only in the bourgeois-democratic character of the Canton government, which is the embryo of the future all-China revolutionary government; the point is above all that this government is, and cannot but be, an anti-imperialist government, that every advance it makes is a blow at world imperialism—and, consequently, a blow which benefits the world revolutionary movement.

Lenin was right when he said that, whereas formerly, before the advent of the era of world revolution, the national-liberation movement was part of the general democratic movement, now, after the victory of the Soviet revolution in Russia and the advent of the era of world revolution, the national-liberation movement is part of the world proletarian revolution.

This specific feature Mif did not take into account.

I think that the future revolutionary government in China will in general resemble in character the government we used to talk about in our country in 1905, that is, something in the nature of a democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry, with the difference, however, that it will be first and foremost an anti-imperialist government.

It will be a government transitional to a non-capitalist, or, more exactly, a socialist development of China.

That is the direction that the revolution in China should take.

This course of development of the revolution is facilitated by three circumstances:

firstly, by the fact that, the revolution in China, being a revolution of national liberation, will be spearheaded against imperialism and its agents in China;

secondly, by the fact that the national big bourgeoisie in China is weak, weaker than the national bourgeoisie was in Russia in the period of 1905, which facilitates the hegemony of the proletariat and the leadership of the Chinese peasantry by the proletarian party;

thirdly, by the fact that the revolution in China will develop in circumstances that will make it possible to draw upon the experience and assistance of the victorious revolution in the Soviet Union.

Whether this course will end in absolute and certain victory will depend upon many circumstances. But one thing at any rate is clear, and that is that the struggle for precisely this course of the Chinese revolution is the basic task of the Chinese Communists. From this follows the task of the Chinese Communists as regards their attitude to the Kuomintang and to the future revolutionary government in China. It is said that the Chinese Communists should withdraw from the Kuomintang. That would be wrong, comrades. The withdrawal of the Chinese Communists from the Kuomintang at the present time would be a profound mistake. The whole course, character and prospects of the Chinese revolution undoubtedly testify in favour of the Chinese Communists remaining in the Kuomintang and intensifying their work in it.

But can the Chinese Communist Party participate in the future revolutionary government? It not only can, but must do so. The course, character and prospects of the revolution in China are eloquent testimony in favour of the Chinese Communist Party taking part in the future revolutionary government of China.

Therein lies one of the essential guarantees of the establishment in fact of the hegemony of the Chinese proletariat.

THE PEASANT QUESTION IN CHINA

My fourth remark concerns the question of the peasantry in China. Mif thinks that the slogan for forming Soviets—namely, peasant Soviets in the Chinese countryside—should be issued immediately. In my opinion, that would be a mistake. Mif is running too far ahead. One cannot build Soviets in the countryside and avoid the industrial centres of China. But the establishment of Soviets in the industrial centres of China is not at present on the order of the day. Moreover, it must be borne in mind that Soviets cannot be considered out of connection with the surrounding situation. Soviets—in this case peasant Soviets—could only be organised if China were at the peak period of a peasant movement which was smashing the old order of things and building a new power, on the calculation that the industrial centres of China had already burst the dam and had entered the phase of establishing the power of the Soviets. Can it be said that the Chinese peasantry and the Chinese revolution in general have already entered this phase? No, it cannot. Consequently, to speak of Soviets now would be running too far ahead. Consequently, the question that should be raised now is not that of Soviets, but of the formation of peasant committees. I have in mind peasant committees elected by the peasants, committees capable of formulating the basic demands of the peasantry and which would take all measures to secure the realisation of these demands in a revolutionary way. These peasant committees should serve as the axis around which the revolution in the countryside develops.

I know that there are Kuomintangists and even Chinese Communists who do not consider it possible to unleash revolution in the countryside, since they fear that, if the peasantry were drawn into the revolution it would disrupt the united anti-imperialist front. That is a profound error, comrades. The more quickly and thoroughly the Chinese peasantry is drawn into the revolution, the stronger and more powerful the anti-imperialist front in China will be. The authors of the theses, especially Tang Ping-shan and Rafes, are quite right in maintaining that the immediate satisfaction of a number of the most urgent demands of the peasants is an essential condition for the victory of the Chinese revolution. I think it is high time to break down that inertness and that “neutrality” towards the peasantry which are to be observed in the actions of certain Kuomintang elements. I think that both the Chinese Communist Party and the Kuomintang, and hence the Canton government, should pass from words to deeds without delay and raise the question of satisfying at once the most vital demands of the peasantry.

What the perspectives should be in this regard, and how far it is possible and necessary to go, depends on the course of the revolution. I think that in the long run matters should go as far as the nationalisation of the land. At all events, we cannot repudiate such a slogan as that of nationalisation of the land.

What are the ways and means that the Chinese revolutionaries must adopt to rouse the vast peasant masses of China to revolution?

I think that in the given conditions one can only speak of three ways.

The first way is by the formation of peasant committees and by the Chinese revolutionaries entering these committees in order to influence the peasantry. (A voice from the audience: “What about the peasant associations?”) I think that the peasant associations will group themselves around the peasant committees, or will be converted into peasant committees, vested with the necessary measure of authority for the realisation of the peasants’ demands. I

have already spoken about this way. But this way is not enough. It would be ridiculous to think that there are sufficient revolutionaries in China for this task. China has roughly 400 million inhabitants. Of them, about 350 million are Chinese. And of them, more than nine-tenths are peasants. Anyone who thinks that some tens of thousands of Chinese revolutionaries can cover this ocean of peasants is making a mistake. Consequently, additional ways are needed.

The second way is by influencing the peasantry through the apparatus of the new people's revolutionary government. There is no doubt that in the newly liberated provinces a new government will be set up of the type of the Canton government. There is no doubt that this authority and its apparatus will have to set about satisfying the most urgent demands of the peasantry if it really wants to advance the revolution. Well then, the task of the Communists and of the Chinese revolutionaries in general is to penetrate the apparatus of the new government, to bring this apparatus closer to the peasant masses, and by means of it to help the peasant masses to secure the satisfaction of their urgent demands, either by expropriating the landlords' land, or by reducing taxation and rents—according to circumstances.

The third way is by influencing the peasantry through the revolutionary army. I have already spoken of the great importance of the revolutionary army in the Chinese revolution. The revolutionary army of China is the force which first penetrates new provinces, which first passes through densely populated peasant areas, and by which above all the peasant forms his judgment of the new government, of its good or bad qualities. It depends primarily on the behaviour of the revolutionary army, on its attitude towards the peasantry and towards the landlords, on its readiness to aid the peasants, what the attitude of the peasantry will be towards the new government, the Kuomintang and the Chinese revolution generally. If it is borne in mind that quite a number of dubious elements have attached themselves to the revolutionary army of China, and that they may change the complexion of the army for the worse, it will be understood how great is the importance of the political complexion of the army and its, so to speak, peasant policy in the eyes of the peasantry. The Chinese Communists and the Chinese revolutionaries generally must, therefore take every measure to neutralise the anti-peasant elements in the army, to preserve the army's revolutionary spirit, and to ensure that the army assists the peasants and rouses them to revolution.

We are told that the revolutionary army is welcomed in China with open arms, but that later, when it instals itself, a certain disillusionment sets in. The same thing happened here in the Soviet Union during the Civil War. The explanation is that when the army liberates new provinces and instals itself in them, it has in some way or other to feed itself at the expense of the local population. We, Soviet revolutionaries, usually succeeded in counter-balancing these disadvantages by endeavouring through the army to assist the peasants against the landlord elements. The Chinese revolutionaries must also learn how to counter-balance these disadvantages by conducting a correct peasant policy through the army.

VI

THE PROLETARIAT AND THE HEGEMONY OF THE PROLETARIAT IN CHINA

My fifth remark concerns the question of the Chinese proletariat. In my opinion, the theses do not sufficiently stress the role and significance of the working class in China. Rafe asks, on whom should the Chinese Communists orientate themselves—on the Lefts or the Kuomintang centre? That is a strange question. I think that the Chinese Communists should orientate themselves first and foremost on the proletariat, and should orientate the leaders of the Chinese liberation movement on the revolution. That is the only correct way to put the question. I know that among the Chinese Communists there are comrades who do not approve of workers going on strike for an improvement of their material conditions and legal status, and who try to dissuade the workers from striking. (A voice: “That happened in Canton and Shanghai.”) That is a great mistake, comrades. It is a very serious under-estimation of the role and importance of the Chinese proletariat. This fact should be noted in the theses as something decidedly objectionable. It would be a great mistake if the Chinese Communists failed to take advantage of the present favourable situation to assist the workers to improve their material conditions and legal status, even through strikes. Otherwise, what purpose does the revolution in China serve? The proletariat cannot be a leading force if during strikes its sons are flogged and tortured by agents of imperialism. These medieval outrages must be stopped at all costs, in order to heighten the sense of power and dignity among the Chinese proletarians, and to make them capable of leading the revolutionary movement. Without this, the victory of the revolution in China is inconceivable. Therefore, a due place must be given in the theses to the economic and legal demands of the Chinese working class aimed at substantially improving its conditions. (Mif: “It is mentioned in the theses.”) Yes, it is mentioned in the theses, but, unfortunately, these demands are not given sufficient prominence.

VII

THE QUESTION OF THE YOUTH IN CHINA

My sixth remark concerns the question of the youth in China. It is strange that this question has not been taken into account in the theses. Yet it is now of the utmost importance in China. Tang Ping-shan's reports touch upon this question, but, unfortunately, do not give it sufficient, prominence. The question of the youth is one of primary importance in China today. The student youth (the revolutionary students), the working-class youth, the peasant youth—all this constitutes a force that could advance the revolution with giant strides, if it was subordinated to the ideological and political influence of the Kuomintang.* It should be borne in mind that no one suffers from imperialist oppression so deeply and keenly, or is so acutely and painfully aware of the necessity to fight against it, as the Chinese youth. The Chinese Communist Party and the Chinese revolutionaries should take this circumstance fully into account and intensify their work among the youth to the utmost. The youth must be given its place in the theses on the Chinese question.

VIII

SOME CONCLUSIONS

I should like to mention certain conclusions—with regard to the struggle against imperialism in China, and with regard to the peasant question.

There is no doubt that the Chinese Communist Party cannot now confine itself to demanding the abolition of the unequal treaties. That is a demand which is upheld now by even such a counter-revolutionary as Chang Hsueh-liang. Obviously, the Chinese Communist Party must go farther than that.

It is necessary, further, to consider—as a perspective—the nationalisation of the railways. This is necessary, and should be worked for.

It is necessary, further, to have in mind the perspective of nationalising the most important mills and factories. In this connection, the question arises first of all of nationalising those enterprises the owners of which display particular hostility and particular aggressiveness towards the Chinese people. It is necessary also to give prominence to the peasant question, linking it with the prospects of the revolution in China. I think that what has to be worked for in the long run is the confiscation of the landlords' land for the benefit of the peasants and the nationalisation of the land.

