

# China Policy Study Group

# BROADSHEET

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## GREAT DEBATE RENEWED

The Western press has written off President Ford's visit to China as a non-event—no communique, no big new decisions, no sensations. However, when Mao Tse-tung takes time off to spend hours talking to the chieftains of US imperialism it is certain the conversations were momentous.

Thirty years ago—in 1946—Chairman Mao explained to another American, Anna Louise Strong, how US imperialism was then using the cold war as a subterfuge, as a means of achieving world dominion. He warned the world, reactionaries and progressives alike, to be watchful.

Ford and Kissinger have now received a new warning; everywhere the Soviet leadership is on the rampage, trying to subvert Arabs, Africans, Latin Americans, Indo-Chinese and Europeans alike; wherever revolution is in the air Soviet

power, military, diplomatic and economic, is seeking to use the situation for its own aggrandisement. It too uses subterfuge—the sweet-sounding 'policy of detente' is calculated to lull and fool those not yet alive to the reality of the new menace. The US visitors have been reminded of the errors of their predecessors; Churchill was a rabid imperialist sharing the same objectives as Chamberlain but they differed strongly on how to contain their emerging imperialist rival, German Nazism. Chamberlain's strategy, opposed by Churchill, was to reach an accommodation with Hitler, buy him off, do a deal; Munich was a 'policy of detente', with ghastly consequences for the whole world.

Today, the US ruling class is experiencing the same dilemma, the same threats, the same fears, but this time the newest imperialists are those who seek to use

the enormous prestige of Lenin's first Socialist State to reinforce and conceal their betrayal of his principles. Kissinger represents that section of US imperialism that believes it can best outwit its rivals—the social-imperialists—by playing them at their own game—do a deal, buy them off, reach a gentlemen's agreement, pursue a policy of detente! Shades of Chamberlain!

Other sections of US opinion—including some of the ruling class—suspect, more realistically, that the beneficiaries of this policy will be the new ruling class of the Soviet Union—the same gentry who have besmirched and destroyed Socialism in that great country.

The Great Debate has taken on a new dimension; the subterfuge is being exposed. The visit to Peking was not a non-event.

## THE WORKING CLASS AND ITS ALLIES

The working class has much political work to do in order to accomplish its revolutionary task in the countries where monopoly capitalism is most advanced—in Western Europe, the USA, Japan and the Soviet Union. And until it thinks and acts on the correct lines the mass of the working people will continue to be beset with economic and social problems which the bourgeoisie in power has shown itself incapable of solving. The impressive way in which the Chinese have overcome difficulties and achieved success, however, should give proletarian revolutionaries confidence that they can overcome difficulties elsewhere; it is also a lesson in the correct theory and practice of uniting around them, and leading to victory, all the rebellious victims of capitalist and imperialist oppression, and thus beginning the socialist revolution.

Revolutionary-sounding phrases about the great historical role of the working class do not always help the oppressed and exploited classes, nations and social strata to defeat the oppressors. The bourgeoisie can get its leftist allies to wave the bogus red flag in order to oppose the red flag of genuine Marxism. Petty bourgeois revolutionism drives individuals to jump on the stage and play at being the makers of history. The working class does not have to pretend. It is distinctive, unlike any other class, having in its most concentrated and advanced form the working masses' capacity to make history. The agenda of proletarian revolution is defined by the objective course of the development of human society. If the working class finds itself isolated, when it should be leading the people in their millions, it

is because its vanguard has deserted the standpoint and abandoned the methods of Marxism.

### The example of Marx and Engels

To learn to analyse the revolutionary situation correctly at every stage of the struggle, and to see the difference between lines of thinking and policy that lead towards or away from the establishment of the proletarian dictatorship, communists in other lands cannot, any less than the Chinese, dispense with the lessons to be learnt from the struggles that Marx and Engels waged in their day against those who tried to confuse the working class, lead it astray and deprive it of its vital weapon of historical materialism. We are left in no doubt of the world of difference between the scientific principles of historical materialism on the one hand and the rhetorical revisions of them on the other, when we follow the example Marx and Engels set when dealing with the Gotha Programme.

Writing to Auguste Bebel, one of the leaders of the German Party, on 12 October 1875, Engels pointed out that the Gotha Programme consisted, among other things,

'of general propositions, mostly borrowed from *The Communist Manifesto* and the Statutes of the International, but which have been so edited that they contain either *total falsehood* or *pure nonsense*, as Marx proved in the essay well-known to you.'

