

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

## AID AND COMFORT TO BREZHNEV

It is natural for the characters who now wield state power because of Reagan's electoral victory to have fellow-feeling for, and common interests with, the Salvadoran oligarchy and their terror squads. Everywhere it is the people they see as their main enemies. It is one of the symptoms of the continuing decline of the US bourgeoisie that it is led by this fraction: one which has delusions that the inevitable collapse of US hegemony can be averted, even reversed, by such acts as mobilising political and military backing for an unpopular regime; one, moreover, which has done away with the pretence that the Third World rightists Washington loves, torture and kill only 'communists'. It is arming and 'advising' a regime whose agents are sent into refugee camps to kill, and who have murdered their own Archbishop and raped and killed US nuns serving El Salvador's poor!

Evidence—eye witness reports, films and reports by reputed journalists and by church leaders—which the CIA has not been able to suppress, shows how capable the oppressed masses, mainly peasants, are of achieving the democratic revolution they want. They are clearly not risking torture and death in order to become subjects of a Cuban Heng Samrin. Such an alternative would be no better than the status quo. In its own interest Washington could have been neutral or even, opportunistically, have sought the prestige of backing the pop-

ular forces in El Salvador. But it is utterly cut off from the people. Consequently, Reagan's cruel and foolish policies have been a godsend to the hard-pressed Brezhnev and to the pro-Soviet forces in the USA itself. Firstly, world attention has been drawn away from Russia's aggressive drive for world domination to the bombastic warmongering of Reagan and Haig. Secondly, when more and more people are seeing through the KGB's lying propaganda about Afghanistan, Kampuchea and Eritrea, Reagan has come to its rescue. He has been using the identical anti-people and racist justifications used by Moscow's and Hanoi's agents and apologists—pretending that without 'foreign' instigation, initiative and military aid the Salvadorans could not have risen up. Thirdly, the Russians have undeservedly gained in prestige for allegedly supporting a genuine people's struggle and for their sweetly reasonable response to Washington's bluster. Fourthly, the US, confusedly reaffirming the superpower 'spheres of influence' policy, is conceding that Afghanistan, Kampuchea, Laos and other lands adjacent to the Soviet bloc are as much Moscow's 'backyard' as Latin America is Washington's.

The independent struggle of the Salvadoran people for a more just society and a better life is bound to succeed. All other peoples, particularly those of the USA, should give them the support and assistance they are requesting.

## TAMING BUREAUCRACY

**To be Red, it is also necessary to be expert**—Deng Xiaoping

To make an opposition between being 'red' and being 'expert' is a mistake; yet there is no doubt that expertness may tend to breed elitism, and elitism to breed bureaucracy. How to prevent the development of bureaucracy, or several bureaucracies, is a key problem in building a socialist society. Obviously, a society of this new type needs to make the best possible use of all those with special skills and abilities; equally obviously, such a society cannot allow its skilled workers to demand special privileges and isolate themselves from the masses just because they have their particular expertise. This would result in the new society being little better than the old society it has replaced; the old privileged class would have been replaced by a new equally privileged class. Indeed, very often the members would be the same, carried over from the old regime.

In both the USSR and China, owners of factories were often kept on after the revolution as managers of the factories they once owned. Many of them co-operated

and became good supporters of the new regimes. In the Soviet Union, however, there has been a history of some conflict between the developing class of technocrats—experts in economic, technical, scientific matters and so forth—and the Communist Party cadres who are in charge of organisation and management of the economy in general.

**Bureaucracy is a historical phenomenon**—Hua Guofeng

The Communist Party itself is vulnerable to the development of an elite which shows a tendency to become bureaucratic, in the sense of the control of affairs and of decision-making becoming concentrated in the hands of a few powerful individuals who derive their power from their place in the Party hierarchical structure. They hold office for long periods and become difficult, even impossible, to remove except by some act of violent overthrow. We have seen many of these power struggles in the USSR and the countries of Eastern Europe. Workers' risings in East Germany and in Poland, the suppres-



sion of the 'Prague Spring' by Russian tanks, the present situation in Poland, are all evidence of the dangers of a Party hierarchy becoming divorced from the masses and forgetful of their interests. Yet the Communist Party must comprise the leading members of the working class or it is no better than a Labour Party or a Social Democratic Party in a bourgeois Parliament.

