

Ten Years of Tumultuous Advance

1. The Cultural Revolution is Unleashed: November 1965 - January 1967

The "signal," Mao called it, was the publication of the newspaper article "On the New Historical Drama *Hai Jui Dismissed from Office*." This play by a Peking Deputy Mayor was a thinly disguised demand for the reinstatement of former Defense Minister Peng Teh-huai, dismissed as head of the armed forces in 1959. Peng Teh-huai had refused to go along with Mao on creating a People's Militia. He had been a standard-bearer of the Right's opposition to the political mobilisation of the peasants and the formation of People's Communes in the Great Leap Forward. Now he was demanding reinstatement and the Right was using him as a battering ram.

A criticism of the play was written by Yao Wen-yuan under the leadership of Chiang Ching, Mao's wife. Peking Mayor Peng Chen blocked its publication. Behind Peng Chen stood head of state Liu Shao-chi and another powerful Party leader, its Secretary-General, Deng Xiaoping. "At that time," Mao later explained, "certain departments and certain localities were dominated by revisionism. It was so tight that even water could not seep in and pins could not penetrate." Finally the article appeared in Shanghai November 10th.

When the Right found it couldn't suppress the publication of Yao Wen-yuan's criticism of *Hai Jui*, it tried, through its leading positions in the Party, to steer the debate into purely academic and historical waters. They forbid big meetings, big debates and the posting of big posters.

Mao later explained, "Yao Wen-yuan's article was merely the signal

for the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. Consequently, in the Central Committee, I was especially keen on drawing up the May 16th Circular. Because the enemy was especially sensitive, once the signal was sounded, we knew he would take action. Of course we had to take action on our own. This circular had already been very precise in bringing out the question of line, and the question of two lines. At that time, the majority did not agree with my view, and I was left alone for a time. They said my views were outmoded.... After some debate I gained the endorsement of a little over one-half of the comrades."

"Open Wide" — The May 16th Circular

The circular was meant to blow the debate wide open and indicate its true targets: "Those representatives of the bourgeoisie who have sneaked into the Party, the government, the army and various fields of culture are a bunch of counter-revolutionary revisionists. Once conditions are ripe, they will seize political power and turn the dictatorship of the proletariat into the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. Some of them we have already seen through, others we have not. Some are still trusted by us and are being trained to be our successors. Persons like Khrushchev, for example, who are still nestling beside us. Party committees at all levels must pay attention to this matter...."

As to method, "Open wide." "To open wide" means to let all people express their opinions freely, so that they dare to speak, dare to criticise and dare to debate."

This May 16th Circular was at that time an inner-Party document, but Mao had no intention of seeing the struggle confined to Party ranks and circles.

On May 25th 1966, seven students

and teaching assistants at Peking University put up a big character poster criticising the university head and other high-ranking Party officials linked to Mayor Peng Chen. Written with broad brush strokes on a large sheet of paper, it said, "What kind of people are you actually?... to hold big meetings and put up big-character posters is one of the best ways for the masses to do battle. By 'guiding' the masses not to hold big meetings, not to put up big-character posters and by creating all kinds of taboos, aren't you suppressing the masses' revolution, not allowing them to make revolution, and opposing their revolution? We will never permit you to do this!"

The young people who put up this poster had no way of knowing what would happen to them. Mao asked that it be broadcast on the radio and printed in newspapers on June 1st. He called it, "China's first national Marxist-Leninist big character poster." There was celebration on the Peking University campus.

Elsewhere secondary school students wrote the Central Committee a letter demanding the transformation of an educational system which augmented the difference between manual and intellectual labour, between workers and peasants, and between city and country. In support of these kinds of demands, student outbursts became widespread, especially in Peking.

By June, Peng Chen and the Peking University president were removed from office. Exams and matriculation were postponed on instructions from the Central Committee. In the schools, wall posters began to cover every inch of space; then they were hung from wires in great sheets across the lunchrooms. A torrent of leaflets, brochures, printed wall newspapers and handwritten wall posters began to overflow the campuses and engulf

all of China.

