

China Policy Study Group

BROADSHEET

Sponsors: Dr Joseph Needham FRS, Prof Cyril Offord FRS, Prof Joan Robinson, Prof George Thomson

CONTRASTS

1974 will certainly have its emphatic place in history. The stench of Watergate reveals corruption, greed and malice going far beyond the vice of one man or the villainy of a group of men. No event this century has so exposed the hypocrisy and pretension of capitalist democracy; Watergate, in essence, is not an aberration but a revelation.

Yet, Watergate is not the most significant event of the year.

Take a poll amongst Western politicians, bankers, economists, editors, trade unionists—top vote will be cast for the economic crisis which has swept the world. A black pall of misery shrouds financial centres as Finance Ministers and Central Bankers confer and solve nothing. Diagnosis is available, but no cure; the symptoms are evident, but the treatment is worse than the disease and gives little prospect of success.

At no time in living memory has confidence so deserted the capitalist world, and no capitalist government can plan beyond the next few months.

What does the Chinese worker or peasant make of it all? In his country the Socialist Revolution has sheltered him from capitalist storms—his currency is stable, prices fall instead of rising, his job is safe, his standard of living rises unflinchingly each year, his cultural life develops. For him, corruption, bribery and mendacity are but memories from the past, like bubonic plague and venereal disease.

The socialist base is the indispensable prerequisite for these achievements, but wrong policies could still turn the clock back. Compared with the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, international trade is only a marginal assistance which must not be allowed to distort the rising graph of China's economy.

So the Chinese reject the blandishments of the West, the offers of loans, financial aid, joint ventures, and mutual investment. Instead, they stand firmly for a policy of self reliance, which provides the basis for a genuine, independent, fruitful, socialist economy.

Twenty-five years after the Chinese People's Republic was born it is possible to say with complete certainty—no Watergate, no inflation, no slump, no unemployment. Instead, morality, socialist ethics, growing prosperity and self-confidence.

LEADERS, NOT ELITES

The number of people who still believe that the old order can offer mankind anything but insoluble crises, temporary expedients and ever-bigger disasters is rapidly dwindling. Everywhere in the world more and more are discerning that in the old order political leadership consists in producing the 'right' combination of intimidation and deception to deal with critics and malcontents. More insistently than ever, the majority are pressing their economic and political demands—just demands for freedom from oppressive living and working conditions, the ending of exploitation, increased opportunities for work, education and enjoyment. These cannot be fully satisfied by any measures which fall short of the total destruction of the old order, and the replacement of bourgeois rule by that of a class which can provide new leadership.

Unity in struggle

This transformation is a task which landowners, bourgeoisie and imperialist overlords are manifestly incapable of performing, because their very existence is based on injustice and oppression. The new order, on the other hand, is one in which workers in town and countryside, workers with hand and brain, together devise and carry out new economic policies, manage enterprises in a new way, increase production by new strategies, and advance scientific and technical knowledge by their own efforts. Since they liberated themselves, the Chinese people have become really free to engage enthusiastically in what Mao Tse-tung has termed the three revolutionary movements of class struggle, the struggle for production and scientific experiment.

But, as in the Soviet Union after the Bolshevik Revolution, so in China immediately after Liberation, the very determination to get on with the task and to mobilise all available resources for the people, rather than for landlords and capitalists, gave rise to a dilemma. When the dictatorship of the proletariat was established, there was a shortage of those who had specialist training and skills, and therefore those available were in great demand. Men and women who had had a better education in the old society, who were already

well known for their achievements, tended to rise to leading positions because their work was of vital importance. In such a situation, people such as these, who might not even have fought in the revolution, not only had privileged positions, but perhaps also received extra economic and social benefits as an incentive. Though the employment of such people helps, in the short term, to further the proletarian dictatorship, it risks setting up obstacles to the new style of work and administration required, because it increases the danger of the formation of an 'elite' which is separate from the mass of the working people. Only when revolutionary workers and peasants mature in sufficient numbers can they effectively supervise the old-style experts and teach them how to work in a socialist way.

This is a significant aspect of an important, and sometimes neglected, problem facing all socialist societies: if class distinctions based on economic privilege are wiped out, how can we prevent the emergence of other elites based on apparently reasonable factors such as a better education, valuable social skills, a higher Party function, or even simply more respect and admiration from friends and neighbours? The converse of this is just as troublesome: if leadership does not bring the traditional rewards of power and prosperity, what will motivate the ablest members of the community to take on the burdens and responsibilities of leadership?

