

THE MAIN TASK OF THE LABOUR MOVEMENT IN CHINA TODAY

August 3-4, 1948

The Sixth All-China Labour Congress³⁵⁵ has set forth the main task of the labour movement in China today. What is that task? It is to overthrow the rule of the U.S. imperialists and their lackeys, the Kuomintang reactionaries, and establish a new-democratic people's republic. On other words, it is to overthrow the Kuomintang reactionaries and the old counter-revolutionary government and set up a new revolutionary government. That is the supreme task the Chinese working class is faced with at the present stage. Workers in both the liberated areas and the areas under Kuomintang rule should strive to accomplish it. The comrades present here are representatives of the workers and serve their interests. We should therefore discuss this main task carefully and publicize it among workers throughout the country, so that every one of them will understand that to overthrow Chiang Kai-shek and build a new China is of vital importance to the fundamental interests of the working class and of all our people.

When we put forward the main task of the working class, does that mean we are going to ignore the problems workers face in their daily lives—for example, in the Kuomintang areas, the problem of long hours and low wages, or the fact that workers are not free to organize trade unions? The answer is, no. We shall concern ourselves with and help to solve all the problems relating to the vital interests of the workers. But unless we accomplish the main task, it will be impossible to solve those problems completely, and even if some can be partially solved, the results will not last long. The workers in the Kuomintang areas are still leading a hard life, suffering from exploitation and oppression and being denied freedom. The workers in the liberated areas have obtained democracy, but their standard of living is still very low. Why?

Excerpt from a report to the Sixth All-China Labour Congress. On October 10, 1948, Comrade Chen Yun was elected chairman of the All-China Federation of Trade Unions, at the First Plenary Session of its Sixth Executive Committee.

In the final analysis, it is because of exploitation and oppression by the U.S. imperialists and their tools, the Kuomintang reactionaries. Unless we overthrow them, our workers will have no way out.

The only solution is to overthrow the Kuomintang. That is the conclusion to be drawn from history. We have been struggling against the Kuomintang for more than 20 years, ever since 1927. I want to say something about historical facts. During the period of the Great Revolution²⁰³ I was in Shanghai and took part in the three armed uprisings against the northern warlords.³⁵¹ At the time, we workers supported the National Revolutionary Army, and the trade unions sent representatives to Xinlonghua to meet the Kuomintang. But after the troops arrived in Shanghai, they perpetrated the April 12th Massacre³⁵⁶ and then went on to wage civil war for 10 years, "encircling and suppressing" the Soviet areas¹⁹ with hundreds of thousands of troops and ruthlessly murdering Communists and revolutionary workers in the White areas.³⁷ During the period when the Japanese imperialists occupied northeast China and were attacking north China, the policy proposed by the Communist Party was to stop the civil war and unite to fight Japan, while Chiang Kai-shek adhered to the reactionary policy of pacifying the country internally before resisting foreign aggression. The result was the Xi'an Incident in which Chiang was arrested.³⁵⁷ Holding the survival of the Chinese nation to be of paramount importance, the Communist Party urged that he be set free if he promised to fight against Japan. But during the eight years of the anti-Japanese war he was very passive in fighting Japan while very active in fighting the Communist Party and the people. After the war Chairman Mao went to Chongqing to negotiate with him, and the Kuomintang and the Communist Party signed the Agreement of October 10.³⁵⁸ But Chiang played his old trick again, going back on his word and working hand in glove with the U.S. imperialists to launch a full-scale civil war in an attempt to wipe out all the revolutionary forces at one stroke. In the Kuomintang areas he ruthlessly oppressed the people, who were demanding food, peace, democracy and freedom. He had newspapers closed down and many people including workers, Communists and leading democrats arrested, beaten or killed. Comrade Zhu Xuefan, who is present here today, was one of the victims.³⁵⁹ What is most abominable is that Chiang Kai-shek, ignoring the fact that the Japanese had been attacking China for more than eight years, recently employed Yasuji Okamura,³⁶⁰ former Commander-in-chief of the Japanese Expeditionary Forces in China and the arch-criminal among all war criminals in the Japanese forces, as his secret military advisor to help him in the civil war. What Chiang Kai-shek's Kuomintang has done over the past 20 years shows that we shall meet disaster unless we defeat it.

