

China Policy Study Group

BROADSHEET

PROBLEMS OF NATIONAL LIBERATION AND SOCIALISM

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SIGNIFICANT ECONOMIC MILESTONE

FOR thirty years China's sights have been set at modernisation without social injustice. There are short cuts to modernisation which take a heavy toll in retarded living standards and a prolonged dislocation of urban and rural life. Responsible planning, and particularly socialist planning, must beware of all these pitfalls and be ready to tighten the reins when the foundations for accelerated modernisation are found wanting.

It is this necessity that dictated a period of readjustment, and later its extension from three years to nearer five. Most immediately apparent of the deficiencies in the foundation were power shortages and gaps in the transport system. These must be repaired before any major programme of new capital construction can be launched. In 1979 electrical power output was raised from its previous annual level of 257,000 to 282,000 kWh and in 1980 it was up to 297,000. Coal output, however, after increasing from 618 m. tons in 1978 to 635 m. in 1979, fell back to 606 m. Crude oil production is at present stationary around 106 m. tons per annum. Transport improvements in China, when they happen, are impressive by international standards but the priority given to them has been too low.

The other area of capital construction which has languished too often is civilian housing. Here one of the first gains of the readjustment period was seen in a 33 per cent increase in housing completions in 1979, giving the highest annual total in three decades. In 1980 a 25

per cent increase in urban house building brought the total in that sector to 78 million, setting up a further record. State and local investment in housing construction, taken together, added up to around 20 per cent of China's total investment in capital construction last year, compared with a little over 5 per cent in 1966-1976, and a million-and-a-half people moved into new accommodation.

The achievement claimed as most significant, however, is not in the field of construction but in the balance of industrial production. The key to accumulation in China—as well as to the advance of living standards—is light industry, which turns out mainly consumer goods. Before last year, if industrial output as a whole increased by 8 per cent, the figure for light industry alone would be a little above that and the figure for heavy industry a little below. But in 1980 there came a break. Light industry went up by 17.4 per cent, heavy industry by 1.6 per cent. Even in value terms light industry (including textiles) now accounts for nearly half (46.7 per cent) of China's industrial output.

That milestone should have been passed before, but it was not until after Mao's death that his words began to be applied literally. To serve the people certainly means having more and better heavy industry in the long run; but with a huge agricultural and urban population looking for tangible improvement in living standards the priority must go to light industry.

ACCOUNTABLE TO THE PEOPLE

THE trial of the 'ten principal defendants in the case of the Lin Piao and Jiang Qing cliques' ended on 25 January with two suspended death sentences and eight long terms of imprisonment. It is no longer in the news, but neither is it yet part of history.

Nowhere is it possible to divorce justice from politics. This is especially so when the accused, as in the case of the 'gang of four', were highly placed public servants who used their positions to assume enormous power over their fellow-citizens—arbitrarily depriving many thousands of employment, possessions, homes, social and political rights, liberty and, in not a few cases, life itself. They showed neither justice nor mercy to those who, unfortunately, fell into their hands. Their intrigues and violence they tried to justify *politically*. The people of China tried them according to properly worked out procedures and laws. In relation to their deeds, the sentences were lenient; the accused were not treated as they had treated so many others.

Outside observers' views of the recent proceedings of

the special people's tribunal are inevitably coloured by their own preconceptions. There are some who regard Jiang Qing & Co. as the true communist leadership, seeking to rid China of 'capitalist-roaders', reactionaries and the like, including Zhou Enlai and Zhu De. They regard the whole proceedings as a mockery of justice, put on by the victors in a political struggle.

Then there are those who lay most stress on the rights of these individuals, rather than the rights of society or on the need to defend socialism and the proletarian dictatorship. They naturally object to the proceedings, on the grounds that they started with a presumption of the accused's guilt, and that it was impossible to distinguish the crimes charged from political acts.

Some Chinese no doubt hold these two distinct points of view, but the available evidence suggests that they are very few. For the most compelling reasons, the overwhelming weight of public opinion was against Jiang Qing and her colleagues, and rejoiced in their downfall. The widespread hatred felt for them formed at a time

when the mass media were clearly being manipulated in their favour. Anyone outside China presuming to comment on the trial has to take account of this fact.

