

China Policy Study Group

BROADSHEET

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EDITORIAL

China's rejoicing on the completion of twenty years of socialist construction was tinged last month with the sadness of bereavement. For almost on the eve of the anniversary President Ho Chi Minh, 'the closest comrade-in-arms of the Chinese people', passed away, leaving a void that can never quite be filled.

It was the message of condolence from the State Council itself that paid unique tribute to Ho Chi Minh by describing him in these words. It went on to recall that the whole life of this remarkable leader had been devoted to the national liberation of the Vietnamese people and the cause of communism and that he had played the central role in founding the revolutionary state which is today the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. Nor was it forgotten that Ho Chi Minh also 'personally took part in China's revolutionary struggles and fought shoulder to shoulder with the Chinese people', thus helping to forge the deep and militant friendship that exists between the Chinese and Vietnamese people today.

During the last few weeks of his life President Ho Chi Minh once again saw concrete expression given to this comradeship by the conclusion in September of a far-reaching agreement on trade and economic and military aid. It is clear that aid to be received from China will continue to play a key role in backing up the efforts of the Vietnamese people. In past years Chinese aid has taken many forms: direct technical aid, such as that given by road and bridge repair teams, and the supply of food and basic industrial equipment to underpin the Vietnamese war effort have often been more important than military supplies. It appears that China's aid to Vietnam is 'non-refundable', to quote the Hanoi paper 'Nhan Dan' — not made in the form of advances to be repaid later, as was Soviet aid to China during the Korean war.

By renewing her aid in ample measure at this time China is joining with the Vietnamese people in 'turning grief into strength' and in carrying out Ho Chi Minh's final exhortation in his will, written on 10th May this year, to 'fight against the U.S. aggressors till total victory'. The Chinese government and people, said the message of condolence, share Ho Chi Minh's militant revolutionary spirit and will 'always give powerful support to the Vietnamese people's war until final victory is won'.

TWO OCTOBERS

A month after the celebration of the anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China comes the anniversary of the October Revolution. The October Revolution was a crucial event in the history of mankind; it proved that the workers did not have to be exploited forever but could overthrow their exploiters, and it directly assisted in the formation in China, a few years later, of a Communist Party committed to follow the same road.

Thirty-two years later, in 1949, Mao Tse-tung inaugurated the People's Republic and acknowledged China's debt to the Soviet Union. But within ten years divergencies began to appear: in 1960 Soviet technical experts were withdrawn from China and shortly afterwards the public controversy began which has dominated the international socialist movement ever since. The Chinese Communist Party published an extensive series of theoretical documents which greatly clarified the issues and established that the Chinese case was firmly based on the principles of Marx and Lenin.

Nevertheless, there are many who are almost uninfluenced by theoretical arguments, who took up a position of support for the Soviet Union long ago, maintained it in the teeth of capitalist propaganda and maintain it still without examining the Chinese case. We would ask such people to think back over some of the elementary facts of the situation — facts which many socialists have pushed to the back of their minds, but which must eventually be considered by anyone who lays claim to a scientific approach to the problems of society today. A number of them are generally accepted.

(1) The Soviet Union has ceased to rely on 'moral', i.e. social, incentives to greater productive effort, and adopted instead a system of material rewards. These lead to marked status differences and to what most people would identify as class distinctions. Taken together with the gradual switch-over to a profit-regulated economy, this means that traditional socialist ideas have been dropped and something resembling capitalist methods substituted.

(2) For a number of years Soviet agriculture has been in serious difficulties. Collective agriculture, which never won the full support of the peasants, is be-

coming saddled with bureaucracy and many voices are calling for a return to individual farming. There is a shortage of fresh food at controlled prices; a substantial part of that available is produced on privately-owned land and sold (quite legally) at higher prices.

(3) There is a shortage of many items of consumer goods, notably clothing, and quality is poor.

(4) There is a thriving black market in foreign currency and foreign goods. It is normal for visitors in Moscow and other big cities to be approached by persons wishing to buy currency or articles of clothing, cameras and watches.

(5) With growing cynicism towards their own brand of socialism, and lacking any spirit of experimentation in new socialist culture, their own painters, sculptors, writers, architects and even dress designers, whether of the younger or older generation, look to the West for leadership.

