

China Policy Study Group

BROADSHEET

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AN ANNIVERSARY AND ITS LESSON

Fifty years ago, on 12 April 1927, there occurred a historic event, the Shanghai Massacre, perpetrated by Chiang Kai-shek's forces against the workers of Shanghai. Secret society chiefs, gangsters, and the imperialist powers who controlled the International Settlement and French Concession all had a hand in it.

In July 1926 the nationalist armies were under the overall command of Chiang Kai-shek. They had been recruited to serve a newly-formed revolutionary United Front; the militant core was the Communist Party. Among the officers and men many individuals were Communists, but they were in a minority. They had started out from their base in Canton on the Northern Expedition, with the aim of throwing out the warlords and unifying the whole of China.

The armies won sweeping victories. And the chief reason for their successes was that the Communists gained the enthusiastic support of the people by explaining the anti-imperialist and anti-feudalist purpose of the whole enterprise.

Wuhan was taken in September 1926 and Nanking in March 1927. Then Chiang had a choice of marching north to Peking or east to Shanghai, the biggest industrial centre of the country and the heart of imperialist power. There Chou En-lai had since the autumn of 1926 been leading strikes and uprisings, involving half a million militant workers in support of the revolution. Despite bloody suppression by the local warlord regime from February onwards, by March 1927 the workers were in virtual control of all the vital centres of the city outside the foreign-ruled areas, and awaited the arrival of the nationalist forces.

Chiang chose to turn east, but delayed his arrival while his emissaries held secret negotiations with foreign officials and Chinese financial and gangster leaders, his former associates.

The betrayal was carefully planned: foreign arms and cash were moved in, and the gangster forces were given free passage from their bases in the French Concession through the British-controlled International Settlement.

On 12 April the armed gangs moved in with crushingly superior armament and attacked the workers, slaughtering them wholesale. Two days later, Chiang's regular forces entered the city. The killings continued. On 18 April he established a military government at Nanking.

The Shanghai Massacre was only the beginning; the killings went on far and wide for weeks, months, years. What was the cause of this tragedy? Leaders of the Communist Party and the Federation of Labour — Chen Tu-hsiu, Liu Shao-chi and Li Li-san — put unity with the Nationalist Party (KMT) above all. At the Fifth Congress of the CCP held in April in Wuhan, Chou En-lai was actually criticised for *not* having persuaded the workers to disarm, thus 'provoking' the massacres!

The Comintern was issuing numerous instructions from Moscow. Borodin, its representative in China, watching events from Wuhan, where the revolutionary government had moved from Canton in November 1926, insisted on CPC-KMT unity. After a few months the Wuhan Government collapsed in the face of Chiang's Shanghai-based regime, which before long secured formal recognition from the foreign powers.

When uniting with all the forces that can be united, revolutionaries must hold both the initiative and the gun. And they must always be on guard against enemies hidden in their own ranks. To prevent such betrayal and disaster, especially in the age of imperialism and social-imperialism, the people must, as Mao Tse-tung taught, be both ideologically and materially prepared.

NEW IMPETUS

Capitalism and imperialism are now fetters on the productive forces they developed. Having brought into being a world economy, in which neither the workers in the metropolitan countries nor the workers and peasants of the poorest countries in the Third World are immune from plunder, capitalism has now reached a dead end. Its system keeps plunging into crisis and leaving productive capacity idle. Further real progress is impossible without a change in the production relations; only then will new possibilities emerge. Lenin, speaking of the tasks of the proletariat after the overthrow of the bourgeoisie, said:

(the proletariat) must lead the whole mass of the working and exploited people, as well as all the petty-bourgeois groups, on to the road of new economic development, towards the creation of a new social bond, a new labour discipline, a new organisation of labour, which will combine the last word in science and capitalist technology with the mass association of

class-conscious workers creating large-scale socialist industry. . . . the sole guarantee of the durability and permanence of these victories can only be a new and higher mode of social production, the substitution of large-scale socialist production for capitalist and petty-bourgeois production.

