

# China Policy Study Group

# BROADSHEET

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## TRUTH WILL OUT

Anti-China propoganda will be with us as long as capitalism. Its methods vary, the aim remains: to discredit the proletarian dictatorship in the eyes of the people and to 'contain' socialist China.

Now that China's material achievements can no longer be denied, it has become necessary to suggest that 'Chinese Communism' is a unique variant of Marxism, suited to China, unsuitable elsewhere. Furthermore—and here the spokesmen of social democracy are particularly vociferous—it is said that prosperity has been won at the expense of 'essential human freedoms' which we prize and the Chinese have never known.

Unfortunately for such propagandists, workers under capitalism see every day the price they have to pay for the freedom they are allowed. They can work only if a boss will employ them. They can live only if they pay ever-rising prices for food, clothing and fuel. They have to pay taxes, rents, mortgage repayments. They have freedom of speech, press and assembly, provided they don't use these for any serious purpose, such as advocating the collective takeover of their own country and running it directly for the benefit of the mass of the people. Let them so much as begin seriously to organise for that, and they are soon told how 'criminal' and 'treasonable' their actions are.

In China too there are people who never used to work but who now are allowed to work and enjoy freedom provided they don't seek to overthrow the social order. Only there it is the workers, poor peasants and their allies who govern and make the rules, and it is the former bosses whose freedom is restricted. It is ninety per cent of the people, studying, arguing, organising and working, who are the decisive force in determining the conditions in which they live and work. Living standards are still low but there is no unemployment. Medical and other services take a tiny fraction of a worker's pay and the cost of living gradually falls. People feel secure.

These facts cannot be hidden for ever. They are obvious to every visitor to China and fortunately workers are now beginning to go there. In the end truth must out.

## AID TO END AID

The 'self-reliance' of the Chinese and those who would like to see their drive towards independent development emulated in other countries of the Third World is a principle with wider application than is often appreciated. It does not mean self-sufficiency in any literal sense, though it does mean that a developing country should neglect no opportunity of meeting more of its needs for food and basic materials from home production. Foreign trade, conducted on an equitable basis, is as much part of self-reliance as meeting internal needs from internal production. If by exporting some of its products a country acquires the purchasing power to command other goods it needs in world markets, these are as much the fruit of its own efforts as those it produces for itself. There is thus no conflict between trade and self-reliance unless possibilities of meeting essential needs from home production are neglected just because it is feasible to meet them by imports.

Similarly if foreign technical or economic assistance can be enlisted for an internal development programme without infringement of sovereignty, and without creating a situation of dependence, it need involve no abandonment of self-reliance. The enlistment of outside support should remain subsidiary to the country's own development effort.

It is on this basis that China, the first developing country to become itself a donor of development aid, contributes by means of loans, equipment and specialist teams to the construction efforts of other countries. The agreements under which she does this are called, undramatically, 'economic and technical co-operation agreements'. They have covered help to North Korea in her reconstruction after the American onslaught in the early 'fifties; loans and projects worth hundreds of millions of dollars to Albania to speed her socialist construction; economic aid amounting to billions of dollars to North Vietnam; a series of grants to other neighbouring countries like Cambodia to finance development projects; economic assistance to Romania; and in addition a large volume of aid to non-socialist develop-

ing countries.

The last—and now largest—of these brings China into an area that is today the subject of heated debate in the United Nations and every international agency concerned with the outlook for the underdeveloped countries.

The current controversies about development aid have little bearing on the aid given by China, which is interest-free and in practice very long-term. Learning from their own experience as aid recipients the Chinese insisted that foreign loans which put a burden on the economy when they had to be repaid were not aid at all but more like business transactions. The superpowers do not scorn to score a point off each other when it comes to denigrating aid programmes. It was the U.S. State Department that drew attention to the reversal of flow in the case of the U.S.S.R. early in the 'seventies when the recipients' repayment obligations began to amount to higher figures than current aid disbursements. This cannot happen in China's case: the revenue side of the aid account is still negligible and by and large is likely to remain so as China does not expect repayment from a country before it has achieved a reasonable degree of self-reliance. 'Do you mean that our grandchildren will pay?' asked the sceptics in some African countries. The Chinese were not displeased with the question.