Once again the Right strove to put itself at the head of this movement and distort it for its own ends. During Mao's fifty-day absence from Peking in June and July, Liu Shaoyi and Deng Xiaoping, still second and third-ranking Party leaders, sent in work teams to "guide" the Cultural Revolution in the schools, offices and factories. They forbid off-campus discussion of university affairs. Meetings were also forbidden and persecution was the order of the day. The work teams tried to "point the spearhead down," by focusing criticism on real or alleged errors among ordinary teachers, students and workers, instead of on the policies being carried out by leading Party officials. The Cultural Revolution was close to being extinguished by these officials masquerading as supporters of Mao Tsetung Thought. Small, sometimes semi-clandestine resistance groups sprang up, especially among students. But the situation was serious and many were confused. The stakes were mounting: at that time the U.S. bombed Hanoi and Haiphong, in Vietnam, bringing the war closer to China's borders.

On July 25, in the newspaper *People's Daily*, a photo appeared on page one: Mao swimming in the Yangtze River. At 73 he had swum a good number of miles in turbulent waters. Rumours about Mao's indisposition were wrong, those who counted on being able to write him off were wrong, and he was definitely not out of the political combat.

In August, there was a plenum of the Central Committee. It was to break down important political and ideological barriers holding back China's young rebels, by clearly affirming the main targets, goals and methods of the Cultural Revolution. Its main document, called the 16 Points, was to become the basic programme of the Cultural Revolution.

The 16 Points: August 1967

"Comrade Mao Tsetung said, 'To overthrow a political power, it is always necessary first of all to create public opinion, to do work in the ideological sphere. This is true for the revolutionary class as well as the counterrevolutionary class.' This

thesis of Comrade Mao's has proved entirely correct in practice. Although the bourgeoisie has been overthrown, it is still trying to use the old ideas, culture, customs and habits of the exploiting classes to corrupt the masses, capture their minds and endeavour to stage a comeback. The proletariat must do the exact opposite: it must meet head-on every challenge of the bourgeoisie in the ideological field and use the new ideas, culture, customs and habits of the proletariat to change the mental outlook of the whole society. At present, our objective is to struggle against and overthrow those persons in authority who are taking the capitalist road, to criticise and repudiate the reactionary bourgeoisie academic 'authorities' and the ideology of the bourgeoisie and all other exploiting classes and to transform education, literature and art and all other parts of the superstructure not in correspondence with the socialist economic base, so as to facilitate the consolidation and development of the socialist system."

"Large numbers of revolutionary young people," the 16 Points continued, "previously unknown, have become courageous and daring pathbreakers" who "argue things out, expose and criticise thoroughly, and launch resolute attacks on the open and hidden representatives of the bourgeoisie." "Since the Cultural Revolution is a revolution," it added, "it invariably meets with resistance.... chiefly from those in authority who have wormed their way into the Party and are taking the capitalist road. It also comes from the forces of habits from the old society.... Because the resistance is fairly strong, there will be reversals and even repeated reversals in this struggle. There is no harm in this. It tempers the proletariat and other working people, and especially the younger generation, teaches them lessons and gives them experience, and helps them to understand that the revolutionary road zigzags and does not run smoothly...."

"What the Central Committee of the Party demands of the Party Committees at all levels is that they persevere in giving correct leadership, put daring above everything

else, boldly arouse the masses, change the state of weakness and incompetence where it exists, encourage those comrades who have made mistakes but are willing to correct them to cast off their mental burdens and join the struggle, and dismiss from their leading posts all those in authority who are taking the capitalist road and so make possible the recapture of the leadership for the proletarian revolutionaries....

"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. Cast out fear. Don't be afraid of disturbances. Chairman Mao has often told us that revolutions cannot be so refined, so gentle, so temperate, kind, courteous, restrained and magnanimous. Let the masses educate themselves in this great revolutionary movement and learn to distinguish between right and wrong and between correct and incorrect ways of doing things."

The 16 Points distinguished between "antisocialist Rightists" and those who had made mistakes, and between people in authority and "people who have ordinary bourgeois academic ideas." It also made a distinction between contradictions among the people and contradictions between the people and the enemy, stating "it is normal for the masses to hold different ideas." "The minority should be protected, because sometimes the truth is with the minority." "When there is debate, it should be conducted by reasoning, not force." It divided cadres (full-time officials of various kinds) into good; comparatively good; people who had made mistakes "and put fear above everything" else and who could either make self-criticism or become an obstacle; and capitalist roaders in authority. Regarding the latter, the document warned, "when they find themselves very isolated and no longer able to carry on as before, they resort still more to intrigues, stabbing people in the back, spreading rumours and blurring the distinction between revolution and counterrevolution, all for the pur-

pose of attacking the revolutionaries.” The pertinence of this last point would become even clearer in the coming months.

