

CHINA POLICY STUDY GROUP  
**BROADSHEET**

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### **BRITAIN'S RESPONSIBILITY**

FOR half of this century Mao Zedong was forecasting the trend of world events in advance of the awareness of politicians more conventionally versed in international affairs. Today his predictions are being vindicated.

In the early 1970's he warned that while contention between the two superpowers, the USA and the USSR, increasingly threatened world peace, the USSR was the more dangerous and its first objective in global expansion was Western Europe. This warning was not heeded by European leaders and many on the 'left' treated it with derision.

Gradually, however, NATO defence chiefs began to speak publicly of the growing Soviet threat. Among the most outspoken was Chief of the General Staff Air Marshal Sir Neil Cameron, who stated bluntly that the Soviet Union had emerged as the common foe of China and the West.

Hua Guofeng's reiteration, during his recent visit to France, West Germany, Britain and Italy, of this warning was a natural sequel to Mao Zedong's forecasts and to the gradual realisation in the West of their truth. Each nation has its own urgent problems to solve but the overriding urgency must be to expose and thwart Soviet hegemonism and to avoid repeating the mistake of Chamberlain's appeasement of Hitler's Germany.

Today there is a strong trend towards appeasement in the West (expressed for instance in the London *Guardian*), which is accompanied by working-class distrust of Tory warnings about the Soviet threat. Many leftists condemn socialist China for 'cooperating' with Mrs. Thatcher's government while it is attacking living standards and working-class liberties. However, the class character of the government is an internal question, with which China would never interfere. British workers are right to fight cuts and to oppose any government—Labour or Tory—which institutes them.

But combining with other countries to meet a military threat is neither an internal question nor the exclusive concern of any class or party. For those gazing into the open jaws of a superpower it is a question of national survival, without which the opportunity to choose either government or social system would be lost.

China seeks to make common cause with others similarly menaced. The only test is the strength of their resolve and their willingness to cooperate in good faith and on terms of equality.

History cannot be fabricated or tampered with. It is a record of objective facts. The history of Sino-Vietnamese friendship and cooperation cannot be changed into one of enmity because the relations between China and Vietnam have worsened. Yet the Vietnamese authorities have taken such a position of historical idealism. The Chinese people have always held that it is their internationalist obligation to support the Vietnamese people and that support is mutual. We will never regret our past support to the Vietnamese people because of Hanoi's current anti-China campaign, for those were the historical conditions.

People's Daily and Xinhua Commentators, 14 Nov. 79.

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## **CONTINUING MAO'S ROAD**

SOME foreign friends of China, as well as a few Chinese, are anxious about what they have been told is a reactionary or counter-revolutionary trend in that country. Western press reports assiduously cultivate the view that what imperialism most wishes for has come true: namely, that most of the Chinese people and their top leaders have got fed up with socialism, with the dictatorship of the proletariat, with Marxism as it has been practised in China for 50 years, and with the CPC. China's modernisation programme, we are urged to believe, is based on its leaders' acknowledgement of the superiority of imperialist development over socialist development; and its adoption points to China's being Westernised and being taken rapidly down the road to state capitalism, economism, productivism, etc. Pro-capitalist or other anti-Marxist ideas and sentiments expressed by a few individuals in the course of the vigorous debates going on in China are picked out and cited as policy statements by the press. Ye Jianying's 30th

Anniversary speech was reported in the papers as being a repudiation of Mao.

Propaganda of this kind is a good thing in so far as it forces people to take a hard and unsentimental look at the Chinese Revolution in the post-Mao era; and if it pushes people into not taking theoretical and policy documents for granted but rather to read them and evaluate them carefully. Obviously, the truth cannot be derived from anti-Mao allegations but only from the facts of the situation in China. In fact, Ye's speech reflects and sums up numerous discussions which have been going on in factories, mines, production brigades and in local and national journals, and also, more important, the actual solution of concrete problems of socialist revolution in hundreds of thousands of industrial, agricultural, fighting, commercial, educational, research and other units. The root causes of failures are being identified more frequently and China is shown to be changing more quickly. There is plentiful evidence that China's



workers, peasants and cadres have made a good start in a vast mass campaign.

