

China Policy Study Group

BROADSHEET

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MAO TSE-TUNG'S THOUGHT AND ITS ENEMIES

In every country there always exists, objectively, a mass movement of struggle against oppression. But before it can arrive at a victorious revolution, this mass movement needs a head—first there must be a Party to organise and put forward policies and, second, the broad masses themselves must have a conscious grasp of the historical role of their revolution. 'The force at the core leading our cause forward is the Chinese Communist Party. The theoretical basis guiding our thinking is Marxism-Leninism' (Mao Tse-tung, at *First Session of First NPC*). Party leadership and the political consciousness of the masses are deliberately linked; they can't develop in isolation from one another.

Mao Tsetung Thought is a theoretical summing-up of China's vast experience over the past half-century. It is thus immensely valuable in building the subjective forces of revolution, in guiding the Communist Party in all spheres of its work and arming the masses with theory.

Campaign against Mao's Thought

Those who know something of the history of the Communist movement will not find it in the least surprising that in the nine months or so since Mao's death there has developed a trend, even among some people who call themselves Marxist-Leninists, to try and write off the significance of Mao Tsetung Thought. This represents an attempt by the bourgeoisie to prevent the subjective forces of revolution from growing at a time when objective contradictions are getting sharper.

In China herself there was also a trend to distort Mao Tsetung Thought, to prevent its being grasped in a living way by the masses and guiding the work of the party. This trend was associated with the development of the faction known as the 'Gang of Four', and became particularly strong during the period when Mao was gravely ill.

The Democratic Revolution

The Chinese revolution took up the torch directly from Lenin who said to the Asian revolutionaries: '... here the majority of the people for the first time begin to act independently and will be an active factor in the fight to overthrow international imperialism' (*Coll. Works*, Vol. 30, p. 160). It was from the beginning part of the world proletarian revolution against imperialism, even though it was a democratic revolution in form. The CPC applied Marxist theory to problems which had never been faced before, and the Chinese revolution, which could not have been successful without being guided by Marxism-Leninism-MaoTsetung Thought, had an immense effect in world history as a whole.

All Mao's writings of the period of the democratic revolution provide a further development of modern political science, i.e. Marxism. But a trend developed in China over the past two or three years to argue that the experience of that period in China's revolution was no longer of much importance.

An example is the remark by Chang Chun-chiao (one of the people in the Gang) that in the field of proletarian culture

there was a void of 100 years between the writing of the *Internationale* and the work of Chiang Ching (another of the people in the Gang). In fact Chang's remark is inaccurate, because the music of the *Internationale* was only written in 1888. This would imply that Mao Tsetung's *Talks at the Yanan Forum* were only of limited value because part of the democratic revolution. But in fact the problem of proletarian literature and art was posed directly at that stage of China's revolution. Mao didn't just write in a vacuum, but always in response to specific problems raised by the development of the objective process of the revolution.

Significance of Cultural Revolution

More generally as well, the trend of the 'Gang of Four' was to argue that things only really started happening with the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, when they themselves stepped on the scene. This line or argument would mean not only downgrading the theory of China's revolution before 1949 (in other words Volumes I-IV of the *Selected Works* of Mao Tsetung), it would also mean that the pre-Cultural-Revolution theory of the Chinese revolution would not be of direct relevance either. In other words Volumes V and VI of Mao's *Selected Works* would not be worth publishing.

Mao's works emerge from a summing up of practical experience and were tested out in practice. The onward movement of the class struggle raised further problems which Mao answered in his writings of the early period of socialist revolution and construction.

The epic mass struggle of the Great Leap forward (1958), particularly, provided a severe testing of the subjective forces of the revolution, and its experience produced a lot of fresh understanding about how socialist society works.

This theory guided the mass movement, which advanced to a point where there was a very serious contradiction with the political superstructure, and the Cultural Revolution became 'absolutely necessary and most timely'. There will continue to be contradictions in the future, because advance only comes through solving contradictions. Having already encountered and solved questions which did not fully present themselves to Marx and Lenin, the Chinese revolution will in the future come across new problems which are not directly answered in Mao's writings.

Milestones

But the whole point is to apply Mao Tsetung Thought creatively to such new situations. Chang Chun-chiao claimed that a new analysis of China's classes was necessary, and this in itself is nothing bad. But his remark that the more he read Mao's *Analysis of Classes in Chinese Society* (1926) the less he knew about contemporary Chinese society, shows that he didn't intend to apply Marxism or look at things dialectically.

