

A New Kind of Revolution

Ruth Gamberg

'Bombard the headquarters!' It was with these words, issued on August 5, 1966 by Mao Tsetung, Chairman of the Communist Party of China, that the Cultural Revolution, which up to this point had been little more than a rumbling in the background, was placed fully in the centre of China's political and social life. Three days later, the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party adopted guidelines concerning the Cultural Revolution.

One is immediately struck by this unique way of launching a revolution. Revolutions have *always* been made by those who feel that their interests are being trampled upon by the existing government in power and who see no way of achieving a meaningful voice in matters directly affecting them short of a major transformation of their society. Revolutions have always been and still are the last resort of the disinherited to gain access to the power they require in order to right the injustices they judge themselves to be the victims of. In China this historical precedent was broken with the proclamations from Mao and the Party's Central Committee. Never before had the need for a revolution been articulated

to the people by those in the highest reaches of power; never before had the guidelines for conducting a revolution been set forth by those in established leadership positions.

Why would the top levels of the Communist Party and the Government in China decide that such a revolution was necessary? What kind of leadership is it that invites the people to bombard its own headquarters? How can a revolution be considered successful, as the Chinese consider the Cultural Revolution to be, when for the most part, the essential features of the political and economic structures remain the same after the revolution? And what kind of revolution is a *cultural* revolution? The answers to these questions will provide us with the perspective necessary for an understanding of China today.

The Chinese for their part do not think that history develops willy-nilly, that anything can happen at any time under any circumstances, or that any explanation of events has as much merit as any other. Basing their judgment largely on their own historical experience, they—the great majority of the Chinese people and not just their leaders—appear to be in fundamental agreement that the vast body of economic, political, social and historical analysis known as Marxism-Leninism provides the tool for a scientific comprehension of the dynamics of societies as well as the guide for action to bring about

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thoroughgoing social change.

Class Struggle

The oft-quoted opening line of *The Communist Manifesto* remains the lynchpin of Chinese thought and political action. The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles. To Marxists this is a fundamental and accurate summing up of all recorded history without which an understanding of the dynamics of societies and how they change cannot be grasped. Whether they look at slave societies, feudal societies, or capitalist societies, the main feature they see is the existence of classes.

While recognizing that the class structure in any society is always more complex, in its skeletal outline there are two main classes—be they slavemaster and slave, lord and serf, or capitalist and worker—wherein the life patterns of the one are intrinsically linked to those of the other. But this linkage is always seen as an antagonistic one because the interests of the two stand in direct opposition; the interests of the one unavoidably clash with the interests of the other.

To capture the workings of this antagonistic relationship called class struggle, let us look for a moment at the capitalist system. The description that follows is an over-simplification when applied to today's world, because this is the period of imperialism, a period in which capitalism is no longer competitive in the same way as it was in the nineteenth century and in which it is no longer confined to national boundaries. The relationships, therefore, are much more complex. But the same essential features of class struggle still hold for present-day Marxists, and in this case, for the Chinese.

It is these essential features that serve the purpose here of delineating and explaining how the Chinese analyze societies and change today.

In a capitalist economy there are, on the one side, the capitalists, those who

own the means of production—factories, machines, raw materials, land, etc. However, the coal in a mine is of value only after miners dig it out and make it available for human use; the value of land is realized only after the farmers plant and harvest wheat, other workers process it, and it is then made available for human consumption. So, on the other side stands the proletariat (the working class), those who by applying their labour to the means of production are essential for producing the goods required by all classes for their continued existence. A class then is defined by its relationship to the ownership and control of the means of production.

In the capitalist class system, the goal of the capitalist is to maximize profits. This is achieved by paying the least possible for what he buys and getting the most possible for what he sells. In other words, he maximizes his profits by minimizing his expenses. It is, therefore, in his best interests to pay the workers—those who give value to his holdings—as little as he possibly can. This is clearly in direct opposition to the interests of the workers who want to increase their ability to purchase those goods which they have produced. Because of the competitive nature of capitalism (even in its monopoly phase) the efforts of the capitalist class must be not merely to maintain but to continually increase its profits by holding down what it pays out to the working class by way of wages and benefits. This process of profit-making, which Marxists call exploitation, is independent of the will of any particular capitalist.

Accordingly, the two classes are in constant and antagonistic opposition to each other; Marx and Engels call this opposition class struggle. This is not to say that the struggle is always overt or violent. Sometimes it is, but often it is not. What this analysis *does* say is that by the very nature of their conflicting interests, each class is necessarily in a position where it must struggle, through a wide variety of means, *for* its own class

interests and, therefore, *against* the interests of the class in opposition.

Since China was never a fully developed capitalist country, the alignment of forces in the class struggle differed somewhat from the simplified outline just given. A precise Marxist summation of class forces during the period preceding 1949 is provided by George Thomson:

At the beginning of the present century China was a semi-feudal, semi-colonial country, in which the masses of the peasantry were exploited by the feudal landowners and by a number of colonial powers, which had occupied the ports, seized control of the banks, and established a commercial network for plundering the country. In this they were supported by the rich merchants, moneylenders and financiers who constituted the big bourgeoisie—the comprador or bureaucratic capitalists. These two classes, the feudal landowners and the comprador bourgeoisie, formed the social base for imperialist oppression in China.