When Chairman Mao issued the call, 'Bombard the Headquarters', at the beginning of the Cultural Revolution, he referred to precisely this danger of the leadership of the CCP getting out of touch with the people and adopting an autocratic manner which could have put the whole revolution at risk. The anarchy which occurred when the Cultural Revolution got out of hand proved once more that things turn into their opposite. The autocracy of the Gang of Four far surpassed that which Mao had decided to attack.

In his important speech of September 7th 1980, Chairman Hua Guofeng referred also to the long tradition of officialdom in China, and the way in which officials in the new society had not always been able, or willing, to shake themselves free of the old attitudes of unquestioning obedience to authority.

### **Bureaucracy and elitism**

According to the dictionary, an 'elite' is the 'choice part or flower (of society, etc.)'. This means that it consists of an element of a society which is lifted above the average by virtue of some special quality which it has.

But the ethics of the bourgeois revolution, from these beginnings, went on to claim that although all (except slaves) were created equal, hard work enabled one to rise to the top, to gain control of the forces of production, so that society would be managed by men of merit. This led inevitably to a division of labour, the separation of mental from manual work, of city from country. The effect of mass production, when it came, was to alienate the worker from his product so that he became merely another cog in the machine. Nowadays, the decision-makers are far removed from the real processes of production, we now have management by accountants, control by finance capital.

The same is true of all elements of the superstructure. In politics, the governors are separate from the governed, who are controlled through national and local systems of administration. Bourgeois elections purport to give all voters a chance to influence and control their governors, but the reality shows that they do not: there is no right to recall or dismiss a representative, who may even change sides and still remain an MP.

Governments influence all aspects of an individual's life, and they call upon the service of 'professionals', who are supposed to be servants of society specially trained to do the sort of things that society wants, often supplying a service collectively which the average citizens cannot supply for themselves by individual effort. This sort of training usually soon becomes a 'mystery', with protected access and skills hidden from public view: lawyers and doctors are good examples.

These skilled persons are or course necessary for the efficient functioning of society, because all governments need skilled persons to carry out the work efficiently. As Lenin said, the question is, 'Who controls whom?'

### **China's need for stability**

After the anarchy resulting from the degeneration of the Cultural Revolution, the whole country stood in urgent need of a period of stability and restitution. To get back on the road to the Four Modernisations programme announced by Zhou Enlai in 1974, there ensued a period in which the CPC took control under a corporate leadership. Organisation and management became centralised and the nation was mobilised to achieve the ambitious targets set out by the central leadership.

In the event these proved too ambitious, and the action of the pendulum of history is well illustrated by the over-compensation that took place. Capital construction, especially in heavy industry, took away resources from agriculture, light industry and consumer goods, and resulted in an unbalanced economy and discontent among some of the people. Over-centralisation of power, particularly in a socialist society, stifles the initiative of people in the regions. They feel unable to make their own plans and decisions because they are insufficiently informed and in touch with the general directions of the country.

### **Serving the people**

No doubt a highly centralised government can impose stability on any country, even one so large as China, as its long history of Imperial rule organised by officials selected by competitive examinations shows. A docile working class directed by small power groups can apparently achieve a sort of progress, as in some South American countries. But a people which is oppressed in this way, a people which has no say in planning its own way and means of life will be dissatisfied with its fate and will eventually rise and revolt against it.

Hua's September speech pointed the way forward. China's economic performance should not depend on greater centralisation but on greater decentralisation. Certainly there must be a national plan worked out in the ministries and departments. Certainly the Communist Party must take its proper place as the leading organ of the working class. But there must be responsibility as well as authority, the masses must be involved in supervising the activities of the managers and cadres.

National congresses of workers and specialists are now being held in order to confer and to advise the government how their own knowledge and skills can contribute to forming the best plan at the national level. More autonomy, more power to make their own decisions, is being passed down to local levels, to industries and to factories. The office and responsibility of Director, abolished during the Cultural Revolution, has been reinstated, and Directors will be in charge of, and responsible for, the performance of their own factories. Workers' teams meet to discuss how their contribution to their factory and to the national effort may be improved. Honours are once again being awarded to outstanding workers and greater attention is being paid to local circumstances rather than rigidly adopting single slogans of the 'Learn from Dazhai' variety.

