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Marxism in China Today

by

George Thomson

Professor of Greek at Birmingham University
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Fifty years ago Lenin wrote: "Marx was the genius who continued and completed the three chief ideological currents of the nineteenth century, represented respectively by the three most advanced countries of humanity: classical German philosophy, classical English political economy, and French socialism combined with French revolutionary doctrines."

In this lecture I shall suggest to you that since Lenin's time the three ideological currents mentioned by him have been joined by a fourth, namely Chinese classical philosophy; and that this fourth current is the source of some distinctive features of Marxist theory as developed by Mao Tse-tung and as applied in practice by the workers and peasants in China today.

○ Ideological Environment

In his Report on the new Party constitution in 1945, Liu Shao-chi says:

What Comrade Mao Tse-tung has done as a disciple of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin is to unite the theories of Marxism with the actual practice of the Chinese revolution, thus giving rise to Chinese communism — the Thought of Mao Tse-tung — which has guided, and is guiding, the Chinese people to achieve complete emancipation. It will make a great contribution to the struggle for emancipation of all peoples, and particularly the peoples of the East.

The Thought of Mao Tse-tung, from his world outlook to his style of work, is Marxism applied to China in the process of development and perfection. . . . It embodies his analysis of the present world situation and China's special conditions. It is his theories and policies in regard to New Democracy, the emancipation of the peasantry, the revolutionary united front, revolutionary wars, revolutionary bases, the establishment of a Republic of New Democracy, Party-building, and culture. All these theories and policies are as thoroughly Marxist as they are Chinese and are the highest expression of the intellect of the Chinese people as well as their highest theoretical attainment.

To put the matter in another way, the ideological environment into which Marx and Engels were born was capitalist and predominantly Christian. In their youth they were pupils of Hegel, the great bourgeois philosopher, whose work can be traced back through Plato and Aristotle to Heraclitus and Pythagoras, the founders of the European philosophical tradition.

The environment into which Mao Tse-tung was born was predominantly feudal and Confucian. As a young man he had studied the writings of Confucius and the other classics of Chinese philosophy, which had had as long a history as European philosophy, Confucius being a contemporary of Pythagoras; but the two philosophies had very different histories, the differences corresponding to the differences in the historical development of European and Chinese society. Mao Tse-tung read *The Communist Manifesto*, the first of the Marxist classics to be translated into Chinese, when he

was in his twenties, and by that time he was already well versed in Chinese classical philosophy.

Materialism and Idealism in Greek Philosophy

The most distinctive contribution of Mao Tse-tung to Marxism, from a philosophical point of view, lies in his treatment of dialectics: and of course dialectics belongs to the very essence of Marxism, which is for that reason also known as dialectical materialism in order to distinguish it, on the one hand, from the mechanical materialism of French bourgeois philosophy and, on the other, from Hegel's dialectical idealism. It is therefore necessary for me to say something about the history of dialectics in European philosophy, from Heraclitus to Hegel, and also about the place which it occupies in classical Chinese philosophy.

The standpoint of the earliest Greek philosophers may be described as primitive materialism or proto-materialism. It differs from the materialism of later times in that it is not consciously opposed to idealism, which had not yet emerged as a philosophical principle, and it was inherently dialectical. It may be summed up in the famous saying of Heraclitus, "It is and it is not". All things are continually being transformed into their opposites, and therefore it may be said of everything that "it is and it is not".

With the consolidation of slave society in ancient Greece, the ruling class, cut off from the labour of production, developed an outlook which was predominantly idealistic and metaphysical: that is, it asserted the primacy of spirit over matter and denied the reality of change. This new tendency culminated in Plato and Aristotle, whose work exercised a lasting influence on the subsequent history of European thought. Plato was the father of philosophical idealism, Aristotle of formal logic.

According to Aristotle, a thing "is either A, or not A", that is, it cannot be both A and not-A. This was a direct denial of the principle formulated by Heraclitus, that "it is and it is not".

Plato's theory of ideas and Aristotelian logic formed the philosophical basis of Christian theology, which dominated European thought down to modern times. Thereafter, with the rise of the modern bourgeoisie, the conflict between materialism and idealism, between dialectics and metaphysics, was renewed. It culminated in the work of the great German philosophers, Kant and Hegel, and, with the rise of the proletariat, it was resolved in Marxism, the new dialectical materialism, the theory that points the way to the communism of the future.

