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**NOTES ON TEN YEARS  
OF CIVIL WAR**

**(1927-1936)**

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## PUBLISHER'S NOTE

*Notes on Ten Years of Civil War (1927-1936)* by Chen Po-ta shows how Mao Tse-tung used the theory of Marxism-Leninism to solve the key problems of the Chinese revolution during the Second Revolutionary Civil War (1927-1936).

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## I

### COUNTER-REVOLUTIONARY REGIMES MAY CHANGE, BUT THE REVOLUTIONARY FLAME CANNOT BE EXTINGUISHED

The Chinese revolution of 1924-27 shook the whole world. But it ended in a failure as a result of the betrayal by the Kuomintang clique headed by Chiang Kai-shek and Wang Ching-wei and the capitulationism of Chen Tu-hsiu.<sup>1</sup>

In December 1927, Comrade Stalin made an appraisal of the achievements of this revolution and predicted the inevitability of a new revolutionary upsurge as follows:

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<sup>1</sup> During the last period of the First Revolutionary Civil War (1924-27), the Right opportunism represented in the Communist Party of China by Chen Tu-hsiu developed into a capitulationist line. While co-operating with the Kuomintang, the Right opportunists relinquished the Party's leadership among the peasant masses, among the urban petty bourgeoisie and the middle bourgeoisie and especially among the armed forces, thus causing the defeat of the revolution in the First Revolutionary Civil War. At an emergency conference of the Central Committee held in August 1927, Chen Tu-hsiu was removed from his post as general secretary of the Party. Later, he was expelled from the Party for taking a counter-revolutionary stand by joining the trotskyites.

Great popular revolutions never achieve victory in the first round of battles. They grow and gain strength in the flow and ebb of their tides. This has been the case everywhere, including Russia. So will it be in China.

The most important result of the Chinese revolution is the fact that it has awakened from their age-long slumber and has set in motion hundreds of millions of exploited and oppressed people, has utterly exposed the counter-revolutionary character of the militarist cliques, has torn the mask from the faces of the Kuomintang servitors of counter-revolution, has raised the prestige of the Communist Party among the masses of the common people, has raised the movement as a whole to a higher stage and has roused new hopes in the hearts of the millions of the oppressed classes in India, Indonesia, etc. Only the blind and the faint-hearted can doubt that the Chinese workers and peasants are moving towards a new revolutionary upswing.<sup>1</sup>

Comrade Stalin's scientific judgment and brilliant foresight have been completely borne out by history. Applying the theories of Marxism-Leninism and developing the teachings of Lenin and Stalin concerning the revolution in the colonial and semi-colonial countries, Comrade Mao Tse-tung has taught all members of the Party how to lead the Chinese revolution out of

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<sup>1</sup> *Political Report of the Central Committee to the Fifteenth Congress of the C.P.S.U.(B.)*, Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, pp. 22-23.

the most difficult situations and onto a new path of advance.

During the last hundred years, repeated changes have occurred in the revolution and counter-revolution in China. In 1927 the revolution was betrayed by one Kuomintang leader after another. This was an upheaval on the biggest scale which precipitated an unprecedentedly confused and complicated situation in the realignment of class relations.

The Kuomintang leaders and their accomplices massacred revolutionary workers and peasants as well as revolutionary intellectuals; they replaced the old northern warlords' rule<sup>1</sup> with their own. But after all, what class (or classes) did they represent? Was there any difference between them and the northern warlords? If there was any difference, was it one in substance or in form? If it was in substance, was it complete or partial? Our Party had to answer these basic questions before it formulated its policies. Moreover, the correct answers to these questions would smash all the non-sensical arguments of the counter-revolutionaries (including the trotskyite Chen Tu-hsiu and his followers). Comrade Mao Tse-tung answered these questions at the Second Party Congress of the Hunan-Kiangsi Border Area in October 1928:

The present regime of the new Kuomintang

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<sup>1</sup> The militarists who usurped power and represented the interests of the feudal-comprador class in China from the time Yuan Shih-kai's regime fell to the time the Kuomintang warlord rule was established.