Ye Jianying is drawing on this great beginning to China's socialist modernisation as much as on revolutionary practice over the previous thirty years. He is following the example that Mao set. The people

have greatly enhanced their political consciousness and their concern for affairs of state, increased their ability to tell right from wrong and to distinguish genuine from sham, socialism and real Marxism from false. They have enhanced their ability to fight counter-revolutionaries in disguise and defend true socialist economics and politics. These are invaluable gains. The theory of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought becomes a tremendous material force once it is really grasped by the masses through their struggles.

It would be instructive to study all the lessons that have been learnt. Here we note only the four main ones.

First, the correct focus of the continuing revolution, after the proletariat has established power and begun to establish socialist relations, is on transforming the relation of socially necessary labour to the people's needs:

For socialism to replace capitalism, we must liberate the productive forces and achieve a constantly rising labour productivity to meet the people's material and cultural needs. This is the fundamental aim of socialist revolution...

About the second point Ye says:

it is necessary to make a scientific analysis—one which conforms to objective reality—of the internal class situation and class struggle after the establishment of the socialist system and adopt correct policies and measures accordingly...

His third point arises from the necessity under socialism for fundamental changes in the relations among classes, social strata, nationalities, individuals, etc., in the country, localities and enterprises:

We must have a correct understanding of the interrelationship between the masses, classes, political parties and leaders; this is of special importance in a socialist society... It is impermissible to belittle the collective or the masses or to exaggerate the role of individual leaders. We must give full scope to democracy in the life of the Party and the state, adhere to democratic centralism in organisations at all levels and exercise collective leadership. We must not allow a few people to have the final say, nor should any individual lay down the law. Even less can we permit any individual to place himself above the organisation and the masses.

The fourth point reflects people's recognition that the creation of the conditions for the ultimate abolition of the state, must continue:

We must further improve both Party discipline and the socialist legal system, ensure democratic rights to all Party members and citizens, and see to it that inner-Party democracy and socialist democracy are institutionalised and guaranteed by law...

The people can transform their own and other lives for the better only if they transform the existing material and social conditions.

Socialist revolution sets them free to use all 'positive factors' to take action to transform given conditions.

We must proceed from China's realities, make a careful study of the laws of economics and laws of nature, and open up a path to modernisation suited to China's specific conditions and features. China is a populous country with a vast territory and rich natural resources. But as her economy, technology and education are relatively backward and as we have lost time in the past, we are faced with many difficulties. We must do a good job in combining our efforts to speed up economic development with the step-by-step raising of the living standards of the hundreds of millions of our people and in combining the full use of existing enterprises with the energetic introduction of technology from abroad. Given China's vast territory and her vast regional variations, the pace of modernisation cannot be even. Under the guidance of the country's unified planning, the different areas must work hard to create concrete forms, measures and methods in accordance with their own specific features so as to reach the general goal of the four modernisations...

By the four modernisations, we mean the four major aspects

of modernisation and not that modernisation is confined to these four aspects. Along with the reform and improvement of the socialist economic system, we will reform and improve the socialist political system and develop an advanced socialist democracy and a complete socialist legal system. While building an advanced material civilisation, we want to raise the educational, scientific, cultural levels of the whole nation, foster lofty revolutionary ideals and morals, develop a rich and many-sided cultural life, and thus build an advanced socialist civilisation. These are important objectives as well as necessary conditions for the realisation of the four modernisations (emphases added).

Throughout his speech Ye shows the crucial importance for socialist economic development of socialist democracy, socialist laws, Marxist theory and philosophy, and countrywide unity and stability.

He reminds the people that:

We must adequately assess the situation, show unity in thinking and action, and accomplish the task of readjustment through steadfast and down-to-earth work. In order to strike an overall balance, the national financial and material resources must be allotted in accordance with the principle of giving priority to the production of finished goods over capital construction and to tapping existing potential over starting new projects. Only thus can we place our plan for production and capital construction on a positive and reliable foundation and ensure a steady and proportionate development of the whole economy...

The assertion by the people of this neglected principle, and their carrying out of reform in the structure of economic management are clearly not regarded in China as technical matters. Ye states the conclusions to which discussions have led:

Enterprises must be given greater power of decision in production, management, allocation of funds, control of materials, assignment of the labour force, distribution of income and other matters... The scope for decision-making in economic affairs in the localities will also be appropriately broadened under the unified central leadership.

