

China Policy Study Group

BROADSHEET

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MAO TSETUNG 1893—1976

Mao Tse-tung was one of the greatest revolutionary leaders in world history. A master of Marxist theory, he led his people through more than forty years of revolutionary struggle. The secret of his greatness lay in his closeness to the people.

Of all things in the world, people are the most precious. Under the leadership of the Communist Party, so long as there are people, every kind of miracle can be performed.

The Red Army was formed in 1927. A few years later, still small and weak, it was encircled by the Kuomintang, who built a ring of blockhouses — 'iron bastions' as they were called — within which it was to be annihilated:

Comrades! are they really iron bastions? Not in the least! Think of the palaces of the feudal emperors over thousands of years—were they not powerful within their walls and moats? Yet they crumbled one after another the moment the masses arose. The Tsar of Russia was one of the world's most ferocious rulers, but, when the proletariat and the peasantry rose in revolution, was there anything left of him? No, nothing. His bastions of iron? They all crumbled. Comrades! what is a bastion of iron? It is the masses, the millions upon millions of people who genuinely and sincerely support the revolution. That is the real iron bastion, which no force can smash, no force whatsoever. The counter-revolution cannot smash us; on the contrary, we shall smash it. Rallying millions upon millions of people, we shall wipe out all counter-revolution and take over the whole of China.

Then came the Long March:

For twelve months we were under daily reconnaissance and bombing from the skies by scores of planes, while on land we were encircled and pursued, obstructed and intercepted by a huge force of several hundred thousand men, and we encountered untold difficulties and dangers on the way; yet by using our two legs we swept across a distance of more than twenty thousand li through the length and breadth of eleven provinces. Let us ask, has history ever known a long march to equal ours?

After the liberation, still led by Mao Tse-tung, the Chinese people entered on a new road — the long march of socialist construction. Always cautious in the hour of victory, he warned the Party to maintain its close ties with the people:

The Chinese revolution is great, but the road after the revolution will be longer, the work greater and more arduous. This must be made clear now in the Party. The comrades must be taught to remain modest, prudent and free

from arrogance and rashness in their style of work. . . . We are not only good at destroying the old world; we are also good at building the new.

Similarly, after the triumph of the Cultural Revolution, when the counter-revolutionary attempts to restore capitalism were smashed, he declared:

We have won a 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.

Meanwhile other peoples have joined in the march, and the 'iron bastions' of colonialism have been crumbling all over the world:

The people of a small country can certainly defeat oppression by a big country, if only they dare to rise in struggle, dare to take up arms and grasp in their own hands the destiny of their country. This is a law of history.

Before us there now opens the prospect of raising human society to a higher level by putting an end to the exploitation of man by man:

In the present epoch of the development of society, the responsibility of correctly knowing and changing the world has been placed by history on the shoulders of the proletariat and its party. This process, the practice of changing the world, which is determined in accordance with scientific knowledge, has already reached a historic moment in the world and in China, a great moment unprecedented in human history, that is, the moment for completely banishing darkness from the world and for changing the world into a world of light such as never existed before.

In holding out this prospect for the future of mankind Mao Tse-tung reveals the same boundless confidence in the masses of the people as he had displayed in his leadership of the Long March more than fifty years ago:

**The Red Army fears no hardship on the Long March.
A thousand mountains, ten thousand rivers are nothing.
The Five Ranges are like little winding ripples.
The peaks of Wumeng like clay balls tumbling into the plain.
Washed by the River of Golden Sand, the cloud-covered cliffs are warm.
Spanning the River Tatu, the iron chains are cold.
The far-off snows of Minshan only bring us joy.
The Army presses through, and we all laugh.**

GEORGE THOMSON

LEADER OF THE REVOLUTIONARY PEOPLE

Serving the masses

Mao was of the first rank as revolutionary thinker and teacher, as master of military strategy and tactics, as leader of the world revolution, as world statesman. There is however danger, in thinking like this, of succumbing to the bourgeois preoccupation with individual heroes as makers of history. It tends to make out greatness of action and thought as a mystery — something that is inborn, transcending historical conditions, imposing

itself on a passive 'common herd' of men and women, and after a single life disappearing just as mysteriously as it had appeared. To see China's enormous leap forward from being a suffering, sick and dying country to being the happiest, most alive and most rapidly developing one — to see this as the work of a single person does not make sense of over fifty years of continued revolution by one-fifth of mankind. Nowhere in the world can the people get far on the road to achieving what they

want for their own good if they have leaders, however good, whom they must passively follow.

History and biography cannot in this era be written in the old way: 'Let us now praise famous men'. Mao's leadership (and Lenin's and Ho Chi Minh's too) does not make sense at all in terms of personal achievement. He was, to start with, one of the oppressed people in a nation under imperialist oppression. To the end he never turned against or separated himself from the workers and peasants, or capitulated to imperialism. In 60 years of political activity he never tried, as others have, to use the rebellion of the oppressed to get personal power, fame or wealth, never deserted the cause of the oppressed and exploited. He never even retired from work to enjoy leisurely old age. He faithfully did the duties assigned to him and — even though it meant the pain of separation from old comrades and friends who had stopped relying on the masses — continued to take the revolution forward, on the side of those who were still struggling for their emancipation. He was also strict in refraining from revolutionary rhetoric and posturing, or pomp and ceremony, which entail unnecessary burdens on workers, peasants and intellectuals. He thus set the pattern for a new kind of working class and poor peasant leadership. We can say, everything he had, everything he required for the growing needs of his work, he got from the people and rendered back to them unstintingly. Only the proletarian revolution could produce a leader like this.

