

# To the Communists of China and the World

On the Prospects and Tasks of the Chinese Revolution

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In recent months, a large peasant movement has been observed in some provinces in southern China. The proletarian press around the world, alongside the reactionary papers echo this struggle. The Chinese revolution, ravaged, bleeding and betrayed, is showing signs it's still alive. Hopefully, it won't be long until it raises its proletarian head again. To prepare for it, it is necessary to place the question of the Chinese revolution on the agenda of the world working class.

We, the internationalist Communist-Left, consider it our duty, at present, to raise our voices in order to draw the attention of all communists and of all the revolutionary workers' vanguards to the tasks of the liberation of the big Asian country of the East, while, at the same time, obstructing the erroneous politics of the leading fraction of the Communist International, which manifestly threatens to undermine the future Chinese revolution, just as it led the revolution of 1925-27 to ruin.

The signs of regeneration the Chinese revolution has show in the countryside are proof of its inner strength and grandiose possibilities, but the task lies in transforming these possibilities into reality. The first condition for success is the understanding of what is happening, that is, in the Marxist determination of the forces in motion, and secondly, in a proper evaluation of the stage the struggle has reached. Under these two relations, the leadership of the Communist International is on a false path.

## **Does The Administration of Soviets Exist?**

The Stalinist press is full of information about 'the administrative Soviets' established, so it is said, in vast provinces of China under the protection of the Red Army. Workers in different countries greet this news with enthusiasm. How could it be otherwise?

The formation of a Soviet-like government in a considerable part of China and the creation of a Chinese Red Army would be a gigantic success for the world revolution. But we must say openly and clearly: This does not yet exist.

The news that reaches us from the vast regions of China allows us to, with a Marxist understanding of the internal forces of the unfolding process, confidently

reject the Stalinist assessment of the unfolding events as false and very dangerous for the further development of the revolution.

The history of China has been, for centuries, a history of terrible uprisings of the poor and starving peasantry. No less than five times in the last two millenia have the Chinese peasants succeeded in achieving a complete break-up of land ownership. Each time, this cyclical movement was an expression of economic stagnation into social conditions that offered no outlet.

But China's integration into the world economy has opened up new possibilities for the Chinese people. Capitalism broke into China from outside. The backward Chinese bourgeoisie has become the intermediary between foreign capital and the cruelly exploited masses of its country. Foreign imperialists and the Chinese bourgeoisie combine the methods of capitalist exploitation with the inherited methods of serfdom and usury. The main idea of the Stalinists was to make the Chinese bourgeoisie the leading element of the national revolution against feudalism and imperialism. The resulting political strategy lost the revolution. The Chinese proletariat paid dearly to learn this lesson. The bourgeoisie cannot, will not, and will never be able to fight against feudalism, since they're the most important part in the system of its exploitation, nor against imperialism, of which they're the agent and whose military protection it finds itself under.

From the moment it was clear that the Chinese proletariat, despite all the opposing influence of the Communist International, was seeking an independent revolutionary path, the bourgeoisie, with the help of foreign imperialisms, crushed the workers, starting in Shanghai. Since it became clear that the friendship with Moscow was incapable of paralysing the movement, the bourgeoisie crushed the peasant uprising. The months of the spring and summer of 1927 were soaked in the blood of the proletariat, the scenes of the Chinese bourgeoisie's greatest crimes.

The Stalinist fraction, frightened by the consequences of its mistakes, tried, at the end of 1927, to regain in one fell swoop all that it had lost over several years. Thus the Canton uprising was organised. The leaders began from the position that the revolution was advancing just like the past. In fact, the revolutionary momentum was already in decline. The heroism of the proletarian vanguard in Canton could not destroy the appalling consequences caused by the leaders' adventurism. The Canton revolt was drowned in blood. The Second Chinese Revolution was definitively crushed. We, representatives of the internationalist Communist-Left, were, from the very beginning, opponents of the Communist Party's entry into the Kuomintang, in the name of an independent proletarian politics. From the very beginning of the development of the revolutionary movement, we demanded that the workers take the leadership of the peasant

uprising into their own hands in order to bring about the agrarian revolution. This was rejected. Our comrades were persecuted, expelled from the I.C. and, in the U.S.S.R., they were imprisoned and exiled. In the name of what? In the name of the alliance with Chiang Kai-Shek.

