

The New Situation in China—By Max Shachtman

THE split in the ranks of the national revolutionary movement of China caused by the treacherous defection of General Chiang Kai-Shek and some of his forces has created a new situation in China, not so much because of the act of Chiang himself but because his action was the expression of a very significant phase of the revolution.

The elements of the split of Chiang were contained in the very composition and character of the nationalist revolution, and cannot therefore be looked upon as a simple "palace revolution," a coup d'état of a "strong" individual. Chiang is, and was, the expression of the young, relatively small bourgeoisie of China which felt itself more and more closely pinched between the pressure from the working class and peasantry (chiefly the first) of China, and the pressure of the foreign imperialists.

The former, coming constantly more to the fore in the revolutionary movement, pressed forward for recognition as the driving force and dominant element in the revolution, the element which would give the movement solidity, determination and a stable basis. The workers demanded recognition of the labor unions, the right to strike (not only against the foreign capitalists but also, when necessary, against the native bourgeoisie), and social legislation. The peasantry, who were being drawn in ever greater numbers into the general revolutionary struggle, pushed to the foreground the problem of the agrarian revolution.

Bourgeoisie Deserts to Imperialists

On the other side, one section of the foreign imperialists were pressing forward for intervention and

another section inclined toward the recognition of one phase of the revolution, the formation of a "democratic republic" and co-operation with the native bourgeoisie against the workers and peasants for a systematic exploitation of the resources and working class of the vast country with the initiative and control of the tremendous financial strength of nations like the United States.

Fearful of the growing strength of the working class in the Chinese revolution, a section of the Chinese bourgeoisie plunged from the main stream of the movement and, with the treachery of Chiang Kai-Shek and his attempts to set up an independent government at Nanking, laid the basis for co-operation with the foreign imperialists for the stemming of the revolutionary flood. It was an act of desperation. The future development of the Chinese revolution was reflected for the Chinese bourgeoisie in the growth of the militancy and firmness of the workers, who were arming themselves, largely under the influence of the trade unions, and who had already done more for the direct capture of Shanghai than the armies of Chiang Kai-Shek. The workers were disarmed, the trade unions driven underground, the revolutionary leaders executed or imprisoned. If Chiang did not need to learn military strategy from the reactionary bandit generals like Chang Tso Lin, he did learn from them a virulent hatred and distrust of the masses and a handish cruelty to their leaders.

Revolution Dominated by Tollers

The situation in China has become more clarified to a certain ex-

tent. Hankow remains the center of the historical revolutionary movement in China, basing itself more and more upon the masses, particularly upon the workers, who are drawn in increasing numbers into the revolution. Nanking is trying to become the center of the young, vacillating bourgeoisie who yesterday thought to use the workers in the struggle against feudalism and for independence from the imperialists, and who today are consumed with fear at the growing independence and strength of the young giant of labor who not only marches forward with the peasants, but who is able still to maintain a united front with large sections of the petty bourgeoisie who must acknowledge that only the firm hand of the working masses can guide the victorious and consistent war against the foreign imperialists.

The division in the Chinese nationalist forces is not yet complete by any means. Many of the elements under the control of Chiang, especially in the army (many of the battalions of which Chiang has been forced to disarm because of their condemnation of the road he was traveling), will soon be won back to Hankow. In addition, the revolutionary Kuomintang, centered in Hankow, will not artificially lop off the bourgeois elements that still support it because of its uncompromising fight against the imperialists. It will even win back some of the petty bourgeois elements that have gone with Chiang when these elements find that Chiang is marching on the road towards co-operation with the imperialists or is becoming one of the many cheap militarists with which China is abundantly cursed.

But the split in the nationalist forces has done this:

It has definitely changed the relation of forces so that the workers, and in ever increasing numbers the peasants, instead of, as previously, the bourgeoisie, are now at the head of the revolutionary movement.

It has settled finally the question of whose interests will have the dominating position in the revolutionary movement, of who will coordinate its forces, who will drive it forward relentlessly beyond the stage of a bourgeois revolution and toward socialism.

Present Situation and Prospects

The betrayal by Chiang Kai-Shek has been far from fatal. The forces of Hankow have quickly recovered from the confusion created, and their armies are in full march on Peking. The armies of the Kuo Min Tang general, Feng Yu-hsiang, have already taken Chengchow in their march from the West, while the main Hankow army, marching up from the South have already (as this is written), taken Siping, with every prospect of taking Kai-feng, and joining at a right angle with the armies under Feng at Chengchow for a joint march on Peking, the stronghold of Chang Tso-Lin.

In the meantime, the great offensive against Hankow of which Chiang Kai-Shek has boasted so much since his renegacy, has not materialized. The international bourgeois press must content itself with daily despatches about the fall of Hankow which are just as true as the daily despatches years ago which told of the fall of Moscow.

(Continued on page 7)

Situation in China

(Continued from page 6)

and Petrograd and the defeat of the Bolsheviks.

What is far more likely to happen after the capture of Peking by the Hankow forces, is a southward march by them on Nanking and Shanghai, which Chiang Kai Shek will not be able to withstand as easily as he does the march of Chang Tso Lin. Such a series of victories, which would virtually establish the hegemony of the revolutionary forces over the greatest part of China, are not fantastic hopes; they are quite likely to be realized within the year, for the forces of Hankow march with the banner of the revolutionary people and are welcomed by them wherever they come, while Chiang Kai Shek marches with the yellow banner of the renegade and counter-revolutionary, streaked with the blood of the workers he has murdered.