

The Prospects of the Revolution in China.

(Speech delivered in the Chinese Commission of the Enlarged E. C. C. I. on November 30th 1926.)

By J. Stalin.

Before I enter into the question, I consider it necessary to say that I have not had at my disposal exhaustive material on the Chinese question such as would be necessary to unfold a complete picture of the Chinese revolution. I am therefore compelled to confine myself to a few general remarks of a fundamental nature which are directly connected with the question as to the main trend of the Chinese revolution. The theses of Comrade Petrov, the theses of Comrade Mif, two reports of Comrade Tang Ping Shan and the remarks of Comrade Rades on the Chinese question are in my possession. In spite of their excellence, all these documents have in my opinion, the great defect that they evade a number of the fundamental questions of the revolution in China. I think that our attention should be above all directed to these defects, and for this reason my remarks will at the same time be of a polemical character.

I. The Character of the Revolution in China.

Lenin said that the Chinese would soon have their 1905. Some comrades took this as meaning that exactly what took place with us in Russia in 1905 would necessarily repeat itself in China. This is wrong. Lenin certainly did not say that the Chinese revolution would be a copy of the Russian revolution in 1905; he merely said that the Chinese would have their 1905. This means that, apart from the features which the Chinese revolution would have in common with the revolution in 1905, it would have its own specific peculiarities, which would stamp its special features on the whole revolution in China.

What are these peculiarities?

The first peculiarity is that the Chinese revolution as a bourgeois-democratic one is also a revolution for national freedom directed against the rule of foreign imperialism in China. This is the chief feature which distinguishes it from the revo-

lution in Russia in 1905. The position is that the rule of imperialism in China expresses itself not only in military power but above all in that the imperialists have the power of disposal over the main threads of industry in China, the railways, the factories, the mines, the banks etc. The result is that the questions of the struggle against foreign imperialism and its Chinese agents play a predominant part in the Chinese revolution. This is exactly what links the Chinese revolution directly with the revolutions of the proletarians of all countries against imperialism.

Another peculiarity of the Chinese revolution arises out of this peculiarity and that is that the national large bourgeoisie in China is extremely weak, much weaker than was the Russian bourgeoisie at the time of 1905. This is easy to understand. If the main threads of industry are gathered in the hands of foreign imperialists, the national large bourgeoisie of China cannot but be weak and backward. In this respect Comrade Mif is quite in the right when he remarks that the weakness of the national bourgeoisie in China is a characteristic symptom of the Chinese revolution. From this results that the part of initiator and guide of the Chinese revolution, the part of leader of the Chinese peasantry must inevitably get into the hands of the Chinese proletariat, which is better organised and more active than the Chinese bourgeoisie.

Neither should the third peculiarity of the Chinese revolution be overlooked; it is that, in addition to China, the Soviet Union exists and is developing, the revolutionary experience and help of which cannot but facilitate the fight of the Chinese proletariat against imperialism and against the feudal-mediaeval remains in China.

These are the fundamental peculiarities of the Chinese revolution which determine its character and its trend.