## **The Crushing of the Chinese Revolution**

After the counter-revolutionary coup in Shanghai and Wuhan, we in the Communist-Left persistently emphasised that the Second Chinese Revolution was over, that a period of temporary triumph of the counter-revolution was opening up and that attempts at rebellion by the advanced workers, given the crushing and exhaustion of the masses, would inevitably mean the further annihilation of the forces of revolution. We called for a switch to the defensive. The strengthening of the party's illegal organisations, the participation in the proletariat's economic struggles, and the mobilisation of the masses on the slogans of democracy: the independence of China and the right to position themselves for the peoples of China, the national assembly, the confiscation of land, the eight-hour day. Such a policy was to give the communist vanguard the chance to gradually recover from the defeats it had suffered, to resume links with the trade unions and the disorganised masses of the city and countryside and to meet the new momentum of the masses later, well armed.

The Stalinist fraction declared that our policy was liquidating, and they, as has been repeated more than once in history, leapt from opportunism to adventurism. In February 1928, when the Chinese revolution was in complete decline, the 9th plenum of the C.E. of the I.C. proclaimed armed uprising in China. The result of this madness was the further crushing of the workers, the extermination of the best revolutionaries, the disintegration of the party, the demoralisation sown in the ranks of the workers.

The decline of the revolution and the temporary weakening of the militarist struggle created the possibility of some economic animation in the country. Strikes broke out again, but they developed without the party, which, misunderstanding the circumstances, was completely incapable of drawing out the new perspectives to the masses and linking them with the democratic axioms of the transitional period.

The result of the adventurist and opportunist mistakes is that the Chinese party now only counts a few thousand workers. The red trade unions, according to party figures, number approximately 60,000 workers, whereas during the months of the revolutionary rise, they numbered around three million.

The counter-revolution had infinitely more direct and crueller consequences for the workers than for the peasants. In China the workers are not numerous and are concentrated in the industrial centres. As for the peasants, they are protected, to a certain extent, by their multitude and their scattering over vast expanses. The revolutionary years have educated many the local leaders in the countryside whom the counter-revolution failed to exterminate. An important number of revolutionary workers saved themselves from militarism by heading for the countryside, and during the last decade many weapons have remained hidden throughout the country. During conflicts with local powers and military detachments, weapons reappeared again and red partisan detachments were created. Frequent conflicts take place in the armies of the bourgeois counterrevolution, sometimes there are open rebellions. Soldiers passed with their weapons to the side of the peasants, sometimes in groups or entire detachments.

## **The Peasant Uprising**

That is why it is completely natural that, even after the crushing of the revolution, waves of peasant rebellions continue to develop in the different provinces of the country. And nowadays they have spread with particular violence. With armed force, the peasants drive out and exterminate the local landowners (to the extent that they are in their region) and especially the gentry and the toukiuns [warlords], alongside the representatives of the ruling class, the landowning bureaucrats, the usurers and the kulaks. When Stalinists speak of a government of Soviets created by the peasants in an important part of China, they not only demonstrate their lightness of mind, but they obscure and denature the fundamental problem of the Chinese revolution. The peasant mass, even the most revolutionary, is incapable of creating an independent government. It can only support the rule of another class established in the cities. The peasants, in all major movements, follow either the bourgeoisie or the proletariat. What we call the 'peasant party' may merely mask this fact temporarily, but it does not suppress it. The soviets are organs of power of the working class as opposed to the bourgeoisie. This means that the peasants are incapable of creating a system of Soviets with their own forces. It is the same for the army. More than once in China, Russia and other countries, the peasants created detachments of partisans who fought with an admirable will and tenacity. But they were partisans linked to a particular province, and incapable of carrying out large-scale centralised strategic operations. Only the hegemony of the proletariat in the decisive political and industrial centres of a nation creates the indispensable preconditions, both for the creation of a red army and for the formation of a system of Soviets in the countryside. For those who don't understand this, the revolution remains a closed book.

The Chinese proletariat is only beginning to emerge from counter-revolutionary paralysis.

The peasant movement is currently developing to a great extent independently of the labour movement, according to its own laws and special rhythm. The peasant movement is currently developing to a great extent independently of the labour movement, according to its own laws and special rhythm. Therefore, the whole problem of the Chinese revolution lies in the political combination and organic linkage of the proletarian uprising with the peasant uprising. He who speaks of the victory of the Sovietist revolution in China, even in some provinces of the South, while the industrial North remains passive, ignores in turn the twofold and simple problems of the Chinese revolution, i.e. the problem of workers' and peasants' collaboration and that of workers' leadership in this collaboration. The broad development of peasant uprising can unquestionably give an impetus to the animation of political struggles in the industrial centres. We firmly count on this. But this in no way means that the revolutionary awakening of the proletariat leads directly to the conquest of power, or simply leads to a struggle for power. The awakening of the proletariat may in the latter times take on the character of partial economic and political struggles, defensive and offensive. How long will it take the proletariat, and first of all its vanguard, to become capable of taking over the leadership of the revolutionary nation? In all cases not in a few weeks, nor in a few months. The commandments of the bureaucratic leadership cannot replace the development of the class and its party.

