

China Policy Study Group BROADSHEET

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THE POLITICS OF THE ENVIRONMENT

For all the technical, scientific, economic and political know-how at their disposal, most Western observers fail lamentably whenever they attempt to assess socialist policies; their reporting of China's part in the recent U.N. conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm is no exception.

Both before and after the conference opened there was anxious speculation as to what China would say; on June 10, for example, the Times (London) wrote editorially that 'to a large extent' final success hinged on the Chinese 'who have yet to make their views clear'. They did make their views clear, that same day, in a statement whose general tenor could have been predicted in advance by any serious student of Chinese policy. Yet they were immediately said to be 'bringing politics in', 'putting a spanner in the works', and so on. The main basis for these accusations was China's explicit condemnation of the United States for 'unprecedented destruction of the human environment' in its war against the people of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. A similar judgment had already been made at the conference by the Prime Minister of Sweden, host country of the conference, who very strongly attacked indiscriminate bombing, and the use of herbicidal defoliants—standard U.S. practice in Vietnam.

Another well-tried way of attacking China is to single out nuclear testing in the atmosphere for special condemnation. China, on the other hand, once again repeated her call for the complete abolition of all nuclear weapons, and her pledge (never given by the United

States, the Soviet Union, or even Britain) that she would in no circumstances be the first to use such weapons. The Governments of Australia and New Zealand are brazen enough to protest against the current French test programme in the Pacific, although they have been among the most active aiders and abettors of the genocidal and ecological war waged by the U.S. in Vietnam.

Even though they may be opposed to nuclear testing, Third World countries know that China is a bastion of support for their main concern, i.e. that their own development should not be hampered by measures initiated under the banner of conservation by precisely those affluent nations chiefly responsible for world pollution and the plunder of their resources.

The basic cause of pollution and damage to the environment, in China's view, is the actions of imperialism 'and particularly the policies of plunder, aggression and war' pursued by the superpowers.

China dissociated herself from the final declaration of the conference because it was not the expression of a consensus, failed to mention the political causes of environmental pollution, failed to denounce imperialist wars and war crimes, and failed to demand the prohibition and destruction of biochemical and nuclear weapons and the renunciation of their use.

A key aspect of China's point of view was pithily expressed in the maxim quoted by chief delegate Tang Ke, 'we must not give up eating for fear of choking'. The balanced character of her

socialist development works toward the most economic use of all materials; waste, a prime cause of pollution, is reduced to a minimum. In Tang Ke's words, 'our government is now beginning to work in a planned way to prevent and eliminate industrial pollution'. In China such a policy—like any other policy—involves the education and mobilisation of the whole people, with an effectiveness inconceivable in the 'advanced' industrial societies of the west, where profit is the mainspring.

It should also be noted that the widely quoted sentence from the English version of Tang Ke's speech, 'The possibility of man's exploitation and utilisation of natural resources is inexhaustible', is a seriously misleading rendering of the original Chinese, which, literally translated, reads: 'Mankind's opening up and utilisation of natural resources is constantly extending'. The phrase 'constantly extending' does not connote 'inexhaustible', and 'opening up' is far from 'exploitation'.

It is capitalism and imperialism that 'exploit' natural resources, as they exploit people, wherever they can. Salvation is not to be looked for either from the principal exploiter, the U.S. (which at this moment is systematically increasing the scale and destructiveness of its attacks on the people of Vietnam and their environment) or from any of its open or covert allies. The Third World, which has good reason to know this, is finding in struggle its own way to development. Sooner or later all peoples will rise up and protect their environment in the only secure way, by overthrowing the system that plunders and pollutes it.

CAMBODIA: a key in S-E Asia's liberation struggle

by Lek-Hor Tan

In March 1970 a U.S.-inspired coup in Cambodia set up the Lon Nol regime. The Cambodian people responded to Prince Sihanouk's call to resist, and a month later the U.S. invaded the country to protect yet another Southeast Asian puppet regime. On Sihanouk's initiative a summit conference of leaders of the Vietnamese, Laotian and Cambodian peoples was convened, to unify and coordinate Indochina's resistance to aggression.

Penn Nouth, Prime Minister of the Royal Government of

National Union (RGNU), speaking on the second anniversary of the conference, thanked China for having provided the immediate facilities that made it possible, and reiterated Sihanouk's warning to any would-be organisers of 'third force' or 'third way' solutions.