II. Imperialism and Imperialist Intervention in China.

The first defect of the theses before us is that they avoid or underestimate the question of imperialist intervention in China. If we read the theses correctly, we might imagine that there is at present in China no actual imperialist intervention, that there is nothing but a struggle of the North against the South or of one group of generals against another group of generals. We are apt to understand under intervention a condition in which foreign troops march into Chinese territory and, if this does not take place, then there is no intervention. This is a serious error, comrades, intervention is by no means exhausted by the entry of troops, and the entry of troops is by no means an essential characteristic of intervention. In the present circumstances of the revolutionary movement in capitalist countries, where the direct entry of foreign troops might rouse a number of protests and stir up conflict, intervention has assumed a more elastic character and a more masked form. In the present circumstances, imperialism prefers to intervene against the revolution by organising civil war within the dependent country, by financing the counter-revolutionary forces against the revolution, by moral and financial support of its Chinese agents. The imperialists tried to represent the fights of Denekin and Kolschak, Yudenitsch and Wrangel against the revolution in Russia as an exclusively internal struggle. But we all knew, and not we alone but the whole world knew, that these counter-revolutionary generals were backed by the imperialists of England and America, France and Japan, without whose support a serious civil war would have been quite impossible in Russia. The same applies to China. The fight of Wu Pei-Fu and Sun Tchuang-fang, Chang Tso Lin and Chang Tsun Chan against the revolution in China would be quite impossible were it not that the imperialists of all countries had inspired these counter-revolutionary generals and had supplied them with money, arms, instructors, "advisers" etc. How is the power of the Canton troops to be explained? By their having an ideal, a passionate enthusiasm, by their being inspired in their fight for liberation from imperialism, by their wanting to give China her freedom. How is the power of the revolutionary generals in China to be explained? In that they are backed by the imperialists of all countries, the owners of all possible railways, concessions, factories, banks and business houses in China. For this reason it does not depend alone, it does not even depend to any large extent on whether foreign troops enter the country, but on the support given by the imperialists of all countries to the Chinese counter-revolution. Intervention by using other people — that is the kernel of imperialist intervention at present.

For these reasons imperialist intervention in China is an undoubted fact against which the point of the Chinese revolution is directed.

Anyone who eludes or undervalues imperialist intervention in China eludes or undervalues that which is most important and most essential.

It is said that the Japanese imperialists show a certain amount of "good-will" towards the Cantonese and towards the Chinese revolution as a whole. It is said that in this respect the American imperialists are in no way behind the Japanese. This is self-deception, comrades. We must know how to discern the true nature of the policy of the imperialists, including the Japanese and American imperialists behind their mask. Lenin used to say that it was difficult to win over revolutionaries with a stick, with fists, but that at times it is very easy to win them by kindness. This truth, spoken by Lenin, should never be forgotten, comrades. In any case it is clear that the Japanese-American imperialists have pretty well understood the significance of this truth. For this reason we must make a definite distinction between friendliness and compliments addressed to the Canton people, and the fact that the imperialists, who distribute their friendliness most liberally, cling most desperately to "their" concessions and railways in China, from which they do not wish to be "liberated" at any price.

III. The Revolutionary Army in China.

The second remark in connection with the theses before us concerns the question of the revolutionary armies in China. The point is that the question of the army is evaded or undervalued in the theses. This is their second defect. The advance of the Cantonese towards the North is generally regarded not as the growth of the Chinese revolution but as a fight of the Canton generals against Wu Pei Fu and Sun Chuan Fang, as a fight

for supremacy of one group of generals against another group of generals. This is a great mistake, comrades. The revolutionary armies in China are the most important factor in the fight of the Chinese workers and peasants for their liberation. Is it then a mere coincidence that until May or June of this year the situation in China was regarded as the rule of the reaction which had set in after the defeat of Feng Yu Hsiang's army, but that in the summer of this year it was only necessary for the victorious Canton troops to advance northwards and occupy Hubei in order to change the picture fundamentally in favour of the revolution? No, it was not a coincidence; for the advance of the Canton troops meant a blow aimed at imperialism, a blow aimed at its agents in China, it meant the freedom of assembly, freedom to strike, freedom of the Press, freedom of coalition for all the revolutionary elements in China in general and for the workers in particular. In this lies the peculiarity and the greatest importance of the revolutionary army in China.

In former times, in the 18th and 19th century, revolutions began in such a way that usually the people rose, for the greater part unarmed or badly armed, and encountered the army of the old regime. They made every effort to break up this army or at least to win it over as far as possible to their side. This was the typical form of the revolutionary explosions of the past. The same thing occurred with us in Russia in 1905. In China things developed on different lines. In China, it is not the unarmed people against the troops of their own government, but the armed people in the form of its revolutionary army. In China, armed revolution is fighting against armed counter-revolution. This is one of the peculiarities and one of the advantages of the Chinese revolution. This also explains the special significance of the revolutionary army in China.

