One of the editors of *ALR* who lived in China during 1951-54 discusses some implications of the Chinese revolution in an article based on a report given to the National Executive of the Communist Party in August.

BY ANY STANDARD the Chinese Revolution, consummated on October 1 1949 and whose 20th Anniversary is now being celebrated, must be counted one of the greatest events in human history. It has been an epic of revolutionary devotion and creativeness, both in action and thought, releasing the energies of scores or hundreds of millions of people in China and throughout the world.

The Chinese Revolution has revealed even more sharply and richly the weight of the specifically national in revolutionary development, both because many of these features had tended to be elevated to the level of universality when there was only one "model" — a fairly natural tendency but taken to great extremes under Stalin — and also because, while every nation has its peculiarity, the Chinese nation is more "peculiarly national" than any other. This is to be seen in its great size, with a population exceeding that of North and South America and the Soviet Union combined; in the fact that China has had the longest continuous history as an at least partially unified state; that up till the last two or three hundred years it had the highest level of culture in the world; that its size, cultural level and basically self-sufficient nature as a whole and by regions meant that no other nation or combination of nations was able to successfully colonise more than a small part of it; and the specific way — years long armed struggle mainly in rural areas — in which the revolution developed and triumphed.

When to all this is added the now-being-realised complexity of the theoretical and practical problems involved in the revolutionary movement, the construction of socialism, and the development of proper relations between socialist countries, the difficulty of accurately assessing the position in China and its place in the world is given deserved emphasis, as is the need for patience and recognition that the problems involved are very long term.
The Issues in the Cultural Revolution

In the first year or so of the Cultural Revolution it was clear enough that there was an intense power struggle, and that there were issues involved regarded by the protagonists as vital, but it was not then very clear just what the issues were. The relation between policies and the struggle for power is complex. There are few major power struggles without policies being involved, and just as policies attract people, people attract policies, and the personal imprint of prominent leaders can be very great, as is obviously the case with Mao Tse-tung.

Stated briefly, the overall issue involved in the Cultural Revolution was how to build a modern socialist country out of a vast but poor agricultural country; where the specific conditions include active hostility from the United States, the break with the Soviet Union, the questioning of some aspects at least of the Soviet model of socialism, and the impact of the scientific and technological revolution which in a way compounds the problems of “simple” industrialisation. Put in another way, the over-all issue was the search for a Chinese way to solve these problems. This raises a number of more concrete issues which I will discuss here first of all from the point of view of seeking their positive and rational content, and then attempt a critique of them.

1 Moral versus material incentives.

Involved here are a number of other questions such as “economics” in factories and trade unions, the attitude to the economic reforms being adopted in other socialist countries, the rate of collectivisation and of commune-isation in the countryside, the role of private plots, of free markets, the attitude to “rich peasants”, and the emphasis, especially in the rural communes, on general distribution out of the common fund compared with payment for actual work units performed.

It is a truism to say that both moral and material incentives are necessary — in fact they exist in all socialist countries. The question is rather one of degree, of emphasis, which also may change from time to time. There seems to be no theoretically determinable optimum. But it is on the degree of material incentive compared with that of moral that the Soviet practice has come in for considerable criticism. No comprehensive analysis of incomes in the Soviet Union so far as I know exists, but from sources available it seems that from unskilled to highly skilled there might be a factor of three; for managers and experts, counting other privileges, the factor might be six; and for those in the top administration of party and state this might be doubled again. Such differences undoubtedly contain a tendency to become “castified” and give rise to certain “vested interests.”
In the early days of the revolution Lenin faced the problem, and wrote enthusiastically about "subbotniks" — voluntary unpaid work on Sundays:

Communism begins when the rank-and-file workers begin to display a self-sacrificing concern that is undaunted by arduous toil for increasing productivity of labor, for husbanding every pood of grain, coal, iron and other products, which do not accrue to the workers personally or to their "close" kith and kin, but to their "distant" kith and kin, i.e. to society as a whole, to tens and hundreds of millions of people united first in one socialist state, and then in a Union of Soviet Republics.¹

On the other hand, in the conditions of misery existing in Soviet Russia at the end of the civil war, in the controversy over the trade unions, Lenin had emphasised the need to give preference in consumption to aid the development of production.² At an earlier stage, in 1918 Lenin had confessed that the equalitarian principles of the Paris Commune could not be applied in the circumstances and that it was sensible to pay high salaries for the time being to experts.³ Later the Stakhanovites (shock workers) exercised a form of moral influence while also receiving comparatively high wages. These and other experiences indicate that there are no readily definable or absolute standards in this matter.

Lenin had also, in discussing the Subbotniks pointed to the role of the moral factor in breaking through the problem of low productivity and starvation;

We know that in practice such contradictions are solved by breaking the vicious circle, by bringing about a radical change in the mood of the masses by the heroic initiative of individual groups which, against the background of such a radical change, often plays a decisive role.⁴

There can be no doubt in the mind of anyone who has visited China at any time in the last 20 years of the impressiveness of the moral fervor and enthusiasm which has existed on a mass scale.

