

China Policy Study Group BROADSHEET

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NEW FOCUS OF CONTENTION

Portugal is the new flashpoint of Europe. There the two superpowers are locked in struggle, the U.S., seeking to retain a strategic base whilst the Soviet leaders, taking advantage of the Portuguese people's desire to overthrow fascism, pursue their own political and military ends.

Portugal is especially significant because of its position between the Mediterranean and the Atlantic. Until the fall of the Caetano regime the country was firmly in the pocket of the U.S. The Azores archipelago is an important military base for the U.S., enabling her to transfer forces to the Middle East as well as to monitor the movement of Soviet submarines in the Atlantic. NATO's Atlantic Command is near Lisbon and the country's airports and munition stations also serve NATO. The U.S. is therefore very sensitive to changes of policy by the Portuguese Government.

The fascist rule of Caetano created many contradictions within Portugal and its overthrow has brought to power a government representing new powerful forces, not least from the Army and a section of the bourgeoisie whose development was hindered by Caetano. U.S. concern at internal policies is, however, secondary to her concern at the trend of Portuguese foreign policy. It has been reported that the Soviet Union has asked for a sea port for its Atlantic 'fishing fleet' and for merchant fleet facilities in the Madeira Islands. If this trend is confirmed and continues the Soviet Union will be eroding considerably the U.S. dominance in the southwest Mediterranean.

The U.S. Government, already anxious about instability in Italy and the disputes between Greece and Turkey on the eastern flank of NATO, have through Kissinger and Ford expressed their 'concern' over Portugal. Their fear that a valuable asset is slipping from them may compel them to act 'decisively' and in so doing illustrate the Chinese view that Europe is now the focus of world contention between the superpowers.

In Portugal both superpowers seek to turn internal unrest to their own advantage; as always, each creates its own coterie of puppets to mislead and confuse the people.

CHINA'S REVOLUTION IN EDUCATION

1. Examinations

'The present-day method of examination is a way of dealing with the enemy. It's a surprise attack. It uses odd questions. Catch questions. It's simply the method of the old imperial examinations.' Thus Mao Tse-tung, early in the Cultural Revolution.

At the Foreign Languages Institute in Peking, where my wife and I have been teaching since 1949, we used to examine students one at a time before a microphone—so as to make a tape-recording and analyse it for language problems. There would generally be one examiner and a couple of other teachers to observe and help decide on the mark. The atmosphere, despite all the examiner's efforts, was tense. I especially recall one student: beads of sweat appeared on his forehead even in midwinter, the moment the exam began. The teachers of one class tried to solve the problem of mike-fright by hiding the microphone in a vase of artificial flowers—a practice which was criticised during the Cultural Revolution.

A few weeks ago, with some other resident British and American teachers, I was invited to act as a guest examiner at the passing out exams in English, at a nearby secondary school, which specialises in foreign languages. The form of the examination had been worked out by the students in consultation with their teachers. It was to be a discussion in English. Each class was divided into groups of four students, all of whom were provided in advance with typed lists of discussion topics. These included: 'The Revolution in Education', 'My Experiences when Working in a Commune or Factory' (an integral part of the curriculum in Chinese schools and universities), 'My Hopes of Life after Graduation', 'The Movement to Criticise Lin Piao and Confucius'. During the discussion a British or American teacher acted as moderator as well as playing the part of a foreign visitor to China, while a Chinese member of the staff took notes on the performance of the students, with whom he was familiar. The topics produced such lively debate that the students forgot they were being examined and used English simply as a means

of communication. Especially animated were the discussions on the improvement of teaching methods and material in this particular school and on the Confucian concept of the absolute authority of the teacher—with no punches pulled about the failings of certain teachers, who did not remain nameless. The ideological connexion between Confucius and Lin Piao, who lived 2,000 years apart, provoked such spirited argument that when the lunch bell called a halt to the exam the students asked to have it continued in the afternoon. Such things surely never happened in those old exams denounced by Mao Tse-tung as surprise attacks on the enemy. This new type of exam had eliminated tension and substituted an atmosphere of relaxation which enabled students to show what they had learnt.

Soon after this I sat in on an English exam at a university specialising in foreign languages.