Thus, Marxism may be regarded as a reaffirmation, at an infinitely higher level, of the outlook inherited by the earliest Greek philosophers from primitive communism and subsequently obscured by what Marx calls the "mystical veil" of class society.

Sense of Dialectics in Ancient China

Turning to China, we find there too, among the earliest philosophers, an outlook which may be described as proto-materialist with a strong sense of dialectics, and for the same reason: that is to say, in China, as in Greece, philosophy began with the formulation of ideas inherited from pre-class society. But the subsequent history of philosophy in China was different. There, slavery did not develop to the same extent as it did in Greece: hence the rupture with primitive modes of thinking was less complete.

It is true that, from the time of Confucius onwards, idealism prevailed, but the outlook of Chinese philosophers remained empirical rather than metaphysical, and they never evolved a system of formal logic. In this there was gain as well as loss. In particular, the sense of dialectics was preserved.

Take this passage, for example, from one of the greatest of the Chinese classics, the Tao Te Ching:

Existence and non-existence generate one another, the difficult and the easy complete one another, the long and the short demonstrate one another, the high and the low explain one another, the previous and the subsequent follow one another.

To this let me add Dr. Joseph Needham's comment on Aristotelian logic. Aristotelian logic, he says,

provided the natural sciences with an inadequate tool for handling the greatest fact of nature, so well appreciated by the Taoists — change. The so-called laws of identity, contradiction, and the excluded middle, according to which X must be either A or not-A and either B or not-B, were constantly being flouted. . . . The natural sciences were always in the position of having to say, "It is and yet it is not".

Hence in due course the dialectical and many-valued logics of the post-Hegelian world. Hence the extraordinary interest of the traces of dialectical or dynamic logic in the ancient Chinese thinkers. . . . (*Science and Civilization in China*, Vol. II, p. 201).

Mao Tse-tung's Distinctive Contribution

It is against this background that we should evaluate Mao Tse-tung's distinctive contribution to Marxist philosophy, which lies precisely in his treatment of contradictions and his dialectical theory of the relation between theory and practice. In his notes on Hegel, Lenin wrote:

The identity of opposites . . . is the recognition, discovery, of the contradictory, mutually exclusive, opposite tendencies in all phenomena and processes of nature, including mind and society. The condition for the knowledge of all processes of the world in their "self-movement", in their spontaneous development, in their real life, is the knowledge of them as a unity of opposites. Development is the "struggle" of opposites. . . .

To western students of philosophy, trained without any knowledge of Marxism, as most of them are even today, this statement is almost devoid of meaning; but it would have presented no difficulty to students in the old China brought up, as they all were, on the ancient Chinese classics.

Before leaving the subject of classical Chinese philosophy, I must add a few words about Confucianism, which from the Han Dynasty down to the present century was the established religion, if we may call it so, of the Chinese Empire. Confucianism is concerned with man's conduct in relation to nature and with the conduct of the individual in relation to society: it is humanistic and this-worldly, in contrast to Christianity. The individualism of western ethics — whether the self-effacing individualism of Catholic mysticism or the self-assertive individualism of Calvinism — is alien to Confucian ethics. Confucianism differs also from Christianity in being essentially unwarlike.

Stalin's and Mao's Expositions Compared

Let us now compare Mao Tse-tung's exposition of dialectics with Stalin's. The comparison is all the more instructive because the two treatises in question — *On Contradiction* and *Dialectical and Historical Materialism* — were published about the same time, in the years 1937-8, and therefore were written independently of one another.

Stalin's exposition of the four principles of dialectics may be summarised as follows: (1) all things are inter-connected; (2) all things are always changing; (3) development takes place through the transformation of quantitative changes into qualitative changes; (4) development takes place through the struggle of opposites, through the growth of internal contradictions.

Stalin's formulation of the fourth principle may be quoted in full:

Internal contradictions are inherent in all things and phenomena of nature, for they all have their negative and positive sides, a past and a future, something dying away and something developing: and the struggle between these opposites, the struggle between the old and the new, between that which is dying away and that which is being born, between that which is disappearing and that which is developing, constitutes the internal content of the process of development, the internal content of the transformation of quantitative changes into qualitative changes.

