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PROBLEMS OF NATIONAL LIBERATION AND SOCIALISM

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CHINA'S THREE CHALLENGES

THIRTY years ago when times were prosperous in the West it was commonly allowed that China and other Third World countries taking a revolutionary path might have hit on a solution that fitted their conditions, even though others would find it repugnant. Today, with signs abounding of economic disintegration in the West, the spokesmen of the "free world" are more insistent that their system is the only one that can lead to any advancement. China, they say, is finding out to her cost that to allow a revolutionary party to monopolise power, to gear everything to a state plan, to imagine that social commitment can take the place of material incentives, just fails to deliver the goods.

In assessing what China has done there is not much illumination to be gained from the experience of other countries which were more affluent, more developed and more compact. China had to overcome not only a millennium of economic stagnation but a long tradition of semi-colonial lethargy and compliance, and the attitudes implanted in her people by their years of subservience.

The People's Republic has been dogged at every turn by three problems. The first has been population. Rapid population growth, while it increases eventual production potential, has in practice become an impediment to development, by setting limits to the rate at which living standards can rise. In his report on China to President Truman in 1947, Secretary of State Dean Acheson said: "The population of China during the 18th and 19th centuries doubled, thus creating an unbearable pressure on the land. The first problem which every Chinese government has had to face is that of feeding this population. So far none has succeeded". Until 1949 such verdicts were accepted with equanimity. Yet three decades later the world would be horrified if travellers to China came back with stories of famine, as they regularly did in the days before the Land Reform. China now feeds and clothes a population twice as large as that in Dean Acheson's time. Numbers rose considerably in the fifties but during the 'sixties an extra 200 million children were born. Whatever family planning may do, or is doing now, China faces a bigger task than other countries in providing for her new population at the same time as raising the living standards of those already at work.

Population alone lifts China's problem to a level almost beyond comprehension for a European country. More crippling still, however, has been a second handicap, the ever-returning stranglehold of a centuries-old tradition of submission, of carrying out orders from above. Mao and others were acutely conscious of the need to bring up new generations who would not wait passively for instructions but respond to situations themselves. This was the keynote of the Great Leap Forward. It was also the original inspiration of the Cultural Revolution, though that subsequently became diverted to a contrary course.

Now with the policy of rapid modernisation there is a bigger premium than ever on boldness and initiative at many levels, high and low. The contribution on another page about the *impasse* in education gives an idea of the obstacles China still has to overcome in this respect.

The third problem is not a heritage from the past. The Chinese have created it themselves by deciding to break out of the system of excessive central regulation and tight controls. It is to devise a framework within which popular initiative can be reconciled with central planning and a measure of enterprise delegated to individual units.

First-fruits of the search to diffuse responsibility in the countryside were the People's Communes and Production Brigades. A later trend which was gathering momentum in many medium-sized industrial units a year ago (BROADSHEET Vol. XVIII No. 6-7: *How Should the Chinese System Work?*) went by the name of "enterprises under experiment". Carried to their logical conclusion many of these experiments would have led to the replacement of state allocations and purchases by a multitude of contracts among enterprises themselves, and between enterprises and the state. The urge to experiment had to be contained before this point was reached and the "special responsibility" system now being tried out more widely is essentially a way of allowing enterprises the opportunity to produce more, and market more, after their state quota has been fulfilled.

A vital dimension, sometimes overlooked nevertheless, is the effect which the diversion of resources into "special responsibility" channels could have on the drive to increase consumer welfare.

For the time being the emphasis has been switched from construction to *consumption*. Those who carry through a social revolution to improve their livelihood cannot be told a generation later that further improvement of living standards is indefinitely deferred. If deliveries to the state from the countryside or from light industry were to falter now the current consumer policy would gradually grind to a standstill. One horn of the dilemma, therefore, is consumer welfare; the other, producer incentives.

China's younger generations understand the hazard of excessive population growth and will probably avert it in time. They also have a better chance now of distancing themselves from the passive traditions of the past. But the Chinese enjoy no immunity from the hard choices and pitfalls along the road of socialist development. They will not escape them; but they can draw on a rich fund of experience—both positive and negative—in surmounting them.

NEW POLICIES, NEW PROBLEMS

WITHIN the last year Chinese cities have changed, mainly as a result of the free market. Beside the official free markets, which are used by the peasants, who sell their products there at prices which are often twice as high as in the state-run stores, there are 'illegal' stalls. I was told that people who want to sell something must have a permit, which was always displayed on their stalls. But we also saw some without that permit, and when police appeared they picked up all their things and ran away and after some time opened up their stalls again. Those were the stalls where one could buy things from the West, such as secondhand jeans, etc., and that is what I have called illegal.

The truth is: there are free markets and collective shops which are very useful to the population, as we could see, but there are some (and the numbers seem to be increasing although in fact they are few) who do their own business, trading illegally with people from Hong Kong, selling all kinds of goods, including so-called antiques, to foreign tourists. So if one says 'illegal' one must explain it in detail and say that it is a problem but not the main point of my story.

