

Worker Revolts, Political Strife Belie China's Peaceful Image

anon.

1977



The anthill signals its submission to the leader by holding aloft his religiously imbued sayings.

Since the struggle for power within the Chinese bureaucracy sharpened following the death of Mao Tseung in September, events have begun swirling at an ever faster rate.

Coming on the heels of the political turmoil in the capital city, the startling news that several sections of the country are at the point of armed insurrection certainly lays waste to the myth of China as a peaceful, unified nation -struggling to build socialism."

Armed Conflict in China

In fact, the entire image of China as a peaceful nation since liberation" can be seen as fiction in light of the sharp anti-government struggles fought throughout the 27-year history of "revolutionary" China in the most recent outbursts, *The New York Times*, Dec. 30, 1976, reported from Peking that in Paoting, a city only 100 miles south of the nation's capital, conflict had reached such intensity that it had been "marked by raids on military arsenals, the blowing up of factories, looting of grain stores and shops,; bank robberies, murder and rape."

Since information is extremely difficult to obtain, it is entirely unclear what the social content of these uprisings is, but it was such that Peking was forced to send in troops to quell it. The *Toronto Globe and Mail* correspondent in Peking reported on National Public Ra-

dio on January 3 that rebellion had become organized to the point where the insurgents had set up bases and checkpoints and that the Peking government had ordered them dismantled.

Other reports from Chinese newspapers and broadcasts told of violence in Fukien Province, on the east coast facing Taiwan, severe enough that "troops had to be deployed to occupy cities, villages, schools and factories," ac-

According to the December 30 *Times*. The New York newspaper also quoted Chinese broadcasts as saying there was serious unrest in at least 12 of the 29 provinces, regions, and special municipalities.

The Peking government is suddenly willing to admit the serious political difficulties within their country because the current crop of rulers sees the opportunity to use the conflict to secure their position following a series of intra-party power struggles and, conversely, to use the now discredited left wing of the party as scapegoats for every problem in China.

As is well-known by now, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) left-wing suffered a defeat at the hands of the party moderates following the death of Chairman Mao. Dubbed the “Gang of Four” by their factional rivals, the four high-ranking party leftists—Chiang Ching (Mao’s widow), Chang Chun-chiao, Yao Wen-yuan and Wang Hung-wen—who have been identified politically with Mao for a decade, have been jailed and denounced as the cause of all of China’s political and economic problems.

The situation is much like what Woody Guthrie sang about the American outlaw Pretty Boy Floyd, “Every crime in Oklahoma was added to his name.” Branded by the Chinese press as everything from “dog turds” (*Far Eastern Economic Review*) and “maggots” (*Hsinhua*) to “arch-criminals” and “fascists” (*People’s Daily*), the “Gang of Four” have become, in fact, the arch-scapegoats for the current unsettled state of affairs in China.

Since the official confirmation of the purge in October 1976, a government campaign of vilification continues in terms often so ludicrous that it has even embarrassed the usually slavish U.S. Maoists. The *People’s Daily* of November 14, 1976 accuses the four ex-leading party members of having “spent money like dirt” and leading “a decadent and dissolute life, indulging in eating, drinking, pleasure-seeking; hunting and riding, watching old operas and vulgar films,” and on and on to the point of high (or rather low) comedy.

Behind the Character Assassinations

Still, these character assassinations can not be allowed to mask what is really at issue—the disastrous state of Chinese state capitalism and the intent by the current ruling clique to abandon the economic policies of Mao and his associates (the “gang”). Those now in power want further development of the economy based on heavily increased industrial production and development, material incentives, foreign trade and credits—all in an attempt to develop China “into a powerful socialist country before the end of the century.”

The “Gang of Four” has been accused of plotting to reverse this process by sabotaging production and fomenting political disruptions and strikes (such as the events at the end of the year at Paoting and Fukien Province as well as the Hangchow general strikes of the previous year). Of course, the “gang” has had no opportunity to answer any of these charges since they, at best, remain languishing in prison at the current time.

This is not an unusual procedure: great plots occur within the party, organized by high ranking members of great prestige; they remain unrecognized until unmasked by the Chairman. Within the litany of “anti-Party, anti-People, capitalist roaders,” the name of Liu Shao-chi, and Lin Piao rank as the first order of devils to both domestic and foreign Maoists. However, both situations bear striking similarities to the current disposition of the “Gang of Four.”

Liu was the architect during the early sixties of China’s major economic plans based on material incentives, but the programs failed to have the desired results. Suddenly, in 1966, Mao announced the existence of the Liu faction, which nobody else knew existed, and which was leading the country back to capitalism. The only evidence presented was that Mao had said so and Liu disappeared, never to be heard from again.

The case of Lin Piao is similar. The Minister of Defense was considered the successor to Mao, adulated as the Chairman’s “close ‘comrade in arms,” and the chief proponent of China’s strategy of “Long Live the Victory of People’s War” which advocated opposition to both the U.S. and the Soviet Union. Again, suddenly, Mao’s most trusted lieutenant was accused—this time the charge was: plotting to assassinate the Chairman. Lin was never heard from again publicly, and was reported to have perished in a plane crash in Manchuria while attempting to escape to the Soviet Union (the so-called “Mexican jail break”).

