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China Policy Study Group

BROADSHEET

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FACING THE SEVENTIES

The various parts of our divided world enter the seventies of the century with a variety of expectations, hopes and fears.

The West looks ahead to endlessly continuing economic crises. There's not much talk today of the 'Great Society'. Professional politicians, seeking to defer the future, compete for the job of squeezing a few more years' life out of an economic system which has lost its dynamism and is living off its fat.

That fat is mainly provided by imperialist exploitation. Capitalism survives because it still retains a measure of power and skill to plunder and extort wealth from vast areas of the world inhabited by peoples still subject to its economic and political domination.

But these subject peoples, eagerly reaching out to grasp the future, enter the new decade with confidence. Their confidence arises from the example set by two nations — the Chinese and the Vietnamese — who, not long ago were their fellow sufferers, the one now triumphantly building a new, socialist society, the other showing how revolutionary struggle can defeat the might of U.S. imperialism.

Mao Tse-tung, summing up Chinese experience, said in 1947: 'The difficulties of the reactionary forces are insurmountable because they are forces on the verge of death and have no future. Our difficulties can be overcome because we are new and rising forces and have a bright future.' The Chinese face the seventies with optimism. They look back upon two decades since Liberation that have brought a constantly improving standard of living, but it is in their political achievements that they see the greatest significance. The fifties culminated in the setting up of the People's Communes, the sixties in the Cultural Revolution. What will the seventies bring? The Chinese masses know that they will bring nothing that is not fought for. Mao Tse-tung has warned them that many more cultural revolutions will be needed before the class enemy is finally disposed of. He has warned them, too, to prepare against imperialist and social-imperialist collusion and aggression.

'Strategically, despise all enemies, but tactically take them all seriously' — this attitude, which won them so many hard victories in the past, remains their guarantee of success in the future.

PRODUCTION & POLITICS

Many people, when they hear about 'revolutionary committees' taking over factories and mines in China, think that things have run off the rails, and that production is being sacrificed by the crude application of political nostrums, specialist knowledge wasted, and development retarded. But the Chinese experience shows that this is not necessarily true.

For one thing, many of their factories had been established on European models. But every country has its own pattern of raw material availability, and its own skills.

Is there any reason to suppose that technologists will necessarily be the first to spot new possibilities or short-cuts in production? Even the history books bear testimony to the number of industrial processes that have been discovered by accident. The formally trained engineer may have an eye for new possibilities, but the untrained man may see them sooner and be able also to see a way of trying them out straight away.

'*Everyone has invention*', said a notice over the work-benches in the Harbin Electric Meter and Instrument Plant, '*and every machine has undergone revolution*'. This was before the Cultural Revolution, and in fact in almost any town it was possible to walk into factories and see machines adorned with discs or rosettes denoting the improvements made to them by their own work-team. The Cultural Revolution has added a new dimension to this; *nothing* was sacrosant any more, even if fully satisfactory to foreman and management. Just as Chinese technicians had had the temerity to modify and even reverse instructions laid down by the Russians for operating installations supplied by them, so the workers in turn were emboldened to probe into everything and make an onslaught on any feature they found unsatisfactory.

In many instances workers have asserted their right to try out ideas of their own which had been sat on for a long time by management. A Shanghai cotton mill, for example, adapted an automatic warp-tying machine, incorporating ideas first mooted during the Big Leap Forward, put into cold storage, and revived only by the Cultural Revolution.

If it were only a question of a nation-wide campaign to innovate and adapt, China's shop-floor initiative might amount to no more than a device for making workers feel more responsible for the progress of their industry. But the conception of the worker who is more effective as a technical pioneer because he is politically motivated contains a far bigger challenge to traditional expertise. How does political motivation come into it? Certainly one element is the refusal to take anything for granted. At the Peking Vinylon Plant the equipment was Japanese. The management never doubted that their job was to use it efficiently in the manner envisaged by the designers. The workers were expected to do no more than master the prescribed production technique and achieve the designed output. To some of them this seemed unambitious and they began a series of experiments, analysing the results. On the basis of their conclusions about the characteristics of vinylon fibre they worked out a plan for reducing by one-third the process of drawing, cutting and spinning. When put into practice, this raised production by two-thirds.