Youth unemployment, which has reached a high level, is being countered by a type of self-help programme. Chinese youths are forming small collective businesses: stalls, workshops or restaurants. Since they are themselves responsible for any profit or loss, they often use advertising, even attempting to appeal to their customers through Western music and Taiwanese pop songs. Western goods from cigarettes and Coca Cola to nylon stockings are available everywhere. The main impression one gains in the cities is that the standard of living has risen appreciably. One might even say that the Chinese seem to have developed a minor passion for consumer goods. Cassette recorders and television sets can often be found. Innumerable TV aerials adorn the roofs of Guangzhou, some of them pointing in the direction of Hong Kong.

The fact that foreigners are often approached in the street is not only due to further liberalisation, it is a direct result of the English-language courses being broadcast on radio and television. Learning English is in. Conversations in the street lead all too frequently, however, to the question 'Do you change money?'. Exchanging Yuan RMB against foreign exchange certificates at black-market rates is one way of obtaining the money to buy goods in the Friendship Stores.

Long-haired youths wearing jeans and riding mopeds are still a rare sight in Guangzhou and the discotheques and amusement arcades are still restricted to the large hotels, but China's cities have changed, albeit superficially.

Private initiative

The changes in rural areas may not be as obvious as those in the towns, but they nevertheless have far more influence on the character of Chinese society.

In 1978 Deng Ziaoping came out publicly in favour of ending the class struggle in China so that the policy of modernization could be accelerated. Ideological considerations were to take second place to economic requirements. Thus, present-day policy in the field of agriculture is no longer designed to expand further the collective forms created in the communes, but on the contrary is characterised by a pronounced willingness to cut back collective forms already in existence in the name of increasing production. In the discussion on how to achieve the necessary increases in crop yield currently being carried on in China, the leadership has not fought shy of criticising the communes.

A phrase I heard repeatedly on my last trip to China in the autumn of 1981 was, in the words of a member of the administration of the Zhuliao Commune, for example: ' The new policy of the state is to have a minority become rich first.'

Today private initiative, a desire for material wealth and the rejection of egalitarianism appear to be the main spurs to economic development. A theme reiterated in many conversations was that it is a good thing to be in a position to obtain wealth, if one works well, if one achieves good performances. And this was stated not just in the context of agriculture, although it was emphasised particularly strongly there.

Economic viability

The aim in agriculture is no longer mechanisation at any price. More attention is now being paid to prevailing conditions. This means being prepared to accept further differentiation between poor and rich areas by giving selective support to those collectives which are already partially mechanised. The different degrees of mechanisation are intended to prevent increasing unemployment in the countryside for as long as local industry is not everywhere able to absorb greater numbers of workers freed from agriculture by mechanisation.

To achieve increases in production, methods are being adopted which we would term 'partial reprivatisation' and which involve stressing the peasants' desire for personal advantages and higher incomes. It is admitted, however, that this constitutes a step backwards, although it is apparently not felt that such a policy could represent a danger to the system as a whole.

The communes were created at a time when there was a general feeling that new departures were being made, which would enable the Chinese people to realise Communism within the lifetime of the present generation. It was not so much economic laws which appeared to determine the development of society as the willing striving of human beings. Today it is the economic laws which are being given prominence once again. The communes are being measured against the yardstick of economic viability and not by ideology.

In the last 20 years the communes with their three-tier system of ownership did function, and the peasants became accustomed to this collective form. There is no doubt that production was not always as high as it might have been. Whether measures directed towards increasing production, which in fact imply a return to lower levels of collectivization and more or less recreate the situation at the beginning of collectivization, were necessary is open to doubt. The introduction of the household quota system, in which the fields are distributed between individual families, who then take on the responsibility for cultivation, seems to be restricted to less developed areas. Nevertheless, the attempt is being made to introduce systems in all communes, which no longer link wages to time worked, but rather directly to crop yield. This is intended to motivate the peasants, and is apparently due to the fact that productivity is higher for land privately cultivated than for land in collective cultivation (cf. *Beijing Review*, No. 48 1981).

The dependence of wages on yield through the household quota system is not without its problems. Factors such as the quality of the soil, climatic conditions, etc., have to be taken into account: in distributing fields to the individual households (only for their use, not for ownership!) the quality of the soil will be of prime importance, since along with irrigation conditions, it is of decisive relevance for the yield. In order to ensure that

distribution is just, the communes we visited had adopted a rotation system—every 2-3 years the fields were to be redistributed. The problem here was that peasants who had poor fields were hardly going to be prepared to invest in the improvement of the soil, which could only pay off after a number of years, in the knowledge that by then the fields would be worked by someone else. The improvement of irrigation systems was meeting similar problems. Much thought was being given to their solution; one possibility would be to provide the communes with enough chemical fertilizer, I was told. Since, however, only a small proportion of the fields in the communes visited, were actually being cultivated according to this system, the commune administration was not particularly concerned to accord this problem high priority.