The Chinese communists currently need a long-term policy. Their task is not to throw their forces into the scattered hotbeds of peasant uprisings, because their party, small and weak, will in no way be able to embrace them. The communists' duty is to concentrate their forces in the workshops and factories, in the workers' neighbourhoods, to explain to the workers the meaning of what is happening in the countryside, to revive the discouraged and dejected, to rally them to the struggle for economic demands, for the watchwords of democracy and agrarian revolution. It is only on this path, i.e. through the awakening and reorganisation of the workers, that the party can become the leader of the peasant uprising, i.e. of the national revolution as a whole.

To maintain the illusions of adventurism, and to mask the weakness of the proletarian vanguard, the Stalinists say: at present it is only the democratic dictatorship and not the proletarian dictatorship.

At this fundamental point, adventurism makes full use of the arguments of opportunism. Finding the experience with the Kuomintang insufficient, the Stalinists

prepare for the future revolution a new method to lull and delude the proletariat under the banner of 'democratic dictatorship'.

## **The Slogan of the Soviets**

When the most advanced Chinese workers put forward the slogan of the Soviets, they mean by this: we want to do what the Russian workers did. Even yesterday the Stalinists responded to this: 'Impossible, you have the Kuomintang and it will do whatever it takes'. Today the same leaders answer in a more evasive manner: 'It will be necessary to create soviets, not to realise the proletarian dictatorship, but to realise the democratic dictatorship'. With this the proletariat is told that the dictatorship will not be in its hands. This means that there are hitherto unknown forces capable of realising a revolutionary dictatorship in China. Thus the formula of democratic dictatorship opens the big doors to new illusions for workers and peasants on the part of bourgeois democracy.

To pave the way for the 'democratic dictatorship', the Stalinists portray the Chinese counter-revolution as feudal-militarist and imperialist. This is why they exclude the Chinese bourgeoisie from the counter-revolution, i.e. they idealise it as before. But in fact, the militarists express the interests of the Chinese bourgeoisie, inseparable from the interests and social relations of serfdom. The Chinese bourgeoisie is in a position that is too hostile to the people, too closely linked to foreign imperialisms, and too afraid of revolution to want or tend to rule in its own name, with parliamentary methods.

China's militarist-fascist regime is the expression of the anti-national and anti-revolutionary character of the Chinese bourgeoisie. The Chinese counter-revolution is not the counter-revolution of feudalism against bourgeois society: it is the counter-revolution of all landlords, i.e. first and foremost of all bourgeois landlords against workers and peasants.

The proletarian uprising in China can and will only be inflexible - directed against the bourgeoisie. The peasant uprising in China is, to an immeasurably greater extent than it was in Russia, an uprising against the bourgeoisie. The independent class of landowners in China is non-existent. Landowners are of the bourgeoisie. The 'gentry' and the 'toukiuns', against whom the peasant uprisings are directed, represent the inner links of bourgeois and imperialist exploitation. Whereas the October revolution in the U.S.S.R., in its first stage, pitted all peasants as a class against the landowning class (and only after several months did it begin civil war in the countryside), in China every peasant uprising, right from its first steps, is a civil war of the poor peasants against the kulaks, that is to say against the rural bourgeoisie.

The middle peasants in China are non-existent. The poor peasants form 80 per cent of the peasant mass. It is they - it is only they - who perform a revolutionary task. It cannot be an alliance of the workers with the entire peasant mass, but only with the poor peasants. They have a common enemy: the bourgeoisie. No one other than the proletariat can lead the poor peasants to victory. Collective victory can lead to no other regime than the dictatorship of the proletariat. It is only this regime that can establish the Soviet system and create the Red Army, which is the military expression of the dictatorship of the proletariat, supported by the poor peasants.

