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MY EXPERIENCE  
*in*  
CHINA

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By  
M. N. ROY

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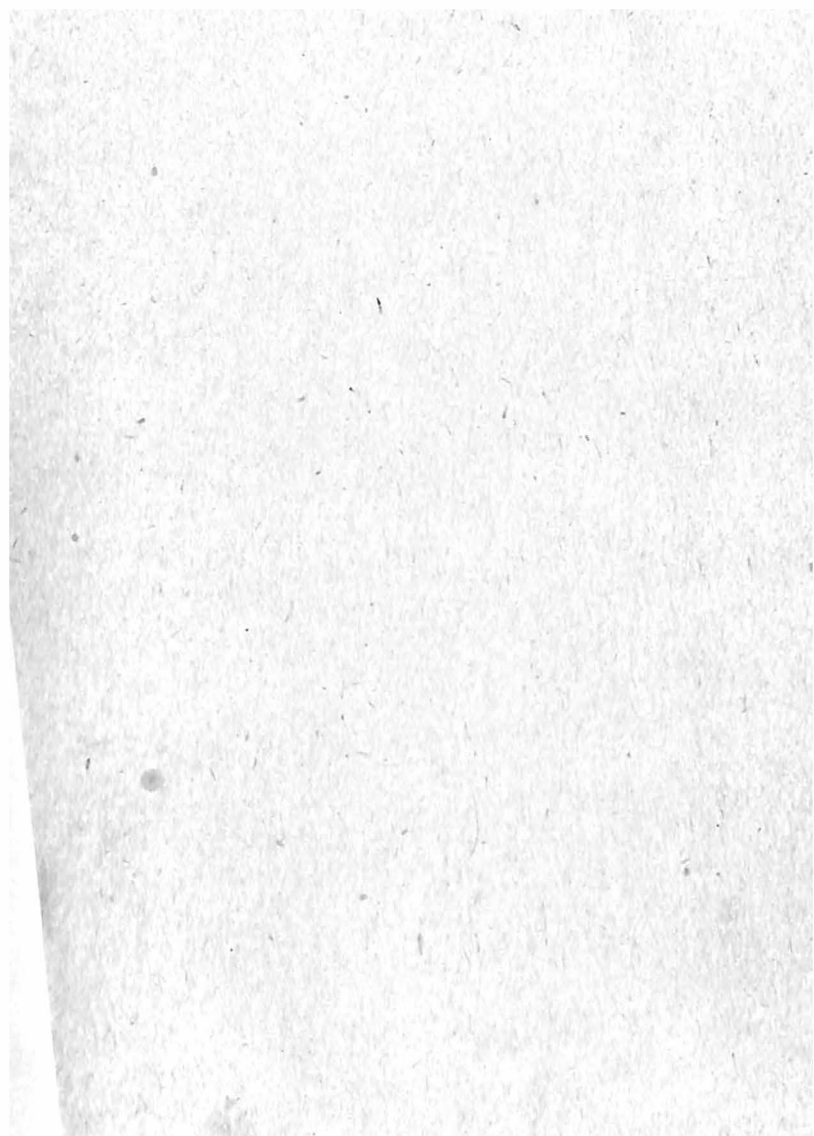
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M. N. Roy went to China in 1927 as the accredited representative of the Communist International. The great revolutionary tide that had amazed the world had already receded ; counter-revolution was on the offensive. By virtue of his position Roy was in first-hand touch with the currents and cross-currents of the situation ; more than that, he had a positive role to play. This is his record of the time placed on the background of the past. With unmistakable objectivity he puts persons and parties in their places ; similarly he relates his own part round which some controversy has raged.

Continued

**CATALOGUED**



MY EXPERIENCES  
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CHINA

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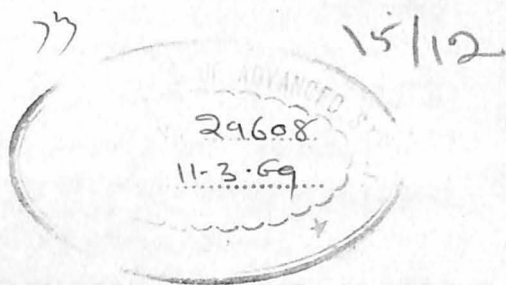
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## PUBLISHER'S NOTE

We are publishing a new edition of this booklet in response to insistent demand. Since it was first published in 1938, events in China and in the world have moved very fast. But that does not require any addition to this booklet which records the author's experience during a specified period. Moreover, we are arranging for the publication of Mr. Roy's bigger book "Revolution and Counter-revolution in China" which deals comprehensively with the contemporary history of the country on the background of an examination of its social and cultural tradition. "Revolution and Counter-revolution in China" was written in 1930 and published in German the next year. For various reasons, publication of the English edition was delayed. After his release from jail, in 1938 Mr. Roy added the new chapters to the book bringing it up to date. The outbreak of the war again delayed publication. Now it is possible to print and publish the book. †

Jan. 1945

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Advance orders for this volume are being registered by the Renaissance Publishers ( P. B. 580 ) Calcutta. The pre-publication price will be Rs. 10/- ( ten ) only.



## INTRODUCTION

The following pages contain a summary of the chapters of my book "Revolution and Counter-Revolution in China" setting forth the march of events during the years 1926-27. The bigger book was written in 1930 and was published only in German. I left Europe before the arrangements for the publication of the English edition were complete. On my return to India, I found many people puzzled with the question what happened in China. Many wild and fantastic stories were current. I had been present in China for a part of that fateful period. For years previous to that, I had my share in the guidance of the Chinese revolution. Therefore, my name figured rather prominently in the stories about the events in China. In that situation, I thought it necessary to write a short account of what really had happened in China. Apart from the purpose of supplying the information, another important purpose is also incidently served herein : to learn from the experience in the China would be of great value for the Indian revolutionaries, particularly the Communists. But before I could write the smaller book, I was arrested. Finally, it was written in jail. On the request of friends, I have decided to publish it, pending the publication of the bigger book. The latter is not only a comprehensive history of the revolutionary movements in China from the Taiping Revolt to 1929, but gives a close analysis of the social and political conditions of modern China as well as a comprehensive insight into her past history and ancient culture.

Since this brief sketch was written, many things have happened in China. It would be necessary to write another whole book to give any fair account of those events. A critical study of those events would be highly instructive for us in this country. Erroneous notions about those events are entertained and propagated even by those who claim to be in a position to know them authentically and interpret them correctly. For example, even to-day, they talk of the Chinese

Soviet Republic and Red Army, when these have been liquidated voluntarily. Since last year, the revolutionary movement in China has struck out a new path. By now, that must be a matter of common knowledge. Yet, for some unknown reason, it is not admitted in this country by those who are supposed to be properly informed, and expected to make the information generally current. The persistent preference for romancing about the revolutionary movement in China as against the honesty and courage of facing the reality, simply betrays the reluctance to learn from the bitter experience. Perhaps the unpalatable truth is hidden because, if it is told, the mendacity and malice of the propaganda carried on against me during the last eight years, will be exposed. However, history has vindicated me ; and history cannot be hidden.

The recent developments in that unfortunate country have again made China the focus of public attention. The causes of China's present misfortune, and of her still darker future, are to be found in the events recorded in the following pages. In 1927, the Chinese nationalists killed a revolution. That shameful act so completely disorganised and largely destroyed the forces of popular freedom, that ever since the Chinese nationalists have signally failed to put up any effective resistance to imperialist aggression. To-day, China's very existence as a nation is at stake. Japan is conquering her completely, while other imperialist powers stand watching the tragedy, making only feeble protests when their privileges are being encroached upon. Yet, having brutally beaten down the forces of revolution, which enabled them in 1926 to drive the imperialists nearly out of the country, the Chinese nationalists counted upon the help of Japan, England and America for the political centralisation and economic reconstruction of China. In order to gain the patronage of the imperialist Powers, they betrayed the friendship of the Soviet Union, which had demonstrated its sympathy for the aspirations of the Chinese people not only in words, but in countless deeds. Had not the Chinese nationalists, from their senseless fear of the necessary revolution, shamelessly betrayed the ideals of political freedom and social justice, professed by themselves, and treacherously turned their back on

the only reliable ally, they would not have been in the present tragic position.

The future to China is dark, indeed. England and America have decided to abandon her to her fate and to the tender mercies of Japanese Imperialism, presumably on the secret understanding that imperialist vested interests will be mutually respected. China is conquered not by Japan alone, but by international Imperialism. In order to derive the greatest benefit from the Chinese market and exploitation of her natural resources, Imperialism must "pacify" China and see that she is brought under an effectively functioning centralised authority. The Nationalist Government of Nanking was expected to do that. Therefore, England and America held out before it the hope of financial aid, of course, not as a gift, but in the form of loans—to bind the Chinese people by the chain of gold. The Nationalist Government, however, failed to deliver the goods. It could not establish its effective authority over a sufficiently large part of the country to inspire the confidence of international finance. The forces that militate against the pacification and centralisation of China are generated in the conditions of social decay. Those conditions can be removed only by a revolution, which became imminent in 1926 and 1927. The Kuo Min Tang, under reactionary influence, betrayed that revolution. A bastard of that betrayal, the Nationalist Government of China, for years tried to exterminate the forces of the revolution which were defeated, but not yet completely killed. Leaving the obstacles to national unity alone, and often allying itself with those forces of reaction, the Nationalist Government wasted all its energy and material resources in the crusade against the Communists, which, in reality, was an effort to suppress the forces of the democratic revolution. Militarily, the crusade was successful in as much as the armed forces under the command of the Communists were forced to withdraw from the centre of the country. But the conditions which gave birth to counter-revolutionary revolts or revolutionary insurrections, remained intact. On the other hand, exhausted in the prolonged struggle for suppressing the revolution, the Nationalist Government was powerless to put

up any effective resistance against the military aggression of Japanese Imperialism which to-day threatens to end in the complete conquest of China.

The Nationalist Government having now failed to make the counter-revolution successful, the task of "pacifying" China has been undertaken by Japan. In the beginning, the Nationalist Government hoped that other powers would come to its aid, at least to prevent Japan from establishing her supremacy in China. That hope also has been shattered. The powers with money to invest seem to have reconciled themselves to the perspective of Japanese supremacy in China. Because in that case, they will be able to invest their surplus capital, either directly, or through Japanese concerns, in China with the necessary security. So, China is doomed to be a Japanese colony, *unless she can find her solution in the native revolutionary forces* which also have been very much exhausted in a prolonged civil war. Her misfortune, resulting from the betrayal of a revolution, will again rise like the Phoenix from the ashes.

That perspective may not appear very bright for the moment. But it is there. In distress, callously deserted by the "democratic" imperialist powers on whose patronage they counted so much, the Chinese Nationalists have been forced to fall back upon the revival of the betrayed revolutionary alliance with the masses, at least as an opportunist manoeuvre, if not out of conviction born of bitter experience. The Communists, on the other hand, have abandoned the adventurous course which they were following during the last eight years. If a united nationalist front against Imperialism can be organised as in the years 1925 to 1927, Japanese aggression will be checked before long. It is not easy to conquer a country like China, which cannot be subdued through the occupation of a few big cities near the coast. The real China lives in the villages; and in the interior of the country, even the most powerful army cannot suppress the popular forces of resistance which draw power and inspiration from the urge of an outstanding revolution. The Russian experience has demonstrated that a huge country in the throes of a revolution cannot be

conquered by invading armies. But the condition for a successful resistance to the imperialist aggression in China is that the Chinese people must be fired with a revolutionary zeal. A revolution at home will alone be able to put up an effective resistance to, and ultimately defeat the counter-revolution imported from abroad. In other words, *the destruction of the native forces of counter-revolution is the condition for the salvation of China as a free nation.* Ten years ago, the Kuo Min Tang refused to face that truth. The result is that, after so many years of bloody civil war, China has been driven to her present pitiable plight, her existence as a free nation is almost at an end. It is to be earnestly hoped that the Chinese nationalists will learn from their bitter experience and will not once again fight shy of the revolution which must succeed if the Chinese people is to be re-born as a free, prosperous and progressive nation.

M. N. Roy.

Bombay,  
January 1938.

## CHAPTER I.

What eventually appeared as a political party with the title of the Kuo Min Tang (literally translated:—The People's Party of China) had existed embryonically, in some form or other, ever since the early 90's of the last century. Nevertheless, it was not until 1919 that the Kuo Min Tang sought to live up to its name. Even then, it did not appeal to the people. The post-war world-wide mass revolutionary movement reached China and made the name of Kuo Min Tang its own. It transformed the old clique of politicians into a political party. We in India also had a similar experience at the same historical moment. The National Congress ceased to be the Christmas gathering of amateur politicians and became a mass movement with great revolutionary potentialities.

It is generally but erroneously believed that the Chinese Revolution of 1911 took place under the leadership of the Kuo Min Tang. As a matter of fact, the Manchu Dynasty fell under the unbearable burden of its long-outlived existence. The Manchus simply passed away. They were not overthrown. The immediate cause of their downfall was the rebellion of the Southern Viceroy, themselves feudal militarist rulers. What functioned as Kuo Min Tang in those days, entered into an unholy alliance with the provincial satraps with no other programme than to bury the dead dynasty. Sun Yat-sen was a signal failure as the Provisional President of the fictitious republic, which was born dead. He voluntarily made room for Yuan Shi-kai, the representative of the feudal-militarists who had decided to misrule China without the Manchus. The passing dynasty itself nominated Yuan as their successor who would hold the Empire in trust for them. The Revolution of 1911 did not change China in any way except to throw her into the ruinous vortex of civil war which began with the fall of Yuan Shi-kai in 1916, and has not ended as yet. It was not a revolutionary civil war—a new order ruthlessly clearing away the debris of the old. It was a ghastly paroxysm of reaction in the throes of a lingering death.

The Revolution of 1911 was tragically miscarried, owing to the absence of a political party with a democratic programme. The Kuo Min Tang was not a political party. It had no programme. Its activities were confined to forming secret military cliques. Its tactics were opportunistic. Ever since 1894, its pioneers had declared war upon the Manchus. All along, until 1924 (when the Kuo Min Tang for the first time adopted a programme) it conducted a Quixotic fight against the shadow, leaving the substance alone. It failed to perceive that the Manchus had ceased to rule the country; that foreign imperialism was the real cause of all the evils that eat into the vitals of the Chinese society for more than a century.

At the close of the world war, the Chinese people, for the first time, clearly saw the real danger, that of the disintegration of the country through the rivalry and intrigues of foreign imperialisms which had reduced their sovereignty to an empty shadow. Previously, the policy of Sun Yat-sen and his party had been to enlist the sympathy and support of the "democratic nations of the West" in the fight against Manchu absolutism, and later, the dictatorship of Yuan Shi-kai. They had successively pinned their faith upon America, England and Japan. They had learnt nothing from the fact that the earlier stages of the Democratic Revolution in China—the Great Taiping Rebellion and the Boxer Revolt—were suppressed not by the Manchus, but by the united forces of the "democratic nations of the West." Had it not been for the support of foreign imperialism, Manchu absolutism and the reaction it stood for would have been swept away by the progressive forces germinating in the womb of the Chinese Society, and China would have taken her place among the modern nations.

