CHINA

The tradition of struggle

Militant

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Chronology

1840–42 The 'Opium Wars', during which Great Britain forcibly opens China to foreign trade. They are followed by the granting of territorial concessions and rights of inland navigation and missionary activity. The British take Hong Kong.

1864 Taiping (Great Peace) Rebellion crushed by Manchu forces helped by British army regulars and mixed European and American mercenaries. Following French seizure of Indochina (1862), encroachments increasingly reduce the Manchu-Chinese Empire to semi-colonial status.

1900 'Boxer Rebellion' against foreign domination. Allied reprisals include mass executions, crushing indemnities, new concessions, legalised foreign garrisons between Tientsin and Beijing, etc.

1911 Republican revolution (the 'First Revolution') overthrows Manchu power in Central and South China. At Nanking, Sun Yat-sen declared president of provisional government, first Chinese Republic.

1912-14 Provisional constitution and parliament suspended by militarist Yuan Shih-k'ai, who becomes dictator. Japan imposes 'Twenty-one Demands', their effect to reduce China to vassal state. Yuan Shih-k'ai accepts most of the demands. Cabinet resigns.

1919 May Fourth Movement. Nationwide student demonstrations against Versailles Treaty award of Germany's China concessions to Japan.

1921 Chinese Communist Party (CCP) formally organised at First Congress, Shanghai. Revolution in Mongolia.

1923 Agreement between Sun Yat-sen and Adolf Joffe provides basis for Kuomintang-CCP-CPSU alliance.

1924 First Congress of KMT approves admission of Communists. Mao Zedong elected an alternate member, Central Executive Committee, KMT.

1925 May 30 incident, 12 students shot by British troops. Marks breaking out of revolution.

1926 Nationalist Revolutionary Expedition launched from Canton under supreme military command of Chiang Kai-shek. Mao becomes deputy director KMT Peasant Bureau and Peasant Movement Training Institute. Nationalist-Communist coalition forces conquer most of South China.

1927 In March, Mao Zedong publishes his *Report of an Investigation into the Peasant Movement*; calls poor peasants 'main force' of revolution, demands confiscation of landlord's land. March 21, workers insurrection if Shanghai victorious. April 12, Chiang Kai-shek leads anti-Communist coup, 'beheads Party'; Communist membership reduced, by four -fifths, to 10,000. Party driven underground. Mao leads peasant uprising in Hunan (August); defeated, he flees to mountain stronghold, Chingkangshang. December 11, Canton (Commune) Uprising fails.

1928 Chiang Kai-shek establishes nominal centralised control over China under National Government (a KMT, one-party dictatorship). Mao Zedong and Chu-teh join forces at Chingkangshan, Hunan, form first 'Red Army' of China opening up ten years of rural guerilla war.

1935 Mao leads southern forces into new base in North-West China, after one year of almost continuous marching totalling 6000 miles. Japanese troops move into Chinese Inner Mongolia, set up bogus 'independent' state.

1938 Mao becomes undisputed leader of Party. Japanese armies overwhelm North China. Nationalists retreat to west. Communists organise partisans far behind Japanese lines.

1945 Seventh National Congress of CCP (April) claims Party membership of 1,200,000 with armed forces of 900,000. After the end of the war in Europe, Russian forces flood North China and Manchuria, competing with American-armed Nationalists.

1946 Nationalists and Communists fail to agree on 'coalition government'; in June the Second Civil War begins.

1948 Despite US aid to Nationalists, their defeat in Manchuria is overwhelming.

1949 As his armies disintegrate, Chiang Kai-shek flees to Taiwan. Over the rest of China the People's Liberation Army is victorious. In March, the Central Committee of the CCP, led by Mao, arrives in Peking. Chinese People's Government organised, with Mao elected chairman. Chinese People's Republic formally proclaimed in Peking (October 1).

1960 In July, Moscow recalls all Soviet advisers from China, cancels more than 300 contracts, withdraws technical help. Chinese openly identify Khrushchev as 'revisionist'. Massive crop failure.The 'Great Leap Forward' leads to industrial dislocation.

1966 China launches the 'Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution' under Mao, with Lin Biao named as his 'close comrade-in-arms'. An unprecedented purge attacks 'bourgeois' and 'revisionist' elements in the CCP.

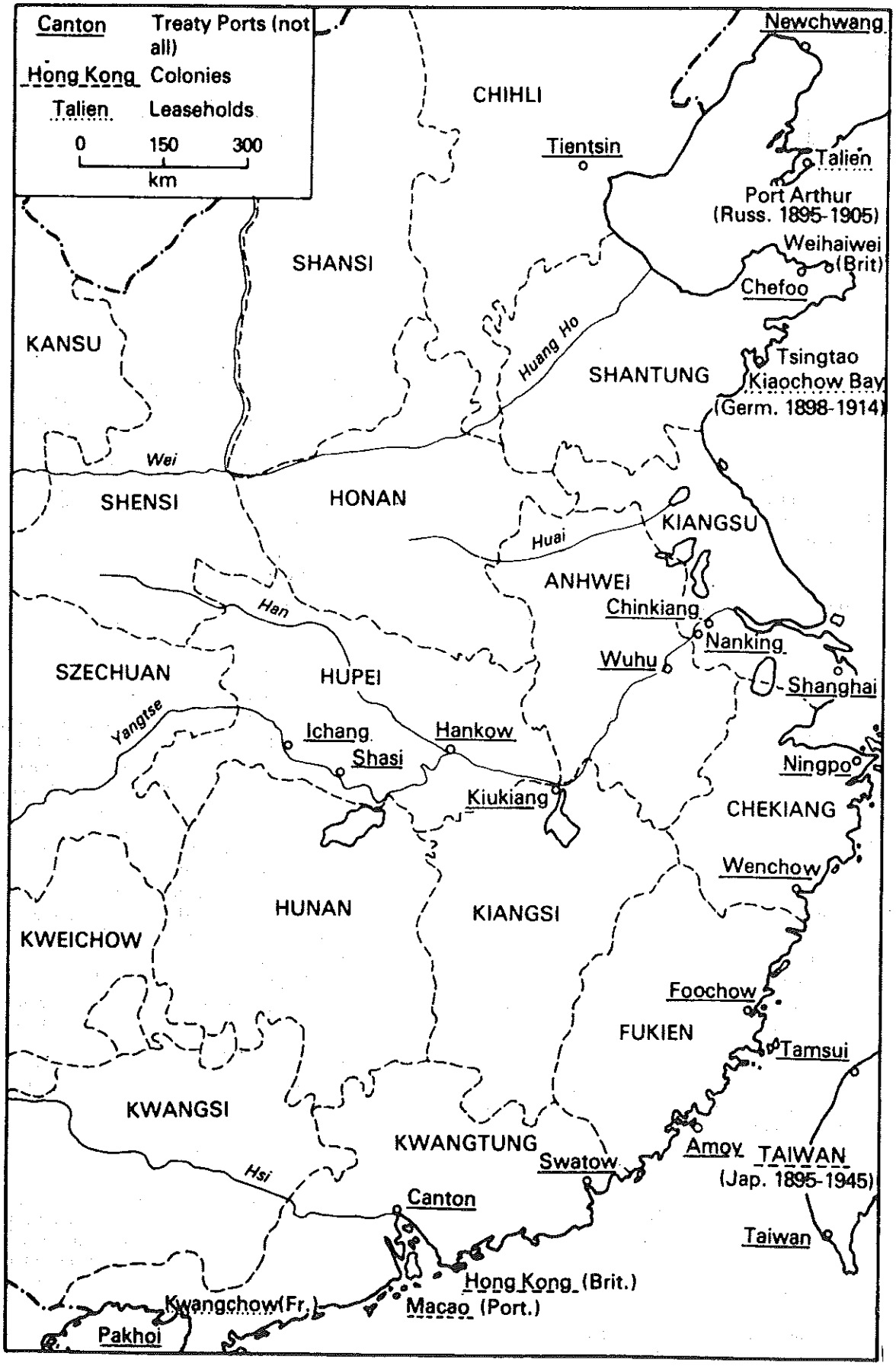
1969 The 'Cultural Revolution' nears a culminating stage, following army intervention in factional disputes, the restoration of order, and break-up of Red Guard organisations dispersed to work in factory, farm, public enterprises, or at school.

1974 Rehabilitation of Deng Xiaoping, who had been removed as CCP General Secretary during the Cultural Revolution.

1976 Death of Mao Zedong. Campaign against the 'Gang of Four'. 'Reform' wing led by Hua Guofeng consolidates its position. Hua becomes chairman of Central Committee.

1980 Hu Yao Bang becomes CCP general secretary.

1986 Movement of students. Hu Yao Bang forced to resign by Deng Xiaoping as a scapegoat for economic problems.



Imperialist Powers in China (1906)

Introduction

THE MAGNIFICENT movement of the Chinese workers and students over the last few weeks has inspired the working class internationally. Demonstrations, first in support of the movement, and then in opposition to the brutal military suppression, have taken place from San Francisco to Sydney, from London to Berlin and in many other major cites.

The huge demonstrations, hunger strikes and the occupation of Tiananmen Square in Beijing, showed the determination to end the corruption of the ruling clique. On 4 June the bureaucracy demonstrated, in the most barbaric fashion, that it will not listen to pleas for reform. The need for a political revolution to overthrow the bureaucracy, as argued in the pages of *Militant*, is now written in the blood of thousands on the streets of China's cities.

At present the 'hardliners' have consolidated their control of decisive sections of the armed forces and are moving to carry out mass arrests. Despite this, none of the underlying problems of Chinese society that led to the movement have been solved. Whatever the immediate developments, one thing is certain, China will never be the same again.

The task now confronting the movement in China will be to work out a clear programme for political revolution that can avenge their martyrs. A key to this is understanding the origins and character of the present regime in China. In this pamphlet we are publishing several articles which give invaluable background to the present situation. For an analysis of the developing situation, we refer the reader to the regular reports in *Militant*.

The first two articles are edited transcripts of speeches given by Peter Taaffe at a Marxist education school in 1980, covering the 1925-7 and 1944-9 revolutions. The 1925-7 revolution, a movement of the young working class, shows the rich traditions of the Chinese working class—traditions clearly not lost today as the singing of the *Internationale* while facing tanks clearly showed.

The 1944-9 revolution resulted in the overthrow of capitalism and the coming to power of Mao. But, in contrast to 1925-7, this struggle was not waged with the working class to the fore but by a peasant based guerilla army. However, without democratic control of the running of society, which can only be provided by the organisations of the working class, the regime which came to power was based from the outset on a mirror image of Stalin's regime in Moscow.

The third article is a major extract from the January 1949 issue of *Socialist Appeal. The foresight of the article is especially remarkable as it was written 10 months before* Mao had completed his victory over Chiang Kai-shek, at a time when over 50 per cent of the Chinese population still lived in areas controlled by Chiang. This article is part of a substantial selection collection of Ted Grant's writings, *The Unbroken Thread*, which has just been published. We recommend this collection, which contains several other articles on the Colonial Revolution, to every reader.

The next article was written at the height of the events known as the 'Cultural Revolution'. These events were neither cultural nor a revolution. Their aftermath demonstrated how, under pressure, sections of the bureaucracy will zig-zag between reform and repression, even striking blows at other wings of the bureaucracy itself. They will at times speak in very radical terms, but then will always move back to reassert control once a movement threatens to get out of control.

The final item is an extract from a longer review written by Lynn Walsh in 1986 which explains the post—cultural revolution manoeuvrings within the bureaucracy which led to Deng Xiaoping consolidating his position.

