

China Policy Study Group

BROADSHEET

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SOCIALIST SOLICITUDE

Newspapers and radio have recently carried reports of the reappearance in office of a number of Chinese who were strongly criticised during the Cultural Revolution and then lost to public view. Some Westerners think these 'rehabilitations' have nullified the achievements of the Cultural Revolution. Others suggest that now passions have cooled and excess steam has been vented, China is being governed by the same people as before, and in the same way.

These critics do not understand the style of work that has long been traditional in the Chinese Communist Party and which now, as a result of the Cultural Revolution, is spreading to organisations at all levels. The emphasis is on 'remoulding' those who have erred, even though their errors may have been serious. The backsliding of one member is considered a defeat for the whole collective, but the loss is reduced if a deviator can be set on the right path and his talents used once more.

One should remark, too, that some of the accusations made during the Cultural Revolution were certainly untrue. Lin Piao was only one of many who waved the red flag in order to oppose it. Nevertheless, the charges they made had to be investigated.

Errors, whoever makes them, are generally the result of isolation from the masses. When everyone without exception is subject to mass supervision, when cadres work at the bench and on the land, when leaders maintain close ties with the workers and poor peasants, there is less possibility of isolation. This is one more gain of the Cultural Revolution, now incorporated in the new Constitution.

The May 7 Cadres Schools are another important, and new, means of maintaining revolutionary understanding and enthusiasm. Some commentators have described them as punishment camps, but the eagerness to attend them, the high spirits which pervade them and their achievements in land reclamation and production—now fortunately witnessed by many Westerners—prove the contrary.

The Chinese people live frugally, saving every grain of rice and every bit of steel for the revolution. People are even more precious; at every level they are preserved and cherished.

PROLETARIAN DICTATORSHIP UNITES NATIONALITIES

As events in countries like Angola, the Philippines, Ethiopia and India show, the fight against imperialism and local reaction can be further complicated unless proper consideration is given to the national question. The special problems of oppressed minorities and the mutual suspicion and division among different nationalities can make it very hard for all the oppressed workers, peasants and others to unite against the real enemy. But unless the correct solutions to these problems are grasped at every stage of the struggle, the false solutions of neo-colonialism and bourgeois liberalism will not be exposed as thoroughly as they should be.

In the era of imperialism, the bourgeois-democratic movement in the Third World has a special character: it is actually part of the world socialist revolution. But the bourgeois form contradicts the substance. Only under the leadership of the proletariat, as in China, can the democratic revolution be carried through to a conclusion (where it passes into a socialist revolution). Especially important among the negative characteristics of the democratic revolution when carried out under bourgeois leadership is its inability to handle the national question, which constantly gives one or the other superpower the opportunity to interfere.

From the time it began to lead the revolutionary struggle in China the Communist Party tried to make a concrete Marxist analysis of the specific historical situation as it affected the different nationalities in China's vast population, and to show how under proletarian leadership *all* the oppressed nationalities in China could achieve the development which feudalism, bureaucrat capitalism and imperialism had made impossible.

In the 'socialist state of the dictatorship of the proletariat' which has been established and developed since victory in 1949, the Chinese people of the fifty-five different nationalities have been learning, under working-class leadership, to handle correctly the complex problems arising from inherited inequalities and a diversity of social formations and cultures. Chinese of Han nationality, the vast majority which dominated in the

past, cannot be thought of as a homogeneous people any more than the minority nationalities can be lumped together. The different regions in which the Hans were concentrated before Liberation in 1949 had themselves developed very unevenly, and were often marked by different dialects and customs. Among the minorities, some were much more developed economically, politically and culturally than others. Some were near extinction—there were then less than 2,000 of the Olunchun and only a few hundred of the Hoche people. There were nationalities which had still to develop a written language. Nearly all Chinese of the minority nationalities, like those of the 'dominant' Han, had been very poor, victims of exploitation by landlords, warlords, imperialists and the Chiang Kai-shek regime; but in addition they had often been denied equality with even the oppressed Hans, who treated them badly and sometimes insultingly. The C.P.C. took account of all this in its revolutionary work.

