

China Policy Study Group

BROADSHEET

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GREETINGS FROM CHINA!

A delegation from the China Policy Study Group has just spent part of October and November in China, at the invitation of the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries. This was a very happy way of marking our tenth anniversary.

We are gratified by this appreciation of our work but we must also thank our readers who, by their constant support and criticism, have encouraged us in the task of producing and improving BROADSHEET, as a result of which it has attracted subscribers in so many countries. The delegation brought back greetings to them, and to the workers and peoples in their countries, from the Chinese workers and peasants. Wherever the delegation went, they never failed to send their good wishes. We hope that in the months to come the content of our journal will adequately reflect the information and inspiration gained during the visit.

It was clear from discussions the delegation had that the Chinese considered BROADSHEET a valuable publication and did all in their power to make the delegation's stay in China informative. The delegation talked with many leading cadres in the places visited (mainly in northeast China), as well as model workers and peasants and out-

standing worker-theoreticians. They asked that sightseeing should be cut down in favour of more thorough study and this was done very effectively. All questions asked—and they were many—were answered frankly and fully.

Wherever the delegation travelled they found that the interest of the working people was far from being centred wholly on China. In factories, communes and homes speakers always made it clear that they saw themselves as working not only for China but for the world revolution, causing the delegation to realise how powerful an incentive this was for the enormous time and effort their Chinese hosts put into their study, political work and production.

Keen interest was shown in Europe, along with some fear that not everyone there clearly recognises the seriousness of the threat posed by the superpowers. The delegation found it exciting to see people actually carrying through a revolution and to see (as at Tientsin and Taching) some of the ways in which they are building socialism.

At every level the guidance of the Communist Party was evident but it did not consist in issuing directives. It was aimed at persuading people to make decisions for themselves and to show them how, guided by Marxist-Leninist theory, they could analyse the true

nature of the problems facing them and so use their initiative fearlessly. The amount of time given to the study of the works of Marx and Engels, Lenin and Mao Tse-tung was astonishing; there was no factory, commune or other organisation without its network of study groups, sometimes running into hundreds.

When studying the works of Marx, e.g. *Capital*, Chinese workers must feel much nearer to the working conditions described therein than English workers do. In the West these conditions of exploitation have been superseded by different ones, but they existed in China's quite recent past and still exist in some Third World countries, e.g. India. The feelings of proletarian internationalism expressed by Chinese workers—their unity with the proletariat and oppressed peoples everywhere—are therefore genuine and based on their own experience. They have overthrown their exploiters and, looking to others to do the same, will make sacrifices to help them.

As a result of the visit the members of the China Policy Study Group feel more strongly than ever the need to continue and improve our work and to increase the circulation of BROADSHEET. We count on our readers to help us do so.

THINKING, FIGHTING, WORKING CITIES AND COMMUNES

In the last year or two attention has been given to the organising, strengthening and development of the people's militia in various parts of China. A good deal of careful thought and effort has gone into militia-building in the communes, in industrial and commercial enterprises, and in entire cities and provinces. How is militia activity related to other activities?

It is well-known that the Chinese people and their leaders have been busily engaged both in campaigns to deepen Marxist political understanding and to develop production, scientific knowledge and technology; and that consequently large numbers of people in various units of work and living all over the country have been actively involved in historical and philosophical analyses which by any standards are highly demanding. It is easy to assume, therefore, that militia building, even if it is widespread, involves the attention and activity of only a few in any one place.

This, however, is not so. An idea of the scale and depth of the militia-building programme can be got from the example of Shenyang. It is politically and economically one of China's key cities, and industrially, technologically and in other ways one of the most advanced cities in the world. Its population is nearly three million. Over one million of its people are active in the militia. A comparable proportion of armed workers and technicians in city and countryside are organising militia forces in other places, including Sinkiang and Tibet. Men and women working in vast, complex enterprises like the famous Anshan Iron and Steel Company have their own militia organisation, covering the mines and factories; similarly, in other industrial plants and mines, in oil fields, in power stations and bridges, in shops and offices and schools, at the county, commune and brigade level in the provinces. Militia training includes intensive training in the handling of arms and explosives, in conducting urban guerrilla warfare and

tunnel warfare, in manufacturing mines, in dealing with attacks of a chemical and biological or atomic nature, in fire-fighting, and so on. As in Shenyang, the top Party leaders have given personal attention to militia work. Outstanding workers who emerged during the Cultural Revolution in leading positions in the revolutionary committee and Party committee of their province, in the Central Committee or as heads of the Trade Unions, have been the commanders of the urban militias.