It is therefore a reprehensible defect of the theses before us that they underestimate the revolutionary armies.

In consequence of this however, the Chinese communists ought to devote special attention to work in the army.

First of all the Chinese communists must use every means in their power to intensify political work in the army and must succeed in making the army a real and model support of the ideas of the Chinese revolution. This is particularly necessary at the present moment because the Canton troops are being joined by all kinds of generals who have nothing in common with the Kuomintang who join it as a force which overthrows the enemies of the Chinese people and who, by joining the Canton troops, introduce disintegration into the army. It is only possible to neutralise such "allies" or to turn them into genuine adherents of the Kuomintang by intensifying the political work and by organising revolutionary control over them. Unless this is done, the army may get into a most difficult position.

Secondly, the Chinese revolutionaries, including the communists, must make a special study of things military, they must not regard military questions as something of secondary importance, for military questions in China are at present the most important factor in the Chinese revolution. The Chinese revolutionaries, of course including the communists, must, with this object in view, study militarism in order to advance gradually and to be able to occupy some leading post or other in the revolutionary army. This will guarantee that the revolutionary army of China will follow the right path, will keep its eye steadily fixed on its aim. Unless this is carried out, it is inevitable that there should be vacillations in the army.

These are the tasks which Chinese Communist Party has to fulfil with regard to the question of the revolutionary army.

IV. The Character of the Future Power in China.

The third remark concerns the fact that, in the theses, the question as to the character of the future revolutionary power in China is hardly dealt with at all or altogether disregarded. Comrade Mif, to his credit, has closely approached this question in his theses. But, when he was on the threshold of it, he failed to carry it out to the end, as though he had been frightened and did not dare to go further. Comrade Mif believes that the future revolutionary power in China will be a power of the revolutionary petty bourgeoisie under the leadership of the proletariat. What does this mean? At the time of the February revolution in 1917, the Mensheviks and social revolutionaries were all petty bourgeois parties and to a certain extent revolutionary

Does this mean that the future revolutionary power in China will be a social revolutionary Menshevik power? No, it does not mean this. Why? Because the social-revolutionary Menshevik power was an imperialist power, whilst the future revolutionary power in China must be an anti-imperialist power. This is the fundamental difference. The MacDonald Government was actually a "Labour" power but it was at the same time imperialist, for it was based on the maintenance of England's imperialist power, for instance in India and Egypt. As compared with the MacDonald Government, the future revolutionary power in China will have the advantage that it will be an anti-imperialist power. What is important is not the bourgeois-democratic character of the Canton Government which forms the nucleus of the future pan-Chinese revolutionary power; the most important thing is that this power is an anti-militarist power and can be nothing else, that every advance of this power is a blow aimed at world-imperialism and is therefore a stroke in favour of the revolutionary world movement. Lenin was right when he said that, if in former times, before the beginning of the epoch of the world revolution, national movements for freedom were part of the general democratic movement, now, after the victory of the Soviet revolution in Russia and since the beginning of the epoch of world revolutions, national movements for freedom are part of the proletarian world revolution.

This peculiarity was not taken into consideration by Comrade Mif.

I believe that the future revolutionary power in China will, in its character, resemble the power which was spoken of in our country in 1905, i. e. a dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry, but with the distinguishing feature that it will be predominantly an anti-imperialist power. It will be a power of transition to a non-capitalist, or, to be more exact, to a socialist development of China.

This is the direction in which the revolution in China is likely to develop. This path of development which the revolution will follow, will be facilitated by three circumstances; firstly in that the point of the revolution in China, as a national revolution for freedom will be directed against imperialism and its agents in China, secondly in that the large bourgeoisie in China is weak, weaker than the national bourgeoisie was in Russia in 1905, which facilitates the hegemony of the proletariat, the leadership of the proletarian party as against the Chinese peasantry; thirdly, in that the revolution in China will develop in circumstances which make it possible to make use of the experience and the aid of the victorious revolution in the Soviet Union.