Seeds of privilege

As can clearly be seen in some 'socialist' countries, there is a particular danger in the formation of a Party bureaucracy which secures for its members a position of privilege putting them above criticism, because it creates a socially divisive group of functionaries who regard themselves as superior to other workers, and whose interests are bound to come into conflict with those of the masses. The period when the Party first rules is one when such privileged groups tend to form. Previously, when the Party was first being organised, when revolutionary activities were first undertaken, able people emerged as leaders. It is not surprising that many of them were not workers and peasants. Later, the Party needs organisers,

teachers, political commissars and other political cadres more than ever. It has to lead the day-to-day work of continuing the revolution in every sort of situation, and there are no safe dogmas to fall back on. The initial diffidence of the workers, and the confidence of leaders tempered in such a period of revolutionary agitation and war, can become dangerous. A society calling itself socialist may develop along lines very like those of the old society, because some Party leaders are opportunists and have a petty bourgeois outlook.

Unity of masses and leaders

In China, when we consider the conduct of Peng Teh-huai, Peng Chen and Liu Shao-chi, we can see how the Chinese learnt that even the most efficient organisers, in trade unions, the army, the Party itself, may be enemies in practice of the continuing revolution, seeking to establish a new order which resembles the old in being based on privilege for certain individuals. There can be an elite in the Party which does not acknowledge the need to learn and practise the mass line, and which may see the masses as fit only to labour and carry out orders. In China, during the period when such leaders, with a bourgeois or Confucian attitude towards the masses, held important positions, the foundations of socialism were laid in industry and agriculture, but the new problems that arose, particularly the problem of leadership, were not solved.

During the first major rectification campaign, Mao Tse-tung's *Some questions concerning methods of leadership* was specific in describing the 'scientific, Marxist methods of leadership', which he counterposed to the 'subjectivist, bureaucratic' methods which had to be overcome. The struggle between these two lines has never ceased; it intensified during the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, and it is now evident from what the masses say and write in the current campaign of criticism of Lin Piao and Confucius that they have learnt, by their own experience, the deeper meaning of Mao's words. As he said at that time: 'However active the leading group may be, its activity will amount to fruitless effort by a handful of people unless combined with the activity of the masses. On the other hand, if the masses alone are active without a strong leading group to organise their activity properly, such activity cannot be sustained for long, or carried forward in the right direction, or raised to a high level. . . .' (*Some questions concerning methods of leadership* June 1941).

Scientific, Marxist methods of leadership are not arbitrarily made up, but arise from the philosophical standpoint of the revolutionary class based firmly on its revolutionary experience. The subjectivist, bureaucratic methods which Mao describes so vividly are precisely the methods characteristic of the ruling classes in the old society.

Progress through struggle

In the last twenty-five years, Chinese workers and peasants have been active in revolutionary transformation and have matured in the struggle. Now, where there is dissatisfaction with the way the 'top people' are acting, and there is criticism in production brigades, party committees, factories, hospitals, or schools, the contradiction between leaders and led is one 'among the people'; it is no longer a case of a gain for one group being won at the expense of another. And contrary to bourgeois notions that it will adversely affect production, the revolutionary style of leadership has increased efficiency in the building of a socialist society. China's progress is admitted, however reluctantly, because it is there for all to see. But progress comes through struggle, and it has been made clear that leaders should not be blindly obeyed. To be in a leading position in China today is to be in an uncomfortably hot seat. Some of those who gave leadership to the Party just after Liberation were not able to meet the severe demands made on

them; but there also appears to be no lack of people who have the political understanding and the ability to take on the hard work which is the lot of leaders at all levels.

There is still another lesson to be learnt from this. What happens in one society is liable to be reflected on the international level. When Party functionaries have assumed a privileged position in their own country, they come to think that they have a right to direct the activities of comrades in other countries. Thus the C.P.S.U. claims to be the only true guide of the international communist movement by virtue of its long experience. China, on the other hand, renounces any kind of hegemony, economic or political; she does not intervene in the internal affairs of others; she believes that 'countries want independence' and should have it.

Elitism is still a problem in a socialist state. It will always be necessary to make the best possible use of everyone's ability and some jobs will always entail more responsibility than others, requiring more specialised training, in fields of greater importance for the future of the revolution. But it is now being demonstrated in China that specialists and leaders at all levels can remain one with the people if they share their work and problems, accept their supervision and so maintain an uncompromising, proletarian stand.