Why a militia?

Militia organisation has been given the greatest importance. What, then, is its significance in China? This is a question with varying implications. Firstly, it needs explanation why, twenty-five years after Liberation, hundreds of millions of Chinese are prepared for war, and armed. Did the period of necessary armed struggle not end once and for all with the overthrow of imperialist, feudal and capitalist rule?

Secondly, there are questions put into people's minds as the result of the 'reports' and 'analyses' by Soviet and Western Sinologists. Some of the propaganda has tried to convince the world that Mao Tse-tung and the C.P.C. have imposed an army type of existence on the Chinese people, especially the workers; militia building, if this allegation had any substance of reality, would be a process of ruthless militarisation. It has also been said that China is a 'military-bureaucratic state'. The militia would in that case be a vast army, under the absolute authority of the high command of a ruling class, which is used to dominate and threaten the mass of the people. Alternatively, there is the view of the China experts who unravel the truth about what goes on behind the scenes in China. Incurably committed to lurid accounts of the 'struggle for power' between various individuals, it is not strange that some of them explain the militia as an attempt by some leaders to build up private armies to attack rivals who have P.L.A. backing.

'In the struggle to run, transform, build and safeguard cities, the militiamen in the cities have also tempered and remoulded themselves. A contingent of militiamen skilled in using both the pen and the rifle is vigorously developing and flourishing.'

Report to a Conference of Urban Militia, called by the Liaoning Committee of the C.P.C., July-August 1974.

Even when there is no deliberate malice or enmity, explanations of the unprecedented developments in socialist society tend to be given in terms of factional power-struggles in capitalist countries or of Chinese society in the warlord period. What the workers and peasants initiate in the period of socialist transition is confused with the very things which have been superseded or destroyed in the course of the revolution. As Lenin, basing himself on the theoretical analysis of proletarian revolutionary practice made by Marx and Engels, showed convincingly in *The State and Revolution*, after overthrowing their class enemies the workers and poorest peasants will still need state power to continue with their revolutionary task. The growth of the people's militia in China has been part of the struggle of the revolutionary workers, peasants and intellectuals to defend and develop their power and ability to transform China in the correct way.

Not just the theory, but also the practical steps taken to form the militia and make it function properly have been at the centre of the struggle between the bourgeois and revisionist lines on the one hand and the line to which Mao Tse-tung has held, between the bourgeoisie in the world as a whole and the working class and their allies who have Marxist-Leninist theory as their guide. The immense, highly organised and politically conscious force which the people's militia is today has been

created as a result of a long experience, in which there have been setbacks as well as advances.

Militia forces played an active and important part in the revolution from its early stages. In the anti-Japanese Resistance and the revolutionary war after 1945 militia forces, numbering hundreds of thousands of labouring people, under C.P.C. leadership, made a success of the people's war against Japanese imperialism and the Kuomintang reactionaries. After Liberation, and especially during the U.S. aggression in Korea, hundreds of thousands of people organised in the militia were a reserve for the P.L.A. as well as a citizens' force for maintaining security. The revolutionary order in China has always been under threat of foreign aggression, counter-revolution and sabotage by agents of the bourgeoisie. The P.L.A. was till recently the main force on which the Chinese people could rely for defence against attacks by these enemies, but the contribution of the militia has not been small. Across its long borders on many sides China has neighbours whose rulers have hostile and aggressive aims. What goes on, largely unreported, from day to day in the more exposed border areas is indicated by a report of the, more recent, achievements of the militia in Chekiang: there were 11,000 occasions on which they dealt successfully, and on their own, with Kuomintang forces.

