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The Chinese Peasantry

The first serious study to appear in English of the conditions, organisations, and needs of 350,000,000 peasants

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The Chinese Revolution: Tasks of the Communist Parties

THE victory of the Canton Army, its advance to the north up to the Yangtse River, its occupation of the central industrial districts of China, the attraction of the peasants into the revolutionary movement, the growing acuteness of the class struggles in the rural districts in China, the approaching conflict between the Canton Army and the principal forces of the internal and imperialist counter-revolution in China, i.e., with the Mukden militarist group, all indicate that the revolution in China has entered a new phase in which the struggle for hegemony between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie will determine the further direction of the revolution. The outcome of this struggle will determine whether China develops along non-capitalist lines, along lines of conflict with world imperialism in alliance with the Soviet Republic and the world proletariat towards the ultimate aims of Socialism, or whether a semi-emancipated China, concluding a compromise with the imperialist powers, will proceed along the lines of capitalist development.

The Chinese revolution is a national revolution in a double sense of the word. In the first place its aim is to unite the country in the fight against the semi-feudal and semi-capitalist predatory militarist cliques, dominating several provinces of the country with the aid of mercenary armies. Secondly, its aim is to emancipate the Chinese nation from the state of a semi-colony and from the oppression of the imperialist powers. These nationalist slogans are inscribed on the banners of the Canton army and it is this which represents the greatest power of that army, wins for it the sympathy of the masses of the people and enables it to spread demoralisation in the mercenary armies of the militarist clique in their very first conflicts with it.

The Canton armies have already achieved important successes in the direction of the unification of the country. But the task of the national revolution in China is far from being completed and for that reason it is idle to talk of China being on the eve of her October. However, in view of the fact that the complete victory of the national revolution in China would signify victory over world imperialism, the national revolution, even at the present stage, gives rise to contradictions which will be

solved either by China becoming a lever of world socialist revolution or becoming a fresh reservoir for the development of capitalism and increasing the stabilisation of world capitalism.

Hence, two perspectives open up before the Chinese revolution, and the fulfilment of either the one or the other will depend to a considerable degree upon subjective historical factors: upon the Chinese proletariat, and its vanguard, the Communist Party of China. The international situation is developing favourably for the non-capitalist development of the Chinese revolution, in so far as the latter is developing in the period of the decline of capitalism and has powerful allies in the U.S.S.R. and the whole of the world proletariat, and in view of the fact that considerable differences prevail among the predatory militarists in connection with the question of China. The Shanghai strike of 1925 raised the Chinese revolution to the height of a general national, revolutionary movement and the sixteen months of the Hong Kong strike, which enabled Canton to become a firm basis for the revolution, show that the Chinese proletariat has already become a powerful factor of the Chinese revolution. We must harbour no illusions about this fact, however; we must realise that the proletariat has not yet the hegemony in the revolution.

IN order to obtain and retain control of the revolution the Communist Party of China and the Chinese proletariat must solve a very difficult problem which now confronts the revolution, must carry out a very difficult strategical manœuvre. On the one hand in view of the fact that the Canton Government in the near future will have to engage in very severe battles with the Northern militarists and with international imperialism which supports them, it is necessary to strengthen the forces of the government and of the Canton army and the Kuomintang, so as not to weaken the revolutionary anti-militarist united front. On the other hand in view of the ripening class antagonisms, the solution of which in one way or another will determine the future fate of the revolution, it is necessary without

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disturbing the revolutionary front to bring about a considerable regrouping of forces in the revolutionary camp over the whole country and a corresponding regrouping of forces in the Kuomintang, in the Canton government and in the Canton army.

THE counter-revolution in China at the present time comprises the militarist cliques and the "compradore" bourgeoisie (contractors and big traders). The Chinese national industrial bourgeoisie at the present time is still partly on the side of the revolution. It is true that the industrial bourgeoisie in China is still weak, that foreign capital still dominates in Chinese industry and that industry in China has only recently emerged from the stage of merchant capitalism. The Chinese industrial bourgeoisie is far weaker to-day than the Russian bourgeoisie was in the period of the 1905 revolution, but through merchant capital it is connected with the rural districts. It has influence upon the urban bourgeoisie and although it is in the minority in the Kuomintang, it occupies a strong position in it and in the Canton government, as well as in the commanding staff of the Canton army. To that extent this "ally" must be taken into consideration.

But this "ally" is extremely unreliable. Immediately the Shanghai strike movement of 1925 rose to a height the national industrial bourgeoisie of China turned its back on the revolution. In the events in Canton on the 20th of March, the industrial bourgeoisie helped to strike a blow against the Left Wing of the Kuomintang and against the Communists. In view of the fact that it has become clear that the Canton armies cannot continue to gain victories without the energetic support of the Left Wing of the Kuomintang and the Communists, the industrial bourgeoisie maintains a united front with them. But this bourgeoisie is imbued with the ideology of Tai Chi-tao, it strives to eliminate from the revolution its international character, to break its contact with the international proletarian movement and secure for China the prospects of capitalist development, even at the price of "peaceful" penetration of foreign capital in Chinese industry.

IMMEDIATELY class antagonisms become acute the industrial bourgeoisie will be found on the other side of the barricade. These class antagonisms are already reaching their culminating point in the rural districts of China, with which the industrial bourgeoisie is connected by many economic ties.

The revolutionary movement is rapidly developing among the masses of the peasantry. The membership of the peasants' unions is rapidly growing and already counts a million. The "Red Lance" movement is also growing. The peasants have rendered most energetic support to Canton, but they have not done this for the sake of the charms of the Canton government. The peasantry seeks relief in its economic conditions, it is fighting against the rural gentry, the usurers, and the landlords. It comes into conflict with the Ming Tuan, the so-called National militia, which on the pretext of combating banditism protects the interests of the rural officials and the landlords. In so far as the Canton government, in spite of the pledges and promises of the Kuomintang,

maintains neutrality in this fight between the peasantry and the local reactionaries and thus actually helps the latter to crush the peasant movement, the peasants here and there are already beginning to turn away from the Kuomintang, are already showing signs of disappointment in the Canton Government and in certain places are definitely turning their weapons against the People's Army. It is worthy of note that Wu-Pei-Fu was able to utilise the "Red Lances" to crush the Second National Army.

Clearly the Kuomintang and the Canton government will have to make a choice. Either they must help to break away the extremely numerous class of merchant and manufacturing petty bourgeoisie from the industrial bourgeoisie, and to steer a course for a close alliance between the petty bourgeoisie, the proletariat and the peasantry, and become reconciled to the inevitable departure of the industrial bourgeoisie from the revolutionary front, or they must steer a course for a close alliance between the urban bourgeoisie and the industrial bourgeoisie and thus turn their backs on the proletariat and the peasantry. The Kuomintang and Canton government will be able to make the first choice only if the Communist Party manages to secure an influential position in the Kuomintang, in the Canton government and in the Canton army. This task is a difficult one but quite possible of fulfilment.

AS for the temper of the urban bourgeoisie, it is noteworthy that the united organisations of the petty and middle merchants of Shanghai and Canton are coming out against the Chambers of Commerce. As far as the peasantry are concerned their demands at the present time are so moderate that their fulfilment does not in any way threaten any profound splits in the rural districts. The peasants as yet do not even advance the demand for the confiscation of the large estates or the expulsion of the gentry from the villages. They demand a considerable reduction of rent, the substitution of heavy taxes and requisition by a single progressive tax, the confiscation of the lands belonging to the Compradores and landlords, who are directly supporting the counter-revolution; they demand the disarming of the Ming Tuan, the arming of the peasant organisations and the organisation of peasant committees in the villages.

The fulfilment of this agrarian programme in the districts under the domination of the militarist cliques is possible only by releasing the peasant movement, by action "from below." In the territory occupied by the Canton government, this programme can be carried out both by action from "below" and from "above," both by organising the fighting forces of the peasantry and by decrees of the Canton government, which if passed would only strengthen the position of the government by establishing for itself a broad and firm peasant basis.

It is unnecessary to say that the economic demands of the proletariat should be fulfilled immediately, however much this may annoy the Chinese industrial bourgeoisie. The Canton government should act as a consistent revolutionary government, it must respond to the demands of the workers, whose conditions are intolerable; for example they are still subject to corporal punishment.

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THIS programme is a moderate one compared with that which should be carried out when the revolution has become strengthened and deep-rooted. But this moderate programme, which must unreservedly be carried out in order to consolidate the victories of the Canton army and aid the future development of the revolution, can be carried out only if the Communist Party of China, by relying in its work upon the proletariat and peasant masses, succeeds in winning a strong position for itself in the Kuomintang, in the Canton government and in the Canton army, that is, if it secures the leadership of the revolutionary movement. Towards this all the efforts of the Communist Party should be directed.

In spite of the advice of "ultra-Left" comrades who propose leaving the Kuomintang, because of the vacillations of its Left Wing, advice which is objectively of a defeatist liquidatory character, the Communist Party of China must on the contrary strive to establish even stronger contact with the Kuomintang than it has done up to now, as well as with the Canton government and the Canton army and to convert these into reliable centres of the revolution.

In this difficult task the Communist Party of China should obtain the support of all the sections of the Comintern. Moreover the more deep-rooted the Chinese revolution becomes, the more intense will become the concealed imperialist intervention in the form of supplies of arms and money to the counter-revolutionary forces of China, and in the form of economic pressure directed towards winning over the vacillating elements of the Chinese bourgeoisie into the camp of the counter-revolutionary forces of China, and in the form of economic pressure directed towards winning over the vacillating elements of the Chinese bourgeoisie into the camp of the counter-revolution.

Even the bourgeoisie of the United States, which counts upon the "peaceful" penetration of American capital into China, will most actively assist and is

already assisting the Right Wing in the Kuomintang to secure victory over the Left Wing, to secure the triumph of Tao Chi-taoism over revolutionary internationalism, and to break China away from alliance with the U.S.S.R. and the world proletariat. Direct intervention may be expected some time from the imperialist powers, and particularly from Great Britain. The conclusion of the miners' struggle has freed the hands of British imperialism and hardly has it managed to settle affairs at home than it is brandishing the sword over China, sending its war vessels to Hankow. In this connection the speech recently delivered by Austen Chamberlain is worthy of note.

IN view of all this all the Sections of the Comintern are confronted with the imperative task to which comrade Doriot referred at the Plenum on the E.C. of the Comintern when he said:

"Up till now we have been talking too much about the situation in China. We should have dealt more with the tasks which confront the European and American proletariat of supporting the Chinese revolution. We must put forward the following slogans: Against all intervention! Withdraw all military and naval forces from China! Recognise the Canton Government! The working class will understand these slogans and will understand the Chinese revolutionary movement by action. Of considerable importance also is the carrying on of anti-imperialist work in the navy. I am convinced that the Communist Parties of all countries will fulfil their duty of assisting the Chinese revolution."

We must confess that the majority of the Sections of the Comintern have not conducted the campaign in support of the British miners with sufficient energy. To repeat this omission in relation to the Chinese revolution may have fatal consequences and would be criminal.

"Hands off China" must become the fighting slogan of the Communist International.



Perspectives of the Revolution in China

J. Stalin*

COMRADES, before taking up the question itself I consider it my duty to state that I have not sufficient material at my disposal on the Chinese question to present a complete picture of the revolution in China. For that reason I am obliged to limit myself to a few general remarks on principle which have direct bearing on the question of the fundamental tendencies of the Chinese revolution.

I have the thesis of comrade Petrov, the thesis of comrade Miff, two reports by comrade Tang Ping Tshan and comrade Rafes' notes on the Chinese question. I think that all these documents, in spite of their good qualities, suffer from the great defect that they ignore a number of fundamental questions of the revolution in China. First of all I think first it is necessary to draw attention to these defects. Therefore, my remarks will bear a critical character.

1. The Character of the Revolution in China

Lenin said that very soon the Chinese will have their 1905. Several comrades understand this to mean that the very same thing will take place in China as took place in Russia in 1905. This is not correct, comrades. Lenin did not say that the Chinese revolution would be an exact copy of the 1905 revolution in Russia. What he meant was that besides the general features of the revolution in 1905, the Chinese revolution also has specific peculiarities which must leave their impression upon the whole revolution.

What are these peculiarities?

The first peculiarity is that the Chinese Revolution, while being a bourgeois democratic revolution, is at the same time a revolution of national emancipation directed against the domination of foreign imperialism in China. This distinguishes it from the Russian Revolution of 1905. The domination of imperialism in China reveals itself not only in the military power, but principally in that all the threads of industry in China, railways, factories, mines, banks, etc., are in the hands of foreign imperialists. This means that the question of fighting foreign imperialism and its Chinese agents must inevitably play a predominant role in the Chinese revolution. This links up the Chinese revolution directly with the revolution of the proletariat against imperialism.

This peculiarity of the Chinese revolution indicates a second peculiarity which consists in that the big national bourgeoisie is extremely weak in China, incomparably weaker than was the Russian bourgeoisie in the period of 1905. This is quite understandable. If the principal threads of industry are concentrated in the hands of the foreign imperialists, then the big national bourgeoisie in China must be weak and backward. In this connection comrade Miff's remark to the effect that the weakness of the national bourgeoisie is one of the characteristic facts of the Chinese revolution is absolutely correct. From this it follows that the role of initiator and leader of the Chinese revolution, the role

of the leader of the Chinese peasantry must inevitably be taken up by the Chinese proletariat as it is more organised and more enterprising than the Chinese bourgeoisie.

Nor must we forget about the third peculiarity of the Chinese revolution, which is that side by side with China there exists and is developing the Soviet Union, the revolutionary experience and assistance of which must facilitate the struggle of the Chinese proletariat against imperialism and the feudal-mediæval survivals in China.

These are the principal peculiarities of the Chinese revolution which determine its character and its tendency.