Mao's treatment of contradictions is subtler and more profound. It may be summarised in his own words:

Contradiction is present in all processes of objectively existing things and of subjective thought and permeates all these processes from beginning to end; this is the universality and absoluteness of contradiction. Each contradiction and each of its aspects have their respective characteristics; this is the particularity and relativity of contradiction. In given conditions, opposites possess identity, and consequently can coexist in a single entity and can transform themselves into each other: this again is the particularity and relativity of contradiction. But the struggle of opposites is ceaseless: it goes on both when the opposites are coexisting and when they are transforming themselves into each other: this again is the universality and absoluteness of contradiction. In studying the particularity and relativity of contradiction, we must give attention to the distinction between the principal and the non-principal contradictions and to the distinction between the principal aspect and the non-principal aspect of a contradiction; in studying the universality of contradiction and

the struggle of opposites in contradiction, we must give attention to the distinction between the different forms of struggle.

Presented in this condensed form, the argument is abstract and difficult to follow; but in the extended exposition, of which this is the concluding summary, each step in the argument is illustrated by simple, concrete examples.

I would draw special attention to Mao's insistence on the different forms of struggle. This rests on the distinction between antagonistic and non-antagonistic contradictions — a distinction which is not mentioned in Stalin's treatise on the subject, though it had already been made by Lenin. Not only does Mao draw this distinction, but he points out more than once that, in the development of a thing, antagonistic contradictions, if correctly handled, may become non-antagonistic, and conversely non-antagonistic contradictions, if incorrectly handled, may become antagonistic.

On the Correct Handling of Contradictions

He developed this point later in his treatise *On the Correct Handling of Contradictions among the People*, which was published in 1957. I believe that this is one of his most important contributions to Marxism, deserving much closer attention than it has yet received from Marxists in the west.

It could, I think, be shown, on the one hand, that Stalin's errors were largely due to his failure to deal correctly with antagonistic and non-antagonistic contradictions and, on the other, that Mao Tse-tung's development of this aspect of dialectics would not have been possible without the historical experience of the October Revolution and of socialist construction in the Soviet Union: in other words, he was building on the work already done by Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin.

Further, it is not, in my opinion, an accident that this development of Marxist dialectics was made in a country with an ancient philosophical tradition which differs from the European precisely in that it had never abandoned the dialectical mode of thinking. It is, in short, an example of the enrichment of Marxist theory that may be expected to follow from the successful application of the universal truths of Marxism to the concrete conditions of a formerly backward country.

In order to show how Marxist dialectics are being applied in China to political problems, let us consider Mao Tse-tung's much-discussed characterisation of imperialism as a paper tiger.

Lenin had described imperialism as "a colossus with feet of clay". A colossus is a gigantic statue made of stone and therefore very strong; yet this statue has feet of clay and is therefore liable to collapse. It is both strong and weak. This is the unity of opposites. The idea of colossus is derived from the ancient Greeks. It belongs, therefore, to the European tradition.

The Chinese use a different idea, drawn from their own tradition. Imperialism, they say, is a "paper tiger", but at the same time it is a real tiger; it is and it is not a tiger. This is how the matter has been explained by Mao Tse-tung:

Just as there is not a single thing in the world without a dual nature (this is the law of the unity of opposites) so imperialism and all reactionaries have a dual nature — they are real tigers and paper tigers at the same time. In past history, before they won state power and for some time afterwards, the slave-owning class, the feudal landlord class and the bourgeoisie were vigorous, revolutionary and progressive; they were real tigers. But with the lapse of time, because their opposites — the slave class, the peasant class and the proletariat — grew in strength step by step, struggled against them and became more and more formidable, these ruling classes changed into backward people, changed into paper tigers; and eventually they were overthrown, or will be overthrown, by the people. On the one hand, they were real tigers; they ate people, ate people by the millions and tens of millions. . . . Were not these living tigers, iron tigers, real tigers? But in the end they changed into paper tigers, dead tigers, beancurd tigers. . . . Hence, imperialism and all reactionaries, looked at in essence, from a long-term point of view, from a strategic point of view, must be seen for what they are — paper tigers. On this we should build our strategic thinking. On the other hand, they are also living tigers, iron tigers, real tigers, which can eat people. On this we should build our tactical thinking.

Theory of Knowledge

Let us now turn to Marxist theory of knowledge as expounded by Mao Tse-tung and see how it underlies the Chinese theory and practice of "the mass line".

