

# China Policy Study Group

# BROADSHEET

Sponsors: Dr Joseph Needham FRS, Prof Cyril Offord FRS, Prof Joan Robinson, Prof George Thomson

## GOING AGAINST THE TIDE—II

The term 'going against the tide' has been used frequently by the Chinese in recent discussions of the spirit in which a real Communist acts. It was because many people—workers, peasants, soldiers and cadres—dared to resist the tide which prevailed that revisionism was not allowed to triumph in the C.P.C. and careerists and opportunists of all kinds were exposed and repudiated by the masses. For the Chinese it sums up the lessons of specific, hard struggles they have waged, and states a revolutionary principle of immediate action for all Party members.

As with the phrase 'rebellion is justified' during the Cultural Revolution, there is a danger that it can become popular in the West as a slogan, because it strikes a responsive chord in the hearts of left-wing people in bourgeois society. Such an easy acceptance of it could prevent an appreciation both of the significance of the stand the Chinese have continued to take in the world revolutionary struggle and of the betrayal by the C.P.S.U's ideologues of the socialist revolution. It may be salutary to begin by taking note of the wrong connotations the term may be given by individual 'rebels' and radicals in capitalist and neo-colonial societies.

### Proletarian revolution not anarchy

Taken out of the context of the history of the proletarian revolution and put into that of decaying bourgeois society, with all its frustrations, discontents and factional divisions, the phrase 'going against the tide' changes meaning. In the West (and not only in the West) there can be found a number of small groups and movements which are indiscriminately against all forms of organised social activity and of idealists who are carried by longing to 'remould the world nearer to the heart's desire'. One finds among them people who are making a plea for more humanitarian social practices, who just want to be different, who have personal grievances. Some of them have tried to invoke what they call 'Maoism' in support of their kind of extremism, but their outlook and aspirations have no support in the theory and practice of the Chinese Revolution as summed up by Mao Tse-tung.

Some people may welcome the call to go against the tide, as it looks like a sign of 'democracy'. In capitalist society, the discontent of certain less privileged but highly articulate social strata may lead them to react vociferously, sometimes violently, against all forms of discipline and centralised authority. (This can be compared with the action taken by those who adopt the proletarian revolutionary standpoint, outlook and method of understanding the world and changing it). It is not surprising that the rigidly anti-establishment section of the petty bourgeoisie sometimes adopts a 'Marxist' rhetoric because it thinks of Marxism as an anti-establishment philosophy in fashion and not as dialectical materialism. The 'progressive' rhetoric becomes more and more extreme as factions seek to outbid one

another in their claim to be the vanguard of the 'left'. Those who imagine that the more 'left' they become the nearer they are to revolutionary truth and purity are certain to be confused about the viewpoint of a proletarian revolutionary Party. Anti-Communist and Soviet propagandists play on this confusion when they write about the continuing Chinese Revolution and sometimes seek to make people believe that the C.P.C. has changed its line or that Mao Tse-tung represents the extreme left against which 'moderates' in the C.P.C. have to contend.

In fact, it is in struggling successfully against the opportunism of such leftists and against the opportunism of the 'moderates' that the C.P.C. under Mao's leadership grew in strength and returned to the correct line after each deviation. One of the facts one notes about both is the absence of an appraisal in proletarian class terms of the historical situation in any country at a particular time. To defy those in authority with words or violence or to deviate from existing fashions by starting new ones is satisfying to petty bourgeois radicals, perhaps; but as the Chinese make clear, it is only in the course of revolutionary practice and thought following the correct (that is, Marxist-Leninist) line basing oneself on the people in their millions that one can know when it is necessary to go against the tide. As the Constitution of the C.P.C. says: 'The Communist Party of China has strengthened itself and grown in the course of the struggle against both Right and 'Left' opportunist lines. Comrades throughout the Party must have the revolutionary spirit of daring to go against the tide ...'

