

# A REPORT ON CHINA

By A. LOZOVSKY

AT the executive meeting on July 28th a paper was read by Comrade Losovsky on the character and outlook of the revolutionary movement in China.

Comrade Losovsky pointed out that the counter revolution had already virtually engulfed the whole of China. Of course, the differences between the Peking, Nanking and Wuhan generals and their respective civil political advisers had not entirely been composed. Nevertheless, the fact was there that Wuhan had ceased to be a revolutionary centre, that the power of authority had passed into the hands of the militarists, and the workers' and peasants' organizations had been destroyed.

How had the Wuhan revolutionary government descended to such a stage, to sanction the military coup d'etat and to allow the destruction of those elements which had carried it into office?

"While in Wuhan," Comrade Losovsky said, "I frequently heard the statement made by prominent Kuomintang leaders, and even by some Communists, that China had no bourgeoisie of her own, that the entire big bourgeoisie consisted of foreigners. This seemingly innocent theory furnishes the key to an understanding of the position of the left wing of the Kuomintang. For, if the whole big bourgeoisie consists of foreign imperialists, and the Kuomintang fights only the foreign imperialists, then the ranks of the Kuomintang should be open to all the elements of the native Chinese bourgeoisie, and the Kuomintang organization should protect the interests of all the bourgeoisie groups. Of course, this theory has no foundation whatever in the actual facts. There are considerable and influential elements of purely Chinese big bourgeoisie, who own important industrial, transport and commercial enterprises. This bourgeoisie is endeavoring all the time to make use of the antagonistic currents which spring up in the process of development of the Chinese revolution.

"As the national armies continued their advance northwards and approached the important industrial centres, the struggle between the classes, which the Kuomintang leaders had been trying to direct into the channels of legal industrial arbitration and tame organizations of the peasantry, began to break out on the surface. The clash of interests within the united front of the Kuomintang became revealed as soon as the national army came within sight of Shanghai. We have also witnessed the intensifica-

tion of the class struggle on the territory of Hunan and Hupei. The April split in the Kuomintang party and the treachery of Chiang Kai-shek did not arise from a dispute over platforms and programs, but on the pretended campaign of ousting "foreign influences," of having Borodin and other counselors removed. Chiang Kai-shek gained thereby credit not only in the eyes of the big bourgeoisie, but also in the eyes of the Nationalist sympathizers among the petty bourgeoisie. His words about Borodin the foreigner being an obstacle to the success of the revolution had their effect. One must also bear in mind that the split was sought also by the imperialists, who acted through their armed forces and their diplomats. Two conditions had been put to Chiang Kai-shek by English, American and Japanese diplomacy: a rupture with USSR and a rupture with the Communists, promising him in return a whole series of economic and financial favors. This was the line chosen by Chiang Kai-shek, who began by breaking with the Communists, whilst hostility towards the USSR came as an automatic sequence.

"The split in the Kuomintang party and the formation of two governments—that of Nanking and that of Wuhan—proved a source of great friction within the Kuomintang ranks which grew in direct ratio to the growth of the workers', and particularly of the peasants' movement in Hupei and Hunan. A good deal was written about the objective circumstances which drove the peasants to take to fighting. Mention ought to be made, however, of the particular features which render the peasant movement so exceedingly intense. These features consist, first of all, in the exceptional density of the population in the provinces of Hunan and Hupei, which affords good facilities for united action. Another characteristic feature consists in the unique cohabitation of twentieth century social relations and tenth century survivals in present-day China, a mixture of capitalism and feudalism. There is a whole number of localities where there are no industrial workers at all, and the leading role belongs exclusively to the peasants' organizations. Yet the actions of the peasants bear the stamp of organization and of political consciousness.

"It is interesting to note the ideological forms taken on by the campaign of the big bourgeoisie and the military reaction against the peasants' and workers' movement. At Hankow, for instance, a theory was evolved about so-called "excesses" and "diseases of leftism." This theory consists in the assertion that the Chinese workers' and peasants' movement is still in a stage of infancy, that it has not yet grown mature, and that therefore it suffers from "infantile left diseases," resorting to "excesses" of every kind. The term "excesses" is used here to describe such actions as are characteristic of any revolutionary upheaval, such as the arrest of thievish officials directly by the people, the donning of a silk-hat upon a usurer's head (a token of degradation according to Chinese notions), and so on. As excesses were also described the most elementary industrial actions of the workers, such as the presentation of demands for a weekly day of rest, for shorter hours, etc.

"The peasants' movement had scared the Kuomintang leaders. As the peasants' movement grew, it began to encroach upon the interests of the army officers, the trading bourgeoisie, and the elements of the population associated with them. The peasants' movement had hit the pocket of many a prominent Kuomintang leader. Efforts began to be made to curb the zeal of the "unripe" workers and peasants' movement. At the same time it ought to be observed that the Wuhan government had never enjoyed real power, that virtually the power was in the hands of the military. It is for this reason that the counter revolutionary coup had been so easily effected in Wuhan. On top of this was the fact that the trade unions and the peasants' organizations were led almost exclusively by intellectuals, and that the system of appointments prevailed, whereby the Kuomintang party had placed its henchmen in the mass organizations, which made it easy to liquidate the workers' and peasants' unions.