He continues:

Under the leadership of Comrade Mao Zedong our Party laid down a dialectical materialist ideological line in the course of long revolutionary practice, and particularly through the Yanan Rectification Movement. This line means proceeding from reality in everything we do, seeking truth from facts and linking theory with practice. These are the fundamentals of the proletarian world outlook and the quintessence of Mao Zedong Thought. They are also the foundation on which our Party formulates its political line and its principles and policies as well as the guarantee for correctly understanding and carrying them out (emphasis added).

He sums up:

In education in the ideological line we must get down to realities and not conduct it in a formalistic way. We must proceed from the objective state of affairs and tackle actual problems which remain unsolved owing to failure in emancipating the mind.

China is attempting to build a society continually reorganising itself, with no dogma or institution being held as so sacred that it blocks the way to continued socialist advance.

## ON THE PRODUCTIVE FORCES

SOME who expected the Chinese Revolution to proceed in a straightline course and are now disappointed because they believe it is becoming bogged down in much the same revisionist mire as its Soviet predecessor, might do well to note what Karl Marx forewarned in 1852. In *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* Marx observed that 'bourgeois revolutions, like those of the eighteenth century, storm more swiftly from success to success; their dramatic effects outdo each other; men and things seem set in sparkling brilliants; ecstasy is the everyday spirit; but they are short-lived...' He went on to make this contrast:



Proletarian revolutions, on the other hand, like those of the nineteenth century, criticise themselves constantly, interrupt themselves continually in their own course, come back to the apparently accomplished in order to recommence it afresh, deride with unmerciful thoroughness the inadequacies, weaknesses and paltrinesses of their first attempts, seem to throw their adversary only in order that he may draw new strength from the earth and rise again more gigantic before them, recoil ever and anon from the infinite immensity of their own aims, until the situation has been created which makes all turning back impossible and the conditions themselves cry out: *Hic Rhodus, hic salta!*

In discussing the first effort of the new Soviet government to grapple with the tremendous problems facing it after the victorious October Revolution, Lenin said in 1919 they were often 'clumsy, immature and casual'.<sup>1</sup> 'We were often obliged to feel our way.' He frankly admitted, 'At first we regarded them (economic problems—Author) in an entirely abstract way, like revolutionary preachers, who had absolutely no idea of how to set to work'. Replying to the accusations of those charging failure and predicting doom, Lenin said:

But these accusations are ridiculous, made by people who lack the spark of life. As if one can set out to make a great revolution and know beforehand how it is to be completed! Such knowledge cannot be derived from books and our decision could spring only from the experience of the masses. (Ibid)

Lenin wrote *A Great Beginning* (28 June 1919) to chart the course ahead for the new socialist state.

In order to achieve victory, in order to build and consolidate socialism, the proletariat must fulfil a twofold or dual task: first, it must, by its supreme heroism in the revolutionary struggle against capital, win over the entire mass of the working and exploited people; it must win them over, organise them and lead them in the struggle to overthrow the bourgeoisie and utterly suppress their resistance. Secondly, it must lead the whole mass of the working and exploited people, as well as all the petty-bourgeois groups, on to the road of new economic development, towards the creation of a new social bond, a new labour discipline, a new organisation of labour, which will combine the last word in science and capitalist technology with the mass association of class-conscious workers creating large-scale socialist industry. (Ibid)

There are, of course, those today who see China's concentration on the Four Modernisations as 'pragmatism', 'revisionism' and 'counter-revolution'. The Gang of Four sought to make 'production' a dirty word, almost equivalent to 'revisionism' and 'counter-revolution', as if it were somehow antithetical to 'revolution'. Lenin, however, clearly recognised that 'economic development' was indispensable to the victory of socialism. He said:

The second task (economic development—Author) is more difficult than the first, for it cannot possibly be fulfilled by single acts of heroic fervour; it requires the most prolonged, most persistent and most difficult mass heroism in *plain, everyday* work. But this task is more essential than the first, because, in the last analysis, the deepest source of strength for victories over the bourgeoisie and the sole guarantee of the durability and permanence of these victories can only be a new and higher mode of social production, the substitution of large-scale socialist production for capitalist and petty-bourgeois production.

In view of the long historical struggle of the Chinese people against poverty and famine, a struggle which is only now beginning to yield some slight 'plus' above subsistence, it seems almost beyond belief that the Gang of Four could hope to get very far with their anti-production line. In the short-run, they could create anarchy, topple cadres in positions of responsibility, deride model workers as 'revisionists', raise havoc with factory discipline, disrupt transportation and thereby install many of their cronies in key offices. But, as a long-range policy, this could not possibly succeed. Certainly, it could not advance the people towards communism.

