

China Policy Study Group

BROADSHEET

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THE BEST JUDGES

A new stage in socialist progress was marked by the 3rd Plenary Session of the 10th Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party which took place in Peking from July 16 to 21. Since the last Plenum the Chinese people have lost many heroes of the liberation struggle and the proletarian revolution, men who had been with Chairman Mao from the beginning.

Besides confirming the appointment of Chairman Hua Kuofeng as Chairman of the Party's Central Committee and its Military Commission, the Plenum unanimously approved the reinstatement of Teng Hsiao-ping in all his former posts, including those of Vice-Premier of the State Council and Chief of General Staff of the People's Liberation Army. Teng's restoration was as much a part of the nationwide repudiation of the Gang of Four's hostility to seasoned revolutionaries as it was a recognition that this particular veteran, who had been at Mao Tse-tung's side since the 1920's, still has much to contribute to China's socialist construction.

Concerning events such as these, the Western press continues to misread the signs, as do some less hostile to China's revolution. Newspapers use the conventional China-watchers' labels — pragmatic, radical, moderate and so on. But tell the ordinary Chinese peasant or worker that Premier Chou was a moderate

and Chiang Ching a radical, as the papers would have it, and he would either dismiss it as a joke or shake his head in bewilderment that anyone anywhere could so confuse realities. It is *his* revolution, and when the Four were taken into custody you may be sure he didn't rush out to bang cymbals in jubilation over the fall of radicals.

The Chinese people, who criticised Teng sharply enough during the Cultural Revolution, when they thought him *wrong*, dragged their feet later when the Four mounted a campaign to discredit him. In a gradual crescendo the people agitated for his return because they considered that the things that were going wrong could not be laid at his door but, rather, squarely at that of his accusers. The response of the Central Committee and Chairman Hua to their demand has increased their confidence in their new leader. They believe that he acted decisively on this and other matters to save their revolution. The revival of the revolution in education, new production targets, modernization of the army, attention to science and technology, are all under way. Before friends begin to tremble in fear that all this means a move to the right by the Chinese Revolution, as the press likes to suggest, let them think about the judgment of the Chinese people themselves who have, after all, already shown skill in detecting counter-revolutionary currents, and are well placed to do so. In Chairman Mao's words: 'The people are the best judges'.

WINNING POWER AND KEEPING IT

In China, this time last year, the masses were numbed by the shock of Mao Tse-tung's death and, because of the activities of the 'Gang of Four' and their associates, they were confused and anxious. They did not doubt Mao's greatness but, just because of that, they had apprehensions about the future. Now they see that the Central Committee as a whole shared their feelings and acted to rid the nation of the saboteurs. Visitors agree that now spirits are high and people work with a will.

China before 1949 was the 'sick man of Asia'; plundered and retarded by feudal exploitation at home and imperialist extortion from without. When Mao in the 50's expressed liberated China's resolve to become a strong, modern, industrialised, socialist country in less than half a century, he saw it as a contribution to all mankind, to the world revolution. As has so often been said, he took the universal truths of Marxism and integrated it with the concrete practice of the Chinese Revolution; but by so doing he expounded lessons for the world.

Mao, more than anyone else, was sure that with Party leadership and the working class vanguard, the Chinese people could achieve their 'impossible' task. Now, in what used to be the vast colonial and semi-colonial world created by imperialism, the foundations have been laid of that radically new social order which Marx and Engels laboured to bring about. When Mao began his work the mass of the Chinese people seemed to most observers to be hopelessly resigned to their lot and passive; today they have begun to create a new kind of society. Workers and peasants, once ignorant, are now the main force in taking the whole world nearer to

a state of things in which every member of society will be enabled to participate not only in production but also in the distribution and administration of social wealth, and which so increases the social productive forces and their yield by planned operation of the whole of production that the satisfaction of all reasonable needs will be assured to everyone in an ever-increasing measure.

(Engels: *Karl Marx*, 1877)

We begin to understand what Mao's contribution was when we consider his repeated insistence that the proletariat can accomplish the complex, difficult and protracted task of 'abolishing all class rule, all servitude and all exploitation' (to use the words of Engels), only if *all* the people are led to enter consciously and responsibly into this world-changing role. It can emancipate itself only if the people are helped to unite, learn and discipline themselves. As Marx and Engels wrote in *The Communist Manifesto*, in the present epoch the revolution, unlike earlier ones, is the 'conscious movement of the vast majority'.

