

CHINA POLICY STUDY GROUP
BROADSHEET

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ONE MORE SOVIET AGGRESSION

THE Soviet leaders have at last shaken Western governments out of their illusions and dreams. The naked Soviet military invasion of Afghanistan, a non-aligned sovereign state, has shocked all but a few Soviet puppets. At the time of writing (and events are moving at high speed) there are reported to be seven Soviet divisions, about 100,000 men, occupying the cities of Afghanistan.

The Soviet Union has been meddling there for many years, involved in one coup after another and the elimination of successive leaders. The West did nothing. Now, with rarely equalled effrontery, the Soviet Union accuses imperialist countries and China of interference which called forth their invasion.

It is noteworthy that President Amin of Afghanistan, with whom the Soviet Union had exchanged friendly messages only a few days before the invasion, was executed a few days after it began. His successor, was unable, at a press conference, to give any coherent explanation of how he himself had come to power (*Times*, 12 Jan. 80).

The Soviet government frequently uses the excuse that they have been 'invited' to help in putting down rebels or countering 'foreign intervention', and that under a bilateral 'Treaty of Friendship and Mutual Assistance' they have a legal obligation to do so. Such treaties have been the regular pretext for Soviet intervention abroad, as, for instance, in Egypt, Angola, Somalia, Ethiopia, South Yemen, Vietnam and now Afghanistan. The role of such treaties is well known. Their shameful and humiliating consequences caused Egypt and Somalia to denounce them and expel the Russian advisers.

As many observers have pointed out, conquest of Afghanistan would be for the Soviet Union a giant step towards control of Pakistan, the Indian Ocean, the Arabian Sea and the world's major oil routes. How did this situation of near-disaster arise?

The seventies were a decade of naive hope or trust, of passive standing by, on the part of NATO and the West European political leaders in the face of the steady Soviet build-up of nuclear and conventional arms and relentless expansion in many parts of the world. The Western attitude persisted in spite of repeated warnings by the commanders of armed forces and a few specialists in international affairs. And, throughout the world disunity, among the countries of Europe, the Arab peoples, the African states, the countries of the Indian sub-continent, the peoples of Southeast Asia, helped the Soviet advance.

In 1975 the Soviet Union sent 20,000 to 30,000 Cuban troops into Angola to interfere in the civil war there. In 1978 about the same number were sent to Ethiopia to fight Somalia in the Ogaden and try to suppress the Eritreans. Cubans also took part in the invasion of Zaire.

On the diplomatic front the Helsinki Talks, preparatory to the Conference of 34 Countries on Security and Cooperation in Europe, began in 1971 and their final act, the Helsinki Agreement, was signed by 35 states in August 1975. Some governments were ready to be per-

sueded by Soviet advocacy of 'detente' in spite of warnings that it was a smokescreen to hide the rapid development of nuclear missiles.

Talks on the reduction of troops in Central Europe have been going on for some years in Vienna, with the Warsaw Pact side insisting on 'parity' and the Western side on 'balance' in disarmament, each thus wishing to preserve its own strongest aspects. The lack of progress in these talks led President Giscard d'Estaing to decide to strengthen French defences independently.

The Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT) in Geneva, between the two superpowers, have done more than anything else to expose Soviet calculation and double-dealing. SALT I was signed in 1972 and discussions on SALT II began immediately. The US Senate debate on the ratification of SALT II, which caused lively controversy, has now been deferred at President Carter's request because of the invasion of Afghanistan.

SALT II is intended to control long-range missiles, but short-range ones, such as are deployed in Western Europe and the western part of the USSR, are not subject to controls. The Soviet SS20s, with multiple warheads, are launched from mobile platforms and have no equal in Western Europe.

Trying to counter NATO's decision to modernise European defences, Brezhnev recently visited West Germany to persuade the Federal government to oppose the plan. As a bait he began his promised withdrawal of 20,000 troops and 1,000 tanks from East Germany. Nevertheless Chancellor Schmidt, previously a strong supporter of detente, announced that his government would accept the stationing in their country of Pershing II missiles.