He had already protested, in a letter of March 1875, against 'Lasalle's high-sounding but historically false phrase' in Para-



graph 4, which declared that in relation to the working class 'all other classes are a single reactionary mass.' This is one of the Lasallean ideas severely criticised by Marx in *The Critique of the Gotha Programme*. Lasalle, he wrote, had an intimate knowledge of *The Communist Manifesto*, but had in this case 'falsified it so grossly' in order to cover up his opportunism. We find that Lasalle's phrase distorts the complex analysis in the first chapter of the Manifesto, in which the feudal nobility, the bourgeoisie, the lower middle class, the artisan, the peasant and other classes and strata are seen from the proletarian standpoint, and a distinction is made between reactionary and revolutionary opposition to the bourgeoisie. The acknowledgement of the bourgeoisie's 'most revolutionary part' in history in no way diminishes the force of the truth that of the classes forced by the development of capitalism to struggle against the bourgeoisie 'the proletariat alone is a really revolutionary class'. Lasalle's ultra-left rhetoric lumping together the feudal nobility, bourgeoisie, peasantry, artisans and others—the majority—into a 'single reactionary mass' is not merely false and nonsensical. It is reactionary. Marx points out that it would please the 'absolutists and feudal opponents' of the bourgeoisie, and justify Lasalle's alliance with Bismarck.

*The Communist Manifesto* appeared in 1848, a year of revolutionary upsurge in Europe. With the later work of Marx and Engels this document has carried to every part of the world the teaching that 'the emancipation of the working class must be the work of the working class itself' and that (in the words of Engels' Preface to the 1888 English edition) 'a stage has been reached where the exploited and oppressed class—the proletariat—cannot attain its emancipation from the sway of the exploiting and ruling class—the bourgeoisie—without, at the same time, and once and for all, emancipating society at large from all exploitation, oppression, class distinctions and class struggles.'

French society was then in a period of profound transformation; in *The Class Struggles in France* Marx had begun a concrete historical analysis of it, which he continued in *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, dealing with the politics of the 1851 coup d'état of Bonaparte. These concrete analyses of the changing material conditions and the changing alignments of social forces related to them in a specific country were written for the revolutionary education of the working class. Marx distinguished the changing and common or conflicting interests not merely of bourgeoisie and proletarians but also of fractions of the bourgeois class. He showed the financial and industrial bourgeoisie, various elements of the aristocracy, the petty bourgeoisie, the industrial working class, different sections of the small peasant proprietors of France at the time, and so on, engaging in struggle against others or joining forces, being oppressed or oppressing. The metaphysical, one-sided approach which issued from the dogma that 'all other classes are a single reactionary mass' is nowhere to be found in these concrete and vivid analyses of historical developments—which distinguish between reliable and temporary allies and between friends and enemies of the working class.

In *The Class Struggles* Marx finds that 'sections of the petty bourgeoisie and peasantry which were already revolutionised' by developments come to ally themselves with the revolutionary proletariat when faced with the coalition of the counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie. He writes of 'the revolutionary peasants', of exploitation by capital such that only the fall of capital can raise the peasant, only an anti-capitalist, proletarian government can break his economic poverty and his degradation'; of the 'various symptoms of the gradual revolutionising of the peasants' in June 1849.

'Gradually we have seen peasants, petty bourgeois, the middle classes in general siding with the proletariat, driven

into open conflict with the official republic and treated by it as antagonists. Resistance to bourgeois dictatorship, need for a change in society, retention of democratic republican institutions as the means to this end, regrouping around the proletariat as the decisive revolutionary force—these are the common characteristics of the so-called party of social democracy, the party of the red republic.'

In *The Eighteenth Brumaire* Marx, after referring to 'the most numerous class of French society, the small peasant proprietors', as the class which Bonaparte had once represented, points out that 'the Bonaparte dynasty represents the conservative, not the revolutionary peasant'—the latter being 'the country people who want to overthrow the old order by their own energies, in alliance with the towns. . .'. The Bonaparte dynasty now represented 'the peasant's superstition, not his enlightenment; his prejudice, not his judgement; his past, not his future. . .'. For the enslavement and impoverishment of the French peasants over the years had been such that their interests,

'are therefore no longer consonant with the interests of the bourgeoisie, as they were under Napoleon, but in opposition to these interests, in opposition to capital. They therefore find their natural ally and leader in the urban proletariat, whose task is the overthrow of the bourgeois order.'