The ruling bureaucracy will manoeuvre, at times make concessions, it will do anything except allow the working class to rule society. It is from this that the tasks today flow—of the need for a political revolution to overthrow the bureaucracy. In 1917 Lenin, leader of the Russian revolution, outlined the fundamental conditions for the inception of workers' democracy which is the basis for the socialist transformation of society:

* all officials to be elected and subject to immediate recall;
* no official to earn more than a skilled worker
* workers to rotate administrative duties, to combat the growth of a bureaucratic caste;
* no standing army but an armed people

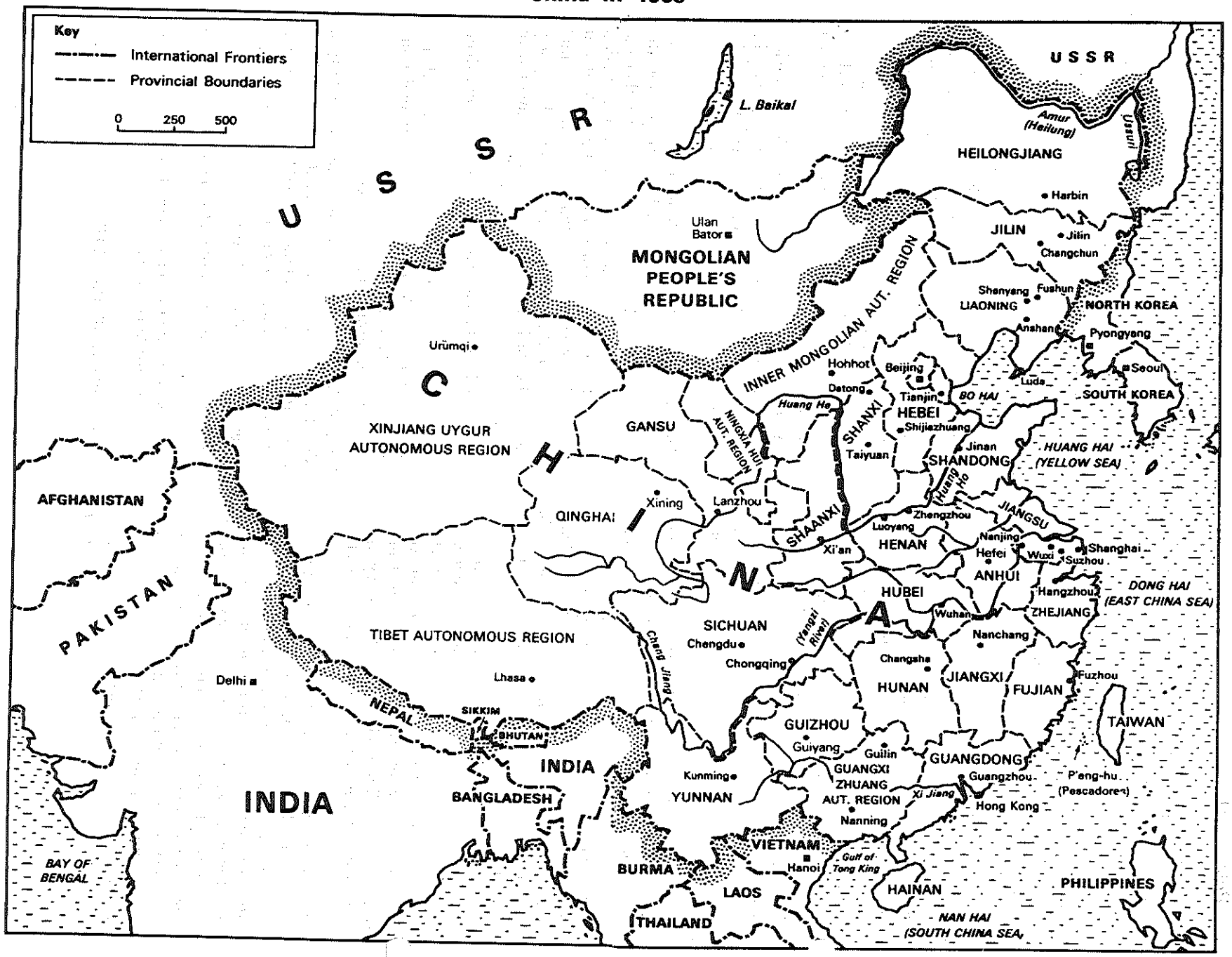
None of these conditions exist in China, the USSR or other Stalinist states. They remain the central objectives of the political revolution to end bureaucratic rule and establish workers' democracy in these countries.

Today Marxists also call for:

* an end to the one party state, for the freedom to form political parties.
* for the formation of independent trade unions and democratic workers' parties.

Kevin Ramage, 10 June 1989

China in 1983



The 1925-7 Revolution

by Peter Taaffe

THE CHINESE revolution, particularly the revolution of 1925-27, is one of the greatest events in the whole history of mankind. Here was a people kept virtually at the level of pack animals, the most despised elements as far as imperialism was concerned, who did the work of beasts, and were considered very often to be of less value then beasts. Yet it was these people who stepped onto the scene of history in a magnificent movement between 1925 and 1927, which if successful would have transformed China and saved the Chinese people the agonies of the following 22 years. It would in turn have altered the whole face of the globe. World history would have taken an entirely different course.

The role of imperialism

On the eve of the revolution of 1925-27, China was an extremely backward society that had not completed what Marxists call the tasks of the capitalist revolution:

i) a thorough-going land reform giving land to the peasants, which in turn could create an internal market;

ii) the freeing of the productive forces from the stranglehold exercised over the colonial and semi-colonial world by imperialism;

iii) the unification of the country and the development of the nation along modern lines.

These are the tasks of the capitalist democratic revolution which were carried out in Britain in the 17th century, and completed in the advanced capitalist world roughly between 1779-1879. China and most of the colonial and semi–colonial world had not been able to carry through these tasks.

China in 1925 was a nation of 400-500 million people with the great majority of the population living off the land. Fifty-five per cent of the population were landless labourers. About 20 per cent had narrow strips of land from which it was impossible to get any real living. On the other hand about 65 per cent of the cultivatable land was possessed by between 10 per cent and 19 per cent of the population.

The whole history of China has shown that the colossal revolts of the Chinese peasantry, finding no leader in the cities, were unable to guarantee the carrying through of land reform. Each movement ended with the establishment of a new dynasty. On the other hand, imperialism exercised an iron grip over all of the main levers of economic power. Half of the largest industry–cotton–was controlled by imperialist powers. One third of the railways were directly controlled, and the rest indirectly controlled, through the mortgages held over them by the imperialist monopolies. Half of the shipping in Chinese waters was controlled by imperialism, which carried 80 per cent of China's foreign trade. All the features of backwardness we see today in Africa, Asia and Latin America existed in China at that time.

The history of the conquest of China is as bloody as the history of imperialism in the rest of the world. In contrast to the attitude adopted by the ruling class, today, at least in words, towards drugs, a number of wars were fought between 1840 and 1858 to perpetuate the importation of opium into China. The people were forced to accept opium as payment for their goods. All the silver in China was drained away through the opium trade. This brought about a rather paradoxical development in the middle of the 19th century with the revolt of the Taiping peasantry. This movement of the peasantry had semi-Christian overtones and was initially greeted sympathetically by Chinese missionaries. However, once it came into opposition with the opium trade, that was sufficient for imperialism to come out against the rebellion and back up the Manchu dynasty.

The history of the conquest of China is firstly of gun-boat diplomacy–the conquering of different territories of China which became spheres of influence of the imperialist powers. Added to that was the racialist abuse and contempt in which the Chinese masses were held by imperialism. In 1925 one could read, in the so-called 'foreign concessions' of Canton and Shanghai, the following notice outside restaurants–'no dogs or Chinese allowed in this restaurant'.

Who could carry through the tasks of the bourgeois democratic revolution? This is one of the most important questions for any socialist, not only in approaching the history of the Chinese revolution, but also the developments in the colonial world today. At the time of the Chinese revolution it was not just a theoretical question, it was a life and death question.

The role of the peasantry

The revolution in Russia in 1917 had shown that the tasks of the capitalist democratic revolution could not be carried out by the peasantry. By its very nature the peasantry is split up into different layers. The upper layers merge with the capitalists, the lower layers sink more and more into the ranks of the working class.

Throughout history the peasantry, tied to its small plot of land, has had a very narrow horizon, an extremely parochial horizon, moreover because it is so heterogeneous it always looks towards the urban classes for leadership. In the modern epoch it is either the capitalists or the working class which provides the lead. If the capitalists lead the peasantry a classical bourgeois development results. The fascists in the advanced capitalist world actively used the peasant masses along with the middle class in Germany and in Italy to create a mass base in order to smash the

working class. The Russian bourgeoisie came too late onto the scene, was afraid of the power of the working class, and was incapable of carrying through the tasks of their own revolution.

The Land Question

In 1925-27 the Chinese landlords and capitalists were hardly distinguishable from one another. A thorough-going land reform—which was the main feature of the capitalist democratic revolution—could therefore only be carried out against the so-called national capitalists by the working class leading the mass of the peasant population. Having done that, as the experience of the October Revolution showed, the working class would then go over to the socialist tasks of the revolution.

The objection could be raised that China was far too backward to carry through a revolution similar to that in Russia. However, the specific features of Chinese society showed an amazing parallel with Russian society, particularly in the capacity and role of the working class. At the time of the 1905 revolution the industrial working class in Russia was no more than one and a half million workers, and yet they led about nine million people in the urban areas.

In 1917, they in turn were able to lead the overwhelming majority of the population of Russia—the peasants—to carry through the revolution. The development of the working class in China was a more powerful movement, a more inspiring movement in many ways, than even the Russian revolution itself.

The Development of the Chinese Working Class

The industrial working class in China only really developed in the course of the first world war and afterwards. The first modern unions in China were created in 1918 but in the space of six years three million workers swelled the ranks of the general labour unions. Enormous movements were conducted on the question of hours, wages and conditions. Even more significantly, this young working class launched political strikes within one year of 1918 and shook imperialism to its foundations. In 1926-27 in Shanghai it staged a victorious insurrection. Within the space of seven years, two million industrial workers in the cities led behind them ten million coolies, transport workers and other workers involved in trade in the cities.

The Bolshevik Party in Russia was created in two decades of heroic underground struggle. In contrast, the Communist Party in China was created in the first socialist circles in 1919-20. The total membership of the Communist Party at its foundation in 1921 was 51. Even as late as 1923 total membership of the Communist Party was 432. Yet by 1927, 60,000 workers were in the Communist Party. There are very few examples of such a lightening development in the whole history of the labour movement internationally. An enormous movement of the working class developed and, unlike the British or German working class, it was not weighed down by an enormous conservative officaldom. It showed tremendous initiative and combativity, not only on the questions of wages and jobs, but was also the main force in the struggles against imperialism.

All the conditions existed for a movement that could have successfully carried through the revolution. What stood in the way of the working class was not the objective situation, or the relationship of forces but, paradoxically, the very organisations which the Chinese working class had themselves so painfully created.

The Communist International Degenerates

The Russian revolution degenerated from about 1923 onwards, which coincided with the decisive period for the development for the Chinese revolution. The political degeneration of sections of the leadership of the Russian Communist Party and the Communist International in turn affected the leaders of the Chinese Communist Party.

The leadership of the Communist International increasingly looked towards the incipient colonial capitalists, leaning on them rather than encouraging the independent development of the labour movement and the Communist Party. They abandoned an independent revolutionary and socialist policy internationally. This was paralleled in the advanced capitalist countries by a policy which looked towards the tops of the labour and trade union movement rather than the working class, seeking a short cut to the revolution through diplomacy and manoeuvring with the labour and trade union leaders. In Britain this led to disaster when the Stalinist bureaucracy in Russia linked up with the General Council of the TUC thus guaranteeing the wrecking of the 1926 General Strike.

In China in the first period of its existance, the Communist Party had ploughed an independent furrow, gaining a powerful position in the developing labour movement and the trade unions. But by 1924 the line of the Chinese Communist Party had begun to change. In 1922 the Chinese Communist Party had proposed a bloc with the capitalist nationalist organisation—the Kuomintang—in the struggle against imperialism. By 1924 the leader of the Kuomintang, Sun Yat-sen, was being offered enormous material support from Russia, and the Communist Party was ordered to subordinate itself to the Kuomintang. This had disastrous consequences for the Chinese revolution.

Stalin, Bukharin and the other leaders of the bureaucracy which was developing in Russia justified this policy on the basis of a 'bloc of four classes'—the workers, the national capitalists, the peasantry and the urban petit bourgeois. The history of Russia had shown that the capitalists were incapable of carrying through the tasks of their own national capitalist democratic

revolution. This was even more so in China where the Kuomintang, led by Sun Yat-sen, had the opportunity, following the revolution of 1911 and the overthrow of the Manchu dynasty, to carry through the tasks of their own revolution. They were incapable of doing that because they were linked to the perpetuation of feudal and semi-feudal land relationships existing in the countryside. In reality Stalin's policy was a re-creation on Chinese soil of the ideas of the Mensheviks. The latter who put forward the conception in Russia that the way for the capitalist democratic revolution to be carried through was to link up with the so-called 'progressive bourgeois'.

A theory of stages was advanced: first establish capitalist democracy, and then—as the music of a vague and distant future—the socialist tasks will be posed once the working class has developed. Trotsky, had counterposed to this the theory of the permanent revolution. This states that the capitalist democratic revolution can only be carried through by the working class leading the peasant masses behind them. The formula of a 'bloc of four classes' was to lead to absolute catastrophe in China—to the beheading of the Chinese working class.

The Chinese revolution of 1925, the second Chinese revolution to be exact, really began in the aftermath of the First World War. On May 4th 1919, the students in the main cities of China rose against the Peking government (which was really a stooge of Japanese imperialism) and against the exactions of China under the terms of the Versailles Treaty.

The students joined up with the working class in an enormous movement which developed between 1919 and 1924-25. The whole period was a gigantic movement of the working class to improve their living standards, jobs, hours, education, etc. The slogan of an eight-hour day had an electrifying effect on the Chinese working class because of the terrible conditions in which they existed.

At the same time the Kuomintang, which between 1911 and 1919 had sunk into a state of complete disrepair, was given a boost and became a sizeable organisation. With the support of the Stalinist bureaucracy in Moscow it became a powerful force. It is very often forgotten that the capitalist Kuomintang was actually financed and militarily trained by the Stalinist bureaucracy. Chiang Kai-shek went to Russia in 1923. The Russian adviser to the Kuomintang, singled him out to become the military leader of the Kuomintang and to head the Whampoa military academy that was set up in 1924.

The Revolution begins

The revolution began in 1919, but the event that really sparked off the enormous movement of the working class was the shooting down of a demonstration of students and workers by British and French machine gunners on 23 June 1925. This provocation triggered off an explosion that had been gathering in the previous period. The workers of Canton and Hong Kong came out in a huge strike which lasted for about 16 months, and paralysed imperialism throughout the whole of China. This movement—a strike and the boycott of French goods, and of British goods in particular—was so complete that 100,000 Chinese workers moved from Hong Kong to Canton, where the workers were the real power. They cleared out the opium dens, closed down gambling joints, improvised an embryonic soviet in Canton (although the movement was not as developed in Hong Kong where imperialism had a stranglehold).

