

CHINA

For almost three months this year, China, where one fourth of the world's population lives, shook the world. We heard of a million people in the streets protesting against corruption and the Chinese Communist Party. Slogans carried by protestors demanded democracy and an end to the rule of the CCP's 84 year leader Deng Xiaoping. In June the army tanks moved in to smash the protestors. Amidst the singing by the protestors of the Internationale (the international workers song) hundreds of students and workers were shot, bayoneted or run over by the tanks. Estimates of the number killed varies from a few hundred to a few thousand. After this massacre, one young woman remarked "The government has won this battle, but they have lost the hearts of the Chinese masses".



What are we to make of these momentous events? Is it as some people claim in S.A. a struggle by a few students misled by Western Imperialism against Socialism? Is it a struggle against Socialism as the Capitalist press claim, or is it a genuine movement by the masses (with contradictions) for greater control over their own lives and against a bureaucracy who use the ideology of socialism as a religion to mask their privilege, power and bureaucracy?

Capitalist media

The first point we need to make is to show the hypocrisy of the international capitalist media. Deng Xioping the leader of the CCP who not so long ago was praised in the media for allowing capitalists to flourish in China, is now regarded as the butcher of Peking. The capitalist media does not want to admit that the uprising is a direct consequence of the capitalist policy of Deng and the CCP.



Demonstration in Peking, Mai 1989

How it began

The movement in China began with a few hundred students making demands in the support of Hu Yaobang who died. Ho Yaobang a past leader of the CCP was known as a reformist who years back supported the students demands for democracy. For this he was dropped from the leadership thus making him a hero in the students eyes

.On April 27 students marched from their

campuses into the centre of the capital Beijing. On the way workers and unemployed joined them. The crowd now more than 300.000 marched to Tienamen Square (the main square in China). On May the 4th, the 70th Anniversary of the 1917 students demonstrations against imperialism a large contingent of workers joined the students with their own demands. In the large industrial centre of Changsha 1000 workers joined 6000 students.

Gorbachev

On May the 14th demonstrations began gathering in the Square for Gorbachev's (the leader of the Soviet Union who was on a visit) arrival. A thousand students began a hunger strike. Gorbachev's visit was delayed, diverting and generally disrupted by the mass actions in the cities. The demonstrators' admiration for the Russian leader did not last long. His remark for the CCP general secretary Zhao Zijang was widely reported. "We also have our hotheads who want to renovate socialism overnight. But this does not happen in real life, only in fairy tales." By now there were 3000 hunger strikers. Two days after Gorbachev's arrival over a million people took over the city of Beijing. They demanded the resignation of Deng Xioping who had wanted them put down by force. They demanded the resignation of the premier, Li Peng who had criticised their motives.

Workers

Banners identified workers from the Beijing Watch factory, Electronic factories 1, 2 and 3 & the Brewery amongst others. The Beijing central steel mill with 200,000 employees, probably the largest work place in the world was on strike. On the 20th May martial law was declared in Beijing 300,000 troops (one tenth of the entire army) began moving on the city. By barricades, force of numbers and sheer determination the population of Beijing stopped the army. On May



