

China Policy Study Group

BROADSHEET

PROBLEMS OF NATIONAL LIBERATION AND SOCIALISM

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

THE BEIJING TRIALS

PUBLIC hearings in the trial of 'the ten principal defendants in the case of the Lin Biao and Jiang Qing cliques' concluded towards the end of December with the prosecution calling for the severest sentence on Jiang Qing. By the end of the trial, most of the accused had admitted their guilt, in whole or in part. Such admissions were taken as a sign of grace, whereas the defiance shown by Jiang Qing in the face of her accusers was seen as an aggravation of her offences.

The verdicts, announced on the day we go to press, contain no surprises. Sentences range from the death penalty, deferred for two years, on Jiang Qing and Zhang Chunqiao, to various terms of imprisonment on the other defendants.

From the point of view of observers outside China, there are certainly unsatisfactory features about the trials. The fact that they were held at all is remarkable, however. It is true that in the early years of the People's Republic the regular legal system handled ordinary criminal cases, and a considerable number of cases categorised as counter-revolutionary. But never before has anyone at the national political leadership level been brought to public trial. Why create such a dangerous precedent?

The answer must be found in the compelling need felt by the present leadership to prove to the people that the

newly established rule of law in China applies to everyone, high and low. Whatever reservations there may be about this or that current policy, or even about the general orientation of policy, it is certain that in the minds of the vast majority of Chinese Lin Biao, Jiang Qing, Zhang Chunqiao and others were long ago found guilty of 'towering crimes', deserving the severest sentences. So the fact that the result of the trials was largely a foregone conclusion does not mean that justice could not be done through them. The prosecution's case was based on written evidence, tape recordings and the oral evidence of witnesses, not on confessions by the accused, which, said the Chief Procurator, 'we do not readily believe'.

Even though it is difficult to separate the political from the criminal in the trials, to assert that they are by implication a trial of Mao is an over-simplification. 'Comrade Mao Zedong in his later years . . . made mistakes and brought great misfortune to the Party and the people', says the *People's Daily* (December 22). But the present total condemnation in China of the Cultural Revolution is a political rather than a historical judgment, few will be found to deny Mao's unique and indispensable contribution to China's liberation, without which the attempt to build a modern socialist country could never even have started. And this is still what the Chinese people are engaged in.

RESISTANCE OR APPEASEMENT ?

S E Asian Response to Soviet - Vietnamese Aggression

The following two-part article has been written for BROADSHEET by Malaya News Service, P.O. Box 164, Fitzroy, Victoria 3065, Australia.

PART 1

AN AGGRESSOR'S DIPLOMACY

ON June 19 1980 Vietnamese Foreign Minister Nguyen Co Thach arrived in Jakarta. It was his third visit for the year to a member state of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN). Upon arrival he affirmed that Vietnam was committed to respecting the sovereignty of Thailand—a question of grave concern in South East Asia as the Vietnamese occupation of Kampuchea proceeds into its third year. Fresh also on Thach's lips were the words he spoke a month before in Kuala Lumpur: 'Vietnam will never attack Thailand'.

Later it was learned that on June 18 various units of the Vietnamese army stationed in western Kampuchea began receiving their final briefings for a major incursion into Thailand that was to take place on June 22-24. Still in Jakarta when the attack came, Thach was asked to explain this latest act of Vietnamese aggression. He

replied: 'It is not possible. It is not our policy'.

Here was encapsulated all the deceit, the brazen denials and the shameless breaking of promises so piously made that have characterised the diplomacy of Vietnam since it changed from a world-inspiring fighter against superpower aggression to an increasingly despised ally of another superpower's aggression.

The record has been building up now for several years. In late 1978 the Vietnamese Premier, Pham Van Dong, toured ASEAN capitals offering assurances that Vietnam had no ambitions towards Kampuchea. The first days of 1979 saw Vietnamese tanks and well over 10,000 troops rolling into the country. They came, said Hanoi, at the invitation of the Kampuchean National Salvation Front, a body which had been formed a mere fortnight before in Vietnam and which did not even pretend to be the 'government' of Kampuchea until Vietnamese forces had penetrated far into the country. Amongst other pretexts offered by Hanoi for the invasion was that Kampuchea had persistently violated the border with Vietnam. Even allowing this claim, though it be Kampuchea that had suffered for many years from Vietnamese encroachment,

Hanoi's method of 'resolving' the dispute was to march west across the breadth of Kampuchea and take up position on the Thai-Kampuchean border. By this logic any 'dispute' occurring on this frontier will be 'resolved' by Vietnam taking up position on the Thai-Burmese and Thai-Malayan borders. Thailand's other neighbour, Laos, is already under Vietnamese occupation.