Many problems remain, and will not easily be resolved. It could not be otherwise in a country like China, following a pioneering path. Intense theoretical and practical discussions must go on to answer questions about the role of competition, the place of a market economy, the aim of socialist production, and hosts of others. How does socialism deal with the contradiction between wide consultation of the masses and stepping up the rate of economic progress? How do we prevent elites turning into bureaucracies, or vice versa?

For socialism to succeed, Party leaders and cadres, and the new generations of professionals and experts, must keep in the forefront of their minds that their function is to serve the people. They must never degenerate into a 'freemasonry', taking all decisions themselves and losing touch with the workers and peasants. It should be a characteristic feature distinguishing socialist from bourgeois society that, as Lenin said, 'every cook must learn to rule the state', and that there should be the widest possible devolution of power so that all become involved in discussion of objectives and plans to achieve them. Only in this way will there develop a genuine mass democracy moving towards the ultimate goal of a classless society.



# POLISH PEOPLE SPURN SOVIET 'SOCIALISM'

## 1. WHAT LED UP TO IT

THE signing of agreements between the Polish government and farmers and students in mid-February appeared to put an end to the period of workers' strikes and protests that had swept the country since July 1980. From one end of Poland to the other, workforces of shipyards, railways, mines and other industries downed tools and set about creating new unions which not only put forward their demands but also insisted on freedom from control by the ruling party (Polish United Workers Party, or PUWP) and by the old, docile, government-sponsored Central Council of Trade Unions. As the protests gathered momentum, the Council's membership left in droves to join up where the action was. Shorn of credibility and members, the bankrupt Council shut up shop by its own decision at the end of 1980.

Solidarity, as the federated new unions became known, achieved a degree of unity, discipline and militancy hitherto unrealised in any previous protest movement in Poland, or indeed in any other Soviet bloc country. There are other important differences. The demand for independence from a ruling party and state is of course unprecedented in the Eastern bloc and was resisted by the PUWP and the government, which finally had to capitulate. Moreover, earlier strikes in Poland—1956, 1970 (bloodily suppressed with 50 workers killed by the militia) and 1976—involved mainly industrial workers making economic demands. The 1980 strikes drew in all sectors of the population—students, intellectuals, private farmers as well as proletarians—and from the first included political demands around which all were united. The workers had learned from experience to measure and use their strength.

The 1980 Polish events were marked by considerable restraint on both sides, primarily due to the undisputed power and popular support the industrial workers commanded in the country. Arrests, provocations and harassment by Polish secret police were answered by greater militancy and demands for its abolition. The threat of military invasion (30 divisions of Soviet and other Warsaw Pact forces remained poised on Poland's borders throughout) and statements that the Soviet Union would if necessary 'protect socialism' from 'counter-revolutionaries acting under cover of the unions', neither deterred nor intimidated the movement. Ultra-left and ultra-right activities were minimal and in any case were swamped in the flood of legitimate complaints and the confidence with which Solidarity's leaders conducted negotiations with the State.

Poland is the largest country in the Eastern bloc. Two years after the war ended it became a state on the Soviet model ruled by virtually one party, then headed by Gomulka. In 1954, Gomulka was released after three years imprisonment for taking sides with Yugoslavia's independent position in its conflict with the Soviet leadership. Two years later, workers in Poznan went out on strike for higher wages, better housing and Workers' Councils on the Yugoslav pattern.

Gomulka came back into the leadership with the status of one who had taken a stand independent of the Soviet Union. Under him, the imprisoned Catholic clergymen were released and the functions of the Church restored; collectivisation in the countryside (long resisted by the peasants and the Church) was halted and other concessions made. But the economic situation worsened. In view of the workers' unrest the Soviet Union cancelled debts, extended long-term loans for grain purchases and upped the price it was paying for Polish coal. Poland

contracted the first of its US loans, the initial step in its increasingly burdensome indebtedness to the West.