### Dictatorship that frees

This is something meant to be taken very seriously by every member of the Party, and everyone seeking to become a member or participating in the nomination of a worker, peasant, soldier, intellectual or cadre to membership of the C.P.C. In repudiating Lin Piao's wrong line and subjecting Confucius and his disciples to criticism according to the Marxist viewpoint and method, Chinese Communists have dared to take on a task which once seemed impossible. They have drawn on what they learnt in the course of the Cultural Revolution. More than that, they, and the younger leaders of the C.P.C. who will have to carry on the task for a long time to come, have realised a principle which has been crucial from the earliest days of the C.P.C. and, still earlier, in the work of Marx and Lenin. It is only under the dictatorship of the proletariat that people in their millions are freed to go against the tide and to create new and unprecedented things. As Mao Tse-tung has stressed, the transition to communism cannot be achieved by an establishment claiming to be proletarian and revolutionary; the revolutionary vanguard must always be a vanguard of Marxist revolutionaries based on the most revolutionary class, not an establishment claiming to be revolutionary. Responsibility for the revolutionary task comes above everything else. As Wang Hung-wen said

at the Tenth National Congress of the C.P.C. last August: 'When confronted with issues that concern the line and overall situation, a true Communist must act without any selfish considerations and dare to go against the tide, fearing neither removal from his post, expulsion from the Party, imprisonment, divorce nor guillotine'.

'Dare to go against the tide' is, then, not the slogan of some 'left' faction contending against a 'moderate' faction. The spirit of daring which characterises the Communist in China is the *distinctive class virtue* of the revolutionary proletariat in the present historical era. It cannot be identified with the unstable leftism which springs from the petty bourgeois outlook or the bourgeois conservatism which has turned its back on revolution. The C.P.C. had a number of leaders who at critical moments tried to take the Party on the wrong line and very nearly succeeded—from Chen Tu-hsiu, Li Li-san and Wang Ming to Liu Shao-chi and Lin Piao.

Although the tide of reaction has almost totally swept away the great achievements of the Bolshevik Revolution, the prospects for the world revolution for which Marx and Lenin worked are better than ever before. The proletarian socialist revolution is being deepened and extended among more than one-fifth of mankind and is giving strength to socialist revolutionary transformations in Korea, Albania and North Vietnam, to a remarkable upsurge of liberation struggles and to an almost unanimous battle in the Third World against imperialist domination of the world's economic resources and trade. The C.P.C. grew as a truly revolutionary party of the proletariat and

the poor peasantry because of those who went against the tide. The real revolutionary knows that his task is only begun by taking up the immediate demands of the people. The crucial test is to fight against forsaking revolutionary principle for opportunist expediency. To go against the tide is to steer the movement away from the line of least resistance, insisting all the time on what is required by its longer-term strategy or what Marx and Engels in *The Communist Manifesto* called the line of march that can realise 'the ultimate general results of the proletarian movement'. Thus revolutionaries in China repeatedly went against the tide: in cooperation with the revolutionary Kuomintang of Sun Yat-sen; in resistance to the abandonment of armed struggle in 1927; in opposing the suicidal policy of trying to occupy cities; in following the mass line during Chiang's annihilation campaigns; on the Long March; in the policy of the United Front for Resistance against Japan; and so on. Every time it was insistence on the correct line which kept Chinese Communists united as a revolutionary Party.

Both nationally and internationally, any other kind of unity can be forged only at the expense of proletarian revolutionaries and their achievements. When questions of line become less important than other things, when subjective factors dominate and when conformity is demanded by Party leaders, then the unity and effectiveness of the Party are damaged or destroyed. Those who go against the tide must oppose capricious decisions and policies based on one-sided, partial assessments, even when these decisions and policies are in accord with what most 'educated' people and 'experts' think is correct.

## CONFUCIUS AND CONFUCIANISM

*The doctrine of Confucius (551-479 B.C.) and Mencius (372-289 B.C.)*

The Chinese people in their present mass movement to criticise Lin Piao and Confucius are giving the Western China 'experts' another shock, though this time the experts are much more cautious in reporting than during the Cultural Revolution, when they used phrases like 'social chaos' and 'economic collapse'. In a different sense, however, this shock is deeper and more puzzling. They ask why Lin Piao and Confucius are linked together? Why cannot dead Lin Piao be left alone, and why should Confucius be attacked, when the whole civilised world has regarded Confucianism as the philosophy responsible for China's unique culture and civilisation, the only unbroken one in the world?

Up to Liberation in 1949, an enormous mass of books on China by Chinese, Japanese and Western scholars centred on Confucian philosophy and ethics and their social and political results. The translation of Confucian classics into Western languages has had lasting influence on Western thought and institutions, for instance French rationalism and the British Civil Service examination system. Indeed, in the minds of many Western scholars Confucian teaching is the most rational, natural, human, and commonsense, closely resembling (in some of its most reactionary elements) the influential philosophical traditions of Plato and Aristotle. But not all admirers were genuinely scholarly in their admiration. Many were using ideas such as the spirit of obedience, doctrine of the mean, filial piety and the attitude of looking-backward, as useful ideological weapons for subjugating the Chinese people. When the Japanese imperialists invaded China they energetically preached reverence for Confucius as the theoretical basis for their 'East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere'.