Human knowledge springs from social practice, that is, through physical contact with the external world, particularly through the labour of production. In its initial stage it consists of perceptual knowledge, that is, knowledge based directly on sense-impressions; but through reflection and discussion, together with further practice, it is raised to a higher stage, the stage of rational knowledge, giving rise to theories. This rational knowledge is then applied in practice with the aim of changing the external world and in the course of doing this the knowledge itself is deepened and enriched.

The external world includes society as well as nature, and the human agency which changes it and is changed by it consists not of isolated individuals, but of individuals living and working together in a group or community or social class; so their knowledge includes not only what they have themselves acquired from practice, but also what they have inherited through speech and writing. Thus the whole process consists of a cyclical interaction between knowledge and practice.

In Mao's own words:

Discover the truth through practice, and again through practice verify and develop the truth. Start from perceptual knowledge and actively develop it into rational knowledge; then start from rational knowledge and actively guide revolutionary practice to change both the subjective and the objective world. Practice, knowledge, again practice, and again knowledge. This form repeats itself in endless

cycles, and with each cycle the content of practice and knowledge rises to a higher level. Such is the whole of the dialectical materialist theory of knowledge, and such is the dialectical materialist theory of the unity of knowing and doing.

Practical Application

This theory of knowledge has been applied systematically by the Chinese Communist Party in its practical work for the purpose of giving correct leadership to the masses in accordance with the principle of the mass line.

To quote again from Mao:

In all practical work of our Party, correct leadership can only be developed on the principle of "from the masses, to the masses". This means summing up (that is, co-ordinating and systematising after careful study) the views of the masses, (that is, views scattered and unsystematic), then taking the resulting ideas back to the masses, explaining them and popularising them until the masses embrace them as their own, stand up for them and translate them into action by way of testing their correctness. Then it is necessary once more to sum up the views of the masses so that the masses give them their wholehearted support. . . . And so on, over and over again, so that each time these ideas emerge with greater correctness and become more vital and meaningful. This is what the Marxist theory of knowledge teaches us.

Further, in order that the Party may carry out the mass line effectively, it is necessary to take note of the contradictions that exist within the Party, within the masses of the people, and between the people and the remnants of the former ruling classes, namely the landlords and the capitalists.

Resolving Contradictions

Within the Party there is a contradiction between the leadership and the rank and file. This is resolved on the principle of democratic centralism, which is a cyclical interaction of the same kind as that which operates between the Party and the masses, except that within the Party it operates at a higher level.

There is also a contradiction, both within the leadership and within the rank and file, between the more advanced members and the less advanced. This is resolved on the principle of criticism and self-criticism.

It was Lenin who insisted that, without criticism within its own ranks conducted with a view to recognising its mistakes and drawing from them the necessary lessons, it is not possible for a Party to fulfil its obligations to the masses. In the Chinese Communist Party the systematic practice of criticism and self-criticism has been cultivated to a higher degree than in any other. Indeed, it has been carried far beyond the ranks of the Party and taken over by the masses of workers, peasants, soldiers and intellectuals, who employ it habitually in their day-to-day activity to a degree that visitors from the west often find astonishing.

Here, too, the Chinese Marxists have been drawing on the

ancient Confucian tradition of the self-cultivation of the individual in the service of the community.

Among the masses there is a contradiction between the industrial workers and the peasants, which is now being resolved by the mechanisation of agriculture and the development of people's communes. Without an alliance between the industrial proletariat and the peasantry the revolution would have been impossible.

Contradictions within Alliances

I speak of the contradiction between the industrial proletariat and the peasantry, and at the same time of an alliance between the industrial proletariat and the peasantry. Contradiction is inherent in the nature of alliance. The workers and the peasants unite together in order to fight the common enemy, thereby overcoming the principal contradiction, but at the same time there exists between them a non-principal contradiction, resolved through ideological struggle, in which the more backward class is raised to the level of the more advanced.

This question of the alliance between the proletariat and the peasantry is a decisive factor in the socialist revolution. How, it is often asked, did it come about that the socialist revolution succeeded in a country in which the industrial proletariat formed such a tiny minority of the population as it did in China before the liberation?

To this it may be answered that the important considerations are two: first, the contradictions present in the objective situation, creating the possibility of a revolution, and secondly, the nature of the *leadership* given by the proletariat — in other words, not its numerical strength but its political strength. Its leadership depends on its ability to utilise correctly the objective contradictions, both the contradictions between the people and the enemy, and the contradictions existing within the people.

