

China Policy Study Group

BROADSHEET

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EDITORIAL:

PEOPLE'S WAR

Vietnam is to this generation what Spain was to an older one: a test of political allegiance. But 1972 is not 1936; since then the theory and practice of People's War has inspired the oppressed.

Forty years ago the story of Vietnam would have been thought beyond belief. A small, peasant people dared to stand up to the greatest military and industrial complex of the world, which, having committed itself fully, availed itself of every weapon except nuclear weapons, is now being defeated.

This is a triumph of People's War. Used in China with spectacular effect between 1927 and 1949, brilliantly expounded by Mao Tse-tung, and confirmed and further developed by the Vietnamese and other Indochinese peoples, it proves to all that imperialism can be defeated by a united people that dares to fight.

A People's War can be waged only by a people's army and the armed masses. One with the people, the army draws from them its strength. The oppressor and the invader cannot use this source of strength, for their interests cannot be reconciled with those of the people. Hence the failure of 'Vietnamisation' and the impending collapse of the whole puppet structure in Indochina. The puppets are bound to be defeated because they fight not for their own people but for the invader. Henceforward superpower hegemony in Asia is doomed.

The U.S. aggressor has used the vilest methods, prostituted the resources of science, constantly intensified and extended the war, but still he is losing. He did not shrink from using nuclear weapons out of feelings of humanity—he has none—but because he feared the wrath of the people both of the U.S. and the world. This is another characteristic of People's War: the masses of all lands support one another.

The lessons of Indochina are imprinting themselves on the masses, proving that superpower domination can be defeated. China, a member of the Third World, once 'poor and blank', has liberated herself after a century of foreign oppression and exploitation. She will unflinchingly stand at the side of all who try, in their different ways, to do the same.

CHINA'S ORGANS OF POWER

Notes on some changes brought about by the Cultural Revolution

by Charles Bettelheim

I shall give here a few indications, collected during a stay in China in the summer of 1971, of the extent of some of the changes in the Chinese Communist Party since the Cultural Revolution. In this connection I shall also say something about the formation of Party Committees, Revolutionary Committees and workers' control committees.

The Party Committee

In the Peking General Knitwear Mill, where I was able to have long discussions, the Party Committee existing before the Cultural Revolution had been replaced by a new one formed according to the directives adopted by the 9th Congress of the Chinese Communist Party.

The new Party Committee had been set up after purification of the Party ranks had been carried out. This took place on the basis of the three-in-one combination made up of representatives of mass organisations, cadres and the P.L.A. The aim of the purification was to draw a sharp distinction between true party members and those who were in fact hidden enemies. The work of purification was accompanied, according to a formulation used during my interviews, by 'a revolutionary campaign for the living study of the works of Chairman Mao'. This campaign made it possible to set up a revolutionary nucleus.

Once the conditions described had been created the election of a Party Committee followed. To prepare for this election the masses were first asked to discuss the number of members the Committee should have and to draw up a list. In the Peking General Knitwear Mill the original list consisted of some forty persons, though it had been decided that the Party Committee should have 27 members. After repeated discussions the number of candidates was gradually reduced to 27. The discussions were organised by the revolutionary nucleus which had been set up during the campaign to study the works of Chairman Mao. This

revolutionary nucleus brought together ideas and differing opinions, and organised a method of consolidating the proposals. This method included first a democratic discussion, then a consolidation, followed by a new discussion with the masses. In all, 'four discussions and three consolidations' were carried out. After the last consolidation a meeting of all the party members was held and the Party Committee was elected.

This Committee includes among its members all the group secretaries of the factory, also elected after a series of discussions, as well as representatives of the party members among the workers. The Committee was set up on the basis of a three-way alliance, namely, the elderly, young and middle-aged members. It includes some who joined recently, that is to say in the few months before the Committee was formed. Out of 27 members there are 5 women—rather few in view of the high proportion of women in the Peking General Knitwear Mill. Some members are on both the Party Committee and the Revolutionary Committee. I shall return to this point later.