warlords is still a regime of the comprador class in the cities and the landed gentry in the countryside, a regime which has in foreign affairs capitulated to imperialism and at home replaced old warlords with new ones, and has subjected the working class and peasantry to an economic exploitation and a political oppression even more ruthless than before. The bourgeois-democratic revolution which started from Kwangtung was only halfway through when the comprador class and the landed gentry usurped its leadership and immediately switched it on to the road of counter-revolution; throughout the country the workers, the peasantry, other sections of the common people, and even the bourgeoisie (here, Comrade Mao Tse-tung refers to the national bourgeoisie—*author*) have remained under the counter-revolutionary rule and obtained not the least particle of political or economic liberation.<sup>1</sup>

Comrade Mao Tse-tung described the Kuomintang regime as a regime of the new warlords. In other words, it was a counter-revolutionary military dictatorship. The rule of the northern warlords had also been a counter-revolutionary military dictatorship, but the Kuomintang regime was a new counter-revolutionary military dictatorship. It was new because it was headed by the new type of Kuomintang warlords and not by the old

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<sup>1</sup> "Why Can China's Red Political Power Exist?", *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung*, Eng. ed., Vol. I, p. 63.

type of northern warlords. What then were the differences between the new and old types of warlords?

Prior to the actual establishment of a counter-revolutionary military dictatorship, the new type of warlords had to a certain extent participated in the revolution and had at one time fought under the revolutionary banner against the old warlords. Consequently, they had some influence with the masses, which the warlords of the old type did not have. Although this influence began to vanish soon after they had become counter-revolutionaries, still, for a certain period in their counter-revolutionary activities they were able to use it to deceive the people in order to reinforce their regime of naked military terrorism.

The greatest difference between the new and old types of warlords lay, however, in the fact that the former had a centralized organization in the form of a political party as well as various subsidiary organizations to assist them in their counter-revolutionary activities. This political party had once been a revolutionary party and had also once been a revolutionary alliance of various classes. The new warlords, however, usurped the leadership of the party and carried out their counter-revolutionary activities in its name, thus turning it into a counter-revolutionary political party. The warlords of the old type did not have such a political party and therefore were rather at a disadvantage as compared with the new warlords.

The regime of the new warlords represented certain definite social classes. According to Comrade Mao Tse-tung, it was "still a regime of the comprador class

in the cities and the landed gentry in the countryside.” By “still” is meant that basically the classes represented by the new type of warlords were the same as those represented by the old. But with the impact of the great revolution, the big compradors and big landlords could no longer maintain their old type of rule; they needed a new one. The counter-revolutionary *coup d’etat* of April 12, 1927<sup>1</sup> was their initial move to establish this new type of rule, with the imperialists actually issuing orders behind the scenes. Some representatives of the national bourgeoisie who opposed the people joined the counter-revolution and became the representatives of the comprador bourgeoisie, having by then become comprador bourgeoisie themselves.

The regime of the new warlords was a new counter-revolutionary military dictatorship of the big compradors and big landlords. It was formed with the Shanghai, or the “Kiangsu-Chekiang,” gangster ring of comprador-financiers as its core. It was at that time that the Shanghai gangster leaders appeared on the political stage and became “important figures in the party and government” directing the nation’s political and financial affairs. Compradors, gangsters, warlords and party roughs interchanged positions in finance and politics and combined to form an incongruous comprador-gangster administration. Such was the peculiar

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<sup>1</sup> April 12, 1927 was the day the Kuomintang reactionaries, headed by Chiang Kai-shek and instigated by the imperialists, staged a counter-revolutionary *coup d’etat*, followed by the massacring of a large number of Communists, revolutionary intellectuals and workers in Shanghai.

type of political regime which emerged in semi-colonial and semi-feudal China after the failure of the revolution in 1927.

For some time after the establishment of the new dictatorship, some of the new representatives of the big compradors and big landlords who had once represented the national bourgeoisie, were able to hoodwink the people. Moreover, favours were liberally bestowed upon a few persons who had well-known connections with the national bourgeoisie or its political representatives. For the sake of appearances, they were given dummy posts in the government. This was a reward given to the national bourgeoisie for its part in the counter-revolution. But it was not long before these puppets were kicked out.