Political motivation is required above all by those who must stand their ground when self-interest or the claims of a quiet life would counsel giving way and acquiescing in official policy. Numerous examples could be cited from industries, such as coal-mining, where knowledge and appraisal of resources are important. In Honan Province, the surveyors and engineers at Wangfeng had declared that the mine was worked out; pits were closed down and workers dispersed. Those who disagreed with the decision had to wait until the Cultural Revolution. Then they came back, saying that they knew there was workable coal in the mine. With the help of retired miners they gathered information as to quantities and location and found that there were still more than 10 million tons of coal unextracted. The findings of the experts were set aside, and in the course of two years over 200,000 tons of coal were brought to the surface.

The term 'socialist emulation' is sometimes used for competitions between units to increase output and improve earnings. In China it has predominantly meant extracting the essence of another unit's successful experience and finding a way of applying it to one's own conditions. One of the fields in which China's advances in

recent years have greatly exceeded foreign expectations is petroleum production, where the extraordinarily rapid opening up of the Taching oilwells led to emulation in every part of the country. One example quoted of this is the old Yumen oilfield where, after exploitation over a long period, production had gradually decreased. Reviewing the reports from Taching, the Yumen oilworkers resolved to make the old oilfield yield anew. They investigated abandoned wells, and restored them one by one. This has led to a continuous expansion of the area of the oilfield and a continuous rise in production.

In terms of the average world cost of extracting these wells were no doubt uneconomic. But for a country with big reserves of manpower, and 20 years' experience of the operation of trade embargoes, this was not the decisive consideration. From a long-term point of view it is debatable whether calculations based on unit cost are a sensible guide to policy for any developing country.

Another proposition which begins to look dubious in the light of China's experience is that experts who want to carry a political revolution into technological fields should take as their starting point the most productive techniques of foreign industry. A large part of the case against depending on imports of industrial plant — or on foreign aid — is that the importing country goes on absorbing the techniques developed by others under quite different geographical, economic and social and political conditions. The petroleum industry offers an example in the field of refinery technique. During three years of intensive development a new method of catalytic cracking, a delayed coking installation and a series of new catalysts were introduced in new refineries and reconstructed old ones. In the past all China's catalysts had been imported, mainly from the Soviet Union. When they could no longer be obtained from this source, Chinese oil technicians successfully developed new ones.

Independent technical development may mean different, and in the long run perhaps better, development. It may well, like petroleum in China, set new standards for world industry.

Even where a development is limited to one section of an industry, it can have repercussions spreading beyond national frontiers. The box furnace at the Changchun Motor Plant, for example, was an 'advanced foreign product', but the workers called it 'a clumsy big-bellied ox belching smoke and fire'. It was not until 1965 that ingrained deference to foreign design was challenged, and a team of workers and engineers analysed the deficiencies of the old furnace and designed a new one. The new model, a high-efficiency thin-walled rotary furnace, a quarter the size of the old one, consuming 40% less gas and heating up a great deal faster, was of advanced world standard. But before it was perfected dozens of experiments had been conducted outside working hours by the volunteer team.

The initiatives taken to solve production problems in China are a remarkable demonstration of the way in which the Cultural Revolution has released the creative energies of the Chinese working people.

ABOUT THE HARVEST

A feudal country may have a good harvest and a socialist country a bad one. Either may have several good or several bad years in succession. To have eight good harvests in succession is more remarkable; and to reap good harvests in years of adverse weather, as China has done several times in this decade, is a relatively new experience in agriculture.

Readers of the daily press in England were reminded recently that China reaped a good harvest last autumn in spite of bad weather in the Yangtze basin and other areas during the spring and autumn — or rather, those who paused to analyse the reports would have realised this. Those who relied on headlines and first paragraphs would not have expected to read success stories about socialist agriculture in China.

CHINA ENJOYS BETTER HARVEST
Financial Times (28th November, 1969).

CHINA FEARS GRAIN SHORTAGE
Financial Times (2nd December, 1969).