The Revolutionary Committee

The formation of the Revolutionary Committee took place under similar conditions. The Revolutionary Committee has 21 members. It was set up on the basis of a three-way alliance—of representatives of the masses, the cadres and the P.L.A., and also on the basis of the three-way alliance of the three age groups. Out of the 21 members there are only two women. As one of the members of the Revolutionary Committee said: 'At the next election we must pay attention to this because, as Chairman Mao has said, "women make up half of heaven".'

As has been indicated, the Party Committee and the Revolutionary Committee have some members in common. The following is how it worked out at the Peking General Knitwear Mill.

Here the principal members of the Party Committee are also the principal members of the Revolutionary Committee. For example, the vice-chairman of the Revolutionary Committee is also vice-secretary of the Party Committee. The secretary of the Party Committee is at the same time chairman of the Revolutionary Committee. The assistant secretary of the Party Committee is vice-chairman of the Revolutionary Committee. There are also vice-chairmen of the Revolutionary Committee who are not assistant secretaries of the Party Committee and, furthermore, not all the members of the Revolutionary Committee take part in the work of the Party Committee.

Workers' Control Groups

The workers' control groups constitute one of the forms of mass organisation. The members of these groups are elected. In this instance, the management team does not concern itself with the elections. It is concerned only with laying down directives for the formation of the workers' control groups, whereas the masses organise the election by means of a democratic centralisation of proposals which result, after a series of discussions, in a list of candidates.

Mass Participation in Discussions

The masses take part directly in discussions through general meetings of the different workshops or, more often, to allow more detailed discussion, meetings of shifts or still smaller groups. As was emphasised, the discussion is better when the group is not too large.

These different meetings allow the ideas and opinions of the workers to be brought out. At these meetings the different organs, or the representatives and the leading cadres, submit reports for discussion and decision. According to one of the members of the Revolutionary Committee: 'Leading cadres must not be asked to take decisions by themselves, if they do, even new cadres may take the old way.'

The Extent of the Changes

The examination of all the changes brought about in the organs of power by the Cultural Revolution raises very big problems, which I cannot deal with here. The suggestions that I shall make are based essentially on the various discussions I had and, in particular, a discussion on 5 September, 1971 with leading members of the Shanghai Revolutionary Committee.

During this discussion I was given some figures about the Shanghai municipality, that is to say, an urban and rural area of about 8 million people. These figures are concerned mainly with changes in the Party at the factory management level. They are based on enquiries at 1,119 factories.

These enquiries bring out the fact that following the consolidation of the party ranks, out of 4,532 leading members of Party Committees in these factories, only 37 per cent are former leading members, while 63 per cent are new.

Such a renewal of the Party Committees does not mean that those who have been dropped were considered bad elements; most of them have taken up other posts and their disappearance from the Party Committee is due partly to the Committee's own desire for renewal, thanks to the entry of young militants.

In Shanghai, I was told, the strictly bad elements made up only 1.2 per cent of the former members of Party Committees. These bad elements have been either expelled or, if they had not committed serious offences, persuaded to withdraw because of their unsuitability to be Party members. Most of the new members of Party Committees are, moreover, workers who have been Party members for a relatively long time. It was emphasised that before the Cultural Revolution there were few workers on the Party Committees.

According to these figures the young members of Party Committees (that is to say, those younger than 30, who joined

during the Cultural Revolution) make up 10 per cent of the members of the Party Committees in these factories.

In Shanghai, as elsewhere, the setting up of three-in-one Revolutionary Committees has caused another radical change in the make-up of the organs of power. In fact such Committees, bringing together cadres, representatives of the masses and representatives of the P.L.A., did not exist before the Cultural Revolution. In Shanghai, 40 per cent of the members of Revolutionary Committees are experienced cadres, while the remaining 60 per cent are new cadres coming from the working masses and the masses in general. It was explained that in factories 70 per cent of the members of Party Committees are at the same time members of Revolutionary Committees and that, on the other hand, 49 per cent of the members of Revolutionary Committees are party members.

The foregoing information shows up certain important points:

1. At Party Committee level, expulsions or withdrawals from the Chinese Communist Party were very few.
2. The make-up of Party Committees has been profoundly affected, in so far as 63 per cent of leading members of these Committees are new leaders.
3. In the Revolutionary Committees 60 per cent of the members are new cadres coming from the working class and the masses.