Therefore, to overthrow the rule of the U.S. imperialists and their lackeys, the Kuomintang reactionaries, and build a new-democratic people's republic is the task of prime importance for us. All problems relating to workers' wages and hours or their freedom to organize trade unions are secondary in comparison. When we have brought the reactionary rule of the Kuomintang to an end—that is, when we have solved this major problem—the secondary ones will be easier to solve.

Right now the working class is struggling for New Democracy; when that is obtained, it will proceed to build socialism. Democracy is good, but socialism is better, because socialism will mean abolition of the exploitation of man by man, the rapid development of the productive forces and greater prosperity for the whole Chinese people. But before trying to build socialism, we must struggle for New Democracy. We cannot embark on socialist revolution before we accomplish the new-democratic revolution. China's new-democratic revolution is led by the proletariat through its vanguard, the Communist Party. Overthrowing Chiang Kai-shek will enable us to control the lifeline of the national economy and develop a co-operative economy among the labouring people, so that we can start the transition from the new-democratic revolution to socialist revolution. The more successful our working class is and the greater contributions it makes, fighting bravely and fearing no sacrifice, the better it will serve as the leading class and the sooner China will achieve socialism.

The great victory we have won is without precedent in the last few decades. According to the New China News Agency, we have so far wiped out 2.64 million enemy troops, and the population of the liberated areas has risen to 168 million. The initiative in the war has shifted from the enemy to us. The counter-revolutionary regime is on the verge of collapse. We are approaching the summit of the mountain. It is a great victory for the Chinese working class and our people as a whole. Foreseeing disaster, the Kuomintang will be busy with plots and intrigues, and the U.S imperialists will try to help it find a way out of its difficulties. Their new plot consists of assembling some military men and politicians and making use of middle-of-the-roaders and right-wingers to bring about a phony peace. They may go so far as to topple Chiang Kai-shek and raise up a Zhang Kai-shek or a Wang Kai-shek or a Li Kai-shek. Why would such a peace be phony? Because they don't want to give up their power and, on the contrary, are trying to reorganize their forces to attack us again. What should we do under these circumstances? Comrades, we should make sure that we are not deceived and that we don't fall into their traps. So long as we persevere in the struggle, there can be no doubt that victory will come in our generation.

Now I would like to say a few words about the general line and policy for the present stage that have been set forth by the Central Committee of the Communist Party. The revolution against imperialism, feudalism and bureaucrat-capitalism, waged by the masses under the leadership of the proletariat, is China's new-democratic revolution. To make that revolution is the general line and policy of the Communist Party. The working class should unite and ally itself with the peasantry, the urban petty bourgeoisie and the national bourgeoisie to form the broadest revolutionary united front against the U.S. imperialists and their tools, the Kuomintang reactionaries, and to establish a joint dictatorship of democratic classes under the leadership of the proletariat. Political power will then belong to the people, and no part of it to the imperialists, feudalists or bureaucrat-capitalists, over whom they will exercise dictatorship. To achieve this goal we are going to hold a new political consultative conference at the proper time to discuss such topics as convening a national people's congress, setting up a democratic coalition government, supporting the war effort and winning final victory. The Central Committee is also asking us to carry out a well planned, thorough agrarian reform in the countryside, that is, by relying on the poor peasants and uniting with the middle peasants, to abolish the feudal system of exploitation by the landlord class and the old rich peasants and give land to the tillers. In the cities, meanwhile, we are to confiscate bureaucrat-capital, protect national industry and commerce, increase production and develop the economy, taking into account the interests of both public and private enterprises and benefiting both workers and capitalists. This congress should call upon the working class of the whole country to act according to the Central Committee's instructions.