A unique opportunity existed for the Communist Party. The independent movement of the working class began to change the relationship of forces in China in favour of the working class. But, the Communist Party deliberately subordinated themselves to the Kuomintang and to Chiang Kai-shek. Gradually the gains that the working class had so painfully acquired in the course of the events of 1925 were encroached upon. The counter-revolution more and more gained ground using the gangsters of Canton and Hong Kong to crush the labour movement. At this stage the slogan of the Communist Party in China, and of the Comintern under the direction of Stalin and Bukharin was 'full support to the revolutionary Kuomintang'. The Kuomintang was accepted as a sympathetic section of the Communist International in 1926.

This movement in the cities in 1925, in Canton in particular, was paralleled by an equally splendid movement amongst the peasantry as well.

The Shanghai working class was also looking expectantly towards the movement in Canton. With the correct leadership, this would have lead to the success of the Chinese revolution. Tragically, that did not happen, because the Chinese Communist Party subordinated itself to the Kuomintang while Chiang Kai Shek gathered the reins of power in his hands.

After 1923, Trotsky opposed the entry of the Communist Party into the Kuomintang. He stood for the complete independence of the Communist Party from the Kuomintang. He was not opposed to a limited bloc on specific anti-imperialist action. There was nothing in principle against a bloc between a workers' organisation and a capitalist nationalist organisation on specific questions. But, argued Trotsky, the Communist Party should not have subordinated itself to the Kuomintang. It was quite wrong to foster illusions in Chiang Kai-shek and the Kuomintang leadership, calling it the 'revolutionary Kuomintang' and the 'vehicle for carrying through the Chinese revolution'.

On 20 March, 1926, Chiang Kai-shek acted to crush the working class. Workers' organisations were closed down, workers' leaders were arrested. About 300 Communist Party members were subsequently shot. Yet the Communist Party never raised its voice in protest until events in Shanghai a month later. All the gains that the working class had made in the preceding years were taken away and a military dictatorship established in Canton. Even in the face of all this the Communist Party still refused to denounce the

Kuomintang.

Chen Tu-hsiu, the founder and father of Chinese Communism, had gone along with the strategy of subordination to the Kuomintang before 1925, but after the experiences of 1926 in Canton, he argued for the Communist Party to develop an independent strategy of mobilising workers and peasants against the Kuomintang to take power. From Moscow, Bukharin and Stalin insisted on continued subordination to the Kuomintang.

The Communist International covered up what had happened in Canton, hiding the fact that the workers' organisations had been beheaded. The movement of the Chinese working class in Canton and Hong Kong wound up in October 1926, when the Hong Kong strike came to an end. The workers went back without any of their major demands being accepted.

Following these events, the Kuomintang leadership argued in July 1926 for a northern expedition, a march towards Shanghai in particular, in order to clear out the warlords in Northern China. From the outset, they had a certain success because the Communist Party provided the military and the political backbone of the Kuomintang—the cadres who went to work amongst the workers and peasants. As a result of their propaganda, together with the advance of the Kuomintang armies to the North, an uprising of the peasantry developed.

The Kuomintang was therefore identified in the eyes of the peasantry as the force which would give them the land, thus ending once and for all the age-old cycle in Chinese society of revolts that only ended with a new dynasty and further exploitation. When the Kuomintang armies advanced, enormous movements of the peasantry took place, paralysing the armies of the warlords.

Landlords were brought before mass meetings of peasants and dunces hats were put on their heads. They were stood on chairs like naughty children in school. Very few of the landlords were executed, but their land was taken away from them. But as soon as the Kuomintang army conquered an area or a city, the same thing happened as in Canton before. The peasant leaders were arrested, the land was returned to the landlords, the workers were disarmed and all the democratic rights which they had won were taken away from them. Once the real role of the Kuomintang was revealed the further advance of the Kuomintang armies was delayed. The peasants and the workers saw they were not going to benefit. It was only in those areas where the Kuomintang armies were led primarily by Communist Party troops and Communist Party members that the Kuomintang armies advanced rapidly. There the land was given to the peasants and the factories to the workers.

Shanghai uprising

One of the most important developments in the Chinese revolution was undoubtedly the heroic and enormous movements of the proletariat in Shanghai in 1927. The northern expedition reached the gates of that city by January or February. When the first detachments of the Kuomintang were 25 miles from Shanghai, the trade unions there, particularly the General Labour Union, called for the workers to come out in a general strike on 19 February.

The Kuomintang leadership of Chiang Kai Shek and his acolytes deliberately halted the Kuomintang armies at the gates of Shanghai in order to give the capitalists and the northern warlords the opportunity to behead and crush these workers' organisations. The Kuomintang could then peacefully occupy the city. On the 19 February approximately 350,000 workers answered the call for a general strike. Then, however, the detachments of the northern warlords went out into the city, joined by the imperialists from the foreign concessions of Shanghai, and shot down demonstrating workers.

A worker found reading a leaflet was immediately beheaded and his head put on a stake and paraded through the city in order to terrorise the Shanghai working class. A reign of terror ensued in the following week. Yet the Kuomintang armies refused to go into the city. Instead they waited for the Chinese capitalists to crush the workers. There was a pause, then on 21 March at least 500 workers were executed. This was not sufficient to cow the Shanghai working class, who responded with a movement as heroic as that of the immortal Barcelona workers of 1936.

The Shanghai working class rose in a magnificent movement on 21 March, 1927, when about 800,000 workers came out onto the streets. They improvised an army of 5000 workers. Armed with a few pistols, mostly with bare hands, they marched against the barracks and against the troops of the northern warlords and smashed them. Responding to this magnificent uprising, the First Division of the Kuomintang—seasoned troops largely influenced by the Communist Party—decided that they would delay no longer and marched into Shanghai in defiance of Chiang Kai-shek's orders. The leader of that First Division was a general who looked towards the Communist Party. In the main working class areas the northern armies were smashed. The whole of Shanghai was in the hands of the working class within two or three days. Only then did the Kuomintang armies as a whole march into Shanghai itself. Secretly, on the outskirts of Shanghai, Chiang Kai Shek met with gangsters and representatives of the imperialist powers. Together they discussed a programme of repression to crush the workers' movement in the city.

Despite the experience of Canton 12 months before, the Communist Party again reinforced the illusions of the Shanghai workers in the Kuomintang and in Chiang Kai Shek, with calls such as 'Long live the heroic general! Long live the conquering Kuomintang army!' Had the Communist Party based themselves on an independent movement of the working class, they could have take power. The police had been smashed, and the policing of Shanghai was under workers'

control. The trade unions in effect controlled Shanghai and the working class was in the majority, yet the trade unions and Communist Party formed a coalition with the capitalist party—the Kuomintang. Of the 19 representatives in the government, the Communist Party had only 5.

Chiang prepares his coup

In the first period, Chiang Kai-shek did not have enough sufficiently reliable troops in Shanghai. He had about 3000 troops whereas the First Division of the Kuomintang army was fraternising with the workers. Trotsky, without a knowledge of all the details argued that the Chinese Communist Party must put forward the slogan of soviets—organisations which really represented the working class—in the peasant areas and the industrial areas.

The Shanghai working class improvised embryonic soviets. Every 50 workers sent a delegate to a central organisation. All that was needed was to make conscious the power of the Chinese working class, to imbue them with a sense of their own power, then Chiang Kai-shek and the Kuomintang would have been left suspended in mid air. Instead of that, Chiang Kai-shek and the Kuomintang were able to openly prepare for a coup. The press in Shanghai gave many examples of this.

Within a week Chiang Kai-shek had closed down the General Labour Union, and had set up so-called new 'unions', which were really organisations of the Kuomintang, based on gangsters. Nevertheless, the power of the working class was still intact. What existed in Shanghai at this stage was dual power. The Kuomintang power was really suspended in mid air and could have been pushed aside by the movement of the Chinese working class. On the other hand the working class in Shanghai had real power through their own organisations.

The preparation for a coup was very swift. The insurrection took place on 21 March and within a week open measures of counter-revolution were being prepared. Assassinations of workers' leaders were carried out and Kuomintang troops attacked workers' organisations.

On the eve of the coup a very important development took place. Chiang Kai-shek knew that he did not have any reliable troops in Shanghai. He therefore ordered the commander of the First Division to move his troops out of Shanghai. The commander of this army approached the leaders of the Communist Party and asked, 'What shall I do? I am prepared to stay here and fight Chiang Kai-shek, arrest Chiang Kai-shek and the Kuomintang leaders.' This would, in effect, have given complete power to the working class in Shanghai.

The Communist Party leaders and Borodin (the representative of Stalin in China) pondered, hesitated and prevaricated for a period of 48 hours. The Communist Party eventually instructed the army commander to obey Chiang Kai-shek's orders, and the First Division was withdrawn from Shanghai. The basis had been laid for the massacre of the Shanghai working class.

There are very important lessons to be learned for today from this incident. Similar developments took place in the Portuguese revolution and in Chile, where sections of the army and police actually approached the Popular Front government and asked what they should do to prevent a coup. In Chile the Communist Party and the Socialist Party leaders did exactly the same thing as in China. In China, had the Communist Party given the First Division general a clear lead, they could have probably won him over, together with other army leaders. But because of their cowardice and their perfidious role, that same general marched against Canton and hunted down the Red Army between 1930-34. This general, and many officers, could have been won over to the side of the working class, but because decisive leadership was not shown by the Communist Party, they went over to the side of the Kuomintang.

The blow was struck on 12 April, 1927. The Kuomintang troops used all the dirty tricks of the capitalists. When they attacked one workers' headquarters in Shanghai, these Green gangsters dressed up in workers' blue denim overalls. Kuomintang troops came along to 'mediate'. Once inside the headquarters, the troops lined up the workers against the wall and shot them. The workers were taken unawares because they had been told that the Kuomintang troops were on their side.

In the days preceding the coup of 12 April, the General Labour Union had actually warned that a coup was being prepared and that a general strike should be organised. Never once was the fountainhead of the counter-revolution—Chiang Kai-shek and the Kuomintang leaders—mentioned by the Communist Party or the workers' leaders of Shanghai. Therefore when the blow fell it came from an entirley unexpected quarter. The workers of Shanghai put up heroic resistance against overwhelming military odds, and fought to the last man and woman.

The Shanghai working class was crushed in blood. An estimated 35,000 workers, many of them Communist Party members, were killed in Shanghai alone between 12 April and the end of 1927.

So ignominious, cowardly and unprepared were the leaders of the Communist Party that Chou En-lai (who subsequently became one of the leaders of the Red Army) was in the headquarters of the General Labour Union, when the attack came. He managed to escape, but went straight to the headquarters of the Second Division of the Kuomintang Army demanding to know what was going on and insisting there must be some mistake.

The defeat of the Shanghai working class in 1927 meant the crushing of the Chinese working class for a whole historical era, but it was not the end of the matter. There were the beginnings of movements in Hunan and Hupei, the other two important provinces

of China where the peasantry, and the working class in the cities, had begun to move into action. Even at this stage, if the Communist Party and the leaders of the Comintern had been prepared to learn from the lessons of Shanghai, it would have been possible, perhaps at the eleventh hour, to change the balance of forces in China in favour of the working class. The final nail in the coffin of the Second Chinese revolution was hammered home in December 1927. The revolution was on the ebb, and the Communist Party staged a putsch in Canton that was bloodily repressed. The American Consul described the aftermath of the Canton rising:

> Execution squads patrolled the streets, and on finding a suspect, they questioned him, examined his neck for tell-tale red (from wearing red neckerchiefs). If found, they then ordered the victim to open his mouth, thrust a revolver into it, and another came to the end of his Communist venture.

Thus the flower of the Chinese working class in Shanghai, Canton and other cities was annihilated. The way was prepared for more than a decade of ruthless dictatorship under Chiang Kai-shek. The scene of struggle shifted from the working class in the cities to peasant-based guerilla war.

The 1944-9 Revolution

By Peter Taaffe

It is impossible to understand the Chinese Revolution of 1944-49 without charting, at least in broad outline, the events which followed the defeat of the revolution of 1925-27.

That earlier revolution had a proletarian character, along the lines of the Russian Revolution, whereas there was an entirely different relationship of class forces in the revolution of 1944-49. Yet in a certain sense—and it might seem a paradox—the revolution of 1944-49 was an echo of the movement of 1925-27.

What were the consequences for the Chinese people of the defeat of the revolution of 1925-27? Politically it meant the establishment of a ruthless military dictatorship that suppressed all the democratic rights of the working people, and crushed the movement of the workers and peasants.

This regime murdered at least 35 000 Communist Party members in 1927, and altogether about 50 000 people in the course of that year in the cities alone. By 1929, as a minimum estimate, 150 000 people had perished as a direct result of the repression carried out by the Kuomintang regime.

All the democratic rights—the right to strike, freedom of assembly, the right to vote—were eliminated by this regime under Chiang Kai-shek. While utterly ruthless in relation to the smallest movement of the workers and peasants, the regime at the same time was completely impotent in the face of the encroachments of imperialism on China.