In fact, Mao's *Analysis of Classes* along with works like Marx's *The Class Struggles in France* and Lenin's *Development of Capitalism in Russia* are profoundly relevant to anyone

who analyses society in any country at the present time, because the Marxist dialectical method is brilliantly shown in these works. Chang claimed in effect that it was necessary to break completely with the old theory and adopt a new one, and his supporters described his own writings as the 'fourth milestone' in the development of Marxism (after Marx—Engels, Lenin and Mao). This milestone would not have meant creatively developing Marxism on the basis of new concrete situations, but would on the contrary have taken the 'new situation' as a pretext for departing from it.

From the masses to the masses

Mao Tse-tung always insisted on the line of 'from the masses to the masses'. He carefully read and summed up a vast amount of material from the grass-roots level. A good example is the book *Socialist Upsurge in China's Countryside* published in 1956 (a translation of the abridged one-volume edition was published by the Foreign Languages Press in 1957) which Mao edited, writing a series of introductions to articles from local newspapers setting out the peasants' concrete experiences in making revolution.

This method was completely thrown overboard in the line associated with the 'Gang of Four': in their view, theory was to come from the top down. In 1975 the people of Fangtai Commune in Chiating County, Shanghai Municipality, received a visit from some representatives of the Gang saying that they were preparing a booklet on the transition from 3-level to 2-level ownership in agriculture, to be provided with an introduction by Comrade Chun-chiao; that Chairman Mao's *Socialist Upsurge* had been published after the upsurge had already taken place so it had been of no help; but now Chun-chiao's book would be published *before* the movement had taken place. This approach wasn't welcomed by the masses in that commune.

The attack of the Gang was directed essentially against

Mao, but they did this by criticising other people who were in fact putting forward Mao's views. This is not a new tactic. It was already used by the 'empiricocritics' who attacked people like Plekhanov for putting forward views which were really those of Marx and Engels. Krushchev and his cronies made a so-called criticism of the errors of Stalin, but all the most important points on which they criticised him were ones where he faithfully upheld the principles of Lenin.

One example among many is a criticism launched by Yao Wen-yuan (another of the group) against an article written by Chou Pei-yuan (head of Tsinghua University in Peking and a well-known scientist), in 1973. This article was designed to promote the scientific and technical revolution, which is an important aspect of the process whereby the broad masses seize control of revolutionary theory. Mao always associated himself with this cause, and he had held three discussions with Professor Chou about the article.

Dogmatists come to a sticky end

It is a common experience of the proletarian movement that at certain times dogmatists gain the upper hand for a while and spout a lot of nonsense. The good people who are in the big majority are often diffident and uncertain of their grasp of Marxist theory, so dogmatists may succeed in filling the whole length of meetings with their dull, repetitious and windy speeches. Readers who have had experience of this kind of situation will understand how happy most of the Chinese people felt when the Central Committee started the movement to criticise Wang, Chang, Chiang and Yao.

The Gang's attempt to break away from the essential character of Mao Tsetung Thought was not accepted by the people. In carrying forward the revolution, which the Chinese people see as their own cause, and changing the objective world, they needed the weapon of revolutionary theory.

THE 50th ANNIVERSARY OF THE P.L.A.

Fifty years ago the Chinese people, under the leadership of the Communist Party, established the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army. With this army the people defeated native reaction in two civil wars, threw out the foreign imperialists, overcame the Japanese invaders and established the dictatorship of the proletariat. The People's Liberation Army is unique in history: it works in the fields and factories alongside the people; it spreads political education; most important of all, it is one with the people. In Mao's words: 'Without a people's army, the people have nothing'.

After his treacherous, ruthless massacre of revolutionaries in Shanghai (see the article in our issue of April this year), Chiang Kai-shek intrigued with warlords and foreign imperialists for help in crushing the revolutionary movement. A reign of terror spread over all China, especially Hunan and Kwangtung Provinces.

The revolutionary leaders, mostly members of the Communists Party but with some from the left wing of the Kuomintang, set to work to plan the next step: uprisings by workers and peasants. Divergent views on this crucial question were to bedevil the Chinese democratic revolution until they were resolved at the Tsunyi Conference in 1935.