Chinese scholars throughout history have spent most of their lives studying and re-studying, annotating and re-annotating Confucian classics, and were very proud of their heritage as the highest culture in the world. This is in accordance with one

of the most important concepts of Confucius, 'study well to become an official'. Those with wealth and leisure were able to study for years until they passed a series of Imperial examinations and became officials amassing wealth and holding power. They wrote the dynastic histories; they interpreted philosophical meanings to the Emperors, and acted as their political advisers; they maintained the bureaucracy ruling and oppressing the people. These were the 'scholar-gentry officials' who were tools of the rulers from dynasty to dynasty. Thus for 24 centuries Confucian doctrines have been the theoretical basis for the unity and continuity of China and her culture. The Chinese people have a very deep sentiment of being one nation and one people, witness the fact that the 'overseas Chinese' though citizens of other nations, some hostile to People's China, are called 'Chinese' and most of them feel 'Chinese'.

What is Confucianism, so powerful and so lasting? To answer this question, it is necessary to state briefly the historical antecedents and setting of the period of Confucius, who lived from 551-479 B.C.

Hsia Dynasty	... ..	21st to 16th century B.C.
Shang Dynasty	... ..	16th to 1066 B.C.
Chou Dynasty	... ..	1066 B.C. to 256 B.C.
Spring and Autumn period	...	722 B.C. to 481 B.C.
Warring States	... ..	403 B.C. to 221 B.C.

The dominant political structure of the Chou Dynasty was fiefdom, with hereditary rulers and a slave-owning aristocracy. Together with this social structure there arose an enormous and complex code of *rites* which governed the states, their rulers, their rights, duties and privileges, from the highest to the lowest in the Imperial and states' hierarchy. The *Chou Rites* were regarded as unalterable principles like those which govern and regulate the movements of the heavenly bodies. The political and social structure and their regulating rites, as well as some cosmological concepts, had been handed down from earlier

dynasties, especially the Shang, but the Chou dynasty elaborated and perfected them.

Confucius was born and bred in one of the aristocratic families and never questioned the nature of this society, but fully supported it. In fact, he developed it by formulating theories on various aspects of the nature of man and of the outside world. Towards the end of the Spring and Autumn period the slave-owning class declined, there was growing unrest which led to uprisings by the slaves. By the beginning of the time of the Warring States there was a more advanced mode of production, giving rise to economic progress and a new social class. Men of this emerging class took possession of land and naturally sought to gain political power at the expense of the slave-owning class. In Confucius' eyes, such deeds were violations of the sacred Chou Rites and created social chaos.

Indeed, both the Spring and Autumn and the Warring States were periods of tremendous turmoil, but they were also ages of great cultural blossoming, the age of many scholars and the Hundred Schools of Thought. Members of the elite, the intelligentsia, wrote, debated, travelled to propagate their theories in order to get a hearing from the states' rulers and, if successful get employment. Confucius was only one of them, and not even one of the earliest. What made Confucianism so important in history was his conservatism, which always supported the status quo, and his over-riding emphasis on the study of the classics as the road to official position. China, uniquely, came to be governed by literati who were ever ready to modify theories to please the rulers, to secure their own positions and power.

#### Confucianism: doctrines of Confucius and Mencius

Cosmology: heaven, earth and man were one unified and harmonious whole, preordained by heavenly principles. Celestial movements, terrestrial seasons and phenomena, human relations, were all related, one manifesting another, unalterable and eternal. However, in his perfect cosmological scheme, Confucius and later Mencius, a student of his grandson, divided human beings into two main classes, the superior and the inferior; the former were knowledgeable and wise, the latter stupid, and this also was unalterable. A few quotations suffice to show this class division:

One who does not know the mandate of heaven cannot be a superior man. One who does not know the rites cannot stand up as a man.

The superior man fears heaven, important people and the words of sages; the inferior man does not understand the mandate of heaven, is disrespectful towards important people and insults the words of sages.

The superior man thinks of virtue; the inferior man thinks about the soil; the superior man is diligent in governing (the state); the inferior man exerts his physical strength. Those who work with their minds govern; those who work with their hands are governed.

Women and inferior people are hard to nurture; they are hard to get along with; they get out of hand when befriended, and resent it when kept at a distance.