Marx was teaching the working class to distinguish the peasant 'who wants to consolidate the condition of his social existence, the smallholding' from 'the peasant who strikes out beyond it'. In *The Civil War in France*, written at the time of the Paris Commune of 1871, he continued his analyses of the class struggles in France. Only by making this kind of historical analysis 'from the dialectical standpoint, examining the movement from every aspect, taking into account both the past and the future', to use Lenin's words (*Collected Works* Vol. 8, p. 328), could it be ascertained whether the peasantry, or considerable sections of it, were held back by their superstition, prejudice and conservatism, or had become revolutionary allies of the working class.

Lasalle's substitution of a metaphysical, petty bourgeois outlook and thinking for the dialectical method and standpoint of the working class, and its uncritical adoption by Liebknecht and other leaders of the party to which Marx and Engels themselves belonged, explains the severity of Marx's criticism. The Lasalleans were radicals with socialist slogans, and the alliance with them was an unprincipled one.

People like Lasalle are bound to crop up again and again, like weeds. The two-line struggle of Marx's day has never ceased. Lenin, in Russia, had to lead the struggle against proposals and programmes with a 'leftist' Marxist label, because they would lead the Russian Social Democratic Party astray on the question of an alliance first, of the urban proletariat with the peasantry in the struggle to overthrow the Tsarist autocracy and establish a radical democratic republic, and then with the rural proletariat. He never slackened in his efforts to get the revolutionary party of the working class to take into account not an arbitrary selection of facts but 'the totality of the various revolutionary currents' at a time when the strategy and tactics of the revolution were being decided. Trotsky, who saw the peasantry one-sidedly as 'primitive', opposed Lenin. It was not accidental that in his *Results and Prospects*, in which he first propounds his 'theory of permanent revolution', he resurrects Lasalle's arguments with Marx in 1849 to the effect that the revolution has from the beginning to be 'purely socialistic'.

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The concluding section of this article, dealing with proletarian leadership in China, will be published next month.



# AUTONOMOUS BUT NOT ISOLATED

In the People's Republic of China the minority nationalities have benefited greatly from their integration into the multi-national state and have contributed notably to its socialist advance. The Hsishuang Panna provides a striking example of how the minorities living there have emerged in a comparatively few years from serfdom to become masters of their own lives, concerned not only with their own welfare but also with the state as a whole. Their homeland lies on the Yunnan-Kweichow Plateau at an average height of 1,000 metres, on the borders of Burma and Laos, and has a varied landscape of plains, valleys and mountain ranges, with a sub-tropical climate. The soil of the valleys is fertile and the mountains have rich natural resources, such as timber, minerals and metals, and a wide variety of fruit trees and animals. Within the area of the Chou (sometimes translated as prefecture) live about ten nationalities, of which the Tai are over a third, some of the others being the Hui, Yao, Yi, Luhu, Wa. The Tais were in pre-liberation days the most settled, cultivating their crops in the valleys with primitive wooden ploughs and bamboo sticks. In the hills and mountains others lived by fishing, hunting and small-scale cultivation using the 'slash and burn' technique which meant devastating the forest, then moving on to a new area.

Before liberation this region was ruled by seven 'lords' and their Han officials, when it was said that 'every Han was an official' to be feared and hated. This domination, based on Confucianism and assisted by a policy of 'divide and rule', encouraged bloody feuding among the nationalities and held production at a primitive level. The combination of feudal oppression and Han chauvinism laid a heavy burden on the people. For example, the Tais were compelled to hand over at least two-thirds of their rice crop, in addition to performing onerous and humiliating services. Having cultivated the rice themselves the Tais said: 'the people have to sell betel nut leaves to get money to buy rice.' The struggle for national liberation from Han domination was thus at the same time a class struggle against all overlords. Only when social relations among the people were transformed was it possible to transform the economic base, enabling the forces of production to be liberated from their feudal shackles and developed.

## Equality of nationalities

In accordance with the revolutionary principles of the Chinese Communist Party the minorities were respected and their interests safeguarded. As expressed in the Common Programme of September 1949, and in the 1954 and 1975 Constitutions, the declared aim was to build new China into a 'unitary, multi-national' state, within which all nationalities are equal and autonomy is guaranteed to ensure to each one the right to retain its own customs and control its own affairs, under the central government of the People's Republic. The economic and social advance of the minority nationalities of this area, as elsewhere in China, has therefore been based on local autonomy while at the same time they are an integral part of the whole state. Disruptive local nationalism was recognised by the Party and national government as a hindrance to socialist progress for all (see BROADSHEET, September 1975, 'Proletarian Dictatorship Unites Nationalities.')