The rest is self-evident.

Those, comrades, are all the remarks that I desired to make.

Notes

1. Note. Such a policy was correct in the conditions prevailing at the time, since the Kuomintang then represented a bloc of the Communists and more or less Left-wing Kuomintangists, which conducted an anti-imperialist revolutionary policy. Later on this policy was abandoned as no longer in conformity with the interests of the Chinese revolution, since the Kuomintang had deserted the revolution and later became the centre of the struggle against it, while the Communists withdrew from the Kuomintang and broke off relations with it.

Speech Delivered at the Fifth-Union Conference of the All-Union Leninist Young Communist League¹
March 29, 1927

Comrades, permit me to greet you in the name of the Central Committee of our Party.
(Applause.)

Permit me to wish you success in your difficult work of organising and politically educating the working-class and peasant youth of our country.

The Young Communist League has always marched in the front ranks of our fighters. Let us hope that the Young Communist League will continue to be in the front ranks, bearing aloft and carrying forward the banner of socialism. (Applause.)

And now, after these greetings, allow me to pass to two questions about which some of your comrades of the Young Communist League have just spoken to me.

The first question is that of our industrial policy. That, so to speak, belongs to our home affairs. The second question is that of the Nanking events.² That, consequently, is a matter of foreign affairs.

Comrades, the basic line which our industry must follow, the basic line which must determine all its subsequent steps, is that of systematically reducing industrial production costs, that of systematically reducing wholesale prices of manufactured goods. That is the high road our industry must take if it is to develop and grow strong, if it is to give the lead to agriculture, and if it is to strengthen and broaden the foundation of our socialist economy.

What is the origin of this line?

What are the causes that make this line necessary and expedient?

There are, at least, four basic reasons which determine this line.

The first reason is that an industry which is based upon high prices is not, and cannot be, a real industry, for it must inevitably degenerate into a hot-house plant that has not and cannot have any vitality. Only an industry that systematically reduces the prices of commodities, only an industry based on systematically reducing the costs of production, hence only an industry that systematically improves its methods of production, technical equipment and Organisation of labour and its methods and forms of management—only such an industry do we need, for it alone can go on developing, and it alone can guarantee the proletariat complete victory.

The second reason is that our industry is based on the home market. We cannot, indeed we are unable, to compete with the capitalists in the foreign market. The home market is the basic market for our industry. But it follows from this that our industry can develop and grow strong only to the extent that our home market, its capacity, the mass demand for manufactured goods, develops and expands. And on what does the expansion of our home market, the enlargement of its capacity depend? It depends, among other things, on a systematic reduction of the prices of manufactured goods, that is, on that basic line of development of our industry of which I have already spoken.

The third reason is that unless prices of manufactured goods are reduced, unless manufactured goods are made systematically cheaper, it will be out of the question to preserve those conditions which are indispensable for a further rise of workers' wages. In the first place, the workers themselves are consumers of manufactured goods, in view of which a reduction of the prices of these goods cannot but be of substantial importance for maintaining and raising real wages. In the second place, on a reduction of the prices of manufactured goods depends the stability of the prices of the agricultural produce consumed in the towns, principally by the workers, which likewise cannot but be of substantial importance for maintaining and raising real wages. Can our socialist state refrain from systematically increasing the wages of the workers? No, it cannot. But it follows from this that a systematic reduction of the prices of manufactured goods is one of the essential prerequisites for a progressive rise in the standard of living of the working class.

The fourth and last reason is that, unless prices of manufactured goods are reduced, we cannot preserve that bond between the proletariat and the peasantry, between industry and peasant economy, which is the basis of the dictatorship of the proletariat in our country. You know that the peasant is paying too much for manufactured goods, for textiles, machines, etc. You know that this is a cause of serious discontent among the peasantry and hinders the progress of agriculture. And what follows from this? The only thing that follows is that we must pursue a policy of systematically reducing prices of manufactured goods, if we really want to preserve the bond, the alliance between the working class and the peasantry, and to promote the development of agriculture.

But what is required to make the policy of reducing industrial production costs and wholesale prices of commodities possible and quite practicable? For that it is essential to have a radical improvement of the technology of production, a radical improvement of the organisation of labour in the factories, a radical improvement and simplification of the entire economic apparatus and a determined fight against bureaucracy in this apparatus. All this is what we call socialist rationalisation of production and of the management of economy. Our industry has entered a phase of development when a substantial increase of the productivity of labour and a systematic reduction of industrial production costs are becoming impossible unless new and better technical equipment is introduced, unless a new and better organisation of labour is introduced, and unless our economic apparatus is simplified and made cheaper. We need all this not only in order to raise labour productivity and reduce the prices of manufactured goods, but also in order that the resulting economies may be used for the further development and expansion of our industry. That is why we need socialist rationalisation of production and of the management of economy.

We thus get a chain: we cannot develop industry further unless we systematically reduce industrial production costs and wholesale prices; but it is impossible to reduce prices of manufactured goods unless we introduce new technical equipment, new forms of the organisation of labour and new simplified managerial methods. Hence the question of socialist rationalisation of production and of the management of economy is one of the decisive questions of the day.

That is why I think that the recent decision of our Party's Central Committee on rationalisation of production and of the management of economy³ is one of the most important decisions of our Party, one that determines our industrial policy for the period immediately ahead.

It is said that rationalisation entails certain temporary sacrifices on the part of certain groups of workers, including the youth. That is true, comrades.

The history of our revolution tells us that not a single important step has been taken which did not involve certain sacrifices on the part of individual groups of the working class in the interests of the whole working class of our country. Take, for instance, the Civil War, although the present inconsiderable sacrifices will not bear any comparison with the serious sacrifices that were made during the Civil War. You see that we are already being compensated with interest for those sacrifices.

It scarcely needs proof that the present inconsiderable sacrifices will be more than compensated for in the near future. That is why I think that we should not hesitate to make certain inconsiderable sacrifices in the interests of the working class as a whole.

The Young Communist League has always been in the front ranks of our fighters. I know of no instance when it has lagged behind the developments in our revolutionary life. I do not doubt that now, too, in carrying out socialist rationalisation, the Young Communist League will take its due place. (Applause.)

Permit me now to pass to the second question—that of the Nanking events. I think that the Nanking events should not have come as a surprise to us. Imperialism cannot live without violence and robbery, without bloodshed and shooting. That is the nature of imperialism. The events in Nanking cannot, therefore, be a surprise to us.

What do the Nanking events indicate?

What is their political meaning?

They indicate a turn in the policy of imperialism, a turn from armed peace to armed war against the Chinese people.

Before the Nanking events, imperialism endeavoured to hide its intentions by unctuous talk about peace and non-interference in the domestic affairs of other countries, by a mask of “civilisation” and “humanitarianism,” the League of Nations and so forth. After the Nanking events, imperialism is discarding its unctuous speeches, its talk of non-intervention, the League of Nations and all the other masks. Now imperialism stands exposed to the eyes of the world in all its nakedness as an avowed plunderer and oppressor.

Bourgeois pacifism has sustained another telling blow. For what, indeed, have those who sing the praises of imperialist pacifism, such as the Boncours, the Breitscheids and others, to oppose to the fact of the massacre of Nanking inhabitants except their false pacifist talk? The League of Nations has been given another slap in the face. For who but lackeys of imperialism can consider it “normal” that one member of the League of Nations massacres the citizens of another member, while the League of Nations itself is compelled to keep silent and assume that the matter does not concern it?

It is now proved that our Party was right when it assessed the dispatch of troops to Shanghai by the imperialist countries as the prelude to armed attacks on the Chinese people. For one must be blind not to see now that imperialism needed troops in Shanghai in order to pass from “words” to “deeds.”

Such is the meaning of the Nanking events.

What could have been the intentions of the imperialists in risking the Nanking gamble?

It is possible that by stripping off their mask and having recourse to their artillery in Nanking, the imperialists wanted to turn back the wheel of history, to put an end to the growing revolutionary movement in all countries, and to undertake a fight for the restoration of that relative stability of world capitalism which existed before the imperialist war.

We know that capitalism emerged from the imperialist war with incurable wounds.

We know that ten years ago the workers and peasants of the U.S.S.R. breached the front of capital and inflicted an incurable wound on it.

We know that the imperialist war shook the foundations of imperialist rule in the colonies and dependent countries.

We know that, ten years after October, the Chinese workers and peasants have also begun to breach the imperialist front, and there is no reason to assume that they will not finally breach it.

Well then, it is possible that the imperialists wanted to wipe out all this at one stroke and begin a "new page" of history. And if that is what they really wanted, it has to be admitted that they have missed the mark. For one must be in one's dotage to think that the laws of artillery are stronger than the laws of history, that the wheel of history can be turned back by the firing in Nanking.

It is possible that when the imperialists bombarded Nanking they wanted to intimidate the oppressed peoples of other countries who are straining for liberty, as though to say: The Nanking affair is meant for your benefit. That is by no means excluded, comrades. The policy of intimidation has its "grounds" in the history of imperialism. But that this policy is unsuitable and is not achieving its purpose is hardly to be doubted. It was applied "with success" by Russian tsarism in its day. But how did it end? You know that it ended in the complete collapse of tsarism.

It is possible, lastly, that in bombarding Nanking the imperialists wanted to strike at the very heart of the Chinese revolution and to make impossible, firstly, the further advance of the South Chinese troops and the unification of China, and, secondly, the carrying out of the terms of the concessions negotiations held in Hankow. That is quite possible and, perhaps, quite probable. That the imperialists do not want a united China and prefer to have two Chinas in order to be able to "manoeuvre more effectively" has been blurted out by the capitalist press more than once. As to the Shanghai and other concessions, there is scarcely room for doubt that many of the imperialists "do not sympathise" with the terms which were worked out and endorsed in Hankow. And so, in bombarding Nanking the imperialists evidently wanted to make it known that they preferred in future to negotiate with the national government under pressure and to the accompaniment of artillery fire. Such indeed is the musical taste of the imperialists. That this strange music smacks of the music of cannibals is something which apparently does not disturb the imperialists. . . .

Whether they will achieve their aim, the near future will show. It should be observed, however, that so far they have achieved only one thing, and that is to intensify the hatred of imperialism among the Chinese, to unite the forces of the Kuomintang,⁴ and to swing the revolutionary movement in China further to the Left.

There can scarcely be any doubt that so far the results are the opposite of what was expected.

It turns out, then, that in bombarding Nanking the imperialists were striving for one thing, but what actually happened was something else, moreover something the very opposite of what they were striving for.

Such are the results and perspectives of the Nanking events.

Such is the policy of the wisecracks of the conservative camp.