In fact the actual changes that have taken place in the organs of power are more profound than any figures can show. Furthermore, some of those who still remain members of different organs of power did not previously follow the same political line as they do today. A not unimportant proportion of those at present still holding leading positions were the subject of mass criticism. This led them to criticise themselves and to remould their world outlook. One should remember that the criticisms directed at the former leaders by the masses were not intended necessarily to remove them but to help them remould their ideology. Here, as elsewhere, Mao Tse-tung's directive was borne in mind: 'In building socialist society, everyone should be remoulded'. Such a demand applies equally to young cadres and veterans.

This last emphasises a decisive fact, namely that from the political and ideological point of view the Cultural Revolution has brought about radical changes in the organs of power by, on the one hand, bringing in new blood and, on the other, breathing new revolutionary spirit into former leading cadres.

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Professor Bettelheim has supplied the following definitions of terms used in his article.

The Party Committee, at factory level, is one of the basic units of the Chinese Communist Party. One of its essential tasks is to ensure the ideological and political direction of the factory by applying concretely the general line of the C.P.C. and by watching over the way in which the political and economic directives of the Party are respected. Another essential task of the Party Committee is to take part in the collection by the C.P.C. of the correct ideas and initiatives of the masses.

The Revolutionary Committee of a factory is the leading organ of the factory. In particular, it draws up, with the masses, the factory's production plan and checks on its fulfilment; it represents the factory in its relations with other economic and administrative bodies.

Workers' Control Groups operate within the factory at the level of the workshop or part of a workshop. At this level these groups have duties similar to those of the factory Revolutionary Committee. They therefore act as links between the Revolutionary Committee and the masses, with whom they are in constant contact.

The Party Committee and the Revolutionary Committee make up what is called the **management team** of the factory.

THE MEANING OF YENAN

The Yen-an Way in Revolutionary China, by Mark Selden, Harvard University Press, 1971, \$10.00; Oxford University Press, London, 1972, £4.75.

The amount of published research on China is perhaps greater than that on any other country. Leaving out the writings of authors who are openly hostile, serious works are mostly academic, tending to be both abstruse and highly individualistic, intended for fellow academics with similar interests. Few enlighten or give pleasure to the keen general reader.

Now and then a book on China that does this appears, usually by an American scholar. Then it is like finding a piece of jade in a mass of rubble: the delight is deep, absorbing and sustained.

Mark Selden understands that 'China' is not an abstraction but the country of the Chinese *people*, mostly peasants. These people, who formerly lived under 'the shackles of oppression, poverty and fear', developed from Robin Hood banditry into full-scale revolutionaries who defeated the far superior military might of the Japanese invaders and of Chiang Kai-shek's armies, financed, trained and equipped by the United States.

Selden shows how the strategy and tactics of People's War as developed by Mao Tse-tung were applied in the struggles against warlord oppression, 'extermination' (i.e. anti-communist) campaigns and Japanese aggression, and also in the work of construction since 1949, and in the Cultural Revolution. The main feature of this long history, the author holds, is popular participation nurtured on egalitarian values. He vividly portrays the Chinese peasants—once fatalistic, hopeless, lacking in discipline, yet becoming fearless and dynamic when organised by the revolutionary young people into peasant associations and partisan guerilla units. We see them as real people at different stages of their development.

This book is notable in that the whole struggle—against social oppression, economic exploitation and Japanese aggression, or for socialist construction—is understood as a tremendous effort to create a new way of life, new man in a new society. All the threads, whether in the political, agricultural or educational field, are shown as organically connected.

The title, *The Yen-an Way*, is evocative. In 1916 British Consul Erich Teichman reported:

The north of Shensi . . . was at the time of our visit in the hands of organised troops of brigands of a semi-political character, robbers one day, rebels the next, and perhaps successful revolutionaries the next . . . What with the ravages of brigands and the natural infertility of the soil, the few inhabitants were poor to the verge of starvation. Yen-an seems to be the centre of the most desolate area, by far the poorest region I have traversed in China outside the actual deserts.

And Edgar Snow wrote in *Red Star Over China* that North Shensi was one of the

poorest parts of China he had seen.

