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ASSISTANCE RENDERED BY THE CHINESE PEOPLE TO REVOLUTIONARY RUSSIA DURING THE GREAT OCTOBER REVOLUTION

The peoples of China and the USSR (Russia) throughout its history had the widest contacts. The Great October Revolution saved Russia from class and national oppression and opened a new friendly era in the life of the Soviet (Russian) people. In the difficult period of the triumphant march of the revolution and the strengthening of its results, the Chinese workers, who lived in Russia, directly participated in the revolutionary movement and defended the banner of October; the workers of the Chinese Eastern Railway actively resisted D. L. Horvat and Semenov's gangs; the Chinese of different classes rendered all possible financial help to the Soviet people even in harsh conditions. All this laid a solid foundation for the Soviet - Russian-Chinese relations.

Key words: *Chinese people, Great October revolution, help.*

Participation of Chinese workers in the revolutionary struggle

The presence of Chinese workers in the Russian Empire is a consequence of the aggressive policy of tsarist Russia in China. At the end of the XIX century, Russia appropriated the right to build a Sino-Eastern railway (CER) and began to actively recruit Chinese workers. From 1898 to July 1900, at least 200 thousand Chinese workers moved to Irkutsk, Blagoveshchensk, Nikolaevsk-on-Amur and other Russian cities¹. In 1906-1910, about 550 thousand Chinese workers entered Russia and some of them became permanent settlers there². After the outbreak of World War I, the tsarist government opened another wave of recruitment for Chinese workers to fill the labor shortages. According to the research by Soviet sci-

¹ Ming Qing Danang Guan: Ihetuan Dan'an Shiliao. – P. 641.

² Amur kaocha baogao, Gunshang'e magazine. – 1915 r. No.27. – P. 491. – quote from: Chinese volunteers fighting for the Soviet power // Institute of the peoples of Asia, USSR Academy of Sciences. 1961. – P. 6.

entists, during the war “at least 200 thousand workers were imported from China,” “the European part of Russia received 100 thousand Chinese workers”¹. In addition, during this period, England hired a large number of Chinese workers to work in Mesopotamia, and many of them from Mesopotamia moved to Russian Caucasus². As is clear from the above material, from the end of the 19th century until World War I, about one million Chinese workers entered Russia.

Chinese workers began to join the great October revolution in the cradle city of the Petrograd revolution and other regions. Chinese workers of Petrograd, Moscow and Perm were among the first fighters of the Red Guard. Chinese workers from Petrograd shipyard red guard participated in the assault on the Winter Palace. Some Chinese workers were among V.I. Lenin’s guards and took part in the work of the Extraordinary State Commission under F. E. Dzerzhinsky³. In November 1917, a large number of Chinese workers joined the Moscow Red Guard. At this moment, Chinese workers from the timber factories of the Minsk region on their own initiative contacted the red guard in Bakhmach and sent there about a thousand workers, some of them joined the ranks of the Moscow Red Guard and the others were sent to the Caucasus to fight against the counterrevolutionaries⁴. Fighting together with the Bolsheviks, Chinese workers, who joined the Red Guard at the very initial stage, increasingly delved into the essence of revolutionary ideas and became more and more conscious. Some workers joined the Bolshevik party and even became party leaders and low level organizers.

In 1918, the Soviet government issued a decree on the creation of the Red Army to counter the armed counterrevolution movement and the armies of invaders. At the same time, Chinese units in the Red Army were organized. At this time “not only separate Chinese volunteers joined the Red Army, but whole sub-divisions and even entire units were completed with Chinese workers”⁵. The first Chinese unit of the Red Army was organized in Transnistria, its organizer was a young Chinese worker, a member of the Communist party Sun Fuyang. In January 1918, he proposed organization of the Chinese unit at the second Congress of the revolutionary army in Tiraspol. After that, Chinese units were organized in Leningrad, Moscow, Tula, Perm, the North Caucasus, Siberia, the Far East and other regions. Many units, platoons, companies, battalions and regiments were fully staffed with Chinese workers; Chinese soldiers served in every international battalion. Especially many Chinese units joined the divisions led by Budenny, Frunze and Chapaev, some Chinese sub-units were included in the territorial units of the Red Army. As noted by Soviet historians, at that time, “Chinese

¹ Novogrudsky T. and other: Chinese brothers in arms. – M., 1959. – P. 19.

² Ibid. – Pp. 16, 20.

³ Chinese volunteers fighting for the Soviet power // Institute of the peoples of Asia, USSR Academy of Sciences. 1961. – Pp. 11-12.

⁴ Liu Yunan Sangse. Ning cheng de yu. – M., 1959. – P. 6.

⁵ Ibid – P. 12.

volunteers fought at every front”¹. On the basis of incomplete sources, Soviet historians have calculated that the approximate total number of Chinese soldiers amounted to over 40 thousand².

The most popular unit was the Chinese squad led by Sun Fuyuan, that fought in the South, in the area of Odessa. This detachment after its formation became a part of the Red Army in Tiraspol; in the battle on the Odessa front it was joined by another Chinese squad. Subsequently, these two groups entered the international division of the Red Army and participated in the fights in Odessa, the Crimea and Donbass.