Not without reason is it said: whom the gods wish to destroy they first make mad. (Stormy and prolonged applause.)

Notes

1. The Fifth All-Union Conference of the All-Union Leninist Young Communist League was held in Moscow, March 24-31, 1927. It discussed reports: on the work of the C.C., Y.C.L.; on current affairs and the policy of the Party; on the participation of the youth in production and on the tasks of the economic work of the Leninist Y.C.L.; on participation of the Y.C.L. in promoting agriculture and rural co-operation; and others. J. V. Stalin delivered a speech at the evening sitting on March 29. In its resolutions, the conference assured the Party that the Leninist Y.C.L. would continue to act, as the Party's faithful assistant in the work of building socialism in the U.S.S.R.

2. On March 23, 1927, in the course of successful battles against the Northern militarists for the unification of China, units of the national revolutionary army occupied Nanking. In an effort to crush the revolution, the imperialist powers passed from assisting the Chinese militarists to outright intervention in China, and on March 24 British and American warships bombarded Nanking.

3. The decision on "Questions of the rationalisation of production," adopted by the C.C., C.P.S.U.(B.) on March 24, 1927, was published in Pravda, No. 68, March 25, 1927.

4. The Kuomintang—the political party in China formed by Sun Yat-sen in 1912 to fight for the establishment of a republic and the national independence of the country. The entry of the Chinese Communist Party into the Kuomintang (1924) helped to convert the latter into a people's revolutionary mass party. In the first stage of development of the Chinese revolution, 1925-27, when it was an anti-imperialist revolution of a united all-national front, the Kuomintang was the party of a bloc of the proletariat, the urban and rural petty bourgeoisie and part of the big national bourgeoisie. In the second stage, in the period of the agrarian bourgeois-democratic revolution, after the national bourgeoisie had deserted to the camp of counterrevolution, the Kuomintang represented a bloc of the proletariat, the peasantry and the urban petty bourgeoisie, and pursued an anti-imperialist revolutionary policy. The development of the agrarian revolution and the pressure of the feudal lords on the Kuomintang, on the one hand, and the pressure of the imperialists, who demanded that the Kuomintang break with the Communists, on the other hand, frightened the petty-bourgeois

intellectuals (the Lefts in the Kuomintang), who swung over to the counter-revolution. When the Kuomintang Lefts began to desert the revolution (summer of 1927), the Communists withdrew from the Kuomintang, and the latter became a centre of struggle against the revolution.

Questions of the Chinese Revolution

Theses for Propagandists, Approved by the C.C., C.P.S.U.(B.)

I

PROSPECTS OF THE CHINESE REVOLUTION

Basic factors determining the character of the Chinese revolution:

- a) the semi-colonial status of China and the financial and economic domination of imperialism;
- b) the oppression of feudal survivals, aggravated by the oppression of militarism and bureaucracy;
- c) the growing revolutionary struggle of the vast masses of the workers and peasants against feudal and bureaucratic oppression, against militarism, and against imperialism;
- d) the political weakness of the national bourgeoisie, its dependence on imperialism, its fear of the sweep of the revolutionary movement;
- e) the growing revolutionary activity of the proletariat, its mounting prestige among the vast masses of the working people;
- f) the existence of a proletarian dictatorship in the neighbourhood of China.

Hence, two paths for the development of events in China:

either the national bourgeoisie smashes the proletariat, makes a deal with imperialism and together with it launches a campaign against the revolution in order to end the latter by establishing the rule of capitalism;

or the proletariat pushes aside the national bourgeoisie, consolidates its hegemony and assumes the lead of the vast masses of the working people in town and country, in order to overcome the resistance of the national bourgeoisie, secure the complete victory of the bourgeois-democratic revolution, and then gradually convert it into a socialist revolution, with all the consequences following from that.

One or the other.

The crisis of world capitalism and the existence in the U.S.S.R. of a proletarian dictatorship whose experience may be successfully utilised by the Chinese proletariat considerably enhance the possibility of the Chinese revolution taking the second path.

On the other hand, the fact that imperialism is attacking the Chinese revolution, in the main with a united front, that there is not at the present time that division and war among the imperialists which, for instance, existed in the imperialist camp prior to the October Revolution, and which tended to weaken imperialism—this fact indicates that on its path to victory the Chinese revolution will encounter far greater difficulties than did the revolution in Russia, and that the desertions and betrayals in the course of this revolution will be incomparably more numerous than during the Civil War in the U.S.S.R.

Hence, the struggle between these two paths revolution constitutes the characteristic feature of the Chinese revolution.

Precisely for this reason, the basic task of the Communists is to fight for the victory of the second path of development of the Chinese revolution.

II

THE FIRST STAGE OF THE CHINESE REVOLUTION

In the first period of the Chinese revolution, at the time of the first march to the North—when the national army was approaching the Yangtse and scoring victory after victory, but a powerful movement of the workers and peasants had not yet unfolded—the national bourgeoisie (not the compradors¹) sided with the revolution. It was the revolution of a united all-national front.

This does not mean that there were no contradictions between the revolution and the national bourgeoisie. All it means is that the national bourgeoisie, in supporting the revolution, tried to utilise it for its own purposes and, by directing it chiefly along the lines of territorial conquest, to restrict its scope. The struggle between the Rights and the Lefts in the Kuomintang at that period was a reflection of these contradictions. Chiang Kai-shek's attempt in March 1926 to expel the Communists from the Kuomintang was the first serious attempt of the national bourgeoisie to curb the revolution. As is known, already at that time the C.C., C.P.S.U.(B.) considered that "the line must be to keep the Communist Party within the Kuomintang," and that it was necessary "to work for the resignation or expulsion of the Rights from the Kuomintang" (April 1926).

This line was one directed towards further development of the revolution, close co-operation between the Lefts and the Communists within the Kuomintang and within the national government, strengthening the unity of the Kuomintang and, at the same time, exposing and isolating the Kuomintang Rights, compelling them to submit to Kuomintang discipline, utilising the Rights, their connections and their experience, if they submitted to Kuomintang discipline, or expelling them from the Kuomintang if they violated that discipline and betrayed the interests of the revolution.

Subsequent events fully confirmed the correctness of this line. The powerful development of the peasant movement and the organisation of peasant associations and peasant committees in the countryside, the powerful wave of strikes in the towns and the formation of trade-union councils, the victorious advance of the national army on Shanghai, which was besieged by imperialist warships and troops—all these and similar facts indicate that the line adopted was the only correct one.

This circumstance alone can explain the fact that the attempt made by the Rights in February 1927 to split the Kuomintang and set up a new centre in Nanchang failed in face of the unanimous resistance of the revolutionary Kuomintang in Wuhan.

But this attempt was a sign that a regrouping of class forces was taking place in the country, that the Rights and the national bourgeoisie would not desist, that they would intensify their work against the revolution.

The C.C., C.P.S.U.(B.) was therefore right when it said in March 1927 that:

a) "at the present time, in connection with the regrouping of class forces and concentration of the imperialist armies, the Chinese revolution is passing through a critical period, and that it can achieve further victories only by resolutely adopting the course of developing the mass movement";

b) “it is necessary to adopt the course of arming the workers and peasants and converting the peasant committees in the localities into actual organs of governmental authority equipped with armed self-defence”;

c) “the Communist Party should not cover up the treacherous and reactionary policy of the Kuomintang Rights, and should mobilise the masses around the Kuomintang and the Chinese Communist Party with a view to exposing the Rights” (March 3, 1927).

It will therefore be easily understood that the subsequent powerful sweep of the revolution, on the one hand, and the imperialist onslaught in Shanghai, on the other hand, were bound to throw the Chinese national bourgeoisie into the camp of counter-revolution, just as the occupation of Shanghai by national troops and the strikes of the Shanghai workers were bound to unite the imperialists in order to strangle the revolution.

And that is what happened. The Nanking massacre served in this respect as a signal for a new demarcation of the contending forces in China. In bombarding Nanking and presenting an ultimatum, the imperialists desired to make it known that they were seeking the support of the national bourgeoisie for a joint struggle against the Chinese revolution.

Chiang Kai-shek, on the other hand, in firing upon workers’ meetings and engineering a coup, was, as it were, replying to the call of the imperialists and saying that he was ready to make a deal with them together with the national bourgeoisie against the Chinese workers and peasants.

III

THE SECOND STAGE OF THE CHINESE REVOLUTION

Chiang Kai-shek's coup marks the desertion of the national bourgeoisie from the revolution, the emergence of a centre of national counter-revolution, and the conclusion of a deal between the Kuomintang Rights and the imperialists against the Chinese revolution. Chiang Kai-shek's coup signifies that in South China there will now be two camps, two governments, two armies, two centres—the revolutionary centre in Wuhan and the counter-revolutionary centre in Nanking. Chiang Kai-shek's coup signifies that the revolution has entered the second stage of its development, that a swing has begun away from the revolution of an all-national united front and towards a revolution of the vast masses of the workers and peasants, towards an agrarian revolution, which will strengthen and broaden the struggle against imperialism, against the gentry and the feudal landlords, and against the militarists and Chiang Kai-shek's counter-revolutionary group.

This means that the struggle between the two paths of the revolution, between those who favour its further development and those who favour its liquidation, will grow more acute from day to day and fill the entire present period of the revolution.

It means that, by waging a resolute struggle against militarism and imperialism, the revolutionary Kuomintang in Wuhan will become in fact the organ of a revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry, while Chiang Kai-shek's counter-revolutionary group in Nanking, by severing itself from the workers and peasants and drawing closer to imperialism, will in the end share the fate of the militarists.

But it follows from this that the policy of preserving the unity of the Kuomintang, the policy of isolating the Rights within the Kuomintang and utilising them for the purposes of the revolution, no longer accords with the new tasks of the revolution. It must be replaced by a policy of resolutely expelling the Rights from the Kuomintang, a policy of resolutely fighting the Rights until they are completely eliminated politically, a policy of concentrating all power in the country in the hands of a revolutionary Kuomintang, a Kuomintang without its Right elements, a Kuomintang that is a bloc between the Kuomintang Lefts and the Communists.

It follows, further, that the policy of close co-operation between the Lefts and the Communists within the Kuomintang acquires particular value and significance at this stage, that this co-operation reflects the alliance between the workers and peasants that is taking shape outside the Kuomintang, and that without such co-operation the victory of the revolution will be impossible.

It follows, further, that the principal source of strength of the revolutionary Kuomintang lies in the further development of the revolutionary movement of the workers and peasants and the strengthening of their mass organisations—revolutionary peasant committees, workers' trade unions and other mass revolutionary organisations—as the preparatory elements of the future Soviets, and that the principal pledge of the victory of the revolution is the growth of the revolutionary activity of the vast masses of the working people, and the principal antidote to counter-revolution is the arming of the workers and peasants.