No anti-socialist movement

The household quota system means individual production, and this in turn will lead—as Du Runsheng, Vice-Minister in charge of the State Agricultural Commission sees it (*Beijing Review*, No. 48 1981)—to the peasants getting right away from the collective. It is, however, a fact that in this process some of the peasants, especially if they are able to sell their products on the free market in the cities, will become rich relatively quickly. This will mean further differentiation between rich and poor in the countryside, which will not be without consequences.

In cases where the fields are distributed to families according to their size on a per-capita basis, there will be problems too. A large number of children will increase the field allocation and thus produce higher incomes. This will naturally render propaganda for 'one couple one child' more difficult. It was admitted to me that in some production teams where the new system has been introduced, the birth rate has already increased. This will tend to undermine a policy successfully applied in the cities and my informants were well aware of this problem. China cannot do without a strict birth control policy; this is true for the cities, but even more so for the rural areas. On the other hand, the increases in yield achieved through the responsibility system are enormous and just as necessary. Responsibility systems at the level of production or work team level, could prove more sensible than at the household level. All systems are being tried out. China is seeking new ways of increasing agricultural production. It is not shy of criticising the communes and has by this method set in motion a discussion of the very form of the collective.

During my trip I thought many times: what about the cadres on the lower levels? Do they understand the new policy? This is perhaps another problem. I did not talk with many local cadres but I see that some are going too fast and some are falling behind.

I think a lot of questions can be asked about the new developments but up to now I can't see an anti-socialist movement. Of course there are problems in regard to agriculture— I have spoken of a de-facto re-privatisation. But I cannot see that Chinese society as a whole is moving back to capitalism. And even about agriculture I'm not sure because I can see the problem only from Western Marxist *theoretical* base. I know too little about the actual problems in the Chinese countryside.

I'm sure that the new system has increased enthusiasm and that it is a success—economically and for the near future. But what will happen to the consciousness of the peasants? I think it will become more egoistic if the family responsibility system is applied. So I think a responsibility system for small collectives would be better and could be a good base for the future development to large-scale production. I learned from my last trip to China and from newspapers that the Chinese are aware of these problems but that they must improve production immediately. I read that peasants have demanded redistribution of the fields according to the situation before 1949! They were criticised for misunderstanding the new policy.

MANFRED ROMICH

NO TIME FOR SECTARIANISM

THE revival of the peace movement is one of the outstanding features of the political life of Western Europe—though not one to which the ruling classes are anxious to draw attention. In Britain and West Germany the demonstrations of Easter 1981 and 1982 recall the great marches a quarter of a century ago.

Those marches failed to achieve their objectives, though they certainly did an important job in placing peace on the agenda of all governments. But history shows that almost all great popular movements progress in a series of waves. Unsuccessful at first, they wane, rebuild their strength, and then take on new life. If they are aligned with the current of history their future is bright and they will succeed in the end. The campaign against nuclear weapons falls into this category; it carries the hopes of many millions.

Some criticisms

The movement has, however, been the target of much criticism from left militants, some of whom look on it as simply the affair of woolly-minded do-gooders. It has been condemned as pacifist and as seeking to gain support by terror lest the whole world should be destroyed (a line pushed by Khrushchev). Then there is the argument, coming from the right as well as the left, that to renounce nuclear weapons would leave countries defenceless. At times some of these criticisms have been voiced in China.

Of course the movement contains many cross-currents and even contradictory views; any great popular cause is bound to have them. There are those who call for total disarmament, even unilaterally. There are those who call only for nuclear disarmament, whether total or unilateral, whether on the part of the superpowers only or of all nuclear powers. There are those who believe the way forward is through the creation of nuclear-free zones. But there is no need to wait for complete theoretical clarity before supporting the campaign; points of agreement are more important than differences. Some issues obviously take priority because their attainment is more possible at present or because they are clearly the most urgent. The fact is that the movement responds to the most fundamental interests of the people and that every success it gains tends to shackle the two superpowers whose aggression is the most dangerous present threat to world peace.

Pacifism, which considers just and unjust wars equally impermissible and therefore opposes even wars of liberation, could never be supported by Marxists or by militants in the most oppressed nations, but there is no need to cut oneself off from pacifists.

It has been said many times that nuclear weapons are all-powerful and that there is no defence against them.

China has never subscribed to this view because it robs people of belief in their own strength, substitutes terror for reason and suggests that once nuclear weapons exist they take over like Frankenstein's monster. Marx once said that mankind sets itself only such problems as it can solve and in fact in recent years it has become clear that defence against nuclear weapons is possible, though at a high price. Leaving aside all the methods based on very advanced science and technology we know that at least some of our Western governments have provided themselves and their entourages with deep shelters. In China, as might have been expected, shelters have been provided for the general population on an enormous scale.

Nevertheless, we can all agree that it is best to get rid of nuclear weapons altogether. The Falklands crisis shows how near to war jingoism can bring our nation.