There are four tasks for the labour movement in the Kuomintang areas:

(1) To consolidate and swell the workers' movement in preparation for the arrival of the People's Liberation Army;

(2) To correctly carry out the policy of struggle and unity and accord different treatment to the national bourgeoisie and bureaucrat-capitalists, uniting with the former to oppose the latter and the imperialists;

(3) To protect all enterprises, both publicly owned and privately owned, keeping their machines and materials intact, and at the same time to send experienced technicians to the liberated areas to help build new industry and commerce there; and

(4) To ensure the safety of the workers' organizations and leaders, strengthen solidarity among the workers and guard against dissension sown by the enemy. If the workers in the Kuomintang areas can accomplish these tasks, they will have done their duty, contributing to the revolution and the

people's cause.

In the liberated areas the labour movement is developing under entirely new circumstances. The working class has been emancipated and has become the leading class in the people's governments. The workers have become masters of all enterprises, whether they are owned by the state,³⁶¹ by the local government or by the collective. Although the labour-capital relation still exists in privately owned enterprises, the leading political position of the working class in the government ensures that the workers will not be oppressed or over-exploited. In the liberated areas, therefore, the labour movement should be guided by new principles and policies.

Under these circumstances the primary tasks for the workers in the liberated areas are to raise their political consciousness, to study hard and to organize, so as to participate voluntarily and vigorously in the building of New Democracy on all fronts. Above all, they should work to develop industrial production, so as to ensure our victory in the revolutionary war and to meet the people's needs.

Since it is of paramount importance to restore and expand industrial production in the liberated areas, we must address a series of problems.

First, we should do more planning for industrial production; right now we are doing very little. Everything should be done according to a specific plan and method. In the Kuomintang areas planning is in the hands of the bosses, not the workers. We in the liberated areas should give first priority to planning. We should see to it that enterprises which are owned by the state or by local governments produce under unified leadership and in accordance with unified, overall plans which have been drawn up on the basis of investigation and study. In northeast China we are running out of scrap iron and steel. It is time for us to draw up plans for building iron mines and iron and steel mills. We should determine what the needs are at present for the war effort and what they are and will be in future for peaceful reconstruction. For instance, the Anshan Iron and Steel Mill, which cannot be put into operation at present, should prepare to resume production as soon as Benxi and Shenyang are captured. That needs overall planning based on investigation and study. A proper balance should be maintained in the development of the munitions industry, heavy industry and light industry. Materials and machines should be allocated and technicians deployed according to a unified plan and not distributed haphazardly. At the same time, we should obtain materials and sell goods in a planned way and ensure a quick turnover of capital. Industry, agriculture, transport and communications, finance and trade should be in general harmony with each other. Without a unified administration we cannot make our economy a success. Local facto-

ries should not go their own ways and keep each other in the dark, because that would be very damaging. To encourage planning we should first of all see that it is done by the state and local-government enterprises; only then can we exercise leadership over enterprises owned by private capitalists and joint state-private enterprises. To put it briefly, lack of planning will result in waste, whereas planning will help promote production and also lay a foundation for drawing up national plans when the time comes.

Second, to improve the operation and management of state and local-government enterprises, it is essential to follow the principles of sound business management and to practise democracy. Only by working hard to improve operation and management can we ensure sufficient materials, low cost of production, high quality, increased output and good marketing. Business management is of prime importance in running factories. A factory is not a government department or an army unit, and it cannot be run in the same way they are. To manage a factory one has to practise business accounting, examine costs and calculate the consumption of raw materials and the depreciation of machinery. What is the cost of production? What quantities of raw materials are needed? What is the rate of depreciation of the machines? How much will the product sell for? We have to know how to balance all these factors. There must be an efficient and rational system for appointing personnel, in which competence, skill and qualifications are taken into account. Our comrades in the liberated areas are experienced only in matters of politics and military strategy; they have yet to become entrepreneurs. We know how to fight revolutionary wars, but when it comes to running factories we are laymen and must learn from the experts. In order for a factory to be successful, rules must be observed. A factory should have its rules and regulations and a system for the division of responsibilities. It should also have a system of quality control for evaluating the products and a system for appraising the performance of workers and managers and meting out rewards and penalties on the basis of performance. Otherwise, we will be encouraging bad work styles and closing our eyes to backwardness, which will damage our cause.