The first story started with the news that China's grain harvest had exceeded 200 million tons in 1969. In a sense this was not news at all, since the 200 million tons figure had been exceeded as long ago as 1965 — the *Financial Times* mentioned this in their last paragraph but made it a year earlier, 1964. There was a further big increase in 1966 (when China gathered what was officially described as 'the biggest all-round harvest since liberation') and in 1967 (when informed on-the-spot estimates put the total as substantially in excess of 230 million tons). The 1968 harvest was almost certainly less than this, though still good compared with the average of earlier years. Coming to 1969, as long ago as last July it was known that all China's major wheat-growing areas in the Yellow and Huai River valleys had had an excellent harvest; both wheat and barley had been above average in the Yangtze Valley, and rice well above average in the south. This put the harvest in the 220-230 million tons range. In other words, while not a record, 1969 was very good by the standards of Chinese agriculture before the present decade.

The second story, despite its title, was not about fear of grain shortage in China. It was about the campaign against waste, in the course of which a slogan was coined reminding people of the simple paradox that anti-social waste could result in 'a shortage of grain even in a bumper year' whereas a disastrous year could be turned into a year of surplus by 'placing proletarian politics in the forefront' of the harvest effort.

Like politics, world news in Britain has become largely a matter of catch phrases and images which go on being flashed before the public long after they have ceased to correspond with contemporary realities.

The simple fact which makes China's experience relevant for other countries is that though population grows, agricultural production grows faster — fast enough to provide a year-by-year improvement in living standards and the bulk of the surplus needed for investment in a rapidly developing economy.

TO FRIENDS OF BROADSHEET

The total of donations received in the last quarter is a very good one — over £74 — and makes a heartening start to our seventh year. Our double issue for October was well received and a number of faithful supporters sent us special gifts to mark their appreciation. Many readers sent small donations when renewing their subscription and our thanks go to all these friends. Donations came from Australia, Canada, Guyana, Hong Kong, India, the Republic of Ireland and the US.

The year 1969 has brought a substantial increase in our circulation, notably from Canada, India, Sweden and, we are glad to say, Britain. We want to keep this up, so we repeat that if you send us names, no matter how many, of people who might subscribe, we will willingly send them sample copies.

BOUND VOLUMES

We expect these to be ready in February. The price will be 50s. for 1968 and 1969 bound in one volume. We still have *a very few* volumes of 1966 and 1967 (again bound as one), at the same price. We have completely sold out of 1964-1965 but can supply copies of most individual numbers at 1s. each.

'CHINA'S CONTINUING REVOLUTION'

Have you yet read this illuminating pamphlet by William Hinton? Price 2s. by post from us.

THE CHINA POLICY STUDY GROUP

A YEAR OF ALL-ROUND ADVANCE

A glance at China's material achievements during 1969 reveals a remarkably even and harmonious development, without many of the contradictions that bedevil us in the West. It would be wrong to ascribe this to China's lower level of industrialisation; as industrialisation increases it is apparent that China, expecting and searching for contradictions, controls and uses them instead of being controlled by them.

Self-reliance is proving itself. Throughout China there are now men and women convinced that they can do anything others can do and even what others have not yet done. This naturally leads to daring innovation and to the spread of effort, achievement and knowledge over the whole country, to a nation which is not only self-sufficient as a whole but consists of many areas self-sufficient in themseves.

One of the spurs to this development is contained in Mao Tse-tung's words: 'Be prepared against war, be prepared against natural disasters, and do everything for the people.'

Agriculture, the basis of the economy, produced a very good harvest last year, not only in grain but in industrial crops. An improvement of 10% over 1968's grain total has been mentioned and considerable stocks of this, as of cotton and other essentials, have certainly been built up.

Progress in water conservancy, guaranteeing the future of agriculture, has been greatly speeded up as a result of the Cultural Revolution. The Haiho, a North China river which in the past did great damage, has been brought under permanent control two years ahead of schedule.

In the last three years Heilungkiang Province, in the north-east, has more than doubled its irrigated area, constructing over 1,000 reservoirs, ponds and dams, 900 pumping stations, and 12,000 power-operated wells. More than 500 million cubic metres of earth were moved.

In the mountainous province of Kiangsi more than 1,300 small hydro-electric stations have been constructed in three years, with a total capacity more than ten times that of those built before the Cultural Revolution. All over China similar work is going on. Industry continues to serve agriculture well.