There are many who seriously want, and have been working for, a society fundamentally different from, and from a working-class standpoint much superior to, Western capitalist, Soviet-type and neocolonial societies. Such a society is in accord with the wishes and interests of the vast majority of the people, and Marx, Lenin and Mao have helped them to identify its features and its emergence. From the point of view of such a society, Zhang Chunqiao and Jiang Qing are reactionaries and criminals, whatever may be thought of the trial. Facts show that Mao's label ('a gang of four'), with connotations of a gangster or mafia character, was deserved. The worker and peasant masses did not follow the lead of Mao, Zhu and Zhou and their associates in revolutionary struggle and socialist transformation in order to establish a regime which was becoming as cruel, exploitative and despotic as Chiang Kaishek's.

There is an important sense in which the trial, however imperfectly its unique problems were handled, could set a good precedent. Political mistakes and dis-

putes must, of course, always be handled politically. But cadres and leaders, who are as indispensable in a socialist society as they are, to serve different ends, in capitalist society, must be held accountable for what they deliberately *do*, especially for what they do to people. However highly placed or connected they are, officials who trample on the rights of the people, who are responsible for thuggery, torture and murder, must not be allowed to get away simply with dismissal. There are leaders who merely make errors of judgement, or cadres who are simply incompetent or politically confused. The masses may still like them, and excuse their shortcomings. However, people's courts, as long as they are not monopolised by a faction, are necessary to deal with crimes. There are, as the trial has shown, fundamental differences between mistakes, errors, misjudgements, on the one hand, and criminal acts such as summarily imprisoning, torturing and killing political dissenters and opponents. The police, army, security services and courts in most of the world are the instruments of a minority who monopolise state power. It is a good thing for the state in China to be seen clearly as different from that of capitalist and soviet societies.

RESISTANCE OR APPEASEMENT?

SE Asian Response to Soviet Vietnamese Aggression

Written for BROADSHEET by Malaya News Service, P.O. Box 164, Fitzroy, Victoria 3065, Australia.

PART 2

Struggle, Not Pleadings and Prayers

IF the appeasement trend in the world today is to be combatted and turned it is important to analyse its basis. In the recent South East Asian experience the starting point of the trend is a recurring underestimation of Vietnam's intentions and of its integration with Soviet global strategy. While very few SE Asian politicians still maintain that Vietnam's intervention in Kampuchea is only temporary, some argue that Vietnam's ambitions are limited to Indochina and acquiesce to the proposition that Vietnam is 'destined to dominate Indochina'. Shutting their eyes to the separate national identities of Kampuchea and Laos and the inalienable right of these two nations to national independence and self-determination, these politicians feel it is better to let events, unsavoury as they may be, take their course. 'Why jeopardise our relations with Hanoi over the fate of others?' they ask. 'If we anger Vietnam by opposing its domination of Indochina and by assisting the Kampuchean resistance the Vietnamese regime may turn on us.' Hanoi's diplomacy has hammered this theme, telling ASEAN that there will be peace, and stability in the region again provided ASEAN minds its own business and lets Hanoi mind all of Indochina's business. Thailand, says Hanoi, has nothing to fear from us so long as it doesn't help the Kampuchean guerillas or allow the channelling of food aid. If the Thais don't desist they only have themselves to blame for the outcome.

Many know that Vietnam's ambitions are not limited to Indochina but still go on foolishly hoping that if left in peace to have its fill of Kampuchea its appetite may be sated. This is reminiscent of the Anglo-French appeasers in 1938 who gave away Czechoslovakia to Hitler in the belief that this would fill the Nazi belly.

A major illusion is to keep seeing Vietnam in isolation from Soviet global expansionism, to think that the Moscow-Hanoi axis is not consolidated and thus to believe that skilful diplomacy can wean Vietnam away from its agency relationship with the USSR. The inverse of the illusion is also heard, with people arguing that Moscow will tire of underwriting Vietnamese aggression.

The reality is that the Le Duan ruling group in the Vietnamese Communist Party has nailed its colours, and for the time being those of its hapless country, to the masthead of Soviet social-imperialism. They have entered into an exploitative and subservient military, economic, political and diplomatic alliance with Moscow. The country is flooded with Soviet technicians and administrators. Commands of the military and internal security are under heavy Soviet influence. Those in the leadership who uphold national independence are being purged, killed or forced to flee abroad. Russian moves in West Asia and in SE Asia are part of an inter-related strategy designed to tie up the globe's strategic points, such as the Straits of Hormuz and the Malacca Straits, the sea lanes and key mineral and energy resources, before waging war on the European continent. Soviet hegemony over Vietnam is too firm for any weaning away to occur in the foreseeable future. Even if the world conceded Vietnamese domination of Indochina, ASEAN made friendly overtures, the West resumed economic aid or the US normalised relations—it would need much more than this to prevent the Hanoi regime handing over the country as the Soviet Union's main military base and supplier of mercenaries in SE Asia. What it does require is a new Vietnamese revolution.