Applying the Marxist-Leninist line

Following the teaching and example of Marx on the national struggle, Lenin spent time and effort in fighting wrong conceptions of the relation between the proletarian revolution and the right of oppressed nations to self-determination. Five years after the Bolshevik Revolution, he was urging his colleagues to regard the correctness of proletarian revolutionary policy on the national question as a matter of the gravest importance. He was particularly concerned when late in 1922, he detected signs of Great Russian chauvinism within the Party and state leadership; Tsarist Russia had been the most expansionist of the big powers, and an imperialist country, making the empire a 'prison of nationalities', with Russia as an oppressor nation. Lenin was very severe in his criticisms of any measures or acts which would have made the other nationalities 'less equal' in the new state, which, consequently, was established as a union of (equal) socialist soviet republics.

The C.P.C., founded during the years of these policy debates in Moscow, began

with a similar conception of its nationalities policy. The Canton Revolutionary Government, in accordance with the 1924 policy declaration of the K.M.T. led by Sun Yat-sen, broke new ground by proclaiming as part of the programme of the national revolution the equality of all nationalities and the right of all nations in China to self-determination. Chiang's coup of 1927, however, transformed the K.M.T. into the party of the landlords and compradors. But the revolution continued under C.P.C. leadership, and workers, peasants and soldiers from the minority peoples joined it. There was, for example, the Paise Uprising of 1929 among the Chuangs in Kwangsi, leading to the formation of the 7th Workers' and Peasants' Red Army. The young Wei Kuo-ching, now a C.P.C. Political Bureau member, took part in it. In the Kiangsi Soviet, and later, during the Long March and in the Yen-an period when, in Mao's *On Coalition Government, On New Democracy* and other major works, the tasks of the C.P.C. were set out, the nationalities policy developed. A Nationalities Institute was set up in Yen-an. Revolutionaries from various nationalities entered both the leadership and the ranks of the Red Army, of the C.P.C. and of the struggle in the rear areas. In taking their own initiatives and playing their part in achieving the historic victory over the imperialist and K.M.T. forces and over the class enemies within each nation, the proletarian revolutionary vanguard of the Chuang, Miao, Uighur, Mongol, Tibetan, Li and other nationalities united with the much more numerous Hans in creating the People's Republic of China.

The new situation was reflected in the Common Programme (1949) and in the 1954 State Constitution. The People's Republic became a multinational unitary state. Leading Communists and others from the minorities worked to produce a policy for the development of the minority peoples. The Nationalities Affairs Commission was set up in 1954, and eventually an elaborate system of autonomous areas was worked out to give predominantly minority areas a greater measure of local autonomy than the rest had: autonomous regions (at province level), autonomous *chous* (or prefectures) and autonomous counties. There are now five of the first and ninety-eight of the others.

Self-reliance and unity in development

In 1950 there were still some Chinese in the newly liberated areas of the P.R.C. who were serfs, even slaves, and some who were forest dwellers living by hunting. Under the dictatorship of the proletariat their development, it is evident, has surpassed the highest expectations of bourgeois idealists. The political and material transformations in the minority areas during twenty-five years of socialist construction, following the leadership of Mao Tse-tung and the C.P.C., can be said to be of world-wide importance.

A significant example is the Tibetan Autonomous Region. With a system which so savagely oppressed the working people and was so steeped in the darkest superstition, it is not surprising that Tibet was totally unindustrialised and had no primary schools in 1950. By the time of the Khamba rebellion in 1959 the population had declined to 870,000. It has, since the democratic revolution, increased at the rate of two per cent a year. By 1974 there were over 230 medium and small industrial enterprises (cement works, farm tool plants, hydroelectric stations, coal mines, chemical works, etc.) with a working class including 50,000 of Tibetan or other minority nationality. The first primary school began in 1952; last year there were 2,600, with 120,000 pupils. The 1973 grain output was more than double that of 1958 and the Tibetans have vastly expanded the cultivated area and diversified production.

In Sinkiang (with its Chinese of Uighur, Kazakh and ten other minority nationalities) the workers and peasants have in twenty-five years achieved phenomenal increases in production: 2.6 times the cultivated acreage, 3.6 times the grain output, eleven times the cotton output and double the livestock, together with hundreds of new enterprises, including iron and

steel mills and the Karamai oilfield, Inner Mongolia (whose eight millions include ten minorities) now has over 2,000 large, medium and small factories and mines, and total industrial output value was 100 times greater in 1971 than in 1951. Sinkiang has over 160,000 and Inner Mongolia 32,000 industrial workers of minority nationality. The people's achievements in developing education, health, and their own leaders at local, provincial and national level match these economic achievements.