With all this, a further erosion of living standards took place in the 60s, attributed by many to the inefficiency of small holdings (collective units had fallen from 10,000 to 1,700, individual private farms averaging 15 acres). New industries had been developed but, as with Soviet mismanagement, while unwanted goods piled up, the people were unable to buy the essentials. Cutbacks in imports were followed by a decline in production and, more shortages; while wages were held static, prices went up. The fall in real wages, scarcity of food and clothing, lengthened shoppers queues—all fuelled the anger which erupted in the 1970 'riots'. The killing of protesting workers added to the prevalent disillusion with and burning resentment against the ruling PUWP.

Gierek, who was called in to replace Gomulka, pledged change. More and bigger loans were contracted to pump money into the economy. The servicing of these loans only added to the Polish people's burdens and rendered the economy more vulnerable. New protests against austerity measures, introduced to help repay the foreign loans, broke out in the mid-1970's. Workers who tried to form independent unions at that time (among them Solidarity leader Lech Walesa) were sacked and harassed by security police. Dissatisfaction continued to build up as the workers' lot failed to improve. An attempt to raise meat prices and the unfair dismissal of a woman union activist in Gdansk touched off the first of the 1980 strikes, followed in the next six weeks by 800 more. A strike committee set up in August formulated 21 demands, among which were: higher wages, better housing, more essential goods, independent unions, abolition of secret police, purge of incompetent and corrupt officials, access to the media and the five-day week. By mid-September the steel workers registered their union at the Warsaw District Court—the first-ever non-official workers' organisation to be legitimised in any country of the Soviet bloc.

The workers won their demands, as did the university students and private farmers who followed their lead. These demands were moderate in themselves and should have alarmed no one, least of all governments calling themselves 'socialist'. In fact, the PUWP and its government showed themselves to be completely out of touch with the people, indifferent to or incapable of relieving their hardships, delinquent in the matter of fulfilling its pledges, guilty of allotting itself privileges and of turning a blind eye to corruption, addicted to handing down decisions without consulting the people. The Polish people had to organise against them—as workers do in capitalist societies—to get action on their problems. There is no evidence, despite frequent reshuffling, that Party and government leaders have changed their basic attitudes or modus operandi.

The Polish people need to keep their powder dry, as the saying has it. Eastern bloc leaders see the gains won by Solidarity as a dangerous infection which they must prevent from contaminating their own preserves. These gains are a challenge to the Polish party and government's monopoly of power, position and privilege, which they will resist relinquishing, even in part. Already the workers' hard-won gains are being attacked. New arrests have been reported. New protests that the government is not carrying out its pledges. The Soviet press has returned to an old theme: the CIA is behind the Polish people's disenchantment with their country's leadership. The CIA, like the Soviet Union, likes to fish in troubled waters—and the responsibility lies with the



leadership's failure to genuinely represent the people and their needs. Ultimately the Polish people, to protect their gains and their future, will have to demand as their rightful place the seats of power and reject dictatorship by the few for that of the proletariat.

## 2. THE WORKING CLASS & THE FUTURE

WILL the working class in Poland prove equal to its historic tasks—tasks set it by conditions which have developed not only in Poland but also in the Soviet bloc and in the world? Without consciously taking a step towards the emancipation of all mankind it clearly cannot hold on to the few gains it has made since last summer. What are called for are working-class discipline, first-rate organisation, correct theoretical analysis of the situation and giving leadership to all the people. Are they willing to undertake this? We have to wait and see. But it is already clear that the workers' challenge in Poland is radically different from the 1968 challenge of the reformist wing of the Czech bureaucracy. The 'socialist' despots in Moscow, who feel no scruples or embarrassment about shooting workers, confining critics in psychiatric 'institutions', and kidnapping and detaining state and party leaders of other countries, are facing a new problem for which KGB terror and the Soviet army are not the solutions. Invasion could accelerate the revolutionary process in Poland.

The Soviet-style ruling class (the PUWP chiefs) have proved incapable of leading the Polish people to the economic, political and moral achievements of socialism. If the working class does not dare to take on its leadership responsibilities in the factories, shipyards, mines, commercial enterprises, farms, planning, and the state, it must eventually submit to the rule of the very class whose incompetence, oppression, corruption and decadence it has exposed to the world.

