

IN THE COLONIES

Northern Africa and Communism.

by *Paul Vaillant-Couturier* (Paris).

Some time before M. Millerand undertook his voyage (a very unpopular one) to Northern Africa, I had the opportunity of visiting the strongest positions of French imperialism. I shall here treat of Tunis and Algeria.

Since the Congress of Tours the Communist Party has done considerable work in these regions, but owing to the lock of a colonial policy defined according to various regions, out-worn electoral customs, the ignorance maintained by the "civilizer" among the native masses, and the mutual bad blood that exists among the different races, the progress of our propaganda in North Africa has met with quite a few obstacles.

The economic power of colonial capitalism is based wholly upon the expropriation of the land belonging to the poor peasantry for the benefit of a minority of rich colonists and of a few native chiefs. It gathers its moral power from the competition of wages which is provoked and developed by vast colonization.

Its industrial field is marked by stagnation, for the simple reason that according to the oldest traditions, the colonies are considered as the sources of raw materials and as the consumers of manufactured articles. At the present moment, Communist propaganda in North Africa promises to loom in importance, because of the recent military law which provides for 250,000 native recruits for the purpose of maintaining "law and order",

profession, i. e., the conscription of natives into the army is considered a great danger by the rich colonists, who are uneasy over anything that may free those whom they are to "civilize", from their prejudices and feudal customs. The only blessing these "civilizers" bring to the native is the development of drunkenness.

The native is governed by means of the fist and the whip. "Without the whip the Arab is worthless", say the colonizers. And they prove their point. Very often they find among the Arabian nobility some very willing collaborators to whom they are attached by common interests. Thus the native and the European capitalists join hands in order to exploit the poor peasants.

In answer to the mere mention of *justice* towards the native, the rich colonists declare that they are in danger of "being stabbed in the back".

What therefore, is the reaction of the masses to such a regime?

It varies in the various regions and according to the degree of oppression.

I have not been able to visit Morocco, but it seems that the Moroccan native, who is active, industrious, intelligent, being the victim of a comparatively recent conquest, will very soon react against the tyranny of colonization.

Recent events in Tunis show the growth of agitation in that region. The Communist and Liberal movements of Tunis make the French colonists very uneasy, and the only thing they can do at present is to attempt an "alliance" with the Liberals against the Communists, that is, if at any time the Liberals are willing to enter into this bargain. The popularity of Soviet Russia, and the successful propaganda carried on by our comrade Louzon- which grew in the eyes of the native masses because of his arrest, would seem to justify our big hopes in the future of Tunis.

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In spite of threats, numerous groups of Arabs have *dared* to come to various of our meetings to hear the exposition of our doctrines. It was a novelty here, a fact which is in itself significant.

But in order to bring about action among these scarred and tortured proletarians, who have no technicians, and who are driven by their misery to fanaticism, it is necessary to gain their confidence. On every occasion the French Communists should defend the native peasants and workers against their exploiters and governors, educate them and arouse them to a consciousness of the modern world and win them over by their devotion. The Algerian nationalist movement which is based upon the popularity of Emir Khalad, deserves all of our attention, wherever it is not dominated by the spirit of aristocracy.

These are briefly the conditions of life under French imperialism in North Africa, which is one of its mighty strongholds. Only the victorious revolution in Europe can liberate it, and effect the development of the natural treasures of this country, which are now being exploited anarchically for the benefit of a few.

COMMUNIST YOUTH

Karl Liebknecht Day in China.

China! When we heard this word in our childhood, we imagined a fantastic country; the land of the mandarins and temples, of the hundred thousand gods and the millions of people, of gigantic towns on the plains and the rivers; the land of the calm philosopher Kon-fu-tse and of great wars and conquerors — a strange, mysterious world. Well, much of this romance has disappeared today. When we report of China now, we speak of capitalist revolution and a petty bourgeois republic, of English-American-Japanese imperialism, of mines and railway concessions, of child labor, and of the struggle of the juvenile proletariat. A gigantic transformation is going on in the oldest country of the world, a mighty struggle of two worlds. And nothing can prove as impressively the power of this transformation and at the same time the immense force of Communism as a short report of the South Chinese newspapers on the Liebknecht-Luxemburg Day of the Young Communist International in China.