The appeasement trend in ASEAN has also been fuelled by the appeasement line within the West. In the US some sections of the bourgeoisie pursue collusion with Soviet imperialism, find collaboration profitable and seek common cause against China and the world revolutionary movement. They share an abhorrence of the national independence of others.

The appeasement line on Indochina surfaced clearly in the State Department early in 1980. A proposal was put forward, apparently with the imprimatur of the Carter administration, to recognise Vietnamese domination of Indochina in exchange for Hanoi confirming earlier offers not to grant the USSR permanent bases in Indochina. When this trade-off plan was put to the Thai Premier, Kriengsak, he strongly objected. The *Far Eastern Economic Review* (4/4/80) reported that Kriengsak's opposition prompted the US to assist in his downfall shortly afterwards.

A major aim of Vietnamese diplomacy towards ASEAN has been to drive a wedge between the regional grouping and China. All stops have been pulled out in this campaign. Hanoi has portrayed China as the big expansionist and aggressor in Asia and has tried to stir racial chauvinism in Malaysia and Indonesia, taking a page from the era of John Foster Dulles to argue that

SE Asia's ethnic Chinese are a disloyal, fifth column. It has elicited support for 'unified action against Chinese expansionism'. Some in ASEAN have been influenced. In Malaysian and Indonesian ruling circles the idea lingers on that a strong Vietnam serves as a buffer against China. Interestingly, in Thailand, which has endured Vietnam's bombs and bullets, there are fewer who can see any advantage in an aggressive neighbour being strong. Actions speak louder than words. In its 31-year history the People's Republic of China has not occupied, nor sought to occupy, any country. Vietnam has occupied two and has others in its sights. Its superpower backer has a discredibly long and expanding list of victims.

Where greatest vigilance needs to be directed is towards a developing, more permanent base for Soviet social-imperialism inside the various SE Asian countries. As the influence of western imperialisms in the region declines the local bureaucrat-capitalist classes, which have built their wealth and power through mutually beneficial collaboration with foreign capital, cast around for new associates. Already there are prominent politicians, financiers and intellectuals in Thailand, Malaya, Indonesia and the Philippines who have strong connections with Soviet and Vietnamese interests. They promote appeasement of Vietnamese aggression, encourage Soviet investment and make propaganda for Moscow and Hanoi. Some bureaucrat-capitalists feel that an alliance with social-imperialism will give new strength to their class and stave off domestic proletarian and peasant revolution. Hanoi plays up to these reactionaries by assuring them it is no friend of the underground revolutionary movements. In late 1978 Pham Van Dong went so far as to lay a wreath on a monument in Kuala Lumpur built to the British colonial army's suppression of the Malayan national liberation struggle in the 1950's.

The social-imperialists also seek allies among the military, the universities, trade unions, student bodies and cultural and other mass organisations. In Thailand they have unsuccessfully sought to split the Communist Party as well as establishing their own 'revolutionary parties'. They work to build up a Quisling organisation which at the appropriate time could 'invite' Vietnamese forces into Thailand and form a 'government of national salvation'. Vigilance against internal subversion and resistance to external aggression are the two essentials for defending sovereignty and territorial integrity.

The Kampuchean Answer to Aggression

Since the June '80 attack by Vietnamese forces on Thailand the appeasement trend in the ASEAN countries has slowed. No new firm moves have been seen towards any change in ASEAN policy on Kampuchea. The Malaysian and Indonesian governments appear to have reviewed the Kuantan principle and have found it lacking. Various moves have been announced to increase defence preparedness. All ASEAN states retain recognition of Democratic Kampuchea and again successfully sponsored a UN General Assembly resolution calling for the withdrawal of the aggressor troops and the convening of an international conference on Kampuchea.

The UN also voted to maintain the seat of Democratic Kampuchea in the world body. The ASEAN delegates argued strongly for this. Filipino Foreign Minister Dr. Romulo told the UN General Assembly: 'Today Vietnam will once again make an effort to unseat the legitimate government of Kampuchea from the UN and instal in its place the alleged government of Heng Samrin. . . . The Heng Samrin regime is not in Phnom Penh by divine right nor is it there by political right. It sits in the Kampuchean capital by the grace of the weapons of its master and protector, without whom it is helpless. If we accept the Heng Samrin regime, then we would be rewarding the aggressor. If we accept the Heng Samrin regime then we legitimize and indeed invite interference in our own internal affairs.'