It is not just the correct handling of the relationship between the Han and the minority nationalities which has led to the rapid development of the areas in which the latter are concentrated. The progress made by all the minorities is due also to the intensifying struggle against the old and emerging bourgeoisie, to the struggle to assert the proletarian revolutionary line against the capitalist line in handling the relations between heavy industry, light industry and agriculture, between town and country, between the centre and the regions, between the highly developed coastal industries and the little developed inland industries, between the state and the collective, and between the leadership and the masses; to the tremendous leaps forward in the grasp of Marxism-Leninism in the course of the Cultural Revolution and the campaign against Lin Piao and Confucius; to the rapid emergence of women cadres and youth cadres of high quality; to the increasing socialist co-operation among enterprises at all levels; to the strengthening of the worker-peasant alliance. All these, by accelerating the revolutionary transformation of China and the Chinese people, have advanced the transformation of the minority peoples.

The C.P.C. is more than ever before a multinational, proletarian vanguard; in each minority area such as Tibet or Kwangsi tens of thousands of workers, peasants, tradesmen and cadres are active Party members. The increasing unity of all nationalities is essential to the consolidation of the proletarian dictatorship. Some of the workers, peasants and intellectuals who were most oppressed before are among the most active revolutionaries in factories and communes, and in the state and the Party. All fifty-five nationalities (including the Taiwanese) had deputies in the Fourth National People's Congress (1975); whereas only one in sixteen in the country was a member of a minority, one in seven of the deputies were from minorities. Of those elected Vice-Chairmen or Standing Committee members of the N.P.C., more than one in ten are from minorities. Among them are Keyum Matniyaz, a Uighur, once a farm labourer, now member of a drilling team in the Karamai oilfield; Pasang, a former slave girl, a Party secretary for Tibet, and one of five Tibetans in the C.P.C. Central Committee; vice-Chairman Wei Kuo-ching, a Chuang, a veteran revolutionary and head of the Party and government in Kwangsi; Paojihletai, Mongolian herdsman, Regional C.P.C. Secretary and member of the Central Committee; and others like them. These, and their counterparts in the C.P.C., are part of the leadership of the whole Chinese people, and of the world revolution.

Abolition of classes and nations

Full consideration of nationalities policy during the transition period of socialism will have to take into account the objective of the abolition of all classes. In the course of socialist development from a world order of oppressed and oppressor classes and nations to communism, what happens to the different traditions of language, customs, art, etc., which the working people have created for thousands of years and were never allowed to enjoy? Nations are the creations of people at a particular stage of historical development. They will disappear. But what does it mean to speak of the abolition of nations? In China there has been the impressive revival of dying 'cultures', painstaking research into the languages and traditions of tiny minorities, the development in some cases of a written language for the first time and in other cases of improved scripts, the diversification of production to suit non-

Han tastes and demands, the provision of separate schools on demand for minorities. Are these breaking the unity of the working class? How can workers and peasants collectively transform and manage the economy, exercise state power, and create proletarian art and literature without developing their individual languages and cultures?

Questions like these, which the C.P.C. has carefully considered, go into the most fundamental issues of the achievement of the worldwide victory of socialism, and of the relation between the complete emancipation of all oppressed nations and the emancipation of the working class. These cannot be discussed adequately in a few words. We notice, however, that

it is in the very process of following Chairman Mao's instruction—'Unite for one purpose, that is, the consolidation of the dictatorship of the proletariat'—that some of the best of China's workers have gone far from the advanced, comparatively well-off areas and cities to work alongside the liberated serfs and others who have been denied the experience of modern farming, mining, construction, scientific research and planning, and who since Liberation have been relying mainly on their own efforts. It is not to seek, as the bourgeoisie do, the glory of any nation or nationality, but in the interests of the whole that the leadership of the Party and the state so vigorously support the efforts of the minorities.

FORGETTING THE ABC OF MARXISM

The Soviet leaders charge that by putting politics in command the Chinese are guilty of 'voluntarism' and 'ignoring objective economic laws':

The Maoist approach to economic tasks was determined by the thesis that 'politics is the commanding force'. It turned the Leninist view of the relationship between politics and economics upside down.

(*New Times*, No. 35, 1971.)