(A Great Beginning)

We are now seeing the first, still faint, foreshadowing of this 'new and higher mode of socialist production' at Taching. This oilfield, with its half-million workers, its 50 work divisions, its agricultural, scientific and industrial units, its soaring output, is certainly large-scale production, yet it has created no great towns, no blighted areas. Its oil wells are scattered throughout grasslands, villages cluster around small administrative and cultural centres where fields extend to the very walls of the buildings. Taching grows all its own vegetables and for 12 years has taken no grain from the state. The petrochemical plant,

by far its largest, probably employs something over 8,000 workers—but it is set amidst countryside and there are no noxious effluents.

SOCIALISM IN ACTION

The Taching oilfield is China's most renowned industrial unit, not only within China but throughout the world. As early as 1963 it was reported that the People's Republic was basically self-sufficient in oil, but it took the oil crisis in the capitalist world to bring home the full impact of the news to the industrial West.

By that time Taching's production had increased very greatly and the possibility that China might become an oil-exporting country was envisaged. For years, however, Western pundits continued to take the matter lightly and to suggest that capitalist loans and know-how would be needed to develop the industry effectively. Japan, being well placed geographically and perhaps best acquainted with the real state of affairs, thought otherwise, and was soon able to conclude contracts for Chinese oil.

It was in 1964 that Mao Tse-tung issued the call, 'In industry, learn from Taching', which was taken to heart by many workers and became the focus of a fierce class struggle with the 'gang of four' and their supporters, like that which took place in agriculture around the watchword, 'In agriculture, learn from Tachai'. Hundreds of thousands of workers have visited Taching and thousands of Taching workers have gone to other oilfields to impart their experience. Now, with the overthrow of the Four, a big campaign to create Taching-type enterprises is being launched.

A national 'Learn from Taching' Conference had been planned earlier, but the Four succeeded in preventing it. Now it is intended to convene it before May Day, probably in Heilungkiang province, where Taching is situated. Preparation for it is thorough: a national preparatory conference was held last December and meetings are being held at provincial level. The aim is to provide for industry an impetus like that of the movement to create Tachai-type counties in agriculture.

PUTTING THE WORKING CLASS IN COMMAND

What is the significance of such a mass campaign? It is not, as the Western press has suggested, that China's industry is backward and exceptional efforts are needed to make it 'competitive'. The purpose is to expand production by continuing and deepening the socialist revolution and to ensure that the working class is firmly in command of all Chinese industry. The rapid development of Taching has been achieved by methods, and with motives and organisation, completely different from those of capitalism—as completely different, we may add, as are Chinese standards for measuring success. This will prove equally true for the rest of industry as the movement develops.

The self-reliant development of Taching's production has been impressive by any standards. Chinese reports say that output has averaged 28 per cent yearly increase since the oilfield was opened. The 'profit' made in 1976 was enough to pay off the whole of the state investment in the oilfield since it was opened. These results have not been attained by reckless, anarchic exploitation, but by careful, methodical well-sinking based on thorough knowledge of the underlying strata and intended to secure stable output over a long period. No foreign loans have been needed and no leases have been granted. Even according to the most advanced world standards Taching is, and is now recognised as, a highly efficient and productive enterprise.

The wells came into production in the course of a crucial struggle against revisionism and social-imperialism (see BROAD-SHEET, February 1975). In 1957 Soviet aid meant a great deal to China but even then some workers and cadres were dissatisfied with it. The Chinese Communist Party determined to end

China's dependence on the Soviet Union for oil and began to survey the north-east, even though Soviet and US experts had said there was no chance of finding oil there. In 1959 the first oil was struck and less than a year later all Soviet technicians in China were suddenly withdrawn and all contracts for the supply of equipment terminated unilaterally. This was a heavy blow, but it deepened the political consciousness of China's workers, enlightened them as to the true nature of revisionism and strengthened the resolve of the people of Taching to stand on their own feet. Premier Chou En-lai, recognising the importance of Taching, visited it several times, gave his full support to the workers there and encouraged them to continue to study Marxism, especially Chairman Mao's *On Practice* and *On Contradiction*. This study resulted in absolute conviction about the importance of ending China's oil shortage and in the determination to do so. This was the main motive force in the remarkable development which followed.