Conditions in Poland and peculiar to it have influenced the Polish road to socialism. Poland just after the First World War was a very backward country, economically. The changes following the arrival in 1945 of Soviet troops did not amount to a socialist revolution. But for the small but class conscious working class they were a big step forward. The new regime industrialised quickly, and gave much importance to the industrial workers, who increased rapidly in numbers and became the main base for the Party. By the late 1960s about two-and-a-half million workers were estimated to be members of the PUWP, making up about 40 per cent of the rank-and-file members. Most of these workers were those newly recruited from peasant and urban petty bourgeois backgrounds. But working class consciousness has developed very rapidly.

Initially there was rapid economic modernisation. But it was badly distorted development because of (a) integration into the Soviet bloc, (b) excessively bureaucratic and centralised economic planning and direction, (c) the persistence of uneconomic and small private peasant holdings, and (d) mismanagement and corruption by a new ruling class. For over 30 years the working class has had close experience of what all this meant.

Class struggles in Poland have expressed the real contradictions of Polish society. By the time of the 1970-71 explosion, there were not only strikes, but also attacks by workers, including Communists, on some Party buildings and on the much-hated militia, factory occupations and the beginnings of independent workers' organisations in factories and shipyards. Gdansk, Szczecin and Gdynia, and Lodz, were even then centres of working-class action. In spite of the radical nature of the workers' demands, Gierek was forced to negotiate with unofficial workers' groups and to make concessions in

order to preserve the regime, and preserve also the pretence that he was the leader of the working class. The regime was, however, allowed to keep its monopoly of policy-making, the mass media, communications, the use of the surplus as well as control of the army, police and militia.

Not surprisingly, in a Poland facing a massive economic crisis in 1980, the contrast between the plight of the labouring masses and their families and the rulers and their cronies was striking. When Gierek had replaced Gomulka, he had sought to blunt working class anger and discontent and popular opposition by greatly increasing the supply of consumer goods in the shops and by frantic modernisation of industry. But that was not socialist development. According to one calculation, by 1976 (when the workers again erupted in anger) 43 per cent of all Poland's industrial means of production was new. Those had been years of rapid industrial growth (over 10 per cent annually). It was expected that the massive credits from the West would be paid for through increased export earnings, i.e., dependence on foreign markets. The oil price rise of 1973, the recession of 1974, were among the reasons for the unrealised expectations, and the massive debt to capitalist money-lenders.

Solidarity has been formed in a climate of free political action and debate, independent working class action and working class solidarity such as Europe has not experienced since the Bolshevik Revolution. Its demands have included the end of special shops and privileges, free access to the media and release of political prisoners. It cannot, however, get these by demanding them from an alien power which its members struggle against in the production process and in the state. It has either to take over the leadership of society, to reorganise it, to solve the people's problems, or simply prolong the crisis, and alienate public support.

The regime's, and its Soviets overlords', attacks on the workers have always been in the name of 'socialism'. Socialism in words and pious phrases. What in deeds? Internationally this 'socialist' regime has supported, played a stooge role in, the Soviet rulers' bid for world domination, its massacres of Third World peoples, its sabotaging of their liberation struggles; it has aided Vietnamese aggression. Why should the workers not reject all this, and set about building a truly socialist Poland? This question is important because in the USSR, too, the main contradiction is that between the CPSU-state bureaucracy and the working class. Even the phoney statistics put out by that regime don't hide the economic, political and moral mess which Brezhnev terms 'Communism'. The Soviet leaders understandably regard Solidarity as the enemy of 'socialism'. But the overwhelming majority of the world's peoples, and the working class, are also enemies of this phoney socialism, and will be on the side of the Polish workers, if they dare to go on. Who knows? The Soviet workers, too are beginning to be restive. They may take to revolutionary action when they see the Polish workers doing so.

### ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION RATES

SURFACE MAIL	SEALED	OPEN
U.K.	£2.50	
U.S., Canada, Europe, China, Hong Kong, Japan, Aus., N.Z.	£3.30 (\$8.60)	£2.50 (\$6.00)
All other countries	£2.50	£2.00
AIR MAIL		
U.S., Canada, Hong Kong	£5.00 (\$11.50)	£3.25 (\$8.00)
China, Japan, Aus., N.Z.:	£5.75	£3.75
All other countries	£3.50	£2.50

UK. ISSN 0067-2052

No air mail rates to Europe