It is, of course, the present Soviet leaders who have put Lenin's policies into reverse. However, in his recent book, *Les Luttes des Classes en URSS 1917-1923*, Seuil (Maspero), 1974, Charles Bettelheim suggests that elements of economism can be traced back to an earlier period and that, after the seizure of power in 1917, there were those in the Bolshevik Party who had not eradicated from their thinking notions of economism inherited from the Second International. Certainly in 1921 Lenin was criticised by Trotsky and Bukharin for his 'political' approach. In contrast with what *New Times* would have us believe, Lenin roundly trounced his critics for their economism:

It is strange that we should have to return to such elementary questions, but we are forced to do so by Trotsky and Bukharin. They have both reproached me for 'switching' the issue, or for taking a 'political' approach, while theirs is an 'economic' one. . . . I said again in my speech that politics is a concentrated expression of economics, because I had earlier heard my 'political' approach rebuked in a manner which is inconsistent and inadmissible for a Marxist. Politics must take precedence over economics. To argue otherwise is to forget the ABC of Marxism.

And later in the same statement Lenin commented:

Trotsky and Bukharin make as though they are concerned for the growth of production whereas we have nothing but formal democracy in mind. This picture is wrong, because the *only* formulation of the issue (which the Marxist standpoint allows) is: without a correct political approach to the matter the given class will be unable to stay on top, and, consequently, will be incapable of solving its production problem either.

(*Collected Works*, Vol. 32, pp. 83 & 84.)

At almost every stage in the struggle between the two lines in China the fight against economism in its various guises has been a crucial issue. Dealing with the agricultural co-operative movement in September 1955 Mao Tse-tung said:

Political work is the lifeblood of all economic work. This is particularly true at a time when the social and economic system is undergoing fundamental change. The agricultural co-operative movement has been a severe ideological and political struggle from the very beginning.

(*Selected Readings*, p. 347.)

However, a year later, at the 8th Party Congress, Liu Shao-chi, Peng Chen and (as we learned later) Chen Po-ta were instrumental in introducing into the political resolution a clearly economic approach, apparently in the teeth of Mao Tse-tung's opposition:

In view of the fact that a socialist system has already been established in our country, this (major) contradiction, in essence, is between the advanced socialist system and the backward productive forces of society.

In February 1957 Mao Tse-tung, in his article *On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People*, sought to correct the adverse currents which had manifested themselves at this Congress and the report on the work of the Central Committee at the Second Session of the Eighth National Congress in May, 1958, brought politics back in command.

The experience of the rectification campaign and the anti-rightist struggle once again shows that throughout the transition period, that is, before completion of the building of a socialist society, the main contradiction inside our country is and remains that between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, between the socialist road and the capitalist road.

Exploiting difficulties

The capitalist-readers, however, did not give up. Exploiting the economic problems of the 'three difficult years' (from 1959) Peng Teh-huai (then Minister of Defence) at Lushan in July 1959 argued:

Politics and economics have their respective laws. Therefore, ideological education cannot replace economic work. And a few days later in a *Letter of Opinion*:

In the view of some comrades, putting politics in command could be a substitute for everything. . . . Putting politics in command is no substitute for the economic principles, still less for the concrete measures in economic work.

Liu Shao-chi, Peng Teh-huai and the other capitalist readers were not without their theoretician. Sun Yeh-fang was made head of the education department of the Central China Party School under the presidency of Liu Shao-chi. Later Sun Yeh-fang became Director of the Institute of Economics of the Chinese Academy of Sciences. He visited the Soviet Union many times from 1956 on, and from discussions with economists and managers had imbibed the theories of Liberman who, with others, provided Khrushchev with the rationale for the use of profits, bonuses and other material stimuli and the profitability of individual enterprises. In fact, Sun Yeh-fang averred that he 'would rather take some risks' and be 'more thorough-going than Liberman'.

Sun Yeh-fang's theme song was 'manage the economy with economic methods'. While Liu Shao-chi argued that 'a factory must make money. If it does not, it should be closed down and

the payment of wages stopped', Sun Yeh-fang in 1956 provided the theoretical gloss:

Profit is the most important overall indicator in evaluating the performance of enterprises. So long as we keep a firm grip on profits, it is just like leading a bull by its nose; in this way the legs of the bull (other targets) will naturally follow along.

Other gems from Sun Yeh-fang's internal research reports, his conferences on economic theory and his 'Theory of Socialist Economy' (1961) are that 'of all the laws, the law of value is primary'; 'the average rate of profit on the social capital must be attained by each and every enterprise; those surpassing this rate of profit are advanced enterprises, while those failing to reach this level are lagging behind'; and 'politics must build around production and through production'.