REVOLUTION AND PRODUCTION

China is now a major industrial producer. In state-run industry, mining, transport and communications, there may well be more than 30 million workers. In enterprises under people's ownership—that is, provincial, county, municipal and commune industry—there are perhaps twice as many. These 90 million or so workers are a force comparable in size with that of the very biggest imperialist or social-imperialist powers. The vast complex of Taching has a population of half a million; Anshan has 200,000 workers, the Wuhan Iron and Steel Company more than 100,000, the Capital Iron and Steel Company 100,000. In both light and heavy industry there are tens of thousands of medium and small enterprises, many of them already 'model' units. Yet China is still a country of the Third World. A mass campaign to emulate Taching, led by the local units of the CPC and enthusiastically supported by the initiative of the masses, could within a few years have a tremendous impact, both inside and outside China.

The New China News Agency (18 Dec 76) stated the aim thus:

The development of Taching has given the answer to many major questions on the management of socialist enterprises: it is necessary to deepen the socialist revolution in both the superstructure and the economic base after the socialist transformation in the ownership has in the main been completed; modern enterprises must be first of all revolutionised, for socialist enterprises are absolutely not pure economic establishments but important positions in consolidating the dictatorship of the proletariat; leading bodies of socialist enterprises must constantly revolutionise themselves to ensure that the leadership of the enterprises is firmly in the hands of Marxists and the workers; the workers are not pure labour but masters of the enterprises who have the right to manage them, fighters in combating and preventing revisionism and the main force in both socialist revolution and construction; industry must be run by relying on our own efforts and in the spirit of independence, initiative and self-reliance and the relations of dialectical unity between revolution and production, politics and economy, consciousness and matter and political consciousness and professional competence must be handled correctly. New type mining areas that combine industry and agriculture and city and countryside should be built, bourgeois right restricted and the three major differences, between workers and peasants, town and country and mental and manual labour narrowed gradually.

It would be wrong to look on Taching as an isolated achievement, as something standing alone. The workers and PLA men who opened up the field came from all over China and behind them was the tremendous mass upsurge of the Great Leap Forward, during which many conventions had been rejected and the General Line of going all out, aiming high and achieving greater, faster, better and more economical results in building socialism had profoundly affected the whole nation. It was at this time that China began to reject the deadening managerial hierarchy in heavy industry as it had developed elsewhere—a

rejection which was confirmed and extended in the Cultural Revolution.

One great struggle had occurred in 1960, around the 'Charter of the Anshan Iron and Steel Company', formulated by Chairman Mao. Its popularisation was, however, held up for many years by revisionists. The workers of Taching nevertheless took it as their guide to the fundamental principles of good management.

Keep politics firmly in command; strengthen Party leadership; launch vigorous mass movements; institute the system of cadre participation in productive labour and worker participation in management; reform outdated and irrational rules and regulations; maintain close cooperation among workers, cadres and technicians; go full steam ahead with technical innovations and technical revolution.

Nearly 130 years ago Marx and Engels related the rise of the proletariat as a revolutionary class to the development of large-scale industry under capitalism. After describing the development of capitalist production and of ever more destructive crises, they added:

... not only has the bourgeoisie forged the weapons that bring death to itself; it has also called into existence the men who are to wield these weapons — the modern working class — the proletarians. . . .

Of all the classes that stand face to face with the bourgeoisie today, the proletariat alone is a really revolutionary class. (*The Manifesto of the Communist Party*)

One manifestation of Mao's greatness as a Marxist is the insight which led him to warn against the concentration of production in a few massive units, advocating instead the parallel development of large, medium and small enterprises, harnessing resources at different levels. It would have been easy to decide to build a new, great 'oil city' at Taching to symbolise China's growing industrial might, and this was in fact proposed by some. But the workers, both men and women, after long discussions and basing themselves on the thought of Mao Tse-tung, decided otherwise. This is the way forward which we may expect other parts of China to take, modifying and gradually eliminating the contradiction between town and country, wor-

ker and peasant, and mental and manual labour. Taching's many small units are not separate and alone. Each community and enterprise, each team of well-sinkers, each team of women builders, has its own branch or branches of the CPC and its links with the Party at the modest oilfield centre and thence with the provincial capital, Harbin, and with Peking. It is a microcosm of the future.

Taching's technique — like technique in a few other Chinese industrial units — fears no comparison anywhere in the world. Its workers are free, conscious proletarians, masters of their own affairs, personally modest yet unlimited in their ambitions and gradually, bold in conception yet cautious in execution, building a society which capitalism and we who live under capitalism can barely imagine.