For over a decade the Soviet Union has fostered in the West illusions about peace, the belief that the Soviet system was 'softening' and that its leaders really wanted detente. They succeeded in persuading the West to put a good deal of investment, loans and technical knowhow into the USSR. One result is that the *New York Times* was able to report on 4 January this year that the Soviet forces in Afghanistan were using trucks 'produced at the huge plant on the Kama River in Central Russia that was built largely on American technology'.

Until Afghanistan, Western governments' characteristic reaction to examples of Soviet economic or military aggression (and there have been many) has been complacency, indecision and disunity, clinging to the illusion of detente. Though at the time of writing there are suggestions that this time it will be different, this has still to be proved by sustained action.

The West's indecision has contrasted strongly with China's firm and clear line. For years China has given warnings of the Soviet threat and the dangers of appeasement and has urged European unity. Only quite recently have there been any signs that these warnings have been heeded in the West.

Now it is more than ever worth remembering what

Lenin said in 1917, that in the era of proletarian revolution inaugurated by the October Revolution, leadership could come only from the people. Only the people, by action appropriate to their various countries, can compel the necessary governmental determination and policy.

By contrast with the West the Third World has been firm and uncompromising. Their opposition to social-imperialism has been growing and this is certainly one of the reasons why the Soviet Union did not dare to defer its action against Afghanistan. Country after country has expressed disapproval of Soviet actions and called for resistance to them. Even Cuba has not publicly supported them so far. In spite of the Third World's imperfect unity and widely varying levels of development, what Third World countries say reflects the direct threat to them. Here again the Chinese thesis of the Third World being the most reliable force for progress is being borne

out. It is to be hoped the Second World will learn the lesson. In a world war the Second World could be virtually destroyed, the Third World could not. The only hope for Europe and Japan lies in their own unity in a firm alliance with the Third World to stop Soviet aggression.

The Russians stand ready to exploit internal differences anywhere. Can anyone doubt the threat to Yugoslavia after the death of President Tito if Russian aggression is not stopped now? It would be easy to find somewhere Yugoslavs to call for Soviet 'assistance'. Experience has shown that this would 'justify' Russian occupation, thus vastly increasing the danger to Europe.

Now, the Afghan people will certainly continue their fight for independence, as the Chinese did and as others have done throughout history. We and they should remember Stalin's World War II slogan: Our cause is a just one; victory will be ours!

CRIMES AGAINST KAMPUCHEA

IN December 1978, Vietnam invaded Kampuchea. Since then, her leaders have sought to justify what they did, and their claims have been widely aired in Britain. They were constantly attacked by the Kampuchean army, they say, and invaded to defend themselves. They were invited in by 'the government', and welcomed by the people. Besides, the Khmer Rouge policies of cooperatives and economic independence, and so on, were oppressive and immoral and did not work, and Vietnam is helping to rebuild the country after the devastation they caused. Self-defence, proletarian internationalism, the civiliser's burden: these are the terms in which she wants the world to see her action.

What is the reality? Vietnam is by no means a weak victim of her neighbour's aggression, nor is she even a small nation (she has over fifty million people, compared with seven million in Kampuchea and under three million in Laos). Armed to the teeth with what the USA left behind and what the Soviet Union provided, with the most battle-hardened army in the world (as George Hildebrand pointed out in Stockholm), she is the world's third military power in terms of troop numbers outside her borders, and fourth or fifth in terms of standing army. Her neighbours are all afraid of her. She virtually annexed Laos in 1978, and occupied Kampuchea later that year; now, over a year later, she has 50,000 soldiers in Laos and over 200,000 in Kampuchea, and has moved settlers in. So it seems rather implausible that the invasion was in self-defence.