In particular Japanese imperialism moved in during the period that followed the events of 1925-27 to carve out a more favourable position for itself in terms of raw materials and markets. This was necessary to satisfy the requirements of its growing manufacturing industry.

It was not at all accidental that Japanese imperialism was to the fore in the conquest and dismemberment of China. Japanese capitalism does not have any indigenous raw materials, and hungrily looked towards China's reserves of coal, oil, etc.

Also, Japanese industry has always been heavily dependent on export markets. During the world depression of 1929-33 Japan's exports of manufactured goods went down by two-thirds; half her factories were idle; and the importance of the Asian mainland as a market became crucial.

The Japanese imperialists, of course, were not alone in preying upon China. American, British and French imperialism likewise seized the opportunity that was presented by the weakness of China in the period following 1925-27 to extend their existing spheres of influence.

Japanese imperialism virtually conquered Manchuria in a number of campaigns between 1931 and 1935, establishing the stooge Manchukuo regime. British and American imperialism joined in the dismemberment of China.

In this situation, when the national oppression of the Chinese people—as well as their national indignation against imperialism—grew tremendously, Chiang Kai-shek and the Kuomintang regime were utterly incapable of opposing the imperialist powers. In fact, Chiang Kai-shek summed up his policy as one of "non-resistance" to imperialism!

In the early 1930s the Japanese were able to advance, without meeting any serious opposition from the Kuomintang forces, to the occupation of Shanghai and other cities. Chinese generals actually supplied the occupying troops with the raw materials and oil they needed. Later in the war, too, Japanese imperialism found open collaborators in the Kuomintang regime and in its armies in particular.

During this period also, Chinese industry was more and more taken over by imperialist concerns. For instance, in 1934, British and Japanese capitalism controlled half the production of Chinese yarn.

It is against this background—on the one side the savage attacks on the conditions and the democratic rights of the working class, and on the other side the greater and greater dismemberment of China—that we have to view the role of the Chinese Communist Party and its leaders in the wake of the 1925-27 revolution.

Transitional demands

At the height of the revolutionary upsurge, as Trotsky and the Left Opposition in the Communist International pointed out, the slogan of soviets (workers' councils) should have been on the agenda and part of the programme of the Chinese CP, as a preparation for taking power. Following the defeat of the 1925-27 revolution, however, when a military dictatorship exercised an iron grip over all the major cities of China, this would obviously no longer be correct.

Therefore, Trotsky put forward the idea that it was necessary now to raise a programme of *transitional demands*—on wages, on hours, on conditions, and also on all the democratic demands of the working people: the right to strike, freedom of assembly, and so on. These were to be linked to the slogan of *land to the peasants*, which could have mobilised the rural masses around the working class and the CP as the most democratic and revolutionary force in society.

The crowning slogan would be for a *revolutionary con-*

The provinces of China during the inter-War period.

stituent assembly—a parliament of the masses, in other words, to be convened by the working class in the course of the struggle against the Kuomintang.

The Chinese CP leadership, however, entirely rejected this programme. This leadership, after the resignation and subsequent expulsion of Ch'en Tu-hsiu, was in the hands of Li Li-san, who was completely obedient to Stalin and the bureaucracy in Russia. This was the 'third period' (ultra-left period) of Stalinism, when the slogan was "soviets everywhere!"—regardless of circumstances.

The CP leadership rejected democratic and transitional demands, which would have been the means of mobilising the working class and peasantry to carry through the socialist transformation of society. Instead, when workers went on strike in Shanghai, Hankow, Canton and other cities, the Communist Party called on them to organise soviets. The workers replied: "Excellencies, you are very good and talented, but please go away. All we can struggle for today is a piece of bread to feed our bellies."

To convince these workers, the general idea of the socialist revolution would have had to be linked with their day-to-day struggles against the capitalists and landlords. Instead, as a result of its insane policy, *the Communist Party completely lost its base in the industrial areas. It ceased to be a working-class party.*

This is made clear by the facts and figures provided by the Chinese CP leaders in relation to the party membership. In 1927 there were 60 000 members of the CP, and 58% of the membership was proletarian in character.

In 1928, after the murders and persecutions of the counter-revolution, the membership of the CP had apparently grown. What this really reflected, however, was the fact that the party leadership *had abandoned the cities and gone into the countryside.* The working-class membership of the CP had shrunk to 10% of the total. In 1929 only 3% of CP members were industrial workers. By September 1930 the figure was 1,6%.

In other words, the Chinese Communist Party was no longer a proletarian party in the Marxist sense of the term.

The ex-leaders of the proletariat—the ex-leaders of the Shanghai and Canton working class in particular—had gone into the countryside following the 1925-27 debacle. To begin with, however, they did not find a big echo among the peasantry. As Mao Tse-tung himself reported subsequently, they were even attacked by the peasants, who were accustomed to armies coming across their territory and plundering them. Initially the Red detachments were assumed to be just another marauding army.

In the period that followed, a number of allegedly 'Red' armies were created in different parts of China. One of them, in Hunan, was led by Mao Tse-tung, who subsequently became the political leader of the Red Army, with Chu Teh as the military leader. This army—I haven't time to go into it—landed up in Kiangsi in the early 1930s.

Chiang Kai-shek, while utterly incapable of facing up to the attacks of imperialism, directed all his forces and energies instead against the small forces of the Reds in the predominantly peasant areas. In fact, no more brilliant pages have been written in Chinese history, than the victories that were scored between 1929 and 1934 by the Red forces against Chiang Kai-shek and the forces of the Kuomintang.

The Kuomintang armies—four, five and six times stronger—were sent against the Red forces particularly in Kiangsi province. But they were incapable of militarily dislodging the Reds by these means.

It was only after Chiang Kai-shek had assembled an army of half a million and completely surrounded the Red districts—when the Kuomintang was armed with all the resources of imperialism, including nearly 400 airplanes, while the Reds did not have a single airplane—only then was the Red Army leadership forced to decide to break out of the encirclement.

In October 1934 the Red Army began what became known as the Long March. Again, it is one of the greatest pages in the military and social history, certainly of China, and indeed of the world. The heroic detachments of the Red Army—totalling some 90 000 in the beginning, and accompanied by many thousands of peasants—undertook a march of exactly a year over an arduous route of nearly 10 000 km.

Under the direction of Chu Teh and Mao Tse-tung, they achieved this while repeatedly engaging enemy forces vastly outnumbering their own. Eventually they found refuge in the mountain fastness of Yenan in Shensi.

Trotsky's prognosis

In 1932, at the time when the peasant 'Red' Army was scoring brilliant victories over the Kuomintang in Kiangsi, Trotsky had posed the question of what would happen

if this army, after defeating the landlords, entered the cities.

He pointed out that the Red Army leaders were ex-workers. The Red forces were made up predominantly of peasants, ex-peasants or landless labourers, and also refugees from the various warlords. In the publications of the Communist Party itself complaints were voiced over the admission into the Red Army of the lumpen proletariat and the lumpen agricultural population.

In other words, in social composition, the Red Army was the same mixture mainly of peasants and ex-peasants that had been seen in China over thousands of years: traditional peasant armies that had arisen against oppression and exploitation by the landlords.

In posing the question of what would happen if the Red Army entered the cities, Trotsky drew on the experience of Russia. He pointed out that there, after the October Revolution, the Red Army was initially made up mainly of workers' detachments, who fought the armies of counter-revolution (known as the 'Whites') throughout the length and breadth of the country. At the same time there were peasant detachments that arose.

So long as they were fighting against the Whites there was a common cause between the Red (proletarian) Army and the various peasant armies. But once the Whites had been vanquished, *the different character of the armies came to the fore.*

The tendency of the proletariat, organised in big industry, is to collectivise industry, to plan and to organise production. The tendency of the peasantry, because it is so scattered, so stratified and so heterogenous, is to divide up property and share out the booty.

What, asked Trotsky, if the peasant 'Red Army' in China, victorious in the countryside, were to enter the cities? Is it not possible, he said, that it would clash with the working class; that it would be hostile to the demands of the working class; and that its commanders, despite their 'Communist' label, would fuse with the capitalist class, resulting in a classical capitalist development? There were indeed many parallels in the previous two thousand years of Chinese history, when the leaders of victorious peasant armies had fused with the then ruling classes in the towns.

In a crucial respect that prognosis of Trotsky was not borne out in the Chinese Revolution of 1944-49, for, as we know, capitalism was overthrown as a result of the victory of the Red Army. Nevertheless, as I shall go on to explain, Trotsky correctly foreshadowed the main features that were evident in the revolution, on the basis of the class forces involved.

"United front"

In the 1930s, Chiang Kai-shek was so preoccupied with fighting the Reds that he abandoned the defence of China against imperialist encroachments. Eventually, even within the Kuomintang itself, and particularly within the Kuomintang armies, there was an enormous hostility growing up—firstly, to the advance of imperialism, and, secondly, to the impotence of Chiang Kai-shek and the Kuomintang leaders in facing up to these attacks.

That culminated in 1936 when the Kuomintang general staff ordered their army in Shensi to attack the Red Army once again. There was enormous discontent; they reluctantly attacked and were defeated. As a result of that, the Kuomintang army was in a ferment of revolt.

Chiang Kai-shek, as was his wont, decided to fly to the battlefront in order to deal with the situation. While he was there, near Sian, the army rose in revolt. Chiang Kai-shek was found crouching on a mountain-side in his nightshirt!

He was brought before the Kuomintang rank-and-file, and the cry went up: "Bring the butcher of the Chinese people to a people's trial!" It showed their readiness to be rid of the bourgeois Kuomintang dictatorship and face up to the struggle against Japanese imperialism.

But, as was the case in 1925-27, once again the Chinese Communist Party leadership came to the rescue of Chiang Kai-shek. Chou En-lai, as representative of Mao Tse-tung, flew into Sian. He walked into the room where Chiang Kai-shek was held.

Let us recall that Chou En-lai had been in the headquarters of the General Labour Union in 1927 at the time of the suppression of the Shanghai working class. He had seen the butchery of Chiang Kai-shek at first hand. So Chiang turned white when Chou En-lai walked into the room at Sian! Quickly, he clicked his heels and saluted Chou as the generalissimo—as the leader—of the Chinese revolution.

In other words, the leader—the very fountainhead—of the counter-revolution was in the hands of the Reds. The troops of the Kuomintang were prepared to go over to the side of revolution.

But instead of basing themselves on this fact, what policy did the Chinese CP leadership pursue? Chou En-lai discussed "successfully" with Chiang Kai-shek for about two days, and eventually a "united front" was forged—an allegedly united front that the Communist Party had been advocating since the world Comintern Conference of 1935.

That was the conference at which the 'third period' was abandoned and Stalinism internationally swung over to *Popular Frontism*—the policy of alliance with the so-called "progressive" bourgeoisie. For this reason the Communist Party leaders in China, firmly under the control of Mao Tse-tung at this stage, were seeking a united front with the Kuomintang leadership against Japanese imperialism.

Eventually they did link up formally in a united front in 1936/37. This in turn was the moment chosen by Japanese imperialism to launch a full-blown military campaign in order to capture Chinese territory.

It is very interesting to examine in detail the process of this alleged "united front"—something which, unfortunately, there is not time to do here. But what is important about the whole experience in China in the 1930s is this: In the first phase when the Red armies went into Kiangsi, they drove out the landlords and began to carry through a land reform. But on the basis of signing this "united front" agreement with the Kuomintang—indeed as a precondition for it—a halt was called to the land reform in the Red areas.

Trotsky said at this stage that one would not rule out the possibility of co-ordinated military action against Japanese imperialism by the forces of the Kuomintang, led by Chiang Kai-shek, and the forces of the Reds. But this would be on condition that there was complete independence of the forces of the Reds and of the labour movement in China.

Moreover, as Trotsky stressed, and as the parallel experience of Russia had shown, the strongest weapon in fighting Japanese imperialism would be to carry through a social programme of land to the tillers and the factories to the proletariat.

But in China, in the "united front" period, the Reds did not do that. On the contrary, within the Red areas, land was retained by the rich peasants; and the rich peasants began more and more to creep into the ranks of the Red Army and the embryonic state machine that existed in the Red areas. Even Chou En-lai and Mao Tse-tung complained about this.

At the same time, in the towns that were controlled by the Reds there was a similar situation to that which had occurred as a result of CP policy in Shanghai and Canton during the 1925-27 revolution: class collaboration with the capitalists; a deliberate attempt to restrict the movement of the working class; the workers were not to ask for more than the capitalists were prepared to give; and so on.

But the most important feature of this so-called united front with the Kuomintang was that, in the course of the war itself, the Kuomintang was utterly incapable of resisting the advance of the Japanese forces. The Kuomintang forces retreated to the central and western parts of China.

The only force that really fought Japanese imperialism was the Red Army.

The programme of Japanese imperialism in the countryside of China was summed up in the horrific slogan of the *Three Alls*—"Loot all, burn all, and kill all." Through this absolute ruthlessness, the peasants were driven into the ranks of the Red Army.

Thus the end result was that Japanese imperialism merely held the major industrial areas and a narrow strip of land along the railways. Already in the early part of the war, much of the rest of China came under the influence of the Red Army and its leadership.

Already in the Red areas we saw the embryo of a state machine. In 1945, for instance, at the end of the Second World War, the area that was controlled by the Reds had a population of about 90 million. The embryonic state power of the Reds was such that they even produced their own currency.