On August 5th, in the midst of the Party meeting that issued this 16 Point decision, Mao put out “My Big Character Poster: Bombard the Headquarters!”

Summer - Fall 1966: Red Guards and Revolutionary Rebels

In mid-August, Red Guard units, which had begun to develop based on the resistance to the reactionary work teams, began to appear publicly and to spread with dizzying rapidity. These were mass organisations of secondary and university students and teachers. The majority were 12 to 17 years old. Despite their organisation in detachments and so on, military style, they did not carry weapons and were not really military in organisation and discipline.

During their first phase, in August, they swarmed through Peking, Shanghai and Canton, painting over streets and store signs which evoked the memory of old, feudal, enslaved China. (Contrary to malicious Western reports, they did not attack museums.) They searched the homes of former capitalists and landlords, confiscating and dragging into the daylight gold, jewelry, opium pipes and opium, weapons and deeds to former property.

Then they began to spread out from these cities into the rest of the country, while new Red Guard organisations sprang up everywhere. Soon Red Guards were traveling around the country to exchange experience. Everywhere they went they distributed the 16 Points and encouraged people to implement them. Later they began distributing hundreds of millions of *Quotations from Chairman Mao Tsetung* and other works by Mao.

Mao donned a Red Guard armband himself and personally greeted the first big Red Guard rally in Peking’s Tien An Men square. A million youth took part, many coming from far-flung provinces (meanwhile many Peking Red Guards were traveling in the hinterlands). Similar rallies were to take place every two

weeks after that. Often they were held in support of the struggles of the peoples of the world, and Mao issued statements in support of specific struggles including the Black people in the U.S. and the Indochinese people then at war with U.S. imperialism. It was estimated that at any one time, in addition to its four million usual inhabitants, Peking also housed another million traveling Red Guards, who organised themselves carefully so as not to break the city’s back.

The workers were becoming active and began to organise the Cultural Revolution among their own ranks, department by department and factory by factory. They began criticising, evaluating and pasting up big-character posters regarding questions facing society as a whole as well as about the management in their work-places.

Generally these worker Cultural Revolution organisations were called “rebels” or “proletarian revolutionaries.” Policies were issued so that the workers could have at their command paper, ink, printing facilities, loudspeakers, meeting places, and transport. Soon worker and student organisations began setting up joint centres of leadership on the city and provincial levels.

Mao later explained, “Although it was the intellectuals and the broad masses of young students who launched the criticism of the bourgeois reactionary line, it was, nonetheless, incumbent upon the masters of the time, the broad masses of workers, peasants and soldiers, to serve as the main force in carrying the revolution through to completion.... Intellectuals have always been quick in altering their perceptions of things, but, because of the limitations of their instincts, and because they lack a thorough revolutionary character, they are sometimes opportunistic.”

On October 1st 1966, China’s national day, two million Red Guards and rebel workers paraded through Tien An Men square.

The “Adverse Current” Begins: Winter 1966

In October, the Party theoretical organ *Red Flag* published an editorial warning that the two-line struggle in the Party, “while not yet

antagonistic, might become so.” Discussion around this editorial was widely organised in the schools and factories. Though not yet named in the official press, Liu Shao-chi and Deng Xiaoping had been labeled opponents of the Cultural Revolution in wall posters and Red Guard publications. It was understood who Mao meant when he said “Bombard the Headquarters.” But the struggle became especially complicated because some leaders who had openly supported Liu and Deng in a straightforwardly rightist manner now saw themselves forced to switch tactics. They began trying to deflect the attacks on the Right by working to “broaden the target” to include genuine revolutionaries as well.

