

CHINA POLICY STUDY GROUP  
**BROADSHEET**

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### APPEASMENT AGAIN?

Britain was one of the first countries to recognise the Chinese People's Republic and one of the last to abandon attempts to impede its advance. The United States took the lead in the trade embargo and efforts to secure a cordon of hostile states—and bases—on China's border. But the former British Foreign Secretary and Prime Minister, Douglas-Home, defined the objective of containing China in terms which held out the prospect of co-operation with the Soviet Union. Moscow, he said, shared our interest in preventing the setting up of the kind of regimes 'China wanted to see' in Southeast Asia. 'With the Russian armies and with the vast armies at the disposal of the United States. . . Britain's best contribution would be air support squadrons. . .' This was in 1966, when the People's Republic was a bulwark of the anti-imperialist struggle in Indochina.

Later it was the British Prime Minister Wilson who, in an infamous phrase, rejected the possibility of a friendly relationship with the world's greatest developing nation. 'The struggle for the soul of Asia' he saw as a struggle between the 'democratic methods' represented in India 'and the Communist way represented by China and those she seeks to subvert. . . And in this war there can be no neutrals. Or, if there could, Britain cannot be amongst them. . . Britain's frontier is on the Himalayas' (November 1965). Under a Labour Foreign Secretary British diplomacy even attempted, in the sixties, to improvise an anti-China axis in Tokyo.

It was left to the Conservative ex-Prime Minister Heath to introduce a more positive note after his visit to China in 1975, describing the attitude of her leaders as far-seeing and realistic, particularly in relation to Europe, and 'at the same time not rigid'. Some voices in the Labour ranks had seemed for a while to be speaking in similar terms (Healey after his visit to China). But what has become of these gestures today?

Reluctance to draw closer to China and make common cause against the threat represented by the Soviet Union appears to underlie Britain's foot-dragging still. This has been so with trade, particularly where any 'sensitive' item is involved. The Rolls-Royce Spey engine licence barely got over the hurdle, while the big airfield control contract (on which France was less inhibited) and several more failed in the attempt. The Harrier vertical take-off fighter, already supplied to other countries with which we are not allied, could win bigger orders from China. Will the government maintain the complete indifference shown in their replies to questions about this from both sides of the House (6.12.1977), and merely wait for 'a formal approach' from China so that they can submit it to COCOM in Paris where Britain's competitors will proceed to veto it—the normal procedure, to quote the Minister's depressing phrase? Or is it the truth that, in order to appease the Kremlin, they have tacitly agreed not to trade this aircraft to China?

It has yet to be seen whether the answers will become clearer since the visit of the Chinese Trade Minister (accompanied by representatives of the State Planning Commission) and his meeting with the Prime Minister. One thing that is abundantly clear is that China's interests and those of the British people point in the same direction: a closer partnership between the two countries in trade and in resistance to superpower machinations.

January 6th is the second anniversary of the death of the great Communist statesman

### CHOU EN-LAI

He always upheld Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought and was greatly loved by the Chinese people. Every day since his death has added to his stature in the eyes of revolutionaries.

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## Upholding Mao's Line on Production

By what yardstick can we judge whether the present leadership in China is becoming capitalist, going to the right, pursuing a pragmatic line as some suggest?

One criterion is to turn our thoughts back to the line of the Chinese Communist Party as enunciated by Mao

Tse-tung and others from the time of the Tsunyi Conference (1935) and ask whether the policies set forth by Hua Kuo-feng and other leaders are rooted in the principles and practice established over these forty or more years; whether the present leadership is 'acting according to past principles' or departing from them.

Fortunately, there is a sizeable corpus of material in Conference reports and statements from Peking since December, 1976, as well as material on the events in 1975 which assist us in making such a judgement. These

clearly have addressed themselves to the state of China's economy in general, to the two broad sectors of industry and agriculture and to specific branches of economic activity and their relationship to class struggle, most of which have been brought under review. They have also been concerned with problems of productivity, quality of output, the orderly organisation of production, development of science and technology and a correct balance between central direction and local management. In dealing with these issues, have the present leaders fallen prey to the theory of productive forces so roundly condemned in Liu Shao-chi, Lin Piao and Chen Po-ta? Are the Chinese leaders giving primacy to economic factors and pushing politics into the background? Are they focussing on the productive forces and forgetting the importance of production relations? These questions can be reviewed against the historical record, chiefly through the statements and articles of Mao himself.