No isolationism

Finally there is the argument that nuclear disarmament would leave peace-loving countries defenceless. The first question we must ask ourselves is, could we trust our government (with or without nuclear weapons) to defend the country, in time of need, against an attack? In Britain and France, those of us who remember the 30s would at least hesitate to answer. In 1939 the Chamberlain government in Britain tried their utmost to divert Hitler into an attack on the Soviet Union and they sold out Czechoslovakia. The French government was riddled with fifth-columnists who wanted Hitler to win. To be sure our country will be defended we must get a government we can trust. During the last war the British people did just that: they compelled Chamberlain's resignation and put in Churchill. (The fact that this was done through Parliament does not disprove the overwhelming influence of public opinion.)

Having said this, it must be added that a nuclear attack on any Western country would cause immense devastation and loss of life. Such nuclear weapons as Britain possesses would make not the slighest difference but would in fact, taken with the siting of US rockets on our soil, be the most certain way to ensure that we would be attacked. In Britain at least there is a considerable body of military opinion which supports this view. Even a number of local authorities have, for what it may be worth, declared their areas nuclear-free zones.

We do not want to retreat into isolationism, any more than we want to ally ourselves with either of the superpowers. The US rulers look on Britain and West Europe as so many convenient bases from which to launch nuclear warheads, thus guaranteeing our destruction and the immunity, they hope, of the US mainland. The US economy is largely built on military expenditure; real disarmament would be a disaster for many US industrialists. President Reagan's belligerent and reckless speeches certainly frighten more people in the West (including the US) than they do in the Soviet Union. He would probably have no objection to a limited war in Europe but it is most unlikely that such a war could remain limited. It would be madness to link ourselves with either superpower.

Natural allies

Our natural allies in the fight for peace are the people of all the world, but first (in time only) those of Western Europe, who are in the same boat as we are. They do not want nuclear arms; they do want peace. There is already cooperation between the peace movements of the West and there have been indications of a response in Eastern Europe. Recent events in Poland have shown not the strength but the weakness of the Soviet grip. Romania has broken with the Warsaw-Pact policy on nuclear weapons and has called for a nuclear-free zone in the Balkans, a call which has received support in Greece and Yugoslavia.

Equally important as allies are the peoples of the third world, who are suffering ever greater poverty and hardship as the governments of the first and second worlds try to alleviate their own economic difficulties. There are no peoples, the whole world over, who do not have a vital interest in the success of the movement for the reduction of arms.

The world in which the first real steps to disarmament are taken will not be the world as it is today. The people will gain strength from their victories and reactionary governments will be weaker, and fewer.

Reasons for the growing strength of the campaign are not far to seek. There is overwhelming evidence of Soviet aggression and preparations for aggression in various parts of the world. President Reagan, in the name of opposing it, is behaving like an old-style imperialist, threatening a Vietnamese-type war in El Salvador. Even Britain is flexing her muscles, Tory and Labour more or less united, at the thought of an easy victory over Argentina.

All the negotiations and agreements once hailed as slowing the arms race have failed completely; the number of nuclear weapons in existence continues to grow. On all sides there is talk of more sophisticated weapons and methods of delivery.

All this leads to widly increased government expenditure and consequent lowering of the standard of living. In Britain Mrs. Thatcher's government have encouraged inflation, brought about a tremendous rise in unemployment, made savage cuts in education and health services, reduced the real value of pensions and unemployment pay, axed social services and are selling off the country's assets. Is it any wonder that those who campaign for disarmament are getting increasing support, The picture is similar throughout Europe.

The campaign for peace is a campaign for the people's welfare, for their democratic rights and for their future. No other movement of the second world has at the moment anything like the same potential. Remember Stalin's words after World War II: 'Peace will be preserved and strengthened if the peoples take into their own hands the cause of the preservation of peace and defend it to the end.'

Against the people stand the two superpowers, whose manoeuvres keep the world on the brink of war; both must be opposed. The efficacy of the opposition will affect the future of us all.

CORRESPONDENCE

In our November issue last year we published a letter from a reader about the Resolution of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party on Party History. Our correspondent then said that he considered the Resolution a very impressive document but that he had 'some important reservations'. We have since had a further note from him in which he refers to one of them:

The *Resolution* says: 'The class struggle continues under socialism, but only within certain limits.' What are the limits? They are not defined. The Cultural Revolution was itself a manifestation of class struggle at its most acute, involving two counter-revolutionary conspirators. Therefore, Mao was right when he said in 1957: 'The class struggle . . . will continue to be long and tortuous, and will at times become very acute.' His mistake was, not to absolutise the class struggle, but to handle the contradictions incorrectly, with the result that 'anti-revisionism' became dogmatic and non-antagonistic contradictions became antagonistic.

SEARCH FOR A SOCIALIST EDUCATION

A teacher's observations

The following article is from a member of the China Policy Study Group who is at present teaching in China.

THIS is the observation of only one person, the result of talks with students in classes, casual conversations with friends and acquaintances and impressions from the daily press. There are inevitably inaccuracies and faulty judgments, which are the responsibility of the writer and not the policy of the Chinese government or even of the University (Jida) in the northeast and Fujian Teachers' two universities where I have been teaching—Jilin Training University (Shida) in Fuzhou in south-east China.