Like all others wanting an end to the tyranny and exploitation of the imperialist order, we shall be joining with the Chinese for some time to come to think of all the varied and almost incredible achievements of Mao. This is not the time to try to take their full measure. He was for forty years *Chairman Mao*: he was attentive to the people's needs, demands, ideas, aspirations and criticisms; he strove to develop and focus the revolutionary energies and skills of workers and peasants on concrete tasks of thinking, fighting, production and organising.

How did he manage to act in accordance with conditions in China? They were so very complex. They had hardly begun to be studied. There were no documents, no scholarly experts, to be consulted. How did he learn what had to be done? Knowing what other Marxist revolutionaries and liberation movements in other situations had written or done was useful, but it could not show what specific steps had to be taken at any particular moment in China in the early part of this century. Mao began by integrating himself with the struggles of the lowliest people and learning through revolutionary practice. In 1911, when as a needy schoolboy he became an ordinary soldier to fight for the new Republic, he first became actively involved in national affairs. The determination to do something to change the situation in which China then was had taken the young peasant to school, where he began to acquire his profound knowledge of Chinese history. It was his political activities while he was there that brought him first into collision with the governor of his home province, Hunan. When he was in Peking working as a library assistant Mao learnt about the wider world, not only from anti-imperialist revolutionaries like Li Ta-chao, but also from the workers in the factories he visited. On becoming a Communist Mao, by then a teacher in Hunan, went to the miners of Anyuan and other workers in order to integrate his work and his struggles with theirs and to learn from them. It was what he gained while teaching the workers and listening to them that convinced him that, to be good Marxists, intellectuals (including even those peasants and workers who become intellectuals) must integrate themselves thoroughly with the workers and peasants. Mao's education as a revolutionary leader was to continue while he was working with the peasantry in Kwangtung and Hunan (1924-27), and later during the long hours he, as Chairman of the Kiangsi Soviet government, spent with the labouring masses. When in Yanan he wrote:

Unless a person is interested in turning his eyes downward and is determined to do so, he will never in his whole life

really understand things in China.

Preface and Postscript to Rural Surveys, 1941.

To learn how China was to be liberated and transformed a revolutionary had to break completely with the ways of the feudal lords, the bourgeoisie, the imperialists.

Turning the oppressive social order upside down

In its immense scope, depth and thoroughness the Chinese Revolution far surpasses all earlier revolutions, including the Bolshevik Revolution. More and more, the working class and its allies have consciously and collectively been directing their revolution with a grasp of the laws according to which society develops. It is the upsurge in many thousands of places — villages, mines, factories, shops, construction sites, dockyards, farms, schools, hospitals and fighting units, whole cities and provinces — which has taken China forward in all the years Mao was at work.

The unprecedented *people's* spirit of daring to overthrow all that comes from or is sanctioned by the oppression-ridden past and to create from day to day not merely a 'better' social system but a new society without classes — where has it found its articulation and summing up better than in the labours of Mao? Mao lived in the era of decaying imperialism and the proletarian socialist revolution. As much as anyone he was a man of his time. But it has become a glorious time for the oppressed millions of the whole world. It is a time of hope. A new epoch has clearly begun. Chinese history under Mao's leadership has brought liberation and socialist revolution nearer for all peoples.

'The masses are the real heroes' is not just any slogan but a Marxist truth. We can look at the stuff of which Chinese — and world — history has been made in the past sixty years, from the standpoint of the working class and its allies. The early struggles were against decrepit imperial China and for new foundations for a China in mortal danger; against the gentry and the warlords who subverted the republic and opened the door for increased imperialist penetration of China; against the traditionalists, Confucianists and westernisers who stifled the growth of the New Culture movement; against the landlords and bourgeoisie who lived off the labour of the masses or by robbing them. Fifty years ago the Chinese workers, peasants and soldiers fighting under the banner of the revolutionary Kuomintang were showing how vulnerable imperialism was. Then came Chiang's coup d'état. The people's struggle, under working class leadership, was now against the Chiang dictatorship, which press-ganged, overtaxed, terrorised and killed daily; against Chiang's imperialist instigators, backers and apologists; against bad revolutionary leaders who misled them, needlessly exposed them to danger, defeat and death. Then it was against the Japanese fascists who seized their land and their cities and massacred them; against the widely-feared power of US imperialism; against the traditional land-tenure system which blocked the advance of Chinese agriculture and industry; against the capitalist factory owners and bosses. Still later it was against overlords in the CPC; against despotism and tyranny in new forms in the factories, farms, army, schools and universities; against the exploitation of the countryside by the cities and for the worker-peasant alliance; against intellectuals dominating the working people; against the betrayal of the Russian Revolution by Khrushchev and Brezhnev; against Soviet imperialist exploitation of their brothers and sisters in the rest of the world; against worship of irrational rules and regulations. . . . And it goes on.

Exemplary successor to Marx and Lenin

It was Mao more than anyone else who insisted that rebellious workers, peasants and students should not be discouraged or suppressed but that they should struggle for liberation, learn how to analyse, take charge of the Party, state and economic work. These millions were armed with Marxism, in a form in which it could be applied to their concrete situation in the process of undergoing changes. They learned how to hold firmly

to the proletarian standpoint and to use Marxism as the weapon of the ruling class against the bourgeoisie and its ideology. In their politics and production the workers and peasants were shown how to adopt correct methods of work in every situation. Therefore the result of the Chinese Revolution is not so much the simple fact that people who were coolies and child labourers and even beggars are now governing China; but that these people, who thirty years ago were illiterate, 'the wretched of the earth', are beginning to solve fundamental problems which the best experts of the old order find impossible to solve.