In 1933 Chiang Kai-shek was launching massive onslaughts against the Red areas and preparing for the fifth 'encirclement and suppression' campaign which began in October. In anticipation of the coming attack Mao Tse-tung made a speech in Kiangsi in August:

Some comrades have thought it impossible to spare time for economic construction because the revolutionary war keeps people busy enough, and they have condemned anyone arguing for it as a 'Right deviationist' . . . Comrades, such views are wrong. Whoever holds them fails to realise that without building up the economy it is impossible to secure the material prerequisites for the revolutionary war, and the people will become exhausted in the course of a long war. . . .

If the workers and peasants become dissatisfied with their living conditions, will it not affect the expansion of our Red Army and the mobilisation of the masses for the revolutionary war?

They fail to understand that to dispense with economic construction would weaken the war effort rather than subordinate everything to it. Only by extending the work on the economic front and building the economy of the Red areas can we provide an adequate material basis for the revolutionary war. (*Selected Works* Vol. 1, pp. 129, 130).

### LONG-RANGE STRATEGY

In April 1956, based upon China's experience in the First Five-Year Plan which began in 1953, Mao Tse-tung set forth the Ten Major Relationships, embodying a prescription for the proportionate development of China's economy. It is surely significant that this was one of the first of Mao's hitherto unpublished articles to be disseminated by the new leadership in December, 1976 and widely discussed, thus channelling the country-wide outburst of enthusiasm at the arrest of the Four into the broad parameters as defined by Mao Tse-tung.

The Socialist Education Campaign which opened in 1963 was essentially directed to putting politics in command in the countryside. In June 1964 at the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee Mao Tse-tung set out six standards for evaluating the Socialist Education Movement, one of which was: 'We must see whether production is increasing or decreasing'. Later, in the Twenty-three Points issued by the CC in January, 1965, this was spelled out:

In the course of the movement, from start to finish, we must grasp production. At the same time we must pay attention to grasping each year's distribution (the question of livelihood). If we do not grasp production and distribution, we will become divorced from the masses and will bring grievous harm to our cause.

The Socialist Education Campaign led into the Cultural Revolution when the question of revolution and production was again posed. In the guidelines decided by the Central Committee in August 1966—the Sixteen

Points—which were largely drafted by Mao himself, the relationship between the two was stated unequivocally:

The aim of the great proletarian cultural revolution is to revolutionise people's ideology and as a consequence to achieve greater, faster, better and more economical results in all fields of work. If the masses are fully aroused and proper arrangements are made, it is possible to carry out both the cultural revolution and production without one hampering the other, while guaranteeing high quality in all our work. The great proletarian cultural revolution is a powerful motive force for the development of the productive forces in our country. Any idea of counterposing the great cultural revolution against the development of production is incorrect. (Point 14).

### ANARCHIST DISRUPTION

Early in the Cultural Revolution a section of students took on an anarchistic stance, began to form small feuding groups and to engage in violence in contravention of the 16 Points. It was not long before Chiang Ching, Chang Chun-chiao and Yao Wen-yuan associated themselves with these factional activities and encouraged the use of force. An editorial in the People's Daily on 7th September, 1966 addressed itself to the disruptive effects of the students' action on production:

We must look upon the great proletarian revolution as the key link and take a firm hold of the revolution on the one hand and of production on the other so as to guarantee that both the cultural revolution and production go forward without a hitch. . . .