Chinese aid creates no repayment burden, and that is plainly to its credit whatever criticisms there may be from hostile sources about the nature of the aid. But there is another small point on the credit side in the context of the current U.N. debate. The group of 77 developing countries has pointed out that, just as the only way to prevent a decline in the value of their raw material exports relatively to manufactured imports is to have the two sets of prices tied together, so ought aid budgets to be tied to gross national products of donor countries. Developing countries should, in short, be insulated from the directly harmful effects of inflation in the developed countries. In China there is no inflation and the price of Chinese equipment required to



implement aid schemes does not escalate. Indeed, the boot may be on the other foot, with China obliged to pay higher prices for commodity imports but not wanting to charge any more for the capital goods she is supplying.

Few critics would maintain that China has been parsimonious in her spending on aid projects, or that any less of her G.N.P. is devoted to that purpose than has been earmarked by the most affluent countries in the West. It is more usual, in fact, to censure the Chinese for having run ahead of themselves to become aid-givers before they could afford it. Even ten years ago *Far Eastern Economic Review* carried a warning article, 'Aid from the Aidless', announcing that 'China may soon find it necessary to trim her ambitious aid programme.'

### Moving ahead

Since those words appeared China has become more prominent as an aid donor, moving ahead of the Soviet Union, for example, in 1970 and later being recognised as the source of the main net aid flow from the 'centrally-planned' countries (by 1973 the inward flow of repayments had reduced Soviet net disbursements for the year to \$50 million, while the other East European countries received back more than they paid out). Of some \$4,000 million of Chinese aid, mostly recent, granted to 60 countries up to the end of 1974 more than half had already been used. The aid schemes, in other words, were live and not inactive agreements.

China is one of the developing countries herself, and by European standards very poor. She does not set out to reach big figures in aid-giving and in fact maintains that the best kinds of aid are those which supplement efforts initiated by the receiving countries, or alternatively are supplemented or overtaken by them. This has happened in countries as different, politically and socially, as Pakistan, Afghanistan and Albania. The last of these, as a small country carrying out a socialist revolution under Marxist-Leninist leadership in defiance of both the Soviet Union and the West, was obliged from the outset to take the road of self-reliance. Chinese aid has reinforced and speeded up development that would have had to be undertaken in any case. There was no question of aid from any other source. With a country like Pakistan, under bourgeois leadership, every partial advance towards a self-reliant attitude on any front, no matter how untypical, and every local contribution (such as providing machinery for Chinese-built factories), must be supported as far as possible.

The fact is that *amount* is not the measure of *aid*. If outside funds or equipment or technical personnel turn out to have set a country's feet on a course that leads in a direction other than self-reliance they can be aiding diversion instead of development. A factory or mine that starts with production mortgaged years ahead to pay for the investment is no prodigy of self-reliance, nor is an installation that continually turns for replacements or technical services to the country which supplied the original equipment. The extreme case, that quickly erodes interest in the predicament of developing countries and sympathy for any efforts, including those of the Chinese, to help find a way through it, is the piling-up of uninstalled machinery because building or manning programmes are out of phase. Instances of this are not rare, and with more countries giving and receiving development aid they could become very frequent. The safeguard in the case of China's aid is the nature of the schemes themselves: methods recommended are relatively labour-intensive, and provision of erecting and training personnel forms a large element in the initial Chinese contribution.

Half the cost of any development project is usually reckoned to be wages and salaries. However, according to the last of the Eight Principles of Economic Aid (BROADSHEET Vol. I, No. 11; also Vol. VIII, No. 9), set out by Chou En-lai in Conakry nearly twelve years ago, all Chinese technicians and workers who go to a foreign country to take part in a development scheme live

at the same standard as the people they work among. Living standards in most of the countries are low, which means that remuneration and expenses of the Chinese are low, much lower than those of other foreigners who come to work there. One recently-published study (*China's Economic Aid* by Wolfgang Bartke, C. Hurst & Co., London), concludes that it is 'fairly safe to assume that the expenses on salaries and wages in a Chinese economic project will amount to far less than half the costs arising for the recipient countries when comparable economic aid is offered by capitalist countries or communist countries other than China'.