Between these two exploiting classes and the masses of the people stood the middle, or national, bourgeoisie. These were industrial capitalists whose efforts to build native industries were frustrated by feudalism and imperialism. From that point of view they were inclined to side with the people, but at the same time they were themselves exploiters, afraid of the proletariat, and so they tended to vacillate.

The only consistently anti-feudal, anti-imperialist classes were the peasantry and the proletariat. The vast majority of the peasantry were poor peasants, that is, rural proletarians and semi-proletarians. The industrial proletariat was small, but after the First World War, and more especially after the October Revolution, it grew rapidly in strength and influence.¹

The Chinese talk about 'the three big mountains'—feudalism, bureaucratic capitalism, and imperialism—that weighed heavily on the workers and peasants and against which they waged their revolution. Given the semi-feudal, semi-colonial nature of the country at the time and the presence of a vast, largely landless pea-

santry, the first demands they had to agitate for were national independence, land reform and basic democratic rights. This is considered the necessary first stage of a two-stage revolution and is called New Democracy. It was not until the encroachments made by imperialist powers were neutralized, until the land that had always been monopolized by landlords was distributed to the peasants, and until the working people were accorded the democratic rights that they had always been denied that the conditions for the next stage—socialist revolution—could be set.

The national bourgeoisie could be looked to for support of the new democratic revolution since their interests were also inhibited by the tremendous power of 'the three big mountains'. They would have to oppose the second stage, however, because as capitalists, they had to make profit, which comes from only one source—the exploitation of workers. In the era of advanced capitalism and imperialism, then, the proletariat, according to the Chinese, is the only class capable of the consistent and tenacious leadership necessary for conducting either the new democratic or the socialist revolution.

For any country to have true national independence in the age of imperialism, the Chinese believe that it is impossible to stop after the democratic revolution. Since under-developed countries are kept under-developed by the imperialist nature of advanced capitalism's relationship with them, only a complete rupture with capitalism will unleash the productive forces of their societies. Without an advance to socialism, the economic and political power of imperialism will be able to maintain its control and keep such countries in continued subjection. Thus the socialist revolution is seen as absolutely essential.

¹ George Thomson, *From Marx to Mao Tse-tung*, pp. 31-32.

The State

Political power, according to Marxist theory, goes hand in hand with economic power. The possessing class, exactly *because* of its economic power, is able to organize and control the machinery of the state—the executive and legislative bodies, courts, police, armies, etc. It naturally organizes this machinery in such a way as to protect its own interests. It will go to great lengths to maintain political control, because only in this way can it safeguard its economic control. It is this analysis of the inner workings of the class struggle and the absolute requirement of the class in power to maintain its power if it is to survive that led Lenin to observe that no ruling class in history has ever given up power voluntarily.

As a leader of the exploited classes in China, it was this same analysis that led Mao to say that 'political power grows out of the barrel of a gun.' What Mao is saying is that those who hold economic power also hold political power, which means that they control the repressive instruments of the state apparatus—the police and armies. They can and do marshal these instruments when their class rule is threatened. Their political power, then, ultimately resides in the barrels of the guns at their command.

Mao's statement further means that in order for the exploited classes to *effectively challenge* the ruling class and bring about the changes necessary whereby they can fulfill *their* class interests, they must likewise ultimately resort to the use of force. It means that the only way for the transformation to come about is through revolutionary means in which the exploited take up arms against the already armed exploiters.

The Dictatorship of the Proletariat

The Chinese do not view their liberation as the final or ultimate event in the class struggle. They say that class strug-

gle will be over only when there are no more classes, but that there still *are* classes in China as well as outside, and that, therefore, there is still class struggle in all countries including their own. What they say *has* changed, however, is that a new class, the proletariat, is in power. This they see not as a mere substitution but as a qualitative change that makes a basic difference in the lives of all the people in all classes. It must be remembered that Marxist analysis contends that in order for *any* class which is in power to remain there, it has *no choice* but to suppress the interests of the opposing class or classes. This suppression, for Marxists, constitutes a dictatorship.

This should not be confused with the Western connotations of the word dictatorship. We are accustomed to applying the term only to those situations where the suppression of those *not* in power is conducted by those who *are* through the most extreme and blatant methods, as, for example, in the military regimes in Latin America and other overtly fascist regimes like the one in Spain. For Marxists, on the other hand, the term dictatorship does *not* refer to the *severity* of the methods employed by a ruling class. *It refers instead to the fact of class power which has no choice than to suppress other classes*—at one time perhaps gently, at another violently; at one time covertly, at another time overtly—but which, *regardless* of the intensity or means of suppression at any particular moment, remains suppression nonetheless.