The Kuomintang fought only an occasional engagement against the Japanese. The calculation of Chiang Kai-shek was that he would keep his forces in the west so that, as soon as Japanese imperialism was defeated in the World War by American imperialism, he would occupy the eastern seaboard of China once again.

He expected then that there would be a repetition of the events of 1925-27, and the capitulation of the Chinese CP leadership. This did not happen, for reasons I will go into in a moment.

It is important to emphasise that most of the energies of the Kuomintang during the war were directed against the Reds whenever it was possible to do so. In 1941-42, for example, when the Red Army was attempting to engage the Japanese in combat, in the course of the crossing of a number of rivers the Kuomintang treacherously attacked the forces of the Reds.

This was in complete violation of the so-called "united front" against Japanese imperialism which had been agreed.

Outcome of the War

Eventually, as we know, Japanese imperialism was defeated in the course of the Second World War, capitulating in 1945 after the dropping of the atom bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Then Chiang Kai-shek was faced with an enormous dilemma.

First of all, the Russian Stalinist bureaucracy intervened in Manchuria, and occupied practically the whole of it in a nine-day war. It was obvious that Stalin was even considering the establishment there of a puppet regime.

Li Li-san (whom I mentioned before as a stooge of Stalin) had been removed from the Chinese CP leadership in 1930 and had remained in Moscow after that. Now he was brought back on the heels of Stalin's troops as part of a half-hearted attempt by the bureaucracy in Russia to establish their position in Manchuria.

Manchuria actually contained most of Chinese industry at that particular stage. When the Stalinist bureaucracy occupied Manchuria, they proceeded—in the same hooligan fashion as they did in Germany—to strip the whole area of its factories, of its technical expertise, and transported it back to Russia.

This was in complete contradiction to all the principles of internationalism that Lenin and the Bolsheviks had established in 1917. The narrow, nationalist, bureaucratic concepts of Stalinism resulted in the looting of Manchuria.

The Red Army having penetrated Manchuria, Chiang Kai-shek was flown in by the Americans from the western areas that he occupied. Chiang now found himself in the position that Japanese imperialism had been in previously. He had the towns and some parts of the railways—those parts of the railways that the peasants had not ripped up. (In a very famous tradition of Chinese peasant resistance, they bent the rails to make them unusable.)

Chiang Kai-shek then had to think about importing his troops and equipment into northern China and Manchuria by sea, with the aid of American imperialism. In all, he was in a very difficult strategic position.

But at the end of the Second World War, there was tremendous pressure on the Chinese Red Army, which was predominantly a peasant force, to come to an agreement once again with Chiang Kai-shek. In 1945 there was considerable war-weariness, and in that year the Red Army leaders decided once more to negotiate with the Kuomintang.

I mentioned before that Trotsky had expected that, when the Red Army entered the cities, the leaders might fuse with the capitalist class, with the result that a classical capitalist development would take place. But let us recall

that, by the end of the Second World War, two decades had elapsed since the 1925-27 revolution and the capitulation at that time of the Chinese CP leaders to the Kuomintang bourgeoisie.

Now Chinese society was completely in an impasse. Landlordism and capitalism had had the opportunity in those two decades to solve the problems of Chinese society, and had been found wanting. Chinese capitalism was incapable of tackling the land problem; incapable of unifying China; impotent against imperialism; incapable of stopping the blood-letting and the suffering of the Chinese people.

To take just one example of the terrible bankruptcy of the capitalist system in China—the rate of inflation in one year after the Second World War was 10 000%! Money became completely worthless. The whole of Chinese society was completely disorganised.

Moreover, during the period of the Kuomintang dictatorship, as a minimum estimate one million people had perished in China as a direct result of the monstrous repressive measures of this regime. That is apart from the slaughter carried out by Japanese imperialism.

Nevertheless, at the end of the war there was pressure, on account of war-weariness, for the Kuomintang and the Communist Party to collaborate. Some Marxists in the West—alleged Marxists, that is—said: "Ah, look! Mao Tse-tung is attempting to capitulate to Chiang Kai-shek."

But was this the case? It was correct, in fact, for the Red Army leadership to negotiate with the Kuomintang at that stage. This was necessary in order to make it clear to the masses that the Reds were not the ones who should be held responsible for continuing the war, but that they were in favour of peace.

And what was the programme that Mao Tse-tung put forward at this point? It is very interesting to examine this programme:

**Punish war criminals.* Who were the war criminals? Mostly the tops of the Kuomintang—who, by the way, in Manchuria, had taken over and absorbed into the Kuomintang armies all the collaborators with Japanese imperialism. The war criminals were the leadership of the Kuomintang.

**Abrogate the bogus constitution*—on which the Kuomintang rested.

**Abolish the pretended legitimacy of the Kuomintang power.* This meant that the Kuomintang leaders were no longer to be considered the legitimate holders of political power.

**Reform all reactionary armies in accordance with democratic principles*—a devastating blow against the Kuomintang officer caste and ruling clique.

**Confiscate bureaucratic capital.* That was, in effect, a pseudonym for "Take over capitalism"—nationalise the capital that was controlled by imperialism and by the tops of the Kuomintang and their supporters.

**Reform the agrarian system.*

**Abrogate treaties of national betrayal.*

**Convoke a consultative conference without the participation of reactionary elements.*

It was absolutely impossible for the Kuomintang leadership to enter into an agreement with the Red Army on any of these measures—measures so obviously necessary and acceptable to the mass of the Chinese people. There followed a short inter-regnum in which American imperialism tried to exert pressure for a coalition. That was not successful, and in turn resulted in the resumption of the war in 1946.

Really the *civil war* in China took place between 1946 and 1949. In a whole series of battles the forces of the Kuomintang were smashed. In Manchuria, they were surrounded in the cities, which eventually fell. Then the Red Army moved into the central and eastern provinces.

Social situation

If we look at the combination of factors that existed in Chinese society at that stage, it was obvious that the situation was not as Trotsky had anticipated in the period before the Second World War. The impotence and bankruptcy of landlordism and capitalism—its utter inability to show a way forward for Chinese society—had by now gone much further than could have been foreseen.

It would be wrong to think that it was military superiority which guaranteed the victories of the Red Army in the clashes that took place in the Chinese civil war. On the contrary, the Kuomintang had overwhelming superiority in military terms. There were roughly one million troops in the Kuomintang armies, and they were armed with the very latest in weapons and technique by American imperialism.

What happened is that, in every battle which took place, the Kuomintang *was defeated by the revolutionary propaganda of the Red Army—in particular by the call of "land to the tillers!"*

Under the impetus of the mass movement that developed in 1947, Mao Tse-tung and the Chinese CP leadership had been forced to adopt a much more radical land programme than had existed in the Red areas during the earlier "united front" period. As a result, the propaganda of the Red Army was like tanks going through the lines of the Kuomintang armies.

When they defeated an army of the Kuomintang, the Reds did not take the troops prisoner. They released the Kuomintang troops—and imbued them with the idea that the Reds wanted them to take over the land and smash the landlord and capitalist exploiters.

That was more successful than airplanes, bullets and all the latest word in armaments in disintegrating the Kuomintang armies. Eventually it resulted in the total collapse of the Kuomintang in 1947-48.

But even as late as 1948 there were alleged "Marxists", alleged "Trotskyists", who were insisting that Mao Tse-tung was attempting to capitulate to Chiang Kai-shek! As one wag in America said, "If that is true, the problem is he can't catch him"—because, in fact, Chiang and his forces were running away from the forces of the Reds, from the north of China right down the eastern seaboard to the southern coast itself.

Another claim that was put forward, by the allegedly "Trotskyist" SWP in America, was that Mao Tse-tung would never cross the Yangtze River. However, on the day that they published this in their paper, Mao was

already 60 km beyond the Yangtze.

They were operating with all the old *formulas* that Trotsky had worked out in the inter-war period—*but they were incapable of understanding Trotsky's method and of relating his ideas to the changing situation, and the new combination of factors and forces that had arisen in the period 1944-49.*

Chinese landlordism and capitalism was utterly impotent to develop society any further. A vacuum existed in Chinese society. Japanese imperialism had been defeated and could not intervene. American imperialism itself was not able to intervene directly.

In the aftermath of the Second World War, throughout the whole of Asia there were massive movements of American troops wanting to go home. The famous "Bring the Boys Home" movement developed throughout the West.

So American imperialism could supply Chiang Kai-shek with the latest armaments (which by the way, were subsequently captured by the Reds and used not only in China, but also against American imperialism in Korea), but they were not able to bolster up the armies of the Kuomintang with troops. They could not stop the disintegrating effects on the Kuomintang armies caused by the social situation that existed in China at that time.

The incapacity of imperialism to intervene was summed up in one famous—or infamous—incident (depending on your point of view). That was the "Amethyst" incident.

Let us remember that in Shanghai and Canton, at the time of the 1925-27 revolution, the British imperialists brazenly shot down Chinese workers and peasants. Yet in 1949 when the British warship *Amethyst* managed to sneak down the Yangtze River, evade the Red gun-boats, and escape, that was hailed as a "great victory" in the British press. That was a graphic illustration of the impotence of imperialism to intervene against the Chinese revolution.

The power vacuum that existed in China was more important in determining the outcome of the revolution than all the speeches of Mao Tse-tung, when he said, for instance, that national capitalism in China would last a hundred years.

Understanding this enabled the Marxist tendency, which today is gathered round the *Militant* newspaper (and we trace our antecedents right back to that period), to grasp correctly the process of the revolution that was taking place in China.

The Marxists of the Militant Tendency argued that the development would not be as Trotsky had anticipated in the inter-war period. Certainly it would not be a conscious movement of the proletariat like the October Revolution in Russia in 1917. It would be a peasant army entering the cities, as Trotsky clearly foresaw. But instead of the commanders of the peasant army fusing with the capitalist class and a capitalist development taking place, it was now inevitable that capitalism would be overthrown.

This was because of the exhaustion and bankruptcy of Chinese capitalism; because of the weakness of imperialism on a world scale in the aftermath of the Second World War; because of the greatly increased strength of Stalinism as a result of the Second World War, in Russia and Eastern Europe; because, also, Mao Tse-tung and the leaders of the Red Army had a model of the kind of state and the kind of society that they could confidently move to create in China.

But while, therefore, the outcome of the revolution would not be as Trotsky had expected in the inter-war period, by no stretch of the imagination could Mao Tse-tung and the Chinese CP and Red Army leaders be considered *communists*, in the classical sense of the term.

They were not Marxists in the sense that they did not base themselves on the proletariat—which is absolutely fundamental to the Marxist approach, method, strategy and tactics. On the contrary, they were deadly fearful of the movement of the proletariat and of any action by the workers which they could not directly control.

The Chinese CP leaders were Bonapartist leaders, resting on the peasant Red Army, and manoeuvring in order to gather absolute power over society into their own hands. From the outset the model for their regime was the Stalinist dictatorship in Russia, which had arisen out of the *degeneration* of the Russian Revolution. Mao

This map, published in the New York Herald Tribune *in January 1949, showed the area of China then under the control of the Red Army.*

began at the point which Stalin had already reached.

This was the explanation and analysis put forward by the Marxists of the Militant Tendency *at the time of the Chinese Revolution itself.* It was explained that, like Stalin, Mao would balance between the classes while consolidating his regime, and in the process ruthlessly suppress all independent actions and initiatives by the workers.

As in Russia, so in China capitalism was eliminated and a nationalised and planned economy introduced. But while the Russian workers' state began on healthy lines of workers' democracy and subsequently degenerated, the state established in China by the Red Army was a deformed workers' state, a Stalinist state from the outset.

International effects

The difference between the Russian and Chinese revolutions was enormous also in the different international repercussions which they produced. The October Revolution in Russia inspired tremendous movements of the working class throughout the world. An example was the revolutionary events in Italy, in 1920, where the workers occupied the factories.

An indication of the way that the proletariat internationally identified with the Russian Revolution was, paradoxically, indicated by the barrage of propaganda put up by the capitalist press at the time. The propaganda against the Russian Revolution put in the shade the lies and filth that we encounter in the *Daily Express*, for instance, today.

To give one humorous example: the *New York Times* carried over a hundred articles between 1918 and 1921 which said either that Trotsky had bumped off Lenin, or that Lenin had bumped off Trotsky! One headline was "Trotsky Assassinates Lenin in Drunken Brawl"! Now, if that was in a serious journal such as the *New York Times*, imagine the kind of stories that would appear in the yellow press.

But despite the propaganda, the working class internationally instinctively knew that their class was in power, and it inspired them.

In Russia there had been democratic organs of control and management in the form of the soviets. Nothing of this character existed in China between 1946-49 or in the aftermath.

In the main, in the big cities, "...Political apathy and inertia were stronger even than universal dissatisfaction ...the revolution finally engulfed Peking, but it was full-grown and did not grow gradually within the City itself." (*Communist China on the Eve of Takeover* by A. Doak Bennet, p. 325.)