The first major step was taken in January 1953 when 430 elected delegates met to inaugurate development plans. Under the guidance but not dictatorship of the Communist Party, people who had been serfs but three years before began to learn to solve their own problems and to deal with their class enemies. In 1955, following the adoption of the first national Constitution in 1954, the area was designated as the Hsishuang Panna Tai Autonomous Chou, with its own elected Congress and with

representatives at Congresses of higher levels. The minorities were no longer isolated but part of a unified whole. The way was paved for transformation stage-by-stage of the economic base, as decided by the local people, but these changes, as well as those in old customs and ideas, would necessarily be gradual, never imposed from outside.

Speaking to the Second Plenary Session of the Seventh Central Committee of the Communist Party on March 5, 1949, Mao Tse-tung had stressed that about 90 per cent of China's economy consisted of scattered agriculture and handicrafts, but that the age-old feudal land tenure was in process of being abolished, and that step-by-step advance would bring about changes in social relations and the modernisation of production. In this backward area 'land to the tillers' was realised only in 1956.

During this early period the central government gave financial help and the Party physical assistance in carrying out work. The People's Liberation Army, often at the risk of their lives, entered remote mountain villages to do agricultural and other work and to give class education, largely by example. They started to farm small plots to show what could be done with more modern techniques, and in 1955 the Government started a state farm for the same purpose. By 1957-8 the more settled Tais set up mutual-aid teams and soon began to pool their land in lower-stage cooperatives. Clearer understanding of the nature of class struggle and the need for unity led them to teach the mountain people, former enemies, how to use draught animals, to build permanent settlements, to work paddy fields. They learned how to use fertilizers, to build irrigation systems, and above all, how to cooperate to promote production.

## Birth of industry

By 1964, with help from the state and the PLA the minority peoples had built four large reservoirs and irrigation systems, linked their villages by roads with each other and with the provincial capital, Kunming, whence they were connected even with Peking. Before liberation there had been in the area now covered by the Hsishuang Panna only two small workshops processing tea and salt; by 1964 there were 40 state and 80 local cooperative workshops, including mechanical tea processing, paper mills, electric power stations, porcelain manufacture. The Panna was then able to export tea, coffee, sugar cane, and was self-supporting in food crops—thus becoming more self-reliant and also more integrated.

At the same time problems of education and health were tackled. By 1964 there were 300 primary and middle schools where before there had been none except for the Hans. Shops in the local capital Tsemao sold bilingual books and papers; song and dance troops presented modern themes in traditional nationality styles. Film projection teams brought scenes of the wider world.

In the old days the area around Tsemao had been stricken with pernicious malaria and many had fled the pestilential 'ghosts' which were held responsible for the wiping out of whole villages in 48 hours. The PLA led medical teams from outside to attack the virus, deal with problems of sanitation, and educate the people; by 1962 the malaria mosquito had been virtually eliminated. Other diseases such as cholera and small-pox were then being overcome, a process which was completed shortly afterwards. By 1964 three main hospitals had been set up in the Panna and there was a complete network of clinics. The local government office in Tsemao, which in malaria days had been the home of leopards, was the centre of activities run by elected minority officials, where in groups they studied Marxism and worked out the principles to guide them in agricultural experimentation and research.



Great leaps had been taken since 1950 but contradictions remained. As Mao Tse-tung said in *On the Correct Handling of Contradictions among the People*,

The basic contradictions in socialist society are still those between the relations of production and the productive forces and between the superstructure and the economic base.

Differences remained between producers and administrators, the less and the more highly skilled. There were inequalities in remuneration and in rank, and struggles similar to those elsewhere in China took place between the socialist and the capitalist lines. For instance, in 1961-2 the influence of Liu Shao-chi caused many young cooperatives to be disbanded on the grounds that peasants who had only recently acquired their own land were not competent to run larger units. Even by 1964 only about 55 per cent of the peasants were in cooperatives, thus helping to create the situation where—as Mao has said—small individual production can engender capitalism. But, in 1964 the importance of national unity was illustrated when the call came to 'learn from Tachai' and representatives from Hsishuang Panna were able to travel far north. The cooperative movement took on new life, advancing to the higher level when tools and livestock were pooled. A new wave of enthusiasm for socialism swept into the formerly isolated area when during the Cultural Revolution Red Guards from Peking arrived.