"It is difficult to understand the Chinese situation without knowing the structure of the Chinese army. The make-up and the methods of the military forces operating in the various parts of China do not at all correspond to what we understand by a modern army. In the matter of army organization the Chinese army reminds one of the hordes commanded by Slav princes in pre-historic times. The Chinese gen-

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eral is an employer who hires soldiers and pays them wages, whilst he himself takes toll from the population of the territory where his forces are quartered. Therefore, the army has a specific character of a band of despoiling mercenaries. As to the 'ideology' of the army, it is like this: the 'boss', i.e., the general, decides for whom to fight and what program to advocate, whilst all his hired underlings—from the officers down to the soldiers in the ranks—blindly obey his commands. For this reason the military are looked upon contemptuously throughout China, and the appeal to the workers to join the army in order to strengthen the revolutionary influence did not meet with the proper response.

"Of somewhat different character was the Wampu Military Academy with its 8,000 cadets prior to the coup performed by Chiang Kai-shek. However, after the imprisonment of several hundred revolutionaries and the execution of some of the Communist cadets and officers, the 'spirit of liberty' was banished from the Wampu Academy, and it is now controlled entirely by the Cantonese reactionary general, Li Ti-sing. Another trait of the Chinese army is the easy manner in which the generals transfer their allegiance from one 'supreme commander in chief' to another. This is due to the fear of the respective generals that they might lose their provinces on which they feed and maintain their armies. Therefore the generals swerve around with amazing alacrity from the defeated 'leaders' to the winning side, and the forces of the defeated side rapidly dwindle away.

"The antagonism between the masses of the workers and peasants on the one hand, and their intellectual leaders which came from the petty bourgeoisie on the other hand; the antagonism between the mercenary bandit troops and the rest of the population, and finally, the class antagonisms within the Kuomintang body—all this was bound to

lead to the final collapse. By its fear of the masses, and by preaching its pet theory of the unripeness of the masses, it had contributed to its own downfall. Besides the theory of unripeness, there were also several other theories evolved to meet different eventualities. Thus, for instance, it was asserted by some Kuomintang people that the workers' and peasants' movement was pursuing selfish aims, whereas the national movement demanded self-sacrifice. Such a theory made it easier to use armed force against the workers and peasants. In order to cure them of their 'selfishness', the guns were trained on them. Therefore, the coup d'état was the logical upshot of the Kuomintang policy of fear of the masses, which had not been adequately countered by the trade unions and the Chinese Communist Party.

"Now the whole territory of China is under the sway of the counter revolutionary generals and their 'governments'. The Chinese revolution has sustained a defeat. The question now amounts to this, whether this defeat is going to be of long or short duration?

"Personally I believe," Comrade Losovsky continued, "that the situation in China resembles that of Russia in 1906, after the defeat of the December revolt of 1905. But the workers' and peasants' movement in China has acquired such an impetus that the period of reaction, which lasted in Russia from 1906 to 1917, is not going to be so prolonged in China. A considerable factor of the Chinese situation consists in that millions of Chinese workers and peasants have entered upon the arena of political activity. Despite the brutal shooting down of thousands of militants, the movement among the peasant masses goes on unabated, whilst a good deal of inflammable material has been stored up. It is also important to note that all the military regimes and groups in China are exceedingly unstable. This leads us to assume that notwithstand-

ing the heavy defeat of the revolution, the new upheaval in China will come not after the lapse of decades, but within the next few years. Just now, after the defeat, there springs up in China a new generation of leaders who are reared by the masses of the peasants and the workers from their own ranks. Hitherto there were no real Jacobins in the Kuomintang, and there were few of them in the Chinese Communist Party. Yet the Chinese revolution needs its own Jacobins.

"During the last eighteen months the revolutionary movement of China had a great reverberating effect upon all the countries of the Far East. Everywhere a great change was observable, and in the first place, in India. It is true that the labor movement in that country is still in its initial stage of development, but there is already a number of tokens indicating a smoldering ferment of revolution. Suffice it to mention the fact, among others, that hundreds and thousands of Hindoo soldiers, sent to China to crush the revolution, have thrown in their lot with the revolutionaries. The English commanders frequently had to withdraw entire detachments of Hindoo troops, because they were found to be 'unreliable'. The Svaraj people in India are showing great sympathy for the Chinese revolution, tho the Svarajists' left wing has many points of similarity with the left wing of the Kuomintang.

"The effect of the Chinese revolution has been considerable upon Japan, too. It has served to enliven the workers' and peasants' movement in Korea. We are also getting news of the effect of the Chinese events upon the Philippine Islands.

"All these new factors," Comrade Losovsky concluded, "have cast their reflection upon the labors of the Pan-Pacific Conference, which should be considered as the most important event in the international labor movement during the current year. Our chief task for the present is to consolidate in a practical manner the results of that conference."