Selden gives a detailed picture of the Shensi-Kansu-Ninghsia Border Region, of which Yen-an was the centre, from the twenties onwards. Then the peasants, at the end of their tether, took to the hills with deserters from warlord armies and members of secret societies, brought together by their common desperation. In time they were joined and led by a few students with a grounding in Marxism and revolution. In the course of struggle and organisation, leaders emerged, mostly young peasants and a few educated young people from the towns. One of them, Liu Chih-tan, killed in battle against Chiang's troops in 1936, became known as a national hero after liberation.

After the arrival in 1935 at the end of the Long March of Mao Tse-tung and other leaders, Yen-an became the revolutionary centre to which thousands upon thousands of young people, often in disguise, flocked from all over China. They slipped through the Nationalist blockade and the Japanese lines, to receive training as revolutionaries. From here, during the years of resistance against Japan and the early part of the Liberation War, Mao Tse-tung led the People's War and the liberation struggle. Here he developed his theory of the Mass Line and wrote many of his most important works. Revolutionary base areas on the Yen-an model were created behind the Japanese lines throughout China.

There is a popular tendency to identify Yen-an with the period after the Long March. Selden's book is therefore especially valuable because he documents the history of the Northwest in general and north Shensi in particular before 1935. While Mao was organising the peasants in Hunan and Kiangsi provinces and establishing the Kiangsi Soviet in the years 1926-34, Liu Chih-tan and others were organising rebel peasants in north Shensi, particularly in the Land Revolution. The most significant common experience of the two movements is that leaders of both were from time to time attacked by the Party Central Committee sitting in Shanghai, remote and divorced from rural struggles. The names of some of the Committee leaders, such as Wang Ming (the most prominent member of the students returning from Russia, who has for many years, since going back there, specialised in anti-China propaganda) are familiar. The struggle with the Right conservatives and the ultra-Left, both expressions of opportunism, between bureaucracy at the top and local leadership in close contact with reality, runs through the whole history and will continue during the long period of socialism. It is therefore necessary to have repeated ideological campaigns for renewal of the revolutionary spirit. Selden refers frequently to the nature, scale, methods and values of the Cheng-Feng (Rectification) campaign launched by Mao in 1942. This was the first of a series of such movements, the latest and most

thoroughgoing being the Cultural Revolution.

The problem of uniting different strata or classes for the purpose of fighting the common enemy, in the 'Yen-an way', has special relevance today. As the revolution developed, Mao analysed the nature of the contradictions and pinpointed the main enemy at successive stages, whether warlords, Kuomintang (Nationalist) government, Japanese aggressors, or U.S. imperialism. According to the nature of the main enemy, the Chinese revolutionary movement at times united with rich peasants or even with some warlords and landlords, and always with educated young people from the upper classes or the professions who opposed foreign domination and exploitation. Negotiations were a necessary part of the tactics of People's War, always on condition that the initiative was retained, and that weapons were kept in the hands of the people.

In the United Front the dominant force remained the peasants, whether organised in peasant associations, as militia, or in the Red Army. The Communist Party led these organisations in Land Revolution and in production, ensuring the peasants' livelihood and slowly improving it under very hard conditions. One may note that similarly during the Cultural Revolution one of Chairman Mao's most important directives was to 'grasp revolution and promote production'.

Selden concludes:

As the bulwark of regular armies and a nationwide guerrilla network behind Japanese lines, but also as the indispensable agent of change in the new society emerging at the grass-roots level in the base areas, the peasantry emerged from the resistance at the centre of the movement for China's revolutionary transformation. The deep commitment to patterns of development predicated on the elimination of distinction between town and country, prosperous and poor, dynamic and stagnant, eloquently attests to the continued allegiance to the highest ideals of the Yen-an way in revolutionary China.

As a microcosm of China, Yen-an is also of concern to the whole of the Third World. Reading Selden's book one is constantly reminded of the situation of the hundreds of millions today, to whom the experience of China is compellingly relevant.

The writer of this review was in Yen-an in August 1971. Thousands of former Red Guards from Peking were settling there, being re-educated by working in communes and at the same time helping the peasants to raise their general educational and cultural level. The enthusiasm of these young people had to be seen to be believed; they are proud to be the first generation of 'educated' peasants. As Selden puts it 'Above all there was a sense of participation in an historic mission.'

This book brings the whole period to life and shows its organic connection with the present.