My students were in their first or second year, in all nine classes with around 20 in each class.

General knowledge and interests

It was a new and unexpected experience for me to find that first and even second year university students were ignorant of the most common everyday facts, such as whether there were any energy sources in their part of the country and where their electricity came from. Students at Jida did not know that not very far away was Daqing, the biggest oilfield in the country.

Comparing the two universities, and students of the same year, the northern students had the better command of spoken English, but the southern ones have more general knowledge and are quicker in response. This may be due to climatic differences or to the long Japanese occupation, from 1931 to 1945, which, with its political oppression and obscurantist policy must affect even the generation born 15 to 18 years later.

Lack of general interests among the majority of students in both southeastern and northeastern parts of the country is shared, I believe, by the present generation in the whole of China. This state of affairs may be traced back to the Gang of Four, who labelled intellectuals 'the stinking ninth'. The 'fall out' from this cultural and ideological holocaust still permeates the country. Students now in their second year entered primary school early on in the Cultural Revolution and of course learned nothing because of school closures. Hence the sad lack of interests, curiosity, initiative, and even any attempt to speak out on the simplest and most harmless questions.

Some students in the northeast did not even know the name of the Premier, Zhao Ziyang! They don't listen to the radio, watch TV or read the daily paper. What do they do? Read and study the text books, both intensive and extensive. I came to the conclusion that the intensive course was one of the main obstacles blocking the students' development. They rely on their dictionaries and look up new words instead of listening to the teacher and grasping their meaning and use in a direct way. This habit hinders their comprehension and speech and is very difficult to break.

This may be due to the examination system of the Ministry of Education. It is also a legacy from the ancient Chinese educational methods, by which young men aspiring to become Scholar-Gentry-Imperial-Officials had to learn hundreds of classical essays by heart, in order to be able to quote passages in the series of Imperial Examinations (which became the inspiration and models for European Civil Service examinations in the 19th century!). Times have changed, but tradition and habit die hard. In a socialist country, with planned economy, embarking on the gigantic programme of the Four Modernizations, these students must change their method of study drastically; otherwise they will be of very little use to their country.

Restoring education

The Four Modernizations need millions of young people with enquiring minds, scientific and analytical attitudes, daring creative spirit, ability to solve problems and overcome difficulties, strong individuality (*not* individualism), dynamic personality and communist morals, principles and integrity.

The Ministry of Education has made great efforts to restore the country's education in schools of all kinds, colleges and universities. However, owing to the scale of the damage suffered—material, economic, ideological and spiritual—the process is bound to be slow. The new education programme did not take off until early in the 70s. Since then successes have been remarkable, especially in science and technology.

Key schools and universities

In order to speed up the training of groups of selected able individuals, some of the better-equipped and better staffed schools and educational institutions were designated as *key* schools and universities and were provided with more money for better teaching staff and equipment. Western observers have criticised this policy as training an elite. A few graduates may regard themselves as superior, but this was certainly not intended by the Ministry and I feel sure that students who were soundly based ideologically would not regard themselves as an elite destined to lord it over the masses. Most of them have a genuine desire to help the country forward by developing agriculture, industry, economy and culture in general as quickly as possible.

These 'key' principles, when they were practised soon after liberation and in the 50s, resulted in spectacular achievements in almost all spheres of national life. A small area would be chosen as an experiment; with success the area would be widened, say by a mass education campaign. When more people had been educated, more would be given a higher level of training. The broader area and the higher standard could be said to be dialectically related.

Undesirable side-effects

Here again the force of tradition in education had very undesirable effects. The passionate desire of individual pupils and their parents for success, and then of their schools, even of their home towns and counties, for the prestige of having intellectually gifted students selected to go to the best schools—all became an unbearable burden on the young people. It had been more or less the same in old China, when 85 per cent of the masses were starved, ignorant and silent. Now the masses have some education and are 'masters of the country'.

The key school system, like the English 'eleven-plus', resulted in the polarisation of schools, pupils and families into two classes. In key schools the teachers train their pupils for the national enrolment examinations. The more who gain entrance into higher education, the higher the prestige of their schools, teachers and parents.

The unsuccessful feel ashamed, disheartened and often lose interest in their study and work. The chief and at present insuperable difficulty is China's population, which is far, far too great. No matter how hard the

government tries to produce more goods, more opportunities and institutions, there is never, and probably never will be, enough to meet the demand. In the national enrolment examinations of 1981, for instance, 2.5 million took the exams, but only 4 per cent gained entrance to higher education. There was simply no room for more.

All colleges and universities in China have been building more dormitories, classrooms and blocks of teachers' flats, as fast as possible. But much more than buildings is needed: far more qualified teachers, more books on academic subjects. To provide them requires time and a large investment.

If the key schools succeed in sending only 5 per cent into higher education, the ordinary schools which make up the great majority, are doomed to produce 'second class citizens'. The psychological damage to unsuccessful students, their teachers and their parents is often serious. The successful students suffer too. Many work so hard that they become ill. The Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region has published statistics which demonstrate this.