Lek-hor Tan's article shows how, as the aggressors become more heavily involved, and the strength of the puppets declines, the strength of people's war grows.

Phoney elections

According to a report issued by the Ministry of Information in Phnom Penh, Marshal Lon Nol was legally elected President of the Republic on June 4th for a term of five years. The total number of voters was nearly one million.

This relatively low figure is significant. It shows that only a small part of the total population of Cambodia is still under the control of the Lon Nol regime. Out of a total population of seven million people, that regime now controls about two million, who live in less than one third of the country's territory. This means that only the capital city and several major provincial towns are still under its control; the rest of the country has already been completely liberated by the Cambodian National Liberation forces.

Prince Sihanouk commented that through these 'elections' the traitors and their masters still pursue the 'vain and foolish hope' of giving an appearance of legality to the illegal, anti-national and anti-popular regime in Phnom Penh.

The Nixon administration and the 'free world' now talk about the 'democratically elected President, Marshal Lon Nol' just as they always talk of the 'democratically elected President Thieu' in Saigon.

Broken promises

When the Lon Nol coup took place on March 18th, 1970, his regime promised radical changes at all levels of society, based on five major principles: liberty, equality, fraternity, progress and happiness. Most notable among the promises were a policy of 'political accommodation' and 'national concord' among dissidents and rival political groups. Young people, especially students, were promised 'full political participation in decision-making at all levels of government'. A new constitution was to be drafted; the task was given to the National Assembly. The former Council of the Kingdom was abolished and replaced by the 'Council of the Republic', with rights similar to those of the upper house in other parliamentary systems. On paper at least, everything seemed very promising, but in fact under the new regime the only new faces in the political life of Phnom Penh have been those of the Khmer Serei and of the Khmer Krom (the mercenary forces recruited by the CIA from among the Cambodian minority in South Vietnam, who for years have been trained, armed and financed by the American Special Forces — the Green Berets).

Cambodia shares with most other Southeast Asian countries a common feudal and semi-colonial heritage, so it was predictable that the inherent political, social and economic contradictions of Cambodian society would drive the authors of the 1970 putsch into deadlock. The same old clans and interest groups in the government, in the army and in the Parliament continued to fight over special privileges. With the plunge into full scale war, corruption became rampant and social chaos general. In just over a year the regime became an undisguised military dictatorship.

On October 16th, 1971, Lon Nol dissolved both the National Assembly and the Council of the Republic. He declared the country to be in danger, and imposed martial law. He maintained that, while he still 'respected the basic principles of democracy' he had to choose whether to 'obey the sterile game of a liberal and outdated democracy which would inevitably lead to defeat by the enemy' or to 'combat anarchy'.

Military dictatorship

On March 11th, 1972, when the Constituent Assembly was about to adopt a new constitution, Lon Nol dissolved it, on the grounds that it was 'guilty of producing a constitution which contains too many radical changes'. He made himself Chief of State and gave Son Ngoc Thanh, head of the Khmer Serei, the job of forming a government and drafting a new consti-

tution. Son Ngoc Thanh, Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, now heads a government which includes eight senior military officers.

The new constitution, ratified on March 30th by a 'referendum', provides for a Parliament to be elected within three months, but a provision for 'general mobilization' to deal with the war gives the president powers of martial law.

Lon Nol's military dictatorship roused the students and university teachers to protest. During the June elections, for example, leaflets and banners read 'Lon Nol — father of the incompetent and corrupt', 'Down with the disguised dictatorship', 'Son Ngoc Thanh — Hitler-fascist', 'Sirik Matak, master of the corrupt' were displayed in full view in colleges and universities. The scenario of another 1964-65 Saigon situation has now been written; we await its materialization.

U.S. aggression

As for American involvement, in theory the U.S. government has no military forces in Cambodia. Since withdrawal of U.S. forces following the invasion of the country in 1970, the U.S. Congress has forbidden direct U.S. involvement. As in South Vietnam, Nixon's use of the policy of 'Asians fight Asians' is applied in Cambodia. But, behind this anxiety to appear uninvolved, there are indications that the Nixon administration is in fact completely entangled. The U.S. embassy in Phnom Penh, for example, which had a staff of about a dozen before the coup, now has nearly three hundred, not to mention scores of others who cross the borders regularly from Thailand and South Vietnam in the guise of various missions. Since the war started two years ago, U.S. aerial gunning and bombing have been used regularly in the hope of saving the Lon Nol regime from total collapse. In 1971, according to studies published by Cornell University, 100,000 tons of bombs were dropped in Cambodia by the U.S. The U.S. government is also trying to build up an army of 200,000 men for Lon Nol. Spending now totals 350 million dollars a year, but according to unofficial estimates, the U.S. government spends at least a billion dollars annually in Cambodia if invisible aid is included, such as paying mercenaries from South Vietnam and Thailand.