Democracy in the management of enterprises means pooling the wisdom of all our workers and office staff and relying on them to run the factory well. When a problem arises, people should consult each other. You know one thing and I know another, and we can put the two together to come up with the best solution. As the old saying goes, "Three cobblers with their wits combined match Zhuge Liang, the master mind." How can we put that saying into practice in the factory? a) We should set up a board of management, half of it consisting of the director or manager, the engineers

and other responsible personnel, and the other half of representatives elected by the workers and office staff. The director or manager will serve as chairman, and the board will exercise unified leadership over the factory. b) In any factory that has more than 500 workers, a congress of workers and office staff should be convened at regular intervals. This will give the rank and file an opportunity to be promptly informed of the board's decisions and to discuss the production plan, sum up their experience in production, evaluate the managers' performance and talk over problems of common concern relating to production or to their own lives. At the congress the representatives can express their views freely, c) Meetings of production groups should be organized. When a suggestion is made, the group can hold a meeting to discuss it. Democracy doesn't mean that there is no leadership or that everyone can do as he pleases. The democracy we are talking about is subject to centralized leadership and should function in an organized way. The purpose is to run the factory well.

Third, we should recognize the importance of technicians and managers and make efforts to train them. We now have very few technicians and even fewer managers. This is a big problem. How are we to solve it? First of all we should rely on the technicians and managers who are already in place, at the same time promoting some from among the skilled and experienced workers and office staff, who constitute the main source of our cadres. We should run schools and training courses for employees. Wherever conditions permit, we should also open institutes of technology or polytechnic schools. In addition, we can transfer to the factories some persons in other departments who formerly worked in factories or who have had training in technology. With the exception of counter-revolutionaries, all former engineers and administrators in the liberated areas who are willing to work in factories should be welcomed. Engineers should remain engineers and administrators administrators. We should do all we can to help them—help them remould their ideology, change their attitude towards work and workers and get rid of the bureaucratic style of work characteristic of the old factories.

When setting wages, we must oppose egalitarianism and introduce a system of overlapping wage scales with graduated rates. The amount of pay should be based exclusively on the employee's job category, the difficulty of the work performed, the skill it demands and his own competence. Women should enjoy equal pay for equal work, and so should children and adolescents. The period of apprenticeship should not exceed three years; masters should love their apprentices and apprentices should respect their masters. The factory and the trade union should take joint responsibility for the employees' health, safety and welfare. The factory's budget should include a

fund for this purpose (an amount equivalent to a certain percentage of the total payroll), and the workers should also contribute a certain percentage of their wages. As for hours, since a large-scale war is under way, workers in the liberated areas will generally work eight to ten hours a day. No one should be allowed to work more than 12 hours a day, including overtime, unless it is necessary to meet urgent war needs.

In state and local-government enterprises, the drive to promote emulation among workers and to designate heroes of labour has helped to develop production. We shall continue to encourage this drive, although we must guard against the tendency towards formalism and individualistic heroism. The general policy in the liberated areas is to increase production and develop the economy, taking into consideration the interests of both public and private enterprises and benefiting both workers and capitalists. In accordance with that policy, the tasks before the trade unions are as follows: a) to unite all employees, encourage them to take an active part in production and observe discipline, protect their general interests and educate them so they can participate in the management of enterprises, whether owned by the state, by local government or by the collective; b) to supervise management of privately owned enterprises; and c) to stimulate technical innovation and co-operation in production among individual households. The trade unions should try to recruit all the employees, bearing in mind, however, the principle of voluntary participation. They should regularly concern themselves with the problems of the masses and do practical work to solve those problems. And they should overcome their present bureaucratic, formalistic style of work, so as to become organizations that truly belong to the employees.

To ensure that the decisions made by this congress are carried out, it is essential to re-establish the unified national organization of the Chinese working class, that is, the All-China Federation of Trade Unions, which will guide the workers and office staff of the whole country. Our congress should urge the new executive committee of the Federation to uphold the revolutionary traditions it established during the first Great Revolution (1925-27). We should instruct it to organize workers and office staff across the country as quickly as possible and, under the leadership of the Communist Party, to unite with democratic parties, mass organizations and national minorities in the struggle to overthrow the rule of U.S. imperialism and its running dog, the reactionary Kuomintang government, and set up a unified new-democratic people's republic.