It follows, lastly, that while fighting in the same ranks as the revolutionary Kuomintangists, the Communist Party must more than ever before preserve its independence, as an essential condition for ensuring the hegemony of the proletariat in the bourgeois-democratic revolution.

IV

ERRORS OF THE OPPOSITION

The basic error of the opposition (Radek and Co.) is that it does not understand the character of the revolution in China, the stage it is now passing through, and its present international setting.

The opposition demands that the Chinese revolution should develop at approximately the same pace as the October Revolution did. The opposition is dissatisfied because the Shanghai workers did not give decisive battle to the imperialists and their underlings.

But it does not realise that the revolution in China cannot develop at a fast pace, one reason being that the international situation today is less favourable than it was in 1917 (the imperialists are not at war with one another).

It does not realise that decisive battle must not be given in unfavourable conditions, when the reserves have not yet been brought up—just as the Bolsheviki, for example, did not give decisive battle either in April or in July 1917.

The opposition does not realise that not to avoid decisive battle in unfavourable conditions (when it can be avoided) means making things easier for the enemies of the revolution.

The opposition demands the immediate formation of Soviets of workers', peasants' and soldiers' deputies in China. But what would forming Soviets now mean?

In the first place, they cannot be formed at any desired moment—they are formed only when the tide of revolution is running particularly high.

In the second place, Soviets are not formed for the sake of talk—they are formed primarily as organs of struggle against the existing power, as organs of struggle for power. That was the case in 1905. It was also the case in 1917.

But what would forming Soviets mean at the present moment in the area of action, say, of the Wuhan government? It would mean issuing the slogan of a struggle against the existing power in that area. It would mean issuing a slogan for the formation of new organs of power, a slogan of struggle against the power of the revolutionary Kuomintang, which includes Communists working in a bloc with the Kuomintang Lefts, for no other power exists now in that area except the power of the revolutionary Kuomintang.

It would mean, further, confusing the task of creating and strengthening mass organisations of the workers and peasants—in the shape of strike committees, peasant associations and committees, trade-union councils, factory committees, etc.—on which the revolutionary Kuomintang already relies, with the task of establishing a Soviet system, as a new type of state power, in place of the power of the revolutionary Kuomintang.

It would mean, lastly, a failure to understand what stage the revolution in China is now passing through. It would mean placing in the hands of the enemies of the Chinese people a new weapon against the revolution, enabling them to spread new legends to the effect that what is taking place in China is not a national revolution, but artificially transplanted "Moscow Sovietisation."

Hence, in advancing the slogan of the formation of Soviets at the present moment, the opposition is playing into the hands of the enemies of the Chinese revolution.

The opposition considers inexpedient the participation of the Communist Party in the Kuomintang. The opposition, consequently, considers expedient a withdrawal of the Communist Party from the Kuomintang. But what would withdrawal from the Kuomintang mean now, when the entire imperialist gang with all its underlings are demanding the expulsion of the Communists from the Kuomintang? It would mean deserting the battlefield and abandoning its allies in the Kuomintang, to the glee of the enemies of the revolution. It would mean weakening the Communist Party, undermining the revolutionary Kuomintang, facilitating the work of the Shanghai Cavaignacs and surrendering the banner of the Kuomintang, the most popular of all the banners in China, to the Kuomintang Rights.

That is precisely what the imperialists, the militarists and the Kuomintang Rights are now demanding. It follows, therefore, that by declaring for a withdrawal of the Communist Party from the Kuomintang at the present moment, the opposition is playing into the hands of the enemies of the Chinese revolution.

The recent plenum of the Central Committee of our Party therefore acted quite rightly in categorically rejecting the platform of the opposition.²

Notes

1. Compradors—part of the big native merchant bourgeoisie in the colonies and dependent countries who act as intermediaries between foreign capital and the local market. In China, the comprador bourgeoisie showed itself to be an agency of foreign imperialism and a bitter enemy of the Chinese revolution of 1925-27.

2. This refers to the plenum of the C.C., C.P.S.U.(B.) held April 13 to 16, 1927. It discussed a number of questions connected with the congresses of Soviets of the U.S.S.R. and R.S.F.S.R., and fixed the date for the convening of the Fifteenth Congress of the C.P.S.U.(B.). On April 13, J. V. Stalin spoke on the question of agenda of the plenum and in the discussion on M. I. Kalinin's report on "Questions of the Congresses of Soviets of the U.S.S.R. and the R.S.F.S.R." After discussing a communication of the Political Bureau of the C.C., C.P.S.U.(B.) on the decisions adopted by it in connection with international developments (events in China, etc.), the plenum approved the Political Bureau's policy on international affairs and emphatically rejected the anti-Party platform of the Trotsky-Zinoviev opposition.

Concerning Questions of the Chinese Revolution Reply to Comrade Marchulin

Your letter to the Derevensky Kommunist¹ on the question of Soviets in China has been forwarded to me by the editorial board for reply. Presuming that you will have no objection, I am sending you a brief answer to your letter.

I think, Comrade Marchulin, that your letter is based upon misunderstanding. And for the following reasons:

1) Stalin's theses for propagandists oppose the immediate formation of Soviets of workers', peasants' and soldiers' deputies in present-day China. You, however, join issue with Stalin and refer to Lenin's theses and speech at the Second Congress of the Comintern,² where he speaks only of peasants' Soviets, of toilers' Soviets, of Soviets of the working people, but does not utter a single word about the formation of Soviets of workers' deputies.

Why does Lenin say nothing about the formation of Soviets workers' deputies either in his theses or in his speech? Because, both in his speech and in his theses, Lenin has in mind countries where there can be no question of a purely proletarian movement, where there is practically no industrial proletariat (see Vol. XXV, p. 353). Lenin definitely says in his speech that he has in mind such countries as Central Asia, Persia, where there is practically no industrial proletariat (ibid).

Can one include among such countries China, with its industrial centres, such as Shanghai, Hankow, Nanking, Changsha, where there are already some three million workers organized in trade unions? Obviously not.

It is clear that in the case of present-day China, where there is a certain minimum of industrial proletariat, one must envisage the formation not simply of peasants' Soviets, or toilers' Soviets, but Soviets of workers' and peasants' deputies.

It would be another matter if we were considering Persia, Afghanistan, etc. But, as you know, Stalin's theses deal not with Persia, Afghanistan, etc., but with China.

Consequently your objection to Stalin's theses and your reference to Lenin's speech and theses at the Second Congress of the Comintern are mistaken and pointless.

2) You quote in your letter a passage from the "Supplementary Theses of the Second Congress of the Comintern" on the national and colonial question, where it is said that in the East "the proletarian parties must carry on intensive propaganda of communist ideas and at the first opportunity establish workers' and peasants' Soviets." In so doing, you make it appear as if these "Supplementary Theses" and the passage you quote from them are Lenin's. That is not so, Comrade Marchulin. You have simply made a mistake. The "Supplementary Theses" are Roy's. It was indeed as Roy's theses that they were submitted at the Second Congress and adopted as a "supplement" to Lenin's theses (see verbatim report of the Second Congress of the Comintern, pp. 122-26).

Why were the "Supplementary Theses" needed? In order to single out from the backward colonial countries which have no industrial proletariat such countries as China and India, of which it cannot be said that they have practically no industrial proletariat. Read the

“Supplementary Theses”, and you will realise that they refer chiefly to China and India (see verbatim report of the Second Congress of the Comintern, p. 122).

How could it happen that Roy’s special theses were needed to “supplement” Lenin’s theses? The fact is that Lenin’s theses had been written and published long before the Second Congress opened, long before the representatives from the colonial countries had arrived, and prior to the discussion in the special commission of the Second Congress. And since the discussion in the congress commission revealed the necessity for singling out from the backward colonies of the East such countries as China and India, the necessity for the “Supplementary Theses” arose.

Consequently, Lenin’s speech and theses must not be confused with Roy’s “Supplementary Theses”, nor must it be forgotten that, in the case of countries like China and India, one must envisage the formation of workers’ and peasants’ Soviets, and not simply of peasants’ Soviets.

3) Will it be necessary to form workers’ and peasants’ Soviets in China? Yes, it certainly will. That is plainly stated in Stalin’s theses for propagandists, which say:

“The principal source of strength of the revolutionary Kuomintang lies in the further development of the revolutionary movement of the workers and peasants and the strengthening of their mass organizations—revolutionary peasant committees, workers’ trade unions and other mass revolutionary organizations—as the preparatory elements of the future Soviets.” . . .*

The whole question is when to form them, in what circumstances, in what situation.

Soviets of workers’ deputies are an all-embracing, and therefore the best, revolutionary organisation of the working class. But that does not necessarily mean that they can be formed at any time and in any circumstances. When Khrustalyov, the first chairman of the St. Petersburg Soviet of Workers’ Deputies, suggested the formation of soviets of workers’ deputies in the summer of 1906, after the tide of revolution had receded, Lenin objected and said that at that moment, when the rearguard (the peasantry) had not yet caught up with the vanguard (the proletariat), the formation of Soviets of workers’ deputies was inexpedient. And Lenin was quite right. Why? Because Soviets of workers’ deputies are not a simple workers’ organisation. Soviets of workers’ deputies are organs of the struggle of the working class against the existing power, organs of an uprising, organs of a new revolutionary power, and only as such can they develop and gain strength. And if the conditions do not exist for a direct mass struggle against the existing power, for a mass uprising against that power, for the organisation of a new revolutionary power, then the formation of workers’ Soviets is inexpedient, since, in the absence of these conditions, they run the risk of decaying and becoming mere talkshops.

Here is what Lenin said about Soviets of workers’ deputies:

“Soviets of workers’ deputies are organs of direct struggle of the masses. ... It was not some kind of theory, not appeals on somebody’s part, not tactics of somebody’s invention, not a party doctrine, but the logic facts that faced these non-Party, mass organs with the necessity of an uprising, and made them organs of an uprising. And to establish such organs at the present time would mean creating organs of an uprising,† and to call forth their establishment would

mean calling for an uprising.‡ To forget this, or to veil it from the eyes of the broad mass of the people would be the most unpardonable short-sightedness and the worst of policies” (see Vol. X, p. 15).

Or again:

“The whole experience of both revolutions, that of 1905 and that of 1917, and all the decisions of the Bolshevik Party, all its political statements for many years past, boil down to this—that a Soviet of Workers’ and Soldiers’ Deputies is practicable only as the organ of an uprising††, only as an organ of revolutionary power‡‡. If this is not their purpose, Soviets become empty playthings that are bound to lead to apathy, indifference and disillusionment among the masses, who quite naturally become fed up with the endless repetition of resolutions and protests” (see Vol. XXI, p. 288).