The level of material rewards particularly of the mass of peasants in a peasant country, is also related to the basic problem of the so-called "primitive socialist accumulation." In Russia repression on a big scale was practised not only in the struggle against the kulaks, but also to enforce a policy of keeping the countryside relatively backward technically and culturally so that funds would be available for industries and cities. A greater emphasis on moral factors combined with a greater development of industry and cul-

¹ "A Great Beginning", in the collection Marx-Engels-Marxism.
² See Vol. 9 Selected Works, p. 13.
⁴ "A Great Beginning".
ture, even at a yet primitive level, through the Communes in China, cannot therefore be discounted as a possible alternative.

2 The kind of expert and the kind of education.

Much Chinese material contains a general (though not absolute) tendency to decry experts as necessarily becoming separated from the masses, of an attitude of superiority to the masses being developed when mental labor is separated from manual and when there is a great gap in living standards (it should perhaps be pointed out that the gap between intellectuals and masses in China has been traditionally much greater than we are accustomed to). Consequently a tendency to shorten and change formal education, a renewed and greater emphasis on "going to the villages", an emphasis on self-reliance and indigenous methods, and a general struggle to prevent cadres and experts consolidating into a "new class" of organisation men, have been stressed.

3 The "Little Red Book" of Mao quotations lends itself to being made fun of, but makes more sense if seen as a type of new moral code replacing the Confucian which permeated every pore of Chinese society for hundreds of years. Similarly the figure of Mao, together with the red book can be taken as a unifying and rallying point of a nation traditionally and (at the present stage of development) inevitably, displaying strong centrifugal tendencies.

4 The red book could be considered to be a cultural factor in the sense of a moral code as mentioned above, and there was a campaign against entrenched and old cultural forms, as well as foreign ones.

5 The Cultural Revolution, genuinely to a degree at least, did harness the spirit of enthusiasm, self-sacrifice and revolutionary energy of youth, and some have praised Mao as the first political figure to consciously set out to do this in today's context.

6 All the above are in general related to methods such as reliance on mass movements and "big leaps", and "ideological remoulding" rather than physical suppression (though this was also present), and theories, examined later, about class struggle under socialism.

7 Whatever rationality and practicality is contained in the above policies which were at issue, is given greater point if related to expectations of external attack, something that appears in a rather different light now, following the invasion of Czechoslovakia, than it did before, while imperialism has continued to threaten. Thus dispersal of much of industry in rural areas and communes, and emphasis on local self-sufficiency with smaller, less sophisticated and improvised industries, which may be less efficient on a purely economic basis than concentration on highly centralised large-scale
modern industry, makes more sense if a protracted war on Chinese territory is envisaged. Similarly the emphasis on self-reliance and simplicity of equipment in the army. Except for the Bomb. But then the stress on moral as opposed to material incentives could become a necessary contribution to the diversion of resources to production of the Bomb, whether as power symbol, or deterrent, or both.

But Will It Work?

These rational aspects exist and cannot be ignored, but many commentators sympathetic to China see merely these and turn a blind eye to other aspects and considerations, such as

1 The moral and the material are easy to see separately in simple forms of manual labor, but it is a very different matter in highly complex industries and an integrated economy. People in one section of a large factory, or in all sections, may think they are working well, but often cannot really assess the results of their work directly, and need recourse to economic categories which can sum up the whole, such as profitability. Joan Robinson correctly points out that there is a difference between profits as a criterion of efficiency and as an incentive, but goes on to say that the Chinese claim that the one inevitably leads to the other. But if such economic means are not employed the results of "moral fervor" may not be readily measured or effectively attained and so may become more difficult to maintain as time goes on.

Also, when the atmosphere is such and there is the social pressure to conform, it may be possible to maintain hard manual labor in a team for quite a long time. But without a material incentive as well, it well may prove more difficult to get people to put time and effort into the acquiring of new, unaccustomed skills. That is, there well could be, and in fact seems to have been, more difficulties in the factories.

And is the reliance on the moral factor actually as great as is made out? Differentiation of incomes is one thing, but the prospect of material gain made collectively is, at least from time to time, emphasised. For example Mao Tse-tung:

We should do everything possible to enable the peasants in normal years to raise their personal incomes year by year on the basis of increased production. 8

Furthermore, there are very big differences in incomes in different parts of the country. Colin Mackerras records annual commune

incomes (apart from private plots etc., which still exist) ranging from $U.S.25 without additional grain to $U.S.200 plus grain.\(^7\)

Another observer gives the average annual wage of an industrial worker as over $U.S.300,\(^8\) and I should be surprised if people "higher up" do not get still higher incomes, on a graded scale, as they did when I was in China.

Why cannot moral incentive (working for the good of distant kith and kin) overcome these great discrepancies? True, it is more difficult the more distant the kith and kin are, but some better explanation is needed than Joan Robinson's comment that "political danger" and "economic efficiency" preclude this at present.\(^9\) This may be so, but it could then be that the same situation and economic considerations are operating in other socialist countries.