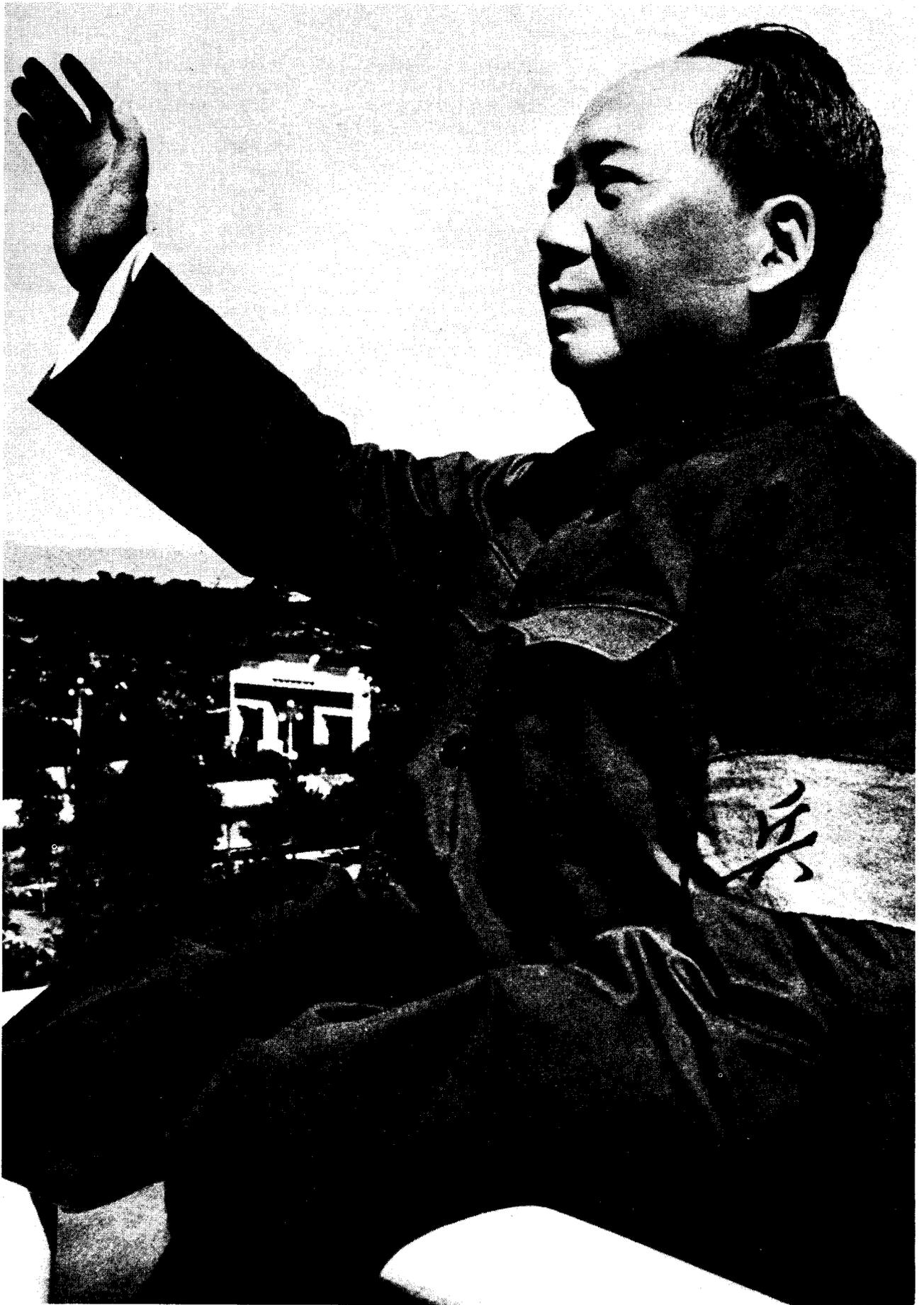
“Suspect all, Overthrow all” was a favourite rallying cry designed to divert the struggle from overthrowing the bourgeoisie in the Party. Reflecting this and the sharpening differences within the Party, conflicts between different Red Guard organisations also began to sharpen. In some cases, the Right was able to foment pitched battles. At the same time, since it had failed to keep the Cultural Revolution from taking hold among the workers, the Right promoted an “economist wind” of encouraging workers to demand — and to strike for — pay raises and bonuses, in order to distract the workers from the current political battles and their revolutionary political goals, to promote individualism and to create economic difficulties which they hoped to use as an excuse to demand that the Cultural Revolution be reined in.

During this “adverse current,” despite it — and directly in the face of it — the centre of gravity of the Cultural Revolution began to shift to China’s industrial areas. In November 1966, the Shanghai Workers Revolutionary Headquarters was established to fight the rightist city Party leadership. In response, the authorities set up their own rival Detachment of Red Defense of Mao Tsetung Thought, a “rebel worker” organisation headquartered on the top floor of City Hall. Chang Chun-chiao, a former Shanghai party leader loyal to Mao’s line, was sent back to



*Young student activist
pins Red Guard
armband on Mao.*





Mao greets Red Guards at Tien An Mien demonstration.

