

HEART OF DARKNESS?

Questioning Chinese Labour and Investment in Africa

We are pleased to announce the third issue of *Made in China*. As usual, we open with a series of **Briefs** where we provide an overview of notable stories that occurred over the past three months. Undoubtedly the most important development is the conviction, but suspended sentences, of labour activists Zeng Feiyang, Zhu Xiaomei, and Tang Huanxing, while a fourth activist, Meng Han, is still awaiting trial. In the midst of an oppressive political climate, a suspended sentence comes as a relief to Chinese labour NGOs, which are already struggling to survive due to government repression and increasing financial constraints.

In the China Columns, we present two essays. In **The Chinese Working Class: Made, Unmade, in Itself, for Itself, or None of the Above?**, William Hurst invites our readers to consider the fractured and segmented history of the Chinese working class, as well as its rapidly homogenising present, and emphasises the need to refrain from too-facile comparisons with other foreign experiences. In **China's Workers and the Legal System: Bridging the Gap in Representation**, Aaron Halegua delves into the challenges that Chinese workers face when they seek to enforce their rights through the legal system.

We dedicate the core of this issue to a special section on Chinese labour and investment in Africa, offering a series of thought-provoking pieces with a focus on two countries—Zambia and Ghana—where conflicts related to Chinese capital and labour inflows have recently emerged. In **Fighting the Race to the Bottom: Regulating Chinese Investment in Zambian Mines**, Mukete Beyongo Dynamic examines the claim that Chinese investment

in copper mines in Zambia have led to a 'race to the bottom' in labour standards. In **There and Back Again: Conceptualising the Chinese Gold Rush in Ghana**, Nicholas Loubere and Gordon Crawford investigate the media discourse and popular depiction of Chinese miners in Ghana as stealing resources from marginal sectors of local society. Finally, in **A Chinese Empire in the Making? Questioning Myths from the Agri-Food Sector in Ghana**, Jixia Lu draws from her fieldwork in the country's agricultural sector to challenge the dominant narratives of China's presence in Africa.

In the Window on Asia section, you will find an article by Tom Barnes on possibly the largest strike in Indian history, which took place in September. In this issue, we also launch a new cultural section with Christian Sorace's **Paradise under Construction**, an essay on Zhao Liang's *Behemoth*, a recent documentary on the environmental and social tragedy behind China's economic miracle. We conclude with the Academic Watch, which introduces the edited volume *Legal Reforms and Deprivation of Liberty in Contemporary China* through a conversation with co-editor Elisa Nesossi.

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The Editors,
Ivan Franceschini, Kevin Lin,
and Nicholas Loubere