PETER TURNLEY FOR NEWSWEEK

'We also have hotheads': The Gorbachevs with Deng

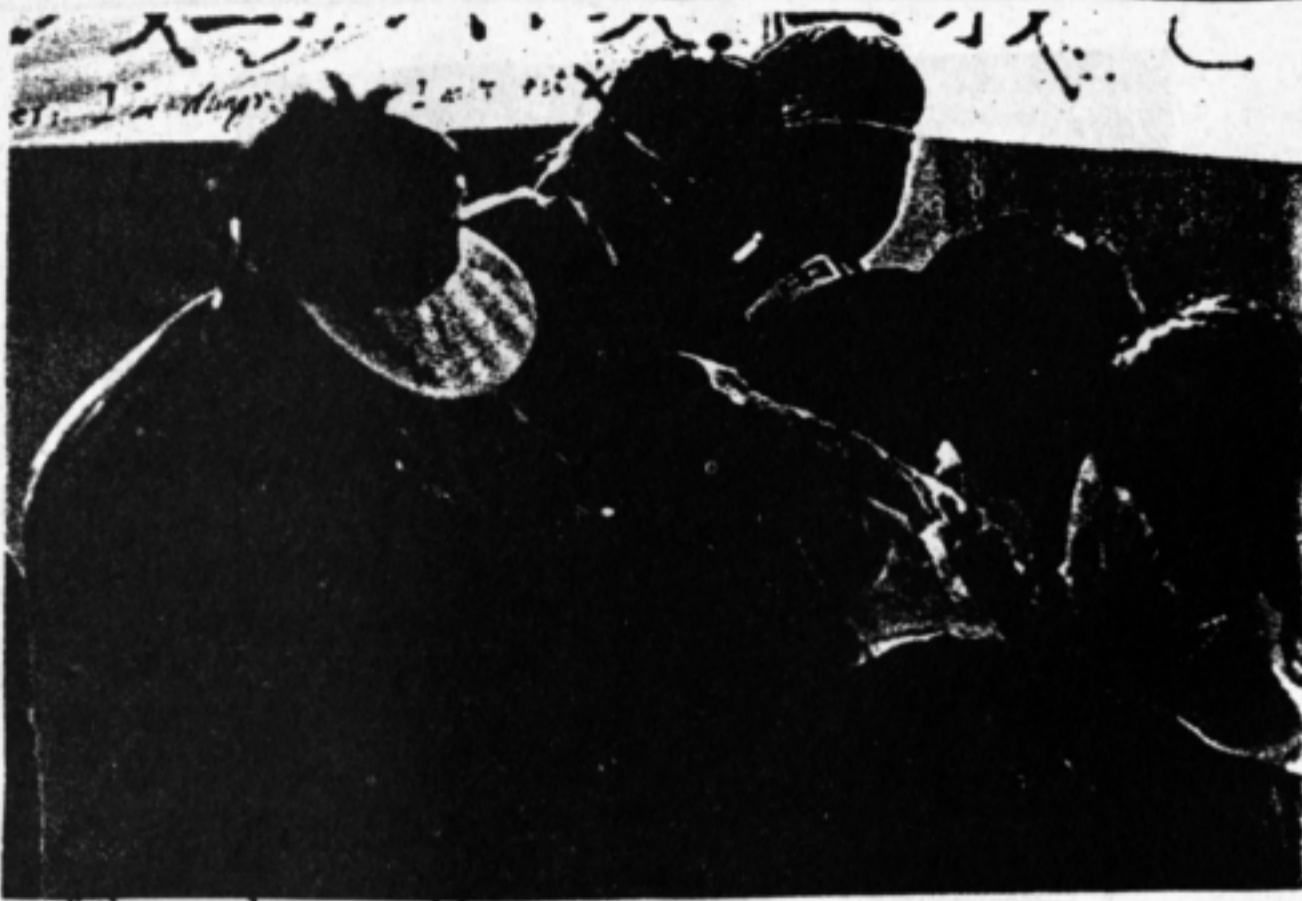
22nd it was reported that the workers had formed a union independent of the party and were threatening a mass strike. (Independent unions are illegal in China.)

After a single day, it was very clear that ordinary soldiers refused to take action against the protestors. One entire unit the 38th Army, refused to carry out its orders, and had to be replaced by the 27th army from Shanxi province. The 27th army through a full scale military assault cleared the square. In the process hundreds of people were killed.

Brief History of CCP.

In 1921 the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) was formed. This had been inspired by the victory of workers in the Russian Revolution of 1917. At its second Congress the party voted to propose an alliance with the Nationalist of the Kuomintang (KMT) a growing movement of the day. The common enemy was Imperialism. The alliance was to be a United Front of the two parties, each holding their own independence in organisation and methods of struggle.

This United Front outlook was overturned by the emerging Stalinist block in the Communist International. This block argued instead that the CCP should not see itself as an independent force. The CCP should rather put all its energy into building the Nationalist forces. The revolution was to be seen in stages, first the Nationalist, then the Socialist revolution. The Nationalist later used this to insist that the communist hand over their membership lists and cease to be critical of the Nationalist leadership. The crisis in China reached a breaking point in March 1927, in the industrial city of Shanghai. Hundreds of thousands of workers came out in a general strike against the oppression and exploitation they experienced. Workers formed councils in preparation for a showdown with the Imperialist and local capitalist. Plans were made for an insurrection. This new turn of events severely upset the Nationalist. They were worried that the self activity



of the workers would sweep away both the Nationalist and the Imperialist and institute worker control as the way forward.

The Communist Party acting with its two-stage outlook argued with workers not to antagonise the Nationalist and started to demobilise the worker structures that had been formed in the heat of the strikes.