United Front successes

The success of the National United Front of Cambodia (NUFK) during the past two years is due largely to its understanding of the true nature of the Cambodian conflict. It has been able to exploit effectively the contradictions inherent in the Phnom Penh regime and isolate enemies while winning friends, even among those Cambodians who were at one time enthusiastic supporters of the coup. The increasing number of public figures who have gone over to the Front is evidence of this success.

The NUFK armed forces starting with some 3,000 men in March 1970 have now reached 50,000, according to the latest CIA estimates. On the political level, under the programme of the NUFK, socialization has started from the grassroots, as reported by Serge Thion of *Le Monde*, who recently spent six weeks in the liberated areas of Cambodia. The major tasks inside Cambodia at the moment, according to Thion, are the military training and intensive political education of the peasants and the training of cadres to carry out revolutionary activities.

On the diplomatic front, the Royal Government of National Union (RGNU) is now recognised by 28 countries. Generous aid, both financial and military, has been coming from those countries, with China in the lead. Recently, commenting on the American blockade of the Gulf of Tongking, Prince Sihanouk declared that 'two thirds of the military aid that we have received has not yet reached Cambodia, but Nixon cannot interrupt our supplies. In fact, we now have more American

arms than Chinese arms in Cambodia. Transportation difficulties do not stop us from equipping ourselves. We simply capture arms from Lon Nol's army.'

The position of RGNU policy on the future of Cambodia is clear and categoric. It is based on the five points proclaimed by Prince Sihanouk on March 23rd, 1970 — complete victory and no compromise with the Lon Nol regime and its masters. The relations of the RGNU with the other Indo-Chinese governments are based on the Joint Declaration of the Summit Conference of the Indochinese Peoples held on April 24th-25th, 1970, namely the principles of militant solidarity, separate development and regard for each country's specific problems. These principles have China's support, as Chairman Mao said on May 20th, 1970, and Premier Chou En-lai has repeatedly reaffirmed in the numerous declarations he has made on the Indo-China question.

Fears of victory?

Among the present difficulties of the RGNU are its strained relations with the Warsaw Pact countries. So far, only Yugoslavia and Romania have recognised the RGNU; the rest still maintain their diplomatic relations with the Lon Nol government. The Soviet Union, for example, has not only been hostile

to the RGNU from the start, but continues to give aid to Lon Nol and maintains a staff of over 60 persons in its Phnom Penh embassy. There is ample evidence that the Soviet Union is seeking a compromise solution for Cambodia, like the 1962 coalition in Laos.

This Russian attitude on the Indo-Chinese question raises one very important question: does the Soviet Union really want a complete victory of the revolutionary Indo-Chinese peoples? The Soviet Union's foreign policy in Southeast Asia is well known, namely to 'freeze' the region until they are in a position to play an active role in the area. This policy was made clear by Brezhnev in July 1969 when he proposed a 'system of collective security' for Southeast Asia.

On numerous occasions Prince Sihanouk has voiced the strong feeling that the Russians are obsessed with the 'yellow peril' myth and fear revolutionary Asia. Neither they nor the U.S. will be able to stem the revolution there.

Lek-Hor Tan is co-author with Malcolm Caldwell of 'Cambodia in the Southeast Asian War', to be published in the autumn of this year by Monthly Review Press, New York and London.

CREATIVE ENERGY IN ACTION

by Rewi Alley

Towards the end of March I drove across Kwangtung Province to Lo Ding, a hill county near the Kwangsi border, where in the past people often starved and emigration to other parts of the province or abroad was a regular thing. The soil is a poor sticky yellow clay, or else red laterite. Rivers flow in deep valleys, and many of the steeper mountain slopes have been deforested. Today 35,000 hectares of land, most of which has been reclaimed during the last seven years, yield sufficient food for the county's 640,000 people. All the land is irrigated.

