



OUTSIDE LEFT

I don't know if it's more me or you, but I really look forward to getting *ALR* these days ... I think it'll be addressing those areas that are at the edge of my thinking — like consumerism or parenting — where I've sort of noticed that we on the left seem to have overlooked something. And not only do I read it more avidly but I tend to more often photocopy articles to hand out to others. Actually, as I am typing this I'm thinking that I'm tired of giving photocopies, I'll suggest they subscribe.

But there is one tiny, teeny irritation that I have with *ALR*, and I was wondering if you'd been thinking about this yourselves. It's that there still is a tendency in the articles to say that "the left should ..." This does two things to me. One is that I think that the author, and the journal, are somehow *outside or on the fringes of* the left. As if the left were these other people who won't listen, can't respond, are misguided or whatever. But somehow we are not in and of the left.

Secondly, I wonder why I can't get to read about more impressive, inspiring, innovative and positive things that are happening on the left. I don't mean necessarily on a grand scale. I'd be pleased to read about small programs or campaigns that have been successful. Some of what the metalworkers are doing, the Aborigines' TV station (not what a bastard the NT government is, but what great things are happening despite that), the local tenant victories, women's programs.

Anyway, keep up the excellent work you are already doing.

Richard Fletcher,
Hamilton, NSW.

l e t t e r s

CHINA AND THE COLONEL

I would like to make a few friendly criticisms about the way in which a large part of the left press, including yourselves, has covered political changes in the People's Republic of China.

The title of Colin Mackerras' article in *ALR* 103, "Kentucky Fried Socialism", might be an indication of the way in which we have come to regard the changes that are occurring in the PRC. I can well appreciate the humour and the irony. Unfortunately, I think it distracts us from the importance of what is occurring in that country. The arrival of consumerist symbols is nothing new to post-capitalist societies. They are certainly in great abundance in a country like the Soviet Union, yet there one gets the impression that some leftwing commentators regard it as symbolising a liberalisation of political life. When we see this occurring in the PRC, it seems to be simply a matter of ironic comment. Can we really continue to have it both ways?

Anyone who has had more than a passing interest in the continuing impact of the Chinese revolution (perhaps the most significant event in the twentieth century) will know that many of the democratic openings we have so much enthusiasm for in the Soviet Union were achieved in China many years ago.

On the ideological level, the Chinese Communist Party has gone much further in rehabilitating the leaders of the Russian revolution than the Gorbachev faction has dared to go. While Bukharin's works are only just being published in the USSR, the works of Bakunin, Bukharin, Kropotkin, Luxemburg and Kardelj have been appearing in government controlled printing presses in China since the start of the 1980s. Furthermore, the works of the greatest anathema of them all, Leon Trotsky, have been published.

More important than the intellectual openness has been the rise of a democratic movement that is far larger and more deeply rooted than anything that has so far existed in the Soviet Union. Large mobilisations have always been a feature of politics in the People's Republic. The December 1986

demonstrations, which some reports from Shanghai say involved up to 150,000 people, are a mark of how intensely the issue of political democracy is regarded there.

I hope that we will grow to be as enthusiastic for the continuing Chinese revolution as we are for developments in the Soviet Union. We could well find that the historical and political significance of changes in that country will be more profound than what is happening in the USSR.

Jeff Richards,
Prospect, Sth Australia.

Note: The title of Colin Mackerras' piece was *ALR's*, not the author's. — Ed.

LETTERS

● We welcome your letters for our next issue. As a general rule, letters should be no longer than 300 words and, preferably, should be typewritten. *ALR* reserves the right to edit letters down to this length.

● authors' addresses and a contact phone number should be included, although, naturally, they will not be printed. The deadline for letters is four weeks prior to the month of publication.

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