Setting the Chinese people these tasks, considered by many

CONTENTS :

Verdict on Teng Hsiao-ping
A year since the death of Mao Tse-tung
Unity for revolution
A Chinese view

Western 'Marxists' to be poetical visions rather than attainable goals, Mao showed that Marx, Engels and Lenin were above all practical men with a down-to-earth conception of a strategy and tactics for putting ordinary working people in charge of the State.

Imperialism will always try to postpone its doom by turning as many people as it can against socialism. To do this it is now absolutely necessary to attack and discredit Mao, make him appear to stand for the things he was most against, to have been uninterested in the welfare of the masses, to be out of date, and so on.

It is noticeable that Chiang Ching, since her fall, is treated with far greater respect in the bourgeois press than ever she was during her membership of the Central Committee. Her individualism, her arrogance, awake sympathetic echoes in the West. At the other extreme, the attempts of the Four to stigmatise all regulations as oppressive, to condemn efforts to increase production, win support from those whose 'socialism' is really anarchism.

What Mao stood for was patient investigation of the desires and needs of the masses — 'no investigation, no right to speak'. He stood for the careful testing of proposals on a small scale, for the correction of mistakes without trying to hide them, and then for broad unity to implement the desired measures. The frequency with which he spoke of 90 or 95 per cent of the people as wanting socialism, of out-and-out opponents as being a mere two or three per cent, shows what he meant by unity.

One should add that Mao's conception of unity did not mean subservience to ill-informed or random demands. He saw the Party's task as one of education, explaining possibilities, pointing the way forward. When the masses understood their goal and were united in desiring it, Mao was alert to their every feeling, trusting them to be the first to see errors and the first to see new ways of tackling the practical tasks.

He quickly realised that Marxism was a weapon in the cause of the Chinese people and he urged first the cadres and then the masses to study Marxism-Leninism in order to play a greater part in the struggle, while ceaselessly pointing out to them the lessons to be learned from their own experience. The training of successors to carry on the revolution was a constant preoccupation of his last years.

The Cultural Revolution was the supreme example of Mao's trust in the masses and an unequalled educational experience for them. The *16-Point Statement* of 8 August 1966 says:

Let the masses educate themselves in this great revolutionary movement and learn to distinguish between right and wrong and between correct and incorrect ways of doing things.

The Cultural Revolution was a leap forward for Marxism, showing that dangerous capitalist tendencies existed within the Communist Party itself and that it was the responsibility of ordinary people to watch for them, expose them and work to overcome them. Though the Chinese Communist Party has the task of leading the whole Chinese people, up to the very highest organs of the state, and Mao inspired the Party's work style and trained it in leadership — in spite of all this, every citizen has the right and duty to supervise, and criticise when necessary, the work of the Party. The Cultural Revolution made this clear but Mao had expressed the same idea very plainly ten years earlier, in the *Ten Major Relationships*. Discussing the relation between Party and non-Party people he said that non-communists should be given the opportunity to express their views and there should be a 'policy of both unity and struggle towards them'. The aim should be to unite all who can be united and to this end to allow even 'abusive types ... to rail at us, while refuting their nonsense and accepting what makes sense in their rebukes'. Opponents, Mao observed, often turn into supporters when it comes to the crunch. This is one of the main lessons which we in the West might learn from Chinese experience.

An equally important achievement of the Cultural Revolution was that it cast light on the relation between base and super-

structure in socialist society. Many had assumed that once a socialist economic base had been laid the superstructure would in time become socialist. Mao explained that, on the contrary, relics of capitalism in the superstructure would react on the base, which could revert to capitalism. The revolution must be carried through into the superstructure and all the habits, customs, beliefs of the old society must be re-evaluated.

Previous revolutionary movements in history had been sporadic, and when they succeeded it was only for a short time. Soon after every revolution a new ruling class gained the power to control the state and production. In the Paris Commune the workers held sway briefly and then were overthrown. In Russia they achieved a greater victory, establishing Soviets and then the Workers' and Peasants' Republic. They won power to carry out the socialist revolution, but later lost it. In China they won the power, have used it in spite of many subtle counterattacks, and still keep it. This is in large measure because Mao tirelessly explained and educated, showed who were friends and who were enemies, and taught that in the fight for socialism there can be no relaxation. The Party has to wage a continuous struggle against enemies who will never give up. The dictatorship of the proletariat must be constantly maintained and strengthened; theories about the dying away of class struggle are, in the present era, pernicious nonsense.