Mao was one of the founders of the Communist Party of China. More than anyone else it was he who made it the correct and victorious Party of the working class, 'the force at the core leading our cause forward'. The CPC was essential to the working class in the momentous transformation of the whole of society. In the New Democratic Revolution the united front and armed struggle were also essential, as weapons. Since the socialist revolution began, continued class struggle against the bourgeoisie has been the key to development.

The universal truth of Marxism-Leninism, which reflects the practice of proletarian struggle throughout the world, becomes an invincible weapon for the Chinese people when it is integrated with the concrete practice of the Chinese proletariat and people. This the Communist Party of China has achieved. Our Party has grown and advanced through staunch struggle against every manifestation of dogmatism and empiricism, which runs contrary to this principle. . . . Our congress should call upon the whole Party to be vigilant and to see that no comrade at any post is divorced from the masses. It should teach every comrade to love the people and listen attentively to the voice of the masses; to identify himself with the masses wherever he goes, and, instead of standing above them, to immerse himself among them; and, according to their present level, to awaken them or raise their political consciousness and help them gradually to organise themselves voluntarily and to set going all essential struggles permitted by the internal and external circumstances of the given time and place. Commandism is wrong in any type of work, because in overstepping the level of political consciousness of the masses and violating the principle of voluntary mass action it reflects the disease of impetuosity. Our comrades must not assume that everything they themselves understand is understood by the masses. Whether the masses understand it and are ready to take action can be discovered only by going into their midst and making investigations. If we do so we can avoid commandism. Tailism in any type of work is also wrong, because in falling below the level of political consciousness of the masses and violating the principle of leading the masses forward it reflects the disease of dilatoriness. Our comrades must not assume that the masses have no understanding of what they themselves do not yet understand. It often happens that the masses outstrip us and are eager to advance a step when our comrades are still tailing behind certain backward elements, for instead of acting as leaders of the masses such comrades reflect the views of these backward elements and, moreover, mistake them for those of the broad masses. In a word, every comrade must be brought to understand that the supreme test of the words and deeds of a Communist is whether they conform with the highest interests and enjoy the support of the overwhelming majority of the people. Every comrade must be helped to understand that as long as we rely on the people, believe firmly in the inexhaustible creative power of the masses and hence trust and identify ourselves with them, no enemy can crush us while we can crush every enemy and overcome every difficulty.

On Coalition Government, 1945.

The world revolutionary struggle was weakened by revisionist tendencies which substituted economism for Marxism and waited for development of the productive forces under imperialism instead of taking part in the struggle of the exploited and oppressed to liberate themselves. Above all other things people want to be freed from the shackles which prevent them realising the immense social benefits in the modern age of production

which is cooperatively planned and directed, and more so where imperialism is dominant than anywhere else. It is because its task is to achieve this liberation that the working class is, as Marx and Engels put it in *The Communist Manifesto*, the greatest class in history. As Mao put it:

The amazing complexity of Marxism is to be summed up in one sentence: 'It is justifiable to rebel'. For centuries people have been saying, 'It is justifiable to oppress or exploit people, but it is wrong to rebel'. Marxism turned this thesis upside down. That is a great contribution, a thesis established by Marx from the struggles of the proletariat. Basing their action on this thesis, people have shown defiance, struggled and worked for socialism.

Mao Papers, ed. Jerome Chen.

There has never been a period like that in which we are living, for upheaval and revolt all over the world. The world is being turned upside down. In this time of unending tempest some people would like to take refuge in calm waters until the storm blows over. But Mao welcomed the struggles of the millions all over the world for independence, national liberation and revolution, remained close to them, recognised their importance for China and integrated himself with them as no one else has done.

A state and society founded on the conviction that it is right to rebel against those who exploit and oppress is a new phenomenon. There is something about Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tse-tung Thought (i.e. revolutionary Marxist theory and practice) which stirs a new kind of life. From the issuing of *The Communist Manifesto* to Mao's most recent acts, from the Paris Commune to the current struggle against reversing the correct decisions of the Cultural Revolution, people have been aware of a new element in contemporary history, something that makes the blood run faster and the nerves tingle. This is very much present in Mao's life and work. We realise that the practice of revolutionary Marxism is different from the bookish Marxism of the right and left opportunists who are so familiar a spectacle in our society. Many people will recall the following in the *Report on an Investigation of the Peasant Movement in Hunan* (1927):

This is a marvellous feat never before achieved, not just in forty but in thousands of years. It's fine. It is not 'terrible' at all. It is anything but 'terrible'. 'It's terrible' is obviously a theory for combatting the rise of the peasants in the interests of the landlords. . . . If your revolutionary viewpoint is firmly established and if you have been to the villages and looked around, you will undoubtedly feel thrilled as never before. Countless thousands of the enslaved — the peasants — are striking down the enemies who battered on their flesh. What the peasants are doing is absolutely right; what they are doing is fine! 'It's fine!' is the theory of the peasants and all other revolutionaries (*italics added*).

A number of people misunderstand the reliance Marxism-Leninism-Maoist Thought places on class consciousness and the creativity of the working class and poor peasantry. Some petty bourgeois anarchists and fanatics have called themselves 'Maoists'; while some bourgeois Sinologists have seen Mao as a 'romantic revolutionary'. In the great 1936 work, *Problems of Strategy in China's Revolutionary War*, Mao referred to a letter written by Marx on 12 April 1871 to Ludwig Kugelmann, discussing the Paris Commune. 'What flexibility, what historical initiative, what a capacity for sacrifice in these Parisians!' Marx exclaims, and goes on to speak of the 'Parisians, storming heaven'. These are the qualities of the revolutionary working class and, in writing in *Ching Kangshan Revisited* about what Communists have done, Mao was surely alluding to the heaven-storming spirit of the proletariat when he said:

We can reach the Ninth Heaven to grasp the moon,
We can plumb the Five Oceans to catch turtles.