Yet, in the West, we see some self-professed 'communists' who say the Gang of Four were true 'Marxists-Leninists'. While a number of these are no doubt paid

provocateurs and Trotskyite elements, others, largely petty-bourgeois intellectuals, are genuinely confused. The latter fail to realise that China today is still in the first stage of socialism, a long way from communism, and still a developing country. It must continue to adhere closely to the law of value—i.e., to exchange commodities in proportion to the socially necessary labour power expended on their production; it cannot afford to ignore the significance of material incentives and must pay according to work done; and it must modernise agriculture, industry, science and technology, and defence. There is no other way to communism!

Under the leadership of the Communist Party, China has decided that the principal contradiction is no longer that between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie but is now between the forces of production and the relations of production. This, of course, does not mean that class struggle has ended—not at all—but it does mean that large-scale, turbulent struggles, such as occurred during the cultural revolution, are not on the agenda. Here, in the West, the contradiction between the forces of production and relations of production has given rise to misunderstanding and, no doubt, more can be anticipated.

A recent example of such confusion is given by the French academic, Charles Bettelheim, whose article, *The Great Leap Backward* (*Monthly Review*, July-Aug. 1978), represented a somewhat thinly veiled defence of the Gang of Four. Throughout his writings, Bettelheim exhibits a systematic bias, downgrading the forces of production and overemphasising the relations of production. Even in his more serious work, *Class Struggles in the USSR*, he clearly reflects this bias, carrying it so far as to distort flagrantly well-known quotations from Marxist classics. Here is an example:

Everyone knows that Marx, in his *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, speaks of the 'bourgeois limitation' which affects the distribution of goods during 'the first phase of Communist society',<sup>2</sup> however, this 'limitation' is not related to the level of the production forces, but to 'the enslaving subordination of the individual to the division of labour' and to the corresponding social relations which hinder the development of the productive forces. (Bettelheim, *Class Struggles in the USSR*, Vol. I, p. 52)

In order to transform Marxism into Bettelheimese, the author grossly misrepresents what is perhaps the most famous passage in the *Critique*. He omits Marx's explicit admonition, namely, that:

... after the productive forces have also increased with the all-around development of the individual, and all the springs of co-operative wealth flow more abundantly—only then can the narrow horizon of bourgeois right be crossed in its entirety and society inscribe on its banners: From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs! (K. Marx, *Critique of the Gotha Programme*. Italics added—Author)

Ignoring the present level of the forces of production, the impatient dreamers and modern-day utopians criticise China for not moving faster to abolish bourgeois right, eliminate commodity exchange, establish equalitarianism, do away with material incentives and to undertake other tasks beyond their means. Not surprisingly, these same people are the ones who, like Bettelheim, tend to overstate the significance of the relations of production and to understate the significance of the productive forces. There are, to be sure, instances in which the relations of production merit primacy, but as Marx, Lenin and Mao clearly pointed out, the productive forces are usually the principal aspect. 'Whoever denies this is not a materialist, said Mao.

CHARLES J. COE

<sup>1</sup> cf. V. I. Lenin, *Report of the Central Committee*, March 18, 1919. Collected Works, Vol. 29, 1965, Progress Publishers.

<sup>2</sup> Where Marx speaks of 'communist society', we would today say 'socialist'



## A LETTER FROM CHINA

We commend to our readers the following letter from a Chinese student of English in Fujian Province. It gives a Chinese reaction to our issues of April and June-July 1979.

We have read BROADSHEET with interest, not only because of the friendly feelings and attitude towards China expressed between the lines and its expression of confidence in China's future—even stronger than some of us Chinese—but also because of its objective viewpoint in studying and analysing China's situation and problems, which serves as a mirror reflecting our appearance from another angle and so is valuable to us.

In reading the articles carried in these issues we saw the great efforts made by the writers in studying and researching China's experiences and in making China better understood by the world and therefore promoting friendship between China and the world's people and contributing to the world's revolutionary cause. We appreciate this devotion greatly and we are glad to find that we have much in common with the writers on some points which we are not going to cite here one by one.

However, it's a colossal and very difficult task to give an explicit explanation or statement of China's situation, which is a complicated case, with its full-of-twists-and-turns history and still unclear present, and we Chinese have so far failed to accomplish this task. So, what has been said and done is far from sufficient and there is still much more which is open to further and deeper discussion and study. Here we'd like to say something, though immature, about this aspect.

