

SOCIALIST VOICE

CHINA SPECIAL

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CHINA CRISIS



Fasting students in Tiananmen Square

Here we reprint a statement made by a group of Chinese students in Britain issued on 19-5-89;

“To our sisters and brothers in China:

“Over the past five weeks we have followed with deep concern reports of your courageous struggle to play an active part in determining China’s future - the hunger strikes, the demonstrations and the sit-down protests. As overseas Chinese we long to join your ranks and send our fullest support for your demands.

“We are concerned with developments in China. In the course of the last century

Chinese migrant workers here have suffered racist oppression. We look forward to the day that China steps on to the road to a bright future of openness and democracy. The future of China is our future too.

“Hong Kong is an inalienable part of China; the only real safeguard for ‘democratic self-government’ in Hong Kong is to unite behind the democratic demands of one billion Chinese people. Events of the past few days showed clearly that the promises of the Chinese bureaucracy are not to be trusted. Only the implementation of genuine socialist democracy can guarantee freedom and democracy for both Hong Kong and the

Chinese people.

“We demand that the Chinese Government immediately:

- 1) Stop all threats of the violent suppression of the democracy movement.
- 2) Accede to the demands of the students and workers for a fair and open dialogue.
- 3) Implement democratic political reforms.
- 4) Release all political prisoners, in particular, Wang Xishe, Wei Jingshen and Hong Kong citizen Liu Shanqing.
- 5) Investigate and punish all corrupt bureaucrats in the party and in government.
- 6) Respect the right of self determination of all minorities in China.

“With deepest admiration we send our greetings to you, our sisters and brothers in struggle.”

CHINA & TROTSKYISM

Bill Hunter

The disastrous policy of Stalin and Bukharin in the leadership of the Communist International bore a grave responsibility for the defeat of the second Chinese revolution in 1925-27.

The Chinese workers and peasants had victory within their grasp but the Communist International leadership subordinated the Chinese Communist Party to the "revolutionary anti-imperialist united front".

They called this front a "bloc of four classes" - the workers, the peasants, the petty and large bourgeoisie.

The nationalist Kuomintang, led by Chiang Kai Shek, was, according to Stalin, a revolutionary Parliament and the Chinese Communist Party was instructed to enter and subordinate the class struggle in China to the Nationalist Government.

The policy meant that workers and peasants were compelled by Stalin to give up their arms to the Kuomintang. It was a policy which led to the bloody massacre of workers and peasants by Chiang Kai Shek. A graphic picture of the destruction of working class organisations and Chinese Communists in Shanghai, through this policy, is given in the novel "Man's Fate" by Andre Malraux.

Chiang Kai Shek's forces entered Shanghai in April 1927 to butcher the working class. His executioners fed Communist Party members into locomotive furnaces. The Shanghai working class did not recover from this terrible defeat until 1945 and in 1933 was abandoned by the party, whose Central Committee withdrew from the city.

A number of founding members of the Chinese Communist Party and members of its Central Committee became trotskyists, including Ch'en Tu-Hsui, its General Secretary until 1927.

The Trotskyists suffered the treble persecution of Japanese imperialism, of the Kuomintang and of the Chinese Stalinists.

Some of them led guerrilla bands during the war. In his memoirs - "Chinese Revolutionary" (Oxford University Press 1980) - Wang Fan-hsi writes of the great number of Trotskyists who died and suffered during this period:

"In the Kuomintang area, particularly Chungking, Trotskyist workers in the arsenal and other factories were arrested and some, including Wang Shu-pen, one of the leaders of young Trotskyists were impris-

oned and murdered in the notorious Hsi-feng concentration camp in Kweichow province. In the areas controlled by the CCP (Chinese Communist Party), those Trotskyists who had gone there of their own accord (for example Wang Shih-Wei) were brutally persecuted and eventually murdered. All of these comrades equally deserve to be remembered, but unfortunately space does not permit me to do so. All I have done is to give some examples of how Chinese Trotskyists lived and struggled during these years."



A number of founding members of the Chinese Communist Party...became trotskyists, including Ch'en Tu-Hsui, its General Secretary until 1927.

Wang Fan-hsi was four times imprisoned in Kuomintang jails, subject to interrogation and solitary confinement. At the end of the war, he worked with other trotskyists to build the movement in Shanghai. They began to recruit members in the mass upsurge that took place. He writes:

"When the masses began to show their readiness to act, there was no strong revolutionary Marxist party to give them shape and direction. The CCP had long since withdrawn its cadres from the cities of south east China, and the various 'democratic parties' could do little more than show the flag. There was, therefore, a vacuum of revolutionary leadership. If the Chinese Trotskyist movement had had several hundred or, better still, several thousand basic cadres, I believe we would have been in a position to fill that vacuum. Even if the forces of the

CCP had then re-entered the cities to dispute the leadership of the mass movement with us, we would not necessarily have suffered a smashing defeat; and even though they might still have ended up by winning control of the whole of China, at least the political situation in the Kuomintang areas in the period from 1945 to 1949 would have gone down in history in a very different form.

