

Group profile: Hong Kong 70s Front

CIRA-Nippon

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An active organization carrying out the social revolution, the ‘70s Front’ is naturally ready to confront many questions, such as: What are your beliefs and ideals? How do you see the future Hong Kong revolution? And so on. Such questions are, honestly, hard to answer, but nonetheless demand thorough analysis, lest our action come to lose all its vitality, our words and deeds become rootless and our blindness laughable. The below can be said to be our first, tentative attitudes toward the above questions.

Our Ideals

In certain cases people ordinarily say: “I’m an xxx-ist.” Likewise, we are often asked, “Whatism are you?” Questions such as these put us in a predicament which doesn’t mean that we’ve no ideals nor beliefs, only that we’ve yet to come upon the perfect banner representing our thoughts. Those whose heads hanker after worn-out ways, treading the straight and narrow of rigid self-restraint; who, without a shred of principle, take the teachings of the prophets and priests and call them their own ideas — they represent the flight from freedom. The aim of revolution is to change society, not to register the correctness of this or that ism.

With an open attitude, we therefore recognize, criticize and welcome all progressive thought. Any “pure xxx-ism” is absolutely meaningless. So, to answer the questions above, usually all we can say is: “We are socialists.” Socialism is a tide in which we find many currents, some of them mutually opposed. Those who insist on classifying the ultimate aim of socialism according to two distinct higher and lower stages, communist and socialist, bring up the “transition question,” a theoretical basis advanced so as to perpetuate the state machine, oppress the people, and secure the advantage of a small elite after the elimination of capitalism.

In general, socialist currents and sects share one point: they all favor the abolition of private ownership and the return of production capital to the public ownership of society. They seek to remake society on an egalitarian base so as to establish an ideal society which meets people’s needs. Since we too share these concepts, we too call ourselves “socialists.” But compared to all the other socialist strands, we especially stress the humanist spirit to be found in socialism. As Marx stressed in his *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, if communism lacks humanism then it isn’t communism, and humanism lacking communism isn’t humanism. One who seeks complete independence and freedom can only exist in a society both rational and prosperous. And a rational and prosperous society’s existence, in turn, depends on whether the individual character is to fully develop... The most revolutionary aspect of a revolutionary lies precisely in his/her independence and freedom. Come the day our individuality is wiped out, we’re robbed of our freedom, and all is done at the direction of a solitary authority, leader or party, then we’ll have reached the ideal society — if this isn’t the biggest joke the world has ever seen, then it has got to be the most beautiful!

We are resolutely against all authority: authority suggests suppression. And against all power, no matter its shape or form. We affirm that, under freedom and equality, a socialist life is founded on mutual cooperation and free association. But unlike the proverbial thief who covers his ears that the ringing of the bell he’s stealing won’t give him away, we don’t deceive ourselves by denying the existence of the class struggle in the society before us. We are, however, resolutely against encouraging class hatred as the driving power of the revolution. Hatred will only bring

in its wake retribution, suppression, stripping of the people's rights and the distortion of the people's humanity...

Violence perpetuates the slavery and robbery of the masses — precisely this principle serves as the foundation of contemporary society. A violent socialist revolution is necessary, and if we are to radically transform society and construct in its place one of free workers, there is no way for us to accomplish this save by a violent socialist revolution. But naturally we cannot encourage and sing the praises of violence. Rather than saying violence inevitably and logically proceeds from revolution, better to say that we are forced to resort to violence because, in order to secure their own profits, the anti-revolutionists suppress us with violence.

... In the last analysis is the Chinese social structure under the communist regime socialism? This, more than all else, calls for urgent analysis.

First the economic side. The Chinese communists are stuck as ever in the rut of capitalism... The economic system under the Chinese communists is simply one where the capital resources have been rationalized, domestic markets brought under state control and nationally-operated ventures come to replace private ones. But nationalizing production resources has little to do with socializing production resources, and even less to do with realizing a socialist economy... In China, nationalizing production resources means only that the state has become the general capitalist; and its control powers are all concentrated in the hands of a small clique of party bureaucrats. Thus have the party bureaucrats, in turn, metamorphosed to where they've taken "protective custody" of productive resources.