Kindergarten childen

Educated and ambitious parents teach their children to read and write and do arithmetic earlier than usual so that, when the time comes for them to enter primary school, they can pass the test for entry to a key school. Likewise, primary school children of 10 or 11 may be given extra schooling if the parents are educated or professional people. The children work late at night and get up early for school. The purpose of this heavy burden is to gear the young minds to pass the entrance examination for a key junior middle school. The same process continues in the junior middle school, in order to get into a senior middle school.

The 3-year post-graduate course

The pressure remains when the students enter university. Recently the Ministry of Education started or restored post-graduate research courses in various subjects. Graduates and those working in various professions can take examinations to enter the course. The intake for each course is small, from seven to about 15. So far, comparatively few universities have the staff and facilities to start this second degree work, but more and more are planning to do so. Institutions encourage their graduates to take such examinations. After three years of research work they will go back to raise the standard of their specialised subjects in their 'mother' university. This too is a matter of prestige.

More and more students in their late university year prepare for such examinations. They work day and night at the expense of their normal studies and their physical and mental health. Many people believe that the Ministry will soon bar undergraduates from taking these entrance exams until they have graduated.

In recent years the press has been publishing letters from the public, telling stories of the hardship children suffer under the competitive key school system. By 1981 letters were pouring into editors' offices from teachers, parents, school administrators, educationalists and well-known authorities. Non-key schools tell of the impossibility of running a good school under the system.

Excellent articles have appeared on the purpose of education, on children's psychology, on the duty of a socialist society to care for the healthy development of all children and not just the minority of the most gifted. The Ministry of Education may end the system next September, at the beginning of the next academic year.

In early January this year *Guangming Daily* initiated a discussion which brought out many very interesting and important facts: complaints of waste of talented people, mismanagement or lack of management of millions of educated youth in rural areas (in 1980 there were 150 million educated youth there) whose cultural and technical skills were not put to use. There were suggestions on how to educate problem children; reports of gifted and experienced teachers' achievements; the influence of wise parents; the work and theories of famous educationists; examples of the use of teaching aids for young children.

Retraining teachers

This flood of public response also raised the question of retraining teachers. Many provinces and cities have permanent institutions where groups of teachers take refresher courses. For instance, in English, any university which has some specialised teachers from English-speaking countries (so far mostly American) takes in groups for a full-time course lasting from four to six months. A few may be sent to Beijing or Shanghai for a whole year.

The programme shows how the Ministry concerns itself with the urgent need to train better teachers. But the number in need of retraining is enormous. For this reason many institutions and provincial and city authorities are taking steps to set up more retraining facilities.

Retraining is not limited to general teachers. Teacher training universities, colleges and the Institute of Teachers have, since the publication of the Seven Laws in 1979, set up a department of law or plan to set one up.

At the beginning of this year the Ministry of Education asked the Beijing Teachers' Institute and five other institutes of higher education to set up a course for retraining teachers in Law Departments. This six-month course, which opened early this year, is attended by more than 80 young and middle-aged teachers from some 70 teacher-training institutes all over the country. This was the first course of its kind; it covers the fundamental principles of the constitution and the laws enacted in 1979.

Assignment of qualified graduates

There are complaints of serious misplacing of personnel and of repeated appeals for change being ignored by the leaders concerned. This is partly due to some leaders' laziness and lack of concern for the people. But it is also partly due to the rigid organisational structure, which hinders progress and which the central authorities have already started to reform, beginning from the top. On the local level a new spirit and practice can often be seen. Married couples are assigned to the same locality or at least not too far from each other. Young graduates with parents getting on for 60 years of age are assigned to their home city.

Structure of senior middle schools

In view of the urgent need for the Four Modernizations, there is a growing demand from the peasants, comprising 80 per cent of the population, and from industry, trade, public services, etc., for qualified young people in every profession. The peasants desperately need people with knowledge and skill in crops, soil services, fertilizers, pest control, cultivation and seed selection, animal husbandry, forestry and general scientific studies. The demand for young people with some specialised training is enormous and urgent.

The structure of senior middle schools varies with the locality. Anhui Province in East China, for instance, has twelve cities in which there are over 200 senior middle schools, which are being reorganised into about 40 voca-

tional schools. Each county is to have one. The total number of students in these schools will be 12,000. Each county is to have one agricultural middle school and the whole province will have 74 such schools with about 10,000 students. In addition the new specialised secondary schools, such as those for judicial work, marine products, textiles and price control, will enrol 3,000 more than last year.

As a corollary to this new type of secondary education, Anhui Province instructs all departments and organisations that when they recruit workers they must select the best graduates from the schools mentioned above. In the rural areas communes, brigades and state farms should recruit technical and management personnel from the best graduates of agricultural middle schools.

Emphasis on moral and ideological education

In February the Ministry of Education issued a circular to the educational departments of special municipalities such as Shanghai and Tianjin, all provinces and minority Autonomous Regions, instructing all educational institutions to put into effect eight regulations for students which had been issued earlier as a draft. They asked the students to study Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought, cultivate proletarian ideas and standpoint and follow the mass line. They also asked students to be honest and modest, to honour teachers, respect staff members and workers and develop criticism and self-criticism. No one denies that widespread corruption, abuse of power and financial malpractices exist and the public outcry against them has grown in recent years. In March this year the NPC adopted a resolution to increase penalties for such offences.