The dictatorship of the proletariat is, because of what, under Mao's leadership, the working class by its deeds has written into history, the most hopeful thing for mankind. On 1 June that

year, commenting on the rebels' *dazibao* which had gone up in Peking University, Mao described it as the Manifesto of the Peking People's Commune of the Sixties of the 20th Century.

Mao was not a theorist commenting on history as made by others. He was in the thick of the revolutionary storm, with responsibilities which demanded decisions. The unity of practice and theory is to be seen in the Great Leap Forward and in the Cultural Revolution.

Against Imperialism

In taking as his own the sufferings and struggles of the hundreds of millions victimised by imperialism, feudalism and capitalism, Mao did not confine himself to the Chinese. It was his influence and example that have made the Chinese continually mindful of other peoples and ready to serve them. The Chinese persistence in the revolutionary road of struggle against oppressing classes and nations, for socialist construction and in scientific experiment has shown to other Third World peoples, as well as the working class in the capitalist countries, truths which they cannot do without in fighting for their own emancipation. The latter have been aware of Mao's intense personal interest in the task they have to carry out. Hundreds of millions in many nations continued after China's liberation to be under the tyranny of imperialism and its agents, unable to develop the means of production and subsistence in order to end their lack of food, housing, education, employment opportunities, etc. In championing their cause, Mao did not indulge, as many others do, in mere expressions of anger and flamboyant gestures. He showed deep compassion for them but, viewing the realities from his Marxist-Leninist standpoint, he showed that it was necessary to go beyond compassion in order to unite with the victims of imperialism and social-imperialism. He continually reminded the Chinese people that China, as it developed into a strong and prosperous modern nation, must never become a superpower. It must never take advantage of the need for weakness of other Third World countries to interfere in their internal affairs, or even to coerce reactionary governments which were attacking, imprisoning or killing revolutionaries. As in China, the oppressed masses, under working class leadership, would assert their right to overthrow imperialist rule and make the socialist revolution. At a time when the Soviet social-imperialists have been working hard to confuse and divide the forces struggling to contain and destroy imperialism, to seize the leadership of the liberation movements and to propagate bogus Marxist teachings, Mao's firm leadership was crucial. It is the people who will always make history and who will defeat revisionism, imperialism and social-imperialism.

People of the world, unite and defeat the US aggressors and all their running dogs! People of the world, be courageous, dare to fight, defy difficulties and advance wave upon wave. Then the whole world will belong to the people. Monsters of all kinds shall be destroyed.

Statement supporting the people of the Congo (L.) against US aggression, 1964.

In calling on the workers, peasants and revolutionary intellectuals to rely on themselves in this manner, Marxism-Leninism-Maoist Thought warns the revolutionary forces against the disarming notion that liberation can be achieved by peaceful means — by making deals with imperialism, or by agreements between the superpowers, or by saviours from outside in the shape of 'anti-imperialist' expeditionary armies, or in some other form which prevents the slaves, coolies and serfs from developing through struggle. It is in the same spirit that, following the emergence of Soviet social-imperialism as the other superpower, Mao called for a united front against superpower hegemony.

The New Democratic Revolution in China was a long, hard-fought and costly struggle, in which the victory of the forces led by the working class was in large part due to Mao's leader-

ship. Between 1946 and 1949 the men and women who had fought as guerillas against the Japanese imperialists and the Kuomintang engaged in pitched battles against the US-equipped and advised armies sent against them by Chiang Kai-shek. There was a series of campaigns and battles (some of them among the greatest battles of modern times) which shattered US imperialism in East Asia. It was Mao, more than anyone else, who planned the strategy and gave overall direction. He thus emerged from the revolution as its great Marxist theoretician and as a military strategist of the first rank. He was almost a legend. Much could legitimately have been made of the victory, and of the occasion of proclaiming the People's Republic of China. But Mao made a characteristically short and simple speech declaring that the Chinese people had stood up. He had earlier that year spoken of what had been accomplished as only the first step in a long march of 10,000 *li*. It was not false modesty. It was a sober and correct view, grounded in Marxism-Leninism. The socialist revolution was only then about to begin, as Mao had always pointed out. It would be a long journey before they reached the goal of communism. The revolution was a task in which many people would join.

It is not the praise of his admirers and pupils all over the world, but the work he began and continued so well that will be Mao's memorial. We in the West acknowledge that he was no more of purely Chinese significance than Marx was purely of German or Lenin of Russian significance. In the practice of Marxism in Chinese conditions, in the struggle against revisionism and social-imperialism, and in the struggle against the superpowers Mao extended and developed the work of Marx and Lenin and advanced the day of final proletarian victory over the bourgeoisie. Marx and Engels wrote in 1879 to their German comrades words which read like something out of today's China:

For almost forty years we have emphasised that class struggle is the immediate driving power of history, and in particular that the class struggle between bourgeoisie and proletariat is the great lever of the modern social revolution; we, therefore, cannot cooperate with people who want to expunge this class struggle from the movement.

Mao's Leadership

The masses of the Chinese people made this revolution, which could not possibly be the work of any individual. Mao carried forward the work of Marx and Lenin in opposing the 'Blanquist' approach of individualist manoeuvres in making revolution. It is precisely because he saw so well that the *masses* make revolution that his personal contribution was so great. But struggling spontaneously without the guiding force of theory, the people cannot make the qualitative leap and attain liberation. Mao integrated the principles of scientific socialism with the concrete practice of the Chinese revolution and this is the essence of his contribution, which makes the essential difference between failure and success for the people seeking to overthrow their oppressors.

