

The National Bourgeoisie in the Chinese Revolution

by Yu Huai

From "People's China", Peking, January 1950

As is well known, the political line of the Chinese Communist Party in the present people's democratic revolution of China has been based on a People's Democratic United Front composed of the Chinese working class, peasantry, petty bourgeoisie, and other patriotic democratic elements, based on the alliance of workers and peasants and led by the working class.

We are going to discuss in this article: Firstly, why is the national bourgeoisie at the present stage to be united with, but not to be exterminated by, the Chinese working class? Secondly, what is the policy being adopted by the Chinese working class in dealing with the national bourgeoisie, and on what basis is this policy formulated?

The Bourgeoisie in Colonial Countries

As China was a semi-feudal and semi-colonial country, long under the yoke of imperialism, her revolution could not but take up the fight against imperialism as one of its main tasks. This characteristic determined the series of strategies and tactics of the Chinese revolution.

In his report on the national and colonial questions at the Second Congress of the Communist International, Lenin emphasised the paramount importance of making "the distinction between oppressed nations and oppressing nations". He believed that in this lay the fundamental difference between the Communist International on the one hand and the Second International and bourgeois democracy on the other. Viewed from this angle, Lenin pointed out: "The Communist International must enter into a temporary alliance with bourgeois democracy in colonial and backward countries, but must not merge with it, and must unconditionally preserve the independence of the proletarian movement, even in its most rudimentary form." (Lenin: *Preliminary Draft of Thesis on the National and Colonial Questions*.)

Stalin has developed this brilliant theory of Lenin's on the peculiarities of the revolution in colonial and semi-colonial countries. He has clearly pointed out the double task of opposing feudalism and opposing imperialism in the revolutionary movement of the Chinese people, with emphasis on "the sharpening of struggle against imperialism". (Stalin: *Chinese Revolution and Tasks of the Communist International*.) He has thus concluded that an alliance with the national bourgeoisie was permissible under certain conditions.

In uniting the universal truth of Marxism-Leninism with the actual practice of the Chinese revolution, Comrade Mao Tse-tung has succeeded in concretely applying the theory advanced by Lenin and Stalin regarding the role played by the national bourgeoisie in the revolution of colonial and semi colonial countries.

The Bureaucratic Bourgeoisie and the National Bourgeoisie

Since the component groups of the Chinese bourgeoisie have different relationships with imperialism and feudalism, they should not be treated as a homogeneous mass, but should be

differentiated from each other. There are two main groups within the Chinese bourgeoisie, namely the big bourgeoisie and the national bourgeoisie. The economic interests of these two groups are in conflict with one another. They therefore have played different roles in the Chinese people's democratic revolution.

The distinction between the big bourgeoisie and the national bourgeoisie in China was made clear by Comrade Mao Tse-tung, when he wrote in 1939:

“The bourgeoisie is divided into two different groups. One is the big bourgeoisie which is *compradore* in nature, and the other is the national bourgeoisie.

“The *compradore* big bourgeoisie directly serves the imperialistic foreign capitalists, who, in turn support and nurture this class. Hence it is closely related to the semi-feudal elements in the rural districts. Therefore, in the history of the Chinese revolution, the big bourgeoisie has never been a force of the Chinese revolution, but remains its enemy....

“... since the national bourgeoisie is oppressed by imperialism, and restricted by the remaining feudal elements, thus it clashes with imperialism and the remaining feudal elements. In this sense, it is a part of the revolutionary forces. During the history of the Chinese revolution, they have shown their vigour in the struggle against imperialism and the government dominated by bureaucrats and warlords.” (Mao Tse-tung: *The Chinese Revolution and the Communist Party of China.*)

Who are the Chinese big bourgeoisie?