At present they are taking only the first step on a long road. The immediate aim, after the Learn-from-Tachai and Learn-from-Taching Conferences is 'to bring about the modernisation of agriculture, industry, national defence and science and technology and build China into a powerful socialist state before the end of the century'.

GREETINGS TO INDIAN FRIENDS

While the news of the Indian election results is still fresh we send greetings to all our readers and former readers in India. Since the imposition of the state of emergency many subscriptions have been cancelled and many friends imprisoned.

Now that the feelings of the Indian people have been so clearly expressed we hope to resume relations with all our former readers, who have been constantly in our thoughts.

We believe that the Indian people is a great people, destined to play a key role in world history, and we wish them continued progress on the path of unity, struggle and emancipation.

THE CHINA POLICY STUDY GROUP

BOOK REVIEWS

WIND IN THE TOWER: Mao Tse-tung and the Chinese Revolution, 1949-1975, by Han Suyin. *Jonathan Cape, 1976, 404pp, price £6.50.*

Han Suyin has always enjoyed a wide readership and this second volume of her life of Mao Tse-tung justifies it. How far has she achieved her objective of providing, for the ordinary man or woman, an account of the career of the greatest man of our age? Those meeting him for the first time in this volume — and we hope they will be many — cannot fail to appreciate his stature as an exponent of scientific socialism, as a revolutionary, as a statesman, as a teacher and as a student, as a modest and fallible human being, and as one who drew his great strength directly from the people, in whom he put all his trust. Han Suyin's engaging style draws readers easily on to greater understanding of the magnitude of Mao's accomplishment. All who try to advance knowledge of China are in her debt.

As we said in our review of the first volume (*BROADSHEET*, January 1973), there is really no biography of Mao to compare with this. There are writers who have been closer to him at some period of his life, who have written from a more specifically Marxist viewpoint, or who have perhaps shown more insight in some respects; but their accounts, at the best, have been incomplete. Other professional writers lack Han Suyin's personal experience and at some critical points distort or fail in understanding.

Bourgeois reviewers normally condemn her for being un-

critical, for believing that everything the Chinese do is right and that they never make mistakes. No one who says this can have read the present volume, which refers to a considerable number of errors — for some of which Mao Tse-tung blamed himself. The Chinese Communist Party succeeded, not because their policies were always right, but because mistakes were seen in time and corrected.

Then she is condemned because she often quotes as authority for her statements unnamed officials, workers or peasants. It is a source of strength, that she has been able to go among and talk on terms of mutual understanding with so many ordinary people, giving her a big advantage over most other writers.

Though in our opinion such criticisms have little validity, we do not think this book faultless.

One of the difficulties of writing about modern history is that it is always in motion. An historian who aspires to be up to date is liable to find that events of the day after publication have vitiated judgments made the day before. Appraisals inevitably become more hasty, and therefore less reliable, as one approaches the present and it becomes harder to pick out those events and trends which in later years will be recognised as the important ones.

The first part of this volume, covering the period from 1949 to 1962, is balanced, readable, penetrating in analysis, and contains information not easy to find elsewhere. The second part suffers from the difficulties referred to above. In 20 or 40 years it will be much easier to write about the first Cultural

Revolution, highlighting the essentials. We are sure Han Suyin's overwhelmingly positive view is correct, but some readers may find the mass of detail confusing. So many names (difficult for the Westerner) are mentioned and so many changing and conflicting tendencies alluded to, that the non-expert may feel he cannot distinguish the main trend.

Furthermore, in a situation of such continuous and violent class struggle as that of China today, reputations can be quickly overturned and past events seen in a new light. It is no criticism of Han Suyin if she failed to foresee the overthrow of the 'Shanghai radicals'; when she was writing their reputation appeared to stand high. In the turbulent history of modern China such difficulties will recur.

For similar reasons one may question the wisdom of Han Suyin's efforts to bring her story right up to date. It might have been better had she terminated it after the 9th Party Congress, though we understand her reluctance to do so. We hope that in perhaps ten years she will be able to write another volume, bringing her story up to the time of Chairman Mao's death.

Finally, we may add that it is by no means necessary to have read the first volume in order to understand and enjoy the second. We hope that many who read it will then want to read the first. At present — day prices they cannot be said to be expensive.

CHINA: THE QUALITY OF LIFE, by Wilfred Burchett with Rewi Alley. Penguin Books, 1976. 312p. Price 90p.