Another writer gives as one of the reasons for the emphasis on decentralisation and indigenous methods rather than concentration in modern industry, not only the problem of transport for materials and the products of feeder industries, but the difficulty of deciding between conflicting claims of jealous provinces.\(^10\) Why cannot moral incentive be brought to bear to solve this problem?

2 Modern industry — and especially in these days of the scientific and technological revolution — demands an increasing number of highly educated and creative people, and these can really only develop fully in conditions of freedom, both from pressing material worries and ideological strictures. And even if dispersed, smaller, and more improvised industries will suffice in many cases, it cannot do so in the nuclear field, in rockets, aircraft, electronics, oxygen-steel production etc. not to speak of more social spheres of activity involving the training of socialist economists, bankers, traders, and administrators for the whole country. And as pointed out earlier, skilled workers in modern factories may not prove so easy to come by. Yet the trade unions have been destroyed as hotbeds of "economism." Consequently the proclaimed principles will have to be modified considerably if the Chinese are to attain ends which they undoubtedly do want to attain. The rate of catching up with other countries, which depends to quite a degree on the above, may also become a political, moral factor which could generate at least some conditions for a "Counter Cultural Revolution" to bring it about.

\(^{15}\)


And while combatting the development of bureaucracy among cadres, administrators and experts is commendable, may not one set of bureaucrats have been replaced by another? There is the situation arising from the un-arguable demand for acceptance that “Mao is right” before any democratic discussion is allowed (outside of this, the new set-up may be less bureaucratic for a time.) But is it not also necessary to tackle this endemic problem in other ways as well? As Joan Robinson recognises:

To develop a modern industrial state . . . needs planning, coordination and unified command. A government hierarchy working through a bureaucratic apparatus cannot be dispensed with . . . The Cultural Revolution has swung the balance violently against organisation towards popular spontaneity; how can it be kept from gradually creeping back?

3 The need for a national unifying figure such as Mao in the conditions of China may be accepted, but the question of degree is surely of importance. In my view there is completely unrestrained adulation and a reckless releasing of nationalism. Where will it lead and how can it be stopped? A moral code is good so far as it goes if its precepts are good, but as an unthinkingly accepted, absolute truth which is put beyond question it works against rationality, the development of free minds and democratic processes. There is strong evidence of a markedly less degree of reasoning out and willingness to discuss all sides and all points of view in Chinese material published over the last three years than there was over fifteen years ago when I was there, and this I believe is a bad sign.

4 Getting rid of backward elements of culture is good, but not if it is indiscriminately directed against the heritage of the past. I still believe Lenin was right, in his address to the youth in 1920 to point out that one could not become a communist without acquiring the sum of human knowledge, that this was how marxism arose, and that it was certainly not enough to learn communist (or little red book?) slogans. And it is hard indeed to accept that Beethoven should be considered as a bourgeois corruptor of the youth.

5 The above and other negative sides of the mobilisation of the youth in the Red Guard cannot be overlooked or accepted merely as an exigency in a bitter political struggle. If the youth have been released from one conformity, have they not been plunged still more deeply into another? There is also evidence of cynicism being generated, and of disorientation in application to study for example, which may not be so readily overcome.

11 The Cultural Revolution in China, p. 43.
12 Lenin, “The Tasks of the Youth Leagues”, in Marx-Engels-Marxism.
13 See China Observed, Chapter 14.
6 Mass movements and big leaps certainly have a vital place in the development of socialist society, (the first five year plan in the Soviet Union was a big leap and a mass movement), but they are far from being a universally applicable method. If they are treated as such and continually repeated, may not they produce diminishing returns? Ideological remoulding can be a powerful and useful method, but carried to extremes it can be as painful as a gaol sentence for political non-conformists.

To sum up, the policies now in operation as the result of the victory of Mao in the Cultural Revolution have chances of some success, but contain many negative features which, if uncorrected, will hinder economic and social progress and may produce a political reaction. There is some evidence however that the policies may be modified more in practice than the absoluteness of the words used suggest. The external influences could well be decisive in determining the course of future developments.

**The Power Struggle**

This was a major part of the Cultural Revolution, and was waged with great intensity, even more than other power struggles in the Chinese Communist Party, which have a long history. It seems that there developed in the latter half of the thirties a long term alliance between Mao Tse-tung and Liu Shao-chi which carried through to the 7th Congress of the Party in 1945 and after.

The period '49 to '57 is something of a mystery, in that although Mao's prestige nationally and internationally was at its height, in internal affairs at least he seemed, uncharacteristically, to take something of a back seat. Few speeches or writings are attributed to him in this period. Perhaps this is attributable to Mao's lack of familiarity, compared with others, with the new conditions of shifting head-quarters to the cities and concentration on problems of industrialisation, with a considerable degree of reliance on Soviet experience and Soviet assistance. Apart from the three-antis and five-antis ideological remoulding campaigns the one big domestic issue on which Mao seems to have exerted himself was over the rate of collectivisation (which Mao wanted speeded up in 1955). In 1954 there had been the struggle against Kao Kang,

---

14 There is conclusive evidence that Mao's works were re-vamped somewhat in this period probably with Soviet participation to make them more "orthodox marxist" than they originally were. He was also patronised, not for the first time, as a "peasant leader." His resentment may well be imagined. See, for example, Schram, *Mao Tse-tung*.