A new militia

The militia proved their worth as an auxiliary for the regular armed forces of the people, the P.L.A. As long as they played that subordinate role there were some Rightists who agreed with policies for their formation and training. But it was, of course, a purely bourgeois military view that civilians should be allowed to form volunteer military units only as and when the regular army command needed help in national defence. Between the militia of the early days of the People's Republic and the highly political urban militia of today, with working-class C.P.C. and Communist Youth League members as the core, there are important differences.

After Liberation, the new democratic revolution had to be completed and the socialist revolution begun in the face of the implacable hostility of the worldwide forces led by U.S. imperialism, then the most formidable economic and military power. With the C.P.C. to lead them, the numerically small working class and the poor and lower-middle peasantry were free to organise themselves and assume their revolutionary task. But most of them still bore the marks of the long history of combined exploitation and oppression by the imperialists, capitalists and landlords: cultural backwardness and low level of technical skill. It was as their revolutionary struggle, led by the C.P.C. under Mao Tse-tung, progressed that millions of them in the cities and countryside became transformed into class-conscious revolutionaries with theoretical understanding.

A mass militia

As the working people deepened and extended the proletarian dictatorship through their revolutionary activity—by forming large scale socialist collectives in the countryside, for example—their role as its defenders against class enemies also developed. The great year of 1958 was a milestone in militia development. Chairman Mao's directive, 'Organise contingents of the people's militia on a large scale' was timely. In the countryside, by the end of the year, about two hundred million people were enrolled in the militia, and many millions were receiving intensive arms training. The communes, it will be remembered, were by the decisions of the C.P.C. to be collective organisations not only of production, government, culture and commerce but also of defence.

The militia movement was not kept up with the same enthusiasm, however. Some of the leaders of the Party and the P.L.A. appear to have played down the role of the militia; and in some localities its leadership fell into the hands of the wrong

PEOPLE ARE PRODUCERS

people. In the struggle then waged within the Party by those who followed Mao Tse-tung's line to prevent the undermining of socialism and the restoration of capitalism, attempts were also made to get militia policy on the correct lines. In 1962, the year of the Tenth Plenary Session of the Eighth Central Committee, their line on the militia prevailed again; its proletarian class basis and ideology, and the Party's leading role in it, were emphasised. Mao Tse-tung issued a new instruction: 'Militia work must be carried on organisationally, politically, militarily'.

In the course of the Cultural Revolution, the revolutionaries in Shanghai followed up their victory in the January Revolution by forming a new militia force. As workers have increasingly become the leading force within the Party, and in response to the call of Mao and the Party occupied leading positions in the management of production and commerce, schools and universities, and government, the political consciousness they have as the revolutionary working class, their sense of large scale organisation and discipline and social responsibility, have shaped the kind of militia they have organised. The militia forces are under the Party. They not only engage in military training and patrolling of the cities and installations. In the spirit of Mao Tse-tung's instruction, 'Be prepared against war, be prepared against natural disasters, and do everything for the people', they have trained themselves as a volunteer force to deal with emergencies (floods, fires, etc.), they give leadership in political study for citizens, they direct traffic in rush hours, they help people in difficulties, and so on. Above all, they have followed Mao Tse-tung in seeing the ongoing Chinese Revolution as part of the world revolution, and preparing for a long period of class struggle.

When the Nanchang Militia Command was organised last summer the report in the provincial paper claimed that the militia had been organised 'in accordance with the theories on arming the masses and the working class as put forward by Marx, Lenin and Chairman Mao'. The formation of the militia, not only in the cities but in the communes also, by workers and peasants 'armed with Marxist-Leninist theory and the Thought of Mao' has to be seen as a development of historic importance. Just as Marx wrote in *The Civil War in France* of the 'armed manhood of Paris', so the revolutionary work of the armed manhood and womanhood in the cities and the rural collectives is leading to a new kind of state. 'Fighting, working, thinking Paris' may be said to come to life in 'fighting, working, thinking' Shanghai or Nanchang or Sian. At the least, it is in this perspective that we have to observe the development of the militia.