In China before 1949, there was, say the Chinese, a dictatorship of the two classes, the feudal landlords and the comprador bourgeoisie which, in alliance with foreign capitalists, shared power. Today there is a dictatorship of the proletariat. The earlier dictatorship of the landlords and bourgeoisie suppressed the great majority so as to serve the interests of the two very small allied and privileged classes. The present dictatorship of the proletariat does just the opposite. That

is one major difference, a difference which at first glance may appear to be merely quantitative. But even in terms of the sheer numbers involved, it is bound to have profound qualitative ramifications.

A second difference lies in the ownership of the means of production. Whereas previously they were privately owned by the small ruling classes, now, under the dictatorship of the proletariat they have become collectively owned. Thus, although *all* injustices and inequalities cannot be eradicated immediately during the period of the dictatorship of the proletariat, the major injustice of the past, 'the *exploitation* of man by man will have become impossible'² (emphasis in original) because no individual can any longer profit from the labour of others.

Equally as significant when considering any qualitative change from the old dictatorship to that of the proletariat is that the class struggle under the dictatorship of the proletariat *aims at the eventual proletarianization of all* so that at some future time *all* people will have the same economic and hence social-political interests. At that time, but not before, class struggle will end, because if there is only one class, there are, in effect, no classes.

The final victory of the dictatorship of the proletariat, then, is classlessness, or in other words, communism. Once communism is achieved, they maintain, there will be no further need for any repressive apparatus (a state) since there will be no classes to repress. Once all people have common economic, political and social interests the machinery for repression, the state, as well as all dictatorships will wither away.

Thus, consistent with the Marxist view, the Chinese see their country as a *socialist* state. This state is a dictatorship of the proletariat under the leadership of the Communist Party. While the eventual goal is to do away with the state—and therefore also all dictatorships including that of the proletariat and all parties including the Communist Party—socialism

is defined as a necessary transitional stage in the long historical development toward communism; it is perceived as a process. It is this process and the ideological and economic development effectuating it that the Chinese are referring to when they talk, as they often do, about 'socialist revolution and socialist construction.'

The Role of the Communist Party

From the vantage point of the West, however, it often appears that it is Mao, not the proletariat, who is in power. But the prevailing view in China is very different. To the Chinese, Mao is the man most responsible for interpreting Marxist theory and past practice relative to conditions in their country. Using Marxist analysis, he took the lead as early as the 1920s in setting guidelines for making a socialist revolution in China, and has uninterruptedly continued to do so up to the present, the guidelines now indicating the direction for continuing socialist construction. The people of China fully believe that they owe their liberation to the clarity with which these guidelines were formulated and the meticulousness with which they were applied.

Mao is not seen as a solitary figure, but rather as a leader of the Communist Party. The role of the Party is that of the vanguard of the proletariat. Ideologically, Party members are expected to be highly conscious of social, economic and political matters and to apply that consciousness to furthering proletarian interests; personally, they are expected to be exemplary in their attitudes and behaviours. Leadership geared to the furthering of self-interests rather than the interests of the masses is not to be countenanced.

At no time and in no circumstances should a Communist place his personal interests first; he should subordinate them to the interests of the nation and of the masses.

² V. I. Lenin, 'The State and Revolution,' *Collected Works*, Vol. 25, p. 466.

*Hence, selfishness, slacking, corruption, seeking the limelight, and so on, are most contemptible, while selflessness, working with all one's energy, whole-hearted devotion to public duty, and quiet hard work will command respect.*³

As a vanguard, the Party is expected to lead the proletariat in all struggles. Mao has stressed repeatedly that the Party must be at the forefront of the masses yet always integrated with them.

There are two dangers Mao cautions Party members against—commandism and tailism. Commandism is the tendency for leadership to separate itself from the people and thus either to look down upon them or to over-estimate their consciousness of their condition at any particular time. These mistakes result in the arrogant issuing of commands which do not conform to the realities of people's needs. The opposite danger for Communist Party members, tailism, is the tendency to fear the taking of initiative and bold action, and therefore to fail to lead the masses, but instead 'to trail behind them, gesticulating and criticizing.'

The proper relationship of the leaders to the led is referred to in China as 'the mass line' which rests on the principle 'from the masses, to the masses.'

*In all the practical work of our Party, all correct leadership is necessarily 'from the masses, to the masses'. This means: take the ideas of the masses (scattered and un-systematic ideas) and concentrate them (through study turn them into concentrated and systematic ideas), then go to the masses and propagate and explain these ideas until the masses embrace them as their own, hold fast to them and translate them into action, and test the correctness of these ideas in such action. Then once again concentrate ideas from the masses and once again go to the masses so that the ideas are persevered in and carried through. And so on, over and over again in an endless spiral, with the ideas becoming more correct, more vital and richer each time.*⁴

Underlying the mass line is the rejection

of the view prevalent in the West (though not exclusively in the West) that it is individual leaders who make history. Good leadership is seen as a necessary but by itself insufficient component of social change. The Chinese hold the conviction that all real social transformation can come about only through the efforts of the masses. Reiterating the position earlier propounded by Lenin, Mao has asserted that 'The people, and the people alone, are the motive force in the making of world history.'⁵