She certainly has a treaty to 'help' Kampuchea militarily—drawn up with the regime she installed in Phnom Penh after the invasion! This regime had no independent support; unlike the USA, which was able to back an established politician, Lon Nol, as premier, she had to resort to Heng Samrin, a border bandit and ex-member of her own 'Indochina Communist Party' (see BROADSHEET, Sept. '79). In fact, the editor of the Vietnamese Party paper admitted, Vietnam had considered replacing the Kampuchean Party leadership as early as 1972, while both countries were still fighting the USA.

But Vietnam's most remarkable claim is that she is helping the people. As various foreign observers, some hostile to the Khmer Rouge, reported, in late 1978 the people had enough to eat and the economy was functioning. When Vietnam invaded, she removed what she could—rice, rubber tyres, even art treasures were put into trucks and carried away. This was not the worst. The resistance from the people was stiff (she had tried to invade in 1977 and for all her military superiority had been driven back), so she set about starving them out. The invasion was at the time of the harvest, preventing the

Resistance from stockpiling. Those who submitted, at best, have had their rice removed and in return been given starvation rations of maize. But in contested areas, Vietnamese have been seizing the crop, driving peasants off the land, planting mines in ricefields and shooting peasants trying to enter them, destroying dykes, even taking away cooking utensils. By May last year a famine was imminent; now only 10 per cent of the land is under cultivation and people are starving. International food aid is being piled up in Phnom Penh, or used to supply the soldiers who are doing these things.

Short of food, and often with malaria, the people continue to fight. Even in Laos, where the government submitted, Laotian people are resisting. So, with Soviet help, Vietnam has been using mustard gas. Coloured blue and red, it is released on Kampuchean peasants and Laotian minority tribes; in two weeks they die (*International Herald Tribune*, Dec. '79).

This is the grim reality behind Vietnam's claims—military aggression, colonisation, plunder, killing of civilians, systematic destruction of agriculture, chemical warfare. It adds up to genocide.

Then why, in Britain, has there been so much support for the invasion and occupation? And why is it strongest among 'the left'? Why is the invasion termed 'proletarian internationalism' and 'liberation'? This is so important that it is worth turning the question around. What do these concepts mean in concrete terms, in terms of the relationships between strong and weak, rich and poor, black and white? In other words, what is in store for us when we are 'liberated'?

'We want no condescending saviours to rule us from their judgement hall', says the Internationale. In the Marxist view, liberation is achieved by, and only by, the people, under the leadership of a revolutionary party. The people of each country must liberate themselves when the conditions are right and they are ready; but their struggle reflects the common class interests of the people of the world, so they are supported by their brothers and sisters throughout the world, and this is proletarian internationalism.

It is always the colonialists and the imperialists who have come to liberate others. Did not the British Empire depose corrupt feudal rulers, build railways and schools? Did not the USA oppose old-style colonialism in the '30s and '40s, pour 'aid' into the countries where it had influence? So we must be careful when we use terms like 'progressive' and 'liberation'.

The left in Britain supported the struggle against US imperialism in the Indochina War. Looking back on it,

it was not clear whom the left was supporting. Was it the Vietnamese army or the Indochinese peoples? It was the Indochinese peoples who defeated the USA. The Kampuchean people, for instance, have their own tradition of struggle. By the 1960s the peasants were eking out a meagre existence, oppressed and exploited by absentee landlords; when they revolted in Battambang in 1967, they were brutally suppressed, and over 10,000 were killed. They continued to struggle, and when the CIA backed a coup in 1970, their struggles turned into a war of national independence. In Vietnam itself, in Ho Chi Minh's time, the army was not a 'progressive' superforce, nothing like the Cuban army which arrived in Angola to 'liberate' the people after the Portuguese colonialists had been driven out. No, it relied on the support of the people, with whose struggle it was integrated.