Mao's work shows above all the correctness of these scientific principles of Marxism-Leninism, that this revolutionary theory is confirmed in revolutionary practice. Speaking of great revolutionary leaders, Lenin says:

After their death, attempts are made to convert them into harmless icons, to canonize them, so to say, and to surround their *names* with a certain halo for the 'consolation' of the oppressed classes and with the object of duping the latter, while at the same time emasculating the *essence* of the revolutionary teaching, blunting its revolutionary edge and vulgarizing it.

State and Revolution.

Lenin recovered the revolutionary essence of Marx's teachings and the success of the Great October Revolution against what seemed to be all the odds proved its truth in practice, while also enriching the content of Marxism. After Lenin died, his own

name was treated in the way he describes by the bourgeoisie, including the new bourgeois elite who usurped power in the USSR. Mao re-established in all its vigour the truth of Marxism-Leninism. At present, Mao himself is being praised by representatives of the bourgeoisie with the object of turning him into a harmless icon. But nothing can obscure the essence of his work.

Mao understood and really applied the principle that class struggle is the motive force in human society. He guided the Chinese revolution to victory according to the fundamental Marxist principle that revolutionary violence is the highest form of struggle. He remained true to the concept that the state is an instrument of coercion in the hands of a particular class. He understood that imperialism is the highest stage of capitalism, that the defeat of the bourgeoisie and the rise of the working class to exercise full control over the destiny of humanity is inevitable and necessary. He fully saw that only the workers themselves, acting as *conscious* revolutionaries in their millions, can liberate mankind. Above all Mao grasped and consistently applied the principles of dialectical and historical materialism to the analysis of every situation and every problem, no matter how big or small.

Many people in the socialist movement, while being perhaps more or less sincerely devoted to the people's cause, have felt that it is something of a luxury to apply Marxist principles in analysing complex, tricky or apparently minor problems. Mao consistently fought against empiricism, seeing clearly that if one departs from principle this means in effect putting forward a bourgeois 'line' within the socialist movement.

Mao's conception of two-line struggle is one of his greatest achievements in the field of theory. For a long time Liu Shao-chi and others tried to deny the existence of two-line struggle, to deny the difference between the proletarian line of upholding Marxism as propagated consistently by Mao Tse-tung, and the various bourgeois lines which had occurred in the history of the party. The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution blew the lid off class struggle, showed that two-line struggle has been the motive force in the world socialist movement since the time of Marx, including the Russian revolution and the Chinese revolution. Mao with his broad vision and profound understanding of history has shown that two-line struggle existed from very early times and must continue in various forms even under Communism.

Mao obtained these theoretical insights by summing up the history and experience of revolution, of the struggles of the working masses to win liberation, both in the past and in recent times. In turn, this theory provided the masses with a great theoretical instrument to analyse politics and grapple with affairs of state. It was also possible for the Chinese people to study the history of their revolution and see Mao's work in its true light. Lin Piao tried for his own purposes to make use of Mao's great prestige, pretending that Mao was a unique genius in order to deprive the masses of consciousness of their historic role and hide the fact that Mao's contribution lay precisely in his application of the scientific principles of socialist theory and his devotion to the work of mobilising the masses in their millions. More recently, Teng Hsiao-ping made an attempt at

'emasculating the essence of the revolutionary teaching, blunting its revolutionary edge and vulgarising it.' Mao had a fine sense for perceiving the masses' demands and the contradictions at work in society, and thus seeing what was necessary at any given stage of the revolution. As a great teacher, he guided the people, especially since 1970, in acquiring a mastery of the basic concepts of Marxism, so that they are able to defend Marxism and employ it as a priceless revolutionary weapon against the system of class exploitation.

Socialist society covers a considerably long historical period. Throughout this period there are classes, class contradictions and class struggle, there is the struggle between the socialist road and the capitalist road . . . (*Constitution of the CPC, 1973*).

Since Marx's time Communism has been the guiding star of human progress. Marx showed that it could be attained only by first passing through the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat, and Lenin used all his experience to deepen our knowledge of this stage in social progress. Mao has made an immense contribution in this respect. In his work *On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People*, in the Cultural Revolution and in his analysis put forward since 1974 about the socio-economic character of socialist society, Mao provided a concrete, rich and scientific understanding of the processes whereby the contradictions of socialist society are resolved and the magnificent goal of communism can be reached, step by step. This is of immeasurable significance to workers in every part of the world, for they now see more clearly and vividly the way forward.

What will happen, now that the hand that led the Chinese people through the storms of eleven great struggles, and the world's Marxist-Leninists against the capitalist-roaders in the Communist movement is no longer active? There are revolutionary successors who have been tested and prepared for the task of taking the revolution forward. These revolutionary leaders will have the sympathy and support of people all over the world. The debt that the working class and oppressed people owe to Mao Tse-tung for leading them so far forward towards final emancipation can be paid only by the continuation of the proletarian revolution. Those left to carry on may well feel as Engels did when he wrote, on 15 March 1883, to Sorge after Marx's death:

Mankind is shorter by a head, and that the greatest head of our time. The movement of the proletariat goes on, but gone is the central point to which Frenchmen, Russians, Americans and Germans spontaneously turned at decisive moments to receive always that clear, indisputable counsel which only genius and consummate knowledge of the situation could give. Local lights and small talents, if not the humbugs, obtain a free hand. The final victory remains certain, but the detours, the temporary and local mistakes — which are unavoidable in any case — will now occur much more often. Well, we must see it through; what else are we here for? And we are far from losing courage because of it.

Then the revolutionaries were only a handful; now they muster hundreds of millions. The Third World is awake, the Second World is stirring, the imperialists and social-imperialists are afraid. Mao Tse-tung, the great successor of Marx and Lenin, is no longer with us, but what a legacy he has left behind!