The Stalinists say that the democratic dictatorship, as the next stage of the revolution, will further develop into the dictatorship of the proletariat. Such is currently the teaching of the C.I., not only for China, but for all the countries of the East. It breaks completely with Marx's teaching on the state, and with Lenin's conclusions on the function of the state in the revolution. The democratic dictatorship, in contrast to the proletarian dictatorship, means the bourgeois-democratic dictatorship. The transition from the bourgeois dictatorship to the proletarian dictatorship can certainly not be accomplished by the path of a peaceful outcome. The dictatorship of the proletariat can only replace the democratic, or even fascist, dictatorship through armed uprising.

The peaceful outcome of the democratic revolution into a socialist revolution is only possible under the dictatorship of the class itself, and more precisely of the proletariat. The transition from democratic to socialist acts took place in the Soviet Union under the regime of the dictatorship of the proletariat. In China the transition to the socialist stage will take place even more rapidly because the most basic democratic tasks have an even more anti-capitalist and anti-bourgeois character in China than in Russia.

It seems that the Stalinists still need a failure paid for with the blood of the workers to finally decide to say: 'The revolution has passed to a higher degree so the slogan shall become the dictatorship of the proletariat'.

## **Towards the Third Chinese Revolution**

Today, no one can yet say to what extent the reflections of the Second Chinese Revolution will combine with the dawn of the Third Chinese Revolution. No one can predict whether the outbreaks of peasant uprisings will continue unbroken during the period in which the proletarian vanguard will need to strengthen itself, to engage the working class in battle and match its struggle for power with the generalised peasant offensives against its immediate enemies.

What characterises the current peasant movement is the tendency of the peasants to want to give it a Soviet-like shape - or at least a Soviet-like name - and to confuse the partisan detachments with the Red Army. This testifies to the energy with which the peasants seek the political form that could help free them from their division and powerlessness. On this basis the communists will be able to build effectively.

But it must first be clearly understood that in the consciousness of the Chinese peasantry, the obscure watchwords of the soviets do not yet signify the dictatorship of the proletariat. The peasant mass cannot, in general, pronounce a priori for the dictatorship of the proletariat. It can only be led through the experience of the struggle that will show and prove to them that their democratic tasks can only be solved by the proletarian dictatorship.

This is the main reason why the Chinese Communist Party cannot lead the proletariat in the struggle for power without starting with democratic slogans.

The peasant movement, although covered by the name of the soviets, remains isolated, local and provisional. One can only raise this movement to the national level by linking the struggle for land against the yoke of taxation and the burden of militarism with the ideas of Chinese independence and popular sovereignty.

The democratic expression of this connection is an assembly with various powers. With this, the communist vanguard can gather the broad working masses around it, the small oppressed people of the cities and the hundreds of millions of poor peasants, around the uprising against the internal and external oppressors.

The creation of workers' soviets can only begin during an effective awakening of the revolution in the cities. When this will happen, we don't know at present, we can only prepare for it. And preparing means regrouping forces. Today we can only do this under the slogan of a coherent, bold and revolutionary democracy.

At the same time, we must explain to the advanced elements of the working class that the national assembly is but a stage on the revolutionary road.

We are on the path to proletarian dictatorship in the Soviet form. We no longer stop our eyes from resting on the fact that this dictatorship will bring the most difficult economic and international problems before the Chinese people. The Chinese proletariat constitutes a smaller part of the population in China than the Russian proletariat did on the eve of October. Chinese capitalism is even more backward than Russian capitalism. But the difficulties will be overcome not with



illusions and a policy of adventurism, not with hope in Chiang Kai-Shek or the 'democratic dictatorship'; the difficulties will be overcome by clairvoyance and revolutionary will.

The Chinese proletariat comes to power, not to re-establish the wall in China and build national socialism on its protection. By winning power, the Chinese proletariat will win one of the most important points for the international revolution. Neither China's nor the USSR's fate should be considered outside the revolutionary movement of the world proletariat. Such is the source of the broadest hopes and the justification of the greatest boldness.

### The Provisional International Secretariat Of The Communist Opposition:

For the Russian Left Opposition (Bolsheviks-Leninists): L. Trotsky.

For the French Communist League (Opposition): A. Rosmer.

For the German Communist Left Opposition (Bolsheviks-Leninists): K. Landau.

For the Spanish Communist Opposition: Andrade, Gorkin.

For the Communist League of America: Schachtman, Abern.

For the Communist Opposition (Austrian Communist Left): D. Karl, G. Mayer.

For the Austrian Communist Party (Opposition): Frey.

For the 'Inner Group' of the Austrian Communist Party: Frank.

For the Czechoslovak Left Opposition: W. Krieger.

For the Italian Left Fraction: Candiani.

For the New Italian Opposition: Santini, Biasco.