

## China: Survival versus Ideological Purity

SUMANTA BANERJEE'S review (November 29) of Nigel Harris's book is surprisingly shoddy. He seems to have swallowed Harris's arguments hook, line and sinker and in the process landed himself in a mass of contradictions.

On the one hand he accuses the Chinese leadership of emphasising hard physical labour itself as the mark of socialism, instead of replacing physical labour with technology; and on the other he castigates them for stressing rapid capital accumulation rather than the welfare of the masses. Indeed, he even accuses them of concentrating on nation-building rather than fomenting revolutions elsewhere, but how is "replacement of physical labour with technology" to take place without capital accumulation? And how is capital accumulation to take place if the state is busy inspiring revolutions all round?

Perhaps Sumanta Banerjee will answer that rapid capital accumulation would automatically follow from the harnessing of workers' enthusiasm for socialist construction. But when the working people's enthusiasm is actually harnessed, that is derided as "ideological propaganda ... urging the workers to labour extra hours without pay to contribute to the massive plan of increased production"; it is said to merely entail "considerable savings in labour costs to enterprise and municipality" and to merely yield "surpluses accruing to the state". Indeed, the Chinese leadership is damned if it does and damned if it does not. Does Banerjee believe that socialist construction is possible on the basis of simple reproduction? If not, is it not inevitable that surpluses must accrue to the 'state'? And that the more enthusiastically the workers labour, the more rapidly will the surplus accumulate? But can this discussion be conducted without bringing into question the nature of the Chinese state, that is to say the nature of production relations in China? Is it not a startling achievement on the part of Sumanta Banerjee that he manages to make a series of sweeping statements on the nature of Chinese society without directly bringing in the production relations at any point?

I say 'directly' because indirectly Banerjee does bring in the question of the class nature of the Chinese state.

At one point he blandly states that it was surplus extraction and not the welfare of the agrarian population that decided the CPC's rural policy. At another point he refers to the "additional privileges" and effectively higher incomes of "upper income groups and PLA senior officers". So presumably it is the interests of these "upper income groups and PLA senior officers" that dominated (and continues to dominate) CPC policies. But how does Sumanta Banerjee reconcile this with the oft-quoted statement of the bourgeois economist Wassily Leontieff that if countries are rated according to the per capita income of the poorest 5 to 10 per cent, rather than overall per capita income, then China would move from the bottom to a position much closer to the top? How does he reconcile it with the Chinese government's much-acclaimed concern for the most vulnerable sections of the population (like children)? Banerjee will probably say that this cannot be equated with socialism. True. But it is a far cry from the main policy criterion being maximum extraction of surplus and not the "interests of the poor and the landless".

Again, accusing Mao of having compromised with the rich peasantry during the revolutionary struggle is pointless because Mao visualised the Chinese revolution as a new democratic revolution which would not destroy the rich peasant economy. And while Nigel Harris may not accept the validity of the concept of a new democratic revolution, Sumanta Banerjee certainly does (or at least did, until recently). Finally is it true that the aims of the Chinese revolution were such as were shared by all classes in China? What about the comprador bourgeoisie, the landlords and the warlords who gathered around the KMT?

It is possible that the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution was a farce; it is possible that the Great Helmsman himself was a fraud; it is possible that the internal policy of the CPC was one of maximum exploitation of the labouring classes; it is possible that the foreign policy of the CPC was more nationalist than Marxist (this last accusation, unlike the others, is probably even true). But these issues are to be settled by a Manist-Leainist analysis based on the living realities

of China, and not by accepting bankrupt Trotsky-ite formulations at face value. These formulations are neither new nor any less dead today than they were when they were first put forward.

Intellectuals, as a species, find disillusionment fashionable. In the decadent climes of the imperialist West, this fashion has become a veritable passion. Under such inspiration Sumanta Banerjee professes to seek guidance from the 'purity' and the 'innocence' of the Paris commune rather than Moscow or Beijing. He need not go so far as Paris. He can find quite a few instances in recent Indian history of the establishment of genuine people's power, and on such a scale that in comparison the Paris commune would look like picnic party communism. If Sumanta Banerjee would care to go into the details of their functioning, their achievements and failures, he will probably understand the difficulties of socialist construction. And then perhaps he will get rid of this Trisanku-esque desire for instant socialism that will only leave him suspended in a vacuum of empty intellectualism.

K BALAGOPAL

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### Soviet and US Cotton Crop

THE Soviet Union's cotton harvest has topped 10 mn tonnes for the first time, according to Moscow Radio. The record 1980 crop, 7 per cent up on last year's 9.2 mn tonnes, has been attributed by Soviet agricultural experts to good weather and improved irrigation and harvesting techniques.

According to US Department of Agriculture, US cotton production for the 1981-82 season (August-July) is forecast at around 13.2 mn bales (of 480 lb) up to 22 per cent from this year's drought-reduced crop. In a fact-sheet on the 1981 upland cotton programme, the USDA said US cotton planted acreage is likely to be about 13.9 mn acres, down nearly 0.4 mn from 1980.

Total world cotton exports are expected to increase slightly from the 20.0 mn currently estimated for the 1980-81 year, with US exports expected to rise to around 6.67 mn bales from 5.5 mn this year, which would be about 30 per cent of the total.