Furthermore, the Stalinist leaders of the Chinese Communist Party and Red Army displayed the fear of the 'full-grown' *bureaucracy* towards any independent movement by the working class. In their eight-point peace programme, presented as a manoeuvre before they occupied Peking, they unashamedly warned the working class: *"Those who strike or destroy will be punished ... those working in these organisations* (factories) *should work peacefully and wait for the takeover."*

And true to their word, any independent action by the working class was met with ruthless repression. Contrast this attitude with that shown by Lenin and the Bolsheviks in the Russian Revolution. The Bolsheviks looked towards the working class as the *main* agent of change and urged: *"the land to the tillers and the factories to the producers."*

Without any question, the Chinese revolution of 1944-49 was one of the greatest events in human history. It was the second greatest event, surpassed only by the October Revolution of 1917.

One quarter of mankind stepped onto the stage of history, and put behind them once and forever the disease, the ravages, the misery that landlordism and capitalism had meant for them.

The Chinese revolution inspired and gave a push to the colonial revolution in Africa, Asia and Latin America. It was an event of great historical importance, but at the same time an event that could not have the same effect as the Russian Revolution on the working class internationally.

It established a planned economy, as most of industry was gradually taken over by the state, and a thoroughgoing land reform was carried through. But at the same time there was the establishment of a one-party totalitarian regime.

The idea that there was a democracy in China in 1949 is a fairy-tale, for the consumption of children of 10 or younger.

Now, if we look at the situation in China at that particular stage, we see that Mao Tse-tung formed a "coalition" with the Kuomintang. To be more exact, he formed a coalition with the "People's Kuomintang"—supposedly representing the 'national' capitalists—which had a total membership of a few hundred. Not exactly a mighty force, in a population of three-quarters of a billion.

On the surface what Mao Tse-tung had done coincided with a phrase that Trotsky had used in the 1930s in relation to Spain. This is where a lot of "Trotskyists", who used only the phrases of Trotsky without grasping his meaning, made hopeless mistakes in relation to China.

Trotsky said that in Spain the Stalinist CP had formed a coalition, not with the capitalist class, but with their *shadow*. What he meant by this was that the capitalists in reality had all fled to the side of General Franco and the counter-revolution; and the workers' leaders had formed a coalition with the ex-representatives of the capitalists in Spain.

This was the 'Popular Front' which served to hold the working class back from taking state power, and thus preserved capitalism in Spain. Gradually the "shadow" got substance, and the workers' movement in Republican Spain was smashed.

On the face of it, in China, Mao Tse-tung had entered into a coalition with the shadow of the capitalist class. *But there was a crucial difference in China at this time, as opposed to Spain in 1936-39. The real levers of state power were not in the hands of the bourgeois partners of the Red Army, in the so-called People's Kuomintang. They were entirely in the hands of Mao Tse-tung, the Red Army and the so-called Communist Party—particularly*

the police, the military, and so on.

The "coalition" with the capitalist People's Kuomintang counted for nothing against the enormous objective pressures forcing the regime to move to eliminate capitalism and take the economy into state hands. Therefore we had in China the development of a totalitarian one-party regime based on a *progressive* economic system—a planned economy.

Only by understanding the relationship of forces in the Chinese Revolution is it possible to grasp the very complex processes that are taking place in Asia, Africa and Latin America at the present time. The processes are not according to any schema laid down in advance by Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky—yet only the *method* developed by these great teachers in their time enables us to understand what is taking place.

We can understand the processes if all the comrades gain a fuller grasp of the features of the Chinese revolution of 1944-49, and the way in which that revolution developed.

It was not a case of the working class playing the main role in the revolution, but of a victorious peasant army entering the cities. It was a case of a Bonapartist regime which established a planned economy—which in that sense *historically* expressed the material interests of the working class.

But in no sense was it a regime of workers' democracy along the lines of the Bolshevik regime in Russia in 1917. It was not—and is not—a socialist regime moving towards the development of socialist society. That is impossible unless power is in the hands of the working class, and a regime of workers' democracy prevails.

Unfortunately, because of the way the regime developed in China, the Chinese working class will have to pay with a new revolution—this time a *political revolution*—establishing workers' democracy on the foundations of the planned economy. Only then will the way be clear for Chinese society to move towards socialism in the context of a world socialist federation.

From: The Chinese Revolution

Socialist Appeal January 1949

by Ted Grant

WITH THE spectacular advance of the Chinese Red Army, the diplomats of the State Department in America and the Foreign Office in Britain are seriously discussing the possibility of the complete collapse of the Chiang Kai Shek regime. The entire capitalist press writes gloomily of the prospect of North and Central China to the Yangtse coming under Stalinist sway.

Within three years of the collapse of Japanese imperialism, the Red Army has conquered Manchuria and most of North China. The Chinese capital Nanking, with the richest city of China, Shanghai, which has a population of five million, are rapidly coming within the grasp of the Red Army. The territory which the Stalinists already dominate has a population of more than 170 million.

The British capitalists, with investments in China amounting to £450 million, are dismayed at the prospect of the loss of this lucrative field of investment. American imperialism, within whose sphere of influence China fell with the weakening of the other imperialist powers during the war, has given the Kuomintang government aid to the extent of $3billion, in a fruitless attempt to save China for imperialist exploitation.

But the American imperialists now realise that further aid is merely throwing away good money after bad. With all the military and technical advantages in its favour in the early stages of the civil war that followed the world war, the Kuomintang has suffered defeat after defeat. The Kuomintang regime, under the dictatorial rule of Chiang Kai Shek, represents the feudal landlords and capitalists. It is controlled by an utterly corrupt military clique which oppresses the workers and peasants and battens on their masters.

Chiang Kai Shek came to power after the defeat of the Chinese revolution of 1925-7 in which he played the role of chief butcher of the working class. He succeeded in this because of the policy of Stalin and Bukharin and the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party. Their policy then was to form a bloc with the Chinese landlords, capitalists and feudal warlords, allegedly in the interests of the struggle against imperialism. In consequence, they sabotaged the attempts of the workers to take over the factories and the peasants to take the land. A 'communist' Minister of Labour sabotaged strikes and punished striking workers. A 'communist' Minister of Agriculture had peasants shot down when they attempted to seize the land.

The capitalist Kuomintang was taken into the Communist International as a sympathising section. In *The Third International After Lenin* by Trotsky, the Stalinists' role is shown in an explanatory note:

> The Kuomintang was admitted to the Comintern as a sympathising party early in 1926, approved by the Polit-

bureau of the CPSU, with the sole dissenting vote of Trotsky. Hu Han-min, right-wing Kuomintang leader, participated in the Sixth Plenum of the ECCI, February, 1926, as a fraternal delegate from the Kuomintang. Shao Ki-tze a henchman of Chiang Kai Shek, was fraternal delegate to the Seventh Plenum, ECCI, November, 1926 (*Minutes*, German edition pp. 403f.). (London edition, 1936).

On March 21 and 22, 1927, the workers of Shanghai captured the city. Chiang immediately began preparations to butcher them. He conspired with the imperialists to crush the workers.

Instead of preparing for the struggle the Stalinists gave full support to Chiang. The Comintern official journal *International Press Correspondence*, French edition, March 23, 1927, page 443, said: 'Far from dividing, as the imperialists say, the Kuomintang has only steeled its ranks.'

On March 30 they wrote:

> A split in the Kuomintang and hostilities between the Shanghai proletariat and the revolutionary soldiers are absolutely excluded for the moment....Chiang Kai Shek....himself declared that he would submit to the decisions of the party....A revolutionist like Chiang Kai Shek will not go over, as the imperialists would like to have it believed, to Chang Tao-lin (the Northern militarist) to fight against the emancipation movement....

Chiang proceeded to organise a coup, massacre the flower of the workers, illegalise the trade unions, the peasant organisations, the Communist Party, and deprive the masses of all rights. The masses were utterly defeated and the remnants of the Chinese leadership of the Communist Party fled to the peasant areas —and there tried to organise a peasant war.

Peasant Army

The guerrilla struggle threw up leaders of remarkable military genius. Mao Tse Tung, Chu Teh and others succeeded in evading the poweful military forces which the Kuomintang had arrayed against them. Despite the false political line which led to successive disasters, in one of the most remarkable military feats in world history, Mao was driven from Central and South China in a 6,000-mile retreat to the mountain fastnesses around Yenan, where a 'soviet' republic was set up. There, despite all the efforts of the Chiang regime to dislodge them, they succeeded in holding out against one attack after another. The secret of their success was that the land had been divided among the peasants in this small area, comprising, according to some estimates, about 10 million population.

In the intervening period between the wars, the Chiang regime piled up ever increasing burdens on the workers and peasants. In some areas the taxes were collected from the peasants by the corrupt local officials *80 years in advance*.

There was an endless militaristic squandering of wealth, and the feeble Kuomintang regime showed itself incapable of waging a revolutionary struggle against the incursions of imperialistic Japan.

The Chiang regime resolved itself into one of bribery and police terror. In a period of two decades it became so completely degenerate from top to bottom that it had lost most of its support even among the middle class.

After the collapse of Japan, with a certain aid from the Red Army in Manchuria which helped the Stalinists to capture Japanese munitions, large parts of Manchuria and the North fell into the hands of the Stalinists. The Chinese Red Army had waged a guerrilla struggle against Japanese militarism throughout the war and were in a strategic position to seize certain areas with the Japanese collapse. Even throughout the war Chiang's main preoccupation was the social danger at home, to deal with the Stalinists and workers, and had it not been clear that Japan was going to be defeated in the later stages, it is quite likely that he would have capitulated and made a compromise with Japanese imperialism.

A Dying Regime

American imperialism assisted Chiang by pouring in munitions and other supplies, and even direct military intervention in the transport of Kuomintang troops to Manchuria and North China by the US fleet and air force. Chiang had initial successes, but all in vain. He was leading a dying regime, more archaic than even the Czarist regime in Russia. So rotten was the regime that large parts of the supplies were *sold* by officials to the Stalinist armies for gold, and ministers and other officials in Chiang's government pocketed a great part of the dollars supplied for the war by America. Only the lesser part of the supplies and munitions actually reached the Nationalist troops at the front.

The military commanders ceaselessly intrigued against one another, as in all doomed regimes. Chiang, for example, starved General Fu Tso Yi, the only outstanding general who showed any real capacity on the Nationalist side, of supplies, for fear he might seek to replace him. The generals were outclassed by the superior strategy and tactics of the Red Army command.

Social Questions Involved

However, the main reason for the victories of the Chinese Stalinists has been readily pointed out by Mao Tse Tung: *the social questions involved*. 'Land to the peasants,' as in the Russian revolution, sounded the death knell of feudal landowners and their corrupt regime. In large part, the Chinese Stalinists have

carried out the agrarian revolution. That is the significant difference between the struggle in 1927 and now. It is this which has been responsible for the melting away of the armies which Chiang tried to use to crush the agrarian rebellion. Chiang's armies are composed of peasants —the poorest peasants at that —who have not enough money to escape conscription by bribing the officials.

Even the *News Chronicle* (11 December 1948) admits:

> There is discontent among the rank and file of the Nationalist army. Chiang's privates get about five pence a month.
>
> In some villages conscripts are roped together on the way to barracks, and when they travel by train carriage doors and wagons are locked so that they cannot escape.

Naturally, they desert with their arms, even to the extent of whole divisions when confronted with the agrarian programme of the Stalinists.

The Stalinist Agrarian Programme

At the national agrarian conference of the Chinese Communist party held on September 13, 1947, it was proposed to carry through an agrarian law containing the following provisions:

> Article 1. The agrarian system of feudal and semi-feudal exploitation is abolished. The agrarian system of 'land to the tiller' is to be established.
> Article 2. The land ownership rights of all landlords are abolished.
> Article 3. The land ownership rights of all ancestral shrines, temples, monasteries, schools, institutions, and organisations, are abolished.
> Article 4. All debts incurred in the countryside prior to the reform of the agrarian system are cancelled.

Article 10, aimed directly at the soldiers and even the officers of the Kuomintang reads, in part:

> Section c. All personnel of the People's Liberation Armies, democratic governments, and all peoples' organisations whose home is in the countryside shall be given land and properties equivalent to that of peasants for themselves and their families.
> Section d. Landlords and their families shall be given land and properties equivalent to that of the peasants.
> Section e. Families of Kuomintang officers and soldiers, Kuomintang Party members and other enemy personnel whose homes are in rural areas, shall be given land and properties equivalent to that of the peasants.

One of the outstanding facts in the situation in China is the *relative passivity of the working class.* It is true that as a result of the collapse of the Chiang armies, there have been widespread strike struggles in the large cities, Shanghai, Canton, Hankow and Nanking, despite the repressive conditions. However, it is clear that as the Stalinists advance towards the big cities on the Yangtse, the workers, for lack of a mass alternative, can only rally to their banner. The workers never supported the Chiang Kai Shek regime.