Later Confucians, especially Tung Chung-shu in the second century B.C., formulated more codes of conduct for women, such as 'Three obediences and four virtues'. There was a popular saying: 'Having married a cock she must follow the cock; having married a dog she must follow the dog; having married a carrying pole she must carry it for life'. Hence the not uncommon practice that if a man should die before marriage, his fiancée (even though they had never seen each other) had to go into his home, go through the marriage ceremony and be a widow for the rest of her life. As Chairman Mao wrote, the Chinese people had three ropes round their necks, but women had four: political authority, clan authority, religious authority, male authority. These authorities embodied the whole feudal and patriarchal ideology and social system. This is why during

the Tai-Ping Rebellion women played a big role in anti-Confucian activities. In the 4th May Movement, women and schoolgirls paraded the streets, carried banners, and shouted 'Down with the Confucian shop!'

#### On Government

To all questions Confucius gave different answers, to suit the questioner. When students asked how to govern a state and rule the people, he said that the essential requisite was to revive and adopt the principles and practices, laws and regulations, music and sacrificial ceremonies of kings in ancient dynasties, such as the calendars and seasonal observances of the Hsia period, the chariots which distinguished rank and status in Shang times, and the costumes of the Chou dynasty. This may be summed up as the revival and practice of the Chou Rites. He opposed the rising class of landowners and violently hated the slave uprisings. Devoting his whole attention to *Restrain oneself and return to the Rites*, he was opposing the trend of development and trying to turn history backwards.

This was found to have been a main aim of Lin Piao. He inscribed as his principal motto:

Restrain oneself and return to the Rites; of all things this is the most important.

Thus once again Confucianism was being used as an ideological weapon in an attempt to overthrow the revolutionary regime and return to an order in which a bourgeois exploiting class would dominate.

True to his teaching that to study well was to acquire official positions, Confucius and some students travelled far and wide, from one feudal state to another, trying to gain a hearing from their princes, to convince them of his theories of government. He never succeeded, except for one short period as head of the Justice Department in his own state of Lu, in the southern half of modern Shantung Province.

#### The Legalist School of Thought

This was the most important of the Hundred Schools of Thought. The Legalists spoke for the interests of the newly emerging landowning class. Some of them were eminent Confucian scholars, such as Hsun Ching, of the third century B.C., but they clearly saw the nature of the time, the historical trend. Their powerful writings refuted Confucian doctrines and advocated the abolition of the hereditary clan system of the slave-owning aristocracy, because, they argued, it divided the country and weakened the central authority; the Chou Imperial Government had declined to so weak a position that it was like that of a small feudal state. They demanded a unified China, governed by one law.

There was one state which Confucius despised and never visited, but which particularly attracted his students who had become Legalists. This was the State of Chin with its capital near modern Sian in Shensi Province, in the north-west. About 350 B.C. its ruler Hsiao Kung, took into service a Legalist, named Shang Ying, from the State of Wei, and immediately put into effect measures of reform. In consequence Chin became very strong and absorbed many of the other states. By 221 B.C. Prince Cheng in the 26th year of his reign had conquered the six remaining feudal states, unifying all China, and declared himself the first universal Emperor (Chin Shih Huang Ti). Putting the Legalist theories into practice, Emperor Chin established a strong central government, unified the Chinese (Han) writing, made many highways through the provinces for imperial communication, abolished the fief system, divided the country into administrative prefectures and counties which, with minor variations, have lasted to this day, and appointed their governors from the central government. China owes one of the greatest debts of gratitude to Emperor Chin and the Legalists for the fact that during the second half of the 19th century

the military might of eight imperialist powers failed to cut up China as they did Africa. Yet throughout history the Confucians perpetuated the view that the Chin Emperor was a tyrant because he had many Confucian classics burned and put to death several hundreds of Confucians who opposed his rule.

Throughout history these two schools debated with each other; their polemics never ceased. The list of writers is a long one, but mention must be made of the greatest revolutionary, Lu Hsun (1881-1936). His *Confucius of today* exposed the reactionary influence of Confucius in Chinese history. Peasant uprisings in all dynasties right down to the war of liberation fought against Confucian ideas and cruel practices. Some of them burned Confucian classics and tablets: 'The most holy teacher', 'The example of teachers for tens of thousands of generations to come'. They demanded 'equality between the high and the low', 'equalise the rich and the poor', 'a fair share of the land'. These were direct counter-attacks against the negligence and oppression of the dynasties maintained by Confucian doctrines and scholar-bureaucrats.