Their success in people's war gave them confidence. Later, when only the U.S. had the atomic bomb and the world was cowering under its threat, with reactionaries and progressives almost agreed about the virtual certainty of a world disaster, Mao pointed out that imperialism and all reactionaries are paper tigers, seeming strong but really weak. 'The day will come', he said, 'when these reactionaries are defeated and we are victorious. The reason is simply this: the reactionaries represent reaction, we represent progress'. History — in China, in Korea, in Vietnam — has proved the truth of his words. When the Soviet revisionists debased proletarian internationalism. Mao placed it once more before the working class.

Mao saw struggle as the motive force of history.

So many deeds cry out to be done,

And always urgently;

The world rolls on.

Time presses.

Ten thousand years are too long,

Seize the day, seize the hour!

The Four Seas are rising, clouds and waters raging,

The Five Continents are rocking, wind and thunder roaring.

Away with all pests!

Our force is irresistible.

Even when mortally ill he contrived to take part in one last fight. Knowing that while he was alive his faithful colleagues would undertake no decisive action against the 'Gang of Four' because they feared a battle within the Politbureau might aggravate his grave illness, he yet managed to help to shape events. He suggested the nomination of Hua Kuo-feng as *First Vice-President* of the CPC, clearly marking Hua as his successor; he wrote to him, 'With you in charge, I am at ease'. He urged that the problem posed by the Four should be resolved — 'if not in the first half-year, then in the next...' He gave in his own hand the advice, 'Act in line with past principles'.

Now the Chinese people have the task of continuing the revolution on the basis of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought. Remaining true to Mao's teaching, Chairman Hua and the other members of the Central Committee, with Party members and activists at all levels, are stimulating the enthusiasm of the masses, inspiring them to seize the initiative to build China into a powerful socialist state. This is the only way forward. In the future problems as yet unimagined will arise; the methods of Marxism, with the teachings of Mao Tse-tung, will enable them to be solved. Future generations will envy us, contemporaries of this man who truly moved mountains.

REVOLUTION, COUNTER-REVOLUTION AND THE WAY TO UNITY

Many analyses of the smashing of the 'Gang of Four' have been made in the last ten months, ranging from the 'power struggle between despots' of China-watchers in the West, to the identification of the Four as 'real revolutionaries who have been overthrown by the right'. The former represents deliberate bourgeois misrepresentation of a major struggle waged by the Chinese people against counter-revolution, the latter a failure to understand the nature of revolution and counter-revolution in the transition periods which all socialist societies face as they move towards communism and the abolition of all class rule.

The existence of a two-line struggle — between revolution and counter-revolution, progress and reaction — is not a bad thing. Far from producing the disunity which the above views tend to emphasise, it is part of the process of building a genuine unity, based on a clearer understanding of the forces which exist in the struggle to consolidate socialism.

This is one reason why the Chinese people are studying Volume V of Mao Tse-tung's *Selected Works*, together with his speech *On the Ten Major Relationships*, originally delivered to an enlarged meeting of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party in 1956. It was apparent to our recent delegation in China that study of these important works would precipitate a new evaluation of the Cultural Revolution by the Chinese people, of its achievements and deficiencies, and especially a better understanding of the nature of politics and its relation to the process of production in the era of the dictatorship of the proletariat. This is now well under way.

Productive forces and relations

In 1974 Charles Bettelheim wrote:

When I visited China in 1967 the members of various revolutionary factory committees told me that during its initial stages they believed the Cultural Revolution to be concerned only with Literature and the Arts, and that they had distrusted the critics of the situation in their own factories. Eventually they came to understand that the prevailing conditions in the factories had to be changed before further advances along the road to socialism could be made.

(*Cultural Revolution and Industrial Organisation in China*)

The Cultural Revolution started a massive readjustment of production relations in China. The workers and peasants came to realise that this was not merely a question of ideological upheaval. The relations of production had to be transformed in order to further liberate and develop productive forces — the processes, instruments and techniques of production. Indeed the peasants and workers were often in advance of their local Party leadership in grasping that the cultural and ideological superstructure of China could not be transformed without further change in the economic base.

Bettelheim continues:

... when confronted with the task of elaborating new relations, the workers were often at odds about how to interpret the slogans of the revolutionary line. Months, even years of discussion were required to achieve the unity indispensable to the success of the Cultural Revolution. Through discussions and struggles involving millions of workers and vast sections of the population a new road was opened in the struggle for socialism.

