

A lesson concerning

- old and new imperialism
- a socialist alternative and its mistakes
- the birth of a capitalist class-society
- the rise of a new major power

Preliminary remarks

When China entered the WTO in November 2001, the general public in the Western hemisphere took more or less astonished note that the most heavily populated nation of the world, a former socialist developing country, had turned in recent years into an industrial state and a respectable export nation. By 2010, even such information is already obsolete: meanwhile China is the third largest national economy of the world and has replaced Germany as the world export champion.

So of course, there is a lot of talk about China – but what kind? The leading point of view of the China reports among the bourgeois public involves the question of what the rise of this country means for “us”. China's entrance into the free world market is welcomed and the opening of its market with 1.3 billion customers makes “us” very optimistic; on the other hand, a new “yellow peril” is looming. Because this time, China steps up as a strong economic competitor that not only takes parts of global business away from “us” with its low wages, but has long sounded the organised attack on “our” sanctum, the technical know-how of companies throughout the US and Europe. This ambivalence is reprised politically: The political and economic elite of the West promises itself absolutely plenty from the restrengthened Asian power and the good relations they are maintaining with it. On the other hand, it is recorded in London, in Berlin and especially in Washington that one is increasingly dealing with a self-confident great power that refuses to be simply incorporated in a foreign order. It is noted with dismay that the Chinese leaders are a collection of “still” rather obstinate communist minds occupied with refusing their people democracy and the Dalai Lama “his Tibet”. Sealed off from the public, the leaders are occupied with obscure intrigues and competition for power in the country, to which so far neither members of the opposition nor NGOs sponsored by the West have access. That they are so far rather successful and unchallenged in this strategy earns them once again the respect of their opponents. It is actually a rather bad mixture of ignorance, hostility and enthusiasm that marks the judgment of the bourgeois observer of China.

But the image of China is also not presented more objectively in the eyes of the leftist public. On the one hand, it is marked by sentimental reminiscences of earlier days when one projected one's own hopes and wishes onto Mao, the people's communes and the Cultural Revolution. On the other hand, the left likes to imagine modern China as a paragon of crude capitalist circumstances. Their reports and analyses in many cases are populated by millions of starving migrant workers – almost as if one would lose good reasons for critique of capitalism if in China, too, after 30 years of free market economy a more civilised handling of people would be announced and as if there wasn't more to explain and criticize concerning China's long march to capitalism. Or one simply stays obstinate and believes the Communist Party and their interpretations, according to which the country is still on its way to socialism – only that this way takes a bit longer than assumed and includes small capitalist detours in order to increase social productivity.

The present book opposes these interpretations. It criticises Mao Zedong's socialism without taking sides on China's transition to a market economy. It follows the rise of a developing nation into a major

capitalist power without confounding the progress of this nation with the well-being of the Chinese people. It tracks the success of modern China and the efforts of the established world powers to contain it without showing sympathy for either of the two sides in a controversy that has been long underway. Instead, this book observes, not without irony, that Marx's thesis in the "Communist Manifesto" dealing with the character of the bourgeois order – "It compels all nations, on pain of extinction, to adopt the bourgeois mode of production;" – comes true in manifold ways. First, the old imperialistic powers opened up the Middle Kingdom with their gunships. After Mao's death, the Chinese communists approximated the western world out of national considerations and discarded their alternative socialist way of development step by step. As a result, the western bourgeoisie has succeeded in "creating a world after its own image" – without the communist exception. In the meantime, it is exactly this success of China's conversion to capitalism that causes them a lot of trouble. For "the cheap prices of their commodities are the heavy artillery" with which the People's Republic, turned capitalist shoots back...

Content

The book starts with a comprehensive retrospection on *The Socialist People's Republic of China*. Part I discusses the forcible opening of China by the imperialistic powers, the inner decay accompanying it and the long Civil War between the Kuomintang and the Communist Party. In 1949, Mao Zedong proclaimed the socialist People's Republic with the words: "The Chinese People has risen up". The economy and politics of Chinese National Communism are explained with reference to the building phase, the first Five-Year-Plan and the great Mass Campaigns – and are criticised.

The book analyses the principles of a value-production planned by the state and its Chinese characteristics. It explains the relationship between socialist state power and its people, as well as Mao's party line that relied on "the creative power of the masses" and increasingly appropriated it for an ambitious national construction project. And it deals with the foreign policy of the People's Republic, the Korea War as well as the friendship with the Soviet Union and its break, which sounded the bell for the decline of the communist block: *Nationalism wins out over the state's idealistic Socialism of the Communist Party*.

Part II, titled *The Capitalist People's Republic of China*, explains what China has put on its own country's political-economic agenda when it decided in 1978 to join the world market in order to accomplish, with the help of capitalist methods and foreign investments, its rise to a major power. The whole economy with all its facilities, including its living inventory, is gradually subjected to a new principle: Every individual has to and is allowed to earn money and world money, freed from the dictation of the collective and the plan. This divides the egalitarian Chinese society into classes. How China's "system change" has taken place is analysed in detail: which phenomena and results it has achieved economically and what consequences this has for Chinese society, its socialist state and the Communist Party: *China's Communist Party initiates an "original accumulation"*.

Meanwhile, from the economic successes it has achieved in the last two decades, China derives the entitlement to use for its part all kinds of countries as suppliers of raw materials and as export markets – and not only that: China has entered the strategic competition over the global management of force. The last chapter of Part II deals with the foreign policy of the People's Republic and the policy of containment: not only the US is opposing Chinese ambitions. The global novelty of this competition, which is just in its first years and could easily lead to war, lies in the fact that the two main competitors heavily depend on each other economically in times of "globalization": *China wants to become a world power*.