Many people vaguely influenced by the writings of Sinologists may well ask about the famous Confucian ideas of benevolence, righteousness, virtue, loyalty and forbearance and the doctrine of the mean. They may insist that these are good qualities which should not be criticised. If the sufferings of 85 per cent of the Chinese people before 1949, which were justified by Confucianism, are not evidence enough, it is simple to quote, from the *Analects*, what Confucius' pupils recorded of his sayings and deeds. One example must suffice: within seven days of taking office in his own state of Lu, Confucius had the leader of the opposition to him killed, in spite of state laws, advice and strong opposition to his decision. This was his 'benevolence'.

#### Against Confucius; against Lin Piao

The present campaign to criticise Confucius and Lin Piao is not an academic exercise, nor is it just a movement to unmask Lin as an individual. It is a continuation of the class struggle of the Cultural Revolution in a new form, a campaign in ideological education. Four main objectives can be seen: (1) to raise the class consciousness of millions of Chinese people; (2) to enable them to see for themselves the dangerous elements of Confucian thought; (3) to encourage the masses to study further in order to see where in their own lives, work and experience Confucian ideas threaten socialist consolidation and advance; (4) to use their initiative to create a stronger socialist material base and ideological superstructure.

While rectification campaigns and movements to advance socialist consciousness through education have gone on throughout the history of the Chinese Communist Party, and especially since the foundation of the People's Republic in 1949, the present campaign has involved China's millions in a more far-reaching and profound way than ever before. The earlier years of the Cultural Revolution aroused mass enthusiasm and participation and brought about extensive changes in political and mass organisations. But it is harder to change human thought and conduct than to move mountains and this transformation is far from complete.

Lin Piao, a follower of Confucian thought, believed in rule by the elite and despised the rank-and-file. As far back as 1930 Mao Tse-tung wrote *A Single Spark Can Start a Prairie Fire* as a criticism of those, including Lin Piao, who were pessimistic about the possibilities of a people's victory. Much later, before the Ninth Party Congress in 1969, Lin Piao and Chen Po-ta drafted a report emphasizing the role of the 'productive forces', meaning the professionals, negating the role of the masses. This draft, which was in contradiction to the mass line of the Cultural Revolution, was turned down by the Central Committee of the Party.

In private life Lin Piao exposed his bourgeois ideology. For example, he displayed on his walls scrolls of Confucian sayings. This was not mere artistic fancy, but accorded with the centuries-old Confucian thinking described above. Traditionally these sayings were sacred, were expressions of determination, warning, encouragement to rule with 'benevolence'. His use of the scrolls does not prove him a traitor or a double-dealer, but is a pointer to his ideology. Christians have but to consider the significance of Christian symbols and objects of Christian art: for many they have a deep spiritual meaning.

But if he wanted to achieve power, he had to establish a popular basis, exhibiting himself as a protagonist of the 'left'. In 1959 he brought about drastic changes in the army to restore the revolutionary image and traditions which were being eroded as Soviet models were followed. Later, he devised, then waved, the Little Red Book and exaggeratedly adulated Mao. He called for efforts to 'drag out the handful in the army' in line with the call to 'drag out the handful of Party persons in authority in the Party' and his prestige grew as Mao's 'close comrade-in-arms and successor'.

It was also essential for him to have a carefully devised plan which would be known in detail by followers in near and distant places; a mere palace coup at the centre could not achieve a seizure of power. Lin Piao therefore had a plan, copies of which have been found, known as 'Outline Project 571'. In Chinese these numbers read 'wu chi yi', which also means 'armed uprising'. Details have not been released but facts known to the Chinese people prove that he planned to seize power and assassinate Mao Tse-tung.

The present campaign seeks to enable the people as a whole to see *why* Lin acted as he did, so that in future other Lins cannot threaten socialist society either by guile or by coup.

Since 1949 every mass movement, denounced by enemies at home and abroad, has resulted in a leap forward in economic construction and growth of socialist consciousness and determination. The present movement will free the people from the oldest, deepest and most pernicious ideological fetter. The world will have to open its eyes to a greater leap forward at the conclusion of this movement.

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## HOLIDAYS & BOOK ORDERS

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Orders for the George Thomson paperbacks may be sent to C.P.S.G. Books, 41 Great Russell Street, London, W.C.1, and will receive attention. German friends report that copies of the German translation of *From Marx to Mao Tse-tung* are 'torn from their hands' by eager buyers and that a second edition has become necessary.

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