2. Imperialism and Imperialist Intervention in China

The first defect of the theses which have been presented here lies in that they ignore or under-estimate the question of imperialist intervention in China. In reading the theses we get the impression that there is no real imperialist intervention in China at the present time, but that all that is taking place is a conflict between the North and the South or between one group of generals against another group of generals. There is a tendency to regard intervention as meaning the actual landing of foreign troops on Chinese territory. If that is not taking place then it is presumed that there is no intervention.

This is a profound mistake, comrades. Intervention does not mean merely landing troops, in fact this is not the especial feature of intervention. Under the present conditions, with the growing revolutionary movement in capitalist countries, when the direct landing of foreign troops may give rise to protests and conflicts, intervention may assume much more devious and masked forms. Under present conditions the imperialists prefer to intervene by organising civil war within a dependent country, by financing the counter-revolutionary forces against the revolution and by rendering moral and financial support to their Chinese agents against the revolution. The imperialists tried to make it appear that the fight of Denikin, Koltchak, Yudenitch and Wrangel against the Russian revolution was a purely internal struggle. But every one knew that behind the backs of these counter-revolutionary Russian generals stood imperialist England, America, France and Japan, without whose aid serious civil war in Russia would have been absolutely impossible.

The same thing can be said with regard to China. The fight of Wu Pei-fu, Sun Chuan-fang, Chang Tso-ling and Chang Chung-chang against the revolution in China would be simply impossible if these counter-revolutionaries were not inspired by the imperialists of all countries, if they were not financed, supplied with munitions, instructors, "advisers," etc.

Wherein lies the strength of the Canton troops? In that they have ideas and enthusiasm, inspiring them in their fight for emancipation from imperialism, in that they are the bearers of the liberation of China. Wherein lies the strength of the counter-revolutionary generals of China? In that behind their backs stand the im-

* Comrade Stalin's speech in the Chinese Commission of the E.C.C.I., November 30, 1926.

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perialists of all countries, the owners of all the railways, concessions, factories, banks and business houses in China. Hence it is not a matter only or even so much of the landing of foreign troops, but of the support which the imperialists of all countries render to the counter-revolution in China. Intervention through others—this is the fundamental feature of imperialist intervention at the present time.

Hence imperialist intervention in China is an undoubted fact against which the Chinese revolution is directed.

Hence all those who ignore or under-estimate the fact of imperialist intervention in China ignore or underestimate the principal fact in the Chinese question.

It is said that the Japanese imperialists are displaying certain symptoms of "inclination" towards the Cantonese and the Chinese revolution in general. It is said that in this connection the American imperialists do not lag behind Japan. Comrades, this is self-deception. We must be able to distinguish between the essence of the policy of the imperialists, including Japanese and American imperialists, and the masked form in which this policy is applied. Lenin frequently said that it is sometimes difficult to overcome revolutionaries with the aid of blows and the stick, but that sometimes it is possible to kill them by kindness. We must never forget this truth, comrades. At all events the Japanese and American imperialists fully appreciate the significance of this. For that reason we must draw a strict distinction between the kindness and the praise directed towards the Cantonese and the fact that the imperialists who are most generous in their display of kindness cling most strongly to **their** concessions and **their** railways in China, which they are not prepared to "emancipate" in China.

3. The Revolutionary Army in China

The second remark I wish to make concerning the theses that have been presented here refers to the question of the revolutionary army in China. This question has been ignored or under-estimated in the theses; this is their second defect. The advance of the Cantonese to the North is usually regarded, not as the development of the Chinese revolution but as the fight between the Canton generals and Wu-Pei-Fu and Sun Chuan-Fang, as a fight for the mastery of one general over the others.

This 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. Up to May or June of this year the situation in China was regarded as being the domination of reaction, which set in after the defeat of the army of Feng Yu-Hsiang; and then later on in the summer it was sufficient for the Canton troops to advance victoriously to the north and occupy Hupeh, for the whole situation to change radically in favour of the revolution. Was this an accident? No, it was not an accident; for the advance of the Canton troops was a blow to imperialism, a blow against the agents of imperialism in China, a blow in favour of freedom of assembly, freedom of strike, a free press, and the right to organise for all the revolutionary elements in China generally and for the workers in particular. This is the peculiar and most important significance of the revolutionary army in China.

Formerly, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, revolutions usually began with the uprising of the people, usually badly armed, who came into conflict with the armies of the old order and the rebellious people tried to disintegrate these armies or at least to bring part of them over to their side. This is the typical form of revolutionary outbreaks of the past. This is what took place in Russia in 1905. In China the situation is different. There it is not an unarmed people that is standing up against the troops of the old government, but an armed people represented by the revolutionary armies. In China the armed revolution is fighting against the armed counter-revolution. This represents one of the peculiarities and one of the advantages of the Chinese revolution. And in this is concealed the special significance of the revolutionary army in China.

That is why the under-estimation of the revolutionary army is a reprehensible defect in the theses which have been presented here.

From this it follows that the Communists of China must develop special attention to work in the army.

First of all the Communists of China must intensify their political work in the army to the utmost and try to convert that army into a real and exemplary bearer of the ideas of the Chinese revolution. This is especially necessary for the reason that all kinds of generals, having nothing in common with the Kuomintang, are joining the Canton troops. These generals join the Canton troops as the force which is crushing the enemies of the people, but in doing so they introduce the elements of disintegration into that army. These "allies" may be neutralised or converted into real Kuomintangists only by intensifying political work in the army and organising revolutionary control over them. Unless this is done the Canton army may find itself in a very serious situation.

Secondly, Chinese revolutionaries, including the Chinese Communists must seriously take up the study of military affairs. They must not regard military affairs as of second rate importance, because in China this is one of the most important factors of the revolution. Revolutionaries, and therefore the Chinese Communists, must study military affairs in order to gradually come to the front and occupy various leading positions in the revolutionary army. In this lies the guarantee that the revolutionary army of China will proceed along the proper path directly towards its goal. Unless this is done, wavering and vacillation in the army may become inevitable.

These are the tasks of the Communist Party in connection with the revolutionary army.

4. The Character of the Future Government in China

The third remark I wish to make is that the theses do not at all or sufficiently deal with the question of the character of the future revolutionary government in China. Comrade Miff approached this question closely in his theses, and that is to his credit. But having approached closely to the question he got scared at something and did not carry them to their logical conclusion. Comrade Miff thinks that the future revolutionary government in China will be a government of a revolutionary petty bourgeoisie led by the proletariat. What does that mean? During the February Revolution in Russia in 1917 the Mensheviks and the Social Revolutionaries

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were petty bourgeois parties and to a certain extent revolutionary. Does it mean therefore that the future revolutionary government in China will be an S.R.-Menshevik government? No, it will not. Why? Because the S.R.-Menshevik government was an imperialist government, whereas the future revolutionary government in China cannot be anything else but an anti-imperialist government.

There is a radical difference in this. The MacDonald Government was a "Labour" Government. But at the same time it was an imperialist government, because it aimed at preserving the imperialist power of Britain, say in India and in Egypt. The future revolutionary government in China will have this advantage over the government of MacDonald, that it will be an anti-imperialist government. It is not important that the Canton government, the embryo of the future All-China revolutionary government, is bourgeois democratic. What is important is principally that this government cannot be anything else but an anti-imperialist government, that every step of progress made by this government will be a blow to world imperialism and consequently a blow in favour of world revolution.

Lenin was right when he said that while formerly, prior to the epoch of world revolution, movements for national liberation were a part of general democratic movements, now however, after the victory of the Soviet Revolution in Russia and the opening of the epoch of world revolution, the movement for national liberation is part of the world proletarian revolution.

Comrade Miff failed to take this circumstance into account.

I think that the future revolutionary government of China will recall the type of government we had in mind in 1905, i.e., the dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry, with this difference, however, that the Chinese government will be mainly an anti-imperialist government. It will be a government of China in a state of transition to non-capitalist, or more precisely socialist development.

This is the direction in which the revolution in China must proceed.

This path of development is facilitated by three circumstances.

Firstly, by the circumstance that the revolution in China is a revolution for national emancipation; it is directed against imperialism and its agents in China.

Secondly, by the circumstance that the national bourgeoisie in China is weak, weaker than the national bourgeoisie in Russia in the period of 1905. This will help the proletariat to assume the hegemony and will help the proletarian party to assume the leadership of the Chinese peasantry.

Thirdly, by the circumstance that the revolution will develop under conditions in which the experience and the aid of the victorious revolution in Soviet Russia may be utilised.

Whether the revolution will actually proceed along this path or not will be determined by a number of circumstances. One thing is clear, however, and that is that it is the fundamental task of the Chinese Communists to strive to direct the revolution along this path.

This brings up the task of the Communists in China in relation to the Kuomintang and to the future revolu-

tionary government. Some say that the Chinese Communists must leave the Kuomintang. That is stupid, comrades. It would be a profound mistake for the Chinese Communists to leave the Kuomintang. The whole process of development of the Chinese revolution, its character and its perspectives, undoubtedly show that the Chinese Communists must stay in the Kuomintang and intensify their work in it. But can the Communist Party of China take part in the future revolutionary government? Not only can it take part, but it must do so. The process of the revolution in China, its character and perspectives eloquently speak in favour of the Communist Party in China taking part in the future revolutionary government of China. This represents one of the necessary guarantees that the hegemony of the Chinese proletariat will be carried out to the full.

5. The Peasant Question in China

The fourth remark I wish to make concerns the question of the peasantry in China. Comrade Miff thinks that the slogan of forming Soviets, Peasant Soviets in the Chinese villages, must be put forward immediately. I think this is a mistake. Comrade Miff is running too far ahead. Soviets cannot be set up in rural districts of China if they are not set up in the industrial districts. Moreover, we must bear in mind that we cannot isolate Soviets from surrounding circumstances. Soviets, and in this case we speak of Peasant Soviets, may be set up only if the peasant movement is at its zenith, breaking down the old order and constructing the new and on the understanding that the industrial centres of China had already broken the dam and entered the phase of setting up a Soviet Government.

Can it be said that the Chinese peasantry and the Chinese revolution generally have entered this phase? No, it cannot. Hence it is too early as yet to speak of setting up Soviets. The question that must be raised now is not one of setting up Soviets, but of establishing Peasant Committees. I have in mind the election by the peasantry of committees which could formulate the principal demands of the peasantry and adopt measures to carry out these demands in a revolutionary manner. These Peasants' Committees should serve as the axis around which the revolution in the rural districts should develop.

I know that among the members of the Kuomintang and even among Chinese Communists there are some who think that the revolution must not be allowed to develop in the rural districts. They fear that if the peasantry is drawn into the revolution the united anti-imperialist front will be broken. This is a profound error, comrades. The anti-imperialist front in China will be more powerful if the masses of the Chinese peasantry are drawn into the revolution. The authors of the theses, especially comrades Tan Ping Tshan and Rafes, are quite right when they say that the immediate satisfaction of a number of the most pressing of the peasants' demands is a necessary condition for the victory of the Chinese revolution.

I think that it is time that the inertness of "neutrality" towards the peasantry, which is observed in the actions of certain elements of the Kuomintang, should be broken. I think that both the Communist Party and the Kuomintang, which means the Canton Government, must immediately pass from words to deeds and take up

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the question of satisfying now the most vital demands of the peasantry. What are the perspectives of this and to what limits should they go? This depends upon the progress of the revolution. I think that in the final analysis they must go as far as nationalising the land. At all events we must not repudiate the slogan of nationalising the land.

By what paths and roads must Chinese revolutionaries proceed in order to rouse the vast masses of the peasantry in China for the revolution?

I think that under present conditions we may mention only three paths.

First, the path of forming peasant committees into which Chinese revolutionaries should penetrate in order to influence the peasantry. (A voice: "What about the Peasant Leagues?") I think that the Peasant Leagues will group themselves around the Peasant Committees, or else that the Peasant Leagues will become the Peasant Committees armed with the necessary power to carry out the demands of the peasantry. I have already referred to this above. But this part is inadequate, it will be ridiculous to believe that there are a sufficient number of revolutionaries in China to carry this out. China has a population of 400 million of whom 350 million are Chinese, and of these nine-tenths are peasants. To think that several tens of thousands of Chinese revolutionaries could absorb this ocean of peasantry would be a profound mistake. Hence we must seek other paths.

The second path is the path of influencing the peasantry through the apparatus of the new national revolutionary government. A government of the type of the Canton government will no doubt be set up in the liberated provinces. Undoubtedly the government and the apparatus of this government, if it really desires the progress of the revolution, must undertake to satisfy the most pressing demands of the peasantry. The tasks of the Communists and of the Chinese revolutionaries generally is to penetrate into the apparatus of the new government, to make this apparatus accessible to the masses of the peasantry, and through this apparatus to help the peasantry to secure the satisfaction of their demands by confiscating the land of the large landowners or by reducing taxes and rent as circumstances require.

The third path is to influence the peasantry through the revolutionary army. I have already spoken of the great significance 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 enters right in among the masses of the peasantry and is the criterion by which the peasantry judges the good and bad qualities of the new government. Upon the conduct of the revolutionary army, upon its attitude towards the peasantry and to the landlords, upon its readiness to assist the peasantry, depends first of all the attitude of the peasantry towards the government, towards the Kuomintang and towards revolutionary China generally. If we bear in mind that a considerable number of doubtful elements have attached themselves to the revolutionary army and that these elements may change the character of the revolutionary army for the worse, then it will become clear of what enormous importance is the political face of the army, its peasant policy, so to speak, which it presents to the peasantry. Therefore, the Communists of China and Chinese revolu-

tionaries generally must take all measures to neutralise all the anti-peasant elements in the army, to preserve the revolutionary spirit in the army and to see to that the army helps the peasantry and rouse it for the revolution.