The cultural revolution movement in factories, mines, enterprises, units engaged in capital construction, scientific research establishments and service trades, and the socialist education movement in the countryside. . . should be carried out by the masses there. . . The Red Guards from the schools and the revolutionary students ought not to go there to interfere in those arrangements. They need not take part in the debates there. Workers, poor and lower middle peasants are the main force of the revolution. They are fully capable of handling the revolutionary movement in their own organisations well. Besides conditions in these units differ and they have very big tasks in production. Interference from outsiders who do not understand the situation can easily affect the normal progress of production.

A few days later at a rally in Peking to receive revolutionary teachers and students from all parts of China, Chou En-lai returned to this theme:

the Red Guards and revolutionary students from the universities, colleges and middle schools are now not to go to the factories and enterprises. . . Factories and rural areas cannot take time off like the schools and stop production to make revolution. Revolutionary students should respect the masses of workers and peasants, trust them and have confidence in their being fully able to successfully make revolution on their own.

(*Peking Review*, 23 Sept. 1966)

In January 1967 came the 'revolutionary storm' in Shanghai which had its positive and negative aspects. On the negative side were the notions of forming a 'Shanghai commune' initiated by Chang Chung-chiao and Yao Wen-yuan and taken up in Peking by Chiang Ching. In essence this was an attempt to replace the Communist Party by an amorphous mass organisation in which Chang Chun-chiao and associates would have played a dominant role. It was rejected by Mao Tse-tung. In the same period an anarchistic slogan was heard — 'Doubt all, suspect all, overthrow all,' — which flew in the face of the 16 Points and of Mao Tse-tung's oft repeated dictum that 95 per cent of the cadres are good.

There followed the February counter-current, an attempt to bring down Chen Yi, Tan Chen-lin and other veteran cadres and then the May 16th 'ultra-left' movement led by Wang Li, a close associate of Chang Chun-

chiao, Chiang Ching and Yao Wen-yuan. It was in this situation that the Central Committee on 18th March 1967 addressed a letter to all revolutionary workers and staff and revolutionary cadres in industrial and mining enterprises throughout the country calling on them to take firm hold of the revolution and promote production. Among other things the letter states:

You should strengthen labour discipline, firmly uphold democratic centralism and establish good order in socialist production and the Great Cultural Revolution.

You should, in accordance with the regulations laid down by the Party's Central Committee, firmly uphold the eight-hour work day and carry on the cultural revolution during the time outside the eight hours of work. During working hours it is impossible to absent oneself without good cause from one's production or work post. A struggle should be waged against the unhealthy tendency towards absenteeism or a perfunctory attitude to work.

. . . you should . . . promote the revolutionisation of your own thinking, carry on production according to the principle of achieving greater, faster, better and more economical results, guarantee the quality of products and strive for high quality. A struggle should be waged against any unhealthy tendency to disregard the quality of output or waste state funds and materials. . . .

Landlords, rich peasants, counter-revolutionaries, bad elements and Rightists who have sneaked into factories and mines, should never be allowed to be unruly in word or deed, to sabotage production, undermine unity among workers and staff, or create or incite factional disputes.

(*Peking Review*, 24 March 1967)

In September of that year Mao Tse-tung visited the provinces of Honan, Hupeh, Hunan, Kiangsi and Chekiang and the municipality of Shanghai after which he issued the directive: 'There is no fundamental clash of interests within the working class. Under the dictatorship of the proletariat, there is no reason whatsoever for the working class to split into two irreconcilable organisations.'

Red Flag in publishing Mao's statement commented:

The working class is the most revolutionary class. Yet it, too, may be influenced by bourgeois ideas; the corrosive effect of anarchism, sectarianism, the small group mentality, and the trend of 'doubting everything', as well as other bourgeois and petty bourgeois ideological trends in society, which emerge in Right or extremely 'Left' forms, give rise to the phenomenon of petty-bourgeois sectarianism taking the place of proletarian Party spirit within the ranks of the working class, and this is an obstacle to the revolutionary great alliance.

(*Peking Review* 22 September 1967)

The struggle between the two lines, the one based essentially on the directive 'grasp revolution and promote production' and the other trend of anarchism, disruption and feuding continued, varying in intensity from year to year and from place to place. As the Four gained more control of the media, their scope for spreading their influence, even into areas where they had no direct accomplices, widened. Early in 1975 there were troubles in the Hangchow silk complex and in the vital railway centre of Chengchow.