Shanghai from Peking to intervene.

The Workers Revolutionary HQ and other mass organisations issued an "Urgent Warning" to the city's people denouncing the Right's political intrigues and economic sabotage of socialism. This appeal received the backing of the Party Central Committee but the Right refused to back down.

2. The Working Class Seizes Power From Below: January 1967 - September 1968

On January 11th 1967, worker rebels seized strategic sites and workplaces all over the city and overthrew the city administration, taking power firmly in their own hands. At first they called it the Shanghai Commune. Later, under Mao's guidance, they renamed it the Revolutionary Committee of the Municipality of Shanghai.

This was the January storm. The Cultural Revolution had entered a new phase. The revolutionary rebels, having learned some lessons through the twists and turns, were seizing political power.

Revolutionary committees sprang up in many places, but unevenly and often in a checkerboard pattern. There were protracted struggles in many areas where revolutionary committees could not be established or where the Right established its own phony revolutionary committees to preempt the masses and the Left.

The Party's proletarian leadership began to make efforts to form "great alliances" between different and often rival mass organisations to facilitate further seizures of power. In some places this was successful, while in others it was impossible for the various mass organisations to come to agreement. Sometimes alliances were formed only to quickly collapse.

Mao commented, "This was a crucial stage in the decisive battle between the two classes, the two roads and the two lines, and this [seizure of power — *AWTW*] was the main and proper theme of the whole movement. After the 'January storm,' the Central Com-

mittee repeatedly concerned itself with the problem of a great alliance, but it did not work out. Later, it was discovered that this subjective wish was not in keeping with the objective laws of the class struggle. This is because each class and political power wanted to exert itself stubbornly. Bourgeois and petit-bourgeois ideologies burst forth like unbridled flood waters, thus undermining the great alliance. It was impossible to work out such a great alliance, and even if it were, it would eventually be broken up. Thus the present attitude of the Central Committee is merely to promote it, not to work it out. The method of pulling the sprout to accelerate its growth is unfeasible." (This, like many of Mao's comments summing up the earlier phases of the Cultural Revolution quoted here, are from his "Speech to the Albanian Military Delegation" given on May 1st 1967 — reprinted in *A World To Win* 1984/1.) "The problem," Mao said elsewhere about this period, "is that those who have committed ideological errors are mixed up with those whose contradiction with us is between ourselves and the enemy, and for a long time it is hard to sort them out."

Despite the difficulties that had arisen, cutting the process short could only thwart the movement's goals: "The Central Committee has emphasised time and time again that the masses must educate themselves and liberate themselves. This is because world outlook cannot be imposed upon them. In order to transform ideology, it is necessary for external causes to function through internal causes, though the latter are principal. If the world outlook is not transformed, how can the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution be called a victory? If the world outlook is not transformed, although there are 2,000 power holders taking the capitalist road in this Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, there may be 4,000 next time."

Mao's Two Calls

After the January storm, Mao issued two calls. One was, "Proletarian revolutionaries unite and seize power from the handful of

Party persons in power taking the capitalist road." The other was, "The People's Liberation Army should support the broad masses of the Left." PLA units (unarmed), usually propaganda teams, were sent in to the factories and peasant communes to work and engage in political struggle. Their assigned task was to support the Left through persuasion, help assure production and aid in forming great alliances and revolutionary committees called three-in-one combinations. These were made up of representatives of the masses selected by them, Party representatives also selected by the masses, and army representatives.

The "adverse current" was beaten back by March 1967. The Central Committee asked that school classes resume without halting the Cultural Revolution, with emphasis on criticising and revolutionising teaching methods. Mass revolutionary criticism flourished, with the number of posters reaching new heights when the Party officially began blasting Liu and Deng and exposing their political and ideological programme in an all-around way, including exposing some of the Rightist manoeuvres in "leftist" guise such as during the period of the work teams.

The Right, however, was not dead. "In the summer of 1967 and the spring of 1968, they again fanned up a reactionary evil wind both from the Right and the extreme 'Left' to reverse correct verdicts." (From the *Report to the Ninth Party Congress*) Serious incidents included army support for the Right in the major industrial city of Wuhan and several days of major battles. In a few places fighting between rival Red Guard organisations went over to bloodshed.

In the summer of 1967 Mao toured North, East and South-Central China. When he returned to Peking in September he announced that despite these difficulties, "The situation of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution in the whole country is excellent, not just good; the entire situation is better than at any time before."