Few recent visitors to the Soviet Union would deny that these trends are present and becoming gradually stronger. In fact, they are widely accepted as evidence of maturity, return to normality, of advance rather than retrogression — a measure of the confusion now obscuring the original objectives of the October Revolution.

China is acknowledged, even by critics, to have set her course in the opposite direction. Some deride the Chinese for being unrealistic and utopian, others accuse Mao Tse-tung of splittism for not falling in line and thus weakening Soviet influence in the world. But on the key question they cannot deny that in China the characteristic features of bourgeois society are being eliminated. The worst evils of class society flourished in old China, as in old Russia; now People's China has wiped them out, as was being done in the Soviet Union in Lenin's and Stalin's time. It is accepted that they have reappeared in Russia, and supporters of the post-Stalin policies of the Soviet Union denounce China as 'unscientific' for not allowing them to reappear there too.

While the existence of these trends is generally acknowledged there are others which may not be so apparent.

(6) The use of material incentives in production has led to increasing discrepancies in wages. The ratio between the lowest and the highest wage is cer-

tainly greater than 100 to one. High-wage earners receive permits enabling them to buy motor cars, domestic equipment, flats and imported goods still in short supply. Inevitably, this has led to bribery, cases of which are frequently reported in the Soviet press.

(7) The Soviet Union is in debt at home and abroad and the debts are increasing. As under capitalism, foreign trade is financed largely by credits; during the years from 1964 to 1968 the Foreign Trade Bank borrowed 1,000 million roubles abroad. Again as under capitalism, domestic bonds are issued to raise money at home; the repayment of bonds issued before 1958 has been postponed by 20 to 25 years.

(8) The Soviet Union gives both economic and military aid to governments that are engaged in hostilities against liberation movements and even, in the case of India, against China. It has also given aid to the fascist government of Indonesia, responsible for the slaughter of many hundreds of thousands of Communists and others among its own people.

(9) The Soviet Union is feared and distrusted by its 'allies' in Eastern Europe. After 24 years of close association there is more mass opposition to the U.S.S.R. than ever before. In Czechoslovakia, the occupation has turned opposition to hatred. In Romania, efforts have been made to sever the ties with the Soviet Union. It has been considered necessary to keep Soviet troops in most of the nominally friendly countries of Eastern Europe.

In all the matters mentioned above there are significant differences between Soviet and Chinese practice. Even those who believe some of the Soviet policies to be fully justified will agree that they act differently. In most instances the state of affairs in the Soviet Union accords rather closely with that in capitalist countries. Private production in agriculture, high prices, black markets, juvenile delinquency, corruption, mounting national debt, wide variations in wages, the stationing of troops abroad, aid to reactionary regimes — all these are typical of capitalism, particularly in its imperialist stage.

When we see these manifestations in our own country, socialists unhesitatingly describe them as evils of capitalism, inseparable from it, and to be ended only with its end. When the same phenomena are seen in the Soviet Union is it not cause for serious thought? How can it be argued that the Soviet Union and not China is the pattern of socialism when the Soviet Union exhibits all these phenomena — and China does not?

CLASS STRUGGLE—THE KEY

We believe that the profound differences between Soviet and Chinese society arise out of two different attitudes to class struggle. At the Soviet 20th Congress it was said that classless society had already been built and the dictatorship of the proletariat was no longer necessary.

The Chinese take the opposite view; they hold that class struggle continues and the danger of a capitalist restoration remains long after the means of production have been socialised.

Despite Soviet claims, there is also class struggle in the U.S.S.R. today, a struggle between a ruling elite living in affluence, and the working class and peasantry whose work makes this affluence possible.

The Cultural Revolution brought into the open tendencies and individuals that would, if unchecked, have reversed China's course. It showed that the ordinary people can be relied on to expose self-seeking at whatever level, and shed new light on a fundamental problem of socialist society.

In the Chinese People's Republic, workers and peasants are taking power into their own hands; in the U.S.S.R. it is in the hands of a privileged group. Having started from the same premises, the Soviet and Chinese revolutions now stand as polar opposites.

CHINA AND PEACE

In 1916 Lenin wrote his now classical pamphlet 'Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism'. In this and in further articles written about the same time he explained the link between monopoly capital and imperialism and showed how the economic system upon which monopoly capital depended made imperialist wars inevitable. Anyone who takes the trouble to study these articles will see that Lenin's thesis has been amply borne out by the experience of the last fifty years. Above all he makes it clear that imperialism engenders war and that wars will continue to occur so long as imperialism exists.