The Class Struggle in Ideology

But, it may be objected, if in China the workers and peasants are numerically so preponderant, why must they exercise a dictatorship of any kind? Won't the small classes of landowners and capitalists simply by force of the example of the proletariat (who after all are non-exclusive in that they want to eventually include everyone in their ranks) and by the sheer passage of time—won't they die a natural death? To this Marxists would answer that socialism presents a society 'not as it has *developed* on its own foundations, but, on the contrary, as it *emerges* from capitalist society; which is thus in every respect, economically, morally and intellectually, still stamped with the birthmarks of the old society from whose womb it emerges.'⁶ (emphasis in original)

In China, the economic base, or infrastructure, has seen a quite rapid transformation. It has been almost completely transferred out of the hands of the former ruling classes. That is, the means of

3 Mao Tsetung, 'The Role of the Chinese Communist Party in the National War,' *Selected Works*, Vol. II, p. 198.

4 Mao Tsetung, 'Some Questions Concerning Methods of Leadership,' *Selected Works*, Vol. III, p. 119.

5 Mao Tsetung, 'On Coalition Government,' *Selected Works*, Vol. III, p. 257.

6 Karl Marx, *Critique of the Gotha Programme* (International), p. 8.

production are no longer privately owned. All major enterprises are owned either by the state or communally. Communal ownership, as typified by the large and diversified communes throughout the countryside, refers to ownership by those directly involved in the day-to-day operation of them. A commune, owned in common by its members, often numbers several tens of thousands. A higher form of ownership is ownership by the state. This is considered more advanced because the means of production are in the hands of the *entire* proletariat as a *class* and not just a *section* of the proletariat as in the case of communal ownership. But both of these forms are seen as advancements over prior ownership arrangements because the means of production are owned by those who work them rather than by the former exploiting classes. This therefore constitutes a major stride in the direction of the total public ownership of all the means of production which will characterize the future classless society.

The initial success of a socialist revolution means then that economic and political power has been seized from the hands of the former ruling classes by the exploited classes which, as in China, can happen in a relatively short period of time. Old ideas, attitudes and behaviours, on the other hand, take much longer to transform. While this is especially true of the overthrown classes, it is also, although to a lesser extent, true of the proletariat itself. Mao has expressed the Marxist view that no one is above class ideology: 'In class society everyone lives as a member of a particular class, and every kind of thinking, without exception, is stamped with the brand of a class.'⁷ Since all the people in the new society have been part of the old society and therefore largely moulded by it, the remnants of the old cannot possibly die quickly, easily or automatically.

Marxists have repeatedly asserted that the classes which have been unseated do not take kindly to the new state of affairs.

Although they no longer have control over the repressive state apparatus, their struggle to regain power will be even more energetic than was their earlier struggle to maintain it. They will use any and all possible means at their disposal because as a *class* it is a life or death struggle. If their class power dies once and for all, so dies their privileged positions. So *seizing* power is not enough according to the Chinese: it must be consolidated and held securely as well. The consolidation of a socialist system cannot simply involve a proletariat resting on the achievements of its newly established power; it cannot mean that the class struggle is over. Rather, say the Chinese, socialism can only be sustained by a newer and more conscious struggle against older exploiting ideologies, and in the process, the hitherto uncharted course of the society of the future will become clearer and more solidified.

The Chinese maintain that the transformation of ideas cannot be achieved quickly.

*It will take a fairly long period of time to decide the issue in the ideological struggle between socialism and capitalism in our country. The reason is that the influence of the bourgeoisie and of the intellectuals who come from the old society will remain in our country for a long time to come, and so will their class ideology. If this is not sufficiently understood, or is not understood at all, the gravest mistakes will be made and the necessity of waging the struggle in the ideological field will be ignored.*⁸

Moreover, the economic conditions of a socialist society in transition also generate inequalities which become breeding grounds for the reinforcement of bourgeois ideology. Such inequalities are unavoidable because socialism must still pay

7 Mao Tsetung, 'On Practice', *Selected Works*, Vol I, p. 296.

8 Mao Tsetung, 'On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People', *Selected Readings from the Works of Mao Tsetung*, p. 464.

wages partly in terms of labour performed rather than in terms of need alone (as will occur under communism). Thus, while socialism does away with the gross forms of exploitation that exist in capitalist society, it cannot provide immediate and full equality. In still developing countries like China where the overall technical backwardness of the economy makes the transitional period especially long and hard, it is inevitable that the potential new bourgeoisie will join forces with the older ex-ruling classes to create formidable resistance to the successful development of the new proletarian ideology.

Once the former exploiting dictatorship had been overthrown, the conduct of the class struggle therefore begins to exhibit more distinctly ideological features. This ideological struggle requires an emphasis on education and persuasion which should have definite targets and should be conducted in a reasoned and careful manner.

All erroneous ideas, all poisonous weeds, all ghosts and monsters, must be subjected to criticism; in no circumstance should they be allowed to spread unchecked. However, the criticism should be fully reasoned, analytical and convincing, and not rough, bureaucratic, metaphysical or dogmatic.⁹

The Cultural Revolution in Theory

Class struggle of this type and in these forms has been going on in China since the beginnings of the revolutionary struggle in the countryside and, more especially, since the rectification campaigns within the Chinese Communist Party in the early 1940s. The Cultural Revolution *must* be seen as the continuation of that same class struggle. So with these few basic Marxist theories of the nature of class struggle in mind, we can now return to the questions raised earlier about the Cultural Revolution.