A young People's Liberation Army man in uniform was standing on the teacher's platform. (All Chinese university students are now recruited from the workers, peasants or soldiers.) He was relating in English 'How I raised Pigs in the P.L.A.' After enlisting, he and his whole company of recruits had discussed Mao Tse-tung's *Serve the People*, and he had pledged to do just that. But he had felt let down when he was assigned to help raise the company's 30 pigs. He had envied those who were learning to drive trucks and felt ashamed to write home that after joining the heroic P.L.A. he had become a swineherd—especially when pupils of a nearby primary school nicknamed him 'Commander of the Pigs'. 'Then', he went on, 'the Political Instructor came round and we studied *Serve the People* again, together, and other passages from Chairman Mao's works.'

He spoke for ten minutes on how his thoughts and feelings about being a swineherd had gradually changed and about the complexities of pig-raising. Then came the questions, some from teachers but most from his fellow students.

'What other works of Chairman Mao

did you study, besides *Serve the People*?

'Well, there was that passage in *On Art and Literature* where Chairman Mao says that when he was young he used to think manual labour was undignified, that intellectuals were the only clean people in the world; and how afterwards he came to realise that unremoulded intellectuals were not clean, but that workers and peasants, even though their hands were dirty and their feet were smeared with cow-dung were . . .'

'Any other works?'

'Yes. *On Practice*. You see I'm a townie. I'd never had anything to do with pigs before, except eat them. So the work was all new to me. I had to learn through practice, not just by reading technical manuals. If the pigs fell ill or when I had a hard time repairing the sties, I had to find out what I'd done wrong. I had to sum up my experience, analyse problems, combine theory with practice . . .'

'Do you think that learning how to raise pigs will help you become a better English translator and interpreter?'

'Well, not exactly . . .'

His classmates disagreed. 'Raising pigs is like language learning in some ways,' said a girl. 'You must put your heart into it, because it's for the revolution. So is studying English. To do any sort of revolutionary work you must remould your ideology, get rid of bourgeois ideas.'

The English exam was in line with Mao Tse-tung's principle that the purpose of all education is to transform the students' ideology. But it had two other notable characteristics. One was its collective nature: the examining was not left entirely to the teachers, all the students of the class examined each other. The second characteristic was the atmosphere of relaxation; the exam was rather a jolly affair.

One reason for the relaxed atmosphere was: not only had the new method of examination been worked out by the students themselves in consultation with their teacher, but the examinees could choose their topics from a list they themselves had drawn up. Another reason was the marking system—or lack of it. The pre-Cultural Revolution system of: 5 (excellent), 4 (good), 3 (pass) and 2 (fail) was an improvement on the earlier system of so many marks out of a hundred, which had fostered the competitiveness traditional in a society where high marks had once meant high posts in the government. Changing to the four-point system, however, had not eliminated competitiveness, especially since most teachers would add a plus or minus sign after the figure, thus making it in effect a 12-point system. This was in response to the emphasis placed on marks by Liu Shao-chi and his followers, whose line in education was to cultivate an intellectual elite to run China, not to rely on the mass of the people. For this new type of examination, however, no marks were given. Teachers and students held meetings, first separately, then together, to discuss the performance of each student and of the class as a whole, at which strong and weak points were noted and suggestions made for the improvement of both teaching and studying. Nobody failed the exam.

No uniformity

Examination procedure at this university was not standardised. Different classes created different methods. One class rigged up an exhibition of pictures of the Tachai commune brigade and each examinee in turn acted as exhibition guide while students and teachers, acting as foreign visitors, asked questions. Another class (of 16 students) that I visited, in preparation for the exam, had divided itself into four groups and gone with its teacher to a nearby commune. There they spent an afternoon investigating the situation in one of the brigades. For the exam each group reported its findings in English. One dealt with a typical family history, that of brigade member Grandpa Sun; another with education in the brigade primary school; still another with the educated youth who have

settled down in the brigade; and the fourth with the movement to criticise Lin Piao and Confucius. Three members of the brigade had been invited to attend the exam—including Grandpa Sun—and students took turns interpreting for them. Others interpreted for non-English speaking members of the university leadership who attended as observers.