Where should the uprisings take place? Who should take part? How to distribute the very limited number of weapons captured during the Northern Expedition—to the workers or the peasants? Mao Tse-tung considered agrarian revolution as the main content of the Chinese bourgeois-democratic revolution and the peasants as its basic force. Success depended on working-class leadership of the peasants. But Chen Tu-hsiu, Secretary of the Party, prevented discussion of the question at the 5th Party Congress in April 1927.

The troops stationed at Nanchang were part of the Yunnan

army, which had established a new training school there, to which the Nationalist Government at Wuhan had appointed Chu Teh as director. During the eight months training he prepared the 1300 cadets to protect the mass movement against right wing sabotage.

The Wuhan Government had also appointed Chu Teh head of a police training school. There was, in addition, a school for training peasants for work in the peasant movement, the teaching staff being drawn from the Huangpu Academy in Canton, led by Chou En-lai. They were mostly Communists, young and militant, teaching Dr. Sun's principles: nationalism, democracy and people's livelihood.

But reaction in Nanchang, comprising high army officers, administrators, rich industrialists and merchants, was very powerful and had never accepted the united front. Many were of course landlords or related to landlords. They regarded Chiang Kai-shek as the national leader and opposed labour unions and peasant organisations.

On July 18 Chu Teh attended a secret meeting in a small village not far from Nanchang. There he met many revolutionary leaders, some for the first time: Chou En-lai, who had just escaped death in Shanghai; Liu Po-cheng, who had escaped death in Szechuan. There was the Secretary of the All-China Federation of Labour and the Minister of Agriculture. There were other outstanding military figures: Yeh Ting, Ho Lung, Yeh Chien-ying and Lin Ssu-han.

Chu noticed a most striking young man whose name was then unknown to him, yet for decades this man's name and his own were to form a combination known throughout the world and assumed by many to be one man—Chu-Mao!

This meeting reaffirmed the Communist Party's anti-landlord and anti-imperialist aims and decided to arm the workers and

peasants to begin the agrarian revolution. A Front Committee was set up to prepare and lead an uprising in Nanchang.

In the city the troops under Yeh Ting and Ho Lung were absolutely dependable but the Commander-in-Chief, Chang Fa-kuei, was not. The workers', peasants' and students' organisations were militant though not well supplied with arms.

The uprising was to take place at midnight on July 31. Chu Teh gave a big dinner that evening to all officers of the rank of regimental commander and above. About 9 o'clock they began to play mah jong, by which he intended to keep them occupied till midnight. Rumours of trouble penetrated the gathering, however, and in spite of all Chu Teh could do it broke up early. He rushed to the Front Committee, which ordered that the uprising should begin at once. Firing spread as the order reached unit after unit. The revolutionaries worked with utter devotion and by dawn had won the city.

At an emergency meeting in the morning the Communist Party dismissed Chen Tu-hsiu as Secretary and elected Chu Chiu-pai. They set up a Revolutionary Committee which included members of the CP and the KMT, among them Soong Ching-ling and Eugene Chen, Foreign Minister in the Wuhan Government, who had recently succeeded in winning back the British Concession in Hankow, the first victory over the unequal treaties that had been imposed on China.

Chiang Kai-shek sent troops to the city to crush the uprising. By August 3 the revolutionary troops were forced to leave and started to march south with the aim of taking Canton and establishing a new revolutionary government. But they had practically no arms and could not hold out.

The Nanchang uprising itself had been a complete success, owing to brilliant planning by Chou En-lai and Liu Po-cheng and the disciplined action of Chu Teh, Yeh Ting and others. The failure to hold the city and then take the whole province, and the difficulties and losses on marches to Kwangtung showed up the mistake of not arming the peasants to carry out an agrarian revolution which would have hit the landlords, a basis of reaction. Only strong rural uprisings could guarantee lasting success for urban uprisings (*An Investigation of the Peasant Movement in Hunan*, Mao Tse-tung).

A further reason was that the revolutionary contingents had grown very fast and the background of their members was very varied. There had not been time to build a strong Marxist party which could weld them together.

But there was one achievement which stands as a historic milestone in the Chinese people's long revolutionary struggle: the setting up of the worker-peasant Red Army which later became the People's Liberation Army. That is why August 1st is celebrated in China as Army Day.

A READER WRITES

BROADSHEET'S December 1976 article, *Basis for Anti-Imperialist Unity*, addresses the most urgent issue of our time. Nonetheless, I should like to take exception to your contributor's suggested solutions:

1. "British workers as a whole do not benefit from the exploitation of overseas workers and territories carried on by their bosses."