Sun Yat-sen had started his Quixotic fight against the shadow of the Manchu Monarchy already in 1894 when he organized an attempt to capture the city of Canton with the aid of some military officers. Yet, the Boxer Revolt, six years later, did not interest him. As regards that elemental anti-imperialist mass upheaval, his views at that time, were much the same as of the foreign aggressors. He looked upon the primitive mass revolt as an outburst of fanaticism fomented by the

Manchus. That was the most erroneous interpretation of the character and significance of the Boxer Revolt. It was a wilful misinterpretation.

Before the world war, Sun Yat-sen and his party mostly orientated upon America. During the war, they became willing instruments of Japanese imperialism, and propagated the doctrine of Pan-Asianiſm, according to which Japan had the mission of liberating the Eastern peoples from the domination of the white race. The Versailles Treaty was a rude shock to those who pinned their faith to Wilsonian liberalism. China was too big a nation to be placed in the category of "small nationalities". So, in recompense for her having joined the war on the side of the Allies, her territory was handed over to Japan, in order to secure the latter's consent for the plunder in other parts of the world.

The bubble of Wilsonian liberalism having burst, and the significance of Japan's "liberating mission" been revealed, the Chinese intellectuals at last recognized the reality of the situation. The real movement for national freedom was born. The heroism of the Taipings and the martyrdom of the Boxers had not been in vain. They had been pioneers of the revolutionary democratic movement which, though retarded, could not be crushed by the combined forces of foreign imperialism and native reaction. In 1919, China entered into the last stage of the Democratic Revolution which is not yet complete. The Kuo Min Tang, that made history, and Sun Yat-sen as a revolutionary leader are peculiar features in this still-to-be-closed chapter of the annals of modern China†

A wave of indignation swept over China to protest against the Versailles Treaty which ceded the province of Shantung to Japan. The protest assumed the form of the boycott of Japanese goods. The students and younger intellectuals were in the fore-front of the movement which embraced the mass of small traders and artisans and workers in the cities. Economic

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† The role of the Kuo Min Tang and that of its leader have been more fully dealt within "Revolution and Counter-Revolution in China" by the author. Until now published only in German, it will soon be available in English.



boycott, being a double-edged weapon, cannot be abiding. The traders could not hold on indefinitely and the boycott collapsed ; but the anti-imperialist spirit was there, only to find different and more effective channels of expression. The need for a political party was felt. The movement must be organised and led. Hallowed by tradition, the Kuo Min Tang appeared on the scene. Sun Yat-sen was acclaimed as the leader of the movement.

There was, however, a new leadership in preparation. It was not of an individual, but of a class, still young, unorganized, and but loosely formed. The pioneer of this rising class of the proletariat was Chen Tu-hsu, then a professor of social science at the National University of Peking which was the intellectual centre of the new movement. Through his "Weekly Review" Chen heralded the rise of the new revolutionary class as the only saviour of China, and called upon the young intellectuals to join hands with the proletariat.

Father Confucius had already been dethroned, a quarter of a century ago, by the greatest thinker of modern China, Kang Wu-wei. Chen gave the national sage an honourable burial, and exposed the reactionary nature of the ideology of bourgeois nationalism, which drew inspiration from the mythical Golden Age. He put social contents into the sentimentalist ideology of nationalism. He pointed out that the enemies of the Chinese people were foreign imperialism and native feudalism, which were mutually helping each other to oppress and exploit the Chinese masses. He made it clear that the basic feature of the nationalist movement was struggle against imperialism, and that this struggle must necessarily coincide with class struggle inside the Chinese society—the struggle of the peasantry against feudalism and the general struggle against its ugly progeny, militarism. That being the case, organization of the workers and peasants to enforce their immediate demands must be a condition for a successful struggle against imperialism and its native allies. In short, Chen Tu-hsu endowed the nationalist movement with a revolutionary ideology, set forth the outlines of its programme, and suggested a scheme of organization. Doing this as a Marxist (Communist), he definitely established the claim of the

rising proletariat to the dominating position it was soon to assume in the national democratic revolution. Chen's propaganda greatly influenced the students and younger intellectuals. In 1920, the Communist Party of China was founded:

The movement of 1919 caused the downfall of the pro-Japanese government at Peking; but it could not make any further headway. Kuo Min Tang branches were formed all over the country, particularly in the maritime and the Yangtze provinces. The Kuo Min Tang, as a whole, however, still failed to become a political force, giving a definite lead to the mass movement. It was still in the throes of birth. Its leader had not yet seen the light. The old leader of a secret society could not easily break away from his narrow outlook, and assume the leadership of a political party.

Meanwhile, the proletariat stepped forward. Between 1920 and 1922, there were big strikes in all the industrial centres, which were suppressed by the militarist rulers and their foreign patrons with ruthless barbarity. Bloody reaction reigned supreme, making it impossible for the Communist Party to carry on its activities. It was forced into a precarious illegal existence, limited to the Treaty ports, particularly Shanghai. The failure of the nationalists to support the workers in their heroic struggle made the Communists bitter against them. The Communists condemned the Kuo Min Tang as the organ of the nationalist bourgeoisie, and declared that they could have nothing to do with it. Chen Tu-hsu refused to build upon the foundation he himself had laid. At this stage, the Communist International intervened and directed its young section to follow the right road.

In 1922, Sun Yat-sen had met representatives of the Russian Soviet Republics, who helped him to see the events of his own country in the proper light. He at last understood the necessity of reorganizing the Kuo Min Tang with such a revolutionary democratic programme as would make it a mass party. But his whole training made it impossible for him to accomplish the great task by himself. He welcomed the cooperation of the Communist Party. The Nationalist Government of Canton helped a strike of the seamen, and allowed the

workers to organize themselves in its territories. The policy annoyed its military supporters, who, aided by the English from Hongkong, tried to overthrow it in 1923. But the Nationalist Government and the Kuo Min Tang had now laid a new foundation. The militarist attack was repulsed and a civilian insurrection, organized by the merchant princes, was suppressed. This first success of the Nationalist Government paved the way for the reorganization of the Kuo Min Tang.

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## CHAPTER II

The Second World Congress of the Communist International in 1920 adopted the Theses on the National and Colonial Questions. It was thereby resolved that the Communist Parties in the capitalist countries should mobilize the proletariat to give every support to the movement for national liberation in the colonial countries. It was further resolved that the Communists in the colonial countries should support the nationalist bourgeoisie in the struggle against imperialism. Acting upon the basic principles of its programme, formulated under the personal guidance of its founder, Lenin, the Communist International called upon the world proletariat to support the Chinese Nationalist Government of Canton, and directed its Chinese Section to enter the Kuo Min Tang with the object of using it as a mighty weapon against imperialism.

In recommending these tactics, the Communists International had no illusion about the class character of the Kuo Min Tang leadership. But at the moment, the anti-imperialist democratic forces were rallying under the banner of the Kuo Min Tang. In order to play a dominating role in the anti-imperialist struggle, the proletariat must be where the forces involved in that struggle were gathering. Being with them, placing themselves always in the forefront of their struggle, the Communists were to win the confidence of the nationalist democratic masses. That was the only way to eventual capture of effective leadership.

Owing to their heterogeneous social composition, the anti-imperialist forces could not be mobilized on the platform of Communism. At that moment, even the proletariat, and of course the peasantry, could be agitated more easily with nationalist than with class demands. They could not as yet be brought directly within the fold or even under the guidance of the Communist Party, but they could be formed into mass organizations under the popular flag of democratic national revolution. The Kuo Min Tang could be easily

transformed into such a common platform for the revolutionary democratic forces, should the Communists enter it, give it a new programme, and participate in its leadership.

In the first stage of political consciousness, the masses, not only the democratic middle class but also the young proletariat, had accepted the leadership of the Kuo Min Tang with acclamation. The influence of mass awakening had precipitated a crisis inside the Kuo Min Tang itself. The "Old Guard," composed of Confucian intellectuals, ambitious generals, reactionary officials and representatives of the Compradore† bourgeoisie, disapproved of what they thought to be "Communist deviation" on the part of Sun Yat-sen and his younger associates. Socially speaking, there developed a conflict between the reactionary big bourgeoisie (more reactionary in China, owing to their dependence upon foreign imperialism on the one hand and native feudalism on the other) and the democratic petty bourgeoisie, just in the beginning of the process of radicalisation.

It is a lesson of history that, left to themselves, the petty bourgeoisie (including the peasantry) cannot outgrow the reactionary influence of the big bourgeoisie and, even in the best of circumstances, only become an instrument for creating conditions for the establishment of capitalism. Petty bourgeois radicalism develops into revolutionary Jacobinism only under the pressure of the working class. It was the insurrection of the Parisian proletariat that forced the Jacobins to liberate the revolution from the influence of Girondism, which until then had successfully stood as the bulwark defending the monarchy and feudal aristocracy.

In 1923 it was clearly the task of the proletariat in China to support the radical petty bourgeoisie and thereby bring about the downfall of the Kuo Min Tang "Old Guard." The petty bourgeoisie, though welcoming the co-operation of the Communists, were not prepared to accept their leadership.

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†Wholesalers and bankers acting as the medium of foreign trade, export and import. They are a class of parasites organically tied up with imperialist exploitation which, in its turn, is based upon pre-capitalist production and feudal plunder of the peasantry.

The peasant masses, the back-bone of democratic revolution, still remained untouched. Even the proletariat would rather follow the Kuo Min Tang than the Communist Party. The most correct tactics for the Communists in that situation was clearly to enter the Kuo Min Tang, liberate it from the reactionary influence of Chinese Girondism and to push the petty bourgeois radicals, headed by Sun Yat-sen, further than they would go by themselves.

Under the guidance of the Communist International, its young Chinese Section overcame "the infantile sickness of ultra-leftism" and adopted the correct tactics. The result was quick and remarkable.

Sun Yat-sen not only definitely discarded his habit of flirtation with the "democratic nations of the West," but denounced their imperialist policy in China. For the first time in his long chequered political career, only a year before his death, he saw things in their proper juxtaposition, the substance before the shadow. He declared war upon imperialism as well as upon its hand-maid, Chinese militarism. He hailed the Soviet Republic as the only friend of the Chinese people and boldly advocated a close alliance between the two, for doing which he was branded as a "Bolshevik agent". Defying the opposition of his old allies and associates, he appointed a Russian Communist as his chief adviser.

The so-called Reorganisation Conference of the Kuo Min Tang took place in 1924. A programme of anti-imperialist struggle, worked out by the Communists, was adopted. It also adopted a constitution which was to transform the Kuo Min Tang from a loose opportunist combination of heterogeneous elements into a political party of mass composition with a centralised leadership. Since the programme was not yet clearly revolutionary (the Communists were to blame for the defect), and the new constitution was but a scheme, the "Old Guard" did not oppose them. Their object was to remain at the helm of the party so that they could manoeuvre for position and control the radical elements.

The battle raged on the proposition for admitting the Communists to the membership of the reorganized party. The "Old

Guard" recognized the real foe, and were determined to keep the Communists out. They were defeated. The Reorganization Conference gave birth to Chinese Jacobinism. Although represented in the new leadership of the party, the "Old Guard" felt themselves vanquished and withdrew from the party. Shifting their head-quarters to Shanghai, where they were favoured with the patronage of foreign imperialism, they disputed the authority of the Central Committee, elected at the Reorganization Conference, and denounced Canton as the "hot-bed of Bolshevism". In contrast to the "Red" Kuo Min Tang of Canton they styled themselves the "White" Kuo Min Tang whose supreme task was to fight Bolshevism. The Chinese masses, including the democratic middle class, definitely preferred the "Red" Kuo Min Tang, not because it was red, but because it carried on an active fight against imperialism, legalised the labour movement in the nationalist territories and promised the peasantry a 20 percent reduction of rent.

The hostility of the big bourgeoisie drove the democratic middle classes closer into an alliance with the Communists. In consequence, the latter found themselves in a predominating position. Under their influence, the Nationalist Government of Canton became a revolutionary dictatorship, and repeatedly repulsed the attacks of British imperialism delivered from Hongkong. Every worker in Canton was organised, and peasant unions were formed throughout the province of Kwangtung. All these were under Communist leadership. A general strike paralysed Hongkong which was blockaded from the mainland for the whole year of 1926. The strike committee, which conducted that great fight under the national flag, greatly influenced the policy of the Nationalist Government; and the strike committee, of course, was under Communist leadership. The successful blockade of Hongkong dealt a staggering blow to British trade and, what was still worse, to the prestige of imperialism throughout the Far East. The Chinese Coolie came victorious out of the first trial of strength with a mighty foreign power.

The example of "Red" Canton electrified the whole country

The anti-imperialist movement spread like wild fire. The Shanghai proletariat, led by the Communists, was at the forefront. The Kuo Min Tang became so popular, and such large masses rallied under its banner that it could no longer be suppressed even in provinces ruled by the most reactionary militarists. And the Kuo Min Tang provided the Communists with an extensive legal field of activities. Being the most active, they came to occupy strategical positions in the local branches of the Kuo Min Tang. Thus they came in close contact with the democratic masses, whom they brought under proletarian hegemony in the national revolutionary struggle. The splendid result of the tactics of united anti-imperialist front can be summarized in figures.

The Communist Party had been organised in 1920. Nearly four years afterwards, in 1924, it had some 800 members recruited mostly from among the students and young intellectuals. The party was illegal, its very limited activities being confined to Shanghai. It had little influence on the nationalist movement. It had absolutely no connection with the peasantry. Its leadership of the proletariat was more nominal than real. Except in Shanghai, it had very little to do with the labour movement which was spontaneous. In two years, since the Communists entered the Kuo Min Tang, the membership of their party rose to 54,000; and the young Communist League had over 30,000 members. The Communist Party became the undisputed leader of the Chinese Federation of Labour with over 2 million members; and the peasants' unions, formed throughout the country south of the Yangtse, boasted of a membership of 7 millions under Communist leadership. That was a creditable achievement in two years.

On the other hand, the Kuo Min Tang became an anti-imperialist mass party counting upon millions of followers. It reported a regular membership of more than a million. For thirty years, it had dragged along a precarious nominal existence, engaged in futile military intrigues and discreditable opportunist combinations with reactionary officials. In addition to ambitious generals and disgruntled officials, rich mercantile communities overseas had been its source of support.



The radical students it had but superficially influenced, for it lacked any systematic ideology or programme of national revolution. It had attempted the baffling task of making a synthesis of American democracy and Confucian feudal patriarchalism. It had never appealed to the masses. Its activities had been mostly abroad among emigrants. In short, as an independent political force, it had counted for little. In every moment of action, its name was lent to any promiscuous combination of professional politicians.

Even after 1919, it had not been able to give any positive political direction and organizational form to the mass movement which accepted its leadership. The alliance with the Communists put contents into its empty, but hallowed name. In an incredibly short time it became not only the organ of a mass anti-imperialist struggle; in the years 1924-26, Canton was undoubtedly the base of a great democratic revolutionary movement, and the Kuo Min Tang was the leader of that movement. The Chinese masses could not possibly have been mobilized so quickly in a gigantic revolutionary movement, if a popular nationalist platform were not provided for them. And the Kuo Min Tang could not have become this platform except in alliance with the Communists. On the other hand, the Communists could not have won the dominating position in the anti-imperialist national democratic movement so soon and so easily except through the revolutionary alliance. The alliance was a historic necessity, marking an essential stage of the Chinese revolution.