So the Cultural Revolution opened a new road for the Chinese people — the task of transforming the relations and forces of production. There cannot be socialism without proletarian leadership at all levels of society. But socialism is not built on rhetoric and slogans, it is built of raw materials — socialist

politics are dependent on a socialist economic base

It was in their attempts to transform relations of production and productive forces that the Chinese people analysed the statements, slogans and activities of Wang, Chang, Chiang and Yao and found them not only wanting but counter-revolutionary in essence.

'Leftists' and Rightists

Mao wrote in *On the Ten Major Relationships*:

What kind of factor are counter-revolutionaries? They are a negative factor; a destructive factor, they are forces opposed to the positive factors.

By emphasising the development of production rather than class struggle Liu Shao-chi revealed himself as a capitalist sympathiser and a reactionary or rightist. His policies were counter-revolutionary because the forces of production could not develop properly without class struggle and the development of socialist relations of production. By emphasising 'all class struggle' and 'no production' the Four revealed themselves as even more reactionary than Liu because they hid their counter-revolutionary activities behind a veil of revolutionary-sounding rhetoric, sabotaging production until it ground to a halt in some places. How is it possible to transform relations and forces of production if there is no production? Further, they branded as counter-revolutionary anyone who attempted to promote production, which in the end meant the bulk of the workers and peasants. Because certain elements of capitalism still hung over from old China, the Four labelled large sections of the population as bourgeois, yet undermined the means by which the workers and peasants were attempting to eradicate such anomalies. In short they placed obstacles in the path of socialist progress, were destructive and negative factors, were counter-revolutionaries.

In 1956 Mao had warned the party:

'We must not relax. In future not only must the suppression of counter-revolutionaries in society continue, but we must also uncover all the hidden counter-revolutionaries in Party and government organs, schools and army units. We must draw a clear distinction between ourselves and the enemy. If the enemy is allowed to worm his way into our ranks and even into our organs of leadership, we know only too well how serious a threat this will be to the cause of socialism and to the dictatorship of the proletariat'. (Ibid.)

The question of revolution versus counter-revolution is one which demands the attention of all genuine Marxist-Leninist movements and parties whatever the stage of their development. In China the major task is no longer the overthrow of capitalism but the consolidation of socialism. In Europe it is to work for the former, in Britain it is to establish a genuine Marxist-Leninist party. Marxist-Leninists in these countries not only have to face counter-revolution from the bourgeoisie but also bourgeois ideas in their own ranks. Some in Britain today say it is impossible to unite because the task is difficult; others are unwilling to try. Yet the only way the proletariat can achieve revolution is through a party. Those who oppose its creation are acting in the interests of the bourgeoisie; the objective effect is to hold back revolution.

Kinds of contradiction

However, while it is clear that counter-revolution stands in opposition to the proletarian line, Mao Tse-tung always urged that it is essential that different counter-revolutionaries should be treated according to the merits of each case. Though some die-hards would never change, the majority would event-

ually if given the opportunity. That is why in China it is rare for those in the party and leadership to be criticised by name. Only when they refuse to learn from the people and correct their mistakes, when their activities amount to an antagonistic contradiction in relation to socialism's progress, are they named.

That is why many people were surprised by the campaign of criticism openly launched against Teng Hsiao-ping by the Four. Teng had made errors but had recognised his mistakes long before he was removed from office under the pressure of Wang, Chang, Chiang and Yao. The Gang justified his removal by quoting Comrade Mao as having said that Teng had never been a Marxist, but it is now clear that Mao was referring to the way that Teng had concentrated on the problems of the economy without waging struggle against counter-revolutionaries within the party—the Gang of Four themselves. That Teng has now been reinstated does not whitewash over his errors of judgement, but it does show that the Chinese people do not consider his failings antagonistic, irresolvable.

When the delegation from C.P.S.G. recently visited the Chien Hsiang pottery factory in Changsha, it found that the workers there were dealing in the same way with members of their Revolutionary Committee who had supported the Four. Only those who failed to be honest about their dealings (as counter-revolutionaries), who refused to accept the criticisms of the work force, would be removed from the Committee. Those left on the Committee would be expected to prove their sincerity and so win back the confidence of the work force. Similar opportunities were repeatedly offered by Comrade Mao to Wang, Chiang, Chang and Yao, to reform their style of work, to listen to the people, to unite and not intrigue and conspire. But these were ignored, and the contradiction between the Four and socialism's progress became antagonistic. By the time of Mao's death the nature of this contradiction had percolated through all levels of Chinese life. The people not only understood why the Central Committee headed by Chairman Hua moved against the Four, but approved and rejoiced in it.