In the spring of 1918, the first detachment of Chinese workers appeared in the Caucasus. On the Northern front, the Chinese detachment joined the Petrograd units. At the beginning of 1918, this group together with the (Russian) Soviet army victoriously defeated the offensive of the self-defense forces and troops of the Anglo-American invaders along the Povenets-Malyga line and other parts of the Northern front³. The biggest number of Chinese workers in the Red Army was on the vast Eastern front; when the formation of Chinese troops began in 1918, the total number of Chinese soldiers reached 10 thousand.

The largest detachment in the Perm region, known as the Chinese regiment of the 19th division under the leadership of the heroic commander Blucher, made his way through the area occupied by the White Army and victoriously joined the Soviet troops of the Eastern front. On the day of the first anniversary of the victory of the Great October revolution, the regiment received an order to launch an offensive in Verhojansk. Chinese regiment forced the enemy from the trenches and continued the pursuit of the defeated enemy.

The active participation of Chinese workers in the fighting greatly contributed to the formation and development of the Soviet international unit. In 1919, the Eastern front became the main combat area of the Civil war, and Chinese troops participated in all key battles: the storming of Izhevsk, Sarapul, Belebey, Yekaterinburg, Chelyabinsk, Krasnoyarsk, Irkutsk, etc., together with the Soviet Army they defeated the White Army led by Kolchak⁴.

In 1920, the all-Russian headquarters of Chinese international units moved from Moscow to Irkutsk. A mixed Sino-Korean squadron also arrived there, Chinese soldiers accounted for 65% of the squadron's members⁵. This detachment organized a school in which a large number of Chinese and Korean officers were trained, among them 51 commanders. Some Chinese and Korean commanders

¹ Ibid – P. 6.

² Ibid – P. 7.

³ Ponyatovsky A. Chinese volunteer units in the revolutionary struggle in the North Caucasus. – quote from: Chinese volunteers fighting for the Soviet power. – Pp. 56-58.

⁴ Chinese volunteers fighting for the Soviet power // Institute of the peoples of Asia, USSR Academy of Sciences. 1961. – P. 26.

⁵ Soviet Central state historical archive: fund 185, catalog 8, file 391, p. 25; catalog 9, file 50, p. 216-222; catalog 9, file 50, p. 25. – quote from: Chinese volunteers fighting for the Soviet power. – P. 30.

and soldiers joined different parts of the 5th army and began to recruit Chinese and Korean soldiers. As a result, every unit of 5th army had its own Sino-Korean volunteer detachment. In addition, a large number of Chinese workers participated in the Siberian and Far Eastern guerrilla movement. S. Koval, commander of the Amur guerrilla group, noted that “Chinese comrades fought in every unit in the Far East”¹. According to the archival documents of the Beiyang government, 30 thousand Chinese workers fought in the ranks of the Red Army². Chinese Amur guerrilla group numbered 10 thousand people³. The group consisted of guerrilla units numbering from one to two hundred people, sometimes from six to seven hundred or even over one thousand people, they took part in military operations in many cities of Siberia and the Far East, in taiga and tundra they heroically fought against the Japanese invaders and the White Army, penetrated behind enemy lines and helped the Soviet power to wage the hardest fight.

Assistance of the Chinese people in the fight against the invaders

In an attempt to stifle the Great October Revolution, the United States, Japan, England, and other allies invaded Soviet Russia in the spring of 1918. Siberia and the Far East were the key areas of intervention. In the spring of 1919, the allies gathered 500-600 thousand soldiers for the joint attack on Soviet Russia. On the Eastern front, Admiral Kolchak played a leading role in the offensive. The Far Eastern Committee of the CPSU (b) adopted a resolution “on the strategy of the Far Eastern Communists,” the most important point of which was “the destruction of transport routes and the military industry, as well as all bodies of the Kolchak government, <...> propaganda in foreign troops and among Eastern peoples should become the most important direction of the work of party figures”⁴. In the exclusion zone of the Far Eastern railway, Bolshevik leaders, in accordance with the resolution of the party, began propaganda and organizational work among Chinese and Russian workers. “They tried their best to prevent the strikes from taking political character, <...> but they achieved control over the masses and increased their authority. Chinese and Russian workers have united their efforts”⁵. Chinese workers took an active part in propaganda and organization of strikes, the report by D. L. Horvat’s investigation department read: “Two Chinese arrived at the station of Handaohetsi and conducted propaganda among workers, demanding that the management of the Far Eastern railway paid wages in Czarist

¹ Koval S. To fight side by side with our Chinese brothers. – P. 147.

² Telegram of the military governor of Heilongjiang, Sun Lechena to the State Council. - December 1, 1919 // Beiyang government Military archive

³ Wang Yunan Sangse Nin chen de yu // Zhongguo guniang – 1960. – No. 3. – P. 9.

⁴ Qi BoJing and other. Shi yue geming he gonei janjan zhai yuandong. – P. 116.