### CHAPTER III

But a permanent principle should not be made of a set of tactics, however successful. Unfortunately, this mistake was made by the Chinese Communists acting under the guidance of their Russian advisers. The mistake was detected, but then too late to rectify it, and, it finally proved to be fatal.

Once the very necessary anti-imperialist, revolutionary democratic alliance was established, the Communists, who had previously opposed it, soon made a fetish of it. In their eyes, the means appeared to be the end, and the result of such mal juxtaposition of things was bound to be the sacrifice of the real end. The object of the alliance was mobilisation and organization of the masses for a revolutionary struggle not only against foreign imperialism, but also against the forces of native reaction which provided foreign imperialism with a social basis. Nationalist slogans and the popular nationalist flag had to be used for the purpose, because of the social and political conditions under which the revolution was taking place. *But class antagonism is the basis of all revolutionary struggles.* That is clear to the Communists. When the Chinese Communists were advised to enter the Kuo Min Tang with a very specific object, they were not expected to lose sight of the basic fact of the situation.

The cumulative effects of the imperialist, primitive-capitalist, feudal and patriarchal forms of exploitation were driving the great majority of the Chinese people into a revolt which, in its initial stage, was directed against foreign imperialism, because this stood at the summit of the Chinese social pyramid. But the growth of the revolt, owing to its very nature, was bound to accentuate class antagonism inside the Chinese society. The movement for national freedom could not develop without inevitably sharpening the class struggle. As a matter of fact, sharpening of the class struggle was the mighty lever to develop the national consciousness of the masses.

The entire national economy of a colonial country (China is a colony, in spite of her sham political independence) being

subjected to imperialist exploitation, the smallest demands of the workers, (about wages, conditions of labour etc.) of the peasants (about rent, tenure etc.) and of the urban petty bourgeoisie (about house rent, taxes, prices etc.) bring them all up against the common enemy. Conversely, the movement for national liberation, promoted in this way (there is no other), assumes the character of a democratic revolution. For, it develops by attacking the native parasitic classes (that is, those not contributing anything to production, but actually injuring it), which exist as agencies of colonial exploitation.

In order to be effective, the anti-imperialist movement in China (as in any colonial country) had to win the support of the peasantry. Now, the peasant masses bear the brunt of colonial exploitation; but it affects them indirectly. The multifarious native agencies of exploitation, present on the spot, are naturally more real to the peasants. Therefore they could not be moved simply by the slogans against unequal treaties, concessions, extra-territoriality etc., which directly affected the urban population. The slogans which could agitate the peasantry must be such as were not agreeable for the rural exploiting classes. In the programme adopted at the Reorganisation Conference, the Kuo Min Tang had promised the peasantry 20 per cent reduction of land rent. The Communists carried that message to the villages. The peasants eagerly listened, and enthusiastically rallied under the Kuo Min Tang flag with the cry—“Down with Imperialism.” Peasant unions were formed practically in all the villages in the province of Kwangtung to which the jurisdiction of the Nationalist Government was limited in 1925. The peasantry were mobilized in mass formations to strike at the roots of reaction. Their unions were supported by other exploited elements of the countryside. The peasant unions laid the framework of a democratic State.\* They were quite fit to

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\*It is believed by some Socialists and Communists in our country that the peasant unions were *collectively affiliated* to the Kuo Min Tang. That was not the case. The peasant unions as well as trade unions were affiliated to the Kuo Min Tang in the sense that, upon their affiliation, their members automatically became members of the Kuo Min Tang. They did not have the right of collective representation. On the other hand, in the villages, the distinction between the peasant unions and the local Kuo Min Tang Committees was only formal. The membership was common. There was no rivalry between the two organizations. When the conflict arose between the Kuo Min Tang and the peasant unions, only the leadership of the former was involved. In the villages, the local Kuo Min Tang Committees, as a rule, sided with the peasant unions.

take over the government of the village. But that would imply suppression of the resistance that was sure to come from the landlords and their henchmen. Immediately upon entering the village, the anti-imperialist movement clarified its social content. Its revolutionary democratic essence became palpable.

The situation in the villages created a new crisis in the leading circle of the Kuo Min Tang and the Nationalist Government. The leaders of Chinese Girondism had left the Kuo Min Tang on its reorganisation; but their agents remained inside the higher circle of the reorganized party. They condemned the Communists for fomenting schism in the nationalist ranks. They were fighting for their life. Their social base in the village was threatened by the revolutionary awakening of the rural masses. The left wing, which controlled the situation, wavered. Some of the rabid right wing leaders were sent away from Canton. The Communists feared that the left wing nationalists might be driven back into an alliance with the Girondists. But there need have been no fear. Without the support of the workers, the Nationalist Government could not last a day. Imperialism was waiting to take revenge. The Kuo Min Tang could not retrace the steps it had taken towards Jacobinism, unless time for the purpose was available. The mistake on the part of the Communists gave it the breathing space.

The Communists were terrified by the spectre of the disruption of the alliance with the Kuo Min Tang. Less than two years ago, Chen Tu Hsu, as a propagandist, had maintained that the Communists should have nothing to do with the Kuo Min Tang; that an alliance between the revolutionary proletariat and the nationalist bourgeoisie was a deviation from the principles of Communism. Now, he would not allow the peasants to attack patriarchal feudalism, and free rural economy from parasitic pre-capitalist exploitation. He developed the novel theory of "broadening, not deepening the revolution." He maintained that as long as the revolution remained in the anti-imperialist stage, the class struggle in the village should not be sharpened, for that would weaken the nationalist front.

The theory was a clear negation of the object with which the

anti imperialist united front had been formed. The object was to mobilize larger and larger masses in a democratic revolutionary struggle, and to force the radical petty bourgeoisie to go further on the revolutionary way than they would go by themselves. When the petty bourgeois radicals wavered, it was for the Communists to act with resoluteness. That was why they were there. Had the Communists courageously led the peasants in the impending attack upon rural reaction, the Nationalist Government could not have stopped them. It had no force for that. It had defeated militarist intrigues, and dealt a severe blow to imperialist prestige with the support and active help of the workers, organized and led by the Communists. So, it would have been forced to sanction the revolutionary action of the peasantry, had it been confronted with an accomplished fact. That is how petty bourgeois radicalism acts—always under pressure. Remove or relax the pressure, and it instantly loses its sting, and reverts under the reactionary influence of the big bourgeoisie. During the French Revolution, the Jacobin Convention declared the abolition of feudalism only after the peasants had begun with the job in right earnest.

The Kuo Min Tang radicals and their Nationalist Government would most probably have sanctioned the victorious action of the peasantry, not of course from any revolutionary conviction. They would have done so out of convenience. By sanctioning an act accomplished by the peasantry in their own territory, they would have won the acclamation of the peasant masses throughout the country. A year afterwards, when the nationalist army marched northwards, the support of the peasantry carried it from victory to victory. How much greater and more abiding would have been the victory had the nationalist army carried the message of an accomplished agrarian revolution as its basis !

The Communists having failed in the purpose for which they had entered the Kuo Min Tang, incipient Jacobinism began to lose ground. Reaction, spared by the mistake of the Communists, did not waste time. It assumed the offensive, and claimed its first victim in Liao Chung-hai, the Marat of the Chinese Revolution. Then the tide turned definitely. The agents of the

right wing asserted themselves. They attacked the Communists who were removed from strategic positions. The peasant unions were assailed and destroyed everywhere. To decompose the radical wing entirely, and to liquidate the half-hearted revolutionary policy, inaugurated by the Reorganisation Conference a year and a half before, the Chinese Robespierre, Wang Chin-wei, went, though not to the guillotine, but to forced exile. Sun Yat-Sen had appointed him his successor to carry on the policy of friendship with the Soviet Republic, co-operation with the Communists and support of the workers' and peasants' demands.

## CHAPTER IV

In 1920, the Second World Congress of the Communist International had adopted the Theses on the Colonial and National Questions. At that time, it had no direct knowledge of the situation in the colonial countries, had no definite revolutionary experience in that vast field. Consequently, it was not possible to do more than sketch the general outlines of the programme and principles for the Communists to follow there. In the beginning, Lenin appeared to exaggerate somewhat the revolutionary role of the nationalist bourgeoisie. Approaching the problem theoretically, he thought that the bourgeoisie in the colonial countries, like India and China, were bound to play the same revolutionary role as was played in the past by their kind in Europe. Others, having more intimate knowledge of the relation of classes in those countries and experience of the political movement there, disagreed with Lenin. He thereupon modified his views. The controversy was not definitely settled. Agreement, however, was reached on general principles: the Communist International should support the struggle of the colonial peoples for national freedom, and that could be most effectively done through the revolutionary organisations of the oppressed and exploited masses. The attitude towards the nationalist bourgeoisie was thus not definitely defined. They were to be supported as part of the colonial people, but the form and extent of their support were to be determined with the help of subsequent experience, in the light of their position in the struggle for national freedom.

Later on, the policy of the Chinese Communists entering the Kuo Min Tang was recommended, not with the object of supporting the national bourgeoisie on principle, but as the most effective means to develop an anti-imperialist revolutionary mass movement. The alliance with the Kuo Min Tang was not an end by itself. *It was a means to the end* which was to develop the democratic national revolutionary struggle. Obviously, the Communists' attitude towards the alliance was to be elastic. Should the alliance stand in the way of the

revolutionary mobilization of the masses, it could not be of any more use. But precisely this essence of the policy of united front was not grasped by the leaders of the Communist Party of China and also by their Russian advisers. The alliance was interpreted as unconditional recognition of the revolutionary role of the nationalist bourgeoisie. The criticism of this opportunist application of a revolutionary policy was combated as an attempt to revise Leninism. Had not Lenin said that the nationalist bourgeoisie was a revolutionary force to be supported by the Communists and condemned his opponents as "left Communists"? There should be no independent examination of the problem! Authority settled the issue raised by the realities of a revolutionary struggle. But Lenin never laid down any such categorical law. He expressed his views, defended them, but was prepared to modify them in view of the insufficiency of the materials at hand.

The mistake of making a principle out of a policy was not given up even after the bitter experience of 1925. It was continued throughout the next year, and finally led to the disastrous defeat in 1927.

The remarkable achievements until 1925 and afterwards throughout the following year, notwithstanding the mistakes committed in applying it, proved the absolute correctness of the policy. The defeat was due among other causes to the opportunist interpretation of a revolutionary policy. The very correct and largely successful policy ultimately failed to realize its object because of the mistakes committed in its application.

Being a young party, thrown in the midst of a gigantic revolutionary struggle, the Communist Party of China received special attention of the international leadership, and this, owing to peculiar circumstances, was exercised through the Russian Party. Ever since 1923, the C. P. of China had been under Russian guidance. Its leading cadre was trained by Russian Communists. Therefore, not the Chinese Communists but their Russian guidance and advisers should be held responsible for the opportunist deviations which led to the disaster of 1927. Besides, when it is found that the leaders of a particular



section of a centralized world party like the Communist International, have systematically deviated from the correct line over a whole period of time, the responsibility must be laid at the door of the international leadership. This has either approved of the deviation, or proved itself incapable of functioning properly. As a matter of fact, the international leadership actually available to the C. P. of China was incapable and defective. It put a mechanical and vulgar interpretation upon the revolutionary policy of united anti-imperialist front, and was therefore responsible for the opportunist deviation on the part of the C. P. of China.

Under the given conditions, it was inevitable that the International should exercise its leadership in China through the Russian Party. There was nothing objectionable in the arrangement. The Russian Party was bound to be the leader of the International in the earlier stages of the latter's history. Owing to geographical and political reasons, it was all the more so as regards the Eastern countries. But the misfortune was that the great responsibility and complicated task of leading the Chinese Communists actually, on the spot, fell to a number of young members of the Russian Party having no experience of the revolutionary struggle previous to the capture of power. The talent of the party was occupied at home and taken up with the Western affairs of the International. The young inexperienced Russian Communists, however, carried with them the imposing authority of the leading Party of the International as well as of the Proletarian State. The Chinese Communists, on the other hand, themselves were also too young and inexperienced to be critical. The authority of the representatives of the only party in power appeared incontestable and infallible for them. In these circumstances, the actual leadership of the C. P. of China, ever since 1923, was, as a matter of fact, vested in a few youthful Russians. They all meant very well—were full of revolutionary ardour and idealism; but that was not enough. They lacked sufficient ideological training, intellectual independence and political experience. Consequently, with all their goodwill and youthful enthusiasm, they were not fit to perform the function assumed by them.

Another evil result of the arrangement was that the C. P. of China grew as a spoon-fed child. It did not learn to do its own thinking. The standard of qualification was the ability to imitate the Russians mechanically. To learn from the rich experience of the great Russian Revolution and from the history of the Bolshevik Party was very necessary for the young Communists of China. But it was equally necessary to understand how to apply the lessons effectively to the situation of their country. This required original thinking, and the courage of criticism, which could not thrive in the atmosphere of a hot-house.

Upon the adoption of the correct policy of revolutionary united anti-imperialist front, the C. P. of China grew with amazing rapidity. But its internal maturity lagged far behind its outer growth. In a very short time, it found itself in the proud position of the leader of a great revolutionary mass movement, but, unfortunately, it was not equipped properly so as to occupy the position creditably.

Since 1923, the Russian Communists found themselves in an exceedingly delicate situation in China. Automatically they represented two bodies, the respective interests of which appeared to conflict in China. As members of the Russian Communist Party, they represented the International, and as citizens, the Soviet Republic. There is no antagonism between the two; on the contrary, the latter is the first conquest of the former, its base of operation. To strengthen it is a condition for further victory of the international proletariat; to defend it under any condition, is the revolutionary duty of the class-conscious workers of the world, and particularly of the Communists. Still, to combine the functions of the two is sometimes a rather difficult and delicate task. Such a task the Russians had to face in China. Unfortunately, only inferior and indifferent members of the Russian Party were available for a task, which required the very best of Bolshevism—clear revolutionary foresight, firm ideology, unshaken conviction, indomitable resolution, unerring sense of reality, ruthless regard for facts, a consistent policy and tactical elasticity.

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The Soviet Republic had entered into a close alliance with the Nationalist Government of Canton. Even previous to that it had established diplomatic relations with the reactionary government of Peking, and signed with it treaties of agreement abandoning the privileges acquired forcibly by Czarism. So its attitude was friendly not only towards the nationalist bourgeoisie, but even to the feudal militarists. As regards the latter, the attitude appeared to be inexplicable, and was criticized as unprincipled opportunism by ultra-left Communists. It was, however, quite explicable, being dictated by two considerations. Firstly, to indicate its friendship for the Chinese people by establishing friendly relations with their Central Government, however nominal. Secondly, to prevent the Peking Government from becoming an instrument of international imperialism in an attack upon the Soviet Republic, and to prevent China from becoming the base for such an attack. This second strategical consideration dictated also the policy of giving rather excessive material help not only to the nationalist bourgeoisie, but also to the so-called left militarists, such as Feng Yu-hsiang for example. The friendship of these people was mercenary. Should the Soviet Republic not pay for it liberally, it was likely to be transferred to other quarters; and antagonism of these forces would transform China into a very dangerous base of operations against the Workers' Republic.