It is said that the revolutionary army in China is welcomed with open arms wherever it comes, but that after a time, as soon as the army has settled in a particular district disappointment seems to set in. The same thing happened in the Soviet Union during the period of the civil war. This is explained by the fact that the army, having liberated a province and settled in it, must feed itself at the expense of the surrounding population. We Soviet revolutionaries managed to compensate this by our efforts to help the peasantry through the medium of the army and against the landlord elements. Chinese revolutionaries must also learn to compensate those losses by conducting a correct peasant policy through the medium of the army.

These are the means by which we can conduct a proper peasant policy in China.

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

The fifth remark refers to the question of the Chinese proletariat. I think that insufficient stress is laid in the theses upon the role and significance of the working class in China. Comrade Rafes asks: Upon whom must the Chinese Communists orientate themselves, upon the Left or upon the Centre in the Kuomintang? This is a strange question. I think that the Chinese Communists must orientate themselves upon the proletariat and get the leaders of the movement for liberation in China to orientate themselves upon the revolution.

I know that some Chinese Communists think that it is undesirable for the workers to go on strike to improve their material and legal conditions, and dissuade the workers from going on strike. (A voice: This happened in Canton and Shanghai). This is a great mistake, comrades. This means absolutely to under-estimate the role and the weight of the proletariat in China. This should be mentioned in the thesis as a harmful tendency. It will be a great mistake if the Chinese Communists fail to take advantage of the present favourable conditions to help the workers to improve their material and legal conditions, even by means of strikes. What then is the use of the revolution in China? There can be no hegemony of the proletariat if the sons of the proletariat are whipped and tortured by the agents of imperialism during strikes. At all costs this medieval state of affairs must be abolished in order to rouse among the proletarians of China the sense of their power, the sense of their dignity and to make them fit to take over the hegemony in the revolution. Without this it is impossible to conceive of the victory of the revolution in China.

Therefore the economic and legal demands of the working class which are directed towards palpable improvements in their conditions must be mentioned in the theses. (Comrade Miff: "It is mentioned in the theses.") Yes, it is mentioned in the theses, but the demands are not outlined in sufficient relief.

7. The Youth of China

My sixth remark refers to the question of the youth of China. It is strange that this is not taken into con-

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sideration at all in the thesis. And yet, the youth of China at the present time, is of extreme importance. Reference is made to this question in the thesis of comrade Tang Ping Tshan, but unfortunately it is not given its due prominence.

The question of the youth in China is of first class importance. The revolutionary students, the young workers and the peasant youth—all these represent a force which could make the revolution advance by seven league paces if they are subordinated to the intellectual and political influence of the Kuomintang. It must be borne in mind that no one realises the oppression of the imperialists so profoundly and sensitively, no one realises the necessity to fight this oppression so acutely as does the youth of China.

This circumstance must be taken fully into account by the Communist Party of China and by Chinese revolutionaries and should induce them to intensify their work among the youth. The question of the youth must be mentioned in the thesis.

Deductions.

I would draw two deductions: (1) in connection with

the struggle against imperialism in China, and (2) on the peasant question.

It is quite certain that the Communist Party of China cannot now confine itself to the demand for the abolition of unequal treaties. Even counter-revolutionaries like Chang Hsu-Liang put forward this demand now; it is quite evident that the Communist Party of China must go further than this. They should take as a perspective the question of the nationalisation of the railways. This is essential, and they must bring affairs to this pitch:

Further, they must have in view the perspective of the nationalisation of the more important factories. In this connection the first thing that arises is the nationalisation of those enterprises, the owners of which have made themselves prominent by their hostility and particular aggressiveness towards the Chinese people.

Then the peasant question must be brought to the front and linked up with the perspective of the revolution in China. I think that in this connection affairs must be brought to the state of the nationalisation of the land.

The rest goes without saying.

These, comrades, are the remarks I desired to make.

The Chinese Peasantry

R. Miff

THE development of the revolutionary movement for freedom in China brings the question of the peasantry to the forefront. The last Plenum of the E.C.C.I. indicating two possible tendencies of the Nationalist movement in China—bourgeois and proletarian—asserted that “the revolutionary movement of the toiling masses of the towns headed by the proletariat, combined with a peasant war which might in China assume unprecedented dimensions, and the support of the entire world proletariat, gives us every reason to consider possible the victory of the revolutionary tendency in the movement for national liberation.” The introduction of a peasant basis for the national revolu-

tionary movement will be one of the most decisive factors in the destiny thereof.

What does the Chinese peasantry represent? Unfortunately, up to now, we have not got any scientific research data on the agrarian position of modern China. But, nevertheless, the scattered and incompletely verified information at our disposal allows us to investigate the main groups or contradictions in the Chinese countryside and to sketch those measures which would make it possible to attract the peasantry more widely into the revolutionary movement. The official statistics of the Ministry of Agriculture and Trade for 1917 give us an idea as to the distribution of land according to the main groups.* (See Table I.)

TABLE I.

Distribution of Land in China (Estimate).

	Size of Farms	No. of Families	In percentages	Total Area (in mu)	In percentages.
1. Allotments	1-20 mu	24,429,362	49.5	244,298,620	15.9
2. Small	20-40 ,,	11,685,344	27.7	350,560,320	22.8
3. Medium	40-75 ,,	7,735,226	15.6	386,763,200	25.4
4. Large	75 mu and over	5,509,621	11.2	550,962,100	35.9
Total		49,359,591	100	1,532,579,240	100

* This table, and the greater part of the subsequent material on the agrarian question in China has been taken from an unpublished work by Charles Volin. The actual distribution of land according to groups as given by the official statistics for 1917 is shown in the following table:

Size of Holding	Number of Families	In Percentages
1 mu eq one-eighth acre		
Below 10 mu	17,805,125	36.1
Over 10 ,,	13,248,474	26.9

Over 30 ,,	10,122,214	20.5
Over 50 ,,	5,348,314	10.8
Over 100 ,,	2,835,464	5.7

Comrade Volin, on the basis of material on the peasant budget, and income of the land, re-groups these official statistics and gets the table we give in the text as Table I.

The Chinese Peasantry—continued

TABLE II.
Distribution of Land in Honan Province.

Size of Farms				No. of Families	In percentages	Total Area	In percentages
1. Allotments	...	...	1-20 mu	3,302,548	52.2	33,025,480	17.0
2. Small	...	...	20-40 ,,	1,359,294	21.6	41,078,820	21.2
3. Medium	...	...	40-75 ,,	908,651	14.4	45,432,500	28.5
4. Large	...	...	75 mu and above	740,508	11.8	74,050,800	38.3
Total	...	...	...	6,321,001	100	193,581,600	100

Despite the fact that one cannot guarantee the absolute accuracy of the figures given, nevertheless in so far as they reflect fairly correctly the correlation among the various groups, we can draw the following conclusions, using them as a basis. First, this table gives a striking proof of the extremely truncated nature of agriculture in China. The 36 million families, holding 75 per cent. of all peasant farms, are poor peasants and constitute the lower group of the peasantry. Secondly, in the hands of this group there is about the same amount of land as there is in the hands of the last and highest group which comprises only 11 per cent. of all farms (5½ million farms). One-half of the entire peasantry (49.5 per cent.) have less than one-sixth of the entire area of land. The ratio between the extreme groups (allotments and large farms) is 1 to 10.

This picture of the distribution of the land, and also the conclusions which we have drawn from these figures, is confirmed by the material on separate provinces. If we take the official statistics of the Ministry of Agriculture and Trade for 1921, for the province of Honan (typical of Central China), and split them up according to the groups defined above, we get Table II.*

We see that these figures for the province of Honan are the same kind as the general figures for China. The same conclusions also naturally arise from this table.

A thoroughly conducted investigation of three districts of the province of Kiang-Su by the Chinese South Eastern University, gives us Table III., extremely valuable for comparisons.

TABLE III.

Distribution of Land in Southern Kiang-Su.

Average per district	1-5 mu	5-15 mu	15-50 mu	Over 50 mu
1. Tsian-Min	19%	33%	32%	16%
2. Sun-Chan	27%	46%	22%	5%
3. Khuai	20%	44%	32%	4%
Average	22%	41.2%	28.6%	8.1%

If in analysing these figures we bear in mind that the province of Kiang-Su occupies the first place in China for density of population, and that the profit accruing from the land in Southern Kiang-Su is three times greater than in the Northern Provinces, then these figures will also be in keeping with the conclusions we have already established.

The investigations of Prof. Taylor give us a wealth of material, confirming our original conclusions, with

* Part of this table was published in Nos. 13-14 of the "New East," 926, p. 2, in the article by G.S.

regard to three countries of the Province of Chihli (Northern China). (See Table IV.).

TABLE IV.

Distribution of Land in Chihli (Taylor).

Size of Farms	County of Tsunkhua	County of Tansiang	County of Hantang	Average for 3 Counties
1. Allotments	59.5%	63.8%	29.8%	51%
2. Small	20.5%	29.4%	24.9%	24.9%
3. Medium	11.3%	4.7%	20.9%	12.3%
4. Large	8.7%	2.1%	24.4%	11.8%

All these statistics bear witness to the differentiation which exists in the Chinese countryside and which should determine the direction of the struggle of the Chinese peasantry. These statistics tell us that three-quarters of the Chinese peasantry are actually paupers, oppressed with constant need and doomed to an existence of hunger. It becomes quite easy to see that these poor peasant elements, this overwhelming majority of the Chinese peasantry, are exposed to a constant menace of death from starvation. They cannot exist on their dwarf farms. Some go to the town for work and supplement the army of industrial workers, or else are hired as farm labourers on the big farms; they fill the ranks of the bandits and the armies of the militarists, or lease out plots from the big proprietors on slave conditions.

These poor peasants who have no land or cannot maintain themselves on the land belonging to them, who are compelled to do extra work for the lease of plots of land, comprise 50 per cent. of the Chinese population.

The official statistics of the Minister of Agriculture and Trade give the picture of tenancy conditions shown in Table V.

TABLE V.

Leasehold and Freehold Agriculture.

Groups	1917		1918	
	No of Families	%	No of Families	%
1. Freeholders	24,587,585	50	23,381,200	53.2
2. Tenant farmers	13,825,546	28	11,307,432	25.7
3. Semi-tenant ,,	10,494,722	22	9,246,843	21.1
Total	48,907,853	100	45,935,475	100

What is the situation of half of the Chinese peasantry, the tenant-farmers and semi-tenants? It is difficult to realise the tormentingly difficult conditions in which this group of the peasantry lives. They only receive 40 per cent. of their harvest, the remaining 60 per cent. being collected by the landowners. The land rent often even reaches 90 per cent. of the harvest. These enslaving conditions are made still worse by the fact that every tenant has to pay a big monetary tax for the plots of land leased, that he has to provide a large quantity

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of hens, ducks and wine for the proprietor of the land and deliver the harvest to the landowner without compensation.

In Debt for Generations

In the event of such disasters as floods, harvest failures (which are a frequent phenomenon in China), according to the rent system of "Si-Fin-Su" prevailing in China, no decrease of contribution is allowed. Thanks to this, the debts of the Chinese tenant farmers increase terribly. If the father dies, the son has to pay these debts. Sometimes several generations work to repay the debts.

The main form of land rent in China is in kind. Money forms of rent are relatively rarely used and are practised amongst the well-to-do peasantry. Rent in China is mainly paid in foodstuffs, not by the large farmers, who sub-let their land with the object of further extending their farms, but by small farmers who either owing to shortage of land or else because they cannot maintain themselves on the land they possess.

It is true that in many places there exist tenant societies, renting tremendous quantities of land from the landowners. But they in turn sub-let them. The monopolist position of the tenant societies permits them to inflate the rent still more.

The over-population of the Chinese countryside and the sharply felt land shortage amongst the majority of the Chinese peasants create favourable ground for excessive exploitation of the landless and poor peasants. There is, therefore, nothing surprising that the contradictions arising as a result of these enslaving tenancies are among the chief contradictions in the Chinese countryside at the present time.

In this connection the question of landowners' property in China acquires exceptional interest. The prevalent opinion is that there is no big landowning property in China. This is not quite correct. It is true that in this respect China was considerably behind Tsarist Russia, where big "latifundia," big estate farms, constitute the usual form of agriculture. In China as a result of a number of big peasant risings, the periodically constituted large landed estates were also periodically split up, destroyed and gave place to petty agriculture. At the same time, the privileged big agricultural estates have been preserved up till now in some cases, as a remnant of the former landowning estates, but in the majority of cases as property of bureaucratic officials and the present-day militarists. And despite their not very large dimensions, they play a considerable role in the conditions of extreme land shortage in China.

Big Landowners

We have no detailed statistical material on big estates. In China there are more than 30,000 landowners, each with more than 1,000 mu. Material on many large estates in the province of Kiang-Si is given by Williams. One family owns 400,000 mu, (50,000 acres), another 300,000 mu, while there are several families owing from 40,000 to 70,000 mu; in this same province certain temples own from 300 to 5,000 mu. It is not surprising that in this district the number of tenant farmers reaches 80 per cent. of the whole.

In the province of Kwantung (the main town of which is Canton), one may judge as to the dimensions of the big landed estates from the fact that 85 per cent. of the total land in the valleys of the Western, Eastern, Northern and Hang Rivers (the most fertile) belong to big landowners. In the same province of Kwantung, at Tai-Wantu, 90 per cent. of the total population are tenants.

In the province of Honan, one-third of the entire county of Chante belongs to the sons of Yuan-Shi-Kai, who lease out this land. In this same county there is another large proprietor owning an area of 60,000 mu of land. In the county of Veishe (in the same province of Honan), another family also owns 60,000 mu of land. In the county of Nanyang, the Syu family owned an area of 100,000 mu. The property of the landowner Lo is spread over an area of three counties and extends 75 kilometres (47 miles) from east to west. This landowner Lo leases out his land and receives 50 per cent. of the harvest for his own use. In the district of Kai-Fyn the well-known family of Leo owns 90,000 mu of land.