Hanoi's double-talk is extensive. In three separate rounds of discussions with representatives from various ASEAN countries during 1980 Nguyen Co Thach flatly refused to discuss the Vietnamese invasion of Kampuchea. 'It would not be correct', he said in Kuala Lumpur, 'to discuss the Kampuchean situation behind the Kampuchean's backs. We would not want to interfere in Kampuchea's internal affairs.' This from the international frontman of a regime that now has 220,000 troops in Kampuchea. Nor is Hanoi a stranger to the ancient art of Catch-22. 'Vietnamese troops will remain in Kampuchea as long as the Chinese threat continues' says Thach. 'When will the Chinese threat end?' he is asked. 'When China stops supporting the Khmer Rouge' is his reply. In short, support for resistance to the aggression is used to provide the very justification for the aggression itself.

ASEAN's choice: Unity and resistance or the tragedies of appeasement

It is hardly surprising that Hanoi's cleverer-than-clever explanations, together with the fact that its sophistry often gives way to the baring of fists, have left the Vietnamese regime surrounded by the mistrust of its South East Asian neighbours. Nevertheless Hanoi's regional diplomacy in the last year displayed greater calculation in intent and impact than its unbelievable pronouncements suggest. While the ASEAN states (Indonesia, Thailand, the Philippines, Malaysia and Singapore) have maintained an overall position of collective solidarity, support to Kampuchea and vigilance against future Vietnamese moves, serious differences have been exhibited within the ruling circles of several ASEAN countries and between various of the member countries. Where there has been division and a trend to appeasement Hanoi has been quick to make capital. A vital question is raised: will ASEAN further strengthen its unity, intensify its backing for the Kampuchean struggle and prepare to resist further aggression in South East Asia or will it entertain appeasement with all the inevitable tragic consequences for the peoples of the region? The general version of this question is also highly relevant to Western Europe where appeasement and division still impede powerful unity against the main thrust of Soviet expansionism.

ASEAN-Vietnamese relations up until the end of the Vietnam war were quite hostile. Thailand and the Philippines, at the behest of Washington, both committed combat forces to the side of US aggression in Vietnam as well as providing vast military and supply bases. Much of the murderous air war against North Vietnam was launched from Thailand. Malaysia and Singapore both avoided direct involvement but the two governments were clearly sympathetic to the US, providing supply, training and recreational facilities. Indonesia, having had diplomatic relations with the Democratic Republic of Vietnam since the days of the common struggle against European colonialism in the 1940's, stayed more distant from the war in Indochina. But the sympathy of the Suharto government lay also with the US imperialists.

After the liberation of south Vietnam in 1975 the ASEAN states began to face the reality of the changed situation in SE Asia and step-by-step sought normal, friendly relations with Vietnam. Hanoi did not reciprocate, preferring to blast away at its neighbours and to ridicule ASEAN's proposal, enunciated since 1971, for

the creation of a Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality (ZOPFAN) in SE Asia. Vietnam's hostile stance was echoed by the Soviet Union. Then in 1979 Moscow and Hanoi—simultaneously and without warning—'reversed' their position, showering praise on the zone-of-peace concept. The 'peace' overture was ominous to many. It came at the very time that Hanoi was stepping up its attacks on Kampuchea, consolidating its occupation of Laos and flooding the region with hundreds of thousands of refugees in one of the greatest human tragedies since World War II. The apparent turnabout was nothing but a manoeuvre to try and throw ASEAN off guard, lull it into a sense of false security and undermine the position of those in SE Asia who were advocating vigilance and preparedness against Vietnamese intentions. Overall ASEAN reaction was highly sceptical. But there were some who did not see through Hanoi's 'smiling diplomacy', believing the June announcement and Pham Van Dong's follow-up tour through the five ASEAN capitals to be positive steps towards peace. This latter line of thinking was brutally interrupted in November when Hanoi entered into a military alliance with Moscow and in early 1979 invaded Kampuchea full-scale.