Liberal Soviet support to the nationalist bourgeoisie and friendly relations with the feudal militarists interfered with the correct application of the revolutionary Communist policy of the united anti-imperialist front. The young Russians, entrusted with the task of guiding the C. P. of China, did not know where to draw the line. They confounded the diplomatic manoeuvres of the Soviet Republic with the revolutionary policy of the Communist International. In consequence, they developed the theory: not only the Chinese bourgeoisie (the entire class), but even the so called left-militarists were revolutionary factors, which must be supported unconditionally. The corollary to this theory was that the proletariat should play the second fiddle in the democratic anti-imperialist revolution,

which would be accomplished by the nationalist bourgeoisie. The tactical outcome of that erroneous theory was the anxiety to preserve at all cost the alliance not only with the nationalist bourgeoisie, but also with the "left-militarists." Although the most active element in the anti-imperialist movement, the organizers of the millions of workers and peasants, these Communists, nevertheless, became politically a subservient adjunct to the Kuo Min Tang—a faithful watch-dog of the Nationalist Government, which received more kicks than caresses for its valuable services.

That woeful perversion of a revolutionary policy happened, thanks to the pernicious practice of unintelligent respect for authority. For three fateful years, the Russian leaders of the Communist Party of China invoked the ghost of Lenin to justify their miscarriage of the correct policy, formulated by the great revolutionary leader. The standard of Leninist orthodoxy was not the ability to understand it in its essentials and to elaborate the policy only sketched by Lenin. It was but to quote him, and that not even always with any regard for accuracy. Lenin himself would surely move in the grave, if he knew that his orthodox disciples were making of him a prophet, who has said the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

Necessary diplomatic manoeuvres (which occasionally were carried a bit too far) in the interests of the Soviet Republic, influenced the policy of the C. P. of China. It came to lay more stress on military combinations than on mass struggle. It got involved in the factional fight inside the Kuo Min Tang. In order to win the confidence of one faction, it omitted to press the class demands of the workers and peasants. While helping the formation of the Nationalist Army (which eventually became a formidable weapon in the hands of the counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie) the Communists neglected the supreme necessity of arming the masses. In order not to disturb the Kuo Min Tang and for securing the adhesion of the so-called left-militarists, the Communists restrained the peasants from attacking feudalism. The perverse theory of broadening

the revolution before deepening it, ran rampant. Huge masses were mobilized under Communist leadership. They helped the Nationalist army to victory, and the bourgeoisie to power ; but themselves were brutally suppressed in the end, because they had not been prepared for the fierce class-struggle that developed in the midst of the anti-imperialist movement. The Chinese Communist leaders acted as they were taught by their Russian mentors. They were given more to diplomacy than to mass action.

## CHAPTER V

The short-lived Chinese Jacobinism was definitely overthrown by the counter-revolutionary coup d'état of March-1926. That was an ominous signal indicating which way the political wind was blowing. The radical left wing of the Kuo Min Tang was overwhelmed by the nationalist military leaders. Chiang Kai-shek obviously acted as the agent of the big bourgeoisie. Having gained control of the nationalist government by his coup d'état, he began the preparation for an open attack upon the revolutionary mass movement, which had alarmed the nationalist bourgeoisie no less than foreign imperialism and native feudalism. At Canton the would-be Chinese Napoleon did not feel himself at home. He planned to shift the seat of the Nationalist Government to a place where it could be freed from the influence of the revolutionary working class and go entirely over to the bourgeoisie and seek the patronage of imperialism. Besides, he wanted to increase his military strength in preparation for the great struggle ahead.

The big bourgeoisie, acting through agents who still professed to follow the policy of Sun Yat sen, went over to the offensive, with the object of wresting from the proletariat the hegemony in the struggle for national liberation. Their success would mean defeat of the democratic revolution without which national liberation was not possible. Indeed they would rather make peace with imperialism than tolerate the maturing revolution. They were organically connected with the pre-capitalist social conditions which were threatened by the democratic revolution.

A few months after his coup d'état, Chiang Kai-shek began the military march towards the north. The Communists wholeheartedly supported the North Expedition and undertook the task of mobilizing the masses to support it. The nationalist army was trained by Russian officers, equipped with Russian arms and financed largely with Russian money. As a matter

of fact, without the generous help of the Soviet Republic, the North Expedition of Chiang Kai-shek could not have taken place, and without the vanguard operations of the Communists it could not have so easily vanquished the opposing forces. The spectacular victory, that made the Cantonese army world-famous in 1926-27, was won more by the revolutionary workers and peasants than by the regular troops. The military campaign itself was planned and actually conducted by a Russian Communist ( the ex-metal worker Galen ) with his staff of Russian officers. The nationalist hero Chiang Kai-shek was but the figurehead.

To help and support the campaign was a correct policy, because it provided the Communists with a much wider field of action, and the opportunity to lead the peasant masses actually in the agrarian revolution throughout the Southern provinces. That is, the Communists could, if they dared, have utilized the North Expedition for turning the table against the bourgeoisie, who had planned it to aggrandize themselves. But the Communists again failed to apply a correct policy in action. Instead of going courageously to the offensive, in order to forestall the counter-revolutionary plan of the bourgeoisie, they allowed, indeed helped the bourgeoisie to acquire formidable military strength, which was presently turned upon the revolutionary masses. The fatal mistake was again due to the false theory about the revolutionary role of the nationalist bourgeoisie, and the anxiety to preserve the alliance with the Kuo Min Tang at all costs. It was really tragic to talk of the revolutionary role of the nationalist bourgeoisie, just when they were opening attack upon the revolution ; and to defend the alliance with the Kuo Min Tang when the Kuo Min Tang was preparing to break the alliance.

For every 10 guns supplied to the army of Chiang Kai-shek not even one was given to the workers. Communists, working in the nationalist army as political commissars, acted as members of the Kuo Min Tang and did not permit any propaganda to make the soldiers class-conscious, on the ground that that would decompose the army.

Caught between the advancing nationalist army in the front and the insurgent peasantry in the rear, the northern troops ran away throwing down their guns. These could have been seized by the Communists and given to the peasants, thus creating a revolutionary army to capture power in the villages and destroy feudalism. That was not done. The nationalist army was hailed by the peasants as their liberator, but the troops, who were themselves peasants, were not called upon to support the demands of the peasantry. In short, the Communists utterly neglected to entrench themselves while the field was free for them.

The theory determining these blunderous tactics was to broaden the base of revolution before deepening it. Before the attack upon feudalism began the peasants must be organized. The nationalist army should be helped to bring all the Southern provinces under its control. That would provide the Communists with the freedom to organize the peasantry in all those provinces. Then it would be so very easy to overthrow feudalism. That way of reasoning indicated a naive faith in the revolutionary character of the nationalist bourgeoisie. It was assumed that they also wanted the destruction of feudalism. In the light of cruel facts, taking place ever since 1925, there was however no ground for that assumption. It was clear that the nationalist bourgeoisie were hostile to an agrarian revolution and were preparing to suppress it with the aid of imperialism if necessary. During the North Expedition, one after another, feudal militarists joined the nationalist army, transforming it into a formidable weapon of counter-revolution.

The stormy development of the revolution as evidenced by the spectacular march of the nationalist army attracted the attention of the entire Communist International to the Chinese question. It was immediately felt that there was something amiss. Blunders committed by the leading men on the spot were detected. The extension of the nationalist territories up to the Yangtse, the occupation of important cities in Central China, the imminent fall of Shanghai itself, a new schism in the leadership of the Kuo Min Tang, the abnormal inflation of the nationalist army through the adhesion of feudal



militarists, the tremendous expansion of the mass movement and finally the insurrection of the Shanghai proletariat—all these factors, among many others, indicated that the time had arrived for a recasting of the Communist policy. The relation of classes inside the nationalist ranks had definitely changed. Class-struggle had sharpened. Consequently the social basis of the revolution must shift and tactics and strategy should be readjusted accordingly. *The questions that prominently rose out of the situation were* : Could the National Democratic Revolution develop further under the leadership of the bourgeoisie? Could the class basis of the anti-imperialist united front remain as broad as before? How could the petty bourgeoisie be detached from the influence of the big bourgeoisie? What should be the social basis and from of the Nationalist Revolutionary State? Was the National Revolution going to cease to be democratic because of the defection of the bourgeoisie? Should the agrarian revolution be still delayed for the sake of an alliance, which the bourgeoisie themselves were on the point of breaking?

These questions were answered in the comprehensive theses adopted by a plenary session of the Executive Committee of the Communist International in November 1926. The substance of the theses was that the revolution still remained in the democratic stage and therefore must have an alliance of classes for its social basis; that the alliance was bound soon to narrow down to the proletariat, peasantry and the urban petty bourgeoisie; that agrarian revolution was on the order of the day; that the proletariat must prepare to take the offensive; and that the Communists should enter into the Left-Nationalist Government of Wuhan to transform it into a democratic dictatorship.

By adopting the new resolution, the International on the one hand, rejected the view of the ultra-left led by Trotsky, which demanded an immediate break with the Kuo Min Tang and advocated the slogan of the Soviet; on the other hand, it repudiated the right opportunism of those who had until then been responsible for the leadership of the Communist Party of China. In the beginning, Stalin himself was reluctant to

agree with the demand for the "Nationalisation of Land" formulated in the resolution, but gave in finally. On his insistence I went to China as the representative of the International to execute the new policy which was framed largely on my initiative. It was also generally known that I had all along criticized the opportunist deviations in China and had been attacked by those responsible for those fateful mistakes, as a "left-Communist" trying to revise Lenin. At the critical moment, I was sent to clear the mess, at the eleventh hour.

## CHAPTER VI

The victory of the Nationalist Army, on the one hand, sharpened the class struggle in the country-side, placing the basic issue of the democratic revolution, namely, the agrarian question on the order of the day ; on the other hand, it accentuated the factional struggle inside the Kuo Min Tang, to the extent of endangering its very existence. While taking a very hesitating attitude towards the agrarian question, which involved the overwhelming majority of the people, the Communist leaders were more concerned with the internal struggles of the Kuo Min Tang. Even that major issue of an acute revolutionary situation, they approached from a wrong point of view.

There were two sets of antagonisms developing inside the Kuo Min Tang : one tended to split it horizontally, along the line of divergent interests of the various groups of the bourgeoisie, the other threatened to split it vertically. To sharpen the first set of antagonisms should have obviously been the object of Communist tactics in that situation. The great bulk of the membership of the Kuo Min Tang were recruited from the oppressed and exploited classes. The interests of these demanded development of the revolution towards the final overthrow of imperialist power, and complete destruction of feudalism. The leadership represented not only the bourgeoisie (bankers, industrialists and big merchants) but also the landlords and the village gentry. A bold insistence upon speedy enforcement of the programme of democratic revolution, particularly, the solution of the agrarian and kindred problems (grain monopoly, arbitrary taxation, forced labour, internal customs etc.) would surely widen the cleavage between the leadership and the following of the Kuo Min Tang. The relation of classes in the anti-imperialist democratic revolution would change. The proletariat would capture the hegemony in that struggle. The big bourgeoisie would be definitely ousted from the leadership of the nationalist movement. The social basis of the revolution would be narrowed down to a more homogeneous alliance of the masses, of the proletariat, peasantry, and the

urban petty bourgeoisie. That alliance could still take place on the platform of democratic national revolution, and under the popular flag of the Kuo Min Tang ; but the effective leadership would pass on to the Communist Party.

Still terrified the imaginary spectre of a break with the Kuo Min Tang, the Communist leaders, under the domination of their Russian mentor, Michael Borodin, entirely failed to perceive the perspective of the situation. They stubbornly resisted the new policy recommended by the International and followed Borodin in the old path of opportunism. In that critical moment, when everything depended upon quick and decisive action, the International failed to intervene energetically and effectively, so that its resolution could be carried out. Its accredited representative was not armed with the power necessary to accomplish the mission entrusted to him. The leaders of the Communist Party of China formally but half-heartedly accepted the new line, only to sabotage it on the command of Borodin who, as the agent of the Soviet Government, remained in possession of the material resources and retained control of the apparatus of communication, so that true reports of the situation could not be promptly communicated to Moscow. It was in the teeth of the opposition of the party leadership, acting under Borodin's instructions, that I persuaded the Fifth Congress of the C. P. of China to adopt resolutions in conformity with the new line recommended by the Communist International\*. But the leaders were determined to sabotage them. So, the resolution, particularly the one advocating agrarian revolution, remained on paper, unenforced. The leaders acted in a way which amounted to a betrayal not only of the peasantry, but even of the proletariat. Deprived of the cooperation of the party leaders, I was helpless. I could not act except through their intermediary. Urgent actions planned with apparent mutual agreement, were neglected on one pretext or another.

The leaders of the Communist Party of China had been trained in the school of opportunism. They had been taught

\* The C. I. had by now realised the need for a definitely revolutionary line to be adopted by the Chinese Communists, and sent out M. N. Roy as its special representative to Hankow.

to make a fetish of the alliance with the Kuo Min Tang. They had imbibed the theory that the democratic national revolution must take place under the leadership of the bourgeoisie. For two years, they had acted on those lines, approved by the International, under the direct guidance of those who appeared to be its accredited representatives. Opportunism had become a habit, a tradition, with them and they had been made to acquire this habit under the tutelage of "Bolsheviks" who appeared to incorporate the experience of the great Russian revolution, and who freely quoted Lenin.

So, the Chinese Communist leaders were naturally unable to grasp the new policy. which meant a sudden repudiation of the line followed until then. It appeared to them like a heresy. They had not been trained for such revolutionary mass action as was now recommended. They were used to carry on the work of agitation, propaganda and even organization ; but political action was the monopoly of the Kuo Min Tang and the Nationalist Government. What was not sanctioned by these leading authorities, could not and should not be done ; to do any such thing would be tampering with the alliance. So they imagin ed.

For example, the Party Congress had adopted the resolution that offensive must be taken on the agrarian front ; that the peasants should be led in an attack upon feudalism ; that big estates should be confiscated by the peasant unions, which should forth with assume the functions of government in the village. Even after this resolution had been passed by the Party Congress, the leader of the party, Chen Tu-hsiu, acting under the advice of Borodin, telegraphed to Moscow opposing the policy. His arguments were : the officers of the Nationalist Army all hailed from the landowning class ; they disapproved of the programme of agrarian revolution ; and the suggested offensive in the villages would turn the army against the Nationalist Government. This morbid concern for the attitude of the military officers overlooked the soldiers, who were recruited from the peasantry and would have surely welcomed an agrarian revolution. Besides, the military officers were not marking time. They were already on the offensive, brutally

suppressing the peasant movement, and preparing an insurrection against the Nationalist Government of Wuhan unless this latter openly attacked the Communists.

The tactics of the C. P. of China, in the critical period of November 1926 to July 1927, were determined entirely by the assumption that the Nationalist Government of Wuhan represented the radical left wing of the Kuo Min Tang. This assumption in its turn, was based upon the fact that the Wuhan Government rose out of the opposition to Chiang Kai-shek. In order to win over, in its struggle against Chiang Kai-shek, the support of the masses, particularly the rank and file of the Kuo Min Tang, the Wuhan Nationalist group made pseudo-radical gestures and assumed the fraudulent title of the "Left Kuo Min Tang." It claimed to be the faithful standard-bearer of what came to be known as Sun Yat-senism. To legalize this claim, so to say, the Wuhan Group accepted the formal leadership of Wang Chin-wei, and called him back from exile.