This material might still be supplemented, but we have already said sufficient to get a clear idea as to the role of the landed estates in China. It is also characteristic of the Chinese landowners that in a majority of cases they live in urban centres and are at the same time representatives of merchant capital.

* * * * *

The second group of contradictions lies in the relations of the peasantry to foreign capital. Foreign capital above all makes itself felt by the intolerable contributions which it has inflicted on China, the weight of which falls almost exclusively on the shoulders of the peasantry—this basic mass of taxpayers. Then the imperialist support given to the militarist cliques who squeeze the last farthing out of the peasantry, the exemption of foreign goods, including wheat and rice from the internal taxes, the concentration of the salt monopoly in the hands of foreign capital, the Anglo-Japanese monopoly on the purchase of cotton, the destruction of the handicraft trades which served to supplement the incomes of the peasants, owing to their not being able to withstand the competition of foreign goods—all these things have inflicted immeasurable harm on the Chinese peasants' enterprises.

The Landless

But a reservation should be made here; these contradictions are much less forceful than the struggle of interests which is begotten by the land shortage and the system of lease relations. This should not be surprising. Foreign capital has far from extended its influence over the entire territory of China. It is chiefly extended along the coast and along the railways, which are not very numerous in China. In many districts, whole counties and even in certain provinces, foreign capitalists have hardly penetrated at all.

Now a few words about the farm labourers. There are no accurate data as to their numerical strength. It is only known that this army runs into millions.*

* Comrade Tang-Ping-Tschan gives the total number of agricultural labourers in China as 37 million. Unfortunately we have had no chance of verifying this figure.

The Chinese Peasantry—continued

It is also a well-known fact that the position of all these agricultural workers is extremely difficult. Working every day from early morning until late at night, every one of them receives for this penal work a miserable wage never exceeding 80 roubles (£9 approximately) annually, and in many cases even less than this sum. Women earn considerably less, while the children whose labour is also applied in agriculture, receive very scant nourishment. This increased exploitation inevitably engenders antagonisms between this whole army of agricultural workers and the big landowners who use hired labour.

Taxes Collected for 1929

In speaking of the position of the Chinese peasantry it is absolutely impossible to overlook the colossal weight of taxation which ultimately ruins the poor toilers on the land. Every peasant is compelled to pay every year a basic tax and a special contribution in aid of the provinces. There also exist contributions for troops, militia, garrison detachments, guards, "Ming Tuan," local government organs, supplementary taxes for military operations, altogether from 18 to 30 various kinds of taxes. A tax also has to be paid when any goods are sold. This picture is completed by the fact that the local authorities in the countryside, the gentry, collect exorbitant taxes from the peasantry and keep a large part of same for themselves.

Finally, the exaction of taxes not only for one year but for several years in advance is also frequently practised. For example, the land tax for 1929 was collected a long time ago in the province of Hunan. In the province of Shen-Si, where the land tax alone comprises 13 to 15 roubles for every mu of land, it is also being collected for three years in advance. In certain counties of the province of Szechuan, the militarists and officials have collected the tax several years ahead.

Droughts and Floods

The incessant warfare in China amongst the various militarists is completely ruining the peasants' farms. The difficulty and the haste in the collection of the taxes places the peasants in unbearable conditions. Things are made still worse by the isolation of the peasants from productive occupations in agriculture and their compulsory mobilisation for heavy labouring work in the militarist armies. The peasants are made to carry ammunition, shells, cartridges. The plundering by the troops which goes unpunished has not ceased in most provinces of China for the last few years; this has put millions of peasant farms out of action. The increasing disorders of the Tufey (bandits) who burned down whole villages, the compulsory circulation of war bonds (afterwards not cashed by anyone) which actually amount to the requisition of food products from the peasantry without compensation—all these things have had an absolutely catastrophic effect on the Chinese peasantry and have created the necessary conditions for its rapid revolutionisation.

In order to extend our brief description of the situation of the Chinese peasantry, let us deal with two other factors—the influence of natural disasters and the role of moneylending capitalists in the countryside.

Natural disasters are a very widespread phenomenon in China. They consist mainly of droughts and floods. Their consequences are literally terrible. For instance, the famine of 1878-79, which extended over five provinces, cost ten million lives. If we take the last 20 years these natural disasters are chronologically as follows: 1906 and 1910 famine and drought, 1911 and 1917 floods, 1920 again famine and droughts. The flood of 1917 alone destroyed 17,646 villages and 5,611,759 people were rendered homeless. The famine of 1920 left 19,795,114 completely devoid of the means of existence. During the first few years these natural disasters have not ceased their destructive work. The low standard of living of the majority of the peasantry, the absence of reserves for "a rainy day," all these things considerably weaken the power of resistance of these strata of the population to these natural disasters.

Usury

Just a brief description of the role of money-lending capital in the Chinese countryside. The group of poor peasants comprising 75 per cent. of all peasant farms, are very often compelled to have recourse to moneylenders. In the period called the "space between the yellow and the green," which means the time when the previous harvest has been expended and the new has not yet been collected, during any kind of natural disasters, during the time of the collections of all kinds of taxes, especially the extraordinary taxes and those collected several years ahead—in all such cases, the peasant can do nothing else but get into the clutches of the moneylenders. In the majority of cases, even the selling of the products of their agricultural production is not possible without the aid of a middleman who gets a fat share out of these operations. What is particularly important is that not a single poor peasant can get land on lease without previously contributing a monetary tax to the landowners. And finally, he has nowhere else to get the money from, except from the moneylender. It is comprehensible that under such conditions moneylending capital is taking a firm footing in the Chinese countryside. A loan from a moneylender generally demands 3 per cent. per month, or 36 per cent. per year for small loans, and 2 per cent. per month for big loans. There are frequent cases where the monthly percentage is raised to 50 per cent. and sometimes reaches 100 per cent. per month. The loan is usually guaranteed by the forthcoming harvest. In the majority of cases the peasants who fall into the clutches of the moneylenders cannot possibly liquidate their debts. The transaction ends in complete enslavement, and the land, household utensils and even members of the family are handed over to the moneylender.

Ruin of the Peasants

If now, after all we have said, we take the entire skein of mutual relations in the Chinese countryside as a whole, if we combine the conditions of extreme land shortage for the majority of Chinese peasants, the permanent deficit on their farms, the monstrous conditions of tenancy with the influence of foreign capital, with the results of natural disasters, with the enslaving conditions of credit, with the heavy burden of taxation imposed by the militarist and State apparatus—to put it briefly, if we take the whole sum of conditions, deter-

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mining the position of three-quarters of the Chinese peasantry, the increasing ruin and pauperisation of 300 million peasants becomes quite clear.

Comrade G. S. in his article on "The Peasant Rising in Honan" ("The New East," Nos. 13-14, 1926) says that in "1917 the proportion of proprietors having less than 10 mu of land (in the province of Honan) amounted to 26.1 per cent., while in 1921 they amounted to 39.3 per cent. During the same period the agricultural area occupied by these farms hardly changed at all (an increase of 0.02 per cent.)."

Comrade Cheng-Du-Syu in his article "The Peasant Question in China," gives the following figures which are taken from the official statistics from the Ministry of Agriculture and Trade.

	Area of Land Cultivated in mu.	Area of Land Uncultivated in mu.	Number of Peasant Farms
1914	1,578,347,929	356,235,867	59,402,315
1918	1,314,472,190	846,935,748	43,435,478

This table shows quite clearly that during four years the number of peasant farms decreased by 16 million. The amount of uncultivated land more than doubled, and finally, the area of cultivated land decreased by 260 million mu.

Army of Paupers

These figures, like all Chinese statistics, may not be particularly reliable,* but they absolutely indisputably reflect the main tendency—the ruin of the Chinese peasantry is proceeding with tremendous rapidity. Year by year, more millions and millions of Chinese peasants are compelled to leave their agriculture, thereby losing all means of existence, since the development of Chinese industry is not such as to absorb year by year the growing army of paupers.

It is quite clear that this process of ruin of the Chinese peasantry has not been stopped during the past few years. On the contrary we have every ground for supposing that it is developing in an intensified form.

In summarising this section of our study, we will sketch the main groups of contradictions in the Chinese countryside. We will examine them according to the degree of their importance and force.

Class War in Countryside

First, these contradictions, as we have seen, appertain to agrarian relations. They are based on the land shortage of the majority of the Chinese peasants, differentiations and enslaving conditions of tenancy. They may be formulated as contradictions of interest between the poor peasants and peasants with small land plots on the one hand and the big landowners on the other.

* Comrade Li-Tsin-Khua in the "Peasant International," No. 7-9, gives the following table:

Year	No. of Peasant Families	Area of land Tilled
1914	59,402,315	1,578,347,925 mu
1915	46,776,256	1,442,333,638 mu
1916	59,323,504	1,509,975,641 mu
1917	48,907,853	1,365,186,100 mu
1918	43,935,478	1,314,472,190 mu

Of course, if it be borne in mind that in the official statistics of the Ministry of Agriculture and Trade for various years there is no information on a number of provinces, these general data acquire a considerably different form which is now impossible to establish accurately.

Secondly, the clearly hostile attitude of 90 per cent. of the peasants (poor peasants, small farmers and middle peasants) towards the militarist and bureaucratic State. These contradictions are based on the absolutely intolerable oppression of the taxation.

Thirdly, the antagonism of the entire peasantry towards foreign capital. Here we will make the reservation that the entire peasantry is not taken in the absolute sense, but as a conception including all the social pre-requisites of the peasants.

Fourthly, the contradictions between the farm labourers, and hired agricultural workers, on the one hand, and the landowners utilising hired labour on the other hand. At the basis of these lies the capitalist exploitation of the farm labourers.

From the entire material we have examined it becomes absolutely clear that the agrarian question, the question of land in China, is still far from being solved. The naive idea of the Chinese peasantry being a small and homogeneous class without profound internal stratification is absolutely shattered.

Growth of Peasant Movement

Yet there have been attempts by people calling themselves students of China to foist on us the view that therefore there was an absence of struggle within the peasantry on these lines. We see that such views have been a result of our ignorance of the elementary questions of peasant life. In reality, a most profound and ever-increasing struggle is taking place among the various social groups in the Chinese countryside. As we shall see further, this struggle is by no means confined to the villages. It emerges far beyond the confines of the Chinese countryside, while every one of these fighting groups finds allies in the various class forces of the Chinese urban centres.

This struggle of contradictions, which has become particularly intensified during the last few years as a result of the serious deterioration in the position of the majority of the peasantry, has found its political expression in the growth of the peasant movement, in the creation of Peasant Leagues and armed peasant detachments ("Red Lances") on the one hand, and in the organisation of unions of big landowners and the creation of armed bands of "Ming Tuans" on the other hand across the Chinese countryside.

Mass peasant movements are not a new thing in China. The rapid process of pauperisation of the Chinese peasantry has given rise to and accelerated the growth of a number of secret societies such as the White Lotus Society, the Society of the Three Assemblies, the Society of Brothers, etc. The memorable Boxer Rebellion was in reality a great peasant revolt, directed against the imperialists and also against the survivals of feudalism. The lack of definite political aims among the revolted Boxer peasants made it possible for them to be utilised by the Chinese reactionaries and doomed the movement to destruction. This memorable lesson must not be forgotten.

The "Red Lances"

The "Red Lance" organisations of the present-day bear many traces of the former secret societies. These "Red Lance" organisations are widespread throughout

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the country and embrace an enormous number of the peasantry. In Honan alone there are a number of such organisations variously known as the "Red Doctrine," "The Doctrine of the Mean," "The Iron Helmet," "The Golden Bell," "The Iron Shirt," etc. All these sects believe that they possess magic powers and knowledge which render their members immune against bullets and all other lethal weapons.

This belief in their immunity has not arisen by chance. These sects are in the majority of cases armed with spears, and swords; only recently have they begun to get modern rifles. The sects strive to compensate for the technical weakness of their armaments by mysterious charms and rites. Consequently every new member joining the sect must go through a long period of training in the use of arms, and initiation into special mystic rites which are supposed to make him immune against bullets and spear thrusts, etc. This explains also why physical training occupies an important part in the training of the members of these sects.

With appropriate ceremony every new member solemnly makes a vow to punish bandits, to help the poor, to remain loyal to the society and keep its secrets. The following is a quotation from one of these vows:

"I, the novice entering the great path, swear that I will carry out my duties, that I will not commit injustice or do evil and may a bullet enter my bosom if I break my vow."

A Vow of Solidarity

In the province of Kwantung, where circumstances enable the peasant movement to assume more definite and conscious forms, the vow contains the following expression:

"This night I swear to work for the cause of the oppressed workers and peasants, to work for the overthrow of the oppressors, to help to bring about the social revolution for the sake of the cause and for the sake of my own interests. From this day I swear to carry out all the orders of my organisation. I swear to protect the interests of my organisation with all my might, even at the sacrifice of my life. I swear never to act contrary to the interests of my organisation. If I break my vow, or for my own selfish interests bring harm to my organisation, then do unto me what is now done to this fowl," and as this is said, he cuts off the head of a fowl.

The "Red Lance" societies are composed mainly of proletarianised peasants and poor farmers. Their numbers can be judged by the fact that in 1925, in 24 districts in Honan, there were 400,000 members of such societies. An armed detachment is formed in every village; they maintain excellent contact with one another. It is not rare for the "Red Lances" to rally tens of thousands of men in a single place, when necessary. Each "Red Lance" Society has its leader, who usually is also a poor peasant distinguished for his personal qualities.

The principal slogans of the "Red Lances" can be divided into two categories. Some refer to the internal life of the organisation, as for example, "Keep the Secret," "Do not Fear Death." Others are political,

although vaguely formulated, for example: "Do not plunder the people," "Help the poor," "Establish peace in the land." These slogans do not express clear political strivings, but they indicate the social character of the "Red Lance" societies. They are the armed detachments of the millions of the ruined peasantry of China.