Yet these are facts that people try to ignore. The thought of a nuclear war is so terrifying that it is natural to hope for peace in our time. Hence we have had a series of disarmament conferences, of plans to outlaw nuclear weapons and, perhaps the greatest fraud of all, the treaty banning certain types of nuclear tests. All the proposals put forward by the advocates of nuclear disarmament seem so very reasonable, so very much to the advantage of all, that it seems incredible that they should not have been adopted long ago. But, in all these plans, one very significant factor is left out of account; the fact that imperialism must lead to war, which Lenin understood so well.

IMPERIALISM STILL AGGRESSIVE

For stating these very obvious truths, the Chinese leaders have been the target of abuse from all and sundry, and above all from the present Soviet leaders and their followers. Of course, the fact that wars will occur so long as imperialism exists does not mean that the peoples of the world cannot play a major part in preventing a particular war or in curbing the aggression of an imperialist country. Indeed the invention of weapons of mass destruction has greatly encouraged the progressive forces to increase their efforts for peace. But one thing these inventions have certainly not done and that is to make the imperialists less aggressive. On the contrary, they have always been ready to use any weapon they think would assist their aims. It was an imperialist power that used atomic weapons against civilians, and that today is waging chemical warfare on combatants and non-combatants alike.

Against this, during the 20 years of the People's Republic, the Chinese have pursued a consistent policy for peace. They alone have emphatically declared that they will not be the first to use nuclear weapons. They, unlike other great powers, have no troops on foreign territory.

Do not let us be deceived by propaganda. Those of us who have lived long enough have heard it all before. The big

CORRECTION

On page 3 of BROADSHEET, September 1969, ten lines from the bottom of the second column, the word 'capitalism' should read 'imperialism'.

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bully screams when anyone treads on his toes. How wicked and foolish of the Czechs to provoke Adolf Hitler! How stupid of pre-war Poland to expect to keep their ancient province of Pomerania when it divided Germany! How silly of the Chinese not to appease the bully, who for 20 years has occupied part of their territory and encircled them with military bases.

UNDERSTANDING AND STRUGGLE

The Chinese Communist Party under its leader Mao Tse-tung has brought peace to seven hundred million Chinese and has rid their country, war-torn for almost a century, of the scourge of imperialism. Other peoples of the world can also achieve peace and prosperity when they have taken control of their own destinies. But for this a careful scientific study, in the spirit of Lenin's pioneer work, is essential. It is necessary to know more about the workings of monopoly capital and its connections with imperialism. It is necessary to have a better understanding of the struggles of people in developing countries and to see the link between their struggles and those of the working classes

in industrialised countries. Above all it is necessary for us to understand our own situation and struggle to gain control of our economic and political affairs. They cannot be left to remote control by international bankers or the politicians of the Pentagon or the Kremlin.

China's achievements have demonstrated the vital importance of full independence, economic as well as political. The Cultural Revolution has also shown what can be achieved by people who have attained unity in struggle, learning to understand themselves and their situation.

What is the relation of this revolutionary struggle to the issue of peace versus imperialist world war? Mao Tse-Tung has said: 'With regard to the question of world war there are but two possibilities. One is that war will give rise to revolution and the other is that revolution will prevent war.'

Some of the world's people have already made the choice.

CYRIL OFFORD

SINO-SOVIET BORDER – Chinese Statement

The Western press seems suddenly to have awakened to the truth that the Chinese Government after all are not harbouring irredentist designs on Soviet territory. The Statement of October 7th, 1969, issued by the Chinese Government, apparently surprised Britain's newspapers, and their 'Pekinologists' were quickly off the mark to explain what they considered to be a new Chinese position. Yet the first paragraph of the Chinese press release should have made clear that this was not so.

'The Chinese Government has consistently stood for peaceful settlement of the Sino-Soviet boundary question through negotiations. On 24th May, 1969, the Chinese Government issued a statement in which it reiterated this stand. In its statement, the Chinese Government pointed out that although the treaties relating to the present Sino-Soviet boundary were unequal treaties imposed on China by Tsarist Russia imperialism in the latter half of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century when power was in the hands of neither the Chinese people nor the Russian people, the Chinese Government was still prepared to take these treaties as the basis for an overall settlement of the Sino-Soviet boundary question and proposed that, pending a settlement, the status quo of the border should be maintained and armed conflicts averted... .