What do people mean when they speak, as they often do now, of 'the quality of life'? It is always in the context of enjoying to the full the things they feel will enhance the way they spend their time. In the present crisis of capitalism, when unplanned production runs riot, we are constantly exhorted to buy more of this and that, useless ornaments as often as not, without which our lives will be barren. 'The quality of life' has come to mean private ownership of as many objects as possible, to lay on coffee tables and display to our friends. If these contribute anything, it is no more than the miser's delight at the mere contemplation of his treasures. There are two aspects of life which are rarely mentioned: joy in work and harmony in social relations. Only by our 'status symbols' can we show that we have attained the good life.

Here lies the significance of this book, by two authors who have a long and wide experience of ordinary daily life in China. The theme is announced from the very first chapter. 'The people's communes: Mao's greatest leap'. This book is a record of years of travel all over China, talking to workers and peasants, learning about the realities of their lives. Here, when people who formerly dragged out a miserable existence in dire poverty proudly display their watches and bicycles, it is not in terms of 'see how much money I make', but rather 'see how our people are contributing to the country's progress'. The difference is that none regard themselves as in competition with others, all are consciously working for the good of society. The best proof is perhaps the way in which those communes which enjoy good soil and weather willingly forego some of their own chances of material benefits in order to send aid to the less fortunate: not acts of philanthropic charity, but because they feel themselves to be part of one community, in which all know and feel for the sufferings of others. The vast and inspiring response to the earthquake disasters bears witness.

What comes through strongly in this book is the sense that power is in the hands of working people; they are in charge of their own lives and are creating a social organisation which not only recognises people's interdependence, but makes it the very foundation of their new way of living. Wilfred Burchett and Rewi Alley have personal knowledge of all aspects of this, from decent behaviour ('Fifty thousand policeless states'), through the basic areas of production, distribution, food and health, to matters such as the role and aspirations of national minorities and the young.

These two authors have seen how such changes have occurred since the Liberation and especially since the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. What they see fires them with enthusiasm — not surprisingly! — and their book reflects this. They tend, as the Chinese do not, to gloss over the bad things that still need attention, and their somewhat romantic view colours their style. The poetic epithet is much in evidence: young girls are all pretty and lively, old men have sun-tanned and wrinkled faces which light up with smiles, officials are energetic, indeed tireless. But the book is a convincing account of mass participation in a national effort which does not confuse quality of life with quantity of possessions: of people who are conscious of having, for the first time, power over their own destinies through co-operation, scornful of selfishness, and confident of their ability to continue their progress towards full control by people over things, instead of the other way about.

ENGELS ON NATIONALISATION

For it is only when the means of production or communication have *actually* outgrown management by share companies, and therefore their transfer to the state has become inevitable from an economic standpoint — it is only then that this transfer to the state, even when carried out by the state of today, represents an economic advance, the attainment of another preliminary step towards the taking over of all productive forces by society itself. Recently, however, since Bismarck adopted state ownership, a certain spurious socialism has made its appearance — here and there even degenerating into a kind of flunkeyism — which declares that *all* taking over by the state, even the Bismarckian kind, is in itself socialistic. If, however, the taking over of the tobacco trade by the state was socialistic, Napoleon and Metternich would rank among the founders of socialism. (Frederick Engels, *Anti-Dühring*, Part III, Section 2).

CORRECTION

We regret that there were two serious omissions in the article *Early Class Struggles in the USSR*, in our last issue.

At the end of page 3 the last part of a quotation from Lenin was omitted. The following is the complete passage:

"The central feature of the situation now is that the vanguard must not shirk the work of educating itself, of remoulding itself. . . . The main thing now is to advance as an immeasurably wider and larger mass, and only together with the peasantry, proving to them by deeds, in practice, by experience, that we are learning, and that we shall learn to assist them, to lead them forward (CW, Vol. 32, p. 335).

"But the bulk of the Bolshevik Party failed to understand the specific nature of agricultural production and class relations in . . ." (*Continue top of Page 4.*)

Then on page 4 the following should be added to the end of the first paragraph after the subhead 'Revisionism':

"At times it seems to question whether Lenin was an orthodox 'Bolshevik' at all, but what must be emphasised is that the great link between Lenin and the Bolshevik Party lay in their united fundamental belief in the dictatorship of the proletariat."

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