That being the case, what would it mean to call for the immediate formation of Soviets of workers’, peasants’ and soldiers’ deputies in present-day South China, in the area, say, of the Wuhan government, where the revolutionary Kuomintang is now in power, and the movement is developing under the slogan “All power to the revolutionary Kuomintang”? To call now for the formation of Soviets of workers’ and peasants’ deputies in this area would mean calling for an uprising against the power of the revolutionary Kuomintang. Would that be expedient? Obviously not. Obviously, whoever at the present time calls for the immediate formation of Soviets of workers’ deputies in this area is trying to skip over the Kuomintang phase of the Chinese revolution, is running the risk of putting the revolution in China in a most difficult position.

That, Comrade Marchulin, is how matters stand with the question of the immediate formation of Soviets of workers’, peasants’ and soldiers’ deputies in China.

At the Second Congress of the Comintern a special resolution was adopted entitled: “When and in What Circumstances Soviets of Workers’ Deputies May Be Formed.” Lenin was present when that resolution was adopted. I would advise you to read it. It is not without interest (see verbatim report of the Second Congress of the Comintern, pp. 580-83).

4) When will it be necessary to form Soviets of workers’ and peasants’ deputies in China? Soviets of workers’ and peasants’ deputies will necessarily have to be formed in China at the moment when the victorious agrarian revolution has developed to the full, when the Kuomintang, as a bloc of the revolutionary Narodniks of China (the Kuomintang Left) and the Communist Party, begins to outlive its day, when the bourgeois-democratic revolution, which has not yet triumphed and will not triumph so soon, begins to manifest its negative features, when it becomes necessary to pass step by step from the present, Kuomintang type of state organisation to a new, proletarian type of organisation of the state.

It is in this way that the passage on workers’ and peasants’ Soviets in Roy’s “Supplementary Theses” adopted at the Second Congress of the Comintern should be understood.

Has that moment already arrived?

There is no need to prove that it has not yet arrived.

What, then, is to be done at this moment? The agrarian revolution in China must be broadened and deepened. Mass workers’ and peasants’ organisations of every kind must be created and strengthened—from trade-union councils and strike committees to peasant associations and

peasant revolutionary committees—with a view to converting them, as the revolutionary movement grows and achieves success, into organisational and political bases for the future Soviets of workers', peasants' and soldiers' deputies.

That is the task now.

May 9, 1927

Notes

1. Derevensky Kommunist (Rural Communist)—a fortnightly magazine for Party active in the countryside, organ of the C.C., C.P.S.U.(B). It was published from December 1924 to August 1930. Until February 1927, its editor-in-chief was V.M. Molotov.

2. See V.I. Lenin, Works, 4th Russ. ed., Vol. 31, pp. 122-28 and 215-20.

* See this volume, p. 231.—Ed.

† My italics.—J. St.

‡ My italics.—J. St.

†† My italics.—J. St.

‡‡ My italics.—J. St.

Revolution in China and Tasks of the Comintern
Speech Delivered at the Tenth Sitting, Eighth Plenum of the E.C.C.I.,1
May 24, 1927

I

Some Minor Questions

Comrades, I must apologise for having arrived late at today's sitting of the Executive Committee and so could not hear the whole of the speech that Trotsky read here in the Executive Committee.

I think, however, that in the last few days Trotsky has submitted to the Executive Committee such a mass of literature, theses and letters on the Chinese question that we cannot lack material for criticism of the opposition.

I shall therefore base my criticism of Trotsky's errors on these documents, and I have no doubt that it will at the same time be a criticism of the fundamentals of the speech Trotsky delivered today.

I shall try, as far as possible, to keep the personal element out of the controversy. Trotsky's and Zinoviev's personal attacks on individual members of the Political Bureau of the C.C., C.P.S.U. (B.) and of the Presidium of the E.C.C.I. are not worth wasting time on.

Trotsky, evidently, would like to pose at the meetings of the Executive Committee of the Comintern as a sort of hero so as to turn its examination of the questions of the war danger, the Chinese revolution, etc., into an examination of the question of Trotsky. I think that Trotsky does not deserve so much consideration. (A voice from the audience: "Quite right!") All the more so as he resembles an actor rather than a hero; and an actor should not be confused with a hero under any circumstances.

I say nothing of the fact that when people like Trotsky and Zinoviev, whom the Seventh Enlarged Plenum of the Executive Committee found guilty of a Social-Democratic deviation, abuse the Bolsheviks for all they are worth, there is nothing offensive in this to Bukharin or to Stalin. On the contrary, I should be very deeply offended if semi-Mensheviks of the Trotsky and Zinoviev type did not abuse, but praised me.

Nor shall I dilate on the question of whether the opposition, by its present factional statements, has violated the undertakings it gave on October 16, 1926. Trotsky asserts that the opposition's declaration of October 16, 1926, gives him the right to uphold his views. That, of course, is true. But if Trotsky means to assert that that is all the declaration stipulates, this can only be called sophistry.

The opposition's declaration of October 16 speaks not only of the right of the opposition to uphold its views, but also of the fact that these views maybe upheld only within the limits permitted by the Party, that factionalism must be discarded and put an end to, that the opposition is obliged "to submit unreservedly" to the will of the Party and the decisions of the C.C., and that the opposition must not only submit to these decisions, but must conscientiously "carry them out."

In view of all this, is any further proof needed that the opposition has most grossly violated and torn up its declaration of October 16, 1926.

Nor shall I dilate on the unseemly and grossly slanderous distortions of the position of the C.C., C.P.S.U.(B.) and the Comintern on the Chinese question contained in the numerous theses, articles and speeches of the opposition. Trotsky and Zinoviev never cease to allege that the C.C., C.P.S.U.(B.) and the Comintern have upheld and continue to uphold a policy of “support” for the national bourgeoisie in China.

It scarcely needs proof that this allegation of Trotsky’s and Zinoviev’s is a fabrication, a slander, a deliberate distortion of the facts. As a matter of fact, the C.C., C.P.S.U.(B.) and the Comintern upheld not the policy of supporting the national bourgeoisie, but a policy of utilising the national bourgeoisie so long as the revolution in China was the revolution of an all-national united front, and they later replaced that policy by a policy of armed struggle against the national bourgeoisie when the revolution in China became an agrarian revolution, and the national bourgeoisie began to desert the revolution.

To convince oneself of this, one has only to examine such documents as the resolution of the Seventh Enlarged Plenum, the appeal of the Executive Committee of the Comintern,² Stalin’s theses for propagandists,* and, lastly, Bukharin’s theses submitted the other day to the Presidium of the Executive Committee of the Comintern.

It is indeed the misfortune of the opposition that it cannot manage without tittle-tattle and distortions.

Let us pass to the matter in hand.

II

The Agrarian-Peasant Revolution as the Basis of the Bourgeois-Democratic Revolution
Trotsky's fundamental error is that he does not understand the character and meaning of the Chinese revolution. The Comintern holds that survivals of feudalism are the predominating factor in the oppression in China at the present moment, a factor stimulating the agrarian revolution. The Comintern holds that the survivals of feudalism in the Chinese countryside and the entire militarist-bureaucratic superstructure resting on them, with all the tuchuns, governors, generals, Chang Tso-lins and so forth, constitute the basis on which the present agrarian revolution has arisen and is unfolding.

If in a number of provinces 70 per cent of the peasants' earnings go to the landlords and the gentry, if the landlords, armed and unarmed, are not only the economic but also the administrative and judicial power, if medieval purchase and sale of women and children is still practised in a number of provinces—then it cannot but be admitted that feudal survivals are the principal form of oppression in the Chinese provinces.

And precisely because feudal survivals, with their entire militarist bureaucratic superstructure, are the principal form of oppression in China, China is now passing through an agrarian revolution of gigantic power and scope.

And what is the agrarian revolution? It is, indeed, the basis and content of the bourgeois-democratic revolution.

That is precisely why the Comintern says that China is now passing through a bourgeois-democratic revolution. But the bourgeois-democratic revolution in China is directed not only against feudal survivals; it is directed also against imperialism.

Why?

Because imperialism, with all its financial and military might, is the force in China that supports, inspires, fosters and preserves the feudal survivals, together with their entire bureaucratic-militarist superstructure.

Because it is impossible to abolish the feudal survivals in China without at the same time waging a revolutionary struggle against imperialism in China.

Because anyone who wants to abolish the feudal survivals in China must necessarily raise his hand against imperialism and the imperialist groups in China.

Because the feudal survivals in China cannot be smashed and abolished without waging a determined struggle against imperialism.

That is precisely why the Comintern says that the bourgeois-democratic revolution in China is at the same time an anti-imperialist revolution.

Thus, the present revolution in China is a combination of two streams of the revolutionary movement—the movement against feudal survivals and the movement against imperialism. The bourgeois-democratic revolution in China is a combination of the struggle against feudal survivals and the struggle against imperialism.

That is the starting point of the whole line of the Comintern (and hence of the C.C., C.P.S.U.(B.)) on the questions of the Chinese revolution.

And what is the starting point of Trotsky's attitude on the Chinese question? It is the direct opposite of the Comintern's standpoint, as just expounded. Trotsky either refuses altogether to recognise the existence of feudal survivals in China, or does not attach decisive importance to them. Trotsky (and hence the opposition), underestimating the strength and significance of feudal-bureaucratic oppression in China, supposes that the principal reason for the Chinese national revolution is China's state-customs dependence on the imperialist countries.

Allow me to refer to the theses which Trotsky submitted to the C.C., C.P.S.U.(B.) and the Executive Committee of the Comintern a few days ago. These theses of Trotsky's are entitled "The Chinese Revolution and Stalin's Theses."

Here is what Trotsky says in these theses:

"Fundamentally untenable is Bukharin's attempt to justify his opportunist compromising line by references to the alleged predominating role of 'feudal survivals' in China's economy. Even if Bukharin's estimate of Chinese economy were based upon an economic analysis, and not upon scholastic definitions, all the same 'feudal survivals' could not justify the policy which so manifestly facilitated the April coup. The Chinese revolution bears a national-bourgeois character for the basic reason that the development of the productive forces of Chinese capitalism is being blocked by China's state-customs** dependence on the imperialist countries" (see Trotsky's "The Chinese Revolution and Stalin's Theses").

A superficial perusal of this passage might lead one to think that it is not the Comintern line on the question of the character of the Chinese revolution that Trotsky is combating, but Bukharin's "compromising policy." That, of course, is not true. Actually, what we have in this quotation is a denial of the "predominating role" of the feudal survivals in China. Actually, what is asserted here is that the agrarian revolution now developing in China is a revolution of the top stratum, an anti-customs revolution, so to speak.

The talk about Bukharin's "compromising policy" was needed here by Trotsky in order to cover up his departure from the line of the Comintern. It is, I will say bluntly, Trotsky's usual fraudulent device.

It follows therefore, according to Trotsky, that the feudal survivals in China with their entire militarist-bureaucratic superstructure, are not the mainspring of the Chinese revolution at the present moment, but a secondary and insignificant factor, which only deserves to be mentioned in inverted commas.