15 Against waste, bureaucracy and corruption, and against bribery of government personnel, tax evasion, theft of State property, cheating on government contracts, and stealing economic information.
an important figure in the North east and Jao Shu-shih. It seems generally accepted that Liu (and Chou En-lai) were the immediate targets of Kao, but it is also possible that Mao was the ultimate target, and that this helped to cement the Mao-Liu alliance for a further period.

Mao played a minor role in the 8th Congress in 1956, making a very humbly worded opening speech. Reference to the Thought of Mao was omitted from the new constitution adopted at this Congress. It is said that Mao chastised his comrades afterwards, saying that the decisions of the Congress appeared "left" but were in fact "right."

In 1958, probably associated with an extensive tour undertaken by Mao, came the mass development of the people's communes and the 'great leap forward', which for a time seemed to carry all before it. The sixth meeting of the Central Committee meeting in December was apparently still seized with this. This meeting repeated the extravagant claims about production in that year and targets for 1959 (steel was claimed to have increased from 5.35 million tons in 1957 to 11 million in 1958, and 18 million was projected for 1959; the figures for coal for these years were given as 130, 270 and 380 million tons; grain 185, 375, and 525 million tons; cotton 1.64, 3.35 and 5 million tons.) The time for transition to ownership by the whole people (as distinct from collective ownership) was given as 3 to 6 years, or a little longer, and "some years" after the transition to complete communism was envisaged.

Yet it was at this meeting that Mao announced his intention not to stand for Chairmanship of the State (he remained Chairman of the Party), saying that he would be able then "to set aside more time for marxist-leninist theoretical work." Knowing something of how such decisions are arrived at, it seems certain that it was made at least some months before, at the height of the apparent success of the great leap. A possible explanation for this may be that Mao felt internal problems were well on the way to solution, and that he could concentrate on external problems, particularly the growing differences with the CPSU.

In August 1959, with revision of the exaggerations of the great leap still going on, defence minister Peng Teh-huai was dismissed apparently for having earlier in the year "launched a fierce onslaught on the Party's general line," and on the leadership of

---

Mao. He and others associated with him were declared to have been linked with Kao Kang, and there were implications that both were in league with the Soviet Union. Peng is said to have urged a modernly equipped army, with reliance on the Soviet Union in this respect. Peng was replaced by Lin Piao, and it appears certain that Mao set out on a long course to ensure that, with Lin's assistance, the army would be loyal to him (a sort of precursor of the Cultural Revolution was carried out in the army before it was launched in the nation as a whole) and to overcome the damage done to his prestige.

The insistence with which it has been claimed during the Cultural Revolution that any losses in the great leap were made good in the recent period, for example the current use of buildings erected in that period, and the venom with which detractors of the great leap are still denounced, indicates that many more than Peng were involved, but why they allowed him to be sacrificed, or could not prevent it, is not clear.

For some years after this, cautious, pragmatic, and more "incentive-oriented" policies were pursued to overcome the aftermath of the great leap, the natural calamities, and the withdrawal of Soviet technicians. On the external front, with which Mao seems to have been most closely associated, there seems to have been a remarkable degree of unity in the intense campaign launched against Soviet policies in general and "Khrusnov revisionism" in particular, despite some minor dark hints during the Cultural Revolution that Liu and his associates were prepared to seek some accommodation with the Soviet Union.

However some sort of paralysis of the party apparatus set in during this period, probably reflecting the inability of either side to muster the forces to overcome the other. Mao had, despite the failure of the great leap still considerable prestige among the masses and had secured support of the army. Liu and Teng had the party and government apparatus. The stalemate is shown in the absence of Central Committee meetings, which were supposed, under the 1956 constitution, to be held at least twice a year, which was observed up to the meeting in August 1959 at which Peng Teh-huai was sacked. The next was held in 1961, and nothing was reported of it. There was another in September 1962 which made important 18

18 There are few statistics on the losses in the "great leap". One authority, Uchida, in Scientific American, Nov. '66, claims that 400,000 backyard furnaces for making iron were built, of which only 300 have remained and been developed. These are said to produce now about one third of China's iron and steel. Of course critics claim, on the face of it with some justice, that even if some such "great leap" products are now used, the return on outlay is much less than it would have been if used more rationally.
changes in the secretariat, and the next was not held till August 1966 where Mao was able to muster a small majority. The last was held in October 1968, a prelude to the calling of the 9th Congress in April 1969, which set the seal for the present on Mao's victory.