In the eyes of the Soviet revisionists, putting politics in command can only result in impeding the proportionate development of the economy. As a *Red Flag* article (No. 2 1970) makes clear, the opposite is in fact the case:

As far as the state is concerned, if 'our plans are based on the laws of value', it is impossible for unprofitable national-defence industries to develop; it is impossible to establish heavy and inland industries; it is also impossible for regions, provinces, and municipalities to build industrial systems under different conditions proceeding from the view point of war preparedness; it is impossible for the support of agriculture to develop those industries of low production value that make little profit in the short run; it is impossible for the state to run and develop certain categories of daily necessities that must be subsidised within a certain period of time; and, in accordance with the proletarian spirit of internationalism, it is impossible to produce items needed for the struggle of the revolutionary people of the world.

Struggle continues

The struggle in China against economism did not end with the removal of Sun Yeh-fang during the Cultural Revolution. During the Shanghai events of January 1967 the capitalist-roaders attempted to bribe the students and peasants with special bonuses, travel passes and what not to stir up contention with the revolutionary workers. The issue again came to the fore at the Ninth Party Congress in April 1969, as Chou En-lai then explained:

Prior to the Congress, Lin Piao had produced a draft political report in collaboration with Chen Po-ta. They were opposed to continuing the revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat, contending that the main task after the Ninth Congress was to develop production. This was a refurbished version under new conditions of the same revisionist trash that Liu Shao-chi and Chen Po-ta had smuggled into the resolution of the Eighth Congress, which alleged that the major contradiction in our country was not the contradiction between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, but that 'between advanced socialist system and the backward productive forces of society'. Naturally this draft by Lin Piao and Chen Po-ta was rejected by the Central Committee.

Although these major protagonists of economisms have been defeated, the disease still manifests itself and will continue to do so whilst the class struggle continues. In some of the enterprises at the grass roots, the factories and the communes, revolutionary workers and peasants are from time to time putting up *tatsebaos* (big-character posters) to criticise some of the cadres who tend to erode the gains of the Cultural Revolution by introducing disguised forms of bonuses, time off and other economic inducements. The current movement for the study of the theory of the dictatorship of the proletariat will certainly deliver a telling blow to all such expressions of economism.

For example, at the Nanning Aluminium Works, the Party Committee recently (June 1975) conducted a theory study course in every workshop on the reactionary nature of material incentives. The report explained that:

to engage in material incentives can only delight certain people whose bourgeois mentality is serious, and ideas of capitalism, getting rich and 'money is everything', and striving for fame and profit will run rampant, corrupt the workers, sabotage production and the socialist economic base, and lead to a change in the socialist nature of the enterprises.

Says Mao Tse-tung, 'If our ideological work and political work slacken even a little, the economic work will inevitably go astray.' In the Soviet Union the ideological factor is given no place and economism is in full command. Thus in his address of 28th May 1975 to his constituents, Vladimir Dolsikh, Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee, observed:

The acceleration of scientific and technological progress and the extensive introduction of advanced technology and high output machines and units is the *decisive factor* in the intensification of the national economy and in the growth of its efficiency.

Such a policy, which fails to put politics in command, not only tends to depoliticise the working class but must in the long run have disastrous effects on production and the economy as a whole.

REVIEW

HUAN-YING: WORKERS' CHINA by Janet Goldwasser and Stuart Dowty. Monthly Review Press, 404 pages, 1975, £5.30.

The title indicates from the start the warmly sympathetic approach of the authors to the vast subject matter covered by their book. In this careful study, based on an extensive tour of China, they have throughout borne in mind the question asked by Mao Tse-tung—'Where do correct ideas come from? Do they drop from the skies?' Their factual reportage and theoretical analysis arise from perceptive observation and intensive discussions with people they met, workers in industry, peasants on the communes, students and professors, all of which enabled them to prepare this lively and thoughtful account of many aspects of life and thought in China.

The questions they asked must have exhausted their interpreters as they delved into problems of leadership, the role of the Communist Party, basic principles of socialism as applied in China, the position of women, the significance of the philosophical study being carried out by millions of ordinary people—just to mention a few of the aspects of Chinese life canvassed. They were interested in China's policies and practice concerning her national minorities, including the differences in the handling of this sensitive question by the Russian Bolsheviks in the early days of the USSR and by China. The analysis culminates in a thought-provoking presentation of 'the struggle between two lines', typified by the struggles with Liu Shao-chi and Lin Piao, thus helping the reader to appreciate the warning of Mao that further cultural revolutions will be needed and that struggle continues. *Huan-Ying* presents the actual scene through the eyes of friends who persistently sought to find out the why and how.

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