Kampuchea is the test case for the future peace of South East Asia. If the Soviet-Vietnamese aggressors had been successful in subjugating this country they would certainly have moved into others. Their diplomatic aims have been to isolate the Kampuchean resistance and to cause splits and unpreparedness in ASEAN ranks. In these circumstances it is clear that the ASEAN countries will pay a fearsome price for any appeasement of Hanoi. If, for example, Thailand were to bow to Vietnam's threats and prevent access to the Kampuchean resistance from its territory, would Vietnam leave Thailand in peace? No. It would only hasten the day when the aggression spreads widely into Thailand.

The Kampuchean people have now built a powerful resistance, tying the enemy down, draining him of his will and gradually turning the overall situation around.

The Kampuchean example has again underlined historical experience that when an aggressor is on the loose national independence, territorial integrity and peace cannot be preserved by prayers, pleadings or payments. An aggressor will not give back at the conference table what the tide of battle has yet to redress. Struggle by a wide unity of forces, domestically and internationally, is the only formula capable of dealing an eventual death-blow to a menace as great as Soviet expansionism.

The Kampuchean resistance is becoming a source of awakening and inspiration, arousing people of various social strata throughout South East Asia to the defence of their national sovereignty and territorial integrity. In Laos, which was quietly occupied by Vietnam, people organise and an armed resistance develops. In the ASEAN countries many voices are heard opposing those in the ruling circles who have been manoeuvring for appeasement. A widening range of political parties, organisations and individuals adopt a similar stand against Soviet-Vietnamese hegemonism. The need and potential for united action is felt. There are calls for coalition government of all patriotic and democratic forces against the threat of aggression.

Resistance, not appeasement, is the only viable answer to aggression. A key part of every nation's contribution to defending peace and its own sovereignty and territorial integrity is to give firm material, political and diplomatic support to those countries and peoples in the frontline against Soviet or Soviet-backed aggression—the Kampucheans, the Afghans, the Eritreans and the others who will face and rise to meet the challenge in future.

DE-MAOISATION OR BOLSHEVISM ?

The conclusion of the comments by Philip Corrigan and Derek Sayer begun in our February issue.

THE new line involves a cessation of what was the most progressive focus of policy in China—the constant attack on the Three Great Differences: the division between mental and manual labour (which seems to have been more or less dissolved, *Beijing Review* no. 31, 1980), the division between urban and agrarian production, and the division between large scale and small scale production forms. Now instead, and this is central to Bolshevism, such differences—along with a wide range of production forms, relations and techniques—are seen as neutral ingredients for becoming developed i.e. becoming modernised in the direction of the dominant available examples in the world of 'modern countries', now as then, the USA. This is not, emphatically, an argument against the prime necessity to satisfy the needs of the people (and to see those needs as constantly augmented) but it is an argument against claiming that those needs have to be in the form of capitalist commodities, with their cultural consequences. In pronouncement after pronouncement—centrally in the areas of education and health care (see S. Rifkin 'Health care in China: the

experts take command', *Tropical Doctor*, April 1980)—it is just the latter objectives which are being followed. What we argue here is not a moral critique but that if the new line in China persists people will be less well fed, clothed, housed and cared for—i.e. *less emancipated*—than they have been. Further inequalities of power and life—for instance, between town and countryside, skilled and unskilled, officials and others—will increase. The repeating of the slogan 'Only they who work shall be paid' forgets that this is not a strategic theory, but a recognition by Marx of the untransformed nature of the social relations inherited by socialist construction. It is, along with the many other similar restrictions on thought and practice, a reason for the need for one, two, many GPCRs to transform such inheritances in a socialist direction from below. Mao himself pointed this out during the Campaign against Bourgeois Right.

This freezing of certain conjunctural theses into metaphysical absolutes is also typical of the Bolshevik forms of socialist construction, it reveals State hegemony over production politics, fusion of Party and State into a new 'historic bloc' with managers and other experts. The central concepts repeated in recent years—'realism' and 'pragmatism' (welcomed by Mohan in his article in *BROADSHEET*, August 1980, reprinted in *China Now* Sept-Oct 1980) are in fact arguments against that democratisation of theory which was so unique and extensive a feature of the GPCR and the Campaign Against Bourgeois Right, when certain texts by Marx, Engels and Lenin received their widest distribution and discussion ever (see *Marx, Engels, Lenin on the dictatorship of the proletariat*, Peking, F.L.P., 1975, originally published in *People's Daily* and *Red Flag* and translated with valuable notes in *Peking Review* in early 1975.)