I spent several days travelling around the county, visiting many communes and much of the new county industry that has sprung up. The introduction and widespread use of the electric turbine pump has done wonders. In one place a series of these little pumps pushed water up to a system of terraces 90 metres above the stream. Hill ridges have been cut through, rivers diverted, 2,000 large and small reservoirs built, and aqueducts and siphons bestride the valleys. Main and lateral canals total 5,000 kilometres in length, with 1,300 turbine pumps. Output of the various small hydro-electric power plants totals 8,200 kilowatts. Turbines, generators, motors and reinforced concrete piping are all made in county plants. Red rock hills have been de-capped, and their sides terraced, with river mud carried up to make fields. Paddyfield acreage is being extended all the time. Some brigades get four crops a year, two of rice, one of hemp, and one of tobacco, using a system of transplants. In one brigade we visited the year's grain allotment was 350 kilograms per head. These are just a few of the new accomplishments in one hinterland county.

Record crops

Early in April I went by air to Chengtu in Szechuan, and then out to Kwanhsien, where the headworks of the 2,000-year-old Min River irrigation works are situated. The crops on the Chengtu plain stood proudly, probably the best of all time. The Min is now being made to do much more than it used to. At the time of Liberation it irrigated less than 150,000 hectares, but when the present extension scheme is completed, in the near future, it will irrigate more than 650,000.

In Chengtu itself a part of the old city moat had been roofed over to make a big underground department store, whose customers average 100,000 a day. Cool in summer and warm in winter, one can drive a car down into it: it is part of the nation-wide preparation against natural disasters and against war.

We went by rail to Chungking, looked at some excellent factories in the suburbs, and some of the new construction at Beipei, bathed in the hot spring before taking the boat down through the Yangtze gorges, overwhelming in their grandeur, to Wuhan. It was good to see a middle school there recovering chemicals from an industrial plant's waste water and other waste. Measures against pollution are now being taken in many places in China.

Innovation in transplanting

We went out to Hsinchou county, famous in Hupeh province as the place where the Liu Chi Du commune has achieved a measure of industrialisation. It is also the commune that pioneered the new method of transplanting cotton, planting the seeds in little cylinders of stamped earth so that, as soon as the winter wheat is harvested, the cotton can be transplanted, already with a month's growth. To get the 80,000 or more good plants needed for each hectare, 150,000 transplants must be prepared, which means 100 million for the whole commune. So everywhere one saw the commune folk busy stamping out the cylinders, planting a seed in each, scattering light sandy earth over the top, and then letting the frequent spring rains of Hupeh bring the plant along. The method has spread like wildfire, and now all cotton-producing provinces in the country are using it.

We also went to see a magnificent piece of engineering carried through in the last few winters. A river called the Dao Shui, coming down from the Da Bieh Shan mountains, wound its way through hill valleys to plains and lakes by the Yangtze. Each summer in the rainy season it flooded large areas of agricultural land. Now the people have cut through four ranges of hills, and built dykes across lakes, to bring the

water straight down to the Yangtze. We stood by a cut some 200 metres long and 30 metres deep, and marvelled at the strength they have shown in accomplishing this task. To anyone interested in engineering it was breath-taking.

From Hsinchou we went some 80 kilometres southeast to Hsi Shui county. In Hsinchou the main crops are cotton and wheat, but in Hsi Shui the main crop is rice. The county is well-known for the way it has developed side occupations, making use of its big tracts of hill and mountain country. Its people have also carried through large-scale irrigation and hydro-electric projects one of which, on the Bai Lien river, generates 45,000 kilowatts. A project now under way to straighten the Hsi Shui river will make more land available for cultivation and yield another 6,500 kilowatts of power.

In Hsi Shui, as in Hsinchou, there is a growing industry, producing electric generators for commune and county use, aluminium ingots, farm tools, fertiliser, etc. On hilly land tea and mulberry, fruit and nut trees are grown, as well as the more common timber trees, especially the China Pine. We visited one commune brigade whose land consisted of a number of red sandstone hills, with winding valleys of paddy fields in between. Once one of the poorest brigades, it has now by sheer hard work and organisation become one of the better off. Hill-tops have been levelled and hillsides terraced; beans were growing well and shady sides are planted with trees. Down in the village, learning what in this area is a new craft, the girls were already feeding mulberry leaves to silkworms. It is fantastic what can be done with even the poorest land when a well organised group tackles the problem in the down-to-earth spirit of Tachai. The brigade leader, a big, quiet peasant, had made the journey to Tachai and spent two weeks studying it well. As he tells of the problems — of irrigation, fertiliser, soil conservation and the rest — that have been mastered in Hsi Shui, one sees how theory has changed to consciousness, and consciousness to matter, in the Hupeh countryside of today.