When Marx and Engels wrote *The Communist Manifesto* they believed that Germany was on the eve of a bourgeois revolution to be followed immediately by a proletarian revolution. Things turned out differently; but note that, in their opinion, the first proletarian revolution would break out, not in England, which, being the most advanced capitalist country, had the largest proletariat, but in Germany, which was still feudal, where the old contradiction between the peasantry and the feudal aristocracy coexisted with the new and growing contradictions between the feudal aristocracy and the bourgeoisie and between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat.

A bourgeois revolution, followed immediately by a proletarian revolution, did come eventually — not in Germany, however, nor in any other of the advanced capitalist countries, but in backward Russia, where the numerically small

but politically advanced proletariat was able, under Lenin's leadership, to forge an alliance with the peasantry, to overthrow the Tsarist autocracy, and turn the bourgeois revolution into a proletarian revolution.

Combining Unity with Struggle

As Mao Tse-tung has said, it was the salvoes of the October Revolution that brought Marxism to China. At that time China was even more backward than Tsarist Russia — not only feudal but semi-colonial. Its proletariat was numerically insignificant, but it was led by a Party which was armed not only with Marxism but with the experience of the practical application of Marxism provided by the October Revolution.

In this way, taking full advantage of all the contradictions, it was able to rally to its side the peasantry, which formed the vast majority of the population, together with a substantial section of the capitalist class, the national bourgeoisie, against the landlords and the foreign imperialists, isolating the main enemy and combining unity with struggle in its handling of contradictions among the people.

Thus, as the socialist revolution spreads across the world, the small size of the proletariat in the countries still exploited by imperialism is offset by the intensity of class contradictions and the accumulation of revolutionary experience. This is what makes the "Thought of Mao Tse-tung" so important for the peoples of Africa and Latin America still struggling for liberation.

Theory of Armed Struggle

All this was not achieved without setbacks and mistakes. The nation-wide victory of 1949 would not have been possible without the preceding years of armed struggle and the experience of administering the Liberated Areas. It was then, under the leadership of the Party, that the People's Liberation Army took shape and developed a new theory of armed struggle which was continuously tried, tested and further developed through victories and defeats in the further course of the struggle — a force adapted also for peaceful construction, first in the Liberated Areas and later over the whole country, active not only in productive labour but also in raising through its example the ideological and moral level of the whole people.

Again, in the formation of the people's communes mistakes were made owing to inexperience and overconfidence, combined with objective difficulties; but through the application of the mass line these mistakes were recognised and corrected. It was the people's communes that enabled the economy to stand the strain of the three bad years 1959-61 without loss of life; and at the same time the difficulties of those years forced into the open the weaknesses in the communes and made it imperative that they should be

rectified. In this way a bad thing was turned into a good thing.

Continuing Ideological Struggle

It must not, however, be supposed that in China today the class struggle is over. The economy has been reorganised on a socialist basis, but bourgeois and petty bourgeois and even feudal ideas survive, and therefore the struggle must be carried on at the ideological level as well as at the economic level. The consolidation of the socialist system and the transition to communism is a lengthy historical process, which may be arrested, and even reversed, if there is any relaxation of the ideological struggle. This, too, is in accord with Mao Tse-tung's theory of contradiction.

In general, as he explains, the economic basis is the principal aspect of the contradiction in the movement of society, as opposed to the ideological superstructure, which is the non-principal aspect; but in certain conditions the non-principal aspect of a contradiction may be transformed into the principal aspect, just as a non-antagonistic contradiction, if incorrectly handled, may become antagonistic.

The old ideas will not disappear of themselves; on the contrary, they persist, and, if they are not fought, they will reassert themselves even to the point of reacting on the economic basis, and so bring about a revival of the old class divisions.

In this matter special attention is being given to the upbringing of young people. On the one hand, the young people enjoy an advantage over their parents in that they have been brought up and educated in a socialist environment. On the other hand, for that very reason they have had no direct experience of class oppression or of the sufferings and sacrifices endured by their parents and grandparents in the struggle for socialism.