The main trend within ASEAN during 1979 was to strengthen collective unity in defence of national independence and security. The five states all refused to de-recognise Democratic Kampuchea, let alone recognise the Vietnamese-installed Heng Samrin regime. They regarded any moves in these directions as tantamount to rewarding the fruits of aggression. Internationally, the ASEAN states spearheaded a diplomatic campaign against the invasion and initiated the UN General Assembly resolution demanding the immediate withdrawal of all foreign forces from Kampuchea, adopted 91-21 in November of that year. Diplomatically this was a tremendous blow to the Soviet-Vietnamese alliance.

Ironically, it was immediately after this victory that some ASEAN politicians, especially in Indonesia and Malaysia, openly embarked on an appeasement course towards Vietnam.

Retreat at Kuantan

In January 1980 Malaysian Foreign Minister Rithauddeen visited Hanoi. The stated intention of the mission was to assess the impact of the UN resolution on Vietnam. But he took with him a Malaysian proposal that ASEAN would de-recognise Democratic Kampuchea in exchange for Vietnam agreeing to set up a government in Phnom Penh which was neither hostile to ASEAN, Vietnam nor China. Although taken no further this scheme was of a kind that could easily play into the aggressor's hands. It offered to abandon the legitimate government of Kampuchea in exchange for a worthless guarantee that the foreign occupier of the country would arrange for a neutral government. Hanoi was gladdened to find a weak link in the ASEAN chain. The Vietnamese side then took the offensive telling Rithauddeen that as a first step towards ASEAN-Vietnamese reconciliation he must persuade Thailand to terminate both assistance to the Kampuchean resistance and its rapidly developing relationship with China.

In late March the appeasement trend was expressed more formally when Malaysian Prime Minister Hussein Onn and Indonesian President Suharto met in Kuantan. In an announced principle that came to bear the name of this east Malayan town they maintained that the key to resolving the Kampuchean question lay in ridding Vietnam of superpower influence—Russian or Chinese. The implication was that ASEAN could live with Vietnamese domination of the Indochina peninsula. Vietnamese expansionism would be tolerated so long as it was disconnected from superpower strategy and did not encroach on the ASEAN states. The Kuantan principle was a major retreat from the ASEAN-sponsored UN

DEMAOISATION OR BOLSHEVISM?

comments on recent events
in China

Discussion on the achievement of Mao Zedong now rages in many circles and the following contribution may stimulate our readers. Philip Corrigan and Derek Sayer are the authors of For Mao, published in 1979.

FOR us Mao repeatedly asked the most relevant question for socialist construction: What is production, and how shall it be increased? His recurrent probing of this question led him and the CPC to victory and donated a completely new perspective for socialist revolution. The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (GPCR), in particular, is no deviation but a world-historic event equivalent to the Great October Socialist Revolution of 1917.

Mao's answer to his fundamental question does not only challenge the conventional wisdom of bourgeois development and capitalist modernization but enables us to see the specific contours and antagonistic contradictions which make up the social problematic of Bolshevism which remains the dominant strategy and tactics of socialist construction. Our view is that since the mid-1970s there has been a move of the line on socialist construction of the CPC toward the Bolshevik form of socialist construction. We thus dissent from the two dominant lines of external interpretations of events in China; first, those whom we have always called 'Friends of China', who argue for the correctness of current policies (although doubts may be expressed about this or that policy); second, we also argue against those who see in events since 1976 'simple negation'—the restoration of capitalism, in whole or in part.

Mao answered his fundamental question in characteristically novel ways—by combining universal principles (abstract but rational) of Marxism-Leninism with the particular conditions (concrete but not immediately understandable) of China, thus making visible that 'specific combination' which is the theoretical starting point for any political strategy. This can be seen from his texts in Yanan, whose economic strategies seem to us to have been both insufficiently studied and not connected with the later struggles of the Great Leap Forward (GLF) and the GPCR, including the extremely important Campaign Against Bourgeois Right of the early 1970s. This continuity is evident during the major struggle in the early and mid-1950s (especially in *Socialist Upsurge in China's Countryside*) and subsequent writings through to his death, especially the texts for which he was responsible in the *Polemic on the General Line of the International Communist Movement* (above all the fifteen theses on socialist construction in the famous Ninth Reply) and his *Critique of Soviet Economics*. As BROADSHEET has noted, in the latter, Mao argues '*The purpose of our revolution is to develop the social forces of production*' (Monthly Review Press, 1977, p. 41, our italics; for the importance of this book see Derek Sayer's review essay in *Capital and Class*, no. 9, 1979).