“...The Four Big Families – Chiang, Soong, Kung, and Chen – during their twenty years in power have amassed enormous capital worth ten to twenty billion American dollars and have monopolised the economic life-lines of the entire country. This monopoly capital, merged with state power, becomes state-monopoly capitalism. Monopoly capitalism intimately merged with foreign imperialism and the domestic landlord class and old-type rich peasants, becomes *compradore*, feudal, state monopoly capitalism. This is the economic foundation of Chiang Kai-shek's reactionary regime. This state-monopoly capitalism not only oppresses workers and peasants, but also oppresses the petty bourgeoisie and injures the middle bourgeoisie (i.e. the national bourgeoisie – Y.H.). This state-monopoly capitalism reached its highest peak during the anti-Japanese war and after the Japanese surrender. It prepared adequate material conditions for the new democratic revolution. This capital is popularly called bureaucratic capital in China. This bourgeoisie is called the bureaucratic bourgeoisie, i.e. China's big bourgeoisie. Apart from doing away with the special privileges of imperialism in China, the object of the new democratic revolution within the country is to eliminate the exploitation and oppression of the landlord class and the bureaucratic bourgeoisie (the big bourgeoisie)....” (Mao Tse-tung: *Present Situation and our Task.*)

It should be emphasised that without the fulfilment of the task of opposing bureaucratic capitalism, and without the carrying out of its accompanying concrete programme for the confiscation of the property of the big bourgeoisie by the people's State, the content of the Chinese people's democratic revolution could not be considered complete.

The process by which this unique bureaucratic capitalism was expanding under the reactionary Kuomintang regime was the same process by which the Chinese national bourgeoisie was being oppressed and its private enterprises crippled. The bureaucratic

capitalists, as represented by the Four Big Families of Chiang, Soong, Kung, and Chen, never developed any industry of their own. They appropriated the property of the labouring people, and in part of the national bourgeoisie, to swell up their ill-gotten capital, chiefly by means of their traitorous collaboration with foreign imperialists, by means of the state apparatus under their control, especially their extensive network of financial organisations, and also by means of an openly predatory policy. During the war against Japanese aggression, the Kuomintang bureaucratic capitalist bloc accelerated this process of plundering and concentration of capital by instituting various war-time economic controls and by permitting a runaway inflation. After the Japanese surrender, this bloc, in the name of “taking over” the properties of the Japanese and their puppets, privately pocketed the assets which originally and rightfully belonged to the Chinese people. In this way, the Japanese imperialist aggressors and their lackeys served no more than as a tool in the conversion of the wealth of the Chinese people, including that of the national bourgeoisie, into the private property of the bureaucratic capitalists, which means, in the end, into the private property of the American imperialists. It is therefore nothing strange that the more the bureaucratic capitalists expanded, the more the national bourgeoisie contracted. Thus, the bureaucratic capitalists became the big bourgeoisie, and the national bourgeoisie assumed the position of the middle bourgeoisie. The former were oppressors and exploiters of the Chinese people, and the latter, while exploiting the Chinese working class, were themselves ruthlessly oppressed by imperialism and its agents, the big bourgeoisie.

Viewed from all these economic factors, it is not difficult to understand the changes in political attitude of the Chinese national bourgeoisie at various historical stages. Although during the period after 1927 and before the Mukden Incident of 1931, it co-operated with the big land-owning class and the big bourgeoisie in opposing the revolution, nevertheless, it has never been in power. That is not all. After the Mukden Incident, which heralded the Japanese imperialists’ all-out invasion of China, certain representatives of the national bourgeoisie, prodded by the masses, took an active part in the anti-imperialist movement, at that time directed against the Japanese imperialism. This movement was banned by the Kuomintang which was then in power. After the outbreak of the anti-Japanese war, owing to the intensification of various reactionary political and economic measures, certain representatives of this class sympathised with and even supported, in varying degree, the democratic movement in China.

After the Japanese surrender, the people throughout China all yearned for peace and opposed the impending civil war. This could not but force the Kuomintang government, headed by Chiang Kai-shek, to convene the “Political Consultative Conference” proposed by the Chinese Communist Party. The representatives of the Chinese national bourgeoisie participated in this Conference which had as its aim the striving for democracy and peace at home, and their attitude on the whole was sympathetic towards the progressive demands of the Chinese people. Following the abortive peace parley, a full-scale civil war was launched by the Kuomintang reactionaries. Then basic victory was won by the Chinese people in the revolutionary war. During this series of vital changes, although the national bourgeoisie displayed at times a wavering and wait-and-see attitude, yet it had not surrendered to the Kuomintang reactionaries. What was more, with the changes in the situation, its representatives at last took part in the recently held People’s Political Consultative Conference, which symbolised the great revolutionary unity of the Chinese people.