In 1916 Lenin was already aware, and stated, that the era of struggle for the territorial division of the world among the Great Powers was at an end and that capitalism was entering a new epoch for redividing the world among the great monopolies. Now, about 300 transnational corporations—200 of them (still) American—control the capitalist world's resources.

In his analysis of modern imperialism, Chapter VIII, "The Parasitism and Decay of Capitalism", Lenin explained the practical effect of the then-new epoch:

The export of capital, one of the most essential economic

bases of imperialism . . . sets the seal of parasitism on the whole country (my emphasis—HE) that lives by exploiting the labour of several overseas countries and colonies.

" . . . on the whole country", Lenin noted; not "except for the working class".

Furthermore, in the same chapter, he pinpointed parasitism as "the chief characteristic" of imperialism.

One of the main forms of such parasitism, he declared, was the (then just-starting, now firmly embedded) Western monopoly practice of sharing what he called "crumbs" from overseas super-exploitation with a "tiny minority" of "their own"—that is, Western workers.

Since Lenin's day that "tiny minority" of workers in parasitic Western lands who comprised the labour aristocracy of the time have escalated in number: to a majority of the working class in the US; and to a very substantial percentage, moving toward majority status, in other Western countries.

Third World people collect 1/20th to 1/40th the wages of an average Western worker; their children die at the rate of 200-300 for every 1,000 born instead of the 24-40 in Western countries; their average life expectancy is about 25 years to "our" 70+.

The political expression, in practice, of these comparative conditions is *racism*. Your article does not even mention the word "racism". Yet it is the decisive ideological and economic anti-unity factor on the capitalist world front. In view of these facts, it is no good telling Third World workers that they are "in the same boat as their Western brothers", because they know better in their very bones, as comparative vital statistics attest.

2. "British workers can, through their unions, insist on equal political and social rights for immigrant and migrant labour so that such labour can no longer be used by transnational corporations to bring down wage rates."

Who and what are today's unions in the West? Have their leaderships, unrepudiated by the memberships, not become part of the Establishment? Do they not espouse and practise pure economism, eschewing politics? Are they not tied, sometimes formally but certainly ideologically and practically, to the ICFTU, labour arm of international Social Democracy which speaks and acts for the labour aristocracy? The very unsavoury (pro-imperialist) role of the ICFTU in places like Africa is a matter of record and cannot be ignored when suggesting that unions in the West can be the vehicles for political justice to immigrants.

In my view, the start of any programme aimed at anti-imperialist unity must address the above-cited contradiction, for until it is understood and solved, we are discussing theory with a lamentable disregard for major facts. If unity is to be achieved, we have to deal with realities. Nothing less will do.

3. ". . . they can concretely support workers in the Third World who are fighting for political rights."

But they don't even support such workers fighting for economic rights! Where were they a few years back, for example, when Royal Scottish troops were sent to Lesotho to destroy a Third World miners' strike? Facts show that British and other Western workers literally CANNOT (i.e., are politically unable to) support workers in the Third World. They "should", but that is by no means the same thing.

Now and since World War I, Social Democracy's role has been to arrange and guard special privileges for "its own" workers, so as to ensure the perpetuation of the international division among the world's workers needed by the monopolies, the crumb-givers—an eminently successful strategy that has never been offset by the left. Naturally, to assure such privileges, Social Democracy has had perforce to be one of the main bulwarks of colonialism—and now, of the new brand. Your contributor's position ignores as if it did not exist this very real and widespread split in the international working class resulting from the rise and consolidation of a now-sizeable labour aristocracy throughout the Western economy. This refusal to acknowledge this major contradiction amounts to denying the

qualitative difference between the exploited and the super-exploited. That difference has been brought on by years during which the European Left turned a blind eye to the facts of life in its own environment.

In my own opinion, anti-imperialist unity is not helped by theoreticians misjudging the forces available at any given moment for anti-imperialist unity. In fact, your article shows the perils of trying to base strategy and tactics on theory alone.

H.E.

The Editorial Committee comments:

Imperialism, though the highest stage of capitalism, has not stood still and neither has its economic pillar, monopoly capitalism. When Lenin analysed modern imperialism in 1916 he did not know that the socialist state for which he fought all his life would eventually become a social-imperialist state and the main threat to genuine socialism and peace in the world—though the possibility of revisionism is constantly referred to in his writing.

