

Imperial and Foreign News.

COMMUNISM IN CHINA.

BLOOD LUST OF THE "REDS."

(FROM OUR PEKING CORRESPONDENT.)

The story of Communist savagery at Swabue (told in *The Times* of December 29) relates to but one of a series of similar events in Eastern Kwantung.

In the summer, when the break occurred between Hankow and Nanking, troops from Hankow were sent to Kiangsi Province to oppose those of Nanking. At that time the Soviet agents were still at Hankow. Generals Yeh Ting and Ho Lung arrived at Nanchang and immediately initiated a massacre of anti-Communists. After a brief career of outrage they were compelled to retire before superior numbers, and marched south for several hundreds of miles into Eastern Kwangtung, whence Communist propaganda had for long been reported as extremely active.

At the end of September Yeh and Ho attacked Swatow, which was evacuated after little resistance by the Cantonese troops, whereupon the two generals entered and set up a Communist Government. They were soon driven out, retiring to the maritime districts along the coast from Swatow to the south, where the force seems to have dispersed. From that time onward gruesome reports have been reaching Hong-kong and elsewhere of what was happening in this unhappy area. Among these is a letter written to a Shanghai newspaper from Swatow, from which the following is extracted:—

In the no man's land which lies between the notorious districts of Lufung and Haifung, the Communists are giving a ghastly demonstration of what their principles mean in practice. . . . The local "peasants' armies" have joined up with the remnant of General Yeh's forces which took refuge in these parts after their defeat in this neighbourhood, and between them they have initiated a veritable reign of terror. Gentry and merchants with any money at their command have been mercilessly dealt with. They have been tortured to make them disgorge it—driving splinters under the finger-nails has been a favourite device—and then possibly murdered in the end and their houses burned. The number of victims is put at anything from 2,000 to 3,000.

FIVE HUNDRED BEHEADED.

Latterly, the driving power seems to have been mere lust for blood rather than loot. The most gruesome details come from a walled town of about 10,000 inhabitants, a few miles distant from the port of Swabue. It was bold enough to resist the entrance of the Communists, and the result was a wholesale massacre when they got in. Some 500 were killed, including women and children, and their heads were cut off, until the streets were streaming with blood. The hearts of some were cut out, cooked, and eaten, and those who refused to share in the cannibal feast were denounced as traitors to the cause. The heads were strung in rows across the streets, and carried in procession, stuck on the ends of poles; some were pickled in brine, and carried by the basketful to the city of Haihong and other places. About a third of the town was burned to the ground.

When the perpetrators of this outrage went on to attack the city of Chiehshih, farther up the coast, they took a consignment of the heads with them, and threw them over the city wall to hasten the inhabitants' submission.

So long as the rival generals of the Kuomintang are absorbed in the strategy of "dishing" one another, there seems no reason why this infection should not go on spreading far and wide, for the ground has been only too well prepared for it by two years and more of propaganda, conducted, let it not be forgotten, by the recognized agents of the Kuomintang. It was the Kuomintang, under the inspiration of Dr. Sun himself, who held up the methods of Russian Communism to the ignorant peasantry as their model, and it cannot shuffle off the responsibility for such a reversion to utter barbarism as this.

Places much nearer Swatow have been suffering only a little less from the prevailing anarchy. For several weeks a bitter feud was raging between the city of Puning and the surrounding villages. It really was the recrudescence of a feud dating back about 40 years, but it was waged under the new slogans of "Red" and "White." The net result has been the burning, in whole or in part, of several dozen villages.

WHOLESALE EXECUTIONS.

Another equally instructive communication dealing with the same situation appeared in a Hong-kong journal about the same time, made up of extracts from a Chinese newspaper, whose statements were generally corroborated by refugees from the areas concerned.

The Hai-Luk Fung Soviet is allied to the Third International, and its leader is Peng Pai. This man was originally, on his return from study in Japan, given a free hand by the late Dr. Sun Yat-sen to carry out a Soviet experiment in the district.

Peng Pai started what must have been one of the first peasant unions in China, with the cry in those earlier days (from 1923 on) of forcible reduction of field rents. The soil of the district is poor, in marked contrast to that of the land around Swatow and Chaochowfu, and the peasants, having little to lose, if not much to gain, joined by tens of thousands. Each member paid a subscription of 20 cents, and with these and fines and exactions from the landowners, Peng Pai found himself in possession of an adequate sum. A small Peasants' Army was formed, and trained in Communist methods. . . .

On the establishment of the Soviet the policy of confiscation was promulgated. Public and private property, all kinds of buildings and dwellings, arable and forest land, were pronounced to belong to the Government, title deeds were to be delivered up, collected and burnt, any failure to do so incurring the penalty of death. . . . Demand for and payment of rent were equally punishable by the death penalty. . . . Wherever owners can be found, they are, without further question, condemned as local bullies and worthless elders, i.e., of having been local leaders of pre-Soviet society. If a man be found to have amassed as much as \$50,000, his family and himself are condemned to be executed without appeal.

The Communist Party sought by a policy of frightfulness to terrorize the people; and, beginning from the district city (Haifung), burnt over a thousand shops in the vicinity. Within the first area of their activity all scholars were labelled "intelligentsia," and over 60 were killed. "Elders" were set down as corrupt, and over 70 were killed; the populace were guilty of being counter-revolutionaries, and over a thousand were put to death.

In pursuit of the policy of terrorism, in each area of the district officers were commissioned to carry out the slaughter. Every week the officers were required to report to the Soviet, and the degree of merit in the performance of their duty was assessed. In November the poorest performance was reported by the 8th, the Shanmei area, in that only over 400 people had been put to death. The Soviet gave them one month to pursue the work of the revolution. If within that time 4,000 people were not accounted for, the officer of that area would be severely punished. . . .

The way of carrying out the executions is more horrible than one can bear to hear. Apart from all those labelled bullies, worthless elders, capitalists and owners, ordinary well-living folk were included in the circle of guilt. Every officer has himself to visit each village in his area day by day, with a group of public speakers. They take with them a number of prisoners and, having gathered all the villagers together, address them on Communist doctrine, and then drag the prisoners forward, and execute them on the spot. They first cut off their victims' ears and then slice them.

If any villagers try to escape out of sight, or bend their heads in horror of the sight, or display any appearance of sympathy, they are promptly arrested, charged with being counter-revolutionaries, or unsympathetic with the Revolution, and are either executed on the spot, or dragged on to the next place to suffer there. As the victims are being dealt with, not only must no sympathy be shown, but it is necessary to clap hands and laugh uproariously if trouble is to be avoided.