FROM THE PEOPLE, TO THE PEOPLE

Mao Tse-tung, like Lenin before him, has given back Marxism to the working class. It was becoming a preserve of bourgeois intellectuals and revisionists, who commented on it, annotated it, 'deepened' it, and consistently ignored its revolutionary basis. Marx's theories had been overlaid by all sorts of mystification and perversion, so that sometimes they turned into their opposite and became a belief professed by those who sought to preserve or restore capitalism.

Mao cleared away this deception and humbug, exposing again

the simple yet vital principles of scientific socialism and making them available for use by new revolutionaries. Each of the great Marxist leaders, from Marx on, has had to defend socialist theory against those who tried to distort it. Mao did the same: he took nothing of Marxism-Leninism on trust but considered it afresh in the light of his own experience.

He was not content just to defend Marxism, as a static system of philosophy. He advanced it, summing up new Chinese experience in works which live alongside those of Marx and Lenin

as guides to revolutionaries the world over.

Throughout his long life Mao was a teacher; he knew his ideas were valueless unless communicated to others and inspiring them to social action. Above all he stressed the importance of struggle, especially class struggle, as the motive force of progress. Imperialists and social-imperialists deny it but reality today proves him right.

In the work of the Chinese Communist Party and state there are features and practices which seem to be unique and which, because they are successful, have carried socialist theory a stage further. To mention just a few: the people's communes, the socialist education movement, the Cultural Revolution, the three-in-one combination, the stress on self-reliance, above all, the mass line. One would not say that any of these was exclusively Mao's achievement and yet they all bear his imprint. The back-and-forth flow of ideas between him and the people was continuous, so that it is difficult to say where any particular idea originated. He had no doubt that power lay in the people: 'the people and the people alone are the motive force in the making of world history.'

This blending of responsibility is part of Mao's success. The ideas of a person or group may be taken up, corrected and extended by others, put into a broader context by yet others, taken up by Mao and the Party, become a mass movement and, in the end perhaps, mark a stage in the history of the Chinese revolution.

There are some theories, policies, methods and achievements which will always be associated with his name. It may be a hundred years before his lifework can be seen in perspective, but that should not prevent us from trying now to set down an appreciation, however inadequate, of the greatest political figure of this age, of a leader who has changed the horizons of people throughout the world. The development of socialism has known three great forward strides; they are based on the teachings of Marx, Lenin and Mao Tse-tung.

Below we have singled out those which seem, at present, among the most important. Inevitably, there are major subjects which we must leave for later treatment.

The key role of contradiction

Mao placed in the forefront of his thinking and teaching the dialectical principle of the unity of opposites. Every movement, every tendency has its opposite and the struggle between them promotes change. Without struggle there is no progress. To play a positive role in society one must not avoid struggle but must search out contradictions, distinguish the important ones and act accordingly. He who shuns conflict cannot help to create a new world.

His important theoretical work, *On Contradiction*, was written in 1937, at the beginning of the Yen-an period. Its main object was to attack dogmatism, the belief that all contradictions can be resolved by the arbitrary application of a universal formula. He taught that, on the contrary, every contradiction must be treated differently, after close study of its characteristics. The agricultural worker seeking to increase crops, the factory worker trying to improve his machine, the local Party Committee mobilising the masses, or the leadership considering the complexities of the international situation, all are solving problems by using this method.

Twenty years later he wrote *On the Correct Handling of Contradictions among the People* (1957). Its thesis is that one must distinguish between friends and enemies, treating contradictions with friends as non-antagonistic ones, to be resolved by discussion, education and persuasion. Wrong, bureaucratic handling of such contradictions may turn them into antagonistic ones — in other words, may make enemies out of friends. This work contains lessons absolutely vital for those aspiring to help bring to birth a new society. The Cultural Revolution showed

that many Chinese, especially young Chinese, had not then learned the lessons properly.

Mao taught that the key contradiction throughout the world today is class struggle. It takes many different forms and does not cease when the foundations of socialism have been laid. To pretend that it comes to an end then leads to betrayal of the revolution. The Cultural Revolution showed the reality and bitterness of this struggle; the USSR shows the disastrous consequences of ignoring it.

The mass line

From the people, to the people — this idea underlies all the work of Mao. It was for the people's cause that he fought, upon them that he relied for strength and to them that he looked for wisdom. It has had a decisive influence on the whole style of work of the CPC. Lenin often talked about such a style but, because his life was so short, it never came to be a hallmark of the Soviet Party. Mao summed it up thus :

To link oneself with the masses, one must act in accordance with the needs and wishes of the masses. All work done for the masses must start from their needs and not from the desire of any individual, however well-intentioned. It often happens that objectively the masses need a certain change, but subjectively they are not yet conscious of the need, not yet willing or determined to make the change. In such cases, we should wait patiently. We should not make the change until, through our work, most of the masses have become conscious of the need and are willing and determined to carry it out. Otherwise we shall isolate ourselves from the masses.

The United Front in Cultural Work, 1944.

From this estimate of the importance of the opinions of the masses comes the need to submit to their criticism, to listen to their opinions and be guided by them. 'Anyone, no matter who, may point out our shortcomings', Mao said. 'If he is right we will correct them.'

Recognition of the role of the masses is a fundamental difference between Marxism and modern revisionism. The revisionists pay lip service to the qualities of the masses but they really believe (and in this they join the followers of Confucius) in their own ability and right to dominate.

During the period of land reform the principles of the mass line were strikingly demonstrated. The Chinese peasants *needed* the abolition of landlordism but subjectively many of them were not at all sure about it. Centuries of oppression had bred lack of faith in their own abilities and an exaggerated respect for those of the landlords. This had to be broken down, through the work of the CPC, and the masses did in the end become determined to make the change, and made it. The landlords could have been dispossessed by a simple decree but the aftermath would have been far more stormy and the understanding of the peasants would have remained at a low level.