Dual Nature of the National Bourgeoisie

As stated above, because there are certain contradictions between the Chinese national bourgeoisie on the one hand, and foreign imperialism and the domestic bureaucratic capitalism on the other, consequently it is either sympathetic towards or remains neutral in the Chinese people's democratic revolution – this is one aspect of its nature. But also because there are contradictions between the Chinese national bourgeoisie on the one hand and the working class and the peasantry on the other, consequently it has a dual nature in the Chinese people's democratic revolution.

“From this dual nature of the national bourgeoisie, we can conclude that at a certain period and under certain circumstances, it can take part in revolution against imperialism, bureaucratic capitalism and war-lordism, and it can become a part of the revolutionary forces. But at other times, it may serve the big bourgeoisie by assisting the counter-revolutionary forces.” (Mao Tse-tung: *The Chinese Revolution and the Communist Party of China.*)

It is exactly because of this fact that struggle must necessarily be conducted in an appropriate manner against the national bourgeoisie, while uniting with it.

In December, 1947, on the eve of the victory of the Chinese people's revolution, Comrade Mao Tse-tung pointed out:

“In areas ruled by Chiang Kai-shek, there is a section of the upper petty bourgeoisie and the middle bourgeoisie (i.e. the national bourgeoisie – Y.H.), who, though small in number, have reactionary political tendencies – these are the rightist elements among these classes. They disseminate illusions about American imperialism and Chiang Kai-shek's reactionary bloc. They oppose the people's democratic revolution. As long as their reactionary tendencies can still influence the masses, we should carry on the work of exposing such tendencies among the masses who have been under their influence. Blows should be delivered at their political influence among the masses, so as to liberate the masses from their influence.” (Mao Tse-tung: *Present Situation and Our Task.*)

In July 1949, after the basic victory of the Chinese people's revolution was won, Comrade Mao Tse-tung again pointed out:

“As for the national bourgeoisie, a great deal of suitable educational work can be done among them at the present stage. When the time comes to realise Socialism, that is, to nationalise private enterprise, we will go a step further in our work of educating and reforming them. The people have a strong State apparatus in their hands, and they do not fear rebellion on the part of the national bourgeoisie.” (Mao Tse-tung: *On People's Democratic Dictatorship.*)

Blows at the reactionary political tendencies on the part of the rightist elements of the national bourgeoisie, and adequate educational and reforming work among the national bourgeoisie – all these compose the content of the struggle against the national bourgeoisie at various stages and in various periods of the revolution.

The National Bourgeoisie and Economic Reconstruction

The national bourgeoisie is called upon to play its part in the people's democratic revolution. This is because the people's democratic revolution in China is directed against imperialism, feudalism and bureaucratic capitalism, while the national bourgeoisie might and did participate in the movement against imperialism, feudalism and bureaucratic capitalism. This

is not all. China is a very backward country in so far as modern industries are concerned, and the imperialist countries will continue to be hostile, even after complete victory has been won in the Chinese revolution.

Therefore it becomes necessary to draw the national bourgeoisie into the common struggle to resist imperialist oppression and to improve China's backward economic status.

However, this policy of integrating the national bourgeoisie into the common effort to improve the economic position of China does not at all mean the unlimited expansion of private capital which would lead China to develop in the direction of capitalism. In the first place, having a state-owned economy of a socialist nature occupying a predominant position in China's modern industry makes it impossible for the private capital of the national bourgeoisie to lead China in the direction of capitalism. In the second place, the People's Government adopts the policy of encouraging and assisting "the active operation of all private economic enterprises beneficial to the national welfare and the people's livelihood". (Article 30 of the "Common Programme".) The new government also encourages their development "in the direction of state capitalism in such ways as processing for state-owned enterprises and exploiting state-owned resources in the form of concessions". (Article 31 of the "Common Programme".) This means that the existence of the private capital of the national bourgeoisie and its development under proper control of a State led by the Chinese working class will in reality serve to promote Socialism instead of capitalism in China.

Of course, this is not to say that there exist no contradictions, and consequently no struggle, between the state-owned economy of a socialist nature and the private-operated economy of a capitalist nature. No, contradictions do exist, and so struggle is inevitable, and it will be further sharpened.

But since tremendous changes have already taken place in the relative strength of the various classes in China, and since the powerful state apparatus is now in the hands of the people, and since the growing state-owned economy having a socialist nature together with the co-operative economy having a semi-socialist nature will become the leading components of China's economy, this kind of contradiction and struggle need not be solved by further bloodshed, but can be solved, to a considerable extent, by means of education and reform.