In their separate struggles, the people worked together closely. For instance, the Vietnamese helped to train some of the Khmer Rouge guerrillas early on, while the Kampuchean sheltered and fed some of the Vietnamese guerrillas. Similarly, the Chinese people, poor though they are, supplied the Vietnamese people with rice and much more. This is proletarian internationalism.

Now, it is not surprising that the West should be pleased to see independent Kampuchea in ruins. For when the Kampuchean people won, they set about rebuilding, relying on their own strength and hard work, not on foreign wealth and technology. A media campaign was launched to vilify them. The press was filled with lurid tales which when investigated by people like Chomsky and Caldwell, collapsed like punctured balloons. The *Reader's Digest* published 'Murder of a Gentle Land'; crudely anti-Communist and filled with inaccuracies; it was then serialised by Radio Hanoi!

The problems faced were immense. The US bombing had killed and wounded many, driven two million refugees into Phnom Penh, killed draught animals, turned ricefields into craters and destroyed the irrigation system. At first, many vented their hatred on the collaborators; the government managed to stop the killing, and organised the people into cooperatives to rebuild. All worked, cadres included. Gradually dykes were repaired, craters levelled, old bombs melted down and turned into farm tools; factories were reopened. Old huts were replaced with new wooden houses with tiled roofs, village clinics opened, the illiterate taught to read and write. Certainly, there were mistakes and shortcomings—revolutions are imperfect and untidy, except on paper. But the people were taking their destiny into their own hands, liberating themselves. By 1978 the economy was strong enough for Kampuchea to come back into the world economy on her own terms, establishing trade links with Japan, Yugoslavia, Mauritius and other countries, and to plan to re-institute money. The people were succeeding.

Vietnam, on the other hand, was pursuing more 'reasonable' policies. As revisionism gained influence, leaders who had never understood the principle of national independence came to the fore and mortgaged Vietnam to the Soviet Union, trying to impose an Indochinese Federation on her neighbours. While the rift between Kampuchea and Vietnam was growing, the left by and large remained loyal to Vietnam.

The war of invasion brought out the class contradictions clearly. To the Vietnamese ruling class, Kampuchea was tempting: the agricultural land was fertile and Vietnam was short of food; the door would be opened to the profitable Mekong River development scheme; and the way would be cleared for further expansion. To the Soviet ruling class, this offered the chance to win a foothold in Southeast Asia.

To the Khmer people, on the other hand, the invasion has brought the serious danger that they will be extinguished as a nation. The Vietnamese people are suffering, too. Their economy is in a mess, and they are being

drafted to die in a war that is not their own. So many Southern draftees are deserting to Thailand.

The bulk of the left here is supporting the Soviet and Vietnamese ruling classes against the people. But the rhetoric of 'proletarian internationalism' was unlikely to appeal to the British public. A section of the left, with unhealthily close links with the Vietnamese Embassy, set out to rectify that. The field had already been cleared when Malcolm Caldwell, the most active supporter of Democratic Kampuchea in Britain, was assassinated in Kampuchea. A well-planned mass campaign was launched with the showing of the *Daily Mirror* reporter John Pilger's film on ITV. In this, Vietnam's case for the invasion was put forward, interspersed with pictures of starving children. It contained over a score of untrue or unprovable assertions, but people were moved by it.

Oxfam took the cue; it set about campaigning in support of the invasion, flying aid to Phnom Penh and brushing aside public fears that it was not reaching the people. It was revealed in the *Daily Telegraph* at the end of last year that Oxfam had made a political deal with the Heng Samrin régime, on behalf of a consortium of aid agencies.

The mass media responded quite favourably to the invasion at first. This is due in part to the political threat posed by independent Kampuchea; in part to Soviet-Vietnamese influence, for instance in the *Guardian* and the BBC. When it became clear that Vietnam was a military threat to Southeast Asia, the tide began to turn; it has turned further with the invasion of Afghanistan.