But by social composition, the Wuhan Group was hardly distinguishable from the rival faction of Chiang Kai-shek, with its seat at Nanking. Its virtual leadership was vested in the feudal general Tang Shen-chi who had embraced the nationalist cause recently in its days of triumph. Then in the leading circle of the group sat such men as Tan Yen-kai, Sun-Fo, George Hsu, Eugene Chen and others. Tan Yen-kai, a patriarchal provincial satrap since the days of the Manchus, belonged to the highly conservative old guard of the Kuo Min Tang. Sun Fo, a son of the departed nationalist leader, Sun Yat-sen, always belonged to the right wing of the party, and had opposed his father's radical deviations. George Hsu, formerly chaplain of the Christian General Fung Yu-hsiang's army, was an eminent conservative dignitary of the Church, the first Chinese Christian raised to the Bishopric. The mercurial Eugene Chen was a Victorian liberal, if anything politically. He wrote flamboyant diplomatic notes on the dictation of Borodin, but insisted that there should be no strikes in factories owned by foreigners, because they disturbed his diplomatic dealings.

The Communists recognized such a contingent as the "left wing" of the Kuo Min Tang, and staked the future of the revolution on such a highly questionable team. The only thing in favour of the Wuhan Group was that it apparently maintained friendly relations with the Communists to the extent of admitting two of them into the Government.

The Wuhan Group, as it was, did not represent the left wing of the Kuo Min Tang, but it could be transformed into a platform for petty bourgeois radicalism—an instrument to rally the nationalist rank and file in a decisive fight against the treacherous bourgeois leadership, and the would-be Napoleonism of Chiang Kai-shek. That could be accomplished only in one way : by sharpening the class antagonisms inside the Kuo Min Tang, by forcing it to split horizontally. As long as the representatives of all the reactionary classes, patriarchal officials, feudal-militarists and the big bourgeoisie, controlled the Wuhan Group, it made for a vertical split of the Kuo Min Tang, on the line of factional interests. Therefore, the possible transformation of the Wuhan Group into an instrument of revolutionary struggle was, in the first place, conditional upon the expulsion of the reactionaries, who still sat in its leading circle. From the beginning, when its very existence depended upon the support of the masses, it should have been forced to accept the condition, of sanctioning the enforcement of the programme of democratic revolution. At that time, the Communist Party had occupied the position of vantage. The enemy had been driven out of the Yangtze Valley by the revolutionary action of the working class and the urban petty bourgeois masses (small traders, artisans, employees etc.) before the nationalist army occupied it. Hankow itself was captured by the workers bravely defying the imperialist battle-ships on the river. The workers handed over the victory to Tang Shen-chi. The great old Chinese city of Wuchang on the southern bank of the Yangtze was recovered by the "Iron Army" mostly officered by the Communists. The victory was handed over to Tang Shen-chi for the sake of enlisting the embarrassing and discrediting adhesion of that feudal-militarist to the pseudo-left Kuo Min Tang.

Under such circumstances the Communists could have easily dictated terms. It was on the report of these events, that the Executive Committee of the International in November 1926 recommended the policy of supporting the Wuhan Government and advised the Communists to enter it. But the advantage was thrown away. The Communist Party did not dictate terms; on the contrary, it restrained the agrarian revolution, so that the Wuhan Government could secure the adhesion of feudal-militarists in its factional fight against Chiang Kai-shek. In other words, the Communists helped the reactionaries to strengthen their position in the Wuhan Group and acquire military forces which were before long turned against the Communists themselves.

Had the Communists followed up the initial victories of the urban masses with a general offensive in the villages, the crystallization of a counter-revolutionary army, nominally under the flag of the Wuhan Government, could have been prevented, and the latter, in a helpless position, might have endorsed a radical programme. That, of course, could not be approved by the reactionaries, who would thus be pitted against the nationalist rank and file whose support they wanted to utilise in their factional fight against Chiang Kai-shek. Consequently they would either leave or be expelled from the Wuhan group, and this could become the spear-head of the revolutionary rank and file against the reactionaries. The Kuo Min Tang would split along the line of class antagonism sharpened in its ranks by the development of the revolution. The reconstructed fighting alliance of classes in the national democratic revolution would be more homogeneous. The Wuhan Government would become a democratic dictatorship—the form of the State to be created by colonial democratic revolutions in this epoch of capitalist decline.

By the time I reached China the game was nearly lost. The situation could be saved only by quick and determined action. That was not possible, when the entire party leadership, backed by those who had until then acted as representatives of the International, were opposed to revolutionary action. Accepting the new resolution of the International formally,



they however resisted and sabotaged its application. That was tragic, when every day counted, and counter-revolution was on the offensive.

Arriving at Canton in the beginning of 1927, I found the Communists still afraid of attacking Chiang Kai-shek, although there could no longer be any doubt about his counter-revolutionary motive. In the province of Kiangsi, occupied by his army, peasants and workers were attacked everywhere. He was evidently in secret negotiations not only with the Shanghai bourgeoisie, but also with the northern militarists, and even the imperialists. Japanese envoys had visited him secretly. His army stood inactive in the vicinity of Shanghai, while the proletariat, acting as the heroic vanguard of the army of national revolution, attacked the northern army of occupation and defied the formidable concentration of the forces of international imperialism. He allowed the elite of the anti-imperialist struggle, the Shanghai proletariat, to be butchered by counter-revolution. He did not raise a finger to come to their aid. His already known hostility to the Communists was no longer hidden. He inaugurated the campaign to purge the Kuo Min Tang of Communists. He swore to destroy Wuhan, unless the rival nationalist camp declared war upon the Communists and suppressed the workers' and peasants' movements.

With much difficulty, I persuaded the Communists of Canton to issue a manifesto, in the name of all the mass organisations of the city, demanding explanation of the actions of Chiang Kai-shek, and giving the slogan: "Call back Wang Chin-wei." The object of the slogan was to rally the bulk of the Kuo Min Tang membership in the struggle against Chiang Kai-shek's Napoleonism. The Communists were very reluctant to issue the slogan, because it was the signal for a declaration of war against Chiang Kai-shek. Counter-revolution was clearly on the offensive; still the Communists were not prepared to attack.

On the way from Canton to Wuhan (this was the name given collectively to the three cities situated at the junction of the Yangtse and the Han, namely, Wuchang, Hankow and

Hanyang ) I found that the slogan about the return of Wang Chin-wei had been issued none too soon. In every village, the demand was being put forth in mass meetings. In the province of Hunan, the anti-Chiang Kai-shek campaign was in full swing.

Hunan was the domain of Tang Shen-chi, who had become the Generalissimo of the Wuhan army. He had joined the nationalist campaign to fish in troubled waters. His ascendancy, and occupation of the key point in central China piqued Chiang. Tang Shen-chi on his part aspired to supplant Chiang at the head of the entire Nationalist Army. It was he who secretly encouraged the anti-Chiang campaign, first in his own province, and then forced the hands of the Wuhan Government. A campaign promoted by personal rivalry, however, secured tremendous popular support, because it corresponded with a political necessity. But the personal element cut across the political reason, and confused the whole campaign, which eventually fizzled out. Sub-conscious class antagonism made the campaign so popular. That substance of the campaign never came to the fore. It was the duty of the Communists to develop the campaign on the line of class antagonism. They had failed to initiate the campaign. Nor did they guide it in the right channel, when it was started. On the contrary, they played second fiddle in the campaign, thus becoming a party to the factional struggle between counter-revolutionary militarists.

Chiang Kai-shek was not to be fought as an individual. He was the leader of the counter-revolution. He represented the striving of the nationalist bourgeoisie to arrest the progress of the democratic revolution, because it was bursting narrow political limits and was raising social problems. But the solution of these social problems, particularly the agrarian, was required for the welfare of the majority of the population. Thus Chiang Kai-shek stood for the suppression of the majority in the interests of a minority. His mission was to set up a military dictatorship as the instrumenta of the feudal-bourgeois ruling clique. All that Chiang stood for was antagonistic to the interests of the nationalist masses, to the

sub-conscious motive of the movement for national liberation. Hence the popularity of the anti-Chiang campaign. The campaign failed because its social character remained obscure behind factional issues. Assuming the form of a duel between two rival groups of militarists, it was bound to end in the victory of the stronger.

Chiang's was the stronger side, because it was financed from Shanghai and supplied from abroad. Chiang Kai-shek had started on the North Expedition with the object of coming within the reach of that dual source of support. Under a revolutionary leadership the Nationalist Army ought to have left Shanghai alone. Having captured the middle Yangtze provinces, it should have marched towards Peking to smash northern militarism completely. Then, it would have been in a position to close upon the base of international imperialism from all sides, and overwhelm it without any serious military operation, simply by cutting it off from the hinterland. But for occupying that strategic position the nationalist forces must entrench themselves by carrying through the agrarian revolution, and depend entirely upon the Soviet Republic for supplies. That would be placing themselves under the influence of the revolutionary proletariat, nationally as well as internationally.

Chiang Kai-shek foresaw all that, and made straight in the direction where he was sure to be beaten, if he really wanted to fight. No Chinese army could ever capture Shanghai or come near it, without the sanction of international imperialism. Chiang was allowed to enter Shanghai only after he had established his counter-revolutionary *bona fides*. His first act upon reaching his coveted goal was to massacre the Communists and brutally suppress the revolutionary democratic movement. With Shanghai as his base, financed by the Chinese bourgeoisie and supplied liberally by international imperialism, he could defeat any rival in the land, unless this latter were the standard-bearer of a thorough-going democratic revolution.

## CHAPTER VII

Tang Shen-chi, however, was not in a hurry to have an actual trial of strength with his stronger rival. He simply exploited the sub-conscious revolutionary urge of the masses to increase his military strength and establish his dictatorship at Wuhan. While Chiang Kai-shek was still struggling to establish himself in the lower Yangtze provinces, the prestige of Wuhan rose very high. The Wuhan Government did occupy a very advantageous position. It had the backing of the revolutionary masses in its own territories, and the sympathy of the nationalist rank and file throughout the country.

Owing to the lack of revolutionary leadership, which under the given conditions could only come from the Communists, Wuhan could not for any length of time retain the proud position of the centre of revolutionary China. Chiang Kai-shek's welcome in Shanghai, and the establishment of the rival Nationalist Government at Nanking cast a shadow upon Wuhan. Finding their prestige on the decline, but afraid of risking a decisive fight with the rival, the Wuhan group sought cheap military glory.

Chiang Kai-shek was preparing to march to Peking. The Wuhan group decided to forestall him. They thought that the glory of capturing Peking would be greater than the occupation of Shanghai. Another reason for the so-called Second North Expedition was to win over Feng Yu-hsiang, who was craftily waiting to sell his support to the stronger side and the highest bidder. The main motive behind the projected military adventure, however, was to run away from the social tasks of the revolution. The scheme was to divert the attention of the masses, and have them suspend their demands pending military operations.

The execution of the plan depended upon Tang Shen-chi. He was not at all eager to leave his base in quest of pyrrhic victories. He was particularly unwilling to effect the desired junction with the forces of Feng. For, in that eventuality, his position as the Generalissimo of the Wuhan Government would

be jeopardized. Feng would not subordinate himself to his command. To bring the powerful army of Feng under its flag, the Wuhan Government would most likely appoint him its commander-in-chief. On the other hand, Tang Shen-chi knew that Feng was in secret communication with Chiang Kai-shek, and would join forces with him, if the Wuhan group delayed much in offering him their terms. The alliance of Feng and Chiang would threaten the very existence of Wuhan. Besides Tang Shen-chi could not remain idle indefinitely, should he want to retain popular support. So, with mixed feelings he approved of the Second North Expedition. But he was too shrewd to risk his own forces. He placed the Cantonese troops at the forefront of the expedition.

The new military adventure was obviously dangerous for the revolution. Its object was to increase the military power of the Nationalist Government, so that it could shake off the influence of the masses. Then, on the pretext of war conditions, the government would surely appeal for peace in the rear, as it afterwards did. That would give the reactionary forces time to recover their lost position, and assume the offensive.

On these grounds I opposed the new military campaign and advised the Communist Party to advocate an alternative plan of action. It was to deepen the social base of the Wuhan Government by carrying on the agrarian revolution in the provinces under its control. Concrete measures I suggested were: (1) Extermination of the reactionary forces in the country-side, namely, the landlords, money-lenders and the village gentry; (2) Extension of its effective power to the southern provinces of Kwangtung (the original base of the nationalists) and Kiangsi; and (3) Movement of the revolutionary troops under the actual control of the Nationalist Government southward with the purpose of helping the realisation of these objects.

A powerful mass movement had developed in those four provinces (with a total population of nearly 100 millions) on the occasion of the march of the Nationalist Army from Canton to the Yangtze. There were about a million workers and five times as many peasants organised. General political consciousness was very advanced. Firmly established in these provinces,

the Wuhan Government could be almost invulnerable. Having taken up the strategic position, it would be able to encircle Shanghai from inland, and defeat the combined forces of Chiang Kai-shek and international imperialism. Meanwhile, Feng Yu-hsiang might be asked to advance eastward to threaten the flank of Chiang should he march to Peking on the Tientsien-Pukow Railway. Holding the Lung hai Railway, that joins the two trunk lines connecting Peking with the Yangtze Valley, as his base, Feng could press towards the North. That would be a bait to keep him away from Chiang-Kai-shek.

The Communist leaders would not accept the alternative plan of action. They argued that refusal to support the Second North Expedition would amount to a break with the "left" Kuo Min Tang. Borodin propounded a defeatist theory. He argued that Wuhan could not be held because the revolutionary forces were very weak. Therefore he advocated that the remains of the ruin must be safely withdrawn to a new base in the north-west. That was a fantastic proposition which revealed a remarkable lack of faith in the masses, tragically shared by the entire leadership of the C. P. His other astounding proposition was to set a conglomeration of military forces in motion, in the hope that something positive might come out of the chaos. Fatalism, still another fountain-head of opportunism! The Communist Party being controlled by opportunists, who in the revolutionary crisis exposed themselves as such hopeless imbeciles, it would have been a veritable miracle if the almost certain disaster had been averted.

Even such a miracle could possibly have been worked, had the Communist leaders at the eleventh hour shown some understanding of revolutionary tactics. Had the Wuhan Government been given clearly to understand that the Communist Party would not endorse the military adventure, the plan might have been abandoned; for, without the support of the masses, the campaign could not have been undertaken with any hope of success. The Communists still held the key-position. Instead of dictating terms while they still could do so, they capitulated. They called upon the masses to support a consciously counter-revolutionary military adventure. The old theory, of first-

broadening the revolution, was again expounded. It was contended that insistence upon the solution of the agrarian problem in the nationalist territories would mean war with the Kuo Min Tang.

I referred the disputed question to Moscow. The answer was ambiguous. It was in favour of doing both the things simultaneously : to carry on the military plan and develop the revolution in the territories of the Wuhan Government. That was an impossibility. It proved to be so in experience, before long.

As soon as the military operations began, the Nationalist Government demanded suspension of class struggle in the rear. Strikes were prohibited on the ground that any interference with industry, trade and transport would adversely affect the supplies for the army, and were therefore counter-revolutionary. Even anti-imperialist activities were forbidden, on the plea that the Nationalist Government could not risk diplomatic difficulties when its armies were fighting on the front.