The *Commune*—the reabsorption of the State power by society as its own living forces instead of as forces controlling and subduing it, by the popular masses themselves, forming their own force instead of the organised force of their own suppression—the political form of their social emancipation, instead of the artificial force . . . of society wielded for their oppression by their enemies.

(From Marx's first draft of *The Civil War in France*, Foreign Languages Press, Peking, 1970.)

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The United Nations has designated 1974 World Population Year and the World Population Conference, held in Bucharest in August, was seen by the capitalist countries, especially the U.S., Britain and France, as an opportunity to reassert the view that overpopulation is the 'root cause' of poverty, deprivation and high mortality. They produced 'scientific' statistics to show that if present trends continue the year 2000 will see famine on an unprecedented scale and—something they of course fear still more—greater economic instability in the West.

However impressive the graphs with which it is illustrated, this is pseudo-science. Such predictions, intended to prove that 'backward' peoples are responsible for their own backwardness, ignore almost every factor of real importance. Above all, they ignore the ability of a people to bring about social change and so control their own future.

Third World observers

The experience and observations of some Third World leaders, with the achievements of China particularly in mind, have led them to an analysis of the causes of poverty and want in Asia, Africa and Latin America. What is the factor common to underdeveloped countries almost without exception? It is exploitation by capitalism. For centuries natural resources have been drained and the people driven from their land, resulting in starvation, homelessness, unemployment and disease. Large profits have been extracted by the use of cheap labour and the creation of a single-product economy, making eventual self-reliance more difficult. Natural resources have been expropriated for the benefit of others.

Population does not exist in a void: it is related to concrete conditions such as national income and economic development. If a country's population grows but its national income does not, because it is being plundered, it becomes overpopulated in the narrow sense that it cannot provide for its people. Even countries with relatively small populations can be, and are, in this position. They have become impoverished because, first, they have not taken their resources into their own hands but have allowed others to use them to enrich themselves and, second, because within these countries the *people* have not taken their resources into their own hands and dismissed landlords, usurers, compradors and profiteers.

Programme for self-reliance

Wang Jun-sheng, Chinese representative at the U.N. Economic and Social Council, outlined a programme for developing countries as follows:

Self-reliance means this: Rely mainly on the strength of each country's own people, give full play to their talents, gradually eliminate the forces and influence of imperialism, colonialism and neo-colonialism and exploit all available resources at home systematically and in a planned way; make every effort to accumulate necessary funds for development through internal sources; take effective measures to train the country's own technical and managerial personnel; in a way suited to local conditions, gradually change the 'single-product economy' resulting from long colonial rule, lift the country from dependence upon, and subordination to, imperialism and establish an independent and relatively comprehensive economic system.

(*Peking Review*, 14 July, 71)

Many African countries have a population density far below the European average; teeming Europe lives well while sparse Africa starves. Some of these countries, where the condition of the native population is abject, actively encourage white

REPORT TO READERS

NEW PAPERBACK BY GEORGE THOMSON

immigration. But of course one cannot just reverse the imperialists' theory and say that a big population means wealth and a small one poverty. The richest country in the world, the U.S., is rather thinly peopled, whereas India, where starvation is endemic, has more than seven times as many people per square mile. A cool look at the facts suggests simply that population as such has nothing to do with material prosperity.

If the energies of a population, big or small, are harnessed to the task of developing its resources and increasing its production, and doing this with whatever means are at hand instead of waiting for equipment that is more 'scientific' or labour-saving to become available, it will certainly be able to feed and clothe itself. It may be able to do rather better than that and gradually improve its standard of living.

But there is a sense in which population is important. As the Chinese constantly emphasise, man is in the first instance a producer and only secondly a consumer; people are the most precious thing in the world, the decisive factor in the social productive forces. Malthus in 1798, in his essay *Principles of Political Economy as it affects the Future Improvement of Society*, foretold the doom of the world as the result of over-population. China has never accepted this view. Since 1949 her population has increased by about 50 per cent but in the same period grain output has more than doubled and there has been a marked rise in the standard of living and a spectacular drop in the mortality rates.