"...the political situation in China favoured our position. Having suffered terribly during the eight years of war everyone was eager for peace, but the 'victorious' Kuomintang was actively preparing a new all-out war against the Communists which rapidly led to economic crisis and ruin. People in the Kuomintang controlled areas, especially the students and the working masses, angrily rose up against the government around the slogans "no civil war", "no dictatorship" and "no starvation". These slogans fitted in perfectly with the revolutionary democratic programme for which the Chinese Trotskyist movement had been struggling for over fifteen years."

He concludes that: "...had the rise of the revolutionary mass movement among students and urban poor not been interrupted and brought under control by the unexpectedly rapid military victory of the Chinese Communist Party, the Chinese section of the Fourth International might have grown into a powerful political force".

The speed with which the Chiang Kai Shek regime collapsed took everyone by surprise. Wang describes the whole ruling class around the Kuomintang as having been transformed into "a gigantic group of speculators, smugglers, parasites and plunderers, alienating itself from nearly every other class of Chinese society. But just how rotten and isolated it had become was still not apparent. With the support of US Imperialism it looked very powerful. Only when it was put to the test of civil war was the awe-inspiring regime of the Kuomintang revealed as a building riddled to the core with termites."

The leadership of the Chinese Communist Party, which was trained in the stalinist school, rode into power on the upsurge and the collapse of the Kuomintang regime. It was hostile to any independent movements in the working class. The trotskyist movement continued under difficulties for three years.

To quote Wang again: "Many of our

A MOMENT IN HISTORY

comrades took an active part in the agrarian reform movement, and not a few joined the Peoples' Liberation Army, to fight in its campaign to liberate the rest of the country. Those in industry led many strikes against capitalist employers, thus challenging the new government's policy of collaboration between workers and capitalists. In many areas they became leaders of the masses, not only because they acted as staunch champions of the workers' interests but also because the workers who came under their influence



In June 1979, eleven Trotskyists who had been in jail for twenty seven years without trial were released. They remain without "rehabilitation"

were deeply impressed, in a period where Marxism was much in vogue, by their command of revolutionary Marxist politics."

The Trotskyists continued to grow both in numbers and in influence throughout three and a half years. Wang concludes from this that it: "...is the main reason why the CCP's secret police finally carried out their nationwide raid on the Trotskyists in December 1952".

The CCP has never acknowledged that such a raid took place. Wang gives what he calls a "conservative" estimate of two to three hundred arrested, "...but since many of our sympathisers and relatives of known Trotskyists were also taken into custody, the actual number was certainly much higher".

In June 1979, eleven Trotskyists who had been in jail for twenty seven years without trial were released. They remain without "rehabilitation" ■

In his classic "History of the Russian Revolution", Leon Trotsky observed that the "...most indubitable feature of a revolution is the direct interference of the masses in historic events."

He went on to write that: "The history of a revolution is for us, first of all, a history of the forcible entry of the masses into the realm of rulership over their own destiny."

The last twenty one years have surpassed all others in the numbers who have surged forward to 'interfere' in historic events.

There were the student movements of 1968 in France, the upsurges which finished the dictatorships in Portugal, Spain and Greece, the millions demonstrating in Iran and the popular movement in Poland of workers in Solidarity. There was one mass uprising after another in Latin America.

Korea, the Phillipines, Burma, Palestine, mighty movements in Africa; the list goes on. And in the last few years there have been the great mass stirrings and demonstrations in the Soviet Union and countries of Eastern Europe, which continue to grow in volume.

With all its ebbs and flows, the movement of masses onto the political arena must rise to further heights which will continue to confound the sceptics and "sneering traitors". The masses are surging on to the stage of history, grasping for workers democracy, imposing

their own will on their destiny. Like the revolutionary monk in the fourteenth century, when peasants were in revolt in Europe, we can say: "The worms of the earth will inherit it and devour the serpents."

The movement of masses achieved a new height in China last month.

The future of the world rests on the development of this mass upsurge and its leadership. Journalists and "expert" commentators seek to understand the events in China and elsewhere in the stalinist states by the "power" struggle of the "specialists" in politics or, put more precisely, the bureaucrats in the leadership.

The bureaucratic differences, however, are not fundamentally decisive. The fundamental power struggle, causing their conflicts, their paralysis, which runs together with arbitrary and frantic repression and threats of repression, is the conflict between this great

movement of the masses and the whole bureaucratic rule and apparatus.

The circumstances of today now compel forward this movement of masses against capitalism and against bureaucratic rule. It occupies the centre of the world stage today, which is the fundamental key to understanding world politics and the future of humanity. It will increasingly override and condition all the policies and power struggles of the politicians of the old orders.

Things can never be the same again after the May events. This can be said, not only of China but of the whole world. The possibilities of mass power must make a dent in the consciousness of workers and students. However, as the advance guard of Chartists in Britain learned, "folded arms" can only paralyse the enemy for a time.

The course of this struggle on the world arena, its successes and retreats, its final victory, rest on the development of leadership. That question will now come up more sharply in China.