Extra taxes were levied, and forced loans raised to meet the military expenditure. Prices soared high in consequence ; for, the merchants immediately passed on the burden of taxation and loans to the masses. On the other hand, the workers were not allowed to demand any increase of wages, in order to avoid industrial strikes. Taking advantage of the situation, employers reduced wages on the patriotic plea of economy at the time of war. The workers were asked to perform over-time labour as a revolutionary duty. The peasants were asked not to hold any stock of rice, because that was needed for the army. What thus amounted to obligatory sale, brought down the price of rice. The peasants lost, while the grain merchants lined their pockets. The militancy of the peasant movement was curbed on the pretext that there must be social peace in the rear of a revolutionary army. The social peace gave the landlords and the village gentry the time to prepare the attack upon the peasants.

At the front, fortune did not smile upon the Wuhan Government. Feng Yu-hsiang did not turn out to be a very agreeable ally. He blocked the road to Peking, himself being

in no hurry to move. He arrogantly advised the Wuhan group to make peace with Chiang Kai-shek, and, as the condition for that, to suppress the Communists and send the Russian advisers away. Feng's attitude gave Tang Shen-chi the occasion to withdraw his troops back to the base. They were unscathed. The fighting was done by the Cantonese troops alone which were nearly exterminated.

While the military operations were on, and social peace was being preached on patriotic grounds, detachments of Tang Shen-chi's army in the province of Hunan rose in open revolt against the Wuhan Government. The insurgents marched upon the capital without any resistance. They were stopped and were defeated in the vicinity of Woochang by a volunteer corps hastily organised by the Communist commandant of the city. There could be no doubt that the insurrection took place with the sanction of the Hunan Generalissimo. It was also discovered that the counter-revolutionary officers were at the same time in league with Nanking. While passively waiting to be overthrown by the counter-revolutionary insurgents, the Wuhan Government itself justified their action. It argued that "excesses," committed by the peasantry, were driving the army officers to revolt because they all came from the small land-owning families. The Government called upon the Communists to check the "excesses" of the peasantry. The call did not fall on deaf ears. Borodin fulminated against the "ravages" of the peasantry, and ordered his Chinese disciples to help counter-revolution by checking the militancy of the peasants' movement. He raised the bogey of the break with the "left" Kuo Min Tang,—a bogey that still scared the Chinese Communist leaders into rank opportunism, which in that revolutionary crisis amounted to gross betrayal of the masses.

Counter-revolution developed rapidly. A few days after the defeat of the insurgents under the wall of Woochang, there was a counter-revolutionary *coup d'etat* at Changsha, the capital of Hunan. This threw the Communists into such a panic as deprived them of all good sense. Under the instructions of Borodin, the Communist Minister of Interior and Agri-



culture, Tam Pin-shan, volunteered to go himself to Huñan with the object of "correcting the excesses" of the peasants' unions. I vigorously objected to the Communists undertaking the task of checking the revolutionary action of the peasants, in order to placate the reactionary army officers. I pointed out that the suicidal policy of restraining the development of the agrarian revolution on the plea of not disturbing the rear when the army was fighting on the front, had already enabled the forces of reaction to go over to the offensive. Further restraint would demoralise the peasants' movement, and encourage counter-revolution to raise its bloody head in the villages. But my objection was disregarded.

Thereupon, I suggested that Tam Pin-shan might go with the instruction that, when on the spot, his mission should be not to check the "excesses" of the peasants' movement, but to set up village self-government, investing the peasants' unions with the necessary political power. That would be setting up Soviets in fact, if not in name. The peasant unions were the rallying ground of the rural oppressed and exploited masses. In his capacity as the Minister of Interior, Tam Pin-shan was in charge of local self-government and police. The action proposed therefore was within his official competence. Properly and courageously guided the peasant unions could easily become basic units of the revolutionary state, disarm the rowdies and ruffians in the pay of the land-lords and create a militia as the nucleus of a real revolutionary army.

The rank and file Communists working in the villages were eager for such a line of action, but they were restrained by orders of the Central Committee of the Party. Many of them lost patience, and acted independently under pressure of the masses. Military officers and reactionary nationalist leaders raised a hue and cry against those "excesses". They were also condemned by the Communist leaders, who imagined it to be their revolutionary duty "to correct those excesses". Tam Pin-shan's "peace mission," however, did not materialise. The counter-revolutionary insurgents of Changsha would not let it through.

It was evident that not only Tang Shen-chi was behind the Changsha insurrection; even the "left" Nationalist Government

of Wuhan as a whole connived at that movement, ostensibly directed against itself. For, absolutely nothing was done to suppress the rebellion. The insurgents had a very small force at their disposal. A punitive expedition of a couple of thousand regular troops under reliable officers would have easily over-whelmed them. But they were left undisturbed, obviously to gather strength and go on with their bloody attacks on the Communists and the workers' and peasants' organisations. All the leading Communists of the city including two young girls were brutally massacred. Trade Unions were suppressed; and the political school for the peasants was closed down. The insurgents threatened to march to Wuhan and overthrow the government there, unless the latter sanctioned the suppression of the revolutionary workers' and peasants' movement and punished the Communists.

The Wuhan Government looked upon the situation impotently; at heart it was relieved by the turn events were taking. It ostentatiously charged its Generalissimo to control his subordinates, and establish the *status quo ante bellum* at Changsha. Tang Shen-chi accepted the mission, but was in no hurry to do anything.

It was no longer possible for the Communists to continue playing second fiddle. It would be a criminal and rank betrayal of the revolution. I proposed that the Central Committee of the C. P. should address an open letter to the Kuo Min Tang exposing the latter's counter-revolutionary crimes of omission and commission. The open letter should be an ultimatum, and the signal for a general revolutionary offensive, under the independent leadership of the C. P.

For concrete action, I proposed 1. The peasants to be led in an attack upon Changsha, supported by a quickly raised irregular army commanded by Communists and revolutionary nationalists; 2. Strike in the Hanyang arsenal with the demand that 25 percent of the arms and the munitions produced should be handed over to Trade Unions for the purpose of creating a Workers' Militia as a guarantee against the counter-revolution; 3. A mass demonstration in support of the demand of the arsenal workers, to endorse the open letter of the Communist

Party and to demand that the Nationalist Government and the Kuo Min Tang should immediately call upon the peasants to overthrow the counter-revolutionary insurgents of Changsha, and to destroy rural reaction; 4. General strike to enforce the demands formulated by the demonstration. Finally an armed uprising to begin with the capture of the arsenal.

The plan of action appeared fantastic to the Communist leaders trained in the school of systematic opportunism. The acute revolutionary crisis had totally demoralized them. They were seized with panic and defeatism. Instead of listening to my arguments in favour of determined offensive, the only creditable way out of the situation, they yielded to all the counter-revolutionary demands of the "left" Kuo Min Tang. The Trade Unions disbanded their volunteer corps; even the young pioneers (drilled formations of proletarian children) were deprived of their sticks; class-struggle in any form was forbidden; and to cap the climax of capitulation, the Trade Unions set up tribunals to enforce what was shamelessly called "revolutionary discipline." The tribunal punished workers for agitating in favour of strikes, riksha carriers for protesting against insufficient payment and insults by foreigners, boatmen for refusing to serve foreign soldiers, volunteers for jeering at reactionary traders, and so on and so forth.

In despair, I tried to act over the head of the impossible Political Bureau (the supreme leadership) of the Communist Party. I demanded a plenary meeting of the Central Committee to be attended by local leaders. The demand was opposed on the plea that important members of the party could not leave their respective posts in those critical days. The top leaders were against the plenary session, because local workers were impatient for decisive action, and would have surely endorsed my plan. As the last resort, I sought to act with the co-operation of individual comrades, Chinese as well as Russian. Galen† was fully in agreement with me. Many other Russian

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† Galen was the chief military adviser to the Nationalist Government. He was the creator of the cadre of the Nationalist army. Acting as the chief of the staff, he planned the entire North Expedition and actually commanded all major operations. Having reached the Yangtse through the province of Kiangsi, he disapproved of the advance towards Shanghai advocated by Chiang Kai-shek. On instructions from the Nationalist Government at Wuhan, he left the headquarters of Chiang Kai-shek's army and was staying at Wuhan while I was there.

comrades had also come round to my view by that time. But all power was centred in the hands of Borodin, Moscow had backed me up politically as against his opportunism. Nevertheless, in other respects, he was still left in the controlling position, and consequently functioned as the dictator of the Communist Party. Being mostly his disciples, and ideologically akin to his way, the top leaders of the C. P. of China followed him, disregarding repeatedly the instructions of the International, and in defiance of its representative on the spot.

It was possible to raise an irregular force, several thousands strong, for temporary operations against Changsha pending the formation of the revolutionary army with peasant volunteers. To secure the services of the improvised force, it was necessary to pay the troops a month's wages in advance. Borodin controlled the purse-strings. In the beginning he promised to supply the required money. When all arrangements were made in spite of the criminal non-co-operation of the leaders of the C. P., and the peasants unions had been instructed to besiege Changsha, he failed to keep his promise. Consequently, the plan had to be abandoned. The military attack upon the rest of the counter-revolution could not be organised. But all was not lost as yet. The peasants, led by local communists and revolutionary nationalists, closed upon Changsha in a semi-circle. Over 20,000 of them came within a few miles of the city meeting no resistance. In the city itself the counter-revolutionary force was very small. The workers as well as the petty bourgeois masses were prepared to welcome the peasants' army. So the capture of the centre of counter-revolution was imminent. All of a sudden, the peasants began to fall back. The counter-revolutionary troops sallied forth, chased the peasants demoralized by the sudden order to retreat, and massacred thousands of them. That was a signal for a general offensive of counter-revolution throughout the province where the peasant movement was the strongest.

The sudden retreat of the peasants, throwing away a sure victory at Changsha, was the result of an order, sent out by the Communist leadership at Wuhan, without my knowledge.

I refrain from characterizing that act: one is tempted to use very damaging terms.

At Wuhan, there was a demonstration, but not with the original purpose which was to give the signal for the planned insurrection. The plan was to declare a one-day general strike on the occasion of the return of the representatives of the Government to the Conference with Feng Yu-hsiang at the front. All the workers of the three cities were to gather at the meeting to be addressed by the nationalist leaders. From the platform, the representative of the Communist Party was to demand action according to the resolution of the party, and, the nationalist leaders failing to sanction it, to take them prisoners as the signal for the planned insurrection. Ten thousand workers in the nearby Hanyang Arsenal were ready to take possession of it on that signal. But the demonstration turned out to be a welcome to the commanders of the "victorious" army and the members of the Nationalist Government.

There could not be any bitterer irony of fate. The "victorious" commanders, outwitted by the crafty Christian general, presently wreaked their vengeance upon the foolish Communists. The distressing encounter with Feng had convinced most of the Wuhan leaders of the futility of the struggle for supremacy against Chiang Kai-shek who was by that time firmly entrenched in the lower Yangtze provinces.

## CHAPTER VIII

The leader of petty bourgeois radicalism, Wang Chin-wei, was in a quandry. He was a tragic figure, standing helplessly on board the sinking ship of national democratic revolution. The foolish tactics of the Communists—Borodin's policy of military combination under Tang Shen-chi—had driven Wang Chin-wei into the embrace of the reactionary clique. But it was difficult for him to turn his coat all of a sudden. His position was not based upon the control of armed forces; nor had he come to prominence through factional intrigues. He was the chosen successor of Sun Yat-sen. Democratic radicalism was the basis of his tremendous popularity. He could trifle with his political creed inherited from Sun Yat-sen only at the risk of his political life. On the other hand, his rival to the supreme Nationalist leadership, Chiang Kai-shek, would never give him any quarter unless he foreswore his principles. Compromise with Chiang would hasten Wang's political death.

Such a figure was not to be disregarded, when every available weapon should be used for what it was worth, to avert the disaster which appeared to be imminent. The odds were all turning against the Communists who had so vigorously disarmed themselves. Besides, the attack was not upon the Communists alone. It was against the national democratic revolution. So, objectively the urban petty bourgeois masses were also under attack. As a matter of fact many rank and file Kuo Min Tang members were incurring the displeasure of the reactionary ruling clique and actually falling victims to the bloody counter-revolution due to their close association with the Communists. The slogan of Chiang Kai-shek,—a slogan taken up by the reactionaries of Wuhan,—was to purge the Kuo Min Tang of the Communists and their friends. In such a situation efforts should be made for a closer fighting alliance with the urban petty bourgeois masses to resist the march of counter-revolution. Such an alliance was still an objective necessity, since the national democratic stage of

revolution was not yet complete. Should the efforts succeed, counter-revolution might be checked and the situation saved.

Therefore, I recommended the tactics of a rapprochement with Wang Chin-wei, with the object of detaching him from the reactionary ruling clique. He had been much alienated by Borodin's "Tang Shen-chi orientation." In personal conversation with me he bitterly complained that the Communists were intriguing with the militarists to overthrow him, although he had returned to China on the advice of the Russians to place himself at the head of the Wuhan Government. He told the truth.

His complaint was justifiable. On his way back to China, he had passed through Moscow. There he was promised full support of the Soviet Government as well as the Communist International. Consequently, he had expected a different attitude from the leaders of the Communist Party of China and Borodin. In China, he found himself in a rather equivocal position. He was the titular head of the "Left" Nationalist Government, which was actually under the domination of the reactionary feudal militarist Tang Shen-chi, who had joined the Kuo Min Tang only the other day. In that unenviable position he was naturally bitter and wavering. He was still the idol of the democratic masses. A radical opposition to overthrow the reactionaries not only in the camp of Chiang Kai-shek, but in Wuhan itself, could not possibly be organised except with him as the leader. Therefore, it was all-important to restore his confidence and reassure him of the support promised in Moscow. I managed to send a radio message to Moscow demanding the reassurance. On the other hand, to him I proposed a concrete plan of action which should be undertaken to re-establish his effective leadership of the Wuhan Government. He agreed with the plan, provided that the necessary help would be forthcoming.

The substance of the plan was local conferences for setting up the platform of National Revolution; an emergency Party Congress of delegates elected at the local conferences; endorsement by the emergency Congress of the Platform of National Revolution; re-election of the Party leadership and exclusion

from the new leadership of all who did not unconditionally agree to stand on the Platform of National Revolution. The main planks in the Platform of National Revolution were: confiscation of landed property over a fixed maximum limit; to empower the peasants' unions to carry out the confiscation and to distribute the confiscated land to the actual cultivators; freedom of the peasantry from all charges and levies except a unitary land tax; abolition of the *likin* (internal customs); disarming of the military forces of the rural reaction; formation of village militia out of the members of the peasants' unions; investing the peasants' unions with the functions of village self-government; nationalization of mines and railways; eight hours day and minimum wages for the industrial workers; establishment of workers' councils in factories etc.; formation of a workers' militia; creation of a revolutionary army directly under the Nationalist Government; struggle against the traitors of Nanking; and vigorous prosecution of the anti-imperialist fight.