### RELiance ON WHOM?

It was at this point that a head-on struggle began between Hua Kuo-feng, Teng Hsiao-ping and other leaders on the one side and the Gang of Four on the other. Some extracts from the statement 'Problems in Accelerating Industrial Development' (September 1975), one of three documents criticising the policies of the Four, throw an important light on whether Hua Kuo-feng and his colleagues were proceeding from a capitalist or socialist position, whether they were continuing the dominant line of the Chinese Communist Party over the years or going against it:

A small number of enterprises have serious capitalist tendencies. They are sabotaging the national plan and undertaking illegal free production and free exchange. Some Party members, cadres, and workers pursue bourgeois life styles. In some enterprises, the leadership is not in the hands of true Marxists or in the hands of the workers and masses. Who we rely on in management of enterprises, is a question of class and line.

Chairman Mao has long pointed out: 'We must rely completely and whole-heartedly on the working class.' Today there are localities and units that are not following this policy. They do not rely on the working class, but rather on this or that backer. They do not undertake class analysis, but blindly follow the 'rebel factions' and 'go-against-the-tide elements'. As a result, they split the working class and lose touch with the workers and broad masses.

All work in the enterprises must stick to the mass line. Start mass movements and take a free hand in mobilizing the masses to conduct them. Do not let a few people do it in isolation.

The formation of a plan must be based on a total mobilization of the masses and broad consultation with the units at the grass roots level.

We must restrict bourgeois right, oppose enlarging the disparities and material incentives. . . . The wages of low-wage workers must be raised, so as to gradually reduce the disparities in wages.

In substance the principles set forth in this document and in the General Programme and the Report on Science and Technology produced in the same period (the Three Poisonous Weeds as the Four described them), foreshadowed the policies now being put into practice by the Chinese leaders.

### LINE RE-ESTABLISHED

The policies now being pursued are, in essence a continuation in present conditions of the line concerning revolution and production established by the Chinese Communist Party under Mao Tse-tung's leadership from the time of the Tsunyi Conference. Specifically, the record shows that the cardinal features of revolutionary policy—taking class struggle as the key link; strengthening the mass line, restricting bourgeois right, narrowing wage differentials and reducing the differences between town and country, workers and peasants and mental and manual labour—are in the forefront of the programmes which have been widely debated.

At the Conference on Learning from Taching, Hua Kuo-feng declared:

We must take class struggle as the key link, continue the revolution in the realm of the superstructure to make it harmonise with the development of the productive forces.

The emphasis on strengthening the mass line at all conferences and in all statements made in the recent period, is a sign that the Chinese leaders see the working people and not the material means of production as the major feature of the productive forces, although account must be taken of the relatively weak material base.

Whereas the Four talked much about the restriction of bourgeois right, whilst undermining the economic development which would make it possible, the present leaders put forward directives at both the Tachai and Taching Conferences to restrict the bourgeois right of cadres by a system through which all cadres in central departments and leaders at the provincial, prefectural and county levels will spend one year in three working at the grass roots. Furthermore, the proportion of those in non-productive work will be reduced in accordance with the statement of Yu Chiu-li, Minister of State Planning, that non-productive personnel should not exceed 18 per cent of the total payroll in an enterprise.

Taching, whilst developing its industrial activities, has

also branched out into agriculture and commerce; other industrial complexes, where conditions are suitable, are urged to follow this example which, stated Yu Chiu-li, 'helps restrict bourgeois right and narrow step by step the differences between town and country, between worker and peasant and between manual and mental labour.'

The wages of 46 per cent of China's industrial workers have been raised, but with the proviso that the increase will not apply to those receiving 90 yuan a month or more (the top wage of the 8-grade wage system being 108 yuan), another step in reducing the gap between the lower and higher paid workers.