The situation was excellent for continuing the revolution. Nation-

wide study sessions were organised to study Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought, fight individualism and criticise revisionism. The revolutionary committees spread.

“The Working Class Must Exercise Leadership In Everything”: July 1968

“There is no fundamental conflict of interests within the working class,” Mao said. In July 1968, he issued the directive, “It is essential to bring into full play the leading role of the working class in the Great Cultural Revolution and in all fields of work.” “The working class must exercise leadership in everything.”

Worker control teams were sent into the universities to settle problems and to play a permanent role in revolutionising education. They were also sent into government offices.

In the fall of 1968, with the establishment of the last major revolutionary committees, in Tibet and Sinkiang, the Party press announced that the Cultural Revolution had been brought to a successful stage throughout the country. Mao made a very important and far-sighted statement:

“We have won great victory. But the defeated class will still struggle. These people are still around and this class still exists. Therefore, we cannot speak of final victory. Not even for decades. We must not lose our vigilance. According to the Leninist viewpoint, the final victory of a socialist country not only requires the efforts of the proletariat and the broad masses of people at home, but also involves the victory of the world revolution and the abolition of the system of exploitation of man by man over the whole globe, upon which all mankind will be emancipated. Therefore, it is wrong to speak lightly of the final victory of the revolution in our country; it runs counter to Leninism and does not conform to facts.”

3. Struggle — Criticism — Transformation

The period of tumultuous marches, rallies and fighting was drawing to a close. For the first time in

history, the formerly exploited masses in a socialist country had seized back the power usurped by a new bourgeoisie arisen within the very bosom of the Party — an achievement crowned with the Party’s Ninth Congress in 1969, marking the successful reforging of the Party itself in the furnace of mass struggle against revisionism. But the Cultural Revolution was far from over. In fact, it was to become both deeper and even more complex — or perhaps it is truer to say that it became increasingly complex as it dug deeper and deeper into the soil from which this bourgeoisie had arisen and from which new bourgeois would inevitably continue to arise until the basis for them to exist had been completely eradicated.

The entire nature and purpose of China’s education system was transformed. Formerly it had been much like any educational system serving exploiting society anywhere in the world. Now, as Mao said, its goal was to train “workers with both socialist consciousness and culture.” “It is still necessary to have universities; here I refer mainly to colleges of science and engineering. However, it is essential to shorten the length of schooling, revolutionise education, put proletarian politics in command and take the road of the Shanghai Machine Tools Plant in training technicians from among the workers. Students should be selected from among workers and peasants with practical experience and they should return to production after a few years of study.”

The number of full-time officials working for the central government in Peking was reduced from 60,000 to 10,000 in 1971. Under the system of “May 7th Cadre Schools,” officials spent part of each year in the countryside doing farm labour and studying Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought.

In the countryside, a new model arose: throwing out the old system of allocating the harvest according to work points based on a competitive system among the peasants not much different from the old society, and replacing it with a policy meant to promote “working wholeheartedly for the public interest, self-assessment of work points confirm-

ed by public discussion.” Spurred by their political and ideological understanding and no longer kept so much apart by conflicting interests, peasants carried out enormous construction projects on a scale unprecedented in history. Even the course of rivers was transformed so as to free China of floods and harness the waters for irrigation and electricity. Despite China’s still relatively low level of mechanisation all this led to tremendous increases in agricultural production.

In industry, workers carried out mass movements to free themselves from cumbersome rules and regulations and downgraded material incentives and bonuses. Such measures, necessary for organising production when the fruits of labour are alienated from the producers, were to a large extent replaced by the conscious control of proletarians determined to free society and the world. One-man management was replaced by revolutionary committees and the relations between workers, technicians and management were fundamentally altered through the use of three-in-one teams of these three forces to spearhead continual technical innovations. The division between manual and mental labour was being cut away in production itself, as well as in education and in revolutionising the cadre.

“Grasp revolution, promote production” the 16 Points had declared. This freeing to an unprecedented extent of the productive forces, the greatest of which is the producers themselves, led to spectacular achievements in production. These included the construction of a 10,000 tonne ship on a Shanghai dry dock built for ships of a maximum of 5,000 tonnes. Such victories helped socialist China to withstand imperialist pressures and were quite consciously carried out as part of enabling the country to step up its aid to the world revolution, especially to Vietnam, which directly involved a significant percentage of production and transport.