DIVIDING THE INCOME ON A PEOPLE'S COMMUNE

An interesting account of the method of income distribution in a people's commune appeared recently in a report from Hopei Province, North China, based on a study by Hsinhua correspondents of a production team of Huaiti commune, on the outskirts of the industrial city of Shihchiachuang.

The communes divide their income annually, following the autumn harvest. The production team is the basic accounting unit at present, and is responsible for the main distribution. The team investigated comprised 105 households, with a total population of over 400 people.

Division of income must take into account the interests of the state, the collective, and the individual. It is effected only after the fullest discussion within the team. After the state agricultural tax has been paid, and surplus grain sold to the state, an appropriate sum is set aside for the public accumulation fund for further development of the collective economy, and for welfare purposes. These amounts are kept relatively low, so that in a normal year increased production will give team members increased income.

The team in question, which produces mainly grain and vegetables, reaped record harvests in 1971; income totalled 111,400 yuan, a 13.7 per cent increase over 1970. After deduction of production costs and agricultural tax, net income was 93,000 yuan. Members of the team pointed out that since the setting-up of the commune both the collective accumulation fund and the sum for distribution to individuals had steadily increased year by year. There had also been a steady decline over the years in the rate of agricultural tax, which some years earlier had amounted to 6 per cent of gross income (this rate of 6 per cent is itself only one-third to one-half of the average rate of agricultural tax in the early years after liberation, before industry had been built up, when this tax still constituted the main source of national revenue). A series of good harvests and increased production (which is not taxed) had resulted in

reducing the incidence of agricultural tax in 1971 to 2.3 per cent of the total crop.

Net income is divided into three parts. One portion is used to improve irrigation, buy farm machinery, etc. The second is used for medical services, care of the disabled and of any old people who have no relatives, help to families with small labour power, etc. Finally, most of the income is distributed to members of the team. The relationship between accumulation and production—clearly an important area of policy which in some countries has been the subject of much bureaucratic arbitrariness—is handled democratically, through lengthy and detailed discussion among all members of the team. On this occasion they decided unanimously that 22 per cent of the team's net income should go to investment and welfare funds, and that the remainder—20 per cent more than in 1970—should be distributed among the members.

Replying to questions as to how income was distributed, the team leader said: 'The distribution principle of the people's commune is the socialist one—from each according to his ability, to each according to his work . . . there are differences, but they are not big. No one goes hungry, and there is no polarisation'.

Families visited confirmed what the team leader had said. A family of five received 800 yuan in cash income in 1971 in addition to the annual distribution of grain. A widow with two small children received free grain and a payment from the relief fund. She commented: 'If I'd lost my husband in the old society I'd have had to sell my children'.

The old and sick receive special care, and it is here that the socialist ethic finds its clearest expression. A 75-year-old woman who had lost most of her family remarked that 'the cost of my food, clothing and medical treatment all come out of the team's welfare funds, and I'm given spending money, too. The team members are like members of my own family'.

BOOK REVIEW

China as a Nuclear Power in World Politics by Leo Yueh-yun Liu. Macmillan, 1972, price £2.50.

Twisting Chairman Mao's statement that 'the East Wind is prevailing over the West Wind', the author believes that as China's nuclear weapons have developed stage by stage, so her policy has become progressively more aggressive. Her dual motivations of 'national-interest' and ideology combined with nuclear power he interprets as a serious threat to world stability. 'So far both superpowers have been able to maintain a relatively stable international system. The United States, for example, has played a significant role in the maintenance of world security and stability, especially in Asia'. China is attempting to destroy this peaceful Garden of Eden, has opened the door to chain-reaction nuclear proliferation, and has wickedly denounced as 'plots' for 'co-domination' of the world, the efforts of the superpowers to maintain the *status quo* and to restrain their 'allies'.

Incredible though it may seem, in view of the nonsense this author writes, there is one important point on which he is correct, a fact which he bewails: China has indeed smashed the U.S.-U.S.S.R. nuclear monopoly.

OFFICE HOLIDAYS

We regret that owing to illness holidays have had to be re-arranged. The notice given in our last issue is therefore withdrawn; letters sent to us during June *will* be dealt with. We shall probably have to close the office during September but will give notice later.

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