It follows therefore, according to Trotsky, that the "basic reason" for the national revolution in China is China's customs dependence on the imperialists, and that, owing to this, the revolution in China is primarily, so to speak, an anti-customs revolution.

Such is the starting point of Trotsky's conception. Such is Trotsky's viewpoint on the character of the Chinese revolution.

Permit me to observe that this viewpoint is that of a state counsellor of "His Highness" Chang Tso-lin.

If Trotsky's viewpoint is correct, then it must be admitted that Chang Tso-lin and Chiang Kai-shek are right in not desiring either an agrarian or a workers' revolution, and in striving only for the abolition of the unequal treaties and the establishment of customs autonomy for China.

Trotsky has slid over to the viewpoint of the officials of Chang Tso-lin and Chiang Kai-shek.

If the survivals of feudalism have to be put in inverted commas; if the Comintern is wrong in declaring that the feudal survivals are of predominant importance at the present stage of the revolution; if the basis for the Chinese revolution is customs dependence and not the struggle against feudal survivals and against imperialism, which supports them—what then remains of the agrarian revolution in China?

Where does the agrarian revolution in China, with its demand for the confiscation of the landlords' land, come from? What grounds are there, in that case, for regarding the Chinese revolution as a bourgeois-democratic revolution? Is it not a fact that the agrarian revolution is the basis of the bourgeois-democratic revolution? Surely, the agrarian revolution cannot have dropped from the skies?

Is it not a fact that millions and tens of millions of peasants are involved in a gigantic agrarian revolution in such provinces as Hunan, Hupeh, Honan, etc., where the peasants are establishing their own rule, their own courts, their own self-defence bodies, driving out the landlords and settling accounts with them "in plebeian fashion"?

Where do we get such a powerful agrarian movement from, if feudal-militarist oppression is not the predominant form of oppression in China?

How could this mighty movement of tens of millions of peasants have assumed at the same time an anti-imperialist character, if we are not to admit that imperialism is the main ally of the feudal-militarist oppressors of the Chinese people?

Is it not a fact that the peasant association in Hunan alone has now over two and a half million members? And how many of them are there already in Hupeh and Honan, and how many will there be in the very near future in other Chinese provinces?

And what about the "Red Spears," the "Tightened Belts' Associations," etc.—can they be a figment of the imagination, and not a reality?

Can it be seriously maintained that the agrarian revolution embracing tens of millions of peasants with the slogan of confiscation of the landlords' land is directed not against real and undeniable feudal survivals, but against imaginary ones, in inverted commas?

Is it not obvious that Trotsky has slid over to the viewpoint of the officials of "His Highness" Chang Tso-lin? Thus we have two basic lines:

a) the line of the Comintern, which takes into account the existence of feudal survivals in China, as the predominant form of oppression, the decisive importance of the powerful agrarian movement, the connection of the feudal survivals with imperialism, and the bourgeois-democratic character of the Chinese revolution, with its struggle spearheaded against imperialism;

b) the line of Trotsky, which denies the predominant importance of feudal-militarist oppression, fails to appreciate the decisive importance of the agrarian revolutionary movement in China, and attributes the anti-imperialist character of the Chinese revolution solely to the interests of Chinese capitalism, which is demanding customs independence for China.

The basic error of Trotsky (and hence of the opposition) is that he underestimates the agrarian revolution in China, does not understand the bourgeois-democratic character of that revolution, denies the existence of the preconditions for an agrarian movement in China, embracing many millions, and underestimates the role of the peasantry in the Chinese revolution.

This error is not a new one with Trotsky. It has been the most characteristic feature of his whole line throughout the period of his struggle against Bolshevism.

Underestimation of the role of the peasantry in the bourgeois-democratic revolution is an error which has pursued Trotsky since 1905, an error which was particularly glaring prior to the February Revolution of 1917, and which clings to him to this day.

Permit me to refer to a few facts relating to Trotsky's struggle against Leninism, on the eve of the February Revolution in 1917, for example, when we were advancing towards the victory of the bourgeois-democratic revolution in Russia.

Trotsky asserted at that time that, since differentiation among the peasantry had increased, since imperialism was now predominant and the proletariat was pitting itself against the bourgeois nation, the role of the peasantry would decline and the agrarian revolution would not have the importance which had been ascribed to it in 1905.

What did Lenin say in reply to that? Let me quote a passage from an article written by Lenin in 1915 on the role of the peasantry in the bourgeois-democratic revolution in Russia;

“This original theory of Trotsky's (referring to Trotsky's “permanent revolution.”—J. St.) borrows from the Bolsheviks their call for a resolute revolutionary struggle by the proletariat and for the conquest of political power by the latter, and from the Mensheviks the ‘denial’ of the role of the peasantry. The peasantry, he says, has split up into strata, has become differentiated; its potential revolutionary role has steadily declined; a ‘national’ revolution is impossible in Russia; ‘we are living in the era of imperialism,’ and ‘imperialism pits, not the bourgeois nation against the old regime, but the proletariat against the bourgeois nation.’

“Here we have an amusing example of ‘word juggling’: imperialism! If, in Russia, the proletariat is already pitted against the ‘bourgeois nation,’ then that means that Russia is directly facing a socialist revolution!! Then the slogan ‘confiscation of the landlords’ land’ (which Trotsky, after the Conference of January 1912, put forward again in 1915) is untrue, and we must speak not of a ‘revolutionary workers’ government, but of a ‘workers’ socialist government!! To what lengths Trotsky's confusion goes may be seen from his phrase that the proletariat would, by its determination, carry along with it the ‘non-proletarian (!) popular masses’ (No. 217)!! Trotsky has not stopped to think that, if the proletariat carries along with it the non-proletarian masses of the countryside for confiscation of the landlords’ land and overthrows the monarchy, that will be the completion of the ‘national bourgeois revolution’ in Russia, that will be the revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry

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“The whole decade—the great decade—1905-1915—has demonstrated that there are two, and only two, class lines for the Russian revolution. The differentiation of the peasantry has intensified the class struggle within it, has awakened very many politically dormant elements, has brought the rural proletariat closer to the urban proletariat (the Bolsheviks have been insisting on the separate organisation of the former since 1906, and introduced this demand in the resolution of the Stockholm, Menshevik Congress). But the antagonism between the ‘peasantry’ and the Markovs-Romanovs-Khvostovs has become stronger, more developed, more acute. This truth is so obvious that even thousands of phrases in scores of Trotsky’s Paris articles cannot ‘refute’ it. Trotsky is in fact helping the liberal labour politicians in Russia who understand ‘denial’ of the role of the peasantry to mean refusal to rouse the peasants to revolution! And that just now is the crux of the matter” (see Vol. XVIII, pp. 317-18).

It is this peculiarity of Trotsky’s scheme—the fact that he sees the bourgeoisie and sees the proletariat, but does not notice the peasantry and does not understand its role in the bourgeois-democratic revolution—it is precisely this peculiarity that constitutes the opposition’s principal error on the Chinese question.

It is just this that constitutes the “semi-Menshevism” of Trotsky and of the opposition in the question of the character of the Chinese revolution.

From this principal error stem all the other errors of the opposition, all the confusion in its theses on the Chinese question.

III

The Right Kuomintang in Nanking, which Massacres Communists, and the Left Kuomintang in Wuhan, which Maintains an Alliance with the Communists

Take, for example, the question of Wuhan. The Comintern's position on the revolutionary role of Wuhan is well known and clear. Since China is passing through an agrarian revolution, since the victory of the agrarian revolution will mean the victory of the bourgeois-democratic revolution, the victory of a revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry, and since Nanking is the centre of national counter-revolution and Wuhan the centre of the revolutionary movement in China, the Wuhan Kuomintang must be supported and the Communists must participate in this Kuomintang and in its revolutionary government, provided that the leading role of the proletariat and its party is ensured both inside and outside the Kuomintang.

Is the present Wuhan government the organ of a revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry? No, it is not such an organ as yet, and will not soon become one. But it has every chance of developing into such an organ, given the further development of the revolution and the success of this revolution.

Such is the position of the Comintern.

Quite different is the way Trotsky sees the matter. He considers that Wuhan is not the centre of the revolutionary movement, but a "fiction." Asked what the Left Kuomintang is at this moment, Trotsky replies: "So far it is nothing, or practically nothing."

Let us assume that Wuhan is a fiction. But if Wuhan is a fiction, why does Trotsky not insist on a determined struggle against this fiction? Since when have Communists been supporting fictions, participating in fictions, standing at the head of fictions, and so on? Is it not a fact that Communists are in duty bound to fight against fictions? Is it not a fact that if Communists refrained from fighting against fictions, it would mean deceiving the proletariat and the peasantry? Why, then, does Trotsky not propose that the Communists should fight this fiction, if only by immediate withdrawal from the Wuhan Kuomintang and the Wuhan government? Why does Trotsky propose that they should remain within this fiction, and not withdraw from it? Where is the logic in this?

Is not this "logical" incongruity to be explained by the fact that Trotsky took up a swaggering attitude towards Wuhan and called it a fiction, and then got cold feet and shrank from drawing the appropriate conclusion from his theses?

Or take Zinoviev, for example. In his theses, distributed at the plenum of the C.C., C.P.S.U.(13.) in April of this year, Zinoviev characterised the Kuomintang in Wuhan as a Kemalist government of the 1920 period. But a Kemalist government is a government which fights the workers and peasants, a government in which there is not, and cannot be, any place for Communists. It would seem that only one conclusion could be drawn from such a characterisation of Wuhan: a determined struggle against Wuhan, the overthrow of the Wuhan government.

But that is what ordinary people, with ordinary human logic, might think. That is not what Zinoviev thinks. Characterising the Wuhan government in Hankow as a Kemalist government, he at the same time proposes that this government should be given the most

energetic support, that the Communists should not resign from it, should not, withdraw from the Kuomintang in Wuhan, and so on. He says outright:

“It is necessary to render the most, energetic and all-round assistance to Hankow and to organise resistance from there against the Cavaignacs. In the immediate future efforts should be concentrated precisely on facilitating organisation and consolidation in Hankow” (see Zinoviev’s theses).

Understand that if you can!

Trotsky says that Wuhan, i.e., Hankow, is a fiction. Zinoviev, on the contrary, asserts that Wuhan is a Kemalist government. The conclusion that should be drawn from this is that the fiction must be fought, or a fight undertaken to overthrow the Wuhan government. But both Trotsky and Zinoviev shrink from the conclusion that follows inevitably from their premises, and Zinoviev goes even further and recommends rendering “the most energetic and all-round assistance to Hankow.”

What does all this show? It shows that the opposition has got entangled in contradictions. It has lost the capacity to think logically, it has lost all sense of perspective. Confusion of mind and loss of all sense of perspective on the Wuhan question—such is the position of Trotsky and the opposition, if confusion can be called a position at all.

