

China's Publicists in the West: Always Forget Class

CHARLES ANDREWS

Friends of Socialist China (FoSC) is one of many websites, podcasts, and video channels devoted to praising the capitalist regime that rules China. Most of the praise is set against criticism of U.S. imperialism. They reason that if U.S. imperialism does something evil – which it most certainly does – then the rising monopoly capitalist power must be doing good things. FoSC's almost daily posts use this illogic over and over.

So FoSC publishes titles like, “Campaigning against the New Cold War is crucial for all who value peace and justice” and “The Western left must reject anti-China propaganda and join the progressive global trend.” Talk of a New Cold War casts the U.S. as the instigating power eager for a clash. The actual situation is a growing, unavoidable contradiction between expanding Chinese monopoly capitalism and established, decaying U.S. monopoly capitalism.

One FoSC article of special interest is “A community of shared future is the only viable option for humanity,” by Keith Bennett, published July 12, 2023. (<https://socialistchina.org/2023/07/12/a-community-of-shared-future-is-the-only-viable-option-for-humanity/>) Bennett is a co-editor of FoSC. He calls himself a “researcher and consultant on China’s international relations.” (<https://valdaiclub.com/about/experts/20379/>)

In line with his consultancy, Bennett Associates, Bennett promotes Chinese trade and investment to British businessmen. “The economic and commercial relationship with China is intrinsic to the economic health of the UK and the economic well-being of the British people. ... Business people, civil society, and others [*but no mention of the working class*] all have their roles to play.” (<https://english.news.cn/20230709/4eef87c4026a43eaa0e70566d987a680/c.html>) Apparently, Bennett does not care what de-industrialization does to British workers following the export of capital.

Bennett is also vice-chair of the 48 Club, a London-based group of more than 600 businessmen, parliamentarians, government bureaucrats and diplomats. According to a statement once

posted on its website, “The Club offers an important – and often key – network of contacts for those active in building relations [with China] through any field from commerce to culture.” (<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-8483249/Inside-powerful-48-Club-China-grooming-storm.html>)

In his post of July 12, Bennett took direction from recent PRC propaganda emphasis on the notion of civilization. He wrote:

Humanity has a history of civilization dating back millennia. Civilizations arose and developed on different continents and at different times. But they prospered and innovated through mutual exchanges and mutual learning. The ancient Silk Road, which began in China, is one of the greatest examples of this.

And:

On March 15 this year, I was privileged to participate in the online ‘CPC in Dialogue with World Political Parties High-level Meeting’ and to hear His Excellency President Xi Jinping unveil the Global Civilization Initiative, the latest of his programmatic initiatives designed to realize a community of shared future for humanity.

Paraphrasing Xi:

Countries, the Chinese President explains, need to keep an open mind in appreciating the values of different civilizations and they should refrain from imposing their own values or models on others and from stoking ideological confrontation.

Bennett gets to the payoff:

Socialism with Chinese characteristics offers a new option for those countries that wish to rapidly develop their economies while maintaining their independence.

No, China’s rapid industrialization was *capitalist* industrialization. Deng Xiaoping and crew pushed two hundred million people onto the market for labor power. Driven from their families, they were on their own to migrate in search of work in construction, Foxconn and other sweatshops, and high-pressure, piece-rate delivery work. Their toil enriched a new class of billionaires and millionaires, including the family of Xi Jinping. Today, the Gini index of income inequality in China is close to that of the U.S. This industrialization was the opposite of Soviet socialist industrialization in the 1930s.

China, with Bennett tagging along for consultancy fees, offers to help the ruling elites of under-developed countries do something similar. In its “Global Civilization Initiative,” PRC propaganda

relies on a notion of civilization that ruling classes have peddled for thousands of years. According to them, civilization enables a small part of society to create glorious art and music, conduct scientific inquiries, design magnificent buildings, and write a body of noble literature. Of course, not everyone can cultivate these pursuits. Most people must work long, hard hours to feed and clothe us.

This scenario had a historical basis in the levels of productiveness during the agrarian and early industrial eras. Still, most exploiters had little or nothing to do with high-minded cultural effort. Their financial support for art and science was a fraction of what they spent on dissipated luxury. Furthermore, culture in a society of exploitation glorifies the ruling classes and teaches peasants and workers to submit to their fate.

The FoSC website has a comment box under each post. Comments appear immediately. I posted the following under Keith Bennett's article:

What mush the PRC pours forth about "civilization." It is devoid of the elementary Marxist method, the class point of view. Compare Engels on civilization, bluntly stating:

- "everything civilization brings forth is double edged, double-tongued, divided against itself."
- "The lady of civilization, surrounded by false homage and estranged from all real work, has an infinitely lower social position than the hard working woman of barbarism."
- Throughout his book on the origin of property (<http://marx2mao.com/M&E/OFPS84.html>), Engels speaks of the "antagonisms and contradictions ... in which society has been moving, without power to resolve or overcome them, ever since it split into classes at the beginning of civilization."

What are the different civilizations so beloved to PRC propaganda? They are different ways that the exploiting classes rule over the exploited. By chattering about civilization without class, the PRC makes an offer to exploiters around the world: you'll do better as a junior partner of the PRC than you do as a junior partner of the U.S.!

FoSC deleted the comment a day later. Keith Bennett takes his lead from Xi Jinping: always forget class!

- Charles Andrews is author of *The Hollow Colossus* (<http://www.hollowcolossus.com>).