But the Soviet-Vietnamese campaign continues to take effect. It is being pumped into the British public that liberation, in the Marxist sense, is the worst possible fate that can befall a nation, a real-life version of 1984. On the other hand, 'liberation' from outside—with tanks and guns and poison gas—is being portrayed as humane and acceptable. It is frightening that many people, especially those on the left, accept this. For what is at issue is the survival of a nation; and, in the long term, what is in store for many others, including perhaps our own.

It is vital that the truth about Kampuchea and Vietnam should be made known. People in Britain should get in touch with the Kampuchea Support Campaign, 61 Rectory Road, London, N.16.

TO OUR READERS

In the last quarter of 1979 readers sent us a total of £112 in donations, from places as widely separated as the USA, West Germany and Hong Kong. This unusually high figure probably reflects the fact that people think of us around Christmas; we hope it will encourage others to do so during the rest of the year. Donations enable us to help friends, largely in the Third World, with material which they would otherwise be unable to get.

THE CHINA POLICY STUDY GROUP

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CORRESPONDENCE

I was very interested to read the letter from China (Dec. 79) as well as the comment from AB (Jan. 80). I feel that the Chinese student is quite correct in pinpointing the struggle against bureaucracy, which seems to me the connecting thread linking Chairman Mao's leadership with the present orientation of the Communist Party of China.

Most of the Communist Parties founded in the 1920s degenerated, but this did not happen with the CPC; the political movements launched by Chairman Mao in the Yan'an period were particularly important, and the experience of that period is of lasting significance, not just to China but to all the new Marxist parties which are being built in various parts of the world.

The struggle to maintain the Party's close ties with the masses had to be taken to a higher level after the CPC became the ruling party, and the Cultural Revolution was intended to do this. Unfortunately, though, it is now clear that the Cultural Revolution brought in a new and worse form of bureaucracy. Those who arrogated to themselves the right to speak with the voice of the proletarian revolutionary line could brand others as counter-revolutionaries, which made it difficult for the masses to criticise the former.

But if the Cultural Revolution made things worse, it is also true to say that the situation in China today is *better* than it was before the Cultural Revolution. A.B. grasps this fact perceptually, but since we are dealing here with a contradiction we have to use dialectics to understand it! As I see it, the Cultural Revolution *was* indeed the medium for the Chinese people to cast off mental bonds of feudalism, as A.B. says, but it did this by creating in the *intermediate term* a still worse feudal superstition that had existed before, but one which contained within it the seeds of its own dissolution.

One aspect of the Cultural Revolution is that it developed to an extreme point some errors which had been present in the Communist movement for a very long time—for example, the tendency to rewrite past history for the sake of convenience rather than objectivity has been around in the movement ever since the 1930s, and it was very difficult to settle accounts with it. But Lin Biao and the gang of four, by taking this negative tendency to the point of absurdity (in producing a version of the history of the Cultural Revolution which omitted mentioning most of the individuals who had played a leading role in it, for example), made it inevitable that a struggle against this error should be launched. I am just giving this example in order to clarify the general nature of the process.

The other aspect of the dialectics of the Cultural Revolution—the more important one, I think—is that it did indeed negate some earlier errors or shortcomings and in so doing generate certain potentially valuable positive tendencies: the criticism of the bourgeois concern with individual advancement and renewed stress on the orientation of serving the people, for example. But these tendencies initially asserted themselves in a sterile and dogmatic form. The Cultural Revolution, which negated the earlier period, is now itself being negated.

This is the dialectical process of the negation of the negation, which enabled the positive tendencies that germinated during the Cultural Revolution to be preserved, unburdened of the lifeless and dogmatic husk which enclosed them at that time, and allowed them to flourish in a living way in the new conditions.