The time for social investigation in the brigade had been short and there were inevitably points on which the students were not clear. These were clarified during the question period following each report, by appealing to the brigade members present, who answered through their student interpreters. Grandpa Sun straightened out the students' account of how he had been press-ganged and put into uniform for a day by a Kuomintang officer, to bolster his unit's pay-roll. A woman teacher from the brigade school was also present. She amplified the story of a former pupil victimised by Liu Shao-chi's line in education, which 'put marks in command'. One student, she explained, had been refused a graduation diploma and was compelled to repeat a whole year's work because he fell one per cent short of the passing mark.

Worker participation

One student had made the sweeping statement that in the brigade pay for men and women was already equal. This provoked lively discussion among teachers and students during the question period. It was settled by the third commune member present, the brigade party secretary. Equal pay for equal work, he said, had long been party policy and had constantly been called for by Chairman Mao. Still it had not yet been fully implemented. In their own brigade, he went on, much progress had been made, but pay rates still slightly favoured the men and the struggle for equality must be carried through to the end. Such interventions from the commune members were translated from Chinese into English to the entire audience (including all the students of the class) of about 30 people. So were the comments of the visitors which brought the exam to a close.

The practical work of oral interpretation, as well as the preparatory work of social investigation in the commune, gave this examination dimensions beyond those previously described.

Not long ago we went back with our now grown-up son, born and brought up in China, to the secondary school he had attended in the '60s. Before the Cultural Revolution it had been an elitist boarding school. There was a stiff entrance examination, 99 per cent being required in maths and Chinese (courteously waived in the case of 'foreign friends'). The boarding facilities made it possible for pupils to come from all over Peking, but a large proportion were actually from nearby Peking University and Academy of Science families. They were sons and daughters of professors and scientists. Few workers' children got in and most of the few who did, dropped out. They did not come from a houseful of books and their parents were not educated enough to help them with their heavy load of homework. Now this school is a day school open to all children living in the locality and the dormitories have been turned into school factories (for cabinet making and radio parts) where the pupils are trained in manual skills. Seventy per cent of them still come from University and Academy families, but the majority are from workers' homes, for they are not mainly sons and daughters of professors and scientists, but also of cooks, clerks, drivers, furnacemen, maintenance workers and so on. There is no entrance exam.

For a recent physics examination the students were divided into groups and given a number of questions on electricity. Then each group went to a different nearby factory to investigate its electric power set-up and, in the course of doing so, to find the answers to its questions. Then they were examined, not by their teachers but by the factory electricians, who decided whether they knew their stuff well enough to pass.

These examinations held in commune and factory complied with Mao Tse-tung's calls during the Cultural Revolution: for the students to be re-educated by the workers and peasants; and an end to the domination of education by bourgeois intellectuals and for the working class to lead the proletarian revolution in education.

Examinations—in this society at least—are a critical investigation not only of students and studying but of teachers and teaching. The self-critical discussions among teachers and students which follow exams reveal problems, hangovers from the

past: some mechanical thinking, a tendency to be abstract, general and superficial rather than concrete, specific and analytical; some spoon-feeding by over-solicitous teachers instead of cultivation of the power to think and analyse as called for by Mao Tse-tung. But these problems are being faced. The revolution in education, though still in its early stages, is under way. The smashing of the old examination system, whose influence lingered on until the Cultural Revolution, will help drive it forward.

DAVID CROOK

LESSONS OF REVOLUTION

The new Constitution of the People's Republic of China says that China is a state of the dictatorship of the proletariat, based on the worker-peasant alliance, led by the working class through its vanguard the Communist Party of China, and guided by Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought.¹ Chang Chun-chiao states in his report on the revision of the Constitution that it is the result of the experience of the Chinese people in their revolutionary struggles, and specifically the result of discussing and summing up these experiences over the past five years. If history has convinced the Chinese people that it is necessary to win and preserve the dictatorship of the proletariat, it is not surprising that a campaign has now started to go more deeply into the underlying theory of this political form. Undoubtedly, different peoples have to experience the need for it in the context of their own particular conditions. At the same time, the questions being raised in this campaign are not relevant only to China. We shall mention a few of them, referring especially to another article by Chang Chun-chiao, 'On exercising all-round dictatorship over the bourgeoisie'.²