⁵ Soviet Central state historical archive: fund 323, catalog 5, file 534. – quote from: 1917-1922 nyan zhongdong telu shang de gemin yundong. – P. 81.

rubles according to the market situation. These two people organized a general strike in the territories adjacent to the Far Eastern railway”¹.

Assistance and sympathy to the people of Soviet Russia

In 1921, Soviet Russia was hit by a severe drought, and although the Soviet government took all possible measures, but several years of war and economic blockade by the imperialist powers completely exhausted the country’s economy. The country could not fully cope with the difficulties on its own, and was forced to seek help².

In order to coordinate efforts aimed at assisting drought victims in Russia, on October 30, 1921, several prominent public figures organized in Beijing the Chinese society for assistance to drought victims in Russia. The Chairman of the Board of the society was Xiong Selin, Cai Yuanpei was Deputy Chairman, Lee Yuanhun was nominated to the position of honorary Chairman. Coordination of efforts allowed to establish the All-China movement of help to victims of drought in Russia. The Shanghai branch of the Society in its address to the nation stated: “we call for universal sympathy and international mutual assistance. < ... > The drought will end and the suffering of the Russian people will end. Aid in case of trouble, such as assistance in case of fire and assistance to a drowning man is a help to oneself. <...> Masses of people are moving forward”³. Lectures, speeches, charity performances and other fundraising events were also organized in Beijing. The total amount collected at the time was: “80.498 yuan, 9 Jiao, 6 Feng and 4 Li in Chinese currency, 61 yen in Japanese currency, 1000 rubles in Russian currency, 92 silver coins and 9150 copper coins.” At the station of Anda in the province of Heilongjiang, Humanitarian Union collected 29 trains of grain⁴. Although the donations collected at the time were not so great, it should be borne in mind that China itself has been experiencing drought for several years, and donations were collected by poor employees and ordinary people who saved on everything. That is why these donations are a symbol of the Chinese people’s true concern for the Russian people. The Soviet government highly appreciated the humanitarian assistance of the Chinese people. The Soviet government has repeatedly stated to the representatives of China: “Each country has put forward its own conditions, and only China just helped unconditionally”⁵.

¹ Soviet Central state historical archive: fund 323, catalog 5, file 534. – quote from: 1917-1922 nyan zhongdong telu shang de gemin yundong. – P. 81.

² A letter from the representative of Soviet Russia to Jang Huicin. December 21, 1921 // Jiujia xu lin. – Pp. 57-58.

³ Shanghai Mingo Zhibao. March 2, 1922.

⁴ Minutes of the 6th meeting of the Chinese society for assistance to victims of drought in Russia // Publication of the society for assistance to victims: Minutes of the Russian-Chinese meetings. – P. 97.

⁵ Minutes of the Russian-Chinese meetings. – Pp. 89-94.

These charity events helped the Chinese people to better understand Soviet Russia's policy toward China and in a sense helped bring the Chinese government closer to Soviet Russia. Ordinary Chinese at first sight understood the friendly policy of Soviet Russia to China. Although at that time China and Russia did not establish diplomatic relations, the Beijing government supported and encouraged this charitable activity.

As humanitarian supplies were prepared and trains were sent, trade was also established in the border areas. Large loads of grain, seeds and cattle were sent to Russia non-stop. All this has created a good environment for the establishment of diplomatic contacts and the development of bilateral relations. The Soviet government saw in these humanitarian actions prerequisites for the establishment of diplomatic relations. As it was reported in *Izvestia* article, "Looking at China's charity, pure enthusiasm and will of the Chinese people to help the needy, the Russian people in every possible way welcomes, and the Soviet government deeply appreciates this help. As the Chinese people demonstrate warm feelings towards Russia, so Russian-Chinese relations in the future will rise to the same height"¹.

In conclusion, it should be noted that international support is one of the main conditions for the victory and consolidation of the results of the proletarian revolution. Even the smallest support and assistance of the neighboring Chinese people to Soviet Russia, surrounded, blocked and attacked by imperialists, was extremely valuable. The Chinese people, who were under the rule of imperialists, showed true compassion for the Soviet people. The assistance on the part of the Chinese people was unselfish and therefore it really touched the feelings of the Soviet people. Tens of thousands of Chinese workers shed their blood fighting on Soviet soil, the workers of CER cruelly attacked the followers of the White; Chinese people provided all possible moral and material support to the Soviet people, it all played a significant role in strengthening and development of the Soviet power. The Soviet people will never forget this helping hand extended in the most difficult time. Many Soviet historians, who retrospectively considered the traditions of Soviet-and Russian-Chinese friendship, agreed that the assistance of the Chinese people in the early years of Soviet power was at the origin of this friendship. The Soviet people will never forget this helping hand extended in the most difficult time. Many Soviet historians, who retrospectively considered the traditions of Soviet-and Russian-Chinese friendship, agreed that the assistance of the Chinese people in the early years of Soviet power was at the origin of this friendship. Nor will the Chinese people forget the Soviet people's help in the Chinese democratic revolution, the struggle against fascist invaders and socialist construction. The course and development of Russian-Chinese friendship is continuous, this is the conclusion of history.

¹ Ibid – Pp. 2-3.

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