Whether this method will with certainty lead to victory, depends on many circumstances. One thing is clear, that it is the chief duty of the Chinese communists to fight to prepare the way for the development of the Chinese revolution.

From this we may conclude what is the chief task of the Chinese communists in the question of their relations to the Kuo Min Tang and to the future revolutionary power in China. It is said that the Chinese communists ought to secede from the Kuo Min Tang. This is pure folly, comrades. It would be the greatest mistake for the Chinese communists to leave the Kuo Min Tang. The whole course of the Chinese revolution, its character, its prospects, undoubtedly indicate that the Chinese communists ought to remain in the Kuo Min Tang and intensify their work in it. But can the Chinese Communist Party take part in the future revolutionary government? It not only can, it must. The course of the revolution in China, its character, its prospects, speak eloquently in favour of the Chinese Communist Party taking part in the future revolutionary government of China. This is one of the necessary guarantees for the hegemony of the Chinese proletariat becoming a concrete reality.

V. The Peasant Question in China.

The fourth remark concerns the question of the peasantry in China. Comrade Mif believes that we ought at once to issue the slogan of the formation of soviets, of peasant soviets, in the open country. I believe that this is a mistake. Comrade Mif is in too great a hurry. It is out of the question to form soviets in the country and to leave out the industrial centres in China. The question of organising soviets in the Chinese industrial centres, however, has not yet been raised. Furthermore, we must not forget that the soviets cannot be considered independently of

their connection with the whole situation. It would only be possible to organise soviets, let us say peasant soviets, if China were passing through a period of a flourishing peasant movement which would break down the old power and create a new one, under the assumption that the industrial centres of China had already broken down the barrier and entered on the phase of forming a soviet power. Can it be said that the Chinese peasantry or the Chinese revolution as a whole has already entered on this phase? No, it cannot be said. It is therefore trying to outpace evolution to speak of soviets at the present time. At the present moment, we must not raise the question of soviets, but of the formation of peasant committees; I mean committees, elected by the peasants, which are capable of formulating the fundamental demands of the peasantry and of taking all the necessary measures for realising these demands by revolutionary methods. These peasant committees should form the axis round which the revolution in the village can unfold.

I know that there are people amongst the adherents of the Kuo Min Tang and even among the Chinese communists who do not consider it possible to let loose the revolution in the village lest the enlistment of the peasantry in the revolution should disrupt the united front against imperialism. This is the greatest error. The anti-imperialist front in China will be all the stronger and more powerful the more quickly and thoroughly the Chinese peasantry is persuaded to join in the revolution. The authors of the theses, especially Comrades Tan Ping Shan and Rafees are perfectly right when they maintain that the immediate satisfaction of a number of the most urgent demands of the peasantry is an essential preliminary for the victory of the Chinese revolution. In my opinion, it is high time to do away with the indifference and "neutrality" towards the peasantry which is noticeable in the activity of certain elements of the Kuo Min Tang. I think that both the Communist Party of China and the Kuo Min Tang, including the Canton Government ought, without delay, to pass from words to deeds and immediately to raise the question of satisfying the most vital demands of the peasantry. What prospects open up in this respect and up to what limits an advance can and should be made — that depends on the course of the revolution. I think that it should finally be carried as far as the nationalisation of the land. In any case we cannot dispense with the slogan of the nationalisation of the land.

What path should be pursued by the Chinese revolutionaries in order to mobilise for the revolution the peasantry of China which numbers many millions?

I think that in present circumstances there are only three alternatives.