Maoist credulity aside, what really caught up with Lin was Mao’s decision to begin an opening to the U.S. and to designate the Soviet Union as the principal enemy of China. In both cases, Lin and Liu were victims of dis-

carded policies, and in each case manipulated public opinion was whipped up against the deposed leaders by the government-controlled media and party apparatus.

Such is the case with the “Gang of Four.” Although for a decade they provided the political direction of China, they suddenly stand accused of being “active counter-revolutionaries,” a charge worse than anything leveled at either Liu or Lin.

“Gang of Four” Held Responsible

The New China News Agency quoted CCP Chairman Hua Kuo-feng, January 4, 1977, as saying that 1976 has to be written off economically as a bad year because of the political upheavals caused by the four “radical” ex-party leaders. Although it is never detailed exactly how the “Gang of Four” actually went about its dirty work, it is clear they and their policies are being held responsible for the disruptions taking place around the country. The *People’s Daily* of November 1, 1976, stated that the four “criminally did all they could do to disrupt socialist production.”

Now comes the real truth of the matter. On one hand it seems as though there has been a great amount of what the November 18, 1976 *New York Times* called “imperial court intrigue” with an immense struggle for power within the Chinese bureaucracy based solely on personalities. But the real issue remains: which direction is Chinese capitalism going to take?

No faction within China would have ever directly attacked Chairman Mao because of his revered position both within the party and with the Chinese people. But it is increasingly clear that the Chairman’s policies of dependence on revolutionary rhetoric, moral incentives and a zeal for the building of socialism did not produce the desired results. Chinese workers have become more and more restive and combative, production is sagging, five-year plans have failed, and “criminality” is on the increase.

The “Gang of Four” were attacked so as to allow China to proceed on a much different basis from the one it had under the “radical” leadership. During the last ten years preceding Mao’s death, the line of the party was that of the radicals, and the line of the radicals was the line of Mao, the patron of each one of the “Gang of Four.” This certainly suggests that there was a fifth member of the gang, but one whose policies were unassailable until after its death—and even then his name was reverently invoked to sanctify the purges.

The question of China’s economy, formulated in terms that leave the rhetoric of Maoist mystification behind, is: through which strategy will state capitalism in that country be built?

Also, as E. Mett and Y. Bumczik pointed out in their October letter to the *Fifth Estate* (China: Financing the Celestial Empire, FE #277), the “radicals” favor intensified exploitation of the peasantry and the working class at the present level of industrialization’ to finance future expansion. The so-called “capitalist roaders” want to bring in advanced technology now, to use this technology to improve productivity.

The majority of the party has despaired of the “radicals” strategy of China pulling itself up by its own bootstraps and favor greatly increased trade with world capitalism and the purchasing of large scale technology to make China a modern industrial nation. As an example, it was reported in a recent *Aviation Week* magazine that the Ford administration had approved the sale of two \$5 million Control Data Corporation Cyber 172 computers to China for use in oil exploration.

The party “left,” prior to its purge, accused the moderates in the following terms in the April 1976 issue of *Study and Criticism*: “If this state of affairs (the increased foreign trade and plans to sell oil and coal abroad) were allowed to continue, wouldn’t our country turn into a market for the imperialists to dump their goods, into a raw material base, a repair and assembly workshop and an investment ground?”

It certainly will, but the December 15 *Guardian*, a U.S. Maoist weekly, reported uncritically that “Western business interests involved in trade discussions in China...report that Foreign Trade Minister Li Chiang told them the date for resuming large-scale foreign trade, including importation of advanced technology and entire plant systems, was sometime in 1978.”

This certainly may provide China with its much vaunted “Four Modernizations”—in agriculture, industry, national defense (more A-bombs?), and science-technology—but it will do nothing but intensify the material poverty

of the Chinese working class. For; pretty much as the “radicals” charged, as fast as value will be created by the ever-growing Chinese working class in all its new modern plants, the faster it will have to ship out to China’s capitalist allies to pay off its debts. This, of course; means an ever increasing rate of exploitation (if that’s possible) along with an increasing resistance to it by an increasingly dissatisfied working class.

On the other hand, the “radical” strategy for “pay as you go” would probably never have produced the capability to provide the necessary accumulation of capital to industrialize China at a rapid rate. Both strategies doom China to a marginal position within world capitalism, with continued low standards of living, long work hours and low pay. The moderate approach will benefit only those with a direct hand in trade and commerce—the bureaucracy and party functionaries in China and the capitalist corporations abroad. The “radicals” simply advocate more of the same with only the faith that things will get better if they are “revolutionary” enough in their exhortations to ever greater productivity.

What is Hopeful

To some extent it could be said that this analysis suffers from the same weakness as that of the bourgeois media—the concentration on the machinations of a few politicians at the top of Chinese society—to the exclusion of the hundreds of millions of Chinese people.

What is hopeful in China today is the increase of incidents which challenge the plans and programs of all shades of Chinese politicians—the Hangchow general strikes, the Paoting disturbances and the whole host of activities which shatter the passive anthill image that the Maoist adulators would like to paint of the Chinese “masses.” When workers and peasants fight the garrison state troops of the government to protest against inhuman working conditions and when they burn factories, they are no longer “masses”—they are human beings again.

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Fifth Estate #280, February 1977

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