Every socialist worker will wholeheartedly applaud the destruction of feudalism and of large-scale capitalism in this important section of Asia, even though it is carried out under the leadership of Stalinism. In its *long-term implications* it is as important as the October revolution itself. One could give no better Marxist analysis of the gloomy picture for the world capitalist class than that expressed in the editorial of *The Times,* 10 November 1948:

> At the best this spells only a single check (Hsuchow held by the Nationalists at the time and since fallen) after months of gains which have swung the balance of power — military, industrial, ideological — to the communist side. Their widening hold on large areas of Northern and Central China has a much deeper meaning than the Japanese invasion of ten years ago, for the communists — decisively helped by Russia as they have been and Marxists as they remain — summon up and organise native revolutionary forces. In its vastness and in its all too likely consequences the present upheaval has rather to be compared with the Russian revolution of 1917 — from which it directly and obviously springs. Wider success for the Chinese communists would offer wider influence, and at the ripe moment wider success, for the power with which they ally themselves. Long-cherished Soviet plans for swinging the backward millions of Asia into the camp which already stretches from the Oder to Sakhalin would receive the greatest measure of reinforcement so far.
>
> ...They can draw upon the peasantry for their divisions, and they have been able to win over the support of the peasantry by expropriating most of the landlords and redistributing the land. So far the agricultural reforms of the communists have prospered the more obviously because they have not had to feed many large towns; the food has mainly been kept in the country areas.
>
> In some regions a commander has ruthlessly shot or imprisoned those whom he has judged to be anti-communist; in others there has been a show of tolerance with few changes in the traditional way of life. Businessmen and others have even been given the choice of staying or leaving. This show of tolerance seems to be the policy of Mao Tse Tung, the highly astute communist leader. His writings and speeches show him to be an unshakeable Marxist, but one who recognises that Marx's analysis of the opportunities for revolution in the industrial Europe of last century cannot be applied strictly to the mainly agricultural and primitive state of much of China. He seems to have decided to reach his communist goal by two stages. First, there is to be a system of relatively free trading, similar to the New Economic Policy which Lenin introduced after the initial failure of militant communism in Russia. It is this stage which he proclaims at present, hoping, not without success — not only to win the peasants but to assuage the fears of many townspeople. Secondly when the first stage has been accomplished, he plans to make the further step to Marxist socialism.

The references to Marxism and the communist

policy of Mao are of course false. The policy of Stalinism in Russia, in Eastern Europe and in China has been labelled Marxist by all present day capitalist journalists. It is a perversion of Marxism. Nevertheless *The Times* sees that the tactics of the Chinese Stalinists will be similar to those of the Stalinists in Eastern Europe.

Two Sides of The Coin

While supporting the destruction of feudalism in China, it must be emphasised that only a horrible caricature of the Marxist conception of the revolution will result because of the leadership of the Stalinists. Not a real democracy, but a totalitarian regime as brutal as that of Chiang Kai Shek will develop. Like the regimes in Eastern Europe, Mao will look to Russia as his model. Undoubtedly, tremendous economic progress will be achieved. But the masses, both workers and peasants, will find themselves enslaved by the bureaucracy.

The Stalinists are incorporating into their regime ex-feudal militarists, capitalist elements, and the bureaucratic officialdom in the towns who will occupy positions of privilege and power.

On the basis of such a backward economy, a large scale differentiation among the peasants (as after the Russian revolution during the period of the NEP) aided by the failure to nationalise the land: the capitalist elements in trade, and even in light industry, might provide a base for capitalist counter-revolution. It must be borne in mind that in China the proletariat is weaker in relation to the peasantry than was the case in Russia during the NEP owing to the more backward development of China.

Even in Czechoslovakia and other Eastern European countries similarly, where the capitalist elements were relatively weaker, nevertheless the danger of a capitalist overturn existed for a time. The fact that the workers and peasants will not have any democratic control and that the totalitarian tyranny will have superimposed upon it the Asiatic barbarism and cruelties of the old regime, gives rise to this possibility. However, it seems likely that the capitalist elements will be defeated because of the historical tendency of the decay of capitalism on a world scale. The impotence of world imperialism is shown by the fact that whereas they intervened directly against the Chinese revolution in 1925-7, today they look on helplessly at the collapse of the Chiang regime.

However, it is quite likely that Stalin will have a new Tito on his hands. The shrewder capitalist commentators are already speculating on this although they derive cold comfort from it. Mao will have a powerful base in China with its 450-500 million population and its potential resources, and the undoubted mass support his regime will possess in the early stages. The conflicts which will thus open out should be further means of assisting the world working class to understand the real nature of Stalinism.

The Cultural Revolution

by Peter Taaffe

From *Militant* February 1967

WITHIN THE last month events within China have taken a dramatic turn. Reports of fierce clashes between forces for and against Mao Zedong, strikes, allegations of 'sabotage' etc, have been splashed across the pages of the capitalist press. While most reports have exaggerated the picture, what is certain is that the current purge in China is spreading its tentacles to ever more layers of the ruling stratum and indeed is reverberating throughout the whole of Chinese society.

These upheavals are but the latest culmination of the so-called Cultural Revolution. For almost a year now a ceaseless campaign has been conducted by Mao Zedong against the opponents of his 'thought'. In the process numerous 'heroes' of yesterday have been demoted to 'capitalist agents' today. Thus Peng Chen former boss of Peking, along with a host of other luminaries has been cast out of the charmed circles of the ruling elite. Even the President Liu Shaoqi is currently under attack, while of those who comprised the top core of 22 Politburo members, only a handful have maintained their positions.

Alongside of this has gone the attempt to deify Mao Zedong to the level of god. Bent on stamping his imprint on all things, the 22 million strong 'Red Guards' have run amok within Chinese cities denouncing anything and everything remotely connected with 'western culture' or that which faintly conflicts with the omniscience of the 'leader'. Thus we have seen the 'Red Guards' in the most hooligan fashion and in direct opposition to the Marxist attitude towards culture, destroy priceless books and paintings. Shakespeare, Pushkin, Bizet and Beethoven have all been condemned as 'ideologues of the exploiting classes' while the Russian writer Tolstoy has been condemned as a 'revisionist' for his book *Anna Karenina*, which unfortunately, as *The Times* remarked 'was written before there was any (Russian) Marxism to revise.' Similarly Mao Zedong is placed on a level with Marx, Engels, and Lenin and has been elevated even higher by his current ally Lin Biao (higher than Stalin also!)

Social Crisis

How to explain these upheavals within China? This cannot be done by mere reference to the personal quirks of one man, Mao Zedong (irrespective of how all-powerful he may appear) as is the fashion with the capitalist press. On the contrary these events indicate a profound social crisis which afflicts the very vitals of Chinese society. In fact the present regime in China right from the outset has been a regime of crisis, a regime of Bonapartism. This is reflected in the periodic eruptions in the state, the bureaucracy, agriculture, industry and all aspects of life. It has been characterised above all by a constant policy of zigzags, a violent veering from one expedient to another. Given the march to power, and the birth and evolution of the present regime, this could not fail to be so.

Unlike the Russian Revolution, the Chinese Revolution of 1944-49 saw not the working class but the predominantly peasant Red Army, headed by Mao Zedong, Chou En-lai and their entourage, play the dominant role. In the main, in the big cities, 'Political apathy and inertia were stronger even than universal dissatisfaction...the revolution finally engulfed Peking, but it was full-grown and did not grow gradually within the City itself' *Communist China on the eve of takeover*, A Doak Bennet (p. 325).

Furthermore the Chinese Stalinists displayed the fear of the 'full grown' bureaucracy towards any independent movement by the working class. In their eight-point peace programme presented as a manoeuvre before they occupied Peking, they unashamedly warned the working class: *'Those who strike or destroy will be punished...those working in these organisations should work peacefully and wait for the takeover.'* And true to their word, any independent action by the working class was met with the most ruthless repression. Contrast this attitude with that shown by Lenin and the Bolsheviks in the Russian Revolution. The Bolsheviks looked towards the working class as the *main* agent of change and urged *'the land to the tillers and the factories to the producers.'*

Mao Zedong and the Chinese Stalinists trimmed their 'Marxism' to fit the needs of a Bonapartist clique at the head of the peasant armies. They only came to power because of the peculiar combination of forces which came together at that time. On the one sic Chinese capitalism in two decades of its untrammelled domination had failed to solve even one of the basic tasks confronting the economy and society ie land-reform, unification of the country and freedom from imperialism. Under Chiang Kai-shek the country had been dismembered into fields of warlords and spheres of imperialist interests. On the other the balance of world forces prevented US imperialism from intervening decisively on the side of Chiang Kai-shek in the Civil War (due mainly to the demonstrations amongst the troops and the war weariness of the American and European peoples). Thus in the vacuum that was created the Stalinists were allowed to come to power. Having learnt his lessons well at the school of Stalin, Mao Zedong, in the fashion of Bonapartism—and using its traditional weapon in the form of the peasant army—manoeuvred between the classes and from the beginning constructed a state based in fundamentals on the totalitarian system in Russia.

Nevertheless the destruction of landlordism and

capitalism ensured that the Chinese economy could develop with seven league boots. A tremendous impetus was given to the building of roads, industry, chemicals and all sections of the economy. Steel production, to give but one example, has zoomed from less than one million tons in 1949 to an estimated 12 million tons last year (1966).

In the language of steel, concrete and cement and to a certain extent the living standards of the people, nationalisation and a plan demonstrates its superiority over the outmoded system of capitalism. This despite the existence of a parasitic bureaucracy from the beginning. One has only to compare China with India where the straight jacket of private ownership has brought millions to the bring of starvation.

Economic Contradictions

Given its isolation, the triumph of the revolution was bound to lead to contradictions on a higher plane. The Chinese Stalinists based themselves on Stalin's conception of 'Socialism in one country.' As in Russia, this was the 'theoretical' smokescreen to express the interests of an emerging privileged layer of officials entrenched in the state, army and at all levels of the administrative apparatus.

But from the time of Marx onwards genuine socialists have always viewed socialism as realisable only on a world scale. It is international or it is nothing, and moreover must be based on a technique and production higher than that of the highest capitalism. Marx himself pointed out 'where want is generalised...all the old crap must revive.' First and foremost amongst this crap is the state itself. How completely this is borne out is demonstrated by the example of Russia.

Whereas Lenin conceived that the very first day of socialism would see the process of the withering away of the state, in Russia the repressive apparatus has grown by monstrous proportions with the population excluded from effective management and control of the government. Similarly in China where it has been estimated that the income per head of the population will not reach the level of even 1930 in Russia until 1980! 'Want is generalised' to an even greater extent in China—and with it the unrestricted growth of the bureaucracy. With the masses denied the right to discuss the aims, methods and details of Chinese economy all the mistakes of Stalinist Russia have been committed on a monumental scale. This accounts for the ceaseless convulsions of which the Cultural Revolution is but the latest.

A number of factors have come together to provoke the present crisis. The severe dislocation resulting from the so-called 'Great Leap Forward' caused conflict within the top echelons of the 'Communist Party.' Ordained from the top by Mao Zedong, the Chinese nation was dragooned into the lunacy of 'back-yard steel production,' when workers and peasants were instructed to set up their own furnaces. The result: virtual stagnation in the economy for years (it is no accident that figures of the development of the economy over the past number of years, including the details of the present five-year plan, have not been issued).

Such was the case also in the field of agriculture. With the forced march towards complete collectivising of agriculture they have succeeded in aiming crippling blows at production. Unheeding the lessons of Stalin's debacle in collectivising Russian agriculture (from which the USSR suffers to this day) the bureaucracy brought about a standstill here as well.

The 'communalisation' was carried through with the primitive tools used on small plots of land for centuries and without the large scale machines and technique necessary for the working of large units. The peasants here also reacted to the move with hostility, the consequence being a loss of self-interest and a plummeting of output. The result of all this has been that grain production is still at the level of 1956(!) and the bureaucracy has been forced to make a partial retreat in allowing the cultivation of 'small plots' to the extent that '80 per cent of pigs and 90 per cent of poultry are raised,' in this way and 'account for more than half of peasant incomes.' (*The Economist*).

Only a real plan of production drawn up by the masses themselves would be able to develop the economy in harmony, bring about the necessary balance between agriculture and industry and demonstrate in practice the superiority of large scale organisation of agriculture.

Added to this has been the collapse of the 'international' policy of the Chinese Stalinists. Despite the demagoguery of Mao Zedong, their policy has been based on furthering the 'national' interests of the bureaucracy and not on the interests of world socialism and the working class. As with the Russian Stalinists they have attempted to court the support of the national capitalists throughout the underdeveloped world.

Thus they were silent at the time of the East African mutinies, which were put down by their 'friends' Nyerere, Kenyatta and Co. Similarly they extended aid to the Sultan of Zanzibar before he was overthrown, and to the military dictatorship of Ayub Khan. They rushed to 'recognise' the Bommedienne regime in Algeria within hours of its installation and worst of all, were primarily responsible for the decimation of the Indonesian Communist Party. This debacle which resulted in the slaughter of upwards of half a million members of the PKI (the Indonesian CP) is one of the bloodiest chapters in the annals of world history. In a situation that was rotten ripe for the overthrow of capitalism the Chinese bureaucracy instructed the PKI to tail-end Sukharno, the representative of the national bourgeoisie. The biggest Communist Party in the world outside of Russia and China was sacrificed on the alter of the diplomatic interests of the Chinese Stalinists.

Power struggle

These factors amongst others (particularly the Sino-Soviet dispute) have provoked the present crisis and reflected this within the Chinese state, amongst the bureaucracy and in sections of the people themselves. Meeting opposition from a layer of the bureaucracy, Mao Zedong brought into being the 'Red Guards' as a club by means of which to beat down and destroy the opposition. Thrown into a national shell and as the supreme arbiter, he has leaned upon a more backward and younger section of the bureaucracy as *The Times* put it, 'the conflict...lies between an elite newly established to run the cultural revolution, and the "old guard" bureaucrats', against the 'restriction of democracy' etc, all the better to preserve the position of the bureaucracy as a whole.