Four stages in the development of the Cultural Revolution have been set out in a speech attributed to Mao Tse-tung. The first was the publication in November 1965 of an attack on the writer Wu Han for his play *The Dismissal of Hai Jui*, which is said, probably with justification, to be a defence of Peng Teh-huai. The author of this attack was Yao Wen-Yuan, Mao's son-in-law. Preceding this (February '65) there was a great new spate of praise for Mao, whose works were reported to be hard to get in 1965, and a new emphasis on political subjects in the curricula of the schools.

But perhaps the decisive move was the issuing of the May 16, 1966 "Circular of the Central Committee" which launched the violent attack on Peng Chen, Mayor of Peking, beginning the struggle to get at Liu.

This circular may have arisen from a reported meeting in Shanghai of Mao, Lin Piao, Chou En-lai and others, which probably also organised the forces for the Central Committee meeting in August. In this period too (May 1966) the first "Big Character Poster" was put up in Peking University by a young woman Nieh Yuan-tzu (later elected a candidate member of the Central Committee at the 19th Congress), which was immediately praised by Mao, and signalled the beginning of the Red Guard movement, which was to last for more than two years and closed the schools and universities.

The second stage is put as being from the Central Committee meeting in August '66 to the "January storm" of 1967, which was focussed on the key city of Shanghai. The struggle there raged back and forth for most of that year. On January 9, 1967, the Shanghai Workers Revolutionary Rebel General Headquarters and thirty-one other rebel organisations issued an "Urgent Notice" to all Shanghai people. It contained a ten-point proposal, expressing their common interest in dealing a heavy blow to the "bourgeois reactionary line." The notice nullified many acts previously issued by the Party and the Municipal Government of Shanghai.

From then began the third stage of "triple alliances" (of leaders

20 Colin Mackerras, *China Observed*, Chapters 6 and 12.
of the new revolutionary organisations, representatives of the People's Liberation Army in the area, and an acceptable section of the leading cadres) and the so-called "seizure of power" from the old state and party apparatus. These triple alliances were often unable to be formed or split apart after being formed, but were reformed and gradually spread over the country.

The fourth stage was the all-out attack on Liu Shao-chi beginning in March-April 1968, while a fifth may be identified with the Central Committee meeting in October, and the 9th Congress in April this year.

A great deal could be said about the venom with which the struggle was waged, and the unprincipled nature of many of the charges made long after the events to which they referred. I will deal with the problem in general later, and here give just one, but quite typical example. In the article published on September 20, 1963, Peking Review, No. 30 "On the question of Stalin", one of many replies to a letter from the CPSU by the Editorial Departments of People's Daily and Red Flag, with all of which Mao must have been closely associated, we read:

In the late twenties, the thirties and the early and middle forties, the Chinese Marxist-Leninists represented by Comrades Mao Tse-tung and Liu Shao-chi resisted the influence of Stalin's mistakes; they gradually overcame the erroneous lines of "Left" and Right opportunism and finally led the Chinese revolution to victory.

They (the CPSU) have not made an overall historical and scientific analysis of his life and work but have completely negated him without any distinction between right and wrong. They have treated Stalin not as a comrade but as an enemy.

If one compares the remarks made by Khrushchov when Stalin was alive with those made after his death, one will not fail to see that Khrushchov has made a 180-degree turn in his evaluation of Stalin.

It is not necessary to belabor the point of the different evaluations of Liu as he appears in this quotation in 1963 and in writings about him in 1968, or the wholesale negation of the work of a man — on much less evidence, be it noted, than is available in the case of Stalin.

What is the overall result of four years of intense inner-party and "class" struggle? It is undoubtedly a victory for Mao, but despite the fact that the opposition has been overwhelmed, it does not seem to be an overwhelming victory. The constitution adopted at the

---

22 See for example L. Aarons, Tribune, March 8, 1967.
23 Mao Tse-tung, "Talk on Strategic Dispositions", NLR No. 54, p. 34.
24 See also Indictment without Trial, The Case of Liu Shao-chi, by A. E. Kent, Working Paper No. 11, Department of International Relations, Australian National University, 1969.
9th Congress says "Comrade Lin Piao is Comrade Mao Tse-tung's close comrade-in-arms and successor". Naming a successor in a constitution is unprecedented in a Communist Party and, so far as I know, in any republican type constitution. It certainly hardly speaks for a stable situation.

On the 21 member Political Bureau are Mao and his wife, Lin and his wife, Mao's son-in-law, Chu Teh who is over 80 and has played little role for many years, and a number of Mao's closest associates. It is no slighting of the women as such to say that Mao's wife was little heard of till recently, while even less achievements are known of concerning Lin's wife.

There are reports of problems in running the factories with the new leadership, and in general, moral incentives notwithstanding, the new policies will have to show that they can "deliver the goods". Mao's death, should it occur relatively soon, could cause considerable problems of succession (despite the constitution), and in continuity of policies. Nevertheless the present Mao team must be considered as pretty firmly in the saddle for quite some time to come. The biggest "unknown" is the course and consequences of an extension of the military conflict with the Soviet Union.