First, what kind of a revolution is a cultural revolution? A professor at Peking University provided part of the

answer when he said that it was necessary 'to transform the superstructure and criticize bourgeois ideology.' No political or economic revolution can be secure without a corresponding revolution in the superstructure, that is, in those institutions which influence and shape the way people think. While political and economic power was in the hands of the proletariat in China in the mid-60's, the ideology of the old exploiting classes, although it had been struggled against, was by no means dead. To the contrary, it was gaining strength to the point of threatening in very fundamental ways both the political and economic power of the proletariat. The people of China are convinced that if this process had been allowed to continue unchallenged—if, in other words, there had been no Cultural Revolution—the dictatorship of the proletariat would have been eroded to the point where eventually a privileged class would have emerged victorious.

Revisionism

The return of a privileged class to power is precisely the basis of China's rejection of the direction of development in the Soviet Union which the Chinese sum up in the term 'revisionism'. Revisionism is the process of revising socialism politically, economically and ideologically, resulting in the restoration of capitalism while still proclaiming to uphold socialist principles. According to the Chinese, political power in the Soviet Union is no longer in the hands of the proletariat but has been usurped by a new privileged élite which uses its power to serve its own interest, not those of the working class. Since there is no real dictatorship of the proletariat, the means of production may be *nominally* in the hands of the working class, but the new ruling class *in practice* controls economic power as well.

⁹ Mao Tsetung, 'Speech at the Chinese Communist Party's National Conference on Propaganda Work', *Selected Readings*, p. 496.

This new élite has also succeeded in propagating an ideology designed to consolidate its power. Therefore, the Chinese judge that the Soviet Union in all significant respects—politically, economically and ideologically—has moved so rapidly *away* from socialism and *toward* capitalism, that in effect, there has been a restoration of capitalism.

It became clear to Mao and others that this same process was developing and gaining a firm foothold in China. The deposed exploiting classes of the recent past were winning ground in the class struggle. This was possible because their methods were subtle and covert. Since for the vast majority of the Chinese people socialism has meant an incalculable improvement in their standard of living and a political voice for the first time in their long history, the opposing classes could obviously not declare open war on the dictatorship of the proletariat. As one student put it, 'They wanted to do things harmful to the people's interests, but they knew the people would suppress them. So they didn't do things openly, in the sun; they did them secretly, in the shadows.' Only by concealing their real objectives behind the *guise of support* for that dictatorship could they conduct activities aimed at destroying it. 'They waved the red flag to oppose the red flag.'

By such techniques, the revisionist forces had fooled many people. Their success in influencing the ideological outlooks of the people was making rapid inroads into proletarian power. It was the revolutionary forces, therefore, which adopted the strategy of 'declaring war'. What was at stake was not which *individuals*, but rather which *class* would hold power. This meant that proletarian ideology had to develop to the level where the workers and peasants would see more clearly and more profoundly what their own best interests really were and not be taken in by revisionism which claimed to serve their interests but which, the Chinese say, was doing just the opposite.

The specific components of what comprises proletarian ideology in China as opposed to revisionist or bourgeois ideology are highly ramified as they affect all concrete spheres of institutional life. For the moment, however, the statement of a young peasant from Sian should suffice. 'We see the bourgeois way of life as teaching people to always think only of themselves, not of others. Every day in China we encourage each other to serve the people, to do more for society, to build our country and to do more for the whole of mankind. When someone meets with difficulties, we will try our best to help him overcome them, to do better. There is a saying in China: "To do more for the people is happiness."' "

It is this way of thinking which the Chinese call proletarian ideology. And it was only by deepening such basic ideas as serving the people in the minds and actions of hundreds of millions that revisionist ideology could be effectively undermined. Nothing short of a revolution was the strategy selected to accomplish this gigantic task. Everyone in China was mobilized for this massive campaign of learning through the direct experience of class struggle and changing themselves and others accordingly.

What the Chinese said

Because of the interpretations advanced by 'China-watchers' of the day, the mere mention of the Cultural Revolution still conjures up the most vivid impressions of horror and disgust in the West. But perhaps the demon and monster image can best be exorcised by listening to what the Chinese say about the Cultural Revolution.

From their statements it becomes evident that a sharp distinction was drawn by Mao and his followers between those *leading* the revisionist forces and those being led, or, as the Chinese perceive it—being *mised* by them. Great emphasis was put on distinguishing between

friends and enemies. Point 5 of the sixteen-point programme of the Cultural Revolution states:

The main target of the present movement is those within the Party who are in authority and are taking the capitalist road. The strictest care should be taken to distinguish between the anti-Party, anti-socialist Rightists and those who support the Party and socialism but have said or done something wrong . . . The strictest care should be taken to distinguish between the reactionary bourgeois scholar despots and 'authorities' on the one hand and people who have ordinary bourgeois academic ideas on the other.¹⁰ (emphasis added)

This makes clear, contrary to reports at the time, that the Cultural Revolution was *not* launched against anyone and everyone. There was no randomness about it; the enemies were clearly defined. And the leaders of the enemy forces held very high positions in the Party and Government which explains why Mao issued the call to 'Bombard the Headquarters!' 'Bombard', of course, is figurative. What Mao was telling the proletariat was that only by searching the highest levels would they find the leaders of the counter-revolution. It is this small group of leaders of the counter-revolution—those who oppose socialism and want to restore capitalism—that the Chinese refer to as 'class enemies'.