In 1916 Britain was one of the major Western imperialist powers contending with others for world hegemony. World War II, itself a result of the uneven development of capitalism, led to the emergence of US imperialism as the major contender for world hegemony. But within 20 years it too was superseded by the Soviet Union, which later became revisionist. These changing world forces must affect and reflect upon the subjective nature of the relations between bourgeoisie and proletariat in all countries. But though the external conditions of capitalism may change the objective nature of the relations between bourgeoisie and proletariat—oppressor and oppressed—do not change, whether in the Second or the Third World or in the two superpowers themselves. Mao's concept of the three world systems has enabled us to understand that even the Second World countries centred around Europe are themselves exploited by the two superpowers.

The essential characteristic of the exploitation of the working classes of the world by monopoly capitalism (which incorporates the transnationals) is the extraction of surplus value. In all forms of productive labour the worker receives only the value of his labour power but never the full value of his labour as embodied in a finished product. The only commodity a worker has for sale is his or her labour power; and such is the concentration of monopoly capitalism in the era of imperialism that workers, when selling their labour power, have little choice as to whom they sell it to.

So who are the modern labour aristocrats who benefit so much from imperialism? In his article *How the Bourgeoisie Utilises Renegades* (1919), Lenin wrote:

For 40 years, from 1852 to 1892, Marx and Engels spoke of part (i.e. the top strata, the leaders, the 'aristocracy') of the workers in Britain becoming increasingly bourgeois, owing to that country's colonial advantages and her monopolies (Engels' preface to 'The Condition of the Working Class in England in 1844'). It is as clear as day-light that the twentieth century imperialist monopolies in a number of other countries were bound to create the same phenomenon as in Britain. In all the advanced countries we see corruption, bribery, desertion to the bourgeoisie by the leaders of the working class and its top strata in consequence of the doles handed out by the bourgeoisie, who provide these leaders with soft jobs, give crumbs from their profits to these upper strata, shift the burden of the worst paid and hardest work to backward workers brought into the country and enhance the privileges of the labour aristocracy as compared with the majority of the working class.

(Lenin's emphasis. *Collected Works*. Vol. 30, Moscow 1965)

Today the labour aristocracy includes the bureaucratic leadership of the trade unions and labour movement, which takes no part in productive labour and is petit-bourgeois both in

ideology and in relation to production. Like the labour aristocracy of old, it is their job to transmit and justify to the working class the wishes of the monopoly capitalist state and its bourgeoisie. As Lenin emphasised above, this is not the role of the working class as a whole. Such is the character of monopoly capitalism that it constantly reduces the number of skilled workers required, while mechanisation and automation drive down the level of skill and increase the division of labour. But the working class is well aware of the role played by its so-called leaders. In the recent British Leyland toolroom dispute, workers demanded negotiating rights separate from the engineering union. This reflected distrust of the union bureaucracy and this distrust has been evidenced in other sections of industry.

Imperialism sets the seal of parasitism on the whole country, but that is not the same as setting it on the working class as a whole. As we have already said, external world conditions are bound to be reflected in the internal superstructure and the base of Second World countries. Further, it is cynical to write off, as an aspect of bureaucratic trade unionism, the recent and genuine solidarity given by British workers over the question of Southern Africa. Of course members of the labour aristocracy will interfere in such movements—that is their role under monopoly capitalism. All this shows is the real oppression of British workers, because bourgeois ideology and imperialism back each other up, attempt to smash proletarian ideology and prevent revolution. Of course in the absence of a genuine proletarian party these attempts are bound to have some temporary success. This much the British working class has in common with the Third World: imperialism oppresses both economically and politically and attempts to smash genuine revolutionary ideas wherever they arise. Therefore instead of emphasising what divides the workers of the Second and Third Worlds it is our duty to stress the things which unite them, for it is this unity which will eventually put an end to imperialism, exploitation and oppression once and for all.

The indispensable slogan is still:

Workers of all countries and oppressed nations and peoples, unite!

TO OUR READERS

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In the second quarter of the year we received the sum of £53, for which we are most grateful. We assure donors that it will be used well.

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We have now to meet another increase in printing costs, which has forced us to increase our price per copy to 10p. There have also been increases in postage rates, but the full list of changes has only just become available and we have not yet been able to work out all the consequences. New subscription rates will probably come into force in January. No one regrets it more than we do.

THE CHINA POLICY STUDY GROUP

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