The Statement continues: 'The responsibility for the development of the Sino-Soviet boundary question to such an acute state does not at all rest with the Chinese side. The Chinese Government has never demanded the return of the territory Tsarist Russia had annexed by means of the unequal treaties. On the contrary, it is the Soviet Government that has persisted in occupying still more Chinese territory in violation of the stipulations of these treaties and, moreover, peremptorily demanded that the Chinese Government recognise such occupation as legal (our emphasis. Ed.). Precisely because of the Soviet Government's persistence in its expansionist stand, many disputed areas have been created along the Sino-Soviet border, and this has become the root cause of tension on the border.... .

'On 11th September, 1969, Premier Chou En-lai met Kosygin, Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the U.S.S.R., in Peking and had an exchange of views with him on the boundary question, trade and other questions in the relations between the two countries. In view of the repeated occurrence of armed conflicts along the Sino-Soviet border, in order to truly and strictly maintain the status quo of the border and avert armed conflicts, the Chinese side further proposed that the armed forces of the Chinese and Soviet sides disengage by withdrawing from, or

refraining from entering, all the disputed areas along the Sino-Soviet border, that is, those areas where the two sides disagree in their delineations of boundary line on the maps exchanged during the 1964 Sino-Soviet boundary negotiations. In order to relax the situation along the border between the two countries and enable the Sino-Soviet boundary negotiations to be held free from any threats, the Chinese side put forward the proposal that the Chinese and Soviet sides first of all reach an agreement on the provisional measures for maintaining the status quo of the border, for averting armed conflicts and for disengagement. The Chinese Government already delivered an official letter to the Soviet Government to this effect on 18th September, 1969. On 6th October, 1969, the Chinese Government reiterated this proposal in another official letter to the Soviet Government.'

Some Pekinologists contend that China's agreement to negotiate with the Soviet Union on border problems, and related issues such as trade, was born out of the fear that Moscow would otherwise, in a pre-emptive strike, destroy China's nuclear installations. However as the Statement makes clear, China will neither blackmail nor be blackmailed.

'China develops nuclear weapons for defence and for breaking the nuclear monopoly. The Chinese Government has declared solemnly on many occasions that at no time and under no circumstances will China be the first to use nuclear weapons. It is both ridiculous and absurd to vilify China as intending to launch a nuclear war. But at the same time China will never be intimidated by war threats, including nuclear war threats. Should a handful of war maniacs dare to raid China's strategic sites in defiance of world condemnation, that will be war, that will be aggression, and the 700 million Chinese people will rise up in resistance and use revolutionary war to eliminate the war of aggression.... .

'The Chinese Government has never covered up the fact that there exist irreconcilable differences of principle between China and the Soviet Union and that the struggle of principle between them will continue for a long period of time. But this should not prevent China and the Soviet Union from maintaining normal state relations on the basis of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence. The Chinese Government has consistently held that the Sino-Soviet boundary question should be settled peacefully and that, even if it cannot be settled for the time being, there should definitely be no resort to the use of force. There is no reason whatsoever for China and the Soviet Union to fight a war over the boundary question'.

BESIEGING THE CITIES

A Further Comment

In response to our request for further comments on the issues raised by a reader's criticism (September BROADSHEET) of 'Besieging the Cities' we have received a long letter from a reader in New York, which is printed below in abridged form.

The criticism of the article 'Besieging the Cities' in the September BROADSHEET made several important points but we should recognise that the main thrust of the original article is not either (1) that there is no interaction between the struggles of nations oppressed by imperialism and struggles by the proletariat in the imperialist nations themselves or (2) that progressive peoples in the imperialist nations should passively await the triumphant success of the oppressed nations' struggles. The thrust of the article is that the struggles of the former will triumph before those of the latter.

This is not necessarily an anti-Marxist or historically inaccurate prediction. General appraisals as to when and how the diverse revolutions will triumph are permissible. The critic states, 'We are dealing with moribund capitalism in the West and the objective conditions for revolution are there and have been since World War I.' To assert this and use it as a basis of criticism of the prediction in 'Besieging the Cities' betrays a certain insensitivity to history and failure to see the objective subtlety and complexity of man's social consciousness.