Unity and dissent

But an objective and dialectical understanding of the nature of revolution and counter-revolution is not the same thing as 'gagging' dissent within the party and creating a false unity. Mao expanded this point in an important speech made to the Moscow meeting of Communist and Workers' parties on November 18th, 1957, (*The Dialectical Method for Inner-Party Unity*, Volume V, *Selected Works*).

I say that towards a comrade, no matter who he is, so long as he does not take the standpoint of an enemy or of a saboteur, we must adopt an attitude of uniting with him. We must use the method of dialectics towards him, and must not use the methods of metaphysics.

Because a person had made mistakes he should not be negated; every individual needs the support of others, Mao continued:

Ko-liang (*a master strategist of the Three Kingdoms period, 3rd century A.D.* - Ed.). A Chu Ko-liang on his own is not complete, he still has some things lacking.

Using the dialectical method towards comrades who made mistakes, it was necessary to both struggle with them and help them. Only people like Hitler, Chiang Kai-shek, Trotsky and the Tsar were 'absolutely irreconcilable'. Further, at every tactical stage, Marxist-Leninists should learn to struggle on one hand and compromise on the other through negotiation.

Some people seem to think once they enter the Communist Party they all become saints, there should be no difference or misunderstandings, therefore there is no point in analysing anything. This is just like saying that the party is one slab of steel, as perfect as a straight line, and that there is no need to mention negotiation. As if once in the party it will only do to be one hundred per cent Marxist. But in reality there are all kinds of Marxists: there are hundred per cent Marxists, ninety per cent Marxists, eighty per cent Marxists, seventy per cent Marxists, sixty per cent

Marxists, fifty per cent Marxists, some people only have ten or twenty per cent Marxism. Cannot therefore a couple or more comrades get together around a table and discuss things? Could we not have negotiation in the spirit of helping one another?

With comrades who made mistakes we should struggle on the one hand and unite on the other, while still upholding Marxist-Leninist principles. Said Mao:

The unity of firmness of principle with flexibility is a Marxist-Leninist principle, it is a kind of unity of opposites. (*All quotations from Volume V of Mao Tse-tung's Selected Works are translated from the Chinese - Ed.*)

The point is not whether contradictions are found in socialist society but that it is full of contradictions. Thus though there is a clear dividing line between revolution and counter-revolution, the bourgeois line and the proletarian line, the overall emphasis should be one of working towards unity: unity-struggle-unity. Struggle and compromise towards unity, while upholding the principles of Marxism-Leninism, is the basic maxim of revolution in all forms and at all levels.

A CHINESE VIEW

I was in China, my own country, during all the years of the war of resistance against Japanese aggression and the war of Liberation against the U.S. imperialist—Chiang Kai-shek government of oppression and corruption.

Besides Chairman Mao, the names of Chu Teh, Supreme Commander of the People's Liberation Army and many other extraordinary able and heroic military commanders, like Chen Yi, Ho Lung, Liu Po-cheng, Yeh Ting and others were household words to every Chinese. We all held them in the highest esteem and affection.

But some years after Liberation in 1949, perhaps since the beginning of the Cultural Revolution, I do not remember exactly, these glorious names disappeared from the Press. Even Chu Teh, though Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, was never mentioned as the supreme Commander of the PLA, a really invincible army.

For many years I felt very unhappy and could not understand why and how the Chinese leaders could permit this state of affairs, not educating the younger generations with the stories of these great men who, together under Chairman Mao and Chou En-lai, led the Chinese people to change the sick man of Asia into a dynamic socialist country.

Now one after another biographical accounts of these men are appearing in the press. This convinces me that it was the 'Gang of Four' who tried to bury their names to keep the younger generations ignorant of their country's history of struggle against imperialism. I am very happy that the Communist Party under Chairman Hua got rid of the Four evil-doers. Teng Hsiao-ping suffered terrible persecution from the Four. He is now back in the Party and the Government as result of the complaints and demands of the masses. I am sure China will soon have a new life and another great leap forward. I hope you will share my happiness.

A Chinese
(name and address supplied)

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