

II

CRITICIZE LIN PIAO AND CONFUCIUS

Introduction

The campaign to Criticize Lin Piao and Confucius was launched by Mao in the wake of the 10th Party Congress in August of 1973. Why were the two so closely linked? Lin Piao, of course, had attempted an armed coup in 1971. This was the culmination of a desperate struggle waged against Mao and the continuation of the Cultural Revolution, which Lin said had long since outlived any usefulness and was only creating disaster. He based his program for counter-revolution on the proposition that things had been better before than now, and that the revolution had gone to extremes.

Confucius some 2500 years ago had fought to defend the institutions of slave society from attack, harping that the slaves were creating havoc everywhere. He lectured extensively and organized against the political reforms directed at the slave system. His followers came to be known as the Confucianists, and they preached that everything should be based on strict obedience to the old system complete with its rites, ceremonies, and rigid social distinctions. Their opponents were the Legalists who represented the feudal forces that were rising at the time. They represented the progressive historical trend of the day, seeking to uphold reforms against the slave system.

Lin Piao, like the Confucianists, was a restorationist. He even draped himself in Confucian philosophy, including advocating the doctrine of the mean (things ought not be allowed to get too far out of hand). Confucius and Lin Piao stood against the revolutionary changes of the period in which they lived and did everything they could to turn the clock back. The Criticize Lin Piao and Confucius campaign was aimed at underscoring the persistent and recurrent danger posed by

those who seek to restore the old order and exposing their hypocritical airs of concern for the good of everyone. The campaign was designed to put people on notice that this was, under present circumstances, an urgent question to take up. The achievements of the Cultural Revolution must be safeguarded. And, of course, the campaign would hit at Confucianism, long an ideological prop of the reactionary forces in China and a fetter on the revolutionary enthusiasm of the people.

It was clear who Lin Piao was, but was there someone else who fit the description of Confucius, a contemporary equivalent of this condescending defender of the slave system? Yes there was. While different contemporary leaders often figured in the analogy, it was Teng Hsiao-ping and ultimately Chou En-lai who were targeted by Mao and the Four for opposing the transformations of the Cultural Revolution and for suppressing those who defended these transformations.

By September 1973, study groups started forming in factories, and workers began in earnest to take up this historical study and sum up its contemporary relevance. In different forms, this study continued through 1976. The selection "History Develops in Spirals" (Text 13) demonstrated by way of analysis of the Chinese Revolution that victories were won only through repeated struggle and that twists and turns—even reversals—were part of the normal development of history, though they could not alter its general forward direction. It also contains criticism, by way of reference to Liu Shao-chi, of the line of reducing support to revolutionary struggles in other countries. The articles on culture written at this time (Texts 11 and 12) point to specific struggles on a key front where the Right began to make a concentrated bid to reverse the important changes wrought by the Cultural Revolution.

The speech to the Cambodians by Wang Hung-wen (Text 14) was delivered a week before Teng Hsiao-ping's speech to the U.N. at which Teng enunciated the theory of the "three worlds"; however, it appeared in the same issue of *Peking Review* in which Teng's speech was reprinted. Wang's speech emphasizes the importance of supporting the revolutionary struggles of the people and mentions a recent statement from Mao that not to do so would be to betray Marxism. Even taking into account that the speeches were delivered in different contexts, their thrust is totally different and, interestingly, Teng's speech (Appendix 6) makes no reference to Mao.