When the main purpose of a scheme is to provide personnel to carry out a service rather than put up buildings or organise production—e.g. in the case of the medical groups now operating in some dozen African countries and the prospecting and feasibility surveys carried out by Chinese geological, hydrological and agricultural teams in places like Nepal, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Guinea, Somalia, Ruanda, Sierra Leone and Guyana—the cost of getting the work done by the Chinese 'may be estimated at about a quarter of that of comparable projects undertaken by capitalist countries'.

From the mid-'fifties it became inevitable that countries in Eastern Asia would turn to China for support in any bid for independent development. When the trend showed signs of spreading to Western Asia the established aid donors showed more alarm. But the real shock was yet to come: the main field for development aid by China proved to be Africa, where there are today thirty countries with Chinese-assisted schemes. In the last few years the tide has been lapping two more continents: in Europe Malta (as well as Albania) has secured from China the economic help others were not ready to offer, and in South America Guyana has joined a small but growing group of countries whose trade with China has led on to aid for their own development.

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## TO OUR READERS

Though it is still early, we have had a good response to last month's proposals on 1976 subscription rates. A reader in New York sends \$10 'to celebrate October 1st' and adds '... in total agreement with no increase in rates to Third World countries!' He sent us, too, the names of three friends to receive sample copies.

A correspondent from Bangladesh says he has been an 'ardent reader' for some time but it is not always possible to borrow the publication and 'it is painful on my part to miss any issue'. So in spite of the cost he wants to subscribe.

Now is the time of year to suggest a subscription to BROADSHEET as a Christmas gift. Those who time the gift subscription to start with the December issue will get a year's subscription at the present rates. We shall lose money but our circulation will rise!

### Donations

In the July-September quarter we received the sum of £59 in donations—a very respectable total which we hope will be beaten in the months to come. Now that all the new postal rates are known it seems that our costs for postage have more than doubled in the last year.

### Correction

With regret and puzzlement we have to say that one of the corrections we made in our last issue was itself wrong. The word 'tradesmen' in the September article *Proletarian Dictatorship Unites Nationalities* should have been corrected not to 'tribesmen' but to 'herdsmen'. We sincerely apologise.

THE CHINA POLICY STUDY GROUP



# CHINA'S REVOLUTION IN EDUCATION

## 2. Running the School with the Doors open (concluded)

Running the school with the doors open is not limited to secondary schools. It is also practised in colleges and universities. In the foreign languages institute where my wife and I have been teaching since 1949, piecemeal efforts were made in this direction before the Cultural Revolution. Students went on half-day field trips to factories, communes, exhibitions, museums and parks, with their teachers playing the part of foreign visitors while they themselves acted as the Chinese hosts or interpreters. During the Great Leap Forward of 1958 nearly all colleges and universities ran small factories, made steel, raised pigs and grew crops. But while most students, teachers and administrators enthusiastically supported all this, some people opposed these early steps towards a revolution in education. In foreign language teaching they stuck to grammar books or literary classics. It took the Cultural Revolution to expand and systematise the process of breaking down the wall between classroom and socialist society.

### Learning from practice

Today foreign language students on a three-and-a-half-year course spend a month each academic year outside the institute. During the first year they train for a month with a People's Liberation Army unit; in the second and third years they put in a month in a factory one year and a month in a commune the other. This is in addition to occasional short stints helping to bring in the harvest. During their last half-year they do field work at China's export commodity fairs and at technological and industrial exhibitions from abroad, interpreting for the foreign personnel installing the machinery and explaining the exhibits to the Chinese visitors. Language students also do temporary work for the state travel agency, meeting and seeing off foreign visitors at airports and railway stations, escorting them to the Great Wall, to Peking's Summer Palace and Forbidden City, helping them with shopping and with their daily life in hotels. Some work for a while as waiters and waitresses in hotel dining rooms or as shop assistants in the 'Friendship Stores' catering especially to foreigners. This field work is an important part of the curriculum. For more and more foreign language students, like other students in China today, are sons and daughters of workers and peasants and most of them have hardly set eyes on a foreigner before going to college. This first contact with foreign visitors during field work not only enables them to learn something of foreigners' tastes, temperaments and outlooks. It is their initiation to 'international class struggle'—to uniting with the many to oppose the few.