The biggest and chief imperialism in the world today is, as we know, U.S. imperialism. To fail to consider the profound changes in its objective situation since World War I would be a great oversight; before 1914 the United States was a minor imperialist power, but now it is the world's largest. Four significant changes have occurred: the U.S. has (1) embraced unto itself the several European imperialist empires scattered through Africa, Asia and Latin America; (2) begun gradually and systematically to turn the former European imperialist nations into another segment of its empire; (3) significantly expanded and deepened its exploitation of the agricultural and mineral wealth and labour power of the third world, over and above what had existed in earlier stages of imperialism; and (4) made enormous advances in technology.

WHERE THE GRAVY GOES

The critic also fails to see the effect of these changes on the U.S. proletariat when he claims 'the gravy from exploitation at home and abroad goes into the same (i.e. capitalist) pocket . . . creates the illusion of affluence. . . . The bourgeoisification of the working class is primarily ideological.' To claim that the gravy from external exploitation has not flowed downward, even though in the form of sugar-coated bullets, is very strange to me as I see the homes of a working class neighbourhood and reflect upon their very much higher standard of living compared with that of the ordinary peasant in the third world. The rampant individualistic status-seeking and comfort-seeking of the American workers and their bourgeoisification is very much the result of their material conditions and not primarily ideological.

The objective reality in the U.S. has two major conditions. The capitalist class takes for itself a superiority of wealth and lays on the workers a superiority of burdens. This *internal* contradiction creates the desire for change, and a dignified, liberated life for the working people. The second, *external*, contradiction is that between the objectively higher standards of U.S. workers and those of the peoples in oppressed and revision-

ist countries. This *external* contradiction leads to a sense of privilege, conservatism and a reactionary world outlook on the part of the U.S. workers.

If these two contrary contradictions were of equal intensity, the internal one would dominate, but at times the intensity of an external contradiction is greater and it will dominate the movement and life of the situation. Chairman Mao said of the Chinese people that 'poverty gives rise to the desire for change, the desire for action and the desire for revolution.' As far as the U.S. is concerned at the present stage, the second contradiction is dominant and the desire for the status quo of the workers is stronger than the desire for change and revolution. The plunder of U.S. imperialism has lessened the intensity of the internal contradiction and created a global privilege that tends to nullify the effect of the internal material injustice that exists for the workers.

PRESENT CONDITIONS

The critic also maintains that the failure of the recent French uprising was due to the absence of a 'party with a correct line and having the confidence of the people'. Whether the failure was due to the lack of a correct party or due to lack of certain subjective conditions among the French people, especially the working class, cannot be answered dogmatically.

To admit that at present conditions are unfavourable for revolution in the 'cities' does not mean that in the 'cities' there is no class struggle or that there is no interaction between the struggles in the 'countryside' and those in the 'cities'. In the 'cities', some struggles arise out of purely internal conditions and others receive their initiative and impetus from the struggle of the 'countryside' against imperialism. An example of the latter is the Vietnam war, because of which the U.S. ruling class is less able to afford sugar-coated bullets for its poor. As a result the revolutionary Black Panther Party is growing in strength among the black masses. In general, the internal and external struggles interact, as moral encouragement, as examples of general strategy, and in dispersing and weakening the machinery of oppression. As the oppressed nations rise up and regain for themselves the wealth usurped by imperialism, the imperialist country becomes poorer, increasing the internal contradictions within itself. At the same time, the global privilege which formerly functioned to nullify the internal contradictions is eroded away.

It would be wrong, as the critic correctly says, to think that the cities fall because of the countryside. They 'fall', i.e. are liberated to socialism, because of internal reality within themselves, but the external struggles have a material effect upon the internal reality, increasing the intensity of internal contradictions, and they remove external factors which might otherwise nullify the direction of the internal contradictions.

Surely we must look at things from all sides and with fullness of understanding.

CHINA'S CONTINUING REVOLUTION by William Hinton, author of 'Fanshen'

The Land-Reform campaign of 1948 helps to explain the Cultural Revolution — the counter-revolutionary role of Liu Shao-chi

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