Mao answers his question by refusing to accept the conventionalised (by capitalism and Bolshevism) sequences, hierarchies, separations and linkages within the system of production relations. He was particularly concerned about over-narrow or technical definitions of what were to count as 'forces of production', about a too neutral attitude towards the State, about all those separations (e.g. between cadres or officials and the masses) which have, quite materially, to be paid for. However, he often does this, within a language that remains strikingly Bol-

resolution which holds the total withdrawal of Vietnamese forces to be fundamental to settling the Kampuchean question. The Kuantan meeting also erroneously raised the spectre of Chinese domination of the region, even putting it on a level comparable to Soviet aims.

The most serious aspect of Kuantan was that it breached ASEAN solidarity, with two of the five states appearing to go their own way in dealings with Vietnam. Loud alarm was soon sounded by the Thais who feared that their security was being bargained away behind their backs. A few weeks after the Kuantan summit, Thai Premier and military commander General Prem Tinsulanond visited Jakarta where he pressed Suharto to end the separate negotiations with Vietnam. Suharto agreed, conditional on Bangkok ceasing to aid the Kampuchean resistance.

The Malaysian and Indonesian governments were to continue further on their appeasement course. When Thach visited Kuala Lumpur in early May the Malaysian side came close to conceding the Vietnamese occupation as a *fait accompli*. They pressed instead for assurances that Vietnam would not attack Thailand and proposed that Vietnamese forces make a withdrawal from the Thai-Kampuchean frontier in exchange for Bangkok cutting aid to the Kampuchean resistance. Hussein Onn indicated that he was prepared to accept less than total Vietnamese withdrawal so long as Thailand's security was guaranteed. In so doing Kuala Lumpur hoped to allay its northern neighbour's fears over Malaysian/Indonesian actions.

Delighted by the growing signs of disunity in ASEAN, Thach missed no opportunity to take advantage of the situation. He issued his notorious undertaking never to attack Thailand, indicated that there might be 'some troop withdrawals' from Kampuchea and threw in a vague offer for ASEAN observers to come to Kampuchea. He also stirred the China bogey calling for 'unity against the common threat from Peking'.

Hanoi pursues the isolation of Thailand

Vietnamese diplomacy stepped up its offensive against Thailand, seeking to isolate it from its ASEAN neighbours by portraying its firm stand as being the stumbling block to an ASEAN-Vietnam peace.

During the developments of the past months the smallest member of ASEAN, Singapore, took a stand similar to Thailand's, maintaining that there must be no deviation from the UN resolution and warning that no good would come from trying to appease Vietnam.

As the ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Conference, scheduled for Kuala Lumpur in late June, approached there was growing speculation that Indonesia and Malaysia would press for a changed policy on Kampuchea, while Singapore and Thailand would hold out for no basic variation. The more geographically detached Philippines had been less involved in the debate so far but was not expected to favour any compromise with Vietnam.

The June 22 attack on Thailand by Vietnamese forces came just as the Foreign Ministers of ASEAN were assembling. The complexion of things changed. Intended to cow Thailand into submission and generally remind ASEAN of its military capabilities, the Vietnamese move produced a backlash. More than anything it was the tough defence waged by the Thai army and masses that rallied ASEAN opinion against conceding to the aggressors. Moves for a change in policy were promptly put aside. Indonesian and Malaysian Foreign Ministers, Mochtar and Rithauddeen, expressed exasperation. 'How do you expect us in this situation to continue the dialogue?', asked Mochtar. But Singapore's Rajaratnam (now Deputy PM) took the opportunity to thank the Vietnamese for revealing their belligerence and untrustworthiness, thus forging a new ASEAN unity.

(to be concluded)

shevik, which makes his work subject to major misrecognition and misrepresentation. What he argues, in our own words, is that socialism (which he argues would take several centuries to secure; we would not want to be placed in the 'fastfood socialism' brigade by comrades!) is only made solid by being experienced (historically) in particular ways. That is: people can really only have more by being (conscious of being) more. In this Mao addresses a fundamental theme in Marx which refuses the two conventional explanations of social change. These are *objectivism* (force, invariant social laws, circumstances) with its correlative political forms of opportunism, reformism and the employment of what are in fact restrictions on human emancipation as if they were neutral resources. But, contrary to the quasi-religious interpretation of his thinking (raised to the status of a line during the *Little Red Book* period), Mao with Marx argued equally against *subjectivism* (Will, unrestricted ability to construct the world anyway) with its correlative political forms of voluntarism, adventurism and the employment of a definite form of dogmatic moralism. For Mao, what matters are 'real relations'—yes, the world is materially constraining, but it *can be transformed*—through socialist construction! Moreover the twin principles of mutual benefit and voluntary participation meant that co-operative collectivisation in China was different from that in the USSR, and the People's Communes different from any previously existing form of human sociation.