Peasants against Nationalists

The lack of definite political aims renders it possible for these "Red Lance" societies to be utilised by the landowning classes and the reactionary militarists in their own interests. An example of this is afforded by the conduct of the "Red Lances" in Honan during the fight between Wu-Pei-Fu and the Second Kuominchun (National Army). When the latter occupied Honan, it began to recruit large numbers of additional forces, and as a consequence was obliged to impose heavy taxes upon the province. Of course, as always happens the burden of taxation fell most heavily upon the peasants. Moreover acts of violence were committed against the peasantry by nondescript elements that joined the Kuominchun. In view of the disorganised state of the administrative apparatus, the operations of the Tu-feys (bandits) and in view of the terrible state of poverty of the peasantry, the conduct of the Kuominchun roused the hostility of the peasantry.

The Chinese gentry who act as the agents of Wu-Pei-Fu in the rural districts of Honan-ably took advantage of this mood prevailing among the peasantry and turned their hatred against the Second Kuominchun. The mood of the peasantry of course found reflection in the "Red Lance" society, with the result that Wu-Pei-Fu was able to utilise them to defeat and utterly rout the Second Army.

This incident serves to illustrate the role already played by the peasant organisations in China. Furthermore, it also illustrates the significance which the peasant question, the question of diverting the peasant movement to the revolutionary path, acquires under present conditions of civil war in China.

Recently the conditions of the peasantry have become considerably worse and the process of proletarianisation has become intensified. Class antagonisms in the rural districts of China have become more acute. This has led to the masses of the peasants becoming revolutionary and to the formation of peasant leagues. These leagues, which only began to spring up in the last few years, represent a clearer political expression and a more virile form of the peasant movement. In 1924 the active sections of the poor peasantry in Kwantung province began to form peasant leagues. In the course of 1925-26 these peasant leagues began to develop successfully in a number of other provinces. In 1925 the membership of peasant leagues in the Kwantung province numbered 200,000, but by the middle of 1926 this number had grown to 623,000 and at the present time exceeds one million. According to recent returns the number of members of peasant leagues in Honan province is 600,000.

Peasant Leagues

The peasant leagues are growing into fighting organs for the protection of the economic and political interests of the masses of the oppressed peasantry. They set

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themselves the following aims: (1) general protection of the economic and political interests of the exploited masses of peasantry; (2) to secure a reduction of rents; (3) the abolition of special taxes; (4) the introduction of a progressive income tax; (5) local self-government for the peasantry; (6) the right to organise and bear arms to defend the peasants against banditism and the arbitrary rule of the military.

Membership of these leagues is determined by class affiliation. Owners of more than 100 mu of land may not be elected to the executive committee of the leagues. Owners of 500 mu and upwards may hold no official position in the leagues at all.

The successful formation and rapid growth of these peasant leagues indicate the revolutionary processes which are going on among the Chinese peasantry.

It is not surprising therefore that in the majority of provinces in the country the existence of these organisations is prohibited by the authorities; where they do exist in such provinces they exist as secret societies; nor is it surprising that in their fight for the interests of the oppressed peasantry they meet with frantic resistance from the wealthy classes in the rural districts. The rural officials, the gentry and the large landowners entertain a special hatred against the "Red Lance" societies and peasant organisations generally. And it is precisely these classes that display the greatest activity in combatting these organisations.

The "Ming Tuan"

In their fight against the peasant organisations, the reactionary classes in the rural districts have established a so-called national militia, the Ming Tuan, for the alleged purpose of fighting banditry, but actually to protect their rule in the rural districts against the poor peasantry. The composition of the Ming Tuan indicates its real functions. Poor peasants are not allowed to join it. Every peasant family owning more than 60 mu of land must provide one foot soldier for the Ming Tuan. Every owner of 100 or more mu must provide an armed cavalryman and every owner of 500 or more mu must provide five foot soldiers or three cavalrymen.

In the main these Ming Tuan are composed of peasants who are directly dependent upon the landowners (tenants, permanent labourers, or domestic servants). The leaders of these Ming Tuan are landlords or gentry. As the class struggle in the rural districts becomes more acute these exploiting classes openly utilise the armed forces of the Ming Tuan to crush the peasant movement.

* * * * *

In recent years, the social struggle between the peasantry and the gentry has been developing with increasing intensity. The growth of the peasant unions has roused the resistance of the reactionary classes. The rural districts of China are becoming more and more the scene of intense civil war as the months go by.

Smashing the Leagues

In November, 1924, the landlords and gentry in Fuh sien made several attempts to break up the peasant leagues in retaliation for a resolution which the latter passed in favour of a 40 per cent. reduction of rent.

In May of the same year the gentry in Chainton and Tampu smashed up the peasant league. In November the peasant leagues were reorganised, and again passed a resolution demanding a 40 per cent. reduction of rent. In retaliation for this the gentry organised a regular massacre of the peasants.

The tenseness of the atmosphere is not diminishing; on the contrary, the conflicts are assuming more and more the form of open armed struggle. In 1925 a detachment of armed large landowners burned ten houses in the village of Suhan, killed three and wounded thirteen members of the peasant league and arrested 14 others. Driven to despair, the peasants in their turn burned down several houses belonging to landlords. Last year in the rural district of Chuyetchen, in the county of Sinyuan, Honan province, the chief official of the district, Chang Hu-Chen, a member of the Kuomintang who supported the peasant organisations, was brutally murdered with the whole of his family of nine persons.

Numerous other examples could be cited to illustrate the growing class struggle, but sufficient has already been stated to show us how the masses of the peasantry are becoming revolutionary and to indicate the dimensions of the civil war in the rural districts of China.

Weaknesses of Canton

We will deal briefly with the events in Canton on March 20th, 1926, which led to the Left Wing of the Kuomintang being removed from power. These events will not be understood if the peasant movement in the Kwantung province, and the resistance of the landlords and the gentry are ignored. The social significance of these events lies to a considerable degree in the general attack that was made upon the peasantry by the reactionary elements.

To this very day the Government in the counties and rural districts of Kwantung province is in the hands of the gentry and the large landowners. Burdensome rents and usury still prevail. The peasantry are still encumbered with an enormous burden of taxation. In the county of Chisangchang there are no less than 18 different taxes imposed upon the peasants. It was precisely in this province that the growth of the power of the peasant leagues called for the resistance of the reactionary elements. The counter-revolutionary forces were suppressed, but not entirely annihilated. The counter-revolutionaries conducted a savage campaign against the peasant leagues, but without avail. They could not fight the peasantry while they remained outside the Kuomintang.

Hence these revolutionary elements began to penetrate into the Kuomintang by donning the revolutionary label, and once inside began to disintegrate its ranks. At the same time the reactionaries began to recruit and mobilise armed forces for the purpose of suppressing the peasant movement. Amidst this acute social struggle the events of March 20th, played into the hands of the landlords and the gentry.

The previous national government, influenced by the Left Wing of the Kuomintang, had tried to establish firm connections with the peasantry. These efforts, though not completely successful, were made along the following lines: (1) Suppression of Banditism, (2) passing of a decree permitting the organisation of peasant

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leagues, (3) protection of the peasants in the fight against the Ming Tuan. These efforts on the part of the Left Kuomintang national government to win the support of the peasantry mainly aroused the hostility of the landlords and the gentry.

After the events of March 20th, when the Left Wing Kuomintang lost the leadership, the situation changed, the influence of the officials, the gentry and the large landowners palpably increased and the position of the reactionaries generally became stronger. The new national government did not energetically protect the interests of the oppressed and fighting peasantry.

Government against Peasants

An extremely interesting incident occurred towards the end of the summer, some 30 miles from Canton. In this district a fight broke out between the peasant League and the Ming Tuan over the question of who should receive a consignment of rifles that had been received from Canton. This dispute, which grew into an armed conflict, spread over an enormous region. The Ming Tuan prepared for this fight in accordance with all the rules of war. They timed their attack for the day when the anniversary of one of the peasant leagues was to be celebrated in a certain village. When the peasant league appealed to the local official for military support the latter cynically replied: "I do not know which of you is right. You fight it out and I will ask the Government to dissolve both your organisations." When making this reply the official knew that the Ming Tuan had six hundred rifles while the peasant league had only one hundred. The outcome of it was that the Ming Tuan burned down twelve villages and killed and wounded many of the peasants.

Li Ching-hsing, the commander of the Fourth Army Corps which was stationed in Canton refused to render aid to the peasant organisations in spite of the instructions of the Central Committee of the Kuomintang, of which he is a member, on the grounds that he did not know who was right in this fight. This incident marks the sharp change for the worse that has taken place in the attitude of the national government towards the peasant movement.

The events of the last few months provide additional material confirming our view. The governor of the Canton area places his own men in all the local districts in order to support the gentry and the landlords. The peasant organisations are described as bandit organisations and on this pretext are disarmed. The resistance put up by the peasantry to irregular and insupportable taxes is regarded as treachery, and on these grounds the governing group are becoming more and more insistent in their demand for the dissolution of these organisations. The commandant of the Eastern District has already ordered the prohibition of peasant leagues in this district.

Discontent with Kuomintang

War bonds issued in connection with the Northern Expedition are forcibly imposed upon the peasantry. The peasants have been forced to pay taxes several years ahead, and these taxes had been collected according to the old system without any class differentiation. Conse-

quently the whole burden of taxation for financing the Northern Expedition has fallen principally upon the peasants. The extortion of taxes from the peasants, the imposing of war bonds upon them and the dissolution of the peasant leagues has strengthened the position of the gentry, the landlords and the corrupt officials.

All this throws back the revolutionary movement in the Kwantung province, destroys the as yet weak contact between the peasantry and the national government. The information at our disposal indicates that the breach between the national government and the peasantry is widening every day, and that the discontent of the peasantry is increasing.

The peasantry in the Kwantung province has gradually been losing faith in the Kuomintang and the national government, as the latter has failed to satisfy their demands and failed to use stern methods to prevent the oppression of the peasantry by the large landowners and the gentry. During recent months this loss of faith has in places been growing into open hostility to the national government. It is characteristic of this process that this hostility was revealed first of all among the most revolutionary groups of peasants in the Tungkiang district, which hitherto had helped the national government to combat the counter-revolutionary troops. We must be frank about this, without attempting to gloss over the situation that is arising.

Warning the Nationalists

The Communists must sound a warning note against the danger that is threatening the revolution from this side. It is precisely these processes that explain the change in the policy of the Kuomintang apparent during the past few days. The danger of losing the peasant base for the revolutionary movement for freedom was one of the principal factors which compelled the better elements in the Kuomintang determinedly to secure the return of Wang Ching-wei, the leader of the Left Wing, to the post of head of the national government.

In its resolution on the peasant question the Kuomintang declares that "The Chinese National Revolution by its character is a peasant revolution; our Party must first of all emancipate the peasantry. Every political and economic movement must first of all concern itself with the interests of the peasantry. The conduct of the Government must also be guided by the interests of the peasantry and the aim of its emancipation."

This resolution must be taken as the pledge of the Kuomintang on the peasant question, and the Party must be called upon to pass from words to deeds. The Party must be called upon to fulfil its resolution.

While the Chinese National Revolution is described as a peasant revolution, it can only be successful if the proletariat plays the part of organiser and the Communist Party, the vanguard of the proletariat, plays the leading part. In the present revolutionary period of acute class conflicts the Communist Party of China must render the utmost support to the peasant movement; it must strive to bring about a democratic reform of all rural relations, it must strive to secure revolutionary measures for the improvement of the conditions of the peasantry. Only in this way will it be possible to win over the peasantry to the cause of the national revolution.

The closely interwoven relations existing between

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the Communist Party and the Kuomintang should not prevent the Communist vanguard of the Chinese proletariat from conducting a policy of strong support for the peasant movement. On the contrary, the Communists of China must not conceal but must openly criticise the activity of the Right Wing of the Kuomintang, which is actually directed towards suppressing the peasant movement.

At the Second Congress of the Comintern, comrade Lenin said: "We as Communists must support the bourgeois movement for liberation in colonial countries only when that movement is truly revolutionary, only when the representatives of that movement will not hamper, but educate the peasantry and the broad masses of the exploited, in the spirit of revolution. If these conditions are non-existent, then the Comrades in these countries must fight against the reformist bourgeoisie to which the heroes of the Second International belong." (Lenin, Vol XIX, p. 244.)

What is to be Done?

What should be the programme of action of the Communist Party to train the Chinese peasantry in the spirit of revolution? What measures must it adopt to organise the peasant movement? What agrarian reforms must it demand from the National government? In our opinion the policy of the Communist Party of China, in order to attract the masses into the revolutionary movement for freedom, and to make them the basis of the revolutionary national government may be summarised in the following points:

(1) It is necessary to organise peasant committees and strive gradually to convert them into local organs of government. The national government must be induced to render the utmost aid to the peasant committees,

to dissolve the Ming Tuan, and to organise armed peasant units in connection with the peasant committees.

The function of the peasant committees should be to carry through revolutionary measures towards the complete democratisation of rural relations.

(2) To secure the reduction of rents to the minimum, and in proportion as the revolutionary situation in China develops and the peasant movement grows, not to hesitate to confiscate large estates; in the event of a real democratic system being established to nationalise the land.

(3) To demand the introduction of a single progressive agricultural tax, the regulation of the fiscal system, and the reduction of taxes, especially on the poorer groups of the peasantry.

(4) To confiscate immediately monastery and church lands as well as lands belonging to the reactionary militarists and the agents of the imperialists, i.e., the large landowners, the merchants and of the landlords and gentry who were fighting in the civil war against the peasantry and the national government.