Once found, however, did the leaders of the revolutionary camp urge indiscriminate violence?

The anti-Party, anti-socialist Rightists must be fully exposed, refuted, overthrown and completely discredited and their influence eliminated. At the same time they should be given a chance to turn over a new leaf.¹¹ (emphasis added)

Were 'mobs' of 'teen-age, slogan-drunk' shock troops designated to wage this revolution?

The masses of the workers, peasants, soldiers, revolutionary intellectuals and re-

volutionary cadres form the main force in the great Cultural Revolution.¹²

Were they to apply 'Mao-think'?

In the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, the only method is for the masses to liberate themselves, and any method of doing things in their stead must not be used. Trust the masses, rely on them and respect their initiative . . . 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. Make the fullest use of big-character posters and great debates to argue matters out, so that the masses can clarify the correct views, criticize the wrong views . . .¹³ (emphasis added)*

Were these big-character posters and debates simply a clever ruse designed to give only the appearance of democratic participation while in reality serving the purpose of forcing blind conformity as the media in the West indicated?

It is normal for the masses to hold different views. Contention between different views is unavoidable, necessary and beneficial. In the course of normal and full debate, the masses will affirm what is right, correct what is wrong and gradually reach unanimity.

The method to be used in debates is to present the facts, reason things out, and persuade through reasoning. Any method of forcing a minority holding different views to submit is impermissible. *The minority should be protected, because sometimes the truth is with the minority. Even if the minority is wrong, they should still be al-*

10 'Decision of the Central Committee', pp. 5-6.

11 *Ibid.*, p. 8.

12 *Ibid.*, p. 2.

13 *Ibid.*, pp. 4-5.

* A big-character poster is a sign or essay that anyone can write and hang up in public places, usually on walls on the streets. It provides a channel for the expression of opinion and was widely used during the Cultural Revolution. It has since been confirmed as one of the four democratic forms, which also include freely airing one's views, making criticism and launching mass debates.

lowed to argue their case and reserve their views.

When there is a debate, it should be conducted by reasoning, not by coercion or force.

In the course of debate, every revolutionary should be good at thinking things out for himself and should develop the communist spirit of daring to think, daring to speak and daring to act.¹⁴ (emphasis added)

Unity as an objective

The Chinese are aiming for unity of thought and action on those central issues that will define the direction in which they move—socialism or capitalism. Through *Time* magazine and the like we have been given the definite impression that China is a country where 'thought control' reigns supreme, where no one makes a move without Mao's say so. As the above quotations make abundantly clear, however, the people are expected to rely on themselves, use their initiative, and through full debate gradually reach agreement among themselves on the questions of *basic importance*. The last passage quoted from the Central Committee's Decision continues: 'On the premise that they have the same general orientation, revolutionary comrades should, for the sake of strengthening unity, avoid endless debate over side issues.'¹⁵

Why, though, so much emphasis on consensus and unity? As in any socialist society, in China the dictatorship of the proletariat is constantly being challenged by the old exploiting classes. They always present the threat of restoring the former dictatorship or a new one equally as exploitative and repressive of the proletariat's interests. Only by agreement among the proletariat as to what their essential interests are and how to best pursue them can the proletariat successfully combat the efforts of the exploiting classes and build a society to serve their own interests.

It is simply a matter of strategy. No army could be successful if each soldier on the battlefield made a decision by himself as to who was the enemy, how to best wage the battle, and then went his own way with his own private tactical plan. In the same sense, say the Chinese, the ongoing class struggle in China—of which the Cultural Revolution is just a high point—requires that the masses of the people, the proletariat and the increasingly proletarianized peasantry be able to identify the enemy, recognize his plans of attack, and act as a unit against him. There are only two differences in this analogy between war as we generally define it and the class struggle as waged in China during the Cultural Revolution. First, the battles in the Cultural Revolution did not aim at the physical elimination of the enemy. Second, while there were people who rose to leadership positions at all levels and in all arenas of the struggle, their leadership did not consist of issuing orders for underlings to obey regardless of the extent of understanding or agreement. Unity was to be reached through discussion.