We are arguing against the dominant interpretations (everything is fine! everything is terrible!) as we have previously in the characterisation of the USSR. We note Mohan's discovery that there is now an argument that within China there are no 'clear agreed positions on the relationship between domestic economy and foreign policy' in the case of the USSR. We would extend this to other socialist formations: China's \$100m loan to the fascist Junta in Chile ought to have raised just this question even before the invasion to 'punish' Vietnam. The world we and the Chinese people live in is dominated not by superpowers but a worldwide system of production relations, that of capitalism. This dominance is as much cultural and political as it is economic—it offers, as Marx frequently makes clear, the 'obvious' definitions of not simply goods, but the good life.

We think the range of recent policies in China (including the current re-estimation of both the GPCR and Mao himself) amounts to a retreat from the form of sociation which was delivering a different good life for millions of women and men in China. What we can see taking place is not an accidental sequence of changes, but a systematic pattern of policies. Partly, yes, as a response to the excess of commandism in the GPCR, an objectivist current is being institutionalised; this is often announced through a serialisation: *then* we attended to class struggle, *now* we attend to productive forces. It may be that these changes will be symbolised by an active 'de-Maoisation' similar to just that 'deStalinization' which Mao was so theoretically profound in refusing.

If we are correct then this impossible duty on comrades here—if they seek to support the masses of China and not the leadership (and not China, a metaphysical entity)—they must be resolutely honest and explicit. This means arguing for what are recognisably systematic and coherent changes in line (or arguing against them, as we have implied here) and not smothering changes under a general rhetoric of continuity.

BOOK REVIEW

MARX, HEGEL AND DIALECTICS, by R. Norman and S. Sayers. Harvester Press Ltd., 1980. £4.50.

THE central issue of philosophy concerns the problem of knowledge. If reality is constantly changing, how can we know anything for certain? What is the relation between thought and the real world; mind and matter? Norman and Sayers agree that, without dialectics, philosophy has failed to provide an answer, falling either into reductionism—mind is conflated into a mere pattern of behaviour of matter, or dualism—mind and matter operate in separate spheres. Hegel's dialectic, in response to these two schools of philosophy, attempted to unite thinking and reality through their interaction. However, Hegel was an idealist. For him thought was primary, the creator of the real world.

Marx took Hegel's dialectic and 'turned it off its head, on which it was standing, and placed it on its feet'. As a materialist, he took the objective world as primary; it is knowable through our activity by which we come to learn processes of development and can use our knowledge to change reality. Using the dialectical method, Marx analysed the laws of social development and in particular, the underlying contradictions of capitalism. In this way, he revealed not how society ought to be, but what it really was and how it could change. This is the crucial distinction between utopian and scientific socialism. Dialectics is fundamental to Marxism. In fact, both Lenin and Mao took time to study dialectics, even at critical moments of struggle, to assert the necessity of a scientific approach towards social change in order to achieve its end. This is how important dialectics is.

In their book, Norman and Sayers debate the inter-related and complex controversies involved in understanding dialectics, that are relevant for philosophers as well as Marxists: what is the relation between the dialectical concept of contradiction and the logical law of non-contradiction? Does dialectics supersede analytical philosophy or are they reconcilable? Is Marx's dialectic the mirror-image of Hegel's? Is it a fundamental law of nature, of society and thought? or did Marx use it simply as a conceptual tool for understanding reality? Was Engels justified in applying dialectics to nature as Marx did to human society and history? Do contradictions really exist?

Norman and Sayers disagree on these questions and on their interpretation of dialectics. Their book is a debate in the form of a series of essays, in which each writer develops his own analysis in criticising the other. This gives the reading a dynamic; the controversial issues are clarified and developed in the unfolding of their disagreements, in a sophisticated yet accessible way. In the process, Norman and Sayers deal with the theories of the chief dialecticians—Hegel, Marx and Engels, drawing also widely on sources from Ancient Greek, British empiricist, German idealist, modern analytical and Marxist philosophies. Taking dialectics as a key, they illuminate the issues of philosophy—science, epistemology, logic—and provide critiques of the views of other philosophers.

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