(5) Not to hesitate in special cases to deport from the rural districts those of the gentry, notables and landlords who offer armed resistance to the peasant organisations, and the Kuomintang government.

(6) To organise agricultural labourers' unions in connection with the peasant committees for the purpose of protecting the interests of the labourers.

(7) To demand that the National government organises a system of financial aid for the peasants by granting loans at low interest, not to exceed normal state bank interest, and render the necessary support to peasant mutual aid societies.

(8) To induce the Government to render the greatest possible support to consumers' and producers' agricultural co-operative societies and to organise the settlement of peasants upon less densely populated land.

Problems of the British Empire

(Notes for a Research Worker)

"A British Communist"*

IT would be a great mistake to see in the Imperial Conference which has just concluded merely a new confirmation of the tendency of the British Empire to fall asunder. On the contrary, this particular Conference was the occasion for a very striking demonstration that within the capitalist class of Great Britain and the Dominions there is a very strong tendency to strengthen the ties of Empire, and that this tendency is making practical proposals at last towards this end. Nevertheless the general centrifugal movement was confirmed, and even the measures taken or discussed for "rationalising" the Empire must and will, in the fulness of time, accelerate this movement.

But the time has gone by when we could content ourselves with a simple analysis of the decline of British and the growth of American participation in the trade

of the Dominions, or of the increasing penetration of American finance-capital and the squeezing out of British finance-capital. We must carry our study away from British blue books and into the blue books of the Dominions: first and foremost to ascertain the degree of industrialisation which they have achieved. Only our objective study of this question—of the relative weight of industrial products in their total exports year by year, of the development of their internal market year by year, of the progress of the accumulation of capital, of the progress of their home industries—can give us a real picture of the actual strength of just that fundamental factor which in the long run is driving the Dominion bourgeoisie towards independence and separation. Such a study will both correct undue optimism and justify healthy confidence in our case.

On the political side there is a corresponding investigation and analysis to be made. We cannot usefully limit ourselves any longer to such indications of the barometer variety as the flag incident in South Africa and Hertzog's speech at the opening of the Imperial

* In publishing the above article by "A British Communist" we consider it necessary to point out that certain of the points contained in it are disputable.—(Editorial Board.)

Problems of the British Empire—continued

Conference, the Canadian elections, etc., or even the political resolutions adopted at the close of this conference (about full diplomatic rights of the Dominions, the right of consultation with the British Government, the change in the Royal title, etc.), which in reality only regularised a system already existing, and the broad outlines of which had been canvassed for many months in the "Round Table" and other organs of imperialist opinion. What are the class forces making for separation in Canada? To what extent in South Africa is the peculiar "worker and peasant bloc" of the Boer farmers and labour aristocracy unitedly and irrevocably opposed to the great mining capitalists on the question of separation? How is the Australian bourgeoisie divided on the question of separation, and what is the relative economic weight of the respective forces aligned? These are questions which are already being studied in relation to India, but on which opinion in the Communist International is very sparsely informed so far as the white Dominions are concerned. Yet there can be no correct political analysis from moment to moment, let alone effective guidance of our brother parties in the Dominions, struggling against enormous difficulties, without such information.

Centripetal tendencies

Apart from the declaration made by Hertzog at the beginning of the Imperial Conference, in which he announced (as much for home consumption as for any purpose directly connected with Conference business) his intention of raising the whole question of status and national rights of the Dominions, the most vivid events of the Conference were the "shoulder-to-shoulder" series of declarations by Dominion and British representatives on the question of mandates, the speeches on the question of imperial air communications and the interest shown in the Singapore naval station. Naturally the British Government might be expected to press for the publication of only such materials as would serve to stress unity, not to discount it. But this does not alter the fact that these two debates open up a prospect of a different order from that along which we have been accustomed to look.

The united protest against an attempt of the League of Nations Mandates Commission to investigate by means of a questionnaire, the administration of the mandates, displayed the Dominions not merely as emerging from the role of mere markets for absorbing the products of British industry, but as becoming independently functioning imperialist States, seeking to exploit colonial markets of their own. Australia, with New Guinea; South Africa with the former German African colonies; New Zealand with Samoa—these have a common interest in rejecting the League of Nations interference. And this creates a double interest in maintaining the British connection: first, for military reasons, as the debates on imperial airways and the support of the Singapore project show, and secondly, for financial reasons. Money, which is an essential if mandates are to be properly exploited, can be had more cheaply in the U.S.A. than in Great Britain: but, on the other hand, are American industrial magnates interested in the development of Dominion industries, and cannot British imperialism offer some countervailing advantages?

Here is where we have to look outside the secret sessions of the Imperial Conference for guidance. Sir Alfred Mond, one of the biggest "heavy industrialists" of Great Britain (in coal, iron, steel and chemicals), heralded the successful formation of an Empire Trust with a capital of £56,000,000 for producing and marketing chemical and metallurgical products, with a public statement outlining a complete theory of the new paths along which the British Empire should move. Briefly, it is that Great Britain, now no longer the workshop of the world, should renounce her position as the workshop of the Empire and exchange it for that of the Empire counting house: Britain as the financial centre, the Dominions as the industrial centre (taking over her equipment as well as her surplus population), the Empire capitalists uniting to exploit the Empire proletariat and peasantry, internally, and to compete with the U.S.A. and Germany on the world market—such was the picture drawn by Mond.

Mond's suggestions, as we have seen, fall into line with the published debates of the Imperial Conference: they were greeted by the Press, if not loudly, at least with sympathetic murmurs: and, above all, they depicted a process which had partially begun already (at least, in the form of the bodily transference of whole cotton factories from Lancashire to India).

And this situation dictates a field of research, again of primary importance, on which a correct estimate of the centripetal forces within the British Empire depends. What is the extent of the transference of industrial capital from Britain to the Dominions? To what extent are concerns, seemingly "competing" with British industries in the Dominions and colonies, owned and controlled by financial trusts centred in Great Britain? What is the relative proportion of income from trade and income from investments as between Britain and the rest of the Empire, in which direction is the proportion moving? How far has Dominion capital penetrated into the colonies and mandated territories and to what extent with British assistance? How far has the tendency to integration within the British Empire—which is indicated by inter-Dominion trade statistics as between Australia, India, South Africa, Canada—progressed?

Once again it is Dominion and Colonial blue books, fiscal reports, reports of new capital issues and company reports which are asking the attention of the research worker, in the interest of a correct evaluation of the rate of decline of British imperialism.

Towards Stabilisation or Decay?

Events at and around the Imperial Conference of 1926 have shown not only that the general tendency towards the breakup of the British Empire is continuing, but that a strenuous effort at a readjustment of economic functions and a corresponding readjustment of political rights is being made. This effort has had some success; it is likely to have more.

Does this mean, as some comrades have shown an inclination to believe, merely a "transformation" of British capitalism, giving it a new lease of life in a newer and higher form? Does this "transformation" impose on us the obligation of ceasing to talk about the decline of British imperialism, and of adopting instead a new variety of "super-imperialist" theory about the British Empire specifically, which foresees the modifica-

Problems of the British Empire—continued

tion of contradictions through little readjustments of the character described?

To those who say this, we must reply: "Get back to Lenin's 'Imperialism'!" For in reality this process referred to is only the most clear, convincing example of Lenin's analysis of imperialism as the last stage of capitalism, and of the development of the specific features of parasitism as the last phase of the last stage. And, as Lenin pointed out in his book, entry into this phase does not eliminate the contradictions of capitalism, but accentuates them a hundred-fold, and does not soften the class struggle, but on the contrary renders it a hundred times more acute. This "transformation," in short, is a decline, and does bring revolution nearer by gigantic strides.

What are the perils threatening the existence of British imperialism, and bringing with them the menace of revolution, which the latest "transformation" of British imperialism is accentuating and must accentuate? First, in the words of our Party's report to the Comintern, "it must hasten the transformation of the British capitalists into a purely parasitic class, and the decline of British industry." This redoubles the menace of the working class revolution in Britain, naturally on condition of revolutionary leadership from the Communist Party.

Secondly, again quoting from the same document, "within the British Empire, faced by the growing strength of the movement for the liberation of the colonial peoples, which is bound to find new inspiration from the struggles of British Labour, British imperialism will be forced to intensify its measures of repression." To which must be added that additional exploitation by the Dominion bourgeoisie, should the policy suggested at the Imperial Conference and openly promoted by Mond be applied on a large scale, can only strengthen this tendency.

Thirdly, the "stabilisation," which a graceful and timely retreat by the British bourgeoisie from the field of industrial and political monopoly within the British Empire may still be able to buy, can itself only be temporary. The progress of large-scale industrialisation in the Dominions, the accumulation of native Dominion finance-capital, the fall in the domestic rate of profit and the search for new markets and new alliances—these must be the inevitable stages which must follow the "Mondification" of the British Empire, and they lead only towards separation all the more surely.

Fourthly, as Lenin showed us, the development of the British Empire, Limited, as a third great capitalist combine in the world's markets, not only competing against the rival capitalist States of America and Germany, but also in the permanent opposition to the fourth Great Power—the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, would immensely increase the danger of war, just as it immensely increases the scope and destructiveness of any possible conflagration. Nor does the definite attempt to stabilise the Empire now being made exclude the possibility of British capitalist decline proceeding so rapidly as to force British imperialism to choose (just as German imperialism in 1914 had to choose) between fighting while it still has the strength or reaching a point when it is too weak to fight.

Here too, our research has a great field to attack.

The growth of the rentier class in Great Britain, and its relationship to home, foreign and colonial investments; the real importance of that "new industrial revolution" which Mr. Baldwin advertised at the Guildhall recently, and which consists in the development of certain luxury trades, electrification, and the working-up of semi-manufactured colonial products like oil and rubber; the increased exploitation of the colonial peasantry, the effects upon the standards of British Labour, the development of working class and peasant movements in the colonies; the actual and potential economic contradictions between Britain and the Dominions, the effect of closer relations between Britain and the Dominions upon world contradictions—these are realms of research which must be opened up by us.

Against Reformism

The Communist International and the Communist Party of Great Britain, of course, will have to carry on and intensify their political fight without waiting for the complete results of all these lines of research, confident that the latter will add new weapons to their armoury as time goes on. The weapons already in use will be overhauled, perfected, and probably in many respects repaired. This also involves attentive study, and particularly of the various kinds of poison which reformism pours into the minds of the British proletariat, deceiving it, confusing it, corrupting it, paralysing its will.

Here the tasks may be roughly divided into two groups. First, the fight against the illusions sown by the reformists. The fight against the "Left" propaganda of the Lansbury group, around the motto of "Socialise the Empire"! i.e., of "Don't touch the Empire until you have a Socialist Government, Don't encourage the colonies to revolt, Don't do anything which might really shake the power of the British imperialists!" The fight against the "Centrist" propaganda of the I.L.P. leaders, grouped around the watchwords of "State purchase of foodstuffs" and "Dominion Home Rule for India," i.e., Once again: "Don't touch the Empire or the power of the imperialists! Help them to carry on their business, if it promotes improved conditions for British labour! Don't worry about it consolidating the power of the British capitalists"! The fight against the open imperialism of the unashamed supporters of class collaboration, MacDonald, Thomas and Co., which hides the exploitation of 400 million workers and peasants within the Empire alone and the hideous reality of imperialist carnage which the world antagonisms, to which British imperialism is a party, are bringing nearer and nearer.

The other fight, which we shall have to approach after a careful discussion in our own ranks, is against the time-honoured and still effective slogan of the reformists to the effect that "a revolution in Britain alone is impossible: Socialist Britain would be starved out: our industry would collapse, and all markets be closed: the workers would turn against us, etc., etc." In a word, the growing decline of British capitalism and the sharpening of class relations in Britain and the British Empire raise before us, too, the problem of "Can Socialism be built up in our country alone?" And the fight against opportunism and opportunist tendencies on this issue will be no less sharp and no less important in Britain than it was in Russia for 25 years!

(Continued at foot of p. 20, col. 1.)



A Masterpiece of Marxism

THE LETTERS OF FRIEDRICH ENGELS TO EDWARD BERNSTEIN. J. H. W. DIETZ, Nachfolger, Berlin, 1925.

AT one time Bernstein used extracts from these letters against the Marxist Wing of the French Labour Movement. They increased the confusion which Engels' preface to the "Class War in France" had already created in the heads of the younger generation of Marxists. Riazanov has since shown in black and white what Kautsky indicated in 1908, in his "Road to Power"—that this preface, the celebrated "testament" of Engels, had been falsified by the leaders of the German Social-Democracy. And the letters to Bernstein, which were not falsified? Do not they show the "Opportunism" of Engels? Quite the reverse! Now that we are at last able to read them through in their context, we have to acknowledge that these letters are some of the most valuable treasures of Marxism.

They are very reminiscent of the exchange of letters between Marx and Kugelmann. Even on the surface they have this in common: both have been kept from the German proletariat. The Marx letters were buried for a long time in the "Neue Zeit." The Engels letters slumbered for almost forty years in Bernstein's desk. They appeared in the German language, in which they were written, only after they had been published in Russian.

These letters of Marx are addressed to a private individual; they contain much that is personal and, therefore, of subordinate interest for wider circles. Engels addressed his letters to the chief editor of the foreign organ, actually the central organ, of the largest Labour Party of that time. They contain the advice of the co-founder of scientific Com-

(Continued from p. 19, col. 2.)

Here only the first few outlines of the problem can be roughly sketched. The change in the world situation, created by the consolidation of the U.S.S.R., the immediate duties of the revolutionary workers towards the subject peoples of the Empire, and the practical effect which a policy of real liberation (both political and economic) will have; the part to be played by a Red British Navy in determining the success of the revolution; the possibilities of an economic alliance between a Workers' Britain and a Workers' Ireland—these and other aspects of the tasks facing a Workers' dictatorship in Britain are directly germane to the question of the path of the British Empire.