None of the steps taken or policies advanced since October 1976 supports the view that China is turning to the Right. Rather it would seem that she is getting back on course and putting politics in command not by phrasemongering but in a down-to-earth way in which both revolution and production develop in a true dialectical relationship. Experience of the workings of the Gang of Four have opened the eyes of the Chinese people to the departures from socialist principles and set-backs to socialist construction which inevitably result from any other policy.

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## READERS' QUESTIONS

In our November issue we appealed to readers for questions and criticism. The response has been very gratifying and we give below answers to some of the questions raised. Space does not allow us to publish the letters themselves, so we have had to paraphrase and, in connection with the subject of executions in China, to combine questions from several readers.

**QUESTION:** What is your opinion about recent press reports of a 'wave' of executions in China?

**ANSWER:** Such reports are not new; they have always been part of the stock-in-trade of anti-China propaganda. Some are certainly false, as *International Herald Tribune* and *The Times* have admitted (see our last issue).

Socialists and progressives in the West are usually against the death penalty, partly for humanitarian reasons but also, and perhaps more reasonably, because they reject the bourgeois legal system, developed in the interests of private property, not of the people. Every day one sees examples of the injustice of bourgeois justice; the capitalist state cannot be trusted with the death penalty. In Western Europe executions rarely take place now but many reactionaries would like to see their return.

In China, a socialist country, entirely different considerations apply. The emphasis is on re-education of criminals; no one who can be of use to society should be discarded. The other important consideration is the opinion of the masses. In *On the Ten Major Relationships*, in 1956, Mao Tse-tung made a comprehensive statement on this question in relation to counter-revolutionaries. He spoke of

people who are somewhat removed from the masses, and therefore make enemies in general but seldom enemies in particular. What harm is there in not killing any of them? Those who are physically fit should be reformed through labour and those who are not should be provided for.

Earlier in the same speech he had said:

Now, let's take execution in particular. True, we executed a number of people during the above-mentioned campaign (in 1951-52—*Ed.*) to suppress counter-revolutionaries.

But what sort of people were they? They were counter-revolutionaries who owed the masses many blood debts and were bitterly hated by them. In a great revolution embracing 600 million people, the masses would not be able to rise if we did not kill off such local despots as the 'tyrant of the East' and the 'Tyrant of the West'. But for that campaign of suppression, the people would not have approved our present policy of leniency.

... from now on there should be fewer arrests and executions in the suppression of counter-revolutionaries in society at large. They are the mortal and immediate enemies of the people and are deeply hated by them, and therefore a small number should be executed. But most of them should be handed over to the agriculture co-operatives and made to do farm work under supervision and be reformed through labour. All the same, we cannot announce that there will be no more executions, and we must not abolish the death penalty.

He went on to point out that in many instances executions yield no advantage. People may be wrongly executed and cannot be brought to life again and executions destroy sources of evidence against other wrong-doers.

Mao's opinion was clear: the death penalty must be retained, but it should be used very rarely.

**QUESTION:** Has there been any change in policy since the death of Mao Tse-tung?

**ANSWER:** *On the Ten Major Relationships* was published in China only by the present leadership. There were certainly departures from Mao's principles when the Gang of Four were at the height of their influence. Now the Party and Government are anxious to return to Mao's way of doing things and to act openly. They have no objection, as our delegation found in 1977, to foreigners seeing what is happening.

We can say confidently that any who may have been executed recently were criminals who flourished in the anarchic situation the Four created, rather than their political followers. In early 1976 there were even reports of bank robberies, something extraordinary in the People's Republic. This state of affairs is now being cleared up by open, legal methods.

The *People's Daily* of November 28 printed an article by members of the Ministry of Public Security, pointing out the need for care and moderation as regards executions and for policies that secure the sympathy of the masses and avoid mistakes. Even for serious crimes, which demanded the death penalty, it would be preferable to continue the established principle of deferring execution for two years, in order to give the guilty a chance to reform.

If Mao's policies have not always been followed in the past (and in the West we cannot know the extent of any departures), it is quite clear that the Party and Government are now determined to return to them.

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