The Nationalist seeing this, regained their confidence and with the aid of imperialist guns and gangs viscously attacked the worker organisations. Within days thousands of fighting workers and CCP members were massacred, unions smashed and factories re-occupied by the Nationalist forces.

The Nationalist, when faced with the threat of either worker control or Imperialist control, chose to turn on workers as the greater evil. They viewed worker as threatening their (Nationalist) chance to be the new bosses in China.

The Communist Party under the influence of Stalin's Two-stage theory, acted in a criminal manner in undermining the working class's ability to act and defend its position independently of the Nationalist.

After the massacre most communists left the cities. In 1939 the majority of communists, under the leadership of Mao Zedong, went on the Long March, establishing themselves in the rural areas of China. The social character of the CCP changed, the CCP was overwhelmingly composed of peasants and not workers any longer.



Sympathizer: Police officer's sign calls for a student victory

Imperialism

China had for years been carved up between various imperialist powers with zones controlled by the British, the American, the French and so on. Whole sections of the country were under control of local

warlords. To add to the misery the Japanese had invaded in 1931 and the Kaumintang government had proved to be completely incapable of stopping their advance.

Mao's guerrillas set themselves the task of throwing out the imperialists, suppressing the local warlords and building a strong, united and independent national economy. The peasantry supported the Communists because most of them lived in poverty, going deeper and deeper into debt each year. Famine and draught were regular occurrences, but the landlords always insisted on their rent. Even death was no escape because the debt was transferred to the next generation.

Gradually the CCP extended the rural areas which they controlled. After the 2nd World War, fighting between the nationalists and the communists became a full scale civil war which the CCP finally won in 1949. The revolution brought progress to China.

Mao

Despite this progress tremendous problems lay ahead. Mao chairperson of the CCP and his supporters argued against Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xioping about the best way to build socialism. Liu and Deng argued that the party must put economics in command.

China should build factories and modernise. Mao argued that political consciousness and the mobilisation of the masses was more important than economic incentives. Over the years these differences resulted in deep struggles with the CCP. Mao died in 1976 and this opened the way for his opponents led by Deng. The CCP central committee announced reforms which they called "The Four Modernisations". This is a programme which replaces mass mobilisation and politicisation with industrialisation too.

Market Socialism

According to Deng China needed "market socialism" where state owned enterprises competed with each other. Factories would have to make profits, workers must work harder, where there are too many workers in a factory, some will have to be retrenched. Foreign companies would be allowed to invest in China and take out profits. The social benefits - pensions, unemployment benefits etc minimised and agriculture to be owned in private hands. This "market socialism" has led to food prices being greatly increased, a new layer of rich peasants and businessmen treated, inflation has risen as well as unemployment.

In Guangdong province, a government check of 200 rural businesses found over forty employing women as young as 10, working 14 hours a day in incredibly bad conditions. This is how one worker described the



Deng Xiaoping—scared rigid

conditions in the Special Economic Zones set up to attract foreign capitalists:

" We work more than 13 hours a day, overtime everyday, but have never received overtime pay. The boss doesn't allow us to drink water during working hours, we are body searched when we go off work. Our living dormitory is crowded beyond imagination. How can we bear this life."

Wages are so low that 80% of Hong Kong's garment industry is relocated in China to take advantage of the cheap labour.

For the new businessmen in China things are different. China now has its own millionaires. An example Zhang Guoxi: based in Jiangxi province, Zhang owns 32 factories, 7 commercial companies and a whole network of cottage industries. He employs nearly 3000 workers & has offices in Hong Kong, Japan, West Germany and the US. Zhang is not only a member of the CCP, he is also Party secretary for his enterprises.

Lessons

China is a lesson for those involved in the liberation struggle in S.A. The A.N.C today talks of a mixed economy in the future S.A. We see what this means in practice in China.

There is no doubt in our minds that the struggle in China by the masses for the moment drowned in blood, is a just struggle, a struggle that any one who calls him/herself a socialist must support.

The ageing Chinese leadership have won a battle but not the war. The biggest problem for the regime is the development of the biggest working class in the world, presently around 135 million. These workers are paid low wages, they have no democratic rights, they can't form independent unions and their living standards are being lowered. This continues while profiteering and corruption rule at the top.

As yet, the workers of China have not used their industrial muscle. But when they do, when they discover the power they have, China's rule and the capitalists throughout the world have every reason to tremble.