BOOK REVIEW

The Southern Expansion of the Chinese People by C. P. FitzGerald. Barrie & Jenkins, London, 1972. £4.00.

The dominant theme of Professor FitzGerald's book is the inexorable expansion of Chinese influence, culture and power, achieved until the 17th century by the acquisition of territory and thereafter by the emigration which led to the formation of overseas Chinese communities in Southeast Asia. Both before the overthrow of the Manchu rulers of China in 1911 and after, Sun Yat Sen and the Kuomintang relied heavily on the loyalty and financial support of the Chinese abroad. On the basis of the doctrine of *jus sanguinis* (under which nationality is traced by ethnic descent through the patrilineal line) the communities were encouraged to regard themselves as patriotic Chinese, loyal to China — the Nationalist China of Chiang Kai-shek. Before World War II, colonial regimes throughout Southeast Asia were already alarmed at the prospect — which Chiang Kai-shek's Consulates were attempting to turn into reality — of their Chinese communities turning to China. After the war, with the collapse of the Kuomintang, such fears increased as the colonial or ex-colonial governments saw 'communist conspiracy' against their shaky regimes as increasingly likely. Yet, as FitzGerald shows, the People's Republic of China eschewed conspiracy, and sought instead to establish state relations, on the basis of the Bandung principles of peaceful coexistence, with countries having communities of overseas Chinese. The doctrine of *jus sanguinis* was replaced by *jus solis*, under which nationality depends on birthplace, not on descent. China's new policy was treated with great caution by the other governments concerned, who suspected the overseas Chinese of being a potential fifth column.

FitzGerald's knowledge and understanding of Chinese history is both his strength and his weakness. While it enables him to give a comprehensive account of China's past, it also leads to an interpretation of post-1949 China which is clothed in an imperial straitjacket. Following the 'cyclical' interpretation of imperial Chinese history, he sees the People's Republic as a mere variant of her imperial ancestors rather than as a country dedicated to building a new society based on socialist morals and ethics. He explains China's support for the Vietnamese National Liberation Front and the Pathet Lao as being motivated by balance of power considerations of the sort that led the Sung dynasty to support those kings in the south who opposed whichever power seemed likely to achieve domination in the region. Drawing heavily on historical analogy, he suggests that China should heed the example of the northern Sung dynasty who refrained from a proposed invasion of Nanchao (Yunnan) in the south because of the grave threat from the northern frontier. The analogy with the threat from the Soviet Union today could hardly be clearer, and certainly has some validity. But by consistently relating the People's Republic to her imperialist ancestors, FitzGerald blurs the differences between past and present, and thereby misinterprets the principled policy of Marxist China, which since 1949 has consistently renounced the great power chauvinism that so dominated her past. Her support for the peoples of Indo-China is based above all on her unyielding opposition to imperialism. In failing to take China at her word, FitzGerald commits the same errors as the professional China-watchers and reduces the value of his conclusions and predictions.

FROM MARX TO MAO TSE-TUNG

The first edition of George Thomson's book is almost sold out and the second should be ready towards the end of July. Owing to higher printing costs we have had to raise the price to 60p (by post), but in the meantime some copies of the first edition are still available at 50p.

We have just received a sample copy of the Bengali translation, which is obtainable from the People's Book Agency, 80/C Netajee Road, P.O. Khagra, Dt. Murshidabad (W.B.), India. This is the first translation to be completed and we congratulate our Indian friends on their efforts, which we are sure will prove worth while. Translations are under way into five other languages and a sixth is being considered. The book is being used by study groups all over the world.

Correction

We regret mistakes in the San Francisco address of China Books and Periodicals, given in our May issue. It should be: 2929 24th Street, San Francisco, Calif. 94110, U.S.A. Readers in North America should order *From Marx to Mao Tse-tung* from that address or from the New York branch.

C.P.S.G.

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