It is clear that the government and the Ministry of Education are determined to do everything possible to combat all kinds of un-communist behaviour and that they have the support of the people in doing so.

THE ROLE OF THE ARTIST

Towards the end of 1981 China celebrated the centenary of the birth of Lu Xun, the writer who more than any other has influenced the thinking of Chinese leaders on literature and the arts.

These celebrations are the culmination of a great and enthusiastic public debate that has been going on in China since the fall of the Gang of Four led to a wave of interest and popular participation in all the arts. In the immediate aftermath, for example, there was a remarkable burst of satiric writing, cartoons and the like, often of a high quality, and characterised by the sort of earthy humour found in folk art of all countries.

That Chinese military and political leaders have also attained high artistic achievement is well known; in this tradition Mao himself, Zhou Enlai and Chen Yi all established reputations as poets. Mao's talks at the Yan'an Forum remained for many years the guidelines for literary and artistic criticism, and recent publication of speeches by Zhou Enlai in 1961 and 1962 have shown that the debate continued throughout the years of progress after the Revolution. Even during the Cultural Revolution Jiang Qing took it upon herself to enunciate principles on which artistic works should be based.

She negated the 'Double Hundred' policy of letting a hundred flowers bloom in the arts and ordered everyone to concentrate on the 'struggle against the capitalist-roaders'. She personally guided the changes in Peking Opera towards the 'eight model works' and the 'three prominences', which were: (1) among all characters, give prominence to positive characters; (2) among positive characters, to heroic characters; (3) among heroic characters, to a leading hero.

Such works became in the end divorced from reality and reduced the role of the party and the masses in favour of the bourgeois idea of history as being created by great men.

Soon after the publication of Zhou's speeches in 1979, the 4th National Congress of Writers and Artists took place in Beijing and its President, Zhou Yang, analysed progress and setbacks in the development of a socialist theory in literature and the arts. He dealt mainly with three relationships: that between literature and the arts, and politics; that between them and the life of the people; that between the old and the new—inheriting traditions and making new advances. Like Zhou Enlai, he also brought to the front the 'Double Hundred' policy of frank and open discussion.

At the major meeting on Lu Xun's centenary, Chairman Hu Yaobang reviewed Lu's life and work in relation to the present situation, pointing up the importance of a true revolutionary stand on the part of the artist, against the belief that all art is no more than 'outbursts of individual inspiration'. He congratulated literary and artistic workers on the contributions they make towards socialism in China, but warned against complacency and certain negative features. Not enough attention, he said, was being given to the discussions at the 1979 Conference. There remains a fear of criticism among some, a lack of contact with the masses, a lack of faith in socialism, even some enmity towards socialism as a bureaucratic interference with the freedom of the individual artist to express himself in the way he alone judges to be best.

At the very heart of all these discussions and speeches lie certain specific ideas about the nature of literature and art, and their role in building a socialist society characterised, as Hu Yaobang said, by stability, unity and liveliness, fine moral qualities and socialist civilisation.

Since the artist has developed a refined appreciation of human experience and the skill to communicate this appreciation to others, he has a particular responsibility to use this skill wisely and in the best interests of those to whom he speaks. History is full of examples of the way in which great artists, in all fields, have influenced the thinking of the masses and so helped to change the course of history.

Who then is the artist, and what is his role in society? If, as we usually think, he expresses the subjective element in human experience, how do these subjective feelings arise? What is the relationship of subjective feelings to our experience of the real, objective world, the world 'out there'? In particular, what relationships exist between the people who are part of the real world, and the artists and writers who present to the people their personal accounts of their own subjective feelings? These questions have exercised the minds of philosophers since before Confucius and Socrates, and are even more crucial for socialist society.

Much has been written about the origins of art in the rituals of primitive societies, by which their members tried to exercise some control over their destiny by imitating what they hoped to achieve in hunting, fishing, organising the weather. As societies became more conscious of what they were doing, these rituals became crystallised into definite forms of expression; and it is in the dialectical relation between form and content that the principal contradiction in the arts is to be found. The extent to which the artist is able to discipline the form to carry his exact message is one of the principal criteria against which his work is judged.

But this is not the only contradiction. The 'message' implies a public. A few years ago Marshall McLuhan coined the famous phrase 'the medium is the message',

meaning that the contemporary artist is so bound by the technology of communication—radio, television, etc.—that he has to say only what those media can transmit. He has turned out to be a nine days' wonder; true artistry lies is mastering form, not in being mastered by it. In just the same way, progress towards socialism entails mastering the environment, not in being mastered by it. The artist achieves mastery over his tools and materials —paint, clay, words—and through them shapes his thoughts and contributes to our understanding of ourselves. In this he parallels the scientist in his efforts to master nature, and the productive worker in his efforts to shape his materials into useful social objects.