The Chinese View of World Revolutionary Strategy

Fused with the traditional Chinese view of the world mentioned at the beginning and of their views on socialism and socialist theory, is a view of the further course of the world socialist revolution. This is based on the conceptions of experiences of their own struggle elevated to a world level — armed struggle as the form of struggle, surrounding the city from the countryside, and the view that the Chinese form of socialism is the one universal form. Says Lin Piao:

Taking the entire globe, if North America and Western Europe can be called "the cities of the world", then Asia, Africa and Latin America constitute "the rural areas of the world".25

Quite consistent, then, with all this, is Mao's claim that "the Chinese road is the only one to liberation". He then goes on, having spoken of China's industrial and military developments: "China should not only be the political centre of the world revolution. It must also become the military and technical centre of the world revolution."26

In view of this, and in view of the long growing and now extremely intense conflict with the Soviet Union described elsewhere in this

26 NLR, No. 54.
issue, and the wounded and now strongly expressed nationalism in China (nationalism is not confined to China, of course), the struggle for hegemony of the world revolutionary movement against the hegemony of the Soviet Union becomes more understandable, if no more edifying, as do the clashes over the border, which are manifestations of them, but which cannot be adequately explained by any conflict of strictly national interests.

Another very important light on this is provided by the mounting claim that Mao Tse-tung Thought is the marxism-leninism of the present era. When I was in China we were asked: “What classics of marxism-leninism have you read?” In answer to the question “Were the works of Mao to be considered as classics?” it was said: “Make up your own mind”, but I had a clear impression even then that the Chinese believed the only reasonable answer was “Yes”.

There were other, less definable indications that the Chinese believed that Mao should be considered the world’s leading marxist — even before Stalin’s death — and this developed further after Stalin had gone.

Here it is interesting to note the Chinese analysis of Stalin made in 1963. Stalin’s strong points are listed as: having fought Tsarism and propagated marxism; having led the internal and external fight of the Soviet Union after Lenin’s death; of having upheld the line of industrialisation and collectivisation; of having defended marxism against opportunism and developed it; of having led the Soviet Union to victory in the war; as having a correct foreign policy ‘on the whole’ and (NB) of having stood in the forefront of the tide of history, guiding the struggle.

His weaknesses are stated as: having sometimes fallen into metaphysics and subjectivism, of having on occasions been divorced from reality and the masses; of having confused different types of contradictions in socialist society; of failing to understand class struggle in socialist society correctly, and making mistakes in handling counter-revolutionaries; of failing to uphold democratic centralism; of having made mistakes in relations with other parties and given some bad counsel in the international movement.27

With the possible exception of upholding democratic centralism (and even this may be claimed now the party apparatus built by Liu and Teng has been smashed and replaced by Mao’s), it will be seen that Mao is claimed to have all Stalin’s good points, while his specific further contribution has been in the fields where Stalin was weak. On Practice and On Contradiction dispose of the meta-

physics and subjectivism, the mass line and mass movements dispose of the divorce from reality and the masses, and *On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People* disposes of the confusion of different types of contradictions, the incorrect handling of counter-revolutionaries and class struggle in socialist society. Especially when taken together with the Cultural Revolution which is claimed to be a universal third stage (after seizing power and establishing socialism) of revolution "carried out under the Dictatorship of the Proletariat to consolidate it — the need for a seizure of power limited to certain spheres and certain regions, not in the whole of society".  

It is not necessary to write down the great achievements in thought and action of Mao Tse-tung, or to ignore the fact that he has been a towering figure on the world scene for over thirty five years, or to deny the great importance of prominent leaders, to find in the above claims and the adulation so sedulously fostered, a "cult of the individual" both ridiculous and menacing and for which offsetting factors are not even sought by Mao and his followers, still less found.

*A Criticism of the Chinese View of World Revolutionary Strategy*

Although it has aspects which should be taken into account, I believe that overall the Chinese picture of the world revolutionary process is faulty for the following main reasons:

1. It is a picture of the world so oversimplified as to be false. While correctly emphasising the tremendous importance of the national liberation movements, it is wrong in virtually writing off the revolutionary potential of the working class of the West, and the new contradictions arising in modern capitalism which can lead to a revolutionary resurgence are not recognised, still less understood. The insistence of one sole method of struggle — armed struggle — does not take account of or explain the varied forms of anti-imperialist advance.

2. Taking some concrete issues of world politics, the Chinese often seem to me to be wrong. For example, on Vietnam the evidence that they have hampered the delivery of supplies from the Soviet Union; in the Middle East their opposition to a political settlement between Arabs and Israelis, and their support for those extreme Arab nationalist calls for the destruction of Israel; their fanning of the India-Pakistan conflict, and their preparedness to deal with West Germany, the United States and other countries while denouncing others who do so.