The press of Southern China reported:

"On January 15th the Young Socialist League as a "Marxian Club" and the "Mutual Aid" called a memorial meeting for Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg in Canton in the hall of the Kwang-si Guild (the guilds in China

are workers' and artisans' corporations similar to those existing in the Middle Ages). The meeting was attended by 400 workers; half of whom were sailors on strike and 500 were vineyard peasants. The meeting expressed its veneration for the murdered comrades, whose pictures adorned the walls of the hall. After the meeting the workers commenced a parade through the streets. Many thousands of leaflets with the title "To the Youth on Liebknecht Day" were distributed among the masses. In spite of stormy and rainy weather the demonstration took place with great enthusiasm."

In explanation we must add that the Communist Party of China and the Young Socialist League, although working illegally, were formerly more Marxian Clubs. The vanguard of the Chinese proletariat has been recently engaged in its first great mass action, the Hong-Kong seamen's strike. This strike was supported by sympathy strikes of the Chinese sailors on the rivers, the transport workers and others; a total of 500,000 workers were on strike. Moreover, the workers expressed their sympathy with the strikers by boycotting all goods transported by scabs, by demonstrations and, furthermore, by financial assistance of the part of the trade-unions.

The Liebknecht Day of 1922 was the first public appearance of our young Chinese comrades, and the first Liebknecht anniversary celebration in China. Under the leadership of the Young Communist International demonstrations also took place in Peking and Shanghai on January 15th.

THE RED TRADE UNION INTERNATIONAL

The Second International Congress of Revolutionary Trade Unions.

To all organisations affiliated to the R.T.U.I.

Dear Comrades:—

The Central Council of the R.T.U.I. has decided to convoke the Second Congress at the end of October 1922. The Executive Bureau has fixed the date of the Congress as October 25th and the place as Moscow. According to the decision of the First Congress of Revolutionary Trade Unions (see Constitution, Article 4) representation is distributed as follows:—

Every National Trade Union Federation having less than 10,000 members receives one consultative voice at the Congress; national organizations having from 10,000 to 25,000 members send one delegate with a deciding vote; from 25,000 to 100,000—two delegates with a deciding vote; from 100,000 to 250,000—four delegates with a deciding vote; from 250,000 to 500,000—six delegates and for each additional 500,000 members one additional delegate with a deciding vote. International revolutionary class trade or industrial organizations have two deciding votes each. Minorities organized by countries have the same representation, but all the organizations of a given country affiliated to the Red Trade Union International form a single delegation within which the votes are divided in proportion to the membership of the respective organizations. Organized minorities and fractions have representation at the Congress only in case the National Trade Union Federation of that country is not affiliated to the Red Trade Union International.

It is thus seen that the number of votes depends in general upon the number of organized workers. Naturally the number of delegates may be more or less than the number indicated in the Constitution, if necessary, but this does not alter the number of votes.

The Executive Bureau has drafted the following preliminary agenda:—

- 1—Report of the Executive Bureau.
- 2—The tasks of the revolutionary trade unions and the united labor front.
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- 4—Organisation problems.
- 5—The position of trade unions in colonial countries.

The Executive Bureau requests all organizations affiliated to the Profintern to commence to submit amendments and additions to the agenda and, beginning with August, to send in their concrete propositions. It is understood that the final agenda will be drawn up by the Congress itself.

Yours fraternally,
for the Executive Bureau.

A. Lozovsky, Secretary General.

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(so says Mr. André Lefèvre, former Minister of War), that is to say for the purpose of safeguarding capitalist disorder.

The French, like every colonization system, reposes mainly upon land and mineral grabs.