Content, in a work of art, is the epitome of feelings about certain outside events and their impact on the mind of an individual, the artist. Feelings are the result of our consciousness of the environment in which we find ourselves, and it is natural for us to express these feelings and the emotions they arouse.

But a work of art has to be more than just exclamation or description. These are necessary to start with, but the artist has to transform this individual impact into something more general in its effect, so that we can all share his experience. He must, in fact, show us that we can achieve more, in thought and feeling, than we knew. The artist should show us a vision of higher things.

Art as a guide to action means art as a force helping to control events in the real world; it is not merely a representation of events and emotions in a solitary mind. The real world is full of millions of stimuli, and is full of contradictions which constantly arise from the dialectical process of human and social development. Any aspect is a legitimate subject for the artist, so that in any society some writers and artists will be revolutionaries, some critics of abuses, some the voices of reaction. In capitalist societies, artists often feel alienated from what they see around them, and take refuge in extremes of abstraction or idealism, in God rather than Man, isolating themselves from society.

Such reactionary aspects must not be ignored. They must be given careful thought, and it is no use imposing censorship and pretending that they are not there. The artist seeing dirt and poverty may well react by wanting to escape, seeing tragedy wanting to sympathise, becoming hopeless and overcome by pessimism.

Such defeatism goes against all great traditions in art. If a function of art is to criticise wrongs in society, it is also a function of artists to criticise their own faults, and to help each other to realise their true aims of constructive contributions to our well-being. Much has been made in the Chinese press lately of criticisms of the film 'Unrequited Love', by the Army writer Bai Hua, which ends on a note of hopelessness over the position of the intellectual isolated from society. Bai has now published a letter saying how these public discussions have enabled him to see the defects of his film and to adopt a more positive approach to his work in future.

Socialist art forms a new stage in art theory and practice. Many problems require solution, some old and some new. We cannot expect to arrive at an 'instant' definitive theory. Criticism and self-criticism, reasonably and constructively carried out, are the means by which such a theory can be developed and refined. It will certainly have to take notice of the value of experimentation; in the early years of the Soviet Union there were brilliant flowerings of all kinds of experimental art forms.

Equally, it will not do to discard what was good in the art of the past. As Mao constantly stressed, we should weed through the old to bring forth the new. But when he complained of Peking Opera portraying only 'emporors, scholars and beauties', Jiang Qing took this to extremes in her Model Works and threw them out altogether. This resulted in a barren and ultimately uninventive body of works. Yet the Model Works contained good elements: they glorified the peasants, the Armymen the heroes and heroines of the Revolution, just as the tales of Hereward the Wake and Robin Hood have glorified our own folk heroes. It is encouraging to see that Zhou Yang acknowledges this, urging that the revolutionary operas should be given their proper value and not simply dismissed.

Literature and the arts continue to play an essential role in the life and growth of any society; they are, (in the phrase of Marx, quoted by George Thomson in his well-known book), of 'the human essence'. In the West the so-called 'high culture' of the arts represents the latest phase in the separation of the 'educated', who can foresee and control the future like the witch doctors and prophets of primitive societies, from the mass of the people, who know only what they meet in everyday life. But we have the technology of mass propagation of works of art through printing, radio, television, and the future socialist society will need a theory and principles which will guide artists to produce their best work in the best interests of the people. From their current discussions, it is evident that the Chinese have not yet arrived at practical solutions; but they are busy searching for the right questions to ask.

TO OUR READERS

We think it certain that this will be the last issue of Broadsheet. In producing this May number we have realised that to continue publication on an occasional basis would involve new difficulties. We cannot ask readers to pay a subscription when the prospect of their receiving anything for their money is so uncertain; nor can we maintain an up-to-date record of addresses.

But we do intend that the China Policy Study Group shall continue in existence and we hope to find ways to continue to serve those who are interested in developing friendship and understanding between China and the rest of the world. We shall continue to study China and the developing situation there.

We shall be glad at any time to hear from former readers and to be kept in touch with their movements. If you change your address we should be grateful to be told about it. This year we have had a number of letters of appreciation and support, which have encouraged us.

We have the following items of office equipment for sale:

Complete Index, 1964-1981

This is now ready and all orders so far are filled. We found printing costs greater than expected and we must increase the price for future orders to £1.00. Sorry!

Envelope-addressing machine (Renadress Model 201, semi-automatic), with about 1100 plastic stencil frames, five stencil filing trays, a certain number of stencils, carbon paper and bottles of transfer fluid. In good condition and perfect working order, has never let us down; will address about 700 envelopes an hour. Price £100.

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Any of the above can be seen at this office by appointment (telephone 01-435 3416).

Thomson Paperbacks

Finally, we should like to remind you that the remaining stocks of the books by George Thomson—*From Marx to Mao Tse-tung, Capitalism and After* and *The Human Essence*—are held by The Guanghwa Company, 9 Newport Place, London, W.C.2. Over the years we have sold many thousands of these books and we firmly believe that they have a message for today.

The China Policy Study Group

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