In turn Liu Shaoqi leaned on a section of the workers, utilising their discontent and demands for better conditions which provoked the formation by Mao Zedong of the 'Red Rebels' (the 'Red Guard's' adult counterparts) and vicious denunciations of the 'outrage', 'economism.' In this is revealed the substance of the 'Cultural Revolution.' With sugar-coated words Mao Zedong and the bureaucracy are willing to use the working class and the peasantry in the intra-bureaucratic struggle, but let them once advance even their own limited economic demands and this is 'sabotage' and is attacked as the 'vile road of economic struggle.' (*The Times* 19 January 1967).

Similarly with the question of democracy. While Mao Zedong conjures up the vision of the Paris Commune and tells the workers that the 'state is now their own.' It is conveniently forgotten that even the organisation of the bureaucracy itself, the 'Communist' Party, has held only two Central Committee meetings in four years while the Congresses have been convened only twice also since 1949! What hope then is there for the masses to have a say in deciding their own fate under the present regime?

Stalinist Purge

The only reason why the present purge has not resulted in the bloodbath of the Stalin era, is precisely because Stalin was forced to decimate the section of the bureaucracy who still had links with the October Revolution, eg Zinoviev, Kamenev etc. who despite their desertion of Marxism and Bolshevism, on the first day of revolt against the stranglehold of the bureaucracy, would nevertheless become a catalyst for any opposition.

In China there has been no 'October' in the sense of the working class holding *direct* political power. Another factor is the balance of world forces which is decisively in favour of the working class unlike in the period pre-war.

Socialist Democracy

The present massive rallies in Peking and elsewhere are *not* socialist democracy. On the contrary, as Leon Trotsky pointed out some thirty years ago, 'the democratic ritual of Bonapartism is the plebiscite. From time to time the question is presented to the citizens: *for or against the leader*.'

Genuine socialist democracy means the democrat control and management of the economy and the state by the working class and the people themselves. It means elected delegates subject to recall and with a clearly defined maximum wage, an armed people instead of the standing army, the right of all working class tendencies which accept the nationalised property to be represented in the workers councils, and all the factors which make for real *soviet* power.

None of these exist in China at present time. Hence the convulsions, contradictions and mismanagement of the economy by the bureaucracy. Just as much as worker's political parties need oxygen in the form of democracy, so too, does a nationalised and planned economy. Without is the body ceases to function properly. With the cancer of a bloated and privileged elite battening itself on the necks of the Chinese people the upheavals involved in the Cultural Revolution will be perpetrated and even increased. The current campaign can only lead to another adventure in agriculture and the economy in the futile attempt to sol problems. There is no final solution so long as the bureaucracy maintains its stranglehold. For while it is possible for the Chinese economy to develop despite the blight of the bureaucracy, far from the social antagonisms disappearing they will grow apace with the growth of the economy itself, so long as the present regime exists.

Deng's Rise to Power

The Cultural Revolution began essentially as a purge launched by Mao against top leaders like Liu Shaoqi, Deng Xiaoping, and the group which dominated the apparatus at that time. They had excluded Mao from direct power after the failure of his "Great Leap Forward" (1958-60). The personal bonapartist power of Mao was no longer compatible with the interests of a consolidated mature bureaucracy.

But when Mao mobilised students, peasant youth, and the unemployed into the Red Guards under radical "anti-bureaucratic" slogans, he undammed a seething reservoir of discontent.

All the factions in the leadership tried to manipulate the rebellious youth for their own ends. But once in action, the radicalised youth went far beyond Mao's aim of dislodging his rivals. The spontaneous but politically crude movement exposed the privileges and corruption of the bureaucracy.

Red guards who hauled bureaucrats out of their houses found valuable antiques, luxurious gardens, servants' quarters, expensive imported clothes, perfumes and liqueurs, and other luxuries. Later, when the radical leaders associated with the "Gang of Four" were toppled, they were found to enjoy a similar lifestyle, far removed from the conditions of the vast majority.

However, the Red Guards' demand for a democratic control from below threatened the very existence of the bureaucracy.

Mao himself was forced to dam the tide. Compromising with his rivals, Mao gave his authority to the use of the army and the militia to subdue the Red Guard. In many regions, factional clashes led to violent, armed conflicts, and tens of thousands, possibly millions, perished in the bloody suppression of the movement.

In the period after the Cultural Revolution, up until Deng's new supremacy, the party leadership rested with an unstable coalition of factions, with Zhou Enlai as a key balancing figure. Economic policy oscillated between reform, emphasising modernisation, imported technology, incentives to managers and entrepreneurs, and return to tighter controls over the economy and the state machine exercised from above by the top leadership in Beijing.

However, the leadership was still dominated by a struggle for control of the apparatus between the "radical leftist" newcomers, who had gained positions during the Cultural Revolution, and the "old guard" bureaucrats. Step by step, the old guard around Zhou Enlai and Deng reconquered control.

by Lynn Walsh

Lin Biao was ousted in 1971. After Mao's death in 1976, the "leftist" Gang of Four around Mao's widow, Jiang Qing, were put on trial and given life sentences. There was not a murmur of mass protest, which belied their claims to mass support after the Cultural Revolution.

After a transitional period under the "compromise" leader, Hua Guofeng, Deng restored the grip of the old guard bureaucrats.

In his struggle for control, Deng with great caution, used a similar tactic to Mao. Beginning with the Tiananmen incident in 1977, when tens of thousands commemorated the first anniversary of Zhou Enlai's death, Deng encouraged mass pressure on his rivals. This led to the so-called "democratic movement", partly orchestrated by the Deng faction, but also spontaneously expressing the real grievances of young workers, uprooted youth from the countryside, and unemployed school leavers.

The movement involved very mixed social forces, with largely inchoate demands. There was support for the stability and prosperity apparently promised by Deng's reform policy. But to Deng's "four (economic) modernisations" the movement added a "fifth modernisation", democracy. Some of those involved undoubtedly raised liberal capitalist ideas, but others were groping towards the idea of socialist democracy.

Though falling far short of a clear programme for the overthrow of the bureaucracy and the establishment of workers' democracy, some of the currents posed an unmistakable threat to the bureaucracy. Predictably, having used the protest movement for his own purposes, Deng moved to suppress it, jailing some of its leading figures and banning its publications.

Such expressions of mass protest, for all their limitations, are a significant pointer for the future, when a new generation based on a strengthened working class and a much higher level of culture, will challenge China's ruling bureaucracy. Closer ties with the world market, moveover, will mean that movements of the working class internationally will have far more effect on China in the future.

For the time being the Deng leadership is in the ascendant. But those enthusiastic commentators in the queen's entourage who are hailing Deng as a man with original solutions forget that the 82-year-old veteran is starting once again from where his old boss, Liu Shaoqi, left off before the Cultural Revolution, applying similar reforms to present-day conditions.

Deng does not represent a fundamentally new stage of the Chinese revolution—merely a new episode in the career of the bureaucracy, although one which will have many repercussions for China's proletariat.

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FOR CHINESE names the article follows the People's Republic's official *pinyin* system of romanisation, now in current use, rather than the old system traditionally used in Britain: Beijing (Peking), Mao Zedong (Mao Tse-tung), Zhou Enlai (Chou En-lai), Lin Biao (Lin Piao), Liu Shaoqi (Liu Shao-ch'i), Jiang Qing (Chiang Ch'ing—"Madame Mao"), Deng Xiaoping (Teng Hsiao-p'ing), Hua Guofeng (Hua Kuo-feng), Tiananmen Square (T'ien An Men), etc.

Glossary

Bolsheviks—Revolutionary wing of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party, organised in opposition to the Mensheviks, or reformist wing. The Bolsheviks became a separate party only in 1912. Under the guidance of Lenin and Trotsky, the Bolsheviks led the working class in taking power in October 1917.

Bonapartism—Term used by Marxists for a dictatorial regime which balances between the contending classes, while raising itself above society as a whole. The term derives from the example of Napoleon Bonaparte's dictatorship in France in 1799.

In the last analysis, in the modern world, a Bonapartist regime must defend one or other of two systems of property and economic order. Either it defends private property, which is the basis of capitalism, or it defends state ownership of the means of production, which is the basis of a planned economy.

In the first case, we call it 'Bourgeois Bonapartism'. In the second case, we call it 'Proletarian Bonapartism', because its economic foundation is the system of property historically appropriate to the rule of the working class.

But just as a Bourgeois Bonapartist regime is not *directly* a government *of* the capitalists, neither is a Proletarian Bonapartist regime one in which the workers rule.

Comintern—Communist (Third) International, formed in 1919 under the leadership of Lenin and Trotsky as a new centre for the revolutionary working-class struggle internationally in place of the discredited Second International which had collapsed in 1914. Following the Stalinist counter-revolution in the USSR, the Comintern itself degenerated, becoming a tool of the Russian bureaucracy, until it was officially dissolved in 1943.

Kuomintang—Literally "People's Party", this was the Chinese nationalist organisation founded in 1911 by Sun Yat Sen. It looked for support to the peasantry, urban middle class and workers, but its leadership was in bourgeois hands.

In the Chinese revolution of 1925-27, the Kuomintang, headed by Chiang Kai-shek, played the main counter-revolutionary role as butcher of the working class.

After the eventual defeat of the Kuomintang by the Chinese Red Army in 1949, Chiang Kai-shek took refuge on the island of Formosa (Taiwan), where he established his dictatorship under the protection of American imperialism—and where his successors rule to this day.

Soviets—Elected councils of workers' delegates from the factories and districts. First created on the initiative of organised workers in Petrograd (now Leningrad) during the Russian revolution of 1905, the soviets provided a non-party representative body which could readily gain authority in the eyes of the masses, and serve as instruments of working-class power.

Soviets sprang up again at the outset of the Russian revolution of 1917, when the Tsar was overthrown. During the course of this revolution, the Bolsheviks won a majority in the key soviets and, in October, led the working class in the struggle to take power on the slogan "All Power to the Soviets!"

Although the name 'Soviet Union' is still used to describe Russia, in fact all vestiges of soviet power have been eliminated as a result of the Stalinist counter-revolution.

Stalinism—Term to describe the social phenomenon of (and the policies pursued by) a ruling bureaucracy which establishes itself on the basis of state ownership of the means of production. (See explanation of Proletarian Bonapartism above.)

The first historical example of this was the rise of the bureaucracy in Russia, notably from 1923 onwards, when the exhausted working class had been unable to sustain its hold on state power and the revolution degenerated.

The head of the bureaucratic counter-revolution was Stalin, who eventually became an absolute dictator. Hence the term "Stalinism".

Sun Yat-sen (1867-1925)—Chinese bourgeois-nationalist leader, founder of the Kuomintang in 1894, and President of the Chinese Republic following the revolution of 1911.

Trotsky—Born 1879. Together with Lenin, leader of the Russian Revolution of October 1917; organiser of the Red Army and its leader in the civil war and the successful defence of the country against 21 invading armies of imperialism.

Trotsky was deposed from the Soviet leadership after Lenin's death, in the course of the bureaucratic counter-revolution which set in. The leader of the Bolshevik Left Opposition against Stalinism, he was expelled from the Communist Party and banished to a remote rural area in 1928; then deported from the Soviet Union in 1929; and eventually murdered by an agent of Stalin, in Mexico, in 1940.

Chiang Kai-shek (1882-1975)—leader of the Kuomintang from 1926, defeated by Mao Tse-tung's Red Army in 1949 and expelled to the island of Taiwan with the remnants of his Nationalist regime.

Mao Zedong – A founder member of the Chinese Communist Party. Chairman of Kiangsi 'soviet', 1931. Leader of the Red Army during the 'Long March', elected leader of the CCP in 1935, and Chairman of the Chinese government 1949–76.

Chen Tu-hsiu – Editor of *Hsin Ch'ing Nien* (New Youth), radical journal in 1910. Contacted the Communist International in 1919. Called the founding conference of the CCP in Shanghai, 1921. Central Committee member from inception of the CCP. Leader of the 'proletarian' wing of the CCP, he was its chief theoretician 1921–27.

Chu-teh – Joined CCP while a student in Germany in the 1920s, leader of unsuccesful Kiangsi insurrection in 1927. Commander of 4th Red Army 1928–54, a close collegue of Mao.

Li Li-san – Founder member of CCP in France with Chou En-lai in 1922. Critic of Mao's pro-peasant position. The effective leader of the CCP 1929-31, then removed from the politbureau and sent to Moscow where he remained until installed as Manchurian premier by Stalin in 1945.

Chou En-lai – Joined CCP in France. In 1924 was political instructor at Whampoa Military Academy (under Chiang Kai-shek). Secretary Canton CP. Led the abortive 1927 Shanghai general strike. political commissar to the Red Army 1932, prime minister 1949-76.

Lin Biao – Trained by Chiang Kai-shek in Whampoa military academy. Colonel in KMT army. Led troops to join Red Army in Nanchuang in 1931. Commander 1st Red Army. Played a leading role in the defeat of the KMT in 1949. Defence minister 1959, 1969 CCP vice–chairman. Killed in a mysterious plane crash in 1971 after alleged coup attempt.

Deng Xiaoping – Chairman of CCP 1980-89. Dismissed in Cultural revolution, rehabilitated 1973. Dismissed again 1967, reinstated on Mao's death.

Manchu Dynasty—imperial house that ruled China from 1644 to 1911.

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