REPORT TO READERS

George Thomson's books, *From Marx to Mao Tse-tung* and *Capitalism and After*, are still available from C.P.S.G. Books, 41 Great Russell Street, London, W.C.1, at the price of 60p post free. The latter is selling well but has not yet been read by as many as have read the former. We are quite sure that anyone who has read one will enjoy the other.

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An unusually large number of readers abroad have told us that their copy of the May issue did not reach them. We have checked the stencils we use for addressing and in every instance the address was correct. We are unable to account for these losses but we ask every subscriber who does not receive an issue to inform us. We will always replace it.

We know that a certain number of copies are lost in the post as a result of political conditions in the country of destination. We cannot do much about this, but we are willing to try again with another copy or to send by a different method if it seems more likely to be successful.

It is possible that some readers had to pay the postman because the June issue was inadequately stamped. We apologise for this, which occurred because postage rates for surface mail changed after the envelopes had been stamped.

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Higher printing and postage costs force us to raise our prices in the New Year. One copy will be 7p and subscription rates will be increased by about 40 per cent. We shall publish full details later this year.

Anyone whose subscription expires before December 1974 will of course be able to renew for a full 12 months at the present rate.

Sometimes readers, especially in the Third World, find difficulty in making payment; in such instances we try not to let money stand in the way. Readers who pay our full rates, or perhaps send a donation, help us to maintain a circulation in all continents which we should otherwise have to reduce.

If you want us to send sample copies to friends, please send us the names and addresses.

During the three months April-June we received the respectable total of £64 in donations. This includes a gift from the U.S.-China People's Friendship Association, a thoughtful act of comradeship assistance for which we are very grateful.

THE CHINA POLICY STUDY GROUP

SUPERPOWERS IN DEEP WATER

'Freedom of the seas' was always an article of faith of the British Empire. British children were taught that the British Navy nobly safeguards this freedom for all peoples, chasing away pirates in the Far East, seeking out and destroying slave traders off Africa. After its defeat of the Armada in the 15th century the British claimed the job of keeping the seas free so that trade could be carried on unimpeded. Britain's navy helped her to defeat France in the 19th century and Germany in the 20th. After that Britain was no longer dominant but the ideology by which she had justified her actions lingered on. The U.S. became master of the seas, but her title was not long undisputed. Now the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. are contending for dominance in every corner of the globe while, for the first time, the 'rights' of the great powers on the seas are being not only questioned but denied.

Freedom for whom?

What our history books and teachers never told us was that the trade for which the seas were being kept free was British trade, that the destruction of the slave trade was also an attack on the economy of the southern states of the U.S., which benefitted England. Freedom of the seas meant, in practice, freedom for Britain to develop her colonial empire, to import raw materials and to export manufactures, unhindered. For three hundred years or so no other nation was in a position to make use of the 'freedom' Britain provided. When challengers appeared there was no more uncompromising exponent than Britain of the maxim that 'might is right', though with typical hypocrisy, land-grabbing, pillage, oppression and corruption were concealed under sanctimonious and seemingly humane phrases.

Similarly, today, the U.S. government justifies its drive to control the world by phrases about defending freedom, enabling everyone to live under a government of his own choice, just as the Soviet government talks of ending exploitation. The U.S. will allow a people the freedom to choose an U.S.-approved government; the Soviet Union opposes U.S. exploitation in order to substitute exploitation by itself.

Freedom of the seas has always, in one form or another, been the watchword of the nation in the best position to profit from it.

The right to 'possess' colonies on land was challenged long ago and after many uprisings had been bloodily defeated the principle was conceded that a country belonged to its original inhabitants. The British were forced out of India, the French out of North Africa and Vietnam, the U.S. are being driven from Indochina as they were from China, the Portuguese, one of the oldest colonialists, can no longer hold their foreign 'possessions'.

New field of exploitation

Until now the so-called law of the sea has not been seen as a very important issue. The only way in which the seas could be exploited was by fishing, and there were always more fish in the sea. Capitalist exploitation, however, wasted these resources just as recklessly as it wasted those of the land. Fish began to be scarce where once they had been plentiful and some species, such as whales, were threatened with extinction. No nation surpassed the Soviet Union in this form of exploitation.