In the schools, special measures are taken to ensure that they grow up fully aware of the struggle that had to be fought to create the opportunities which they enjoy. In the factories, elderly workers who participated in those struggles are given special positions — working in the factory library, for example — and special opportunities for passing on their experiences. In the people's communes, when new houses are built, one or two of the old hovels are preserved, so that the old people may point to them and say, "That is where we lived before the Liberation". In all this the aim is to ensure that the revolutionary spirit shall be transmitted to the rising generation.

The ideological struggle is conducted by means of discussion — discussion between members of a working group, discussion in the factory newspaper, discussion in the local press, discussion in the national press. Everywhere there is discussion, not only of current issues, both national and

international, but also of theoretical questions such as those I have been discussing in this lecture. It is with the theoretical discussions, and particularly with the study of Marxism, that I am concerned now.

“Theory Grips the Masses”

Marx said that, when theory grips the masses, it becomes a material force. This is what is happening all over China today.

It may be added that, when theory grips the masses of the working class, the intellectuals are encouraged to reunite themselves with practice, and so the division between manual and mental labour, which is characteristic of class society, begins to disappear.

Ten years ago I spent six months at Peking University, studying Chinese. My room was looked after by a worker about thirty years old, whom I got to know quite well because we used to meet several times every day. He was attending evening classes, learning to read and write, and we used to help each other in our struggles to master the script.

As for Marxism, he used to say he *believed* in Marxism — how could he help doing so, seeing that the Party believed in it, and the Party had done so much for him; he would then tell me, with tears in his eyes, of his life in the old China and the changes that had been brought about since Liberation; all this he owed to the Party; but as for Marxism he could not hope to understand it because he was only just beginning to read. Last September I revisited Peking University and saw him again. He was now studying Marxism.

Class-consciousness and Educational Levels

By comparison with the intellectuals the class-consciousness of the workers and peasants is high, but their educational level is low. For a long time this made it difficult for them to study Marxist theory, but now this difficulty is being overcome.

In 1958 some shipyard workers in Shanghai organised on their own initiative a class on philosophy, and it was a great success. Reports of it were published in the press, and their example was followed by groups of workers and peasants all over the country. The movement suffered a setback during the hard years 1959-61, but since then it has recovered its impetus and now it is stronger and broader than ever.

Early last year Yang Hsien-chen, a member of the Central Committee of the Party, published in one of the newspapers an article on dialectics which has given rise to a nation-wide controversy. Starting from the formula “two combine into one”, taken from classical Chinese philosophy, Yang Hsien-chen interpreted it in such a way as to suggest that the main

task in dialectics is not to disclose the contradictions between opposites, but on the contrary to stress those features which they have in common; in other words he held that the unity of opposites is primary and the struggle between opposites is secondary.

This view was immediately challenged. Hundreds of articles appeared in the press in all parts of the country, most of them from workers and peasants. At first the opinions expressed were more or less equally divided between the two points of view, and so the controversy has come to be known as "two-into-one or one-into-two"; but then the balance began to shift, and in the last few months the great majority of contributors have supported the second point of view, corresponding to Lenin's interpretation of dialectics, that in the relation between opposites struggle is absolute and unity relative.

Never before in the history of philosophy has a theoretical question been discussed on such a scale among the masses of the people.

Applying Theoretical Knowledge to Production

During the past few years, on an ever-increasing scale, in the factories, in the fields, and in the units of the People's Liberation Army, the workers and peasants have been applying their theoretical knowledge directly to problems of production. Again and again it has been found that a series of classes on Marxist philosophy has been followed by improvements in production.

The most popular textbooks are *On Practice*, *On Contradiction*, and *On the Correct Handling of Contradictions among the People*. I was told of a factory worker who, after studying *On Contradiction*, set himself the task of identifying the principal contradiction in the production process in which he was engaged and so succeeded in solving certain problems which he had previously left to the technicians in charge of the machines. He discussed the results with his workmates, and then the group put forward proposals for rationalisation which were adopted by the management.

I was told of a peasant woman, a mother of five children, who during the intervals of her work in the fields studied all the works of Mao Tse-tung and all the main documents, from both sides, on the international controversy. She has since been invited to open discussions in other parts of her own commune and in other communes, explaining how she has succeeded in integrating theory with practice in such a way as to raise the level of production.

Such people, after raising their own theoretical level, improve their practice, thus serving as an example to their fellow-workers, who in their turn become the nucleus for ever wider study groups, leading to further improvements in production and gradually raising the ideological and moral level of the whole community.