The rapid growth of agricultural production has enabled the country to absorb a 50 per cent increase in population but it has not led the Chinese government into complacency or rashness. They carry on constant education on the subject of family limitation and late marriage, as a measure of prudence and as part of a planned population policy, but even in this respect their practice is not uniform throughout the country.

Minorities' new vigour

National minorities which were diminishing before liberation, which in some instances were in danger of dying out, have not been pressed to limit their numbers. As a result the decline in the population of Tibet was quickly halted, people of Uighur nationality in Sinkiang have increased by 42 per cent since 1949, while in the same period the Mongolian population of the Silinghol League of Inner Mongolia has doubled. In spite of this population increase the people in these regions are living better than ever before, and better every year, mainly because revolution has released their productive energy and as a result food output has increased faster than the mouths to be fed. Tibet, for instance, has had good harvests for 13 years in succession and is growing grain in places where it was never grown before.

Here again one must beware of over-simplification. China's minorities were dying out because they were the most oppressed peoples of the country, oppressed by landlords, Han despotism and, often, native religious overlords. The removal of that oppression, and the political steps taken by the People's Government to remedy the wrongs done to minorities by past Han rulers, have created conditions in which their numbers can increase. It is not primarily government policies which have caused the increase; the key factor was the overthrow of the oppressors. It may confidently be expected that increased political understanding will at some time in the future lead the minority peoples themselves to adopt measures of family planning.

Our conclusion must be that population density has very little direct relation to poverty; many other factors must be taken into account in any serious analysis. The main cause of poverty is exploitation, whether by native overlords or by foreign imperialism.

The third and last of George Thomson's paperbacks will be published at the end of January under the title *The Human Essence: the Sources of Science and Art*. It is, in effect, a new version of the same author's *Marxism and Poetry* (1945), which has long been out of print. The scope of the earlier work has been extended so as to include music as well as poetry and science as well as art. The main argument may be summarised as follows.

Science and art are interdependent forms of the organisation of social energy, both rooted in the labour-process. Science is the form in which man organises his cognitive experience (that is, his knowledge), derived from social practice; art is the form in which he organises his affective (that is, emotional) experience, also derived from social practice. The scientist and the artist are both concerned to change the world—the one the external world of man's subjective relations with nature, the other the internal world of his subjective relations with his fellow men. The scientist extends our knowledge, and hence also our control, of nature; the artist heightens our social awareness and so advances the class struggle.

Among the subjects discussed are the origin of speech; the relation between speech, poetry and music; the advance from primitive (perceptual) thought to civilised (rational) thought; the relation between religion, philosophy and science; the conflict between materialism and idealism and between dialectics and metaphysics; the dialectics of Hegel and Beethoven, both fore-runners of Marx. There is a chapter on form and content in drama and music and a comparative analysis of poems by Sappho, Shakespeare, Keats and Mao Tse-tung.

The price of the new book will be 70p post free. Its two predecessors, *From Marx to Mao Tse-tung* and *Capitalism and After* are still available. They make good Christmas presents.

Subscription rates

We were very sorry to have to announce increased subscription rates from the end of this year. Printing costs have increased considerably, so have postage and all the other costs associated with publishing. It seems certain that there will be another increase, perhaps a big one, in postage rates during the year, but as it is impracticable for us to increase our charges except at the beginning of a year we have had to make some allowance for this now. The new rates are printed on page 3.

Some of our subscribers, in the Third World especially, find it very difficult to pay our subscription and in such instances we always try to make special arrangements. We are sure that our readers in general realise that when they pay their subscription, or send us a donation, they are helping to provide BROADSHEET for others less able to pay. We receive many letters showing how much this is appreciated.

Donations

We are a month late in reporting on donations, owing to pressure on space in our November issue. In the quarter July to September we received a total of £28 in gifts, for which we thank all those concerned.

We also thank those who have given us names and addresses to which we can send sample copies of BROADSHEET. This is work we want to extend and we earnestly ask readers to send us more names.

THE CHINA POLICY STUDY GROUP