It was almost too late when the urgently needed reassurance came from Moscow. Meanwhile, believing that the Communists had betrayed him, Wang Chin-wei had entered into negotiations with the right wing, which was clamouring for the blood of the Communists to propitiate Chiang Kai-shek. His defection would mean the liquidation of the Wuhan Government and complete victory of the reactionary clique allied or opposed to, Chiang Kai-shek. Tang Shen-chi himself was in secret communication with his rival, To fool the Communist leaders and to deceive the masses, he made a show of sending an expedition down the river against Nanking. Borodin was satisfied by that fraudulent move. The real purpose of the move was to send away the remnants of the Cantonese army, which might resist the counter-revolutionary plan hatched by the reactionaries of the "Left" Kuomintang at Wuhan. I thought that at that juncture a final effort must be made to regain the confidence of Wang Chin-wei. I communicated to him the message from Moscow. Though not addressed to him, it was obviously meant for him, because it was a repetition of the promise made to him



personally in Moscow. The plan for which the support was solicited could not, under the given conditions, be carried out without his co-operation. Having grown suspicious from bitter experience, he wanted to see the message from Moscow. I could not refuse without running the risk of forfeiting his confidence so very necessary in that critical moment. Besides, the plan was already known to him. He had expressed his agreement with it. He was willing to stand by his agreement if I could produce definite proof that the necessary help would be forthcoming. Nobody could be expected to take a fateful step without the gesture of confidence demanded by him. I had no time to secure the approval from Moscow. Nor did I think it was necessary to do so. In such a critical situation the representative of the Communist International should have the right to act on his initiative, provided that he acted according to the general line previously agreed upon. I gave Wang Chin-wei a copy of the telegram which contained a message meant to be communicated to him.

It is reported that he showed the telegram to his associates who were already in communication with Nanking. It is a fact that subsequently, in a manifesto justifying his going over to the side of the reactionaries, he referred to the telegram as the evidence of Communist intrigue. But it is sheer nonsense to say, as it is done by my opponents, that the telegram was the decisive factor. The counter-revolution was in open offensive in Wuhan itself many days before the arrival of the telegram. Associates of Wang Chin-wei, known reactionaries like Sun Fo, Eugene Chen, Tan Yan-kei, trusted by Borodin and the leaders of the C. P. of China as left-wingers, had come to a secret understanding with Chiang Kai-shek and were only waiting to take Wang Chin-wei along into the camp of the counter-revolution. Counter-revolutionary insurrections of the troops of the Wuhan Government had been taking place with its sanction. In Wuhan itself, the workers had been disarmed and their organisations emasculated with the aid and consent of the leaders of the Communist Party. Wang Chin-wei had been driven into the arms of his reactionary associates by Borodin's opportunist policy of backing up the feudal militarist

Tang Shen-chi as against the acknowledged leader of the revolutionary democratic masses, and by the foolishness of the leaders of the C. P. of China in following Borodin while a wiser way was shown to them. I only made a desperate effort to prevent the disaster which was imminent owing to the opportunism and stupidity of others, also thanks to the failure of those at the helm of affairs in Moscow to make up their mind quickly and give the categorical instructions demanded by me. †

The last guarantee thus thrown away by themselves, the "Left" Kuo Min Tang expelled the Communists and the Nationalist Government declared them outlaws. The blood-thirsty officers of Tang Shen-chi were impatiently marking time. They went to the job in right earnest. The sanguinary scene enacted by Chiang Kai-shek in Shanghai was repeated

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† Even to-day, there are people in this country who whisper about my "treacherous action in China which was responsible for the massacre of thousands of peasants and workers." It is too frivolous and malicious a charge to deserve serious attention. No such charge was ever brought against me by any responsible authority. On the contrary, I brought along with me from China plenty of evidence to back up that charge against the leaders of the Communist Party of China and the virtual representative of the Soviet Government and the Communist International, Borodin. There was no massacre of workers or peasants while I was still in China. I came there when opportunism had demoralised the forces of revolution and tried my best to save the revolution from the betrayal of those who were expected to lead it. The massacre of the masses of Chinese workers and peasants was the consequence of the refusal of the leaders of the Chinese Communist Party to follow the path of decisive revolutionary action indicated to them by myself according to the resolution which the Communist International had adopted also on my initiative. The tragedy of a revolution betrayed is really heartrending. But I was no longer there to witness its bloody consequences. Finally, to expose the mendacity of the whispered propaganda carried on against me in this country, I challenge those liars to produce one single sentence from any official document of the Communist International bearing out the charge they bring against me. After my return from China, I was in Moscow for nearly one year, still entrusted with responsible work. Counter-revolution was raging furious in China during that time. Had I been in the least, even indirectly, guilty of any treacherous act, I would not leave Moscow with my head on my shoulders. As a matter of fact, a joint commission of the Presidium of the Communist International and the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, appointed to receive a report of the happenings in China on my return, passed a resolution which did rather credit to me than charge me of anything harmful to the revolution. Stalin himself was a member of the commission and was the author of the resolution.

in the realm of the "left" Kuo Min Tang only four months later. All the Russian advisers, including the great Borodin, were ordered to leave the country.

A month before, the leaders of the Communist Party had declined to convene a meeting of the Central Committee of the party to discuss my plan of offensive which might still have saved the situation. But the meeting was called when the counter-revolution was on the offensive and the party had been driven underground. I was still at Hankow, preparing to leave the country with a heavy heart. The leaders of the Communist Party, having criminally sabotaged, the week before, the very promising plan of insurrection, I had declined to shoulder the responsibility of representing the Communist International any longer. I did not attend the meeting of the Central Committee. It was too late to do anything. Nor was I asked to attend. That was rather surprising; because I was still the representative of the Communist International in China and had not yet received instructions from headquarters to leave the country. But report of the proceedings of the Central Committee explained the curious fact of its meeting without my attendance. The meeting had been called on the advice of Borodin to adopt the "Platform of Retreat". The party was to beat a retreat without having struck one single blow when victory nearly lay at its feet. The platform was a shameful document. It called for the liquidation of all internal struggle, so that the masses could be mobilised only on the anti-imperialist front. Class struggle was to be suspended for conducting the national struggle. But the plan was Machiavellian, and if carried out, would have led to more disastrous results. It was to provoke Imperialism to intervene more actively in China, so that the counter-revolutionary nationalists might suffer a severe military defeat. To-day that scandalous document is not in my possession. It was included in a book I wrote on my return to Moscow, and published in Russian by the State Publishing Department. Before long, the book was withdrawn from circulation, and I was asked not to publish it in any other language. I was then in Berlin. On the receipt of that advice, I instantly sent

back the original English manuscript of the book, containing a copy of the "Platform of Retreat" together with stenographic reports of the meetings of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China during the months of my stay there.

While the Communist leaders were planning the retreat, which was a disgraceful rout, triumphant counter-revolution marched ahead.

Tang Shen-chi had sent the remnants of the Cantonese "Iron Army" down the Yangtze to attack Nanking. So there was absolutely no opposition to the fierce counter-revolutionary offensive of the "Left" Kuo Min Tang. The power of resistance of the masses had been broken by the steady disruption of their organizations. The Communist leaders were themselves responsible for the disruptive work. It had been done in pursuance of their anxiety to placate the reactionary nationalist politicians and their "left" militarist allies. Prolonged restraint upon their will to fight had demoralized them. The few arms in the possession of the workers had been surrendered at the order of their Communist leaders. The peasants had not been allowed to act decisively while the landlords were at their mercy. They had not been encouraged to capture power in the village, thus leaving the reactionary forces intact to take the offensive at the first available opportunity. The decisive factor had been the failure of the Communists to arm the workers and peasants, when it could have been so easily done, during the military expedition from Canton to the Yangtze.

Consequently, when the blow of counter-revolution fell, it proved to be altogether crushing. The mass movement had carried the nationalists to spectacular victories, but when it was itself attacked, it showed little power of resistance. It had not been consolidated. The revolution had been broadened, but not deepened. Built upon a foundation purposely left shallow, it collapsed like a house of cards. It was a great tragedy.

## CHAPTER IX

After the tables had been decisively turned after the battle had been irretrievably lost, the Communists made up their mind to attack, as if in despair. It was indeed a desperate move to begin the offensive when all the odds were against them. Still, the Communists, acting under categorical instructions of the International leadership given several months too late, went over to the offensive. It was a sheer adventure, and made the defeat a disaster.

On the way to Nanking, the Cantonese army revolted. The motive was not revolutionary. They were fed up with vicarious crusading, and wanted to go home. The Communists, defeated and chased out of Wuhan, siezed upon the mutiny of the Cantonese army as a drowning man catches a straw. They reached Nanchang, occupied by the mutineers, and declared the establishment of the Revolutionary Government which, under given conditions, was bound to be at the mercy of the Cantonese commanders. Nanchang was a place between two fires. It could not possibly be held for any length of time. On one side, it was within striking distance from Nanking, the centre of counter-revolution; on the other side, Tang Shen-chi's army was coming down the river. Until recently Nanchang had been the head-quarters of Chiang Kai-shek's army. Being a small river port, it had never been the seat of a powerful labour movement. Whatever there was, had been completely destroyed by Chiang Kai-shek. The hinterland was the province of Kiangsi through which Chiang Kai-shek had marched from Canton. He had not allowed any strong development of the peasants' movement and had suppressed all revolutionary organisations. The province was occupied by his troops. It was a great strategical blunder to choose Nanchang as the base of the belated revolutionary offensive.

Nanchang had to be evacuated by the insurrectionary army within two weeks. The Revolutionary Government had to follow the army, marching not with any other motive than to return home.

Dislodged from Nanchang, the insurgents could only move southward. In other directions, the way was definitely blocked, and crushing defeat awaited them. They marched through territories infested by counter-revolutionary troops and inhabited by a disorganised peasantry beaten to timidity. The movement obviously had little popular support. Although the insurgent army did not meet any serious resistance on the way, it could hardly boast of a victorious march. While marching northward through the same territories just a year before the Nationalist army had been acclaimed with tremendous popular enthusiasm. In the course of the march it had grown so much that on reaching the Yangtze it was many times larger than its size at the time of its departure from Canton. This was not the case with the insurgent army. The peasants, of course, were not hostile, unless they were robbed, which was often the case ( the troops had to be fed ); but they did not join the insurgents in any considerable numbers. As a matter of fact, rifles, machine-guns and munitions seized occasionally from small detachments of the counter-revolutionary troops, had to be left behind, because there were not enough men either to use them or to carry them. There could be no doubt about the deplorable fact that the revolution had been beaten ; the masses were totally demoralized by terror ; and conditions were not at all propitious for a popular uprising. Under such circumstances, the tactics obviously should be defensive to gather the scattered forces for a respite, for recuperating revolutionary energy, to use all possible legal means for keeping up a popular agitation and to reorganise the revolutionary forces in preparation for action in future.

But the very Communist leaders who steeped in opportunist tradition had refused to attack when the conditions were favourable, became suddenly converted to the adventurous theory of offensive. "Armed Insurrection" and "Soviet" became their slogans. To lead a defeated army to attack is simply to court disaster. In their morbid eagerness to live down their opportunist past, they destroyed the Party itself.

Here again, the responsibility lies with the International leadership. For the new policy of adventure was launched on mandatory instructions from Moscow. Those refusing to act according to the instructions were summarily expelled from the Party. Chen Tu-hsiu was not expelled, because he did not oppose actively ; but he was removed from the leadership of the Party. He had not been treated so, when a few months before he actively resisted the policy recommended by the International, and successfully sabotaged its enforcement. Had he been removed then from the Party leadership, as I suggested, the situation could have possibly been saved. But at that time, the Russian leaders of the International themselves had not yet fully cast off the tradition of opportunism. They hesitated at the fateful moment ; the International leadership inclined more towards the opportunism of Chen Tu-hsiu than its own new policy, half-heartedly formulated. Hence its representative on the spot was in such an ambiguous position. He was armed with a correct resolution and received formal political support from the centre ; but was given little power to act effectively. The real power remained vested in the opportunist leaders.

It was much too late when the Russian leaders of the International recognized their mistake. Eager to save their own face by shoving the responsibility on others, they lost their sense of proportion. They ordered the C. P. of China to attack after it had been thoroughly beaten and dislodged from all its positions of vantage. They gave out slogans of the proletarian revolution, when the task of the moment was to bring the disrupted, demoralized forces of the democratic national revolution, under the decisive influence of the proletariat. The C. P. of China had no leader of its own who could guide it with a firsthand knowledge and correct understanding of the situation. Before, it had been trained in the school of opportunism ; now it was driven to ruinous adventure. The C. P. of China growing under the conditions of a stormy mass movement should have created a revolutionary leadership. But normal growth is not possible, when categorical authority suffocates independent intelligence.

The Nanchang insurrection provided the rival Kuo Min Tang factions with a plausible pretext to bury the hatchet. The Wuhan group went into voluntary liquidation, and met the victorious Chiang Kai-shek more than half way. To smooth over all frictions and to save everybody's face, the command of the peace parleys was assumed by the elder statesmen. In other words, the leadership of the Kuo Min Tang, its hands dripping with the workers' and peasants' blood, betrayal of the national democratic revolution written to its credit, reverted to the Old Guard, representing the big bourgeoisie and feudal militarists. The counter-revolutionary offensive begun by Chiang Kai-shek with the coup d'etat at Canton in March 1926 was victorious. During the intervening year and a half, China was swept by a mighty revolutionary upheaval which came within an ace of success.

Confucian tactfulness, that is consummate hypocrisy, of the elder statesmen conducted the prodigal son home. Wang Chin-wei went to Nanking which, a few months ago, he had sworn to destroy as the noble Roman swore to destroy Carthage. The surrender of Wang Chin-wei marked the debacle of petty bourgeois radicalism. The revolutionary role of the Kuo Min Tang was played out. It became the organ of counter-revolution, its flag soaked with the blood of the mass, who ever since 1923 had held it so proudly aloft.

No fatted calf, indeed, was slaughtered to celebrate the prodigal's return home; but to save his face, his victorious rival was sent abroad on a vacation; but he returned very soon. Wang Chin-wei again went into exile, a disgraced and discredited man. His elimination from the united Nationalist Government and from the leadership of the counter-revolutionary Kuo Min Tang revealed an irreconcilable class antagonism. The petty bourgeoisie were vanquished, and their leaders capitulated; but as an oppressed and exploited class, they had no place in the camp of the victorious counter-revolution. The petty bourgeoisie objectively remained a revolutionary factor, because the democratic national revolution was not yet complete.



The defeat of a revolution should not be confused with its completion. One of the basic mistakes committed in China was to look upon the bourgeoisie as a homogeneous social factor. The oppressed and exploited urban petty bourgeoisie were not differentiated from the reactionary big capitalists. Persistent over-estimation of the revolutionary role of the nationalist bourgeoisie, mistakenly reckoned as an indivisible whole, inevitably lead to a disregard for the importance of the petty bourgeoisie in a colonial national revolution. This disregard was partly responsible for the failure of the Communists to transform the Wuhan Group into a powerful lever to promote the national democratic revolution. Later on, it drove the Communists to the ultra-leftist adventure which isolated them from the democratic forces objectively militating against the dictatorship of the feudal-bourgeois bloc. That amounted to an indirect help to the Nanking Government to consolidate its precarious existence.