As far as the natives are concerned, colonization has appropriated the land which always belonged to the native tribes in common. By the aid of the *cantonement* system, through the use of exchange, expropriation and usury, (always in virtue of the "right of might") French imperialism has imposed the French code of individualism upon a people accustomed to primitive communism. Through political corruption, the largest beneficiaries have acquired unshakable positions. It is in this wise that the former co-owners of the land in common, who only gathered its fruits by cultivating it, were gradually chased from the rich valleys into the mountainous regions, from where they were in turn compelled by *hunger* to descend and hire themselves out to the exploiters.

This expropriation affected not only the natives. Agrarian concentration in North Africa grew with an acceleration that threatened to destroy small-scale colonization completely. Out of 1200 Alsatian families that immigrated into Algeria, only 300 were still living on colonization land, 25 years later. This example is only one of hundreds.

The new villages created today by means of insufficient land-allotments only serve to pave the way to a large-scale agrarian capitalism.

It is not a rare case to see little communities, consisting of 40 to 50 families, falling prey to two or three large landowners. The poor colonist, who is unable to compete with the rich one, is compelled to borrow from his rich neighbor or from the "Loan Association". He is thus at the latter's mercy.

In this manner the large corporations, like the *Compagnie Algérienne*, today possess thousands upon thousands of acres of land, which they exploit through their managers, who are often the former proprietors of the land in question, Europeans and natives.

But this concentration, which in itself prepares large fields for Communist exploitation, does not proceed without leaving its mark upon the native masses of Algeria and Tunis, where general misery as well as unemployment is growing daily.

Because the colony necessarily causes competition between the European workers, the natives and convict labor, it is always assured of large profits and is apparently secure. Thus the wages of the European worker always tend to shrink to the minimum wages of the native workers, and those of the native tend to shrink still lower and to approach the wages of the convicts.

Moreover, because of the difference in wages it causes, colonization develops hatred between the various nationalities; a Spaniard is being paid less than an Italian; and Italian workers less than Frenchmen, etc. It has the same effect upon the Mohammedan tribes themselves; it turns the Arab against the Kabyl, the Kabyl against the Moroccan, the Tunisian against the Algerian, etc.

The average wage received by an Algerian native today, in 4 frs., whereas before the war it was a little less than 2 frs. Moreover it must be taken into consideration that the wages of an agricultural worker are usually below this average wage. The wages of the farm-workers vary from 1.50 fr. to 5 fr. At the same time, however, wheat, which is the basic food of the native, has jumped from 20 francs to 75, 100 and sometimes even to 150 francs per quintal. Thus famine has become chronic in Northern Africa.

During the winter of 1920—1921, and the following spring there were 3,000,000 famine sufferers in Algeria out of a total population of 5,000,000 natives.

Having no labor shortage, and considering the multiplication of the native element as a peril, the colonial administration did nothing serious to fight off the famine; even the distribution of grains was nothing more than a subject for speculation by the administrators. The moral and spiritual misery of the natives in Algeria even surpasses in horror that of the Tunisians. The native, who is looked upon as a beast of burden, beaten, robbed, and even killed at the least provocation sees and feels himself deprived by imperialistic civilization of all means of acquiring an education.

The "education" of the Arab is really nothing more than the organized will of the colonizers to destroy the soul of the race. The French schools can hardly take care of 35,000 out of the 720,000 native children of school age. The hygienic conditions, the school equipment and the lodgings of the teachers are miserable, and everything points to systematic sabotage employed by the colonizers in the field of native education, which according to law is supposed to be "obligatory". It is really not necessary that the Arab "declass" himself. He is a beast of burden, and must remain a beast of burden. Even the military

profession, i. e., the conscription of natives into the army is considered a great danger by the rich colonists, who are uneasy over anything that may free those whom they are to "civilize", from their prejudices and feudal customs. The only blessing these "civilizers" bring to the native is the development of drunkenness.

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