Constant contact with the working people of their own country is of course even more important.

Several classes of foreign language students not long ago went with their teachers for a month in a commune brigade east of Peking. It was rice harvest time and the students were all set for a spell of intensive physical work which might possibly leave them no time or energy for language study—though that was in their plan. The brigade was in fact badly in need of extra hands, for the crop was the best it had ever had and mechanisation, even near the capital, is still not very far advanced. But during the discussion of work arrangements the brigade Party Secretary said: 'You mustn't give up your language study while you're here. Our country's foreign relations are growing and we need interpreters badly. We commune members put in a couple of hours' work in the fields before breakfast. You use that time for studying. Then we'll all have breakfast and start work together at 8 o'clock.' So the students had early morning classes in the village. They also

spoke English to each other as they worked in the fields, learning from their teachers such new words as sickle, scythe, stook and sheaf. The Russian Department students at first stuck to Chinese, thinking that the commune members might disapprove of their speaking to each other in a foreign tongue—especially Russian. They were wrong. The brigade leaders explained to them the political importance of mastering Russian and told them to learn from the English Department students.

The students and teachers were given every facility for the carrying out of 'social investigation', to which Mao Tse-tung attaches great importance. So they set about compiling a history of the village from before liberation in 1949 until the Cultural Revolution of the '60s and '70s. For this they split up into groups, each group interviewing commune members about different historical stages: the bitter pre-liberation days under the Kuomintang and the landlords, the land reform in the early '50s, the co-operative movement, the Great Leap Forward and the setting up of communes in the later '50s, the Socialist Education Movement of the mid-'60s and finally the Cultural Revolution. The history was collated and then read to the brigade cadres and Party Committee, who after some amplification and correction passed it as an accurate record. This compilation of village history was no mere academic exercise. It was a moving experience for these youngsters who, though themselves of worker and peasant origin, had been 'born and brought up under the red flag'. They had no personal experience of famine, beggary, child-selling, oppression and exploitation by the landlords. Compilation was not the end of the process. On returning to the institute students and teachers started translating the history into English for future use as language study material.

This month in the country helped forge links between the students and teachers and the commune members with whom they had lived and worked. There were tears at their parting, when the whole village turned out to say goodbye. These links have been maintained. When the brigade faces a shortage of labour during a rush season, it calls on the institute for help. When the students feel the need for a broader perspective in the movement to criticise Lin Piao and Confucius or in their study of the dictatorship of the proletariat, they invite the brigade Party Secretary to come and tell them how these political movements are going in the commune. And over holidays there is visiting back and forth, students and teachers cycling three hours to the commune and commune members piling into a trailer hitched to a chugging hand-tractor. The walls between school and commune are breaking down.

### Workers and students

Walls are breaking down between school and factory too.

This spring two classes of students specialising in English went with their teachers to a cardboard box factory. There they helped build a new workshop and to install newly imported machinery. Instruction manuals for the machinery were in English, which the students undertook to translate into Chinese for the workers. This was hard, for they did not understand the technical process. So they consulted the workers. The latter, of course, did not understand English; but they did understand machinery and were able to solve problems which baffled the translators. This combination of knowledge of a foreign language with technical expertise taught the students a basic principle of translation: you've got to understand what you're translating.

By the time they finished their month in the factory the



students had learnt to handle the machines themselves. But this new relationship with machinery was less important than the new human relations they established. They ate and studied with the workers. Students helped in the factory canteen kitchen and workers cut the students' hair. Workers and students played ping-pong and basket-ball, sang and did amateur dramatics together, made and ate meat dumplings—a favourite Sunday dinner dish—in workers' homes. This was a sign of new times in a country where working people and intellectuals have been separated for thousands of years. One of the older women workers said to her student guests: 'I never dreamt the day would come when I'd entertain college students.'

In the factory as in the commune the students studied English for two hours a day. This study, like the translation of the instruction manuals, was related to the job on hand; for the teachers, when not building workshops or installing machines, were compiling English teaching material dealing with the history of the factory and life stories of its workers. They also arranged factory field trips, visiting the workshops and workers' homes with their students. The teachers played the part of foreign visitors and asked the workers questions in English, while the students acted as interpreters. One such field trip, in fact, served as the term examination. Some of the students were nervous and one old worker criticised them saying: 'Translating is revolutionary work. What sort of revolutionary interpreter will you make if you're afraid?'