The best explanation of the process of operation of the mass line is in Mao's own words :

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 unsystematic 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. 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.

Some Questions Concerning Methods of Leadership, 1943.

Mao drew all his strength from the masses, replying on them in every difficulty. They in turn trusted him, as a result of their experience, and the great majority of them gave him unflinching support.

People's War

The essence of Mao's theories of people's war is contained in the words: 'The revolutionary war is a war of the masses; it can be waged only by mobilising the masses and relying on them' (*Be Concerned with the Well-being of the Masses, Pay Attention to Methods of Work*, 1934).

Both superpowers hold the opposite opinion: victory will go, they say to the nation with the most advanced science and industry, able to make the most sophisticated weapons. The reason is clear: imperialists cannot rely on the people, so their aim must be to use weapons of mass destruction which can be wielded by a comparatively small number of carefully conditioned fighters. The revolutionaries have, at any rate in the beginning, *only* people on whom to rely. Their understanding of what they are fighting for strengthens them, whereas once the imperialist armies gain the same understanding they no longer want to fight.

The great attention which Mao paid to revolutionary war led imperialists, especially social-imperialists, to try to confuse people with accusations that he was a warmonger. Nothing could be further from the truth. His attitude was pithily expressed thus: we are against war but we are not afraid of it. An examination of the record since 1949 will show that the Chinese government has always acted with the utmost caution and striven to limit conflicts when they have broken out (as on the Sino-Indian and Sino-Soviet borders). Mao has always made a careful distinction between just and unjust wars.

Mao's line is not a pacifist one; it is a realistic, long-term one which acknowledges that as long as imperialism exists wars are unavoidable.

Revolutions and revolutionary wars are inevitable in class society, and without them it is impossible to accomplish any leap in social development and to overthrow the reactionary ruling classes and therefore impossible for the people to win political power.

On Contradiction, 1937.

As early as 1938 he said, 'Political power grows out of the barrel of a gun', and in 1945, 'Without a people's army the people have nothing.' Believing this, it was natural that he should give a great deal of time (before 1949, most of his time) to studying the art of war, a study which included the ancient Chinese writers on the subject. He saw, and in this he followed Marx, Engels and Lenin, that a war against imperialism would be very different from a war between two imperialisms; it would have to be a people's war.

Mao never gave absolute pre-eminence to military strength, it always had to be subservient to politics. He expressed this in the words, 'Our principle is that the Party commands the gun, and the gun must never be allowed to command the Party.'

But the Red Army, and after it the PLA, was not only a fighting force; it carried a political message to the masses, helped to organise them and showed them how to set up revolutionary political organisations. Furthermore, practising self-reliance and determined not to be a burden on local populations, the army became a productive force, which it is still. It cultivates the land and grows much of its own food, makes some of its own clothes (often from cotton it has grown) and raises pigs and other livestock. It stands ready to help the people over difficulties of every kind.

Any war against China would be fought on Chinese soil, as Mao once said. It would be a people's war in the fullest sense of the word — the whole population against the invaders and making the fullest use of local initiative. Such works of Mao as *Problems of Strategy in China's Revolutionary War* (1936) and *On Protracted War* (1939) are rich in guidance for the conduct of such wars and would now be supplemented from the experience of Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos.

In China Mao's ideas were not accepted without a struggle, even though after he was put in charge, at the Tsunyi Conference (1935), victories began to take the place of defeats.

When liberation was won there was considerable pressure, from both inside and outside China, to fall into line with Soviet practice and abandon the distinctive characteristics of the PLA — the equality between officers and men, the emphasis on politics and the reliance on people rather than weapons. Within the Party and the army there was a great controversy which ended in victory for Mao's line and, in 1959, the dismissal of the Chief of Staff, Peng Teh-huai. At that time modern weapons could have come only from the Soviet Union and had the Chinese relied on Soviet promises their experience in the following years of bad harvests would have been even more painful. This is a lesson for all those seeking to free themselves from imperialist domination.

The People's Democratic Dictatorship

The idea of a wide united front of all those suffering oppression is to be found in the very first of Mao's published works. He begins it thus:

Who are our enemies? Who are our friends? This is a question of the first importance for the revolution. The basic reason why all previous revolutionary struggles in China achieved so little was their failure to unite with real friends in order to attack real enemies.

Analysis of the Classes in Chinese Society, 1926.

This was the basis of the policies of the long period of the wars of liberation; without it the degree of national unity which was achieved would have been impossible. This democratic united front brought together, under the leadership of the working class, not only the peasants but intellectuals and members of the bourgeoisie without whom victory would have been much more difficult.

After liberation it was necessary to take up new tasks and to incorporate into a new form of state the principles which had unified the supporters of democracy throughout the fight for liberation. This new state form was named by Mao the People's Democratic Dictatorship. He gave the following advice:

... unite the working class, the peasantry, the urban petty bourgeoisie and the national bourgeoisie, form a domestic united front under the leadership of the working class, and advance from this to the establishment of a state which is a people's democratic dictatorship under the leadership of the working class and based on the alliance of workers and peasants.

On the People's Democratic Dictatorship, 1949.

Because of the implementation of this policy the unity of the Chinese people became ever stronger. The peasants accepted the leadership of the proletariat while adopting a positive attitude themselves and taking their own initiatives. The industrial workers recognised their duty to support agriculture and to provide the peasants with means to lighten their work. The great majority of the intellectuals consciously desired to have their thinking remoulded by the workers and peasants and to become one with them.