As ever before, the industrial workers are wage labor, people plundered and repressed. Having failed to eliminate capitalism, the Chinese communists have driven the capitalist system to the extreme... Not only do wages not reflect the value of labor itself, but are low compared to other capitalist countries. Not only are wages not subject to supply and demand, likewise neither is return on investment regulated, so that the push for attainment of the greatest scale of return on investment has been rendered into the guideline of the People's Economic Plan. This kind of policy is reflected in the universal low wages and shortage of consumer goods, and is reflected all the more in the flow of goods from the mainland to Hong Kong. The application of political force to the suppression of labor, to the increase in expropriation of value, and to the exalting of the return on investment rate all leave any traditional capitalist system trailing far behind in a cloud of dust...

The socialist economy we seek:

1. is not the nationalization but the socialization of production resources. In areas of production control, all responsibility for coordination and control will lie with Workers' Committees, comprising representatives chosen by the workers. As for the form of production, the division-of-labor system will be abolished — including the division between industrial and agricultural labor, between mental and physical labor, between that of managers and producers, and between dissimilar production processes, thereby ensuring that every last worker becomes the embodiment of creative power;
2. abolishes the wage labor system;
3. determines social production according to mass consumption, and plans an economy where need determines income.

As for the political aspect in China, the party directs everything, and the Chinese Communist Party has been influenced by the foul weed of the Leninist vanguard party organized as a high-level, concentrated formation, founded on the principle of “democratic centralism.” Theoretically, policy formulation involves a democratic-style discussion by standing party members or their proxies, thereafter to be collectivized and implemented. And should there be an opposing view, once the matter is put to a vote, the majority will must be obeyed absolutely.

On the surface this appears both democratic and collective; actual circumstances are quite the contrary. In this case ample democracy means nothing more than the opportunity for those attending the meeting to understand opposing views. But it does not necessarily follow that this will solve the problems, because a policy’s correctness can only be tested in the crucible of actual implementation. Under centralism, minority opinions lose all chance of being tried and tested, and naturally which way is right cannot be determined. Therefore, when events reveal majority decisions and consequent policy to have been in error, the people must go on believing that that was the only way.

As far as those who hold democratic centralism sacred are concerned, to allow any chance of implementation to dissimilar ideas or policies represents the path of adventurism or the stupid dissipation of “actual energies.” But we’d like to point out that the opinion of the majority is not necessarily the correct one. If it is majority opinion that serves as the refuge for all policies, is not this too a kind of adventurism? Rather, wouldn’t it be far safer to allow different policies a chance at experimentation and actualization, so as to provide mutually complementary, supportive policies? And as for the line that this would mean a dissipation of actual energies, there’s even less of a leg to stand on. For the concrete expression of actualized energies is to be found in the efficient application of all resources, and the quick — and accurate — attaining of projected targets...

Democratic centralization suffers from one serious defect: it becomes a warm bed to bureaucrats. This is the result of high-level centralization of power as well as information and materials. Consider the case of an ordinary party member: though s/he is legally entitled to criticize and review the policies of his/her superiors, yet, unable to obtain the relevant data, how is s/he to conduct a vigorous criticism or an effective review? In such cases where decisions flow top-down and not bottom-up, the slow development of absolute submissiveness to one’s superiors is the result...

“Without the efforts of the Chinese Communist Party, without CCP members serving as the mainstream pillars of the people, the independence and liberation of China would have been impossible, as would the industrialization of China and the modernization of its agriculture.” *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung, Vol. III*, “on Coalition Government.” This passage fully reflects a reactionary toward the interests of the revolution, the masses, and the party, etc. And it is with just such a attitudes that a small group of bureaucrats, regarding the advantage of the party as that of the revolution, see their own interests and theirs only as the interests of the party. And whenever they meet opponents of different mind, they immediately attack them as “counter-revolutionaries” or a “conspiracy party.” Under the pretext of dictatorship of the proletariat, gradually all become subject to a progressively unscrupulous repression.

Not only is this true for extra-party affairs, but also within the party too — as demonstrated in the reactionary line, “No party outside the party, no faction within the party.” If such a dictatorship is meant to protect the fruits of the revolution, and to bring the passage to communism, then it amounts to the most colossal absurdity. We must understand that dictatorship is only meant

to maintain the special class interests of the ruling class, and the proletariat hasn't its own class property interests. So there's no such thing as a so-called class dictatorship. The entire process of stripping the bourgeoisie of all its capital should be a revolution involving the whole of humanity. To set up, at any point in this process, a controlling party dictatorship under the fine-sounding name of "dictatorship of the proletariat" is simply a dirty insult to, and shameless deceit of, the proletariat. No matter whose hands hold the reins of the state, the result is still suppression of the people. In a nutshell, "Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely."