The trotskyists have made an irreplaceable contribution to building the type of leadership needed. Trotsky's struggle has, above all, been characterised by confidence in the development of the masses against bureaucracy and on internationalism. It is the movement which is the most experienced and consistent in the struggle against bureaucracy and for socialist democracy. It is for that reason that the full weight of stalinist bureaucratic torture and repression was directed against it and for that reason that its growth has faced such unprecedented difficulties in the past.

This movement of masses must have an internationalist leadership linking the whole world wide upsurge in one powerful organised struggle. The permanent defeat of imperialism and the bureaucrats demands it. And the creation of socialist economy built on workers' democracy demands it.

As we have stressed in "Socialist Voice", the International Workers League (Fourth International) - the LIT - is the trotskyist tendency which is devoted to building such an international leadership. Now, as the crisis in the Soviet Union has shown and events in China have underlined, reality can quickly bring that need before millions.

The power that can change the world exists. The necessity is to build a leadership equal to it. That is the lesson of the May days in China ■

DEMOCRACY SHAKES 'INVESTMENT'

Pete Windeler



No one can accuse the governments in the imperialist countries of giving unstinted support to the students and workers of China. In reality there was not a little fear among them as to how this Chinese mass movement could develop.

Imperialist business and governments can be loud in support of democracy - listen to Mrs Thatcher - but it is democracy of a special kind. It is that democracy which assists the capitalist order, in which the real decisions are taken by small groups of people - financiers, big business groups, top civil servants, high ranking military staff, judges and a political coterie.

The real freedom which the imperialist rulers want in China, the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe is the freedom to participate in exploiting their populations - the freedom to make profit from their vast markets.

In Perestroika they see the possibilities of capitalist development. In Glasnost they can see possibilities of developing political parties that will assist the development of their exploitation. But in the development of a mass upsurge, such as in China, they see only dangers.

The editorial of the "Independent" picked this up on the 22nd of May when it declared:

"The British Government, has, like those of other major Western powers, been shamed into near silence by events in Peking. Its admiration for democratic values does not quite extend to revolts against governments with which it hopes to do business."

Again in the Independent newspaper of 26th May, in a special article pointing out the abrupt halt of foreign capitalist investment in China, Edward Chen, a political scientist at Hong Kong University, is quoted as saying: *"China has built up an image as a political stable country in the past few years. But now it will all change. China will be treated as a high risk country."*

The doors that were opened by the bureaucrats in 1979 for western capitalist penetration could very easily be closed by the working class and students.

The fears of the western capitalists were translated to the financial markets. In Hong Kong the stock exchange index, the Hang Seng, had its biggest drop since the 1987 crash, falling 15% in just 2 days. The sensitivity of the capitalists sharpened as a demonstration, first of 100,000, then a million and then almost 1.5 million people - one third of the population - blocked the streets shouting slogans in support of the Chinese students.

China has opened its doors to capitalist investment under the influence of Deng Xiaoping, who is regarded as the architect of China's economic reforms. Deng Xiaoping relies upon the State President, Yang Shangkun, a retired general, as a source of power. Yang Shangkun has many relatives in the army's High Command. This has earned the army the nickname, amongst ordinary Chinese, of the Yang Family Village. *"...Yang children have always been close to Deng Xiaoping's family and they constantly exploit the connection"*, a well informed source told a "Financial Times" reporter.

Japan is the third largest investor in China with investments of \$1.91 billion (£1.22 bn), the largest investors being Hong Kong and the USA. Until the May events or the "Peking spring" as the period is becoming known, businessmen were queuing up to do deals. Now all foreign investment has dried up amid fears of labour unrest.

Most foreign investment in China is made in "Free Enterprise Zones". Recently, horror stories have filtered through to the western press exposing the conditions in which workers are being exploited. One report details girls being herded together, working in isolated environments for years on end. There is estimated to be 2 million workers employed by capitalist enterprises inside 'communist' China

The so-called economic reforms have meant price rises in basic food stuffs and other essentials. TV viewers will have recently seen a worker enjoying a cup of tea out of a jam jar, being too poor to even afford a cup and saucer. But the blatant corruption is

proving too much even for members of China's breed of business people. A Peking businesswoman, supporting the students, told the 'Financial Times' that: *"...cynicism along with the cult of cash have taken a beating during this Peking spring."*

A general strike had been planned in Shanghai from 30th May. It was called off by the city's main trade union federation after a radio appeal from Zhu Rongji, the mayor of Shanghai. Zhu Rongji has been spearheading an international campaign to attract foreign loans and joint ventures since he was appointed in April last year, *"foreign investors must not be let down"* he said.

Above all, the movement in Peking was significantly united in demanding a reform of the system, its concentration was on a 'democratic revolution'. If there were any pro-western dissidents, they could not raise their voices. The overwhelming sentiment was very clearly that of support for a purifying of the revolution. In fact, in Peking, at the very height of the uprising, when the students were first joined by the workers, a new slogan appeared; *"Down with the capitalist rail-roaders."*

What frightens the imperialists most of all is the mass nature of the movement and the fear that it will move from spontaneity into organisation, with a leadership that is firmly based on developing mass democracy and linking with similar movements in other countries.

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