IV

Soviets of Workers' and Peasants' Deputies in China

Or take, as another example, the question of Soviets of workers' and peasants' deputies in China.

On the question of organising Soviets, we have the three resolutions adopted by the Second Congress of the Comintern: Lenin's theses on the formation of non-proletarian, peasants' Soviets in backward countries, Roy's theses on the formation of workers' and peasants' Soviets in such countries as China and India, and the special theses on "When and in What Circumstances Soviets of Workers' Deputies May Be Formed."

Lenin's theses deal with the formation of "peasants'," "people's," non-proletarian Soviets in countries like those of Central Asia, where there is no industrial proletariat, or practically none. Not a word is said in Lenin's theses about the formation of Soviets of workers' deputies in such countries. Furthermore, Lenin's theses hold that one of the essential conditions for the development and formation of "peasants'," "people's," Soviets in backward countries is the rendering of direct support to the revolution in such countries by the proletariat of the U.S.S.R. It is clear that these theses envisage not China or India—where there is a certain minimum of industrial proletariat, and where, under certain conditions, the creation of workers' Soviets is a pre-condition for the formation of peasants' Soviets—but other, more backward countries, such as Persia, etc.

Roy's theses chiefly envisage China and India, where there is an industrial proletariat. These theses propose the formation, in certain circumstances—in the period of transition from the bourgeois to the proletarian revolution—of Soviets of workers' and peasants' deputies. It is clear that these theses have a direct bearing on China.

The special theses of the Second Congress, entitled "When and in What Circumstances Soviets of Workers' Deputies May Be Formed," deal with the role of Soviets of workers' deputies on the basis of the experience of the revolutions in Russia and Germany. These theses affirm that "without a proletarian revolution, Soviets inevitably turn into a travesty of Soviets." It is clear that when considering the question of immediately forming Soviets of workers' and peasants' deputies in China, we must take these latter theses also into account.

How do matters stand with the question of immediately forming Soviets of workers' and peasants' deputies in China, if we take into account both the present situation in China, with the existence of the Wuhan Kuomintang as the centre of the revolutionary movement, and the directives in the last two theses of the Second Congress of the Comintern.

To form Soviets of workers' and peasants' deputies at the present time in the area of activity, say, of the Wuhan government, would mean establishing a dual power and issuing the slogan of a struggle for the overthrow of the Left Kuomintang and the establishment of a new, Soviet power in China.

Soviets of workers' and peasants' deputies are organs of struggle for the overthrow of the existing power, organs of struggle for a new power. The appearance of Soviets of workers' and peasants' deputies cannot but create a dual power, and, given a dual power, the question whom all power should belong to cannot but become an acute issue.

How did matters stand in Russia in March-April-May-June 1917? There was at that time the Provisional Government, which possessed half the power—but the more real power, very likely, because it still had the support of the army. Side by side with this there were the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, which also possessed something like half the power, although not such a real power as that of the Provisional Government. The slogan of the Bolsheviks at that time was to depose the Provisional Government and to transfer all power to the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies. None of the Bolsheviks thought of entering the Provisional Government, for you cannot enter a government that you are out to overthrow.

Can it be said that the situation in Russia in March-June 1917 was similar to the situation in China today? No, it cannot. It cannot be said, not only because Russia at that time was facing a proletarian revolution while China now is facing a bourgeois-democratic revolution, but also because at that time the Provisional Government in Russia was a counter-revolutionary and imperialist government, while the present Wuhan government is a government that is anti-imperialist and revolutionary, in the bourgeois-democratic meaning of the word.

What does the opposition propose in this connection?

It proposes the immediate creation in China of Soviets of workers', peasants' and soldiers' deputies, as centres of organisation of the revolutionary movement. But Soviets of workers' and peasants' deputies are not only centres of organisation of the revolutionary movement. They are, first and foremost, organs of an uprising against the existing power, organs for the establishment of a new, revolutionary power. The opposition does not understand that only as organs of an uprising, only as organs of a new power, can Soviets of workers' and peasants' deputies become centres of the revolutionary movement. Failing this, Soviets of workers' deputies become a fiction, an appendage of the existing power, as was the case in Germany in 1918 and in Russia in July 1917.

Does the opposition understand that the formation of Soviets of workers' and peasants' deputies in China at the present time would mean the establishment of dual power, shared by the Soviets and the Wuhan government, and would necessarily and inevitably lead to a call for the overthrow of the Wuhan government?

I doubt very much whether Zinoviev understands this simple matter. But Trotsky understands it perfectly well, for he plainly says in his theses: "The slogan of Soviets means a call for the setting up of effective organs of power, through a transitional regime of dual power" (see Trotsky's theses, "The Chinese Revolution and Stalin's Theses").

It follows, therefore, that if we were to set up Soviets in China, we should at the same time be setting up a "regime of dual power," overthrowing the Wuhan government and forming a new, revolutionary power. Trotsky is here obviously taking as a model the events in the history of the Russian revolution in the period prior to October 1917. At that time we really did have a dual power, and we really were working to overthrow the Provisional Government.

But I have already said that none of us at that time thought of entering the Provisional Government. Why, then, does Trotsky not propose now that the Communists should immediately withdraw from the Kuomintang and the Wuhan government? How can you set up Soviets, how can you set up a regime of dual power, and at the same time belong to that

selfsame Wuhan government you intend to overthrow? Trotsky's theses provide no answer to this question.

It is clear that Trotsky has got himself hopelessly entangled in the labyrinth of his own contradictions. He has confused a bourgeois-democratic revolution with a proletarian revolution. He has "forgotten" that, far from being completed, far from being victorious as yet, the bourgeois-democratic revolution in China is only in its initial stage of development. Trotsky does not understand that to withdraw support from the Wuhan government, to issue the slogan of a dual power and to proceed to overthrow the Wuhan government at the present time, through the immediate formation of Soviets, would mean rendering direct and indubitable support to Chiang Kai-shek and Chang Tso-lin.

How then, we are asked, is the formation of Soviets of workers' deputies in Russia in 1905 to be understood? Were we not then passing through a bourgeois-democratic revolution?

Firstly, however, there were at that time only two Soviets—in St. Petersburg and in Moscow; and the existence of two Soviets did not yet mean the setting up of a system of Soviet power in Russia.

Secondly, the St. Petersburg and Moscow Soviets of that period were organs of an uprising against the old, tsarist power, which once more confirms that Soviets cannot be regarded solely as centres for organising the revolution, that they can be such centres only if they are organs of an uprising and organs of a new power.

Thirdly, the history of workers' Soviets shows that such Soviets can exist and develop only if favourable conditions exist for a direct transition from bourgeois-democratic revolution to proletarian revolution, if, consequently, favourable conditions exist for a transition from bourgeois rule to the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Was it not because these favourable conditions did not exist that the workers' Soviets in St. Petersburg and Moscow perished in 1905, just as did the workers' Soviets in Germany in 1918?

It is possible that there would have been no Soviets in Russia in 1905 if there had been at that time a broad revolutionary organisation in Russia similar to the Left Kuomintang in China today. But no such organisation could have existed in Russia at that time, because there were no elements of national oppression among the Russian workers and peasants; the Russians themselves oppressed other nationalities, and an organisation like the Left Kuomintang can arise only when there is national oppression by foreign imperialists, which draws the revolutionary elements of the country together into one broad organisation.

One must be blind to deny to the Left Kuomintang the role of an organ of revolutionary struggle, an organ of revolt against feudal survivals and imperialism in China.

But what follows from this?

From this it follows that the Left Kuomintang is performing approximately the same role in the present bourgeois-democratic revolution in China as the Soviets performed in the bourgeois-democratic revolution in Russia in 1905.

It would be a different matter if there was no popular and revolutionary-democratic organisation in China such as the Left Kuomintang. But since there is such a specific revolutionary organisation, one which is adapted to the specific features of Chinese conditions, and which has proved its suitability for the further development of the bourgeois-democratic revolution in China, it would be foolish and unwise to destroy this organisation, built up in the course of years, now when the bourgeois-democratic revolution has only just begun, is not yet victorious and will not so soon be victorious.

From this consideration, certain comrades draw the conclusion that the Kuomintang may be utilised in the future as well, during the transition to the proletarian revolution, as the form of state organisation of the dictatorship of the proletariat; and they see in this the possibility of a peaceful transition from the bourgeois democratic revolution to the proletarian revolution.

Generally speaking, the possibility of a peaceful development of the revolution is not, of course, out of the question. With us in Russia, too, in the early part of 1917 there was talk of the possibility of a peaceful development of the revolution through the Soviets.

But, firstly, the Kuomintang is not the same thing as Soviets, and while it may be adapted for the work of developing the bourgeois-democratic revolution, that does not necessarily mean that it can be adapted for the work of developing the proletarian revolution; whereas Soviets of workers' deputies are the form best adapted for the dictatorship of the proletariat. Secondly, even with Soviets, a peaceful transition to the proletarian revolution in Russia in 1917 proved in fact to be out of the question.

Thirdly, proletarian centres in China are so few, and the enemies of the Chinese revolution so strong and numerous, that every advance of the revolution and every assault of the imperialists will inevitably be accompanied by fresh secessions from the Kuomintang and a fresh strengthening of the Communist Party at the expense of the prestige of the Kuomintang.

I think that a peaceful development of the Chinese revolution must be regarded as out of the question.

I think that Soviets of workers' and peasants' deputies will have to be set up in China during the period of transition from the bourgeois-democratic revolution to the proletarian revolution. For under present-day conditions such a transition is impossible without Soviets of workers' and peasants' deputies.

It is necessary first to enable the agrarian movement to develop throughout China, it is necessary to strengthen Wuhan and support it in the struggle against the feudal bureaucratic regime, it is necessary to help Wuhan to achieve victory over the counter-revolution, it is necessary broadly and universally to develop peasant associations, workers' trade unions and other revolutionary organisations as a basis for the setting up of Soviets in the future, it is necessary to enable the Chinese Communist Party to strengthen its influence among the peasantry and in the army—and only after this may Soviets of workers' and peasants' deputies be set up as organs of struggle for a new power, as elements of a dual power, as elements in the preparation for the transition from the bourgeois-democratic revolution to the proletarian revolution.

The setting up of workers' Soviets in China is not a matter of empty words, of empty "revolutionary" declamations. This question cannot be regarded so light-mindedly as Trotsky does.

The formation of workers' and peasants' Soviets means, first of all, withdrawing from the Kuomintang, because you cannot set up Soviets and promote a dual power, by calling upon the workers and peasants to establish a new power, and at the same time remain within the Kuomintang and its government.

The setting up of Soviets of workers' deputies means, further, replacing the present bloc within the Kuomintang by a bloc outside the Kuomintang, a bloc similar to the one that the Bolsheviks had with the Left. Socialist-Revolutionaries in October 1917.