The Cultural Revolution in Practice

It may be acknowledged that these were the *guidelines*, but the further question arises—how was the Cultural Revolution conducted *in practice*? All indications I received were that the guidelines did in fact constitute the characteristic features of the Cultural Revolution. In response to questions about the extent of violence, a young factory worker from Shanghai, who is presently studying English in Canada and who actively participated in the Cultural Revolution as a Red Guard, stressed that 'it was a revolution by *mouth*, not by force; by *words*, not by guns. The Cultural Revolution was a very big movement throughout the country in which millions of people took part.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 6-7.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

We went to different parts of the country, many cities and communes. Through these visits we learned much about the country and the people. We discussed all kinds of problems and questions; we read articles and wrote big-character posters. We debated with each other. You know, there are different opinions among people on everything. I think everything has two sides; so if you want to solve a problem you must have a discussion; there must be a debate. This is unavoidable.

'Chairman Mao once said to the Red Guards, "You must be concerned about the country's affairs. You must fight selfishness and criticize revisionism." This is what inspired us and this is what we did in the Cultural Revolution. I never saw any violence, but I did hear that there was some. Most people tried to heed Chairman Mao's words. There were a few people, however, who grasped the chance to do bad things. They were opposed to socialism. They were the class enemies of the people. Because all the country took part in the movement and everyone was very busy, they thought that would be a good time to cause trouble. But their tricks were usually discovered by the people before long, and they were prevented from doing too much damage.'

In order for Westerners to correct distorted images of China inherited from the past and to a lesser extent still being perpetrated, it must be reiterated that by 'preventing class enemies from doing damage', the Chinese do not mean doing violence to them. In fact, as the Shanghai worker indicated, *criticism* of revisionism, *discussion*, *debate*—these were the weapons in the arsenal of the revolutionary camp. In discussing this question, the Chinese consistently assert that those who followed Mao's line carried out the slogan 'Use persuasion, not violence,' and that whatever violence there was *instigated* by the advocates of revisionism. They never claim, however, that everyone who *participated* in violence was revisionist. This view maintains that some good revolution-

aries were, for a time, duped by the revisionists into committing violence against fellow revolutionaries, but that they soon saw their mistake and united with the revolutionary forces.

Since many observers date the start of the Cultural Revolution with the appearance of the first big-character poster at Peking University in May 1966 and since much of the activity during the Cultural Revolution emanated from educational institutions the full interview on the subject with the professor quoted earlier—a professor at Peking University since the start of the Cultural Revolution—might shed more light on the course this Revolution took.

'What happened at Peking University during the Cultural Revolution?'

'Because of the advocacy of the Liu Shao-chi revisionist line, class struggle at the University was very strong. We saw that we would have to transform the superstructure and criticize bourgeois ideology. Following the call of the Party, our school had big-character posters. They were published in newspapers and broadcast on radio. Nearly all the students and teachers were active in exposing the revisionist line. The old administration and Party Committee (of the University) couldn't play the same role. In its place we set up a new organization, a Cultural Revolutionary Committee elected by the masses.* It included students, teachers and workers at the University. In the early stages of this Committee it led the revolutionary masses. It organized Red Guards to go everywhere throughout the country. But because those in power still had capitalist ideas, they could not as Chairman Mao says, "divide themselves into two." So they couldn't absorb the criticism of the masses.

'Many factions developed which then coalesced into two. The leaders of these

* The term 'masses' in China can refer to the people of a particular unit, in this case Peking University. Or it can refer to all the ordinary working people. The latter is sometimes expressed by the term 'broad masses'.

two factions gradually became divorced from the masses. The orientation, however, was really the same for both. Each faction thought of themselves as revolutionary and the other as reactionary. They called each other "Kuomintang". They didn't see their own bourgeois ideas.'

'Did they engage in violence?'

'The struggle was very complicated. The young students had revolutionary enthusiasm but lacked the experience of class struggle. So they were easily deceived by bad elements which stirred up dissension. Each faction always thought of themselves as completely right and the others as completely wrong. They attacked each other and called each other names. At first the attacks were only oral. Later they became physical. The reason for the fighting was that the bad elements convinced the students that that was the only way to be a true revolutionary. They said, "Get ready to fight because they will fight you."'

'How widespread was the fighting?'

'Those who participated in the fighting were very few in number. Most disagreed with this method and urged for discussion. Out of approximately 10,000 students, 2,000 teachers and several thousand workers, only one to two hundred took part in any fighting, about one per cent.'

'How was it resolved?'

'After Chairman Mao issued the call for the working class to give leadership to everything, the workers' teams entered the University. They did much to solve these questions. Through patient discussion and persuasion they made it clear that the two factions had the same orientation. Both of them were basically revolutionary, but both of them were making the same errors. Therefore, they must each criticize *themselves first*. Under the influence of the workers, the students did self-criticisms and returned to class. They 'made revolution in their classes.' Very good friends who had been treating each other as enemies now started to recognize their

own mistakes, and they became friends again.'

The Class Struggle Continues

Transformation constitutes the present stage of the Cultural Revolution. Most people outside China have come to identify the Cultural Revolution solely with the 1966-69 period. While that was its height, the most spectacular years, the Cultural Revolution is yet to be completed. To see the Cultural Revolution as a series of events that took place *only* during those years is to miss the profound and, from all appearances, enduring effects it has had and continues to have on the lives of the people. The years since are a time of consolidation—discussing and digesting the lessons of that period—and, no less important, of transformation—implementing new forms appropriate to the new consciousness. Consolidation and transformation have so far resulted in many changes in China. In the years to come we can look for further changes resulting from this Cultural Revolution.