Characterising the situation before the Cultural Revolution, Mao had suggested that the Ministry of Culture change its name to “the Ministry of Emperors, Kings,

Generals and Ministers, the Ministry of Talents and Beauties, or the Ministry of Foreign Mummies.” Now the workers and peasants occupied the centre stage. Traditional Chinese and Western forms were transformed while a radical rupture was made with their content and the outlook of the proletariat was given its fullest cultural expression in history. Eight model theatrical works were created in the early years of the Cultural Revolution. Within a decade, artists in all fields, political workers and large numbers of the masses themselves who were drawn into the process had developed 17 model operas, ballets, symphonic music pieces and so on. On a local level thousands of other works were created by professional artists and by the contingents of part-time artists flourishing among workers, peasants and soldiers.

Mao had also said that the Ministry of Health should be called “the Ministry of Health for Urban Overlords.” Health care was revolutionised to reverse this, putting emphasis on the countryside and on workers’ health problems. Professional medicine and the professionals themselves were transformed. Tens of millions of people from among the masses were drawn into solving health problems. These were called “barefoot doctors” because you can’t work in the rice paddies wearing shoes. By mobilising the masses of peasants to wipe out disease-carrying snails infesting the canals and rice paddies, China was freed of a terrible scourge that had long afflicted the peasants. At the same time, guided by the same principles, socialist China achieved important world breakthroughs in medicine, including the first synthetic manufacture of insulin, the use of acupuncture, new advances in surgery and so on.

In connection with all this, there was a fundamental leap made in the political and ideological education of the masses, both in the course of class struggle, production and scientific experiment, and involving study in its own right. In a country where a great many people had no books, the 400 million copies of *Quotations From Chairman Mao Tsetung* (the “little red book”) meant that many

people had the chance to study Mao’s Thought for the first time. In addition, 70 million copies of his *Selected Works* enabled deeper study to take place on a truly mass scale. Programmes in the factories, fields and schools trained millions upon millions in rigorous study and debate over major basic works by Marx, Engels and Lenin as well as Mao. With the slogan “Philosophy is No Mystery,” vast numbers of workers and peasants studied, debated and consciously applied the basic philosophical principles of materialist dialectics as part of a movement that involved important philosophical advances made under the leadership of Mao’s line.

4. The Revolutionary Road Is Full of Twists and Turns: 1969 - 1976

As Mao often pointed out and as was repeatedly witnessed in the course of the Cultural Revolution, every revolutionary offensive gives rise to a desperate battle by representatives of the status quo. September 1971 saw a grave setback: Lin Piao decisively turned against the Cultural Revolution and hatched an attempt to assassinate Mao. Lin himself was killed in an airplane crash near the Soviet border after his coup attempt failed.

Lin Piao had become Defense Minister in 1959 after the defeat of Peng Teh-huai. Later he had played a prominent role in the Cultural Revolution and had helped bring the support of the armed forces to bear against Liu and Deng. Lin and his followers “never showed up without a copy of *Quotations* in hand and never opened their mouths without shouting ‘Long Live’ and...spoke nice things to your face but stabbed you in the back.” (From the 10th Congress *Report*) After Liu and Deng went down, Lin and his followers themselves took an increasingly stubborn stand against continuing the Cultural Revolution. As early as 1966, Mao had written to Chiang Ching warning that this might happen with Lin Piao: “Monsters and demons will jump out themselves. Determined by their own class nature, they are bound to jump out.”

Especially in 1969, as Russia stepped up military pressure on China and attacked its northern borders, Lin called for an accommodation with the USSR. He argued that China could not defend itself without rebuilding its armed forces to put the emphasis on heavy weapons and not the revolutionary consciousness of the soldiers and masses. As Mao once pointed out, for a country like China such a line could only lead to capitulation in the face of imperialism. Lin wrote a draft report to be submitted to the Ninth Party Congress which claimed that the principal contradiction was no longer between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie but rather between China’s “advanced social system and backward productive forces,” and called for politics to take a back seat to production. This was the same line that Liu Shao-chi had put forward earlier under different circumstances. (This draft was rejected.)

In the wake of Lin’s attempted coup, the Cultural Revolution faced a rather difficult period. Many people were confused and anxious. The army had to be reorganised; Lin was far from being without followers. In order to save the Cultural Revolution, some people who had previously opposed it had to be brought back. The Right used the occasion to accumulate forces and prepare to “reverse correct verdicts.” One of those brought back was Deng Xiaoping.