Why?

Because, whereas in the case of a bourgeois-democratic revolution it is a matter of establishing a revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry, and the policy of a bloc within the Kuomintang fully conforms to this, in the case of the formation of Soviets and the transition to the proletarian revolution it will be a matter of setting up the dictatorship of the proletariat, of setting up the power of the Soviets, and such a power can be prepared for and set up only under the leadership of one party, the Communist Party.

Further, Soviets of workers' deputies entail obligations. The Chinese worker today earns 8-15 rubles a month, lives in intolerable conditions, and is heavily overworked. This state of affairs must be, and can be, ended immediately by raising wages, introducing an eight-hour day, improving the housing conditions of the working class, etc. But when there are Soviets of workers' deputies, the workers will not be content with that. They will say to the Communists (and they will be right): Since we have Soviets, and Soviets are organs of power, why not encroach somewhat on the bourgeoisie and expropriate them "just a little"? The Communists would be empty wind-bags if they did not adopt the course of expropriating the bourgeoisie, given the existence of Soviets of workers' and peasants' deputies.

But, the question arises, can and should this course be adopted now, in the present phase of the revolution?

No, it should not.

Can and should one refrain from expropriating the bourgeoisie in the future, when there are Soviets of workers' and peasants' deputies? No. But whoever thinks that when that is the case the Communists can retain the bloc within the Kuomintang is labouring under a delusion and does not understand the working of the struggle of class forces in the period of transition from the bourgeois revolution to the proletarian revolution.

That is how matters stand with the question of setting up Soviets of workers' and peasants' deputies in China.

As you see, it is not so simple as certain excessively light-minded people, like Trotsky and Zinoviev, make out.

In general, is it permissible in principle for Marxists to take part and co-operate with the revolutionary bourgeoisie in one common revolutionary-democratic party, or in one common revolutionary-democratic government?

Some of the oppositionists think that it is not permissible. But the history of Marxism tells us that under certain conditions and for a certain period it is quite permissible.

I might refer to such an example as that of Marx in Germany in 1848, at the time of the revolution against German absolutism, when Marx and his supporters joined the bourgeois-democratic league in the Rhineland, and when the organ of that revolutionary-democratic party, the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, was edited by him.

While belonging to that bourgeois-democratic league and spurring on the revolutionary bourgeoisie, Marx and his supporters strenuously criticised the half-heartedness of their allies on the Right, just as the Communist Party in China, while belonging to the Kuomintang, must strenuously criticise the vacillation and half-heartedness of its Left Kuomintang allies.

We know that only in the spring of 1849 did Marx and his supporters quit that bourgeois-democratic league and proceed to form an independent organisation of the working class, with an absolutely independent class policy.

As you see, Marx went even further than the Chinese Communist Party, which belongs to the Kuomintang as the independent class party of the proletariat.

One may argue or not as to whether it was expedient for Marx and his supporters to join that bourgeois-democratic league in 1848. Rosa Luxemburg, for instance, thought that Marx should not have joined it. That is a question of tactics. But that in principle Marx and Engels granted the possibility and expediency of joining a bourgeois-revolutionary party in a period of bourgeois-democratic revolution, under certain conditions and for a definite period, is not open to doubt. As to whether Marxists may, under definite conditions and in a definite situation, take part and co-operate in a revolutionary-democratic government together with the revolutionary bourgeoisie, on this point we have the opinion of such Marxists as Engels and Lenin. We know that Engels, in his pamphlet, *The Bakuninists at Work*,³ pronounced in favour of such participation. We know that Lenin, in 1905, likewise said that such participation in a bourgeois-democratic revolutionary government was permissible.

V

Two Lines

And so, we have before us two entirely different lines on the Chinese question—the line of the Comintern and the line of Trotsky and Zinoviev.

The line of the Comintern. Feudal survivals, and the bureaucratic-militarist superstructure which rests upon them and which receives every support from the imperialists of all countries, are the basic fact of Chinese life today.

China at the present moment is passing through an agrarian revolution directed both against the feudal survivals and against imperialism.

The agrarian revolution constitutes the basis and content of the bourgeois-democratic revolution in China.

The Kuomintang in Wuhan and the Wuhan government are the centre of the bourgeois-democratic revolutionary movement.

Nanking and the Nanking government are the centre of national counter-revolution.

The policy of supporting Wuhan is at the same time a policy of developing the bourgeois-democratic revolution, with all the consequences resulting from that. Hence the participation of the Communists in the Wuhan Kuomintang and in the Wuhan revolutionary government, a participation which does not exclude, but rather presupposes strenuous criticism by the Communists of the half-heartedness and vacillation of their allies in the Kuomintang.

The Communists must utilise this participation to facilitate the proletariat's role of hegemon in the Chinese bourgeois-democratic revolution, and to hasten the moment of transition to the proletarian revolution.

When the moment of the complete victory of the bourgeois-democratic revolution approaches, and when in the course of the bourgeois revolution the paths of transition to the proletarian revolution become clear, the time will have arrived when it is necessary to set up Soviets of workers', peasants' and soldiers' deputies, as elements of a dual power, as organs of struggle for a new power, as organs of a new power, Soviet power.

When that time comes the Communists must replace the bloc within the Kuomintang by a bloc outside the Kuomintang, and the Communist Party must become the sole leader of the new revolution in China.

To propose now, as Trotsky and Zinoviev do, the immediate formation of Soviets of workers' and peasants' deputies and the immediate establishment of dual power now, when the bourgeois-democratic revolution is still in the initial phase of its development, and when the Kuomintang represents the form of organisation of the national-democratic revolution best adapted and most closely corresponding to the specific features of China, would be to disorganise the revolutionary movement, weaken Wuhan, facilitate its downfall, and render assistance to Chang Tso-lin and Chiang Kai-shek.

The line of Trotsky and Zinoviev. Feudal survivals in China are a figment of Bukharin's imagination. They either do not exist at all in China, or are so insignificant that they cannot have any serious importance.

There does appear to be an agrarian revolution in China at this moment. But where it comes from, the devil only knows. (Laughter.)

But since there is this agrarian revolution, it must, of course, be supported somehow.

The chief thing just now is not the agrarian revolution, but a revolution for the customs independence of China, an anti-customs revolution, so to speak.

The Wuhan Kuomintang and the Wuhan government are either a "fiction" (Trotsky), or Kemalism (Zinoviev). On the one hand, dual power must be established for overthrowing the Wuhan government through the immediate formation of Soviets (Trotsky). On the other hand, the Wuhan government must be strengthened, it must be given energetic and all-round assistance, also, it appears, through the immediate formation of Soviets (Zinoviev).

By rights, the Communists ought to withdraw immediately from this "fiction"—the Wuhan government and the Wuhan Kuomintang. However, it would be better if they remained in this "fiction," i.e., in the Wuhan government and the Wuhan Kuomintang. But why they should remain in Wuhan if Wuhan is a "fiction"—that, it seems, God alone knows. And whoever does not agree with this is a betrayer and traitor.

Such is the so-called line of Trotsky and Zinoviev. Anything more grotesque and confused than this so-called line it would be hard to imagine.

One gets the impression that one is dealing not with Marxists, but with some sort of bureaucrats who are completely divorced from real life—or, still more, with "revolutionary" tourists, who have been busy touring about Sukhum and Kislovodsk and such-like places, overlooked the Seventh Enlarged Plenum of the Executive Committee of the Comintern, which defined the basic attitude towards the Chinese revolution, and then, having learned from the newspapers that some sort of a revolution—whether agrarian or anti-customs, they were not quite clear—was really taking place in China, they decided that it was necessary to compile a whole heap of theses—one set in April, another in the early part of May, a third in the latter part of May—and having done so, they bombard the Executive Committee of the Comintern with them, apparently believing that a plethora of confused and contradictory theses is the best means of saving the Chinese revolution.

Such, comrades, are the two lines on the questions of the Chinese revolution.

You will have to choose between them.

I am concluding, comrades.

I should like, in closing, to say a few words on the political meaning and importance of Trotsky's and Zinoviev's factional pronouncements at this moment. They complain that they are not allowed sufficient freedom to indulge in unparalleled abuse and impermissible vilification of the C.C., C.P.S.U.(B.) and the E.C.C.I. They complain of a "regime" within the Comintern and the C.P.S.U.(B.). Essentially, what they want is freedom to disorganise the

Comintern and the C.P.S.U.(B.). Essentially, what they want is to transplant to the Comintern and the C.P.S.U.(B.) the manners of Maslow & Co.

I must say, comrades, that Trotsky has chosen a very inappropriate moment for his attacks on the Party and the Comintern. I have just received information that the British Conservative government has decided to break off relations with the U.S.S.R. There is no need to prove that this will be followed by a universal campaign against the Communists. This campaign has already begun. Some are threatening the C.P.S.U.(B.) with war and intervention. Others threaten it with a split. Something like a united front from Chamberlain to Trotsky is being formed.

It is possible that they want to frighten us. But it scarcely needs proof that Bolsheviks are not the sort to be frightened. The history of Bolshevism knows plenty of such "fronts." The history of Bolshevism shows that such "fronts" have invariably been smashed by the revolutionary determination and supreme courage of the Bolsheviks.

You need have no doubt that we shall succeed in smashing this new "front" too. (Applause.)

Notes

1 The Eighth Plenum of the Executive Committee of the Communist International was held in Moscow, May 18-30, 1927. It discussed the tasks of the Comintern in the struggle against war and the war danger, the tasks of the British Communist Party, questions of the Chinese revolution, and other items. J. V. Stalin delivered a speech on "The Revolution in China and the Tasks of the Comintern" at the tenth sitting of the plenum, on May 24. The plenum assessed the international situation, outlined a programme of struggle against the threat of war, and, in connection with Great Britain's severance of diplomatic and trade relations with the U.S.S.R., adopted an appeal "To the Workers and Peasants of the World. To All Oppressed Peoples. To the Soldiers and Sailors." The leaders of the anti-Party Trotsky-Zinoviev bloc took advantage of the sharpened international position of the U.S.S.R. to launch slanderous attacks at the plenum on the leadership of the Comintern and the C.P.S.U.(B.). In a special resolution, the plenum sharply condemned the splitting tactics of the opposition leaders and warned them that if they persisted in their factional struggle they would be expelled from the Executive Committee of the Comintern.

2 This refers to the appeal entitled "To the Proletarians and Peasants of the World. To All Oppressed Peoples," adopted by the Executive Committee of the Communist International on April 14, 1927. The appeal was published in Pravda, No. 85, April 15, 1927.

* See this volume, pp. 224-34.—Ed.

** My italics.—J. St.

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3 See Friedrich Engels, Die Bakunisten an der Arbeit, in Der Volkstaat, Nr. 105, 106, 107, 1873.