More generally, the problem of "peaceful co-existence" is approached by China, as it is by the Soviet Union, from the point of

---

view of world strategic considerations as seen through their own national eyes, mistakes often being made on this account. For example the Vietnamese were hostile to the CPSU at the time when it suggested they should "in the interests of peace" give up the struggle against the US. On the other hand, the Chinese were opposed to the Vietnamese using political as well as military means in the struggle against the US, apparently urging the Vietnamese to "fight to the end" even if this meant national suicide.

On the question of the danger from and importance of avoiding nuclear war, the Chinese certainly err greatly, in my view, by underestimation and ridiculous "paper tiger" talk (the while putting the obtaining of the bomb as a number one objective). The Soviet Union correctly pointing to the untold calamity nuclear war would be, sometimes hints at the imminence of it (during the Czech invasion for example) to curtail opposition in the name of the primacy of the larger issue.

3 By their deep-seated urge for hegemony, and the insistence on 100% acceptance of their line, the Chinese have alienated and repelled many others. The Communist Party of Japan was very close to China for many years, including after the Japanese break with the CPSU, but it now denounces equally the "great nation chauvinism" of both.

Cuba was, in political orientation in the struggle in Latin America (as well as in a number of internal policies), closer to China than to the Soviet Union, but still had their internal affairs interfered in despite specific requests and demands. A deputation of Latin American communists from a number of countries, many of whom were favorably disposed to Chinese policies, visited China in late 1964. They were hectored and harangued by Mao Tse-tung because they would not accept Chinese leadership 100%.

Some Theoretical Questions Involved

In addition to the question of moral and material incentives in socialist society mentioned earlier, a number of general theoretical problems for socialists emerge from consideration of the course of the Chinese Revolution and the Sino-Soviet conflict.

1 As touched on earlier, the different backgrounds of nations and revolutions show enormous multiplicity and divergence, as do the ways to build socialism and the nature of what is in fact

29 There is some indication of a greater flexibility in present Chinese policy, with the emphasis on the ability of their adherents in other countries to exercise real political influence. See the Editorial in Communist, No. 5, reprinted in English in Soviet News April 29, 1969.
built. And this multiplicity and divergence even increases further as more socialist countries emerge, the existing ones evolve, and the character of various parts of the non-socialist world also changes. The development of previous social systems showed a similar great variety. Franz Fanon spoke of the third world countries not regarding themselves, in their revolutions, as becoming a part of the existing socialist world, but of using the fact that such a world existed vis-a-vis capitalism, to advance in their own, perhaps very distinctive ways. He spoke in particular of the need for the peasants to be brought to advance themselves, regarding the town working class and petty and national bourgeoisie as coming to stand in the way of this because of their relatively privileged position and attitudes.\(^\text{30}\)

Without identifying Mao’s views with Fanon’s, I have already indicated that, unorthodox though they may be, the people’s communes may have some viability as a new way to tackle what was tackled in quite a different way in the Soviet Union. In another aspect, the German marxist-economist Kuczynski spoke of a new — the agricultural — way to industrialisation.\(^\text{31}\)

Some people get agitated when such things are pointed out, saying there are fundamentals, common features, universals which must be upheld at all costs, lest everything go to pot. But if experience is taken seriously the harvest of such universals, at least in any usable form, is fairly confined — a change in political power, public ownership in place of private (both large scale and much of individual means of production), mass involvement on a great scale in the revolution itself and after (though in some cases not for so very long), and some form of revolutionary organisation. With the enormous variety in all of these within themselves, and the continual further complicating of the conditions in which revolutionary struggles proceed, repetition of such “well-known truths” tells us precious little about our own struggle.

Insistence by the leaders of CPC or the CPSU and by those who follow them on the one true path (theirs) and the one true interpretation of marxism or marxism-leninism (theirs), hampers rather than reveals and helps.\(^\text{32}\) We must attempt our own analysis on the basis of our study and understanding of marxist and other writings at the time, and on the basis of our practical experiences of the struggle. In particular we should elaborate the principles of the socialist society we stand for. We should do so still more boldly, still more thoroughly than we have done hitherto.

\(^{30}\) *The Wretched of the Earth*, Penguin.

\(^{31}\) See *Australian Left Review*, No. 4, 1966.

\(^{32}\) This problem is not confined to the CPC and the CPSU.
The role of the human will in society, in history: the relationship between the objective and the subjective. The question here is not 'can the subject exist without the object', or "which is primary", but of the inter-relations between the two and the degree to which the subjective element, the human will, can open up new possibilities in social development. I think this degree has traditionally been underestimated in marxist theory, and this has had, though not in all cases in practice (Lenin, Mao, Castro, Ho Chi Minh), deterministic and thus inhibiting and dogmatic influences. But what can be said more than this, if anything? At least we ought to ponder and study the problem. I think one difficulty (in elaborating a theory on the question, that is) is that the problem changes greatly from time to time, and requires a separate concrete analysis on each occasion. But there do seem to be "historic junctures" — revolutionary situations of course are foremost here, but are not the only ones — where the possibilities, the human options, multiply, and a great effort of will can produce startling changes. Stuart Schram, whose biography of Mao Tse-tung should be read by all, regards Mao's view that "the subjective creates the objective", as one of his chief characteristics.