It was essential to beware of 'left' and right deviations. There were many who said that the middle peasants were an encumbrance or the national bourgeoisie too dangerous, just as there were some, of the opposite persuasion, who said that real unity required the adoption of ideas from the bourgeois sector. Mao fought both these trends, while at the same time leading campaigns for changing the thinking of the many non-proletarian elements and keeping proletarian politics firmly in command.

The conception of the people's democratic dictatorship, a form of the dictatorship of the proletariat, was another of Mao's great contributions to scientific socialism, and it points out a path which many future revolutions must follow. Lenin advocated similar policies but did not live long enough to give the subject the attention it demanded. Mao's works give the fullest theoretical treatment, supported by evidence from practice, which Marxism-Leninism possesses of a subject which has not yet been fully grasped by revolutionaries.

The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution

The fallacy that the socialisation of the economic base of a society will lead automatically to the socialist transformation of the superstructure of habits and ideas has been widely held. Mao never believed it and made several attacks, through various rectification movements, on the remnants of old habits of mind which remained in what was considered normal socialist daily life.

This was especially true in the field of education. After liberation the more obviously reactionary features of Chinese education, such as relics of the imperial examination system, were discarded fairly quickly; but their place was taken by ideas from Western education, infected by capitalist rather than feudal ideology. Thanks to the guidance of the Party, and to the revolutionary spirit and devotion of the young teachers entering the system, the schools produced many new people with socialist ideals but on the other hand failed to destroy respect for authority and 'scholarship'. They facilitated the formation of an elite of 'educated' persons and gave the peasants, the majority of China's population, only a minimum of learning.

The students themselves were greatly dissatisfied and when Mao, seeing the spark of revolt in Peking University, encouraged it, there was an explosion.

This is not the place to tell once again the history of the Cultural Revolution. Suffice it to say that it shook the whole of China's superstructure with a force which is now bringing about changes in the economic base itself. Few indeed are the things in China which remain unchanged since the Cultural Revolution. The Decision of the Central Committee of August 8th 1966, usually considered to be the work of Mao Tse-tung, proves convincingly that the importance and thoroughgoing nature of the Cultural Revolution were foreseen at that early date. It was to be a great mass exercise in politics, especially for young people. They had to think for themselves and make up their own minds: '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.' And also, 'the only method is for the masses to liberate themselves, and any method of doing things in their stead must not be used.'

The experience was successful. In 1967 Mao said:

In the past we waged struggles in rural areas, in factories, in the cultural field, and we carried out the socialist education movement. But all this failed to solve the problem because we did not find a form, a method, to arouse the broad masses to expose our dark aspect openly, in an all-round way and from below.

Quoted in the *Report to the 9th Party Congress*, 1969.

The Cultural Revolution is something fundamentally new in the theory and practice of socialism. Every revolution in the future will have to take account of it and build on the basis it has provided. Its inception, course and conclusions are due to the inspiration and leadership of Mao Tse-tung.

The great leap forward in the study of Marxist classics which has taken place since then and the campaigns to criticise Lin Piao, Confucius and Teng Hsiao-ping, show that the lessons of the Cultural Revolution are being persisted in and that the Chinese masses are coming to distinguish falsity more quickly and surely.

Only the outlines of the new educational system have so far been drawn. One certain result, however, is that the old intellectual class based on elitism will gradually disappear, to be replaced by workers and peasants who possess both higher education and socialist consciousness, fitness to receive higher education being judged by a young person's fellow-workers.

Opposition to this reform still exists. There are still those in authority who want to return to the old methods or something like them, but Mao's line on this subject has now been firmly grasped by the masses and they will not easily be led astray.

Another product of the Cultural Revolution is the movement of educated young people to the countryside, where their skills are needed and where their remaining bourgeois habits of thought can be eliminated and their education completed by the peasants. When this movement, which was inspired by Mao, is put fully into practice, it will remove a source of revisionism and help to eliminate the contradictions between town and country and between mental and manual labour.

Dare to go against the tide

In looking back over Mao's career since liberation it will be seen to be dominated by the need to continue the class struggle and maintain the dictatorship of the proletariat. The one essential, if the revolution is to be carried through to the end, is a people who, guided by Marxism-Leninism, can think for themselves.

When a great leader dies, who has led the masses through great difficulties to success, one must remember that success is never final; the struggle continues. Gains made may be lost in later years. Perhaps 40 years ago this danger was not easy to see, but now that we have the example of the Soviet Union there is no excuse for any revolutionary to ignore it. Mao did not do so; he was always aware of the danger of a reversion to capitalism.

No one can guarantee against reversion. Constitutional safeguards are useless; they can be set aside. The only sure way is to educate the masses to think for themselves, to keep the strategic aim clearly in mind and to exercise supervision over their leaders. They must not be afraid to differ from leaders. The frame of reference to decide on right or wrong must be Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tse-tung Thought and it can be acquired only by prolonged study combined with revolutionary practice. This is the reason for the great wave of study that has swept China in the last fifteen years. Tens of millions have taken part in it. It is thorough, prolonged and all the time related to the daily problems of China. Politically conscious Chinese know that communism is impossible in existing conditions but, they ask themselves, are we moving towards it or away from it? Hence the determination to eliminate gradually the remnants of bourgeois right and to see that developments in the relations of production are kept firmly under control.

It is in the light of this increasing knowledge of Marxist theory that one must see Mao's words, quoted by Chou En-lai at the 10th Party Congress: 'Going against the tide is a Marxist-Leninist principle'. Yes-men are of no use to the revolution. Now that Mao has gone he has bequeathed to the Chinese and all peoples a firm basis for the struggles which alone will carry them forward to socialism. He exerted his last strength to encourage a generation of thinking, acting revolutionaries, serving the Chinese people but 'keeping the whole world in mind', forerunners of the eventual socialist man.

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U.K. ISSN 0067-2052.