The dictatorship of the proletariat was first described by Marx and it is important to understand why his conception is held to be a scientific one. It wasn't just desirable, he said, but an absolutely necessary form of social development. As with other processes in society (and in the natural world as well), one form changes into another through the playing out of its own contradictions. So Marx could draw on his knowledge of this general theory of development. Then too, a political form is necessary which resolves the specific contradictions of capitalism, a form which emerges from capitalism and eventually disappears into communism. Thus Marx's careful analysis of the capitalist system helped him to see which characteristics this transitional period would have. Finally, there was the concrete experience of the working class revolutionary movement from 1848 on. Particularly important was the Paris Commune of 1871: although this lasted only a short time, Marx was able to show that its example would, in course of time, become general for the world. Thus he points out:

Between capitalist and communist society lies the period of the revolutionary transformation of the one into the other. There corresponds to this also a political transformation period in which the state can be nothing but the *revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat*.³

If we talk about the dictatorship of the proletariat as something *general*, we must look at it in three main senses: first, its *essential* characteristics apply to all countries; second, its tasks apply to the *entire* historical period separating capitalism from communism; third, it has several tasks, none of which may be neglected.

On the first of these points, Lenin says that

theory, i.e. the discussion of the general (and not the nationally specific) class foundations of democracy and dictatorship, ought to deal not with a special question, such as the franchise, but with the general question of

whether democracy can be *preserved for the rich, for the exploiters*, in the historical period of the overthrow of the exploiters and the replacement of their state by the state of the exploited.⁴

This is just what the Chinese are doing now. The Constitution dealt with the specific application of the dictatorship, but it is even more important to have the general points clear in your head. It is also the internationalist duty of the Chinese to get these points clear. As Mao Tse-tung said recently, 'lack of clarity on this question will lead to revisionism.'⁵

Differences within similarity

Although the differences between individual socialist revolutions are great, it is important not to lose sight of their fundamental similarity. There is a certain red herring, which Trotsky did something to spawn, concerning the peculiarities of the revolution in a backward and still feudal country. This really leads us to the second aspect of the general character of socialism, namely that its essential features (summed up in the proletarian dictatorship) apply through all its different stages. In any country, there will be a certain transitional period while a socialist economic base is laid, but *this particular struggle* is exceptionally difficult in a backward country like China or Russia. Are the forces of capitalist restoration created by a failure to handle the specific tasks of this period? The Chinese would probably not accept this narrowing down of the issue. The initial struggle to build the base and the struggle to continue the transformation are two aspects of the same revolutionary task under the dictatorship of the proletariat. In Albania too,

Our revolutionary experience convinces us that the idea of the transition period should be used with two meanings: a narrow meaning, which includes the transition from capitalism to socialism, and a broader meaning which includes the transition from capitalism to communism. The narrowing of the historic limits of the extension of this period, its reduction simply to the period of the transition from capitalism to the establishment of socialist relations in production is pregnant with very dangerous results for the socialist revolution and the construction of socialism.⁶

This perspective is the same as that seen by Chang Chun-chiao in presenting Lenin's statement that the economic system under socialism still *engenders* capitalist elements: 'Some comrades argue that Lenin was referring to the situation before co-operation. This is obviously incorrect. Lenin's remarks are not out of date.' Apparently the Chinese consider that the Soviet Union *did* succeed in building a genuinely socialist economic base; *even so* a new bourgeoisie (e.g. Khrushchev and Brezhnev) sprang up.

Lenin's works date from a very early stage in building socialism. In outward form they apply to this restricted period, but in essence the contradictions they reflect underlie the *entire* historical period. For example, right at the beginning of the

Russian revolution Lenin put forward the proposition: Communism is Soviet power plus the electrification of the whole country. As Kim Il Sung, leader of the Korean Workers' Party, points out, this has a profound significance for the whole socialist era. Soviet power, he says, means the proletarian dictatorship itself:

This proposition of Lenin's teaches us that communism will be achieved only when, on the one hand, the ideological and cultural revolutions are accomplished and the whole of society is revolutionised and working-classed through the strengthened dictatorship of the proletariat and when, on the other, a solid material and technical basis for a very high level of the productive forces is laid, relying on the fulfilment of the technical revolution.⁷

Thus we have said that one aspect of the all-round character of this political form is that it applies to all countries, and a second aspect is that its general tasks are carried out throughout the period of socialism. A third aspect is that there are several different tasks and it is dangerous to neglect any of them. The all-round nature of this activity is a reflection of the specific class character of the proletariat, whose job is not just to remove this or that group of exploiters but to get rid of the lot. Undoubtedly the class consciousness of the working class enables them to see through the Liu Shao-chi line that 'exploitation is a merit'. Still, after Liu Shao-chi came Lin Piao. Correct consciousness has to be raised to the level of scientific theory if the workers are to see through changes in tactics by the class enemy and finish with exploitation once and for all.