Since the counter-revolutionary dictatorship emerged on the political stage as a result of the machinations of the imperialists, it was inevitable that it should capitulate to imperialism. The imperialists, for instance, bombarded Nanking<sup>1</sup> and in return they received an apology, kowtows and indemnity from Chiang Kai-shek's Nanking government. When the Japanese imperialists massacred the people of Tsinan,<sup>2</sup> they met

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<sup>1</sup> On March 24, 1927, when the Northern Expeditionary Army occupied Nanking, the U.S., British, Japanese, French and Italian imperialists directly intervened. The warships of these imperialist powers, anchored off Nanking, were ordered to bombard the city, with the result that more than two thousand Chinese soldiers and civilians were killed and wounded.

<sup>2</sup> In 1928, supported by Anglo-American imperialism, Chiang Kai-shek advanced with his armed forces into North China. To

with no resistance; on the contrary, Chiang Kai-shek's government issued a special decree ordering the protection of Japanese nationals in China. Making use of the new warlord regime, the imperialists not only returned to power and reinstated themselves in the positions they had enjoyed before the great revolution, but even began to plan new adventures. It was not long after that there occurred the September 18 Incident (1931)<sup>1</sup> which led to the occupation of the Northeast by the Japanese imperialists.

Such a dictatorship — a new counter-revolutionary military dictatorship—was not, of course, “a victory for the bourgeoisie” as the trotskyite Chen Tu-hsiu clique claimed. It only served to protect the interests of foreign imperialism, and those of the compradors in the cities and the landed gentry (landlords) in the countryside. The freedom and democratic rights which the workers, peasants and urban petty bourgeoisie had struggled for and won during the revolutionary period of 1924-27 were destroyed, and they were gradually deprived of their hard-won economic gains. The national

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check the spreading of Anglo-American influence northward, Japanese imperialism dispatched an expeditionary force to occupy Tsinan, capital of Shantung Province, thereby cutting off the Tientsin-Pukow Railway. On May 3, the Japanese invaders massacred a large number of Chinese in Tsinan.

<sup>1</sup> On September 18, 1931, Shenyang (Mukden) was seized by the Japanese “Kwantung” army stationed in China's Northeast. On Chiang Kai-shek's order of “absolute non-resistance,” the Chinese Northeastern Army in Shenyang and elsewhere withdrew to the south of the Great Wall. This enabled Japanese troops rapidly to occupy the Northeastern provinces.

bourgeoisie failed to attain the political status and win the economic rights to which they were aspiring.

This process is best explained by citing concrete facts. Let us first see the condition of the working class after the failure of the revolution in 1927.

The preface to the *Chinese Labour Yearbook*, edited and compiled by the Peiping Institute of Social Research which was headed by liberal bourgeois scholars, had the following to say about the condition of the working class during the four years from 1928 to 1931:

These four years may be considered as a period in which Chinese labour fell completely under the domination and control of the Kuomintang. The dissolution on April 12, 1927, of the Shanghai Federation of Trade Unions marked the beginning of this period.

. . . Generally speaking, these four years of Kuomintang rule do not appear to have produced any positive effect on Chinese labour (the author meant that it had not helped the workers—*translator*). . . . The initiative of the workers has been trampled upon. Trade unions not recognized by the Kuomintang have been either dissolved or re-organized. Government-managed trade unions naturally have no vitality. . . . Those in leading positions have only selfish designs . . . they have thus become harmful parasites . . . cleavages within the Kuomintang not infrequently give rise to conflicts in the party-controlled trade unions. In short, it may be said that the labour movement in China in

these four years has fallen into a state of inactivity. . . . There is no denying that open trade union activities have been greatly restricted and interfered with.

Of course, the passages quoted above are couched in moderate terms. Nevertheless, they bring out the glaring difference in the position of the working class under the rule of the new Kuomintang warlords and prior to the Kuomintang's counter-revolutionary "purge."<sup>1</sup>

In his *Problem of the Chinese Trade Union Movement* written in 1930, Comrade Chu Chiu-pai<sup>2</sup> gave the following brief account of the workers' wages during and after the great revolution:

Since the dissolution of the Shanghai Federa-

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<sup>1</sup> In April 1927, the Kuomintang headed by Chiang Kai-shek betrayed the revolution and perpetrated massacres throughout the country of Communists and patriots within the Kuomintang who supported the revolutionary policy of Sun Yat-sen. The Kuomintang called this a "purge."