The first way is that of forming peasant committees and of introducing Chinese revolutionaries into them in order to influence the peasantry. (Interjection: "And the peasant leagues?") I believe that the peasant leagues will group themselves round the peasant committees or that the peasant leagues will turn into peasant committees possessing this or that competence which is necessary in order to carry through the demands of the peasants. This way has already been discussed, but this way is not enough. It would be ridiculous to suppose that the number of revolutionaries is sufficient to carry this out. The population of China is roughly 400 millions. Of these 350 millions are Chinese, and more than nine tenths of them are peasants. It is a great mistake to assume that a few tens of thousands of Chinese revolutionaries are enough to permeate this ocean of the peasantry. Well then, we must seek other ways.

The second way is that of influencing the peasantry through the apparatus of the new national revolutionary power. It cannot be doubted that in the newly liberated provinces a new power will arise after the pattern of the Canton Government. It cannot be doubted that this power and the apparatus of this power will have to satisfy the most urgent demands of the peasantry if it wishes to advance the revolution. The task of the communists and of the revolutionaries in China altogether is to penetrate into the apparatus of this new power, to bring this apparatus nearer to the masses of peasants and to help the peasant masses to satisfy their most urgent demands by means of this apparatus, whether it be by expropriating the landowners of their land, or by reducing taxation and rents — whatever the circumstances demand.

The third way is that of influencing the peasantry through the revolutionary army. I have already spoken of the extraordinary importance of the revolutionary army in the Chinese revolution. The revolutionary army of China is the force which first penetrates into the new provinces, which first becomes known

amongst the bulk of the peasantry, and by which the peasant forms his opinion of the new power, of its good or bad qualities. The attitude of the peasantry towards the new power, towards the Kuo Min Tang and towards the revolution in China as a whole, depends in the first place on the behaviour of the revolutionary army, on its behaviour towards the peasantry and towards the landowners, on its readiness to help the peasants. If we bear in mind that there are doubtful elements in plenty which have joined the revolutionary army in China, that these elements may alter the aspect of the army for the worse, we shall understand the great importance of the political aspect of the army and, so to speak, of its peasant policy in the eyes of the peasants. For this reason the communists and the Chinese revolutionaries as a whole must take all possible measures to neutralise the elements in the army which are hostile to the peasants, to preserve the revolutionary spirit in the army and to direct things in such a way that the army helps the peasants and mobilises them for the revolution. It is said that the revolutionary army in China is welcomed with open arms, but that later, after it has established itself, there is a certain disillusionment. The same thing happened with us in the Soviet Union during the civil war. This is explained by the fact that the army, when it has liberated new provinces and established itself in them, is compelled to maintain itself in some way or other at the expense of the population of the district. We Soviet revolutionaries, usually succeeded in making up for these disadvantages by endeavouring to help the peasants against the landowners by means of the army. It is essential that the Chinese revolutionaries should also learn to make up for these disadvantages by carrying out a correct peasant policy with the help of the army.

These are the methods and the points of contact through which it will be possible to carry out a correct peasant policy in China.

VI. The Proletariat and the Hegemony of the Proletariat in China.

The fifth remark concerns the question of the Chinese proletariat. It seems to me that in the theses sufficient emphasis has not been laid on the role of the Chinese working class and its importance. Comrade Rafe asks: Towards whom should the Chinese communists orientate—towards the Left or the Centre of the Kuo Min Tang? A strange question. I believe that the Chinese communists should orientate themselves according to the proletariat and to those who are active in the freedom movement in China and in the end according to the revolution. Only then will the question be put in the right way. I know that among the Chinese communists there are comrades who do not approve of strikes of workers for improving their material and legal position, and who dissuade the workers from striking (Interruption: That happened in Canton and Shanghai). This was a great mistake, comrades; it was a serious underestimate of the role and of the specific gravity of the proletariat in China. This should be recorded in the theses as a decidedly negative phenomenon. It would be a great mistake should the Chinese communists not take advantage of the present favourable situation to help the workers to improve their material and legal position, even though it be through strikes. Why in all conscience, have we a revolution in China? A proletariat which allows its members to be beaten and illtreated by the agents of imperialism when they are on strike, cannot be a leader. This mediaeval abuse must be abolished so that the sense of power and the sense of its own dignity may be strengthened amongst the Chinese proletariat and that it may thus be made fit to hold the hegemony in the revolution. Unless this takes place, a victory of the revolution in China is not to be thought of. For this reason the economic and legal demands of the working class in China, which aim at a serious improvement of its situation, must be given the place they deserve in the theses. (Comrade Mif: they are spoken of in the theses.) Yes indeed, they are spoken of in the theses, but unfortunately these demands are not sufficiently emphasised.