The students also gave the workers simple lessons in English, teaching them terms inscribed on machines and packing cases, such as: *This Side Up* and *Handle With Care*. They also taught them songs in English, which students, teachers and workers sang at their farewell get-together. When the time for parting came the gap between workers and intellectuals had been narrowed. Joint political study had helped bring worker and student together, with workers illustrating Marxist theory with incidents in their own lives before and after Liberation. Study of Lenin's writing on the communist spirit of voluntary, unpaid week-end work (during the hard times following the revolution of 1917) inspired students and teachers to maintain contact with the factory after they returned to college. One Saturday every month the two classes and their teachers cycle back to the plant to put in a voluntary shift with their new friends. Some are planning to spend the summer holidays working at the factory.

#### Soldiers and students

During their month's training with the People's Liberation Army students and teachers learn to use automatic weapons, go on tough route marches and learn the essentials of defensive 'people's war'. While training, they also study politics with the P.L.A. and gain something of its spirit of plain living, hard struggle and dedication to the service of the people. One batch of 300-odd college students and teachers just back from a month with the army, recently held a report back meeting. Almost every speaker referred with feeling to an old soldier named Chang. He had joined the revolutionary army in 1940. Three years later he ran into his wife begging in the streets. She implored him to return home but he replied: 'If I did that there'd simply be one more beggar in China. Try and stick it out. I'll fight for a China without beggars.' When demobilised from the P.L.A. a few years ago he volunteered to take charge of an army kindergarten, a surprising step for a man in a society still not free from Confucian ideas of male superiority. But Chang saw it as an important revolutionary task, carried it out well and won praise for his hard work, simple living and spirit of service. His story moved the students and teachers, helped them face their own shortcomings by comparing them with his selflessness. Thus training with the

P.L.A. is not narrowly military. It is a concentrated course in character building, in political and ideological development, in discipline and dedication to the building of socialism.

In the military, agricultural and industrial fields alike, open door education is for teachers as much as for students. Mao Tse-tung stated early in the Cultural Revolution: 'The transformation of the teachers is the key problem in revolutionising education.' Running schools with the doors open does much to transform teachers' ideology. A middle-aged Chinese teacher of English, who was educated abroad, for years before the Cultural Revolution had unquestioningly carried out instructions to teach English by way of the 19th century classics. He tells this story of his personal revolution in education: 'I was working with students in the countryside. We were putting up some buildings and I was carrying a heavy log from the riverside to the building site a couple of miles away. I'd had a hearty breakfast and was pretty fit, but before I'd got half-way my legs turned to jelly and I had to sit down for a rest. I thought of the coolies who had to do heavier work than this before Liberation, often on no breakfast at all and with the ribs sticking through their emaciated bodies. Then I thought of their sons and daughters. They're now our students. Suddenly I began to wonder: Was the best way of teaching them English to have them study the novels of Jane Austen?'

#### Struggle goes on

Running the schools with the doors open has shaken up the thinking of teachers all over China during the last couple of years. And in changing the thinking of teachers it is pushing forward the whole revolution in education. But that revolution is far from finished. Even in open door education many problems are still unsolved. Contact between schools and working people tends to go in fits and starts. After reaching a high point of enthusiasm, discipline and dedication while with the workers, peasants and soldiers, students and teachers often slip back after returning to school. Confucian class-room formalism, excessive authority of the teacher, mechanical memorising and lack of independent thought ruled the academic roost for over 2,000 years. The struggle against them will have to go on for a long time. But running the schools with the doors open is playing its part in that struggle, drawing teachers and students into what Mao Tse-tung calls 'the three great revolutionary movements . . . class struggle, the struggle for production and scientific experiment.' It is broadening horizons, narrowing the gap between theory and practice, between mental and manual work, between town and country, industry and agriculture. In strengthening the links of China's students and teachers with the working people it is helping to raise a generation of revolutionaries who will strengthen socialism, not betray it.

DAVID CROOK

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