The seven months' fight of the miners has convincingly and finally shown that the British working class is as capable of matchless heroism and dogged persistence against seemingly overwhelming odds as our Russian comrades. It is the business of the Communists, by a relentless and ceaseless exposure of reformist slanders and a study of the objective processes within the British Empire, to prove to the workers that heroism and persistence can and will achieve establishment of a Workers' Republic in Britain.

munism to the leading political editor of German Social-Democracy. This lends the letters a peculiar interest.

The correspondence covers a period of 14 years. The first letter is dated February 2nd, 1881, the last postcard is dated July 4th, 1895. The major portion of the letters was written during the first four years. Later Engels was overburdened with the publication of Marx's posthumous writings, and since Kautsky moved to London early in 1885, he told Bernstein whatever he wished through Kautsky as a medium. In 1888, Bernstein also moved to London, together with the whole "Sozialdemokrat." The letters contain so much material showing how Engels looked on things, what attitude and what actions he proposed, that we cannot deal with it all in one article. We must limit ourselves to a few examples.

The Revolutionary Point of View

The anti-Socialist law weighed heavily on the German Labour movement. The leadership of the Party was in the hands of the Reichstag fraction. The majority was of the opinion that the best way to fight against the anti-Socialist law was for the Socialists to show by their own attitude that they are not dangerous. Engels fought against the "molly-coddles," as he expressed himself; he viewed the thing from a revolutionary perspective. He instructed Bernstein:

"Small conditions engender small points of view, so that much understanding and energy is required for anyone who lives in Germany to be able to see beyond the most immediate things, to keep in view the great inter-relation of world events and not to fall into that self-satisfying 'objectivity,' which sees no further than its own nose. This 'objectivity' is really the most narrow-minded subjectivity, even when it is shared by thousands of subjects."

In another place he says:

"What is decisive is the main political situation at home and abroad; and this changes, not remaining the same from day to day. In Germany, on the contrary, a case is examined only under the assumption that present-day German conditions are eternal."

Engels hoped for a great change. For as a result of the tremendous swing of the movement other favourable circumstances arose:

"Even if old Wilhelm merely dies . . . there will be necessary changes. The people of to-day have never experienced and cannot imagine what a decrepit old Crown Prince is likely to do in a situation which has in the meantime become revolutionary. And especially such a vacillating and weak-willed fool as 'our Fritz.'"

Engels expected the impetus from Russia. In his letter of February 22nd, 1882, he wrote:

"We have in Germany a situation which is bringing the revolution nearer with increasing speed, and which must shortly bring our Party to the foreground. We ourselves do not have to do anything—just let our opponents work for us. A new era is coming with a new liberalising, highly undecided and vacillating Kaiser, fashioned after the pattern of Louis XVI. What we lack is merely a timely impetus from the outside."

"This is promised by the situation in Russia, where the beginning of the revolution is only a question of months. Our people in Russia have as good as taken the Tsar captive, disorganised the Government, smashed the popular tradition. Even without a new great blow the collapse must come soon: it will drag on for several years, as from 1789 to 1794; it will, therefore give plenty of time for its effect to be felt in the West and particularly in Germany; so that the situation will be an increasingly rising one, not like 1848, where the reaction was already in full swing all over Europe by March 20th. In short it is a splendid revolutionary situation, such as has not existed before."

In the meantime, the prospects in Russia became worse, and on the other hand they became better in France and in Great Britain. In France the Monarchists were pressing their case; a struggle between them and the radicals seemed to be inevitable. Engels assumed that it would come to a revolutionary outbreak. In Britain too, there were symptoms of a radicalisation of the workers. In September, 1885, he wrote to Bernstein:

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"Since the Russians seem to have been stuck, we must begin ourselves. And when the three big Western countries will be set in motion, that will suffice."

And shortly before that, on May 15th, 1885 he wrote:

"But do not forget the old rule: Not to forget the future of the movement in the present movement and present struggles. The future belongs to us."

The anti-Socialist law was actually abolished only after the change of monarchs; not as a result of the retreat, but on the contrary, through the mighty attack of the Party.

The National Question

Marx and Engels were always warmly in favour of the liberation of Poland as well as the liberation of Ireland. Polish liberation could be achieved only against Tsarism. The Irish "were tripping up the slow John Bull." Marx and Engels were everywhere in favour of immediate and direct liberation of nations where it served the progress of revolutionary development. But they quite decisively refused to favour an immediate struggle for national emancipation, where this would serve the counter-revolution.

The attitude of the "Neue Rheinische Zeitung" towards the Slavs, who in 1848 were misused by the Hapsburgs, is well known. In the letter of February 22nd, 1882, already quoted above, Engels specifically took up the question of liberating the Balkan Slavs. At that time the Tsar was playing the role of the emancipator of the Slavs. He was looking for an opportunity to interfere in the Balkan tangle, and if possible to hatch a war.

International demonstrations of sympathy for the oppressed peoples in the Balkans only encouraged Tsarism all the more. Bernstein expressed such sympathies, Engels was opposed to them. He knew the situation very well, and clearly explained who would benefit by the cry for the immediate and direct liberation of the Balkan Slavs. A war in the Balkans would mean a world war, with quite incalculable results. Quite definitely it would spoil an excellent revolutionary situation. We have already quoted the passage about the revolutionary situation from the letter of February 22nd, 1882. To this Engels added:

"One thing can spoil it: Skobelev himself has already said it in Paris: only a foreign war can save Russia from the morass into which it is sinking. This war is to make good all the damage which our people at the sacrifice of their lives have done to Tsarism. It will at any rate suffice to break the imprisonment of the Tsar, to expose the Social Revolutionaries to the general popular anger, to withdraw from them the support of the Liberals, which they now possess, and all our sacrifices would be in vain; everything would have to be started all over again from the beginning, under less favourable circumstances. But such a game is difficult to play twice, and in Germany too, they can act on the assumption that our people will either acquiesce in the general patriotic howl, or call out against themselves an outburst of anger, against which the anger following assaults on government officials would be child's play; then Bismarck would answer the last elections quite differently from the way in which he acted at the time of the anti-Socialist law.

"If there is peace, then the Russian pan-Slavists are beaten and must retreat at once. Then the Kaiser* can at best make a last attempt with the old bankrupt bureaucrats and generals, who have already been shipwrecked. This can last at most a few months, and then there is no way out except to call in the Liberals, i.e., to call a National Assembly of some sort. And that as far as I know Russia is revolution à la 1789. Under such circumstances why should I wish for war?"

During the Serbian-Bulgarian war, in his letter of October 9th, 1886, Engels once more returned to the question of the liberation of the Balkan Slavs. He wrote:

"As matters stand now, my point of view is this: (1) to support the South Slavs if and so long as they oppose Russia; then they go with the European revolu-

tionary movement; (2) However, if they oppose the Turks, i.e., if they demand at all costs the annexation of the Serbs and Bulgarians who at least at present are Turkish, then consciously or unconsciously they are doing Russia's work, and that we cannot support. This can be achieved only by creating the danger of a European war, and the cause is not worth that; these gentlemen must wait, just like the people of Alsace-Lorraine and Trieste. In addition every new attack against the Turks, under present conditions, can only lead to one of two things: either the victorious small nationalities—and they can be victorious only through Russia—will come directly under the Russian yoke; or—have a look at the language map of the peninsula—they will spring at each other's throats."

This main point of view did not change. He expressed it briefly and to the point in the letter of February 22nd, 1882.

"We must work for the liberation of the West European proletariat and must subordinate everything else to this goal."

To-day, when we are struggling with world imperialism for the liberation of the world proletariat, we are completely for the liberation of all oppressed nations, not for poetic-humanitarian reasons, but because in this war we shall be able to give imperialism its death blow all the more quickly.

The victorious Russian proletariat has realised Engels' statement:

"The victory of the proletariat liberates them (the oppressed nations) really and of necessity."

The Development of the Proletarian Revolution

Early radicalism could not understand why Marx and Engels fought so strongly against the slogan: "One reactionary mass." This formulation of Lassalle's, it was thought would facilitate the building up of the proletarian class front and create a protective wall against dickerings with the bourgeois parties, etc. Bernstein and his friend, Vollmar—who at that time were both wild petty bourgeois, as they later became tame petty bourgeois—openly spoke of Marx and Engels as opportunists. Engels had to disagree with them again and again on this question. He criticised this slogan of one reactionary mass from the point of view of the revolution, and gave a fine analysis of the process of the revolution.

In a letter of November 2-3, 1882, in which among other things he takes up an article by Vollmar, Engels writes:

"The real weakness of the second article (which I noticed but did not take seriously) is the childish concept of the next revolution, which is supposed to begin with a division of the whole world into two armies, 'here wolves, there sheep,' we, on the one hand and the entire 'one reactionary mass' on the other. This means that the revolution is supposed to begin with the fifth act instead of at the first, which the mass of all opposition parties would unite against the government and its bucks and thus triumph; whereupon the individual parties among the victors will work one after the other, become impossible, until finally the mass of the people will be entirely on our side and then the well-known march towards the decisive battle can take place."

On April, 1883, Engels wrote:

"And here the honourable Bismarck is working for us like half a dozen. His latest theory that the National Constitution is nothing more than an agreement made by the government, which any day can be replaced by another without the consent of the Reichstag, is a very fortunate thing for us. Let him only try it. And then his open working toward the conflict his stupid contemptible Bödiker and Co., in the Reichstag—all that is grist for our mill. At any rate stop this phrase about 'one reactionary mass' which is at best suited for declamation (or for a real revolutionary situation). For the historic joke which is working for us consists precisely in this, that the various elements of this feudal and bourgeois mass are working against each other, are devouring each other to our advantage; that is, they are the precise opposite of a uniform

* So in the German, but Engels was obviously referring to the Tsar.

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mass, which the fool fancies that he is done with when he calls them all reactionaries. On the contrary, all these diverse scoundrels must mutually nullify each other, totally run each other, and disgrace each other, and thus prepare the ground for us by showing their inability in one way after another."

A few months later (August 27th, 1883) he wrote:

"With us the first direct result of the revolution as far as form goes, can and must be done other than the bourgeois republic. However, that is only a brief passing moment since fortunately we have no purely Republican bourgeois Party. The bourgeois Republic, perhaps with the progressive party at its head, will serve us for winning over the great mass of the workers for revolutionary Socialism. That would be over in one or two years. It would also serve us to work through fundamentally all the possible parties except ours, each raising itself. Only then can we arrive with success.

"The big mistake of the Germans is that they imagine that revolution is a thing that can be made overnight. As a matter of fact it is a long process of development of the masses under swiftly-moving circumstances."

As a matter of fact it was one of the biggest mistakes of the revolutionary leaders of the German proletariat that they imagined the revolution as a single act. Lenin understood excellently the process of revolution. How carefully he adapted his slogans to the development of the masses in the revolution!

Engels' formulation of the process of revolution found a brilliant confirmation in the Russian Revolution. The policy which was based upon this concept found its reward: it led the proletariat to victory.

The Democratic Republic

The Social-Democrats spread the legend that Marx and Engels treated the Democratic Republic as the State form by which the proletariat in power exercises its rule. At the recent Congress of the Austrian Social-Democracy at Linz, Otto Bauer said:

"Engels and Marx have repeatedly said that the democratic republic is a specific form of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat."

But where did Marx say this? And where did Engels say it? I do not ask this in order to disconcert Otto Bauer. He will never be disconcerted. As a matter of fact, he could reply: Engels said it but in slightly different words.

In his criticism of the draft for the Erfurt Programme, where he complains that immediate "concrete questions" such as the question as to how we shall achieve power are evaded, and that instead "abstract political questions" are placed in the foreground, Engels wrote:

"If anything is true it is that our Party and the working class can only achieve power under the form of a democratic republic. This is even the specific form for the dictatorship of the proletariat."

Engels is here treating the concrete question—the question of under what political form the proletariat achieves power, and not the question as to how the proletariat organises its power after it has achieved it. Engels here speaks of the Democratic Republic, as Lenin put it, as "the next step to the dictatorship of the proletariat." Otto Bauer transforms the phrase "specific form for the dictatorship of the proletariat" into "the specific form of the dictatorship of the proletariat."

Engels' letters leave no doubt as to how this passage is to be interpreted. We have already quoted the passage from the letter of August 7th, 1883, the contents of which completely tally with the quotation from the criticism of the draft of the Erfurt Programme. In the following year, on March 24th, 1884, Engels once more discussed the Democratic Republic. He wrote:

"Liberal Constitutional Monarchy is an adequate form for the rule of the bourgeoisie. (1) In the beginning when the bourgeoisie is not yet done with

absolute monarchy entirely, and (2) at the end when the proletariat makes the democratic republic too dangerous. Yet the democratic republic always remains the **last form** of bourgeois rule—the form in which bourgeois rule goes to pieces."

The phrase "last form" is underlined by Engels himself. Even more important, however, is the following passage from the same letter:

"The March article was in spite of all these things, very good; the essential points were quite correctly emphasised. Also in the following issues, on the peasant talk of the Volkspartei people, only the reference to the 'concept' of democracy was bad. This concept is confused with the old notion of Demos, and does not help us a bit. What should have been said in my opinion is: the proletariat also needs democratic forms in order to seize political power; but these forms are for the proletariat like all political forms, only means to an end. But if to-day democracy is desired as a goal, it must be based on the peasants and the petty bourgeoisie, that is on classes which are in the process of dissolution, and which when they are artificially maintained become reactionary against the proletariat."

Engels did not recognise any "pure" democracy. He analysed the concept according to its class character. He expressly stated that a form of government which respected the bourgeois democratic methods of governing would serve not the proletariat but reaction. The proletariat does not bind itself to previous forms of government, for this would mean nothing else than that it surrenders the exercise of its power. As far as the estimation of the peasantry is concerned, we must observe that Engels in his "Peasant War" characterises the peasantry as the natural ally of the proletariat. The peasantry's transition to Socialism is facilitated in every way. In this letter he writes of the peasantry as reactionary in so far as they maintain themselves "artificially," i.e., perpetuate themselves.