VII. The Question of the Young People in China.

The sixth remark concerns the question of the young people in China. Strange that this question is not considered in the theses, for the question of the young people in China is of extreme importance. This question is, it is true, referred to in Comrade Tan Ping Shan's report, but unfortunately it is not

sufficiently emphasised. The question of the young people is at present of first-class importance in China. The young people at the universities (revolutionary students), the young workers, the young peasants—all of them form a force which might drive the revolution forward with giant strides, if the young people were brought under the ideological and political influence of the Kuo Min Tang. It must be borne in mind that there are none who experience the oppression of imperialism so deeply and so vividly, none who feel so sharply and so painfully the necessity of fighting against oppression, as the young people in China. This circumstance should be taken into consideration in every respect by the Chinese Communist Party and the Chinese revolutionaries in order to bring about an intensification of work among the young people throughout the country. Youth must also have its place in the theses on the Chinese question.

VIII. A Few Final Conclusions.

I should like to draw two final conclusions — with regard to the fight against imperialism in China and with regard to the peasant question.

There can be no doubt that the Chinese communists will now no longer confine themselves to demanding the abolition of the unequal treaties. Even a counter-revolutionary like Chan Suen Lyan now advocates this demand. It is obvious that the Chinese Communist Party must go further. It must make the question of the nationalisation of the railways its aim. This is necessary, and things must be directed towards that end. A further aim must be that of the nationalisation of the most important factories. This raises above all the question of the nationalisation of those undertakings whose owners have distinguished themselves by special hostility and special aggressiveness towards the Chinese people.

Further, the peasant question must be promoted by combining it with the prospect of the revolution in China. In my opinion, the final aim of the whole matter must be the nationalisation of the land.

Everything else is a matter of course.

POLITICS

The Political Situation in Germany.

By P. R. Dietrich (Berlin).

It is part of the tradition of the Ebert-Hindenburg Republic to close the calendar year with a Government crisis. In the middle of December 1924 the second Marx Cabinet resigned. It was followed in January 1925 by the Luther Cabinet which remained in office until December 1925, at first with the German nationalists and later without them. Marx then again took over the government and formed a minority Cabinet of the Centre, which fell at the end of last week. It is the fourteenth government crisis which has been recorded in the history of the German Republic since the betrayal of the November revolution by the Kaiser socialists.

The immediate cause of the fall of the Marx-Stresemann-Külz-Gessler Government was the carrying of the social democratic vote of non-confidence which was passed by 240 votes of the Communists, Social Democrats, German Nationalists and People's Party against 171 votes of the Government Parties. The German Nationalists voted for the Social Democratic motion of non-confidence after "Chancellor Marx" had refused the guarantees demanded by the German Nationalists as the price of their support against the Social Democrats", i. e., the extension of the Government towards the Right by including the German Nationalists in the Government. The Social Democrats proposed the motion of non-confidence against the Marx Government not because they were on principle opposed to it, not because they were concerned to proclaim war against the anti-labour policy of the Government, but in order to clear the way for the big Coalition by the overthrow of the Government. The Social Democrats have given sufficient evidence, even in the last few days, that what they want is not a demonstrative change in the course taken by the Government. They abstained from voting in the vote of non-confidence proposed by the Communists against Külz, the author of the law against impure literature; they were prepared, if only they could get into the Government, to keep Gessler, in spite of their violent criticism of the Gessler system in the Reichswehr.