Limited Marxism

The line which denies the scientific character of socialist theory (today we call this the revisionist line) always omits one or more aspects of the theory so as to leave a loophole which allows exploitation to creep back. Marx was quite clear on this: in a text which is much studied in China at present he criticises pseudo-socialist theory which 'subordinates the total movement to one of its moments', 'does away with the revolutionary struggle of the classes', 'only idealises present society' and 'sets forth each of the so-called systems as a pretentious adherence to one of the transit points of the social revolution against another'.⁸ This is why Chinese communists, taking up Marx's revolutionary banner, emphasise the *all-round* dictatorship of the proletariat. Chang Chun-chiao points out:

If Marxism is to be limited, curtailed and distorted in theory and practice, if the dictatorship of the proletariat is to be turned into an empty phrase, or all-round dictatorship over the bourgeoisie rendered incomplete and exercised only in some but not all spheres, or only at some stages (for instance, before the transformation of the system of ownership) but not at all stages, or in other words, if the 'fortified villages' of the bourgeoisie are not all destroyed but some are left to allow the bourgeoisie to expand its ranks again, doesn't that mean to prepare the conditions for a bourgeois restoration? Doesn't it mean to turn the dictatorship of the proletariat into something that protects the bourgeoisie, particularly the newly-engendered bourgeoisie?²

The question of using the dictatorship against a newly-engendered bourgeoisie is receiving special attention at the moment. This can only be because it has been neglected by certain people, because it is the most dangerous tendency and hence has become the touchstone showing whether one accepts socialism in the full sense. It certainly doesn't mean giving up other aspects of the work, for example the exercise of the dictatorship in the field of culture, which proved its worth in the Cultural Revolution and is written into the new Chinese Constitution (Article 12).

Not yet equality

The Constitution lays down the principle 'from each according to his ability, to each according to his work' (Article 9). As Marx pointed out, this is a necessary feature of socialism

but it still has a bourgeois character, i.e. it looks like equality but really it isn't. People have unequal ability to work, they also have unequal needs. If you leave things to themselves, this principle would mean some people would gradually accumulate wealth, it would be possible for a new bourgeoisie to arise, and they would then make a bid for power and try to restore an all-round bourgeois dictatorship, just as in the Soviet Union. Political power is crucial. Under capitalism there is theoretical equality, but this is restricted and emasculated by the bourgeois state so that for the broad masses of workers equality is nothing but an empty phrase. Socialism starts with some bourgeois characteristics, birthmarks of the society from which it emerged. Pursuing its necessary course of development towards communism (where people give according to their ability and receive according to their need), socialism restricts those bourgeois features which could give rise to exploitation again, and encourages new revolutionary things, of the kind which emerged in the Chinese cultural revolution. This function can be performed only by the special kind of state which Marx called the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat³ (because of the unprecedented historical tasks it performs), and which he also called the *class* dictatorship of the proletariat,⁸ because of the strongly, specifically working-class character it bears.

1 *Documents of the First Session of the Fourth National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China*, Peking (FLP) 1975.

2 *Peking Review* No. 14, 1975.

3 Karl Marx, *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, Peking (FLP) 1972, pp. 27-8.

4 V. I. Lenin, *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky*, Peking (FLP) 1970, p. 37.

5 *Peking Review* No. 9, 1975, p. 5.

6 Hekuran Mara, 'About some questions of the development of the productive forces and the perfection of relations in production in the complete construction of socialism' (1969) in *Some Questions of Socialist Construction in Albania and of the Struggle against Revisionism*, Tirana (Naim Frashëri Publishing House) 1971, p. 187.

7 Kim Il Sung, 'On some theoretical problems of the socialist economy' in Kim Il Sung, *Selected Works* Vol. V, p. 301.

8 Karl Marx, *The Class Struggles in France, 1848-1850*, Moscow (Progress Publishers) 1972, p. 117.

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U.K. ISSN 0067-2052