Even more important, the energy crisis focussed attention on the important reserves of natural gas and oil which lie beneath the sea bed. Geological surveys have shown that there are immense stocks of valuable minerals there too. This is a problem of supreme importance for the great powers, and above all for the superpowers, who are consuming their resources at a

tremendous rate and who cannot hope to succeed in their attempt to dominate the world unless they have assured sources of supply.

But just as they did on land, so the smaller powers are resisting attempts by the major powers to divide the seas between them. They recognise the danger that the great powers, who alone are equipped to do it, will loot coastal waters and make impossible even the small-scale exploitation which they at present carry on. Over 80 per cent of the world's fishery catches are made in shallow coastal waters or above continental shelves, where also are to be found valuable supplies of sulphur and other important minerals and metals.

For some years countries of the Third World have been challenging the long-accepted three-mile limit of territorial waters, demanding recognition of rights over much wider areas. The 'tuna war' of Peru and Ecuador against the U.S. resulted from U.S. plunder of the sea near their coasts. Tuna catches by the U.S. during 1971 in the territorial waters of Ecuador alone amounted to more than \$15 million. The fishing fleet of the Soviet Union, with its large modern vessels, including 'floating fish factories' and sometimes warships, ranges all over the world. In 1972 Soviet catches on the high seas and in waters far from the Soviet Union amounted to 88 per cent of their total.

At the first and second U.N. Conferences on the Law of the Sea, in 1958 and 1960, international acceptance of a 12-mile limit was strongly urged by small and medium countries. The First Conference decided that the 'territorial sea' and its 'contiguous zone' could not extend beyond 12 miles; the Second Conference failed to reach any agreement. Even as early as 1952, in the 'Santiago Declaration,' Chile, Peru and Ecuador had put forward the claim for a 200-mile limit to territorial waters, which has been followed in recent years by similar declarations by other Latin-American countries and by countries of Africa, Asia and the Caribbean Sea.

Caracas Conference

The claims of the hitherto-deprived countries are growing, as the greater powers sadly observe. Iceland, which in the 'cod war' with Britain claimed only a 50-mile limit, threatens to extend her claim to 200 miles. Details of demands vary, but the general principle is recognition of a 12-mile territorial sea with an adjacent 'economic zone' up to 200 miles within which the littoral state would have jurisdiction, controlling fishing and all exploitation of resources of the sea and sea bed. 'Innocent passage' would be allowed for foreign vessels and aircraft but there would be strict control of the movement of warships and military aeroplanes. All this is now being debated at the Third U.N. Conference on the Law of the Sea in Caracas, Venezuela, scheduled to last until August 29th.

The main items on the agenda are: the width of the territorial sea and the adjacent 'economic zone'; straits used for international navigation; fisheries; preservation and exploitation of maritime resources; preservation of maritime environment; and a proposed international agreement on the control and use of the resources of the high seas. Chai Shu-fan, leader of the Chinese delegation, said that all the issues at the Conference

centre on a single question: should superpower control and monopoly of the seas be broken or not, should the sovereignty and interests of the numerous small and medium-size countries be defended or not? So far as the law of sea itself is concerned, it means whether or not the outdated legal regime of the sea based on colonialism, imperialism and hegemonism should be thoroughly changed and be replaced by a fair and reasonable new legal regime of the sea that respects the sovereignty and economic rights and interests of all countries.

The stand taken by the representative of the Soviet Union in the debate on the extension of national jurisdiction was equivocal. While agreeing that a future law of the sea could 'include the recognition of the right of the coastal countries to establish an economic zone up to 200 miles,' he added the proviso that they should 'set reasonable terms' for fishing by foreign powers, on the ground that the technically more backward countries would be unable to utilise the resources available.

'Rights' of imperialism

A serious worry of the superpowers was the danger that the right of passage through straits within territorial waters might be lost to their warships. The U.S. called for 'a satisfactory treaty regime of unimpeded transit through and over straits used for international navigation'. Opposing this, the Third World countries have been demanding international recognition of their right to control such navigation. Indonesia, Singapore and Malaysia, for example, have been insisting on their control of the Malacca Straits.