Decentralisation is one of the keys to China's present development, using local materials as far as possible and spreading technical knowledge over the whole countryside. For instance, in one county of Honan Province, Central China, a small but surprisingly complete industrial network has been set up. The county has its own iron and steel, machinery, cement, ceramic, chemical, power and knitwear plants. Many commune production brigades have their own small coal pits and processing plants for agricultural and 'side-line' products.

Achievements in industry and technology have been many. Outstanding are the opening of the great Yangtse Bridge at Nanking (actually in the last days of 1968), four times as long as the famous Wuhan bridge, and the first Chinese underground nuclear test, marking further and astonishingly rapid progress.

The achievements listed are not the result of the past year's work alone. They are merely so many mileposts, making it possible to gauge both the distance and the spread of advance.

From many items worthy of mention one can select only a few, such as: production of many kinds of low-alloy steels: construction of the first rotary oxygen converter; an electronic telegraph receiver which prints 1,500 Chinese characters a minute; a 5,000 hp. diesel-electric locomotive; and a 125,000 kw. turbo-generator with water-cooled stator and rotor, involving problems solved nowhere else in the world. In fields such as these China is aiming at the highest world standards and sometimes surpassing them.

Kiangsi Province recently completed a small integrated iron and steel works comprising coke ovens, iron-smelting and steel-making furnaces, and rolling mills. The half-ton electric arc furnace was made in little more than 20 days. It required a 400 kva. transformer not then available, but when a worker suggested making it on the spot it was done in 13 days. Now local workers have mastered the techniques of steel rolling and can work independently.

No doubt the examples quoted are outstanding, but they are serving as models to others and no doubt the pacesetters will themselves be overtaken in the course of this year. All over China industrial and scientific techniques are being mastered by ordinary people who, placing politics in command, are doing things previously thought impossible.

In the field of economics the big news of 1969 was that China had repaid all her external and internal debts. Her currency, unshaken by the crises of the capitalist world, is completely stable. The cost of living has not risen since 1949. Prices of many products in common use have been reduced. The average price of medicines, for instance, is 80 per cent below that of 1950, the variety and quality have been improved.

Believing in it themselves, the Chinese consider self-reliance equally desirable for other peoples seeking to free themselves from imperialist exploitation. China not only advises them to try it, she helps them to do so. Her aid to other countries, and its very generous terms, have gone largely unnoticed in the western press, except for the recent agreement on the construction of the Zambia-Tanzania railway.

Chinese aid projects are intended to make it easier for the aided country to attain self-sufficiency. They include a Rice and Tobacco Experimental Station in Somalia, an experimental rice farm in Mauritania, a technical school and well-digging in the Yemen, five water supply works on Zanzibar Island, a hospital on Pemba Island, a brick factory in Guinea, a textile, printing and dyeing, and knitwear plant in Brazzaville.

Many of these projects involve considerable constructions. For the rice farm in Mauritania, for example, a 13-kilometre dam was constructed and in Brazzaville the Chinese workers made over 2½ million bricks themselves to make good a local shortage. In all countries the Chinese work side by side with the local people and live under the same conditions. They pass on their knowledge to them and give them technical training.

The Tanzania-Zambia railway, the surveying and design of which are now in hand, had been compared by *The Times* to the Aswan Dam in scale. It will be over 1,900 kilometres long, crossing very difficult country from Dar-es-Salaam to the Zambia copper belt, freeing Zambia from dependence on the railway through Rhodesia.

Chinese medical teams are working in a number of African countries, where their self-sacrifice and devotion have won high praise. Diseases and disabilities which Western doctors have been unable or unwilling to cure have been successfully treated by Chinese doctors, often with only simple equipment.

China has provided much-appreciated aid to Afghanistan and Nepal, on her southern frontiers, and to Albania in Europe. Projects in Albania include a coal mine, a metallurgical combine for iron-nickel ore, a naphtha-processing plant, a polyvinylchloride factory, an electric lamp factory, and the Fierza hydro-electric plant.

Understandably, details of China's help to Vietnam are not made public. What is clear from official Vietnamese statements and reports of visitors to China and Vietnam is that it is enormous in scope, from weapons to complete factories, to food supplies, and very effective. News released after the signature of the recent agreement on aid for 1970 suggests that it is also a free gift.