Therefore we resolutely oppose the vanguard party concept, instead advocating a myriad of mass organizations, each producing its own ideas and policies. At the same time this assures a consciousness-raising struggle of the people on the broadest possible scale. The consciousness of the people is the main condition for the fruition of the true socialist revolution. A revolution directed by a party or a few "heroes" cannot possibly be a revolution liberating humankind. Simultaneously, we oppose using the pretext of dictatorship of the proletariat to strengthen the instrument of the state.

Simply put, we oppose all dictatorships, all governments, all forms of statism, and all authority. We stand for endlessly-evolving freedom, for we sense, intuitively, that individual freedom is the prior condition for the freedom of all, and that once the individual is robbed of his/her freedom, freedom for all cannot possibly exist. Likewise, when the collective good ignores or suppresses individual interest, that spells the end of the collective good.

Where Is China Going?

In China, the true meaning of socialism has been distorted and corrupted. A cruel, relentless dictatorship, ubiquitous security agents, the impersonal concepts of the murky religion of "socialism"... made people feel dark and secretive. Just when all hope was lost, the "Great Cultural Revolution" burst forth in a shower of sparks, penetrating the darkness with a gleaming light, illuminating for China the road ahead, whereon performed those socialist fighters who, for the sake of truth, would not submit, but would fight back, struggle, and ultimately seize the victory.

The Great Cultural Revolution, beginning with a top-to-bottom false revolution, was transformed into a bottom-to-top genuine revolution. The masses would never again be made fools of, never again let themselves be led by the nose into bringing down those designated as the so-called class enemy... On their own, they organized and took control, and they discovered that even without the bureaucrats and supreme directives, their factories could maintain and even increase production. And they found that their lives were fuller than ever before, the gap between people closed. In order to thoroughly smash the bureaucratic structure — the "revolutionary committees" — mass revolutionary organizations appeared.

This spontaneous mass movement was diametrically opposed to the religious socialism of Mao Tse-tung; the authority of the "pope" lost some of its glamor. Repression failed time and again, ideology momentarily came to life, and for the first time the people came into contact with the tide of true socialism. One by one, groups representing the vanguard of the masses, who had come to a socialist awareness, began to emerge in the ranks of the ultra-left. Their growth heralded the death of Mao Tse-tung Thought. The fear-stricken bureaucrats shed their masks, revealing their ferocious features, and mobilized the state apparatus to lord it over the people. Then the military fired its guns, and the revolutionary generation became a generation ground underfoot.

The revolution died. Long live the revolution! The flesh may disappear, but the idea will stand strong in the face of armed repression.

The ultra-left factions of the Great Cultural Revolution symbolized the dawn of the Chinese revolution, but we must point out that, though they consciously opposed the bureaucrats and though they sincerely struggled for socialism, yet over 20 years of authoritarian control has forged an authoritarian character in a great majority of the people. Hence, even within the ranks of the ultra-left, not a few of the anti-bureaucrat fighters still subconsciously fashioned themselves after their rulers. This is history's tragedy, the poisoned legacy of the Mao Tse-tung dictatorship — and will become a great obstacle to the coming revolution. To mitigate this disaster, it is precisely here that we revolutionaries overseas who, taking advantage of our relatively free contacts with all the new trends in revolutionary thought throughout the world, should apply our energy.

Conclusion

The future of the Chinese revolution is tied up with the question of whether or not the ultra-leftists can spark off an all-encompassing socialist revolution; and that for Hong Kong with its success or failure. This does not mean that we in Hong Kong must wait by the stump for the hare¹ in anticipation of the arrival of the Chinese revolution. On the contrary, we must fight to oppose all irrational systems and let the mass movement in Hong Kong serve as catalyst for the Chinese revolution. To prevent the Hong Kong mass movement from falling into the ruts of the toppled cart of Kronstadt, the Chinese revolution remains the only effective assurance.

¹ An old Chinese proverb which refers to the story of the man who, having seen a hare go down its hole, decided to sit down at a stump nearby and wait for it to come out again, the saying means to wait in vain, or to passively wait instead of taking constructive action.

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