I should say that in my view the Cultural Revolution and its errors must be seen in the context of a time when the revisionist counter-current—with its focus in the USSR—was affecting every corner of the world. Mao at this time, working from internationalist motives, understandably felt that the overriding question was to preserve a bastion of proletarian political power. Given the issue at stake, which were global ones, of immense historical importance, he and the CPC felt it was right to sweep everything aside to make way for the issue of political power. This experience—including its negative aspect—has helped to temper the Chinese people, party and state. In retrospect, it seems to me that the CPC made one of its gravest errors in failing to launch a dialectical criticism of the Cultural Revolution in 1972 after the fall of Lin Biao. As it turned out, the gang of four was able to pose as chief spokesmen of the movement to criticise Lin Biao, whereas it should logically have been the target!

It may seem, as A.B. says, that Chinese policy is characterised by alternating swings from side to side, but there are a lot of

contradictions objectively existing in the ideological sphere, and these cannot all be pinpointed at the same time.

It was first necessary to counter the gang of four's xenophobia by pointing out that there are good things to be learned from the West. This brought a danger of a swing to the Right and the CPC pointed out that the Western societies are after all capitalist and that socialism, for all its shortcomings, is superior. Meanwhile there was another error which had to be corrected, namely the tendency to consider any departure from a narrow orthodoxy as revisionist; so it had to be pointed out that other socialist countries, for example Yugoslavia, have certain specific features which can be learned from.

Thus you have the situation today where it is emphasised on the one hand that the socialist system is overwhelmingly superior, on the other hand that there is no orthodox model to which every socialist system has to conform. Both these points needed to be made, but taken together they produce a danger of failing to distinguish between genuine and phoney socialism. It seems likely, therefore, that the CPC will soon turn its attention to drawing some lines of demarcation between the socialist system and the system where the name of socialism is used to obscure the rule of a class which can perhaps best be characterised as state-bureaucratic, as in the USSR.

Such a distinction can only be based on a careful scientific study of the nature of economic systems—capitalist, state-capitalist, socialist—and of the forms of degeneration which can arise under socialism. To pinpoint the problem of revisionism in the Cultural Revolution was in itself correct, but the mechanical and dogmatic way in which this was done meant that the movement turned into its opposite, in other words bluster about revisionism became an obstacle standing in the way of a scientific study of revisionism! And so many crimes were committed in the name of the anti-revisionist struggle that the whole notion became discredited. But I think that the struggle against revisionism—with its scientific and dialectical character restored—will still be necessary.

B.S.

BOOK REVIEW

CHINA NOTEBOOK 1975-1978, by Jan Myrdal. Liberator Press, Chicago, USA. Price \$3.95.

THESE notes, written for several Swedish papers, provide a very useful and vivid picture of the view Myrdal had of China when they were written and help the reader to understand the basis for the developments of today. This is all the more true because his descriptions and analyses reflect his personal experience based on several visits to China and other Third World countries over about twenty years. The observed changes and struggles enabled him to see China as a developing country where the scene and the thinking have continually evolved and cannot remain static. He rightly castigated those who cry 'woe' whenever there is new thinking and action; as he commented, 'there is a speculative and metaphysical trend of writing on China that is close to theology. Pekingologists... deduce reality from documents and theory. But China is so much simpler. Common folk struggle for a better life. This struggle is a real struggle.' The article *A Chinese Village Revisited* demonstrates the truth of this comment and that 'one does not bathe twice in the same river or visit the same China twice.'

After the drastic and dangerous recent developments in the Middle East, Afghanistan, etc. his insight into China's relationship with other countries and peoples is seen to be as true today as when the articles were written. He considered that, especially in view of the growing Soviet threat, 'what is happening in China concerns us all... China is no longer exotic; she is a great neighbour to all of us around the world.' He realised that as China enters her new era struggle and change will continue; they grow out of the past and are inevitable. China's stand on the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan emphasises the truth of Myrdal's view that China's foreign policy is not introvert, but is based on the need for unity against hegemonism and on mutual concern for the interests and safety of the peoples of all countries.