Instead of going to set up romantic "Soviet Republics" in the mountaneous wilderness, the Communists should have organized a democratic mass movement, with the object of overthrowing the military and bureaucratic dictatorship of Nanking. But owing to their mistake of underestimating the revolutionary role of the urban petty bourgeoisie in a colonial country, they failed to adopt the policy that would have helped them to recover from the defeat before long, and to bring the final stage of the democratic national revolution under effective proletarian leadership. Democratic revolution accomplished under such a relationship of classes could not but be the immediate prelude for a deeper social transformation.

## CHAPTER X

The Communists tried to find a foot-hold at the port of Swatow with the help of the insurgent army. The peasant movement had all along been very strong in the hilly tracks between Swatow and Canton. The revolutionary government established at Swatow issued a decree nationalizing land and called upon the peasants to confiscate large estates. But Swatow was soon assailed from inland, and imperialist battleships appeared in the harbour. The Communists had to evacuate the place. They found some support from the peasantry in the neighbourhood and declared the establishment of the "Soviet Republic." But the "revolutionary" army began to melt away. It had reached its native province. The soldiers went home; they were sick of army life.

Finally, the Communists committed the greatest folly. They tried to capture Canton. Reaction had reigned supreme at the original seat of the nationalist government, ever since the the centre of events moved to the Yangtze valley. The labour-movement had been suppressed. The revolutionary spirit of the democratic masses had broken under the ruthless dictatorship of the feudal militarist, Li Chei-sun. It was in such conditions of depression that an insurrection was staged, hoping that the troops would come over and the peasants from the neighbourhood would march upon the city. A general strike was called, preparatory to the projected insurrection. Not more than 10 to 15 thousand workers responded, mostly river side labourers.

The Trade Unions in the city, once upon a time, had a membership of 150,000. The general strike was an obvious failure. The great bulk of the workers did not join it. The revolutionary proletariat of "Red Canton" had for a year lived under bloody terror. Their traditional fighting spirit was damped. There prevailed a general depression and demoralization, not very propitious for a revolutionary offensive. But the local conditions were not taken into consideration.

The leaders of the C. P. sitting in far off Shanghai had resolved that there should be an attempt to capture Canton and establish a Soviet Government there as the signal for general insurrection throughout the country. So the attempt was made disregarding all ominous warnings. The poor response to the call for general strike should have opened the eyes of the Communists and persuaded them to postpone the plan of insurrection. The workers were not in a fighting mood. Nevertheless, the plan was pushed. For only three days, the Communists held a part of the city under the Soviet flag. Even after the insurrection, and the partial occupation of the city, popular response was lukewarm. The soldiers did not come over to the revolution. The counter-revolutionary army was withdrawn to the suburbs, whence the city was mercilessly bombarded.

In two days, nearly half of the city was burnt down. The counter-revolutionary ruling class would raze the whole city to the ground, rather than abandon it to the workers. They did not want to speculate upon the loyalty of the troops. The city could not be taken without bombardment. The troops were not to be allowed to come close to the insurgents. That was rather risky. The soldiers after all were poor, dispossessed peasants, likely to be easily susceptible to revolutionary propaganda.

The expected help from the peasantry also did not come. The insurgent workers in the city held out for too short a time for the peasants to come to their relief, even if they were prepared for such action. The Soviet Government was overthrown. The Communists rendered an exceedingly heroic account of themselves. They went down fighting as brave martyrs to the lost cause.

The terror that followed is unparalleled in modern history. It is reported that in 10 days more than 30 thousand people were slaughtered. Girls with short hair were suspected to be Communists and were shot dead on sight in the streets. Bloody vengeance was wreaked also upon the older "Soviet Republic" to the North East of Canton. Thousands of peasants were hacked to death simply for being members of the unions. The

adventure of Canton completed the disaster. Bloody terror raged throughout the southern provinces, which only a year ago had been a scene of tremendous revolutionary awakening.

Such a widespread mass movement could be so easily suppressed because it swept only the surface of the country. Reaction had not been struck at the root. It simply lay low bowing its head before the storm but vigilantly waiting for the opportunity to pounce upon the hated enemy. The opportunity came and counter-revolution raged in mad fury throughout the year 1928. It is reported that about 35,000 Communists were killed. That means practical destruction of the entire party, its elite in any case. On the other hand, petty bourgeois intellectuals who had joined the party, in the days of revolutionary enthusiasm, left it by thousands under terror. The destruction of the party was particularly complete in the cities where its social foundation lay. The few surviving Communists, still clinging to the ruinous theory of offensive, withdrew to the mountainous region in the centre of South China.

Towards the end of 1928, the establishment of a "Soviet Republic" and victory of the "Red Army" were reported from that region. The substratum of fact behind those cheery reports was the revival of the peasants' movement. Communists placed themselves at the head of that revival and painted it red. But the social character of a movement cannot be changed by the mere affixation of inappropriate nomenclatures. The "Soviet State" and "Red Army" are organs of the proletarian dictatorship. They are created by the proletariat after the capture of power. Peasant revolt taking place under the conditions of pre-capitalist production, with no connection with the industrial centres, can create neither a Soviet State nor a Red Army. It is a democratic movement and as such should be promoted with the corresponding programme and appropriate slogans, even when it is led by Communists. Fraudulent red stamps harm it. They restrict its sweep, terrifying and creating suspicion in the social elements bound to be drawn into the democratic revolution.

Throughout the year 1929, the activities of the "Red Armies," that is, peasant guerrilla bands, increased and the establishment of a number of "Soviet Republics" was reported from the central region of south China. The peasants had clearly not been crushed as much as the workers in the cities. The ruin of feudal-patriarchal economy, superimposed by modern capitalist exploitation (in the form of colonial plunder), has completely destituted millions of peasants. Previously, these provided the basis for militarism. Anybody could get together thousands of unemployed peasants into an "army" which would be allowed to feed and pay itself by looting. The conditions also made for banditry, and piracy along the coast.

The movement of 1925-27 infused some political consciousness even into remotest villages of the southern and central provinces. Since then, peasant masses could be agitated with economic demands and mobilized into a revolutionary movement. This being the condition prevailing throughout a vast area, counter-revolutionary terror could be effective only temporarily. It is physically impossible to suppress the destitute and desperate masses over a vast area. It is more so owing to the utter absence of means of transportation in southern China. To move armed forces over hundreds and hundreds of miles with no railways and no roads is an extremely difficult task. Besides the troops themselves are not reliable, when they come too close to the insurgent peasantry. Often troops sent against the peasant guerilla bands went over to them.

The revival of the peasant uprising assumed gigantic proportions towards the end of 1929. It surged through the rich province of Hunan, spread southward well into Kwangtung, and extended alarmingly to Kiangsi on the East and Kwangsi on the West. But it was checked at Chengsha the capital of Hunan and again thrown back.

The crushing defeat of 1927 destroyed the equilibrium of the forces of revolution. The proletariat, owing to geographical position and numerical smallness, was more thoroughly beaten than the peasantry. The urban petty bourgeoisie also were more demoralized than the peasant masses. Counter-revolution consolidated its position in the towns, whereas its victory in the

vast countryside was partial and temporary. Consequently the peasantry recovered, while the proletariat still lay prostrate under the iron heel of counter-revolution, and the urban petty bourgeois masses languished in a state of demoralizing confusion owing to lack of revolutionary leadership. The mighty wave of peasant uprising in 1929-30 found little response in the towns. The efforts for a strike of the Railway workers, to prevent the transportation of troops, failed.

The peasantry by itself can never make a revolution, even when led by Communists, unless these function as the vanguard of the proletariat (not only in theory), *actually engaged in the struggle*, occupying the forefront. The Communist leaders of the peasant uprising in 1929-30 were the vanguard only in theory, the proletariat lying prostrate, out of the combat. Not operating primarily from its social basis, the Communist Party of China ceased to be itself except in name, just when in 1929 it was establishing "Soviet Republics", creating "Red Armies" and declaring that Chinese Society was in the throes of the proletarian revolution. According to the report of its Central Committee, by that time the Party had not only recovered from the defeat completely ; it had indeed risen well above the high water mark reached in the beginning of 1927. It claimed to have a membership of 135,000, obviously a great exaggeration unless all the troops of the "Red Armies" were counted as members of the C. P. The significant fact, however, was that only about 5,000 of that vast membership were in the towns. As this latter number included intellectuals and other recruits from the petty bourgeoisie, the proletariat constituted only a minute fraction of the membership of the C. P. It was further admitted in the same report, that the party activities in large industrial centres, even in Sanghai, the original home of the C. P., were very unsatisfactory. So the C. P. had undergone a veritable metamorphosis. It had ceased to be the party of the proletariat, and become a *peasant party*. Still it claimed to be leading the proletarian revolution. It is a queer lesson for a Marxist to learn : a peasants' party leading the proletarian revolution.

Under the leadership of the proletariat, actually occupying the forefront of the struggle, a peasants' party can be the instrument for a revolution, but under that relation of classes in the revolutionary struggle, a peasants' party does not come into existence. The more advanced peasants individually enter the party of the proletariat; the peasantry as a class do not swamp the Communist Party. When that happens, it is clear that the proletariat is not playing its role. That was the case with the Chinese proletariat in 1929-30. The defeat of 1927 had disabled the proletariat from playing the role of leading the peasantry in the revolutionary uprising. In the absence of actual proletarian leadership the peasant uprising of 1929-30 was bound to subside. Eventually it did so.

The relation of classes involved in the revolution has scarcely changed even now. The equilibrium, disturbed by the defeat, will not be re-established before the proletariat comes into its own again, and the Communist Party becomes the Party of the Proletariat, not only in name but in composition and by virtue of its activities. For this, the adventurous theory of offensive must be discarded; the fact that China is still in the stage of national democratic revolution must be recognized, and the tactics of the C. P. should be such as to mobilize the democratic masses under proletarian hegemony.

Giving up the romantic pastime of setting up "Soviet Republics" in inaccessible mountainous fastnesses, the C. P. must focus its attention upon the political and industrial nerve-centres of the country, it must mobilize the proletariat again in action. The peasants will be always there as the vast reserve of revolutionary energy. None but the proletariat will ever be able to draw upon the reserve, for no other class is in a position to solve the agrarian problem of China.

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The Nanking Government has failed to tackle the agrarian problem. It never wanted to do it. But as long as the agrarian problem remains unsolved all its bombastic plans of uniting and modernizing China will miscarry, as has been the case until now. The antiquated relations of property in land, and the

primitive mode of production associated with it, are ruinous for the economic life of the country. Colonial exploitation and the prosperity of its native agents are based upon those ruinous conditions which breed militarism as an ugly by-product. The Nanking Government is closely associated with all these factors. It sought and has received the benediction of foreign imperialism for which a high price has to be paid. The Nanking Government is entirely dependent upon the financial support of the Shanghai compradores, the agents of imperialist exploitation. Lastly, the Nanking Government is obliged to leave the militarist chiefs absolute rulers of their respective domains in order to secure their formal agreement to the unification of the country, under its nominal sovereignty. Its victories against recalcitrant war lords, like Feng Yu-hsiang or Yen Hsi-shan have been very costly, but entirely pyrrhic.

Feudal economy splits up the vast country into a series of isolated local markets, the monopoly over which is maintained by military dictatorships. Unification of the country is not possible except through the liquidation of the antiquated feudal economy. In other words a thoroughgoing agrarian revolution sweeping clean the stinking debris of the past on which the ghostly skeleton of Father Confucius is enshrined, is essential for national unification and the modernizing of China. Can this task be ever accomplished by a government which rose out of the betrayal of the agrarian revolution? Certainly not. The Nanking Government thrives on the prostrate and mangled body of the revolution which alone can bring order out of the chaos in China. The revolution is a historical necessity. The future of the great Chinese people depends upon it. Therefore it can be defeated, but not destroyed. It will again march forward majestically, as soon as the proletariat will have recovered from the effects of the disastrous defeat, and created a leadership with courage to learn from experience.

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The march of events since these pages were written in 1931 completely bears out their prognostic. For eight years, the



Communist Party heroically fought losing battles in pursuance of the misadventure of going over to the offensive immediately after a crushing defeat. Much romantic and lyrical literature has been produced describing the accomplishments of the Chinese Soviets and the victories of the Red Army, neither of which, however, could be abiding either in space or in time. The accomplishments of a revolutionary movement are to be judged by other standards than heroism. The facts that Soviet Republic of China had to be shifted from place to place, and that the Red Army occupied a province only to evacuate it before long, prove that the movement that the movement could not strike root into the social soil of the country. Primarily, it was guerilla warfare, which is not difficult to organise in a country with no modern means of transportation and with millions of pauperised peasants only too willing to be enlisted as soldiers. The remarkable exploits of the pauperised peasant masses under Communist leadership only indicates the social evil peculiar to China, which shows that she is much too backward for a Socialist revolution. While admiring their zeal, heroism and remarkable military exploits, it must be said that these eight years activities of the Chinese Communists did more harm than good to China. Unification of the country under a centralised democratic State is the primary condition for a successful resistance to imperialist aggression in China. Its own reactionary social orientation prevented the Nationalist Government of Nanking from accomplishing that task. But the civil war also contributed considerably to that misfortune of the Chinese people. China is not yet ready for a proletarian revolution; the Soviet form of Government is not suitable to the existing conditions. That should have been clear to the communists long ago. In that case, the tragedy of the last eight years would have been avoided.

Already in 1930, when the world was being regaled with reports about Red Armies conquering province after province, I protested against that romantic adventure. Every Marxist acquainted with the conditions in China could see that it was

foredoomed to collapse. I advocated that the Communist Party should abandon military adventures and return to the field of political activity as the champion of the demand of the democratic masses including the urban petty-bourgeoisie. Guerilla warfare in the more backward parts of the country was not the proper method of combatting the reactionary nationalists and the military dictatorship of Chiang Kai-shek. The fight must take place throughout the country, particularly in the important political, industrial and commercial centres. To be able to function there as an effective political force, the revolutionary party must regain the confidence of the urban democratic masses. A National Assembly, elected by universal suffrage to frame the Constitution of a Democratic State, would be the suitable demand with which a powerful popular movement could be developed to challenge the military dictatorship of Chiang Kai-shek. I recommended that course of action already in 1929.

At last the Communists seem to have learned from bitter experience. Better late than never. The new line of the party, adopted most certainly on the initiative of the Communist International, represents the admission of the failure of the adventure begun in 1927. But while welcoming this belated move in the right direction. I must give again a warning. The new line is fraught with the danger of opportunist deviations. Indeed, tendencies of that nature are already to be noticed. The guarantee against this danger will be found in a critical examination of the activities of the Communist Party of China as well as of the Communist International during the critical period of 1926/1927. In those days, opportunist interpretation of the tactics of united front in the anti-imperialist struggle led to the betrayal of the revolution at the critical moment. That betrayal must be condemned. The responsibility for it should be laid where it belongs. The present leader of the Communist Party of China, Mao Tze-tun, was one of those who persistently and deliberately sabotaged all plans of revolutionary action in 1926/1927. After ten years of romantic ultra-left adventures, he does not seem to have forgotten

his opportunist past. The party may again adopt a "Platform of Retreat" unless the already visible opportunist tendencies are checked. I hope that the leaders of the Communist International will guide the Chinese Communists more effectively than in 1927, and thereby enable it to come out of a very difficult situation, and once again become a powerful factor in Chinese politics.