Basically Mao constantly calls for reliance upon the people, instead, for example, on cadres, capital, or technology. All his familiar links—such as redness with expertise, making revolution to promote production—embody this fundamental thesis: socialism will only be solid when people realise their own collective (increasingly conscious, more and more egalitarian in form) powers over what had been formerly represented as 'natural' or otherwise objective *constraints* on the construction of their own powers over their environment. This is, in fact, what the people making history *means*. It involves, furthermore, a challenge to that separation central to capitalism (in ideology but taking specific institutional forms) which we argue was insufficiently transformed in the nevertheless fundamentally liberating theory and practice of Bolshevism. This is between forces of production and relations of production, each of them being understood in narrowly restrictive forms. Mao here is a follower of Marx (and superior to Lenin and Stalin) in pointing out how certain forces of production are operable and thinkable only through certain relations of production, how political and cultural relations are relations of productive (social) force.

From this flow a number of challenges to precisely those areas of Bolshevism which have been so crippling in the USSR and beyond—for example the identification of socialist construction with 'centralised accounting' and planning (with its consequent burdensome State, replication of the cult of the expert and authority). This can be practically criticised materially through a notion and practice of the General Line: more, better, faster and more economically.

In the light of the above, necessarily brief, analysis we characterise the present period in China as a further two-line struggle for the establishment of forms of socialist construction which are closer to Bolshevism than those of the period of 1955-1975 (or the Border Region years in the mid-1930s and early 1940s). We have already indicated an important similarity between the GPCR and the October Revolution of 1917. Nothing in what follows qualifies that estimate. We similarly repudiate the current attempt simply to deny the project and achievements of the GPCR. But it is clear to us that some of the methods of work employed during the GPCR (and

we have ample evidence that this occurred at times during the GLF and the Border Region years) represented a specific combination of *voluntaristic opportunism*. If we take the Gang of Four as a metaphor (meaning that a whole stratum is involved) then it is clear that many of the cadres and officials who were tempered during the GPCR practised a rigid form of dogmatic authoritarianism. They thereby forgot Mao's numerous writings on *methods of work*. To win (for example) an increase in production, an improvement in water supply, an extension of literacy by *any means* is not to win it solidly for socialism. Coercion and commandism was one feature of the GPCR which we think more important than the much quoted 'anarchy' and even more so than the 'ill-treatment' (doing the work of ordinary peasants and workers!) of intellectuals and officials. As BROADSHEET has noted, what the GPCR often represented was the substitution of politics for economics, making revolution meant coercively promoting production. Mao himself said this was *conservative*.

It seems clear to us that this 'cadres decide everything' deviation paved the way for popular support for—but we should not ignore the extensive opposition against—the moves against the Gang of Four and the current campaign of *Four Modernizations*. The latter is another 'simple negation'—indicated by the very word employed, modernization. Whilst comrades are right to say that in and of itself Coca-Cola supply (under licence? with fees returning to Coca-Cola?) and American Express (does it have no cultural consequences?) and—to take a modern example—Marlborough cigarette advertisements during sports events, do not mean the end of the world, neither can they be totally meaningless.

Rather than simply 'deMaoisation' what is taking place, in our view, can be better understood as Bolshevisation. There is no space to present a detailed analysis here (which can be studied in our work with Harvie Ramsay, *Socialist Construction and Marxist Theory*, 1978, and in the article in *New Left Review* no. 125, 1981).

(to be concluded)

PHILIP CORRIGAN and DEREK SAYER

TO OUR READERS

We have had several appreciative letters about our last two issues and about our expressed intentions for this year. We still need readers' suggestions and comments, critical or otherwise.

Donations

Our warmest thanks to those readers who contributed towards the total of £41 which we received in donations in the last quarter of 1980. Such donations are needed more than ever now that another increase in postal charges has hit us.

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