Nor does the Cultural Revolution mark the end of class struggle in China. The Chinese have a profound sense of process. The class struggle, they maintain, has been with us since time immemorial and will not end until there is an end to classes *worldwide*. They caution each other that the Cultural Revolution must not be mistaken as even closely approaching the final battle in the class struggle. Without belittling its significance, they see it as merely one of many high points in the ongoing class struggle.

Consistent with the analysis of Lenin, the Chinese hold that in the age of imperialism it is impossible to achieve classlessness in one society. Imperialism has given rise to a capital class that operates on all frontiers, and this class will continue its efforts to make and maintain inroads into *all* countries as long as it exists as a class. Thus no revolution is

secure until all exploiting classes everywhere have been eliminated.

This analysis has led many outsiders to claim that China is expansionist and 'exports revolution'. The Chinese, to the contrary, claim that *real* revolution can only be made by the people concerned, that no one else can do it for them. A visitor to China who spoke to a number of officials on this point reports their position: 'We have always believed . . . that revolution cannot be exported. The people of each country must rely on their own correct line in winning. Only by creating their own revolution, depending primarily on themselves, can a people truly gain freedom.'¹⁶ The Chinese Government has meticulously applied its Five Principles of Co-existence with other countries since they were first put forth in 1955: mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty; mutual non-aggression; mutual non-interference in each other's internal affairs; equality and mutual benefit; and peaceful coexistence.

Internally, the long-range view of class struggle looks ahead to more cultural revolutions on the horizon.

*The present great cultural revolution is only the first; there will inevitably be many more in the future No one in the Party or among the people in our country should think that everything will be all right after one or two great cultural revolutions, or three or four.*¹⁷

We are now in a position to summarize answers to the initial questions posed about the Cultural Revolution. Mao and his followers recognized that old ideas do not die easily. They decided to launch the Cultural Revolution when they saw the tremendous influence of revisionist ideology that was growing in all quarters. If the ideology of the people were to continue to develop along this road, the economic control of the proletariat over the means of production and therefore their political power, their dictatorship, would likely be undermined and eventually de-

feated. The revisionist forces were waging a vigorous class struggle, and if the proletariat failed to recognize this and failed to fight back with equal vigour, the Chinese people would have faced the defeat of socialism, and ended up with a social system similar to that which exists in the Soviet Union, and which they consider runs directly contrary to socialist principles. The situation was thought by the revolutionary leaders to be of serious enough proportions to warrant a full-scale mobilization of the population; the people had to see and grapple with revisionist (bourgeois) ideology first hand if they were to understand it, and to thoroughly criticize and repudiate it. Only by such means would they heighten their consciousness and deepen proletarian ideology. None of these objectives would have been achieved if Mao had defined this problem as capable of solution merely through 'inner-Party struggle'. The problem was great; the path chosen for solving it had to be equal to the problem. That is why Mao and his followers arrived at no less a strategy than revolution, including the whole people.

Revisionism emanated from and was directed by those holding high positions in the Government and Party who were therefore in positions to wield considerable influence. The Cultural Revolution similarly emanated from and was directed by others, the revolutionary forces, in equally as important positions. In launching this revolution, Mao saw the potential danger of the masses dissipating their energy *solely* on the criticism and repudiation of officials and leaders in lesser positions. Because revisionist leaders existed at all levels, this was seen as a necessary part of the process, but by itself not sufficient. The leaders of the counter-revolution had to be recognized for what they were and rooted out. This is why Mao directed the

16 Jack Smith, *Unite the Many, Defeat the Few: China's Revolutionary Line in Foreign Affairs*. (A Guardian Pamphlet), p. 34.

17 Circular of the Central Committee, p. 46.

masses to bombard the headquarters.

The successful defeat of the leading advocates of revisionism marks the success of the Cultural Revolution. Through this success, the earlier successes in the transformation of political and economic structures have been made more secure, though by no means safe for all times, as the Chinese themselves recognize. Revolutions had already been won in these spheres. The danger was not there, as much as it was in the developing ideas of narrow self-interest at the expense of the class or collective interests of the great majority. Unchallenged, however, such ideas would have eventually undone economic and political gains, because people would have increasingly put the revisionist ideas of 'self first' into practice.

So top priority in this phase of the class struggle was not to change political or economic structures as such, but rather those institutions that most completely, directly and immediately shape ideas—

education, literature, art, the popular media, etc. Making the superstructure the focal point of intense class struggle—in other words, having a *cultural* revolution represents an entirely new development in the theory and practice of socialist revolution.

This historically unprecedented and perhaps first of many such revolutions in China is called the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. It is considered *great* because of the breadth of people it encompasses and the depth of ideas and practices it challenges; considered *proletarian* because that is the class which leads the struggle and in whose interests it is waged; considered *cultural* because culture in the broadest sense of the superstructure is the arena of the struggle; and considered *revolution* because it is a thoroughgoing attack on and overthrow of the ideological power of a potentially exploiting class.