The Soviet representative proposed a draft which would ensure 'enjoyment of equal freedom of international navigation,' saying that it was essential for 'defending the security' of his country. The whole future seen for Soviet hegemony would be imperilled if her warships, submarines and military planes could no longer penetrate the Indian Ocean from the Pacific or enter the Mediterranean from the Atlantic and the Black Sea. Soviet acceptance of the proposed 200-mile economic zone was therefore hedged by the proviso that there be 'free passage for all ships' through these straits in accordance with the principle of 'freedom of the high seas'. The U.S. and the U.S.S.R. would be willing to accept the 200-mile limit as part of a package deal enabling them to continue their fishing and ensuring them unimpeded use of 'international' straits.

The Conference has also seen sharp struggle over the general use of the high seas and of sea-bed resources. Chinese representative Ke Tsai-shuo said that military operations on the high seas, the use of the sea bed for nuclear weapons and voyages by nuclear submarines should be prohibited, and that scientific research should not be used as a cover for military espionage.

In 1951 a number of developing countries proposed the setting up of international machinery which would be responsible for the direct exploitation of sea-bed wealth, a proposal which has been widely welcomed at Caracas. Chai Shu-fan commented:

We hold that the international sea bed should be used for peaceful purposes. Resources in the international sea area are, in principle, owned jointly by the people of all countries, and it is for all countries to work out together an effective international regime and set up an appropriate international machinery to manage and exploit these resources. We are firmly opposed to any form of superpower manipulation or monopoly and to the exclusive control or arbitrary exploitation of international deep-sea resources by the one or two superpowers on the strength of their advanced technology.

Superpowers combine

The U.S. and the U.S.S.R. have both shown their concern that the proposal might hamper their activities—military, fishing, mining, and so-called scientific research. The Soviet representative said that 'every state has the right to exploit the area' and the U.S. claimed that every state should have 'non-discriminatory access to sea-bed resources'. The superpowers have been pressing for a licensing system which would enable countries or private firms to carry out the operations and enjoy the profits, a reminder of the old 'concession' system whereby colonial powers drained off the wealth of the weaker countries.

The insistence of many of the smaller maritime countries has resulted, so far, in a vague agreement that there should be a 200-mile economic zone and the discussion as we write centres around a precise definition. A draft submitted by the Soviet delegation incurred bitter criticism. The deputy leader of the

Chinese delegation said that the two superpowers had combined to oppose the proposal for exclusive economic zones, professing recognition of the principle while trying to impose conditions which would rob it of its essential content. All the eleven articles in one section of the draft, he said, were limitations on the sovereignty of the coastal states. Among the many other speakers opposing the proposals, the representative of the Congo said that the 'clear characteristics of paternalism' were unacceptable and that the proposals would aggravate the plunder of the fishing resources of the developing countries.

The Conference, which is not yet over, is unlikely to result in an agreement. On August 6 U.P.I. reported Senator Edward Muskie as envisaging that no agreement might result (in other words, that the U.S. might refuse to accept the demands of the developing countries) and, ironically, suggesting that the U.S. would probably ban foreign fishing fleets from a 200-mile zone off its coasts!

Steps forward

However, whatever may be the result in formal agreements, three points already stand out clearly:

1. The revolutionary, anti-imperialist forces of the Third World are continuing, and speeding, their advance,
2. The superpowers have been thoroughly exposed as seeking only their own ends.
3. The Chinese analysis, made long ago, pointing to the Third World as one of the most progressive forces of this era, has been justified once again.

As a corollary one may add that some countries of the Second World, too, are taking supporting action. The Japanese press has bitterly criticised Soviet spying and other activities in the waters around Japan. A former Director-General of the Defence Council, Osamu Unbara, said, 'The Japan Sea used to be a Japanese sea, but now it has become a Soviet sea, pure and simple.

An out-and-out trial of strength at sea between a superpower and a small maritime power has not yet taken place, but we can be confident that if it did tactics of 'people's war' at sea would eventually be found. Iceland, an island with a population of less than a quarter of a million, has not done so badly in its confrontation with Britain, the one-time 'mistress of the seas.'

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As we go to press it is generally accepted that the Law of the Sea Conference will reach no agreement. The Times (London) said on 19 August that the countries concerned had 'abandoned hope of reaching even a tentative agreement in principle on any of the major issues raised'.

Failure to agree means the continuance of the status quo, but it also means that the superpowers and other main maritime nations have been unable to impose their will on the developing countries. With every conference the smaller nations become more confident and their demands more comprehensive. In default of agreement they will continue to rely on themselves and on the solidarity between them. Their determination to free themselves from domination by others will not be diminished.

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