Struggle Over Summation: 1971 - 1973

The Cultural Revolution could not and did not subside. Battles raged over exactly how to sum up what had happened. A particularly concentrated expression of this took place in the bitter struggle over the relationship between revolution and production.

The 1973 Tenth Party Congress was an important victory in this regard. It analysed Lin Piao’s line and programme; in opposition to the view that held that the problem had been that Lin wanted to go “too far,” Lin was exposed as a revisionist who had tried to bring the Cultural Revolution to a halt. The Congress Report quoted Mao saying

“Probably another revolution will have to be carried out after several years.” It added, “when a wrong tendency surges towards us like a rising tide, we must not fear isolation and must dare to go against the tide and brave it through. Chairman Mao states, ‘Going against the tide is a Marxist-Leninist principle.’”

After the 10th Congress, the Left launched a campaign to “Criticise Lin Piao and Confucius,” which brought out the common ideological essence of all revisionists and exploiting classes and the political programme that was bound to be common to all who would restore capitalism in China. The purpose was to make the summation of the recent past serve to arm the masses of Chinese people for the inevitable trials of strength that would follow.



Mao in 1941.

A New ‘Right Deviationist Wind’ — 1974

The Right, of course, could not simply sit and watch with folded arms. A new rightist tide — the “Right deviationist wind” — began to rise. They argued that the economy was a mess and fixing it required more rightism. Both assertions were strongly rebutted by the 1974 National People’s Congress which underscored the successes of China’s economy in the course of the Cultural Revolution and proclaimed, “socialist revolution is the powerful engine for developing the social productive forces.” Still, some people who had only grudgingly supported the Cultural Revolution at first and then later opposed it, and others (like Deng) who had opposed it all along, were able to reinforce their organisational positions.

In 1974-75, while the Left was putting emphasis on freeing the productive forces by carrying out further transformations of the relations of production and in the superstructure, the Right went on a powerful offensive to bring back some of the old relations between managers and workers in the factories and so on and to chain the workers to their posts so as to keep them out of politics. “Be masters of the wharf, not slaves to tonnage,” the Shanghai workers replied, making it clear that the real issue was not whether or not

to produce but what — which class — to produce for.

Mao gave direct leadership and guidance to the proletariat in this battle to “beat back the Right deviationist wind.” At the end of 1975, he sharply and publically criticised Deng Xiaoping and his programme for restoring capitalism under the guise of “modernising” China.

Once again political activity was turning white-hot. In April early 1976, on the occasion of the death of top Party leader Chou En-lai, the Right staged a riot in Tien An Men square; Mao and Chiang Ching were openly denounced. As a result, Deng was dismissed from his posts. Again there were pitched battles in various parts of the country, reflecting the all-out confrontation between two headquarters in the Party.

On September 9th 1976, Mao died. On the 6th of October, on the eve of an important Party meeting, Rightist Party leaders and army commanders staged a military coup. Mao’s closest followers in the Party, including Chiang Ching, were arrested. This was the end of the Cultural Revolution and indeed, for now, the end of the socialist revolution in China. But it was not and is not the end of the resistance to bourgeois rule in China by the many millions of workers and peasants who still follow Mao’s line and it is very far from the end of the story.

The new revisionist government

met with serious resistance and had to bare its teeth. In Shanghai itself, immediately following the arrests, there was an attempted insurrection which failed due to a combination of vacillation and confusion about the nature of the new government. In the provinces of Anhui, Fujian, Sichuan, Hunan, Yunnan, Xinjiang and Jiangxi, revolutionary armed struggle against the new regime was fierce and protracted. According to the government, these areas remained outside of government control for some time.

Chiang Ching and Chang Chun-chiao put up soul-stirring resistance within the clutches of the enemy during their January 1981 public trial. Chiang Ching in particular gave very important encouragement to the world’s revolutionaries with her defiant denunciation of the new revisionist regime. Both of them were sentenced to death. As far as is known abroad, they are still being held in prison by the bourgeoisie they fought unceasingly against.

As Mao said, “If the Rightists stage an anti-Communist coup d’état in China, I am sure that they will know no peace either and their rule will most probably be short-lived, because it will not be tolerated by the revolutionaries who represent the interests of the people making up more than 90% of the population.” □