It may be that Mao, although an opponent of the old Chinese culture in the main, is influenced to a degree by the mystical tradition of all Eastern philosophy — that is the search for truth "within", rather than "without". Certainly Mao's account of "contradiction" in places follows very closely the ancient Chinese view, and there is the failure to distinguish it from the Western, Hegelian and Marxist, view. This is not necessarily to condemn. Eastern philosophy has in the main been treated for too long in western society with ignorance or contempt.

Related to this question is that of the base and superstructure (the terms being used here because they are traditional, not necessarily definitive). The Chinese say that despite state ownership of the means of production, the degree of material incentive, the differences of income, the existence of markets, the caste or class power exercised, and the lack of ideological development mean that the Soviet Union has gone back to capitalism.

Soviet authorities increasingly say that despite state and collective ownership the People's Republic of China does not have as its main aim the well-being and all round development of the citizen, is subordinating the development of production to its own hegemonic aims, is using voluntarist leaps rather than planned development, is using levelling and compulsion instead of incentives, and there is no participation by the masses in the running of the economy, and
thus that it is not now, or is ceasing to be a socialist country. It is said:

It will be recalled that Marx and Engels never reduced the concept of the economic system merely to the form of property. Drawing attention to the many-sided and diverse attributes and manifestations of production relations, they pointed out that state property contained only the "possibility of resolving" social contradictions in the economic sphere. (Marx and Engels, Works, Vol. 20, p. 290, Russian-Language edition) and that "nationalisation of property" in different social conditions might not produce the same results and might have different social consequences. The decisive role would be played by the social nature of the state, which exercised a tremendous influence on economic relations.

It is interesting to compare this viewpoint with various Soviet statements about Yugoslavia at different times.

While I discount the claims of both as being taken far too far, one wishes each would look at their own system as a whole in the light of the strictures they make on others, and the point is, in the theoretical sense, well taken. That is, while collective ownership is the necessary foundation the actual nature and all round assessment of the social system cannot at all be adequately embraced in this. That is, 'socialism' is an abstraction which has to be clothed in flesh and blood. And many of us, unfortunately, do not like the flesh and blood in which it has hitherto been clothed in most cases — and neither do many others. Especially do questions of the form of state, self-management, the role of the party, intellectual and other freedoms — that is mainly questions of socialist democracy — arise as neither adequately treated theoretically nor developed practically. As far as the Soviet Union and China are concerned neither accords with what I would describe as "socialist democracy"; but I would also say that both could develop in that direction — that is, there is not one only possible starting point for this.

Probably the most important point connected with the question of the base and superstructure in China and the Soviet Union at the present time is that of war. Hitherto, almost all marxists and socialists have held that, given public ownership of the means of production as the basis, a contradictory phenomenon of the political superstructure, such as war was impossible. Clearly, this is no longer tenable, and one of the most disturbing features of all in the present situation is that, along the lines of the preceding argument, both China and the Soviet Union are preparing their people ideologically for war by giving prominence to views that the other is "non-socialist", "aiding imperialism" etc. The populations of

35 e.g. Suslov, Report to the Central Committee CPSU, February 14, 1964.
both countries have been brought up on the simple marxism which says that war between socialist countries is impossible. But wars between capitalist countries, or between capitalist and socialist countries (starting always with the capitalist countries) are acknowledged as common phenomena.

Related to these questions again, are those of class and class struggle in socialist society. In a previous article I attempted to examine this problem by pointing out that the identification of class in capitalist society by reference to relations of ownership alone was far too general, and that this might be extended to recognition of “necessary relations” understood in a wider sense, and that this would have some bearing on socialist society also. I think that the problem under socialism needs to be examined concretely, but sociological analysis has been lacking.

Under socialism, in every country, we have seen the development of big struggles after the victory of the revolution, when the unity engendered by the actual struggle to overthrow the old system, and the mass enthusiasm on which it is based, tends to disintegrate.

What needs to be done is to find different ways of conducting political life from that which has existed hitherto, where those who differ are labelled as “class enemies”, and the old class passions and struggles are re-aroused in what are quite different circumstances. What is needed, speaking in general, is an orientation towards full development of socialist democracy and acceptance of some form of political pluralism. Few, if any, of those declared to be enemies, whether Bukharin, Liu Shao-chi or Dubcek, can seriously be considered as “capitalist agents”, and it only discredits socialism to declare that they are.

Tentative Conclusions

1. The internal crisis in China has been basically resolved for some time to come, but big divisions still remain.

2. The line on internal questions now being put into operation has prospects of some success, but the extent of this is doubtful.

3. The line adopted by China on international questions is unlikely to have the degree of impact expected, though it will have some.

4. All these questions, in their concrete outcome, hinge to a great degree on the course of development of the Sino-Soviet conflict. Measures of invasion, or greater military action by one side or the other would have to be condemned, would have incalculable consequences and would face the socialist movement internationally and in every country with the need to rebuild from the ground up.