All this material progress is the result of a great ideological event, the Cultural Revolution. It is a proof of Mao's statement that ideas can turn into a material force. But it is still only the beginning.

BOOK REVIEW

AWAY WITH ALL PESTS

by J. S. Horn, Paul Hamlyn, London, 1969. 35s.

This account of personal experience of 15 years of work in China's medical and health service takes its title from a poem by Mao Tse-tung which begins 'so many deeds cry out to be done' and ends 'Our force is irresistible'. Dr. Horn, who volunteered for medical work in China in 1954 tells us something of the nature of these deeds and the forces rallied to accomplish them.

Before Liberation, like the people of most semi-feudal colonial countries whose resources go to fatten imperialism, the people of China was a prey to famine and disease, victims of brutal indifference to the poverty and ignorance in which they lived and died. There was one doctor to every 100,000 of population and the majority of the people saw little of them. Today, Dr. Horn points out, China is turning out more medical workers than any other country in the world; famines no longer threaten; diseases which once took heavy toll have either been wiped out or brought under control; and in such fields as elimination of syphilis and schistosomiasis, the treatment of burns and the reattachment of severed limbs, China's successes even surpass work done in 'advanced' industrialised countries.

These remarkable successes, Dr. Horn convinces us, are due to the political system and thinking in China, the conscious use of Marxism-Leninism and, especially, the moral qualities explicit in Mae Tse-tung's teachings, which inspire wholehearted service to the people and call forth extraordinary boldness and tenacity in meeting the sometimes formidable problems. Training various grades of medical personnel for specialised areas of work, combining western and traditional Chinese medicine, establishing teams for hospital and field work — all help to meet the immediate needs. The relationship between doctors and patients, Dr. Horn tells us, is based on mutual respect, the work of both, however different in kind, being seen as equally essential to the building of socialist society.

Such attitudes reinforce the concept of collective, not competitive, work, the close contact between specialists and labouring people, from whom there is much to learn as a guard against feelings of superiority and isolation. Thus hospital teams include representatives from all levels, from doctors to ward cleaners, with administrative staff doing a weekly stint at sweeping floors, stoking furnaces, or serving food; and mobile medical teams working out of hospitals go into the countryside on rotation duty, bringing to the peasants the best available medical help and learning in turn from them the needs to be met.

Dr. Horn worked with such a team, which served 12 People's Communes with a total population of 80,000, some in villages accessible only on foot or by donkey. The team not only performed operations, and made home visits, carried out immunization and disseminated information and means for planned parenthood, but also helped train auxiliary medical personnel from among local peasants to foster a new kind of socialist-minded rural health worker able to deal with the more common diseases and needs.

The most important task entrusted to such mobile teams is to deepen understanding and change old habits of thinking. Such work presented many new and sometimes unexpected problems. Dr. Horn himself, after having operated on an old peasant ploughman for strangulated hernia, was asked by his patient to perform the same surgery on the village ox. When told the necessary instruments were not at hand, the offended ploughman accused the team of underestimating the importance of the animal to village production. The team improvised the required tools, saved the ox, and not only gained new respect from the people but learned something about themselves.

Indeed Dr. Horn's book is a warm and human document in which readers can enjoy learning quite a number of useful political-social lessons from a host of moving anecdotes, illustrating the changes going on both in China and in the thinking of a western-trained surgeon who put himself at the service of the people.

Reply to Comrade Kuo Mo-jo

On this tiny globe
A few flies dash themselves against the wall,
Humming without cease,
Sometimes shrilling,
Sometimes moaning.
Ants on the locust tree assume a great nation swagger
And mayflies lightly plot to topple the giant tree.
The west wind scatters leaves over Changan,
And the arrows are flying, twanging.

So many deeds cry out to be done,
And always urgently;
The world rolls on,
Time presses.
Ten thousand years are too long,
Seize the day, seize the hour!
The Four Seas are rising, clouds and waters raging,
The Five Continents are rocking, wind and thunder roaring.
Away with all pests!
Our force is irresistible.

Mao Tse-tung, 9th January, 1963.

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