After the visit to Tachai there was a notable increase in determination to work for the state, to raise production. Capital construction work was speeded up, including irrigation, small plots were merged into bigger ones, scientific experimentation was intensified, and the people strove to improve collective organisation. In 1969, 11 years later than elsewhere, communes were formed so that now there are 27 of them in the Panna. By 1970 elementary mechanisation had begun in at least some teams and brigades, and the exploitation of mineral resources throughout the Province of Yunnan, including the Hsishuang Panna, has now led to the establishment of local industry. Fundamental changes in the relations of production have revolutionised the forces of production. The people themselves own the iron, silver, copper, gypsum, manganese, salt which provide the basis for industry. By 1975 there were 125 small and medium-size industries run by communes or brigades, with another 107 run by the Chou and its three counties. Every county has a tractor repair shop and some produce agricultural machinery, fertilizers, building materials, paper, and do food processing. Production of consumer goods, such as silver belts for Tai girls, is an important feature of the new society, as it is in accordance with the basic principle of producing goods for minority nationalities according to their tastes and customs, avoiding Han chauvinism.

#### Peasant scientists

Minority peasants have become technicians and scientists, developing new rice strains and double-cropping for the first time. It is estimated that about 45 per cent of the land is now irrigated. Water conservancy and electrification have brought new energy for the young industries and for homes. These are tremendous social and technical advances, but the achievement of the higher stage of communism in the Hsishuang Panna, as throughout China, is still a future goal. In accordance with the 1975 Constitution households have private plots and carry on side-line production, allowed providing it does not interfere with socialist production. Here the plots are restricted to one mou per family and they are used mainly for raising pigs and vegetables which are consumed or sold to the state. Just as an example of the trend, in one team, the Manchianglan Team, out of 132 households 45 have given up their plots as the team itself can distribute sufficient vegetables to its members.

There are also class contradictions arising out of differential work points according to the type of work done. Arguments have surged around problems of assessment of points for cadres

attending meetings, for different non-manual workers such as teachers, part-time and full-time medical workers. But the Team Leader of the Manchianglan Team assured visitors in 1975 that there had been no quarrels as the resolving of contradictions was sought through discussions, sometimes lengthy, at team meetings. Some cadres in the team, although active in collective work, were said to become too involved in trifling matters. Wrong class attitudes were sometimes shown, for example, by skilled tractor drivers who refused to do heavy field work.

These and other contradictions are seen as non-antagonistic, and are being tackled in the campaign to criticise Confucius and Lin Piao and to study the theory of the dictatorship of the proletariat, with special stress on the study of the Marxist classics. In the Manchianglan Team a translation group has been set up to translate them into Tai. As the Team Leader explained to visitors in 1975, they run study courses to spread socialist ideas and enable the team members to distinguish socialist from capitalist ideas, to show how small production can engender capitalist ideas. They compare the old society with the new and stress the capitalist trends which can and do emerge out of the present distribution system which gives rise to inequalities. They try to combine theory with practice.

As a result of the dramatic changes in the living conditions of the national minorities in the Hsishuang Panna Autonomous Chou the population trebled within a few years after the elimination of malaria and control of other diseases. But the rate of increase diminished a few years ago with education and family planning, facilities for which were not denied to the people although not aggressively pushed. Today the rate of increase is said to be not much higher than in Han areas.

#### People and state together

The transformations roughly outlined above have come about through the initiative, enthusiasm and class understanding of the national minorities under their own cadres and with the guidance of the Communist Party. They have been made possible also because the national minority policy of the central government is to grant special material and financial assistance to such autonomous areas. Between 1952 and 1974 the Chou received from the state 37 million yuan. Its 1975 budget allowed for an income of eight million yuan and an expenditure of fourteen million. The difference was made up by the Province of Yunnan, which in turn was remunerated through the national financial plan as this province is one to which such aid is allocated. The funds received are administered at local level by governing bodies on which cadres of all nationalities work together.

The road of step-by-step advance taken by the Hsishuang Panna Autonomous Chou is by no means unique in the People's Republic of China, as all areas where the majority of the population consists of one or more minority nationality can tell a similar story of emancipation and development. Some have emerged from feudalism, some even from slavery, taking the socialist road made possible by the dictatorship of the proletariat, overcoming contradictions inherited from the past and those that appear in the course of progress, and facing further class struggles during the era of socialism.

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