All in all: the democratic republic is the last form of bourgeois domination, the form in which it goes to pieces; it has nothing to do with the rule of the proletariat.

The Proletarian State

Engels expressed himself not only on the form of the State under which we achieve power, but also on the Proletarian State, i.e., the State form by which the proletariat will exercise its power.

It will be recalled that Edward Bernstein in his "Principles of Socialism," etc., made the point that Marx and Engels at one time gave up their conceptions of the State and of the Revolution. In this he supported himself on the 1872 preface to the "Communist Manifesto," in which it was clearly said that the "Communist Manifesto" is out of date in certain places, since the Commune has proved that "the working class cannot simply take over the old State machinery and set it in motion for its own purposes." (See "The Civil War in France," an address of the General Council of the International Workmen's Association where this is further developed.)*

Bernstein quotes this passage not less than three times. He interprets it as a warning against revolution.

The confusion caused by Bernstein is obvious: he turned the sense of this sentence and the facts upside down.

The best that can be said for Bernstein is that it was simply impossible for him to grasp Marxism, and that, therefore, he did this unconsciously. To our surprise we now see that Friedrich Engels clearly explained the correct meaning of this preface to Bernstein fifteen years earlier. In his letter of January 1st, 1884 Engels wrote:

"Regarding your previous query as to the passage in the preface to the Manifesto, out of the 'Civil War in France,' you will no doubt agree with the reply which is given in the original ('Civil War,' p. 19, et seq.). I am sending you a copy in case you have none to hand. It simply deals with the fact that the victorious proletariat must first transform the old bureaucratic administrative and centralised State

* Communist Bookshop, 16 King Street, London, W.C.2, (1s.).

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power, before it can use it for its purposes; it is for that reason that all bourgeois republicans since 1848, so long as they were in the opposition, attacked this apparatus, but as soon as they entered the Government they took it over, used and used it without change, partly against the reaction, but still more against the proletariat.

"The fact that in the civil war the unconscious tendencies of the Commune came out as more or less conscious plans, was under the circumstances justified, even necessary. The Russians, quite correctly emphasised this part of the civil war in their translation of the manifesto. If the preparation of this book had not been so hasty, that and other things could have been done."

It was not a question of proving the impotence of the proletariat against the old State apparatus, but of proving that the proletariat knew how to organise its own State apparatus. The proletariat conquers State power, but it changes it. In the "Civil War" it is stated that the proletariat abolishes parliamentarism, and does not let itself be represented and crushed in Parliament, the agricultural producers are to be brought under the spiritual leadership of the workers in the cities—that was the "finally discovered political form" under which the economic liberation of labour could be carried out. It was this state that Engels saw.

It is not important for us how Bernstein now calms his literary conscience. Much more important for us is that we get here a clear definition of the proletarian State, a clear definition of a State that has not the least thing in common with the democratic republic, but in principle corresponds completely with the proletarian Soviet State.

The Party

In Germany there was for many years a considerable discussion on the theme "Masses and Leaders." Among the old "Lefts" something like the following opinion existed: the masses are good, the leaders are bad. It could not be expected that they should actually become the leaders of the revolution. The "Lefts" believed that this did not matter much. The masses would rectify the errors of the leaders. For that reason, the question of a split in the Party did not arise.

In the exchange of letters, the question of masses and leaders plays a great role, but Engels represents a point of view which is quite different from that of the old "Lefts." He is also enthusiastic about the masses. He believes in their initiative. The German workers stood every test splendidly. He says that "the gentlemen leaders were being pushed forward by the masses." But he is not satisfied with that; he demands from the leaders that they should push the masses ahead. He is opposed to leaving the bad leaders at the helm. (Letter of November 11, 1884). Favourable circumstances alone cannot do it. It is a question whether "the leaders have grown up to the circumstances."

He was in favour of making an issue of it at once and letting it come to a split in the Party. But the anti-Socialist law did not permit a free debate, and so the responsibility for a split could have been shifted by the Opportunists to the shoulders of the Radicals. In his letter of June 5th, 1884, Engels explicitly instructed Bernstein how to prepare to split the Party. He drew the following conclusions:

- "Therefore, (1) Defer the break where possible.
- (2) If it is unavoidable, let it be made by them.
- (3) In the meantime prepare everything. (4) Do nothing without at least Bebel and possibly Liebknecht, who will become quite good again (perhaps too good), as soon as he sees that the thing is unavoidable, and
- (5) The strategic posts on the "Sozialdemokrat" against everything to the last shot. That is my opinion."

In 1885 when a conflict broke out in the Reichstag fraction on the question of granting the steamship subvention, Engels wrote a series of letters about the split. Kautsky was at that time in London, and supported Engels in this.

Finally, Engels saw that the Party despite its division into Right and Left Wings remained united, but still comforted himself with the thought that the Left Wing was the leading wing.

Engels' view on the role of the leaders and the Party led in a direct line to the point of view to which the Bolsheviks, made wise by experience, arrived at first among the Marxists.

Elastic Tactics

Engels' vision was always fixed on the coming revolution. All means which promoted the revolution were right for him, provided that they brought "more use than harm." He is quite free from the dogmatic formula which either sanctify or damn certain parliamentary usages. In 1884 the tactic of the by-elections played an important role. In his letter of May 17th of that year Engels wrote:

"Singer was here; among other things I told him my views about the tactic of by-elections. I consider it very stupid to set up a rule for all cases, which won't be kept in reality. We have a great power in our hands which remains totally unused if non-participation in the elections is declared in all cases, if we have no candidate of our own in the by-elections. In reality, there have always been in such cases election agreements, for example, with the Centre: we shall vote here for you if you will vote there for us, and we have obtained some seats in this way. Naturally, stupidities occur in such cases, but these have always occurred, and that is no reason for committing an even greater stupidity.

"I even told him that for example, in places like Berlin, where the election fight is entirely between us and the Progressives, that agreements prior to the main elections are not out of the question: you let us have this election district and we will give you that one—of course, only if we can count on keeping the district. What seems to me to be awkward is only this: to try to set up at Congresses in advance general rules for tactical cases which belong to the future."

Similar "heretical opinions" were expressed by Engels on various questions, opinions which would give an old "Left-Winger" the shivers. As is well known, this sort of radicalism became exhausted in setting up as sacred "principles": to make no alliances in the main elections, to vote against the budget, when the Kaiser is cheered to leave the Session Hall, etc. This nay-saying radicalism suffered inglorious bankruptcy at the outbreak of the war as well as outbreak of the revolution. He who really wants to be a revolutionist may—and under certain circumstances must—make use of the most daring means. It is sufficient to recall Brest-Litovsk.

Engels was opposed to deciding certain tactical questions for the whole future according to a general principle, but he always fought with all his might against those who followed a policy without principles. Thus for example, when the Party of Malon and Brousse, at the Congress of St. Etienne, adopted the statutes of the First International as their programme in order to catch more workers' votes, Engels wrote:

"The proletarian class character of the programme is abolished. The Communist Considerants of 1880 are replaced by the Statutes of the International of 1866, which had to be formulated as they were precisely because the French Proudhonists were so backward and yet could not be excluded."

And when these leaders declared that they must gather into the Party all the workers regardless of political opinion for the carrying out of labour demands, Engels declared this a "direct treachery."

Marx, Engels and Social-Democracy

Shortly before his death Engels opposed the use of the words "Social-Democracy" because the expression was too elastic. But for him this was not merely a question of words. Marx and Engels had always kept a certain distance from Social-Democracy. By 1881 they had refused to write for the "Sozialdemokrat." In the letter of April 4th, 1881, Engels wrote:

"We have not yet appeared directly and under our own names in the 'Sozialdemokrat'; this is not, as you

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may be sure, because of the way in which you have been editing the paper in the past. On the contrary, it is because of the opinions in Germany. We have, it is true, been promised that this will not happen again, and also that the revolutionary character of the Party will be more outspoken and firm. But we should like to see this happen first; we have too little faith in the revolutionary character of some of the gentlemen (rather the contrary); for that reason it would be very desirable for us to get a verbatim report of all of the speeches held by our deputies. After you have made use of them, you can easily send them here for a few days, I promise to return them promptly. It will help to get out of the way the last obstacles which still exist between us and the Party in Germany—through our fault. This is between ourselves."

Later, Engels published several essays in "Sozialdemokrat"; but even in his letter of February 27th, 1883, he asked Bernstein not to address him as comrade, because he was not a comrade in the strict sense of the word, since he was not a member of the German Party.

Engels on Kautsky

In the exchange of letters a number of opinions are given about various leading personalities of the Labour movement of that time. Engels spoke repeatedly and specifically about Guesde, about Hyndman, about Kautsky, etc. We cannot go into details, but since the legend has been spread that Engels considered Kautsky as the spiritual heir of Marx, certain actual expressions of opinion by Engels on Kautsky should be quoted here. In his letter of February 8th, 1883, Engels wrote:

"Kautsky has sent me his pamphlet about American corn. Priceless irony: in three years the population is to be limited, because otherwise it will have nothing to eat! Now there is not enough population in order to consume American products! This comes from studying so-called 'questions' one after the other without connection."

And in his letter of February 27th, 1883, Engels wrote:

"Kautsky has the misfortune that in his hands complicated questions do not become simple, but simple questions become complicated."

This view Engels expressed even before Marx's death. This was obviously also Marx's view about his "heir."

Marx's Death

In the letters it is once more confirmed that Marx and Engels always consulted each other before taking any public steps. This Engels states expressly in his letter of July 15th, 1882. Engels characterised the "Anti-Duhring" as "an attempt to give an encyclopedic review of our opinions on philosophic, scientific and historical problems."

But from these letters it is clear that Marx was the more important of the two. Engels confirmed this without envy. Very interesting in this connection is the letter of October 25th, 1881, to which we wish to call particular attention. Engels characterised Marx as a genius.

"That is a thing so unique that those of us who do not have it, know beforehand that for us it is unattainable. But to be able to envy such a thing, one must be terribly petty."

On March 14th, 1883, Marx died. In this collection of letters there is published the wonderful letter which Engels wrote to Bernstein on the same day and which has been published repeatedly. The closing sentences may well be quoted here once more:

"What this man was worth to us theoretically, and on all decisive moments practically also, can be imagined only if one has been with him continually. His great points of view will disappear from the stage with him for years to come. These are things for which the rest of us are not big enough. The movement will go its way, but it will miss the calm timely considered approach that has so far saved it many a long mistaken path."

Who can help thinking of Lenin on reading these lines! Of course, the movement goes its way, but we must miss

the calm timely and considered approach of Lenin, which saved us many a long mistaken path.

Marxism and Leninism

Fourteen years ago I heard a lecture by Edward Bernstein, which he delivered before an audience of students and intellectuals on the topic: "What Survives of Marxism?"

After many "on the one hands and on the other hands" he concluded his remarks with the following anecdote: Charles I. was arrested by a cavalry lieutenant. When the king asked to see the order for his arrest, the lieutenant pointed out of the windows where his squadron was lined up. Whereupon Charles I. remarked: "A very clear handwriting." Well, said Bernstein, when we see the tremendous development of capitalism on the one hand, and the development of the modern class struggle on the other hand—things which Marx prophesied—we must on our part say that we see here a proof of Marxism, given in a very clear handwriting.

Marx gave quite another expression to his teachings. He wrote to Weidemeyer:

"As far as I am concerned, the credit should not be given to me for having discovered the existence of classes in modern society or their struggle with each other. Bourgeois historians had long before me discovered the historical development of this class struggle, and bourgeois economists analysed the economic anatomy of the classes. What I did was to show (1) that the existence of classes is connected only with definite historical struggles in the development of production; (2) that the class struggle would necessarily lead to the dictatorship of the proletariat; (3) that this dictatorship itself would be only a transition to the abolition of all classes, and to a classless society."

The dictatorship of the proletariat—that is the essence of Marxism. But where do we find a clear confirmation of it? In the Russian Revolution! The "very clear handwriting" was furnished by the Bolsheviks.

The collection of letters also contains that letter by Engels which Bernstein so often used against the Marxists, namely, the letter in which Engels said that Marx repudiated the doctrinaireism of Larfargue by saying, "One thing is certain, I am no Marxist!" The same Marx, however, joyously both in public and in private letters supported the Commune and he would have just as joyously supported the proletarian revolution in Russia, which so far represents his greatest triumph. The letters of Engels confirm, from the first to the last line how correctly Lenin understood Marxism, how he always worked in the spirit of Marx. We can say with certainty that in answer to the counter-revolutionary slanders of his faithless disciples against the proletarian dictatorship, Marx could well have said: "One thing is certain, I am a Leninist!"

Dwarfs and Giants

The collection of letters contains an introduction and notes by Bernstein. How these are written can be seen by two examples:

"Letters of Engels written in 1882 to me . . . are still worth reading to-day quite apart from the fact that they have acquired a new reality through the increasing resemblance of Soviet Russia's foreign policy of the former Tsarist Russia."

These letters, then, are to be a weapon against Bolshevism!

This is Bernstein's note to the letter in which Engels declares that we should subordinate all our deeds and actions to the proletarian revolution.

Bernstein's note to a letter in which Engels writes about Johann Philipp Becker states:

"He distinguished himself as soldier in 1849 in the Palatine-Baden uprising for the national constitution, but was nothing more than an adventurer, etc."

For this counter-revolutionary philistine everyone is an adventurer who not only with his mouth and pen, but also with weapons in hand, fights for his convictions.

But enough of this junk. These are external defects in the book which should not hold us back from studying it thoroughly.

Besides the dwarf Bernstein, the giant Engels looks all the mightier.

JULIUS ALPARI.