<sup>2</sup> Veteran member and leader of the Communist Party of China. From the autumn of 1927 to the summer of 1928, he served as secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China. After 1931, he co-operated with Lu Hsun in carrying on a revolutionary cultural movement in Shanghai. In 1933, he went to the Red base area in Kiangsi and served as commissioner of people's education of the Workers' and Peasants' Democratic Central Government. When the Red Army started on its long march, he remained in Kiangsi to carry on his work. In March 1935, he was captured by a Chiang Kai-shek gang in the guerilla area in Fukien Province and died a martyr's death in Changting, Fukien, on June 18.

tion of Trade Unions (after the "April 12" *coup d'état*), the wages of Shanghai workers have been cut, particularly in the textile industry. Less than 20 per cent of the working people of Wuhan (*e.g.*, bank staff members) continued to receive the same wages as during the so-called "Communist Period" while over 80 per cent received cuts. After the Canton uprising,<sup>1</sup> the capitalist owners of various enterprises in that city enforced a reduction of wages. For instance, the wages of workers in the oil industry were reduced three times in succession.<sup>2</sup>

Such were the impact on the working class of the rule of the new Kuomintang warlords. Let us now see the condition in which the peasants found themselves under the Kuomintang warlord regime.

I am not going to dwell upon the ruthlessness with which the new Kuomintang warlords attacked the peasant revolution. They consolidated their rule gradually in the course of an unprecedentedly brutal campaign against the workers, peasants and revolutionary intellectuals. I am only going to make a comparison of the conditions in the countryside under the rule of the new Kuomintang warlords with those under the

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<sup>1</sup> On December 11, 1927, the workers and revolutionary soldiers in Canton jointly staged an uprising and set up people's political power. They fought bitterly against the counter-revolutionary troops directly supported by imperialism, and failed only because the disparity in strength was too great.

<sup>2</sup> *The Bolshevik*, Vol. III, Nos. 2-3, p. 113.



rule of the old warlords. The land surtax gives a good example for comparison. The following figures for 1927 and 1928 are taken from *Report on Investigations into Land Surtax*:

Liyang County, Kiangsu Province:	1927	1928
Tax . . . . .	9.10 <i>yuan</i>	9.10 <i>yuan</i>
Surtax . . . . .	9.675 <i>yuan</i>	9.911 <i>yuan</i>
Ihsing County, Kiangsu Province:		
Tax . . . . .	6.00 <i>yuan</i>	6.00 <i>yuan</i>
Surtax . . . . .	3.646 <i>yuan</i>	14.79 <i>yuan</i>
Nantung County, Kiangsu Province:		
Tax . . . . .	3.85 <i>yuan</i>	4.10 <i>yuan</i>
Surtax . . . . .	5.896 <i>yuan</i>	11.103 <i>yuan</i>
Chinhua County, Chekiang Province:		
Tax (first harvest) . . . . .	1.80 <i>yuan</i>	1.80 <i>yuan</i>
Surtax (first harvest) . . . . .	1.124 <i>yuan</i>	1.454 <i>yuan</i>
Sungyang County, Chekiang Province:		
Tax . . . . .	5.10 <i>yuan</i>	5.10 <i>yuan</i>
Surtax . . . . .	4.092 <i>yuan</i>	4.194 <i>yuan</i>

The 1927 and 1928 figures have been taken because these two years represent the dividing line between the rule of the old warlords and that of the new. The figures given above fully bear out the fact that the oppression by reactionary rule and the burden borne by the peasants both increased during the rule of the new warlords.

In short, the peasants suffered more than ever in the areas under Kuomintang rule. The figures given above relate to the first years of the new Kuomintang warlord regime. Thereafter, the figures rose year by year. For example, by 1933, surtax in Nantung County