We consider it essential to study China's problems from the viewpoint of the substance of Chinese society and social system, which is the key to understanding China's problems and forming a scientific analysis. The theory of Marxism tells us that the economic base determines the relations of production. We have to go deeply into and resolve China's problems from this standpoint not from some fragments of superficial phenomena such as contingent events, ideological causes or personal mistakes or contributions. As we all know, China is a country developed from a basis of semi-feudal, semi-colonial society, therefore its main feature, even at present, is its undeveloped productive forces. On this basis our system is seen to be non-socialist in many aspects, some of them feudal, some capitalist. So some statements in the articles seem to us worth discussing.

For instance, in the article *Shifting the Focus* (April 1979) the writer mentions that Lin Biao and the Gang of Four fit more into the role of 'China's Khrushchev' and they 'represented the most serious danger of a Khrushchev-style restoration'. We are not certain whether the politics of Lin Biao and the gang can be equivalent to Khrushchev-style restoration. So far as we know Khrushchev was at least a reformer of the Soviet economy. It seems a Chinese habit to use the term 'Khrushchev-style' or 'China's Khrushchev', by which is meant capitalist restoration. But we doubt whether it is scientific and factual to say so. Khrushchev and his function in Soviet history is yet a question subject to reassessment. So we are afraid it's not precise to use this formula as the Chinese press does. But we do agree with the writer when he says that Lin Biao and the gang's political form are 'more specifically Chinese, a reflection of the economic base in China'. That is, to be more specific and precise as we understand, feudalism.

In the article *The Cultural Revolution and the Question of Capitalist Restoration* (June-July 1979) the writer says that 'Stalin failed to get people to grasp Leninist theory and to supervise the leadership, so the leading organs of the Party and State became divorced from the masses, making it easy for a clique at the top to change

the Party's line and so restore capitalism.' The statement seems unsuccessful in pointing out straightforwardly the fatal failure of Stalin, which was, we hold, his maintaining a system far from a socialist one as Marx and Lenin expected it to be, a system with remains of bureaucracy to be found everywhere, in the leading organs in particular, therefore a system with many problems hard to resolve. This is significant to us because post-liberation China was in fact similar, so we can see our problems more clearly through theirs.

Another point is about the 'victory of the Cultural Revolution'. To speak the truth, the word 'victory' now sounds jarring on Chinese ears. As a matter of fact, many of us regard the term only as a temporary political tactic without any real sense. If it has any sense, it only means the exposing of some dangers and mobilising the masses in the movement, but even this explanation proves weak and unpersuasive, so that hardly anyone would like to notice. But anyhow this is a question impossible to answer or define in one sentence. One thing maybe worth noticing is the great response of the 900 million Chinese people to Chairman Mao's call for the cultural revolution. This startling response and unprecedented enthusiasm, apart from other reasons, had its economic causes. It reflected the people's resentment against some inadequate aspects such as bureaucracy, etc. existing then in our Party and government work, and it also reflected the people's desire to abolish these aspects. This might also have been Chairman Mao's intention in initiating the cultural revolution. Bureaucracy is a danger in our social system perceived by Chairman Mao in the early years after liberation. He had been trying hard to resolve it but failed to find a proper and effective way, though he seemed to hope it would be resolved through the cultural revolution. But when the storm died down, with many disasters brought out by it, the problems were unresolved and are still a main threat to our society. It is no wonder that people feel disappointed and refuse to regard the cultural revolution as a 'victory'. To realise the four modernisations, we have to resolve this problem fundamentally.

We can't discuss all the points one by one, for about some of them we are not clear ourselves, and sometimes we can't yet quite understand the writers' viewpoint with the limited material available to us. But if we have the chance, we'd like to read more and discuss more and to be criticised.

There is now a tendency in our theoretical field to wander away from the basic principles and conceptions of Marxism. Marxism was easily distorted by some political swindlers because it has not been correctly applied to our concrete problems and developed by our own theoreticians. The influence of metaphysics prevails in our thinking. This influence has its expression in our press, which we often feel bored to read. We like to hear foreign views because of their freshness and objectiveness which help to broaden and deepen our thinking. BROADSHEET is appreciated for this reason. Still, we wish to see it more independent of the ways of China's traditional propaganda and more thorough.

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