Thus the cyclical process described by Mao — practice, knowledge, again practice and again knowledge — is now spreading all over China. And this is only a beginning.

Bridging Gap Between Manual and Mental Labour

Apart from the worker whom I have mentioned, my closest friends at the Peking University were members of the teaching staff, most of them young, and all except one of petty bourgeois and bourgeois origin; the exception came of an ex-landlord family. They were well read in Marxism, but they had no contact with the workers. This was a great problem for them. It had been proposed that they should take classes in Marxism for the workers, but such classes had been tried and were not successful, because they did not understand what the workers needed. We discussed this problem many times without finding any solution.

This too, is now changed. For a number of years past all Party and government officials have been required to spend a certain amount of time engaged in manual labour. For recurrent periods — say, a month in the year — the factory manager works on the factory floor, the chairman of the people's commune works in the fields, the general serves in the ranks.

Among other sections of the professional classes manual work is voluntary, but there is no lack of volunteers. The professors and lecturers of Peking University go to a village in the Western Hills — a poor village short of labour, because almost the whole of the adult male population was killed by the Japanese. There they work and live with the peasants, helping them on the land during the day and organising classes and lectures for them in the evenings. Through this contact with the workers they have raised their class-consciousness.

So with the students. All of them spend a month or two every year working in the factories or in the fields along with the workers and peasants in accordance with the principle of the three "togethers" — "live together, feed together, work together".

Meanwhile, the number of working-class students at the universities is increasing steadily, and recently experiments have been carried out with a new type of school, in which the children combine study with productive labour. In this way the mental workers are becoming manual workers, and the manual workers are becoming mental workers.

Effect of the Arts

Outside the universities and schools the movement for participation in manual labour embraces all professional people. Writers, painters, architects, actors, musicians, dancers — all are involved. Although it began only a few years ago, its effect on the arts is already apparent.

China has a very ancient tradition of painting, poetry and

music. In painting and in opera alike the traditional style is being adapted to contemporary themes. It is understood, of course, that it is impossible to effect changes in the content without effecting changes also in the form — here, too, we have a unity of opposites; but the aim is to develop the content as the principal aspect of the contradiction in such a way as to evolve organically a new unity corresponding to the new unity between the artists and the people.

There are, of course, many problems to be solved, and with the opening of every new exhibition of paintings, with the production of every new opera, these problems are eagerly discussed. But the first step has been taken. The artist has learnt that in order to inspire the people he must himself seek inspiration from the people. And conversely, thanks to these closer contacts with the artists, the artistic level of the people is also being raised.

In all parts of the country, popular songs and dances, arts and crafts — some of which were on the verge of extinction fifteen years ago — are being revived; western music and ballet are being introduced, both for their own sake and because they contain elements which can be used in developing the national traditions. In this way the artistic talents of the workers and peasants are finding new channels of expression. The arts are becoming more and more a creative activity of the whole people.

Evidence of this was to be seen in the great procession on October 1. I had been present on this occasion in 1952. That was the third anniversary of the Liberation. The second time I was present was on the fifteenth. The changes were immense.

The Gate of Heavenly Peace now opens on to a vast square, flanked on the left by the Museum of the Revolution and on the right by the Hall of the People's Congress, and looking towards the monolith which has been erected at the end of the vista to the memory of those who gave their lives in the War of Liberation. The procession began punctually at ten and finished punctually at twelve — seven hundred and fifty thousand people passing in wave after wave of colour, movement and music, drawn from all sections of the people and every sphere of national life — an imaginative display that sometimes took one's breath away, it was so beautiful — a brilliant manifestation of an extremely ancient and rich civilisation which has suddenly burst into new life, reinvigorated by Marxism.

The same evening the square was filled again under a cascade of fireworks with over a million people, who danced all night long, hour after hour, rejoicing, a living embodiment of the last movement of Beethoven's Choral Symphony with its prophetic hymn to the brotherhood of man.

Among the spectators, together with other national leaders and foreign visitors from all parts of the world, was Mao Tse-tung.

Let me conclude with his words:

"This process, the practice of changing the world, which is determined in accordance with scientific knowledge, has already reached a historic moment in the world and in China, a great moment unprecedented in human history, that is, the moment for completely banishing darkness from the world and from China and for changing the world into a world of light such as never existed before."

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