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CHINESE AND LENINIST COMPONENTS IN THE PERSONALITY OF MAO TSE-TUNG

STUART R. SCHRAM

The relative importance of Leninist ideology and of traditional factors in determining the behavior of the Communist leaders is a favorite subject of controversy. In the past, two extreme viewpoints have sometimes been expounded. One of these has seen Stalin as a new Peter the Great and Mao Tse-tung as a new Liu Pang, whose actions were explainable entirely in terms of geopolitics or "national psychology," without any reference to Leninism whatsoever. The other has suggested on the contrary that the policy of Moscow or Peking could be predicted in all its details from a careful reading of Marx and Lenin. A variant of this second approach, in the case of the Chinese Communists, has seen the latter as mere puppets of the Soviets, and looked for the explanation of their behavior not in Leninist doctrine, but in the orders received from Moscow.

The events of the past thirteen years have adequately demonstrated the falsity of all such one-sided views. As adherents of Marxism-Leninism, all Communists attempt to make use of certain ideas and categories to understand society and to change it. As Russians or Chinese, they are influenced in the way they go about applying Leninism by the fact that patterns of thought and action inherited from the past have marked not only the societies with which they must deal, but the revolutionaries themselves. As the rulers of two great empires, their ideological positions are also influenced by considerations of prestige and power. The common commitment to world revolution, and the ideal of "proletarian internationalism," no more suffice to eliminate conflicts and rivalry than the clear injunction, "Let them be one, as I and my father are one," has prevented Christians from quarreling for 2,000 years regarding the correct definition of their faith, or even massacring one another in a struggle to decide who should enjoy the authority to fix doctrine and to rule over the organization of the Church.

After the events of the last few years, and especially of the last few months, there are not many people who still venture to dispute these obvious verities. The quarrel is no longer about whether Chinese communism bears any relation to the historic entity, China, but rather about which factor is of primary importance: Leninist doctrine, or traditional attitudes. I would suggest that the qualitative aspect of this problem is at least as important as the quantitative aspect. We must ask ourselves not only whether "Communism" or "China" is more important

in the combination of the two, but *how* the two mesh together, both in present-day Chinese society in general, and in the minds of its leaders.

In his report to the Sixth Plenum of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party in 1938, Mao Tse-tung discussed the problem of combining Marxism-Leninism and the Chinese inheritance in the following terms:

Today's China is an outgrowth of historic China. We must not mutilate history. From Confucius to Sun Yat-sen, we must sum it up critically, and we must constitute ourselves the heirs of all that is precious in this past. Conversely, the assimilation of this heritage itself turns out to be a kind of methodology which is of great help in the guidance of the revolutionary movement. A Communist is a Marxist internationalist, but Marxism must take on a national form before it can be applied. There is no such thing as abstract Marxism, but only concrete Marxism. What we call Marxism is Marxism which has taken on a national form, that is, Marxism applied to the concrete struggle in the concrete conditions prevailing in China, and not Marxism abstractly used. If a Chinese Communist, who is a part of the great Chinese people and is bound to his people by his very flesh and blood, talks of Marxism apart from Chinese peculiarities, this Marxism is merely an empty abstraction. Consequently, the sinification of Marxism—that is to say, making certain that in all of its manifestations it is imbued with Chinese peculiarities, using it according to the peculiarities of China—becomes a problem which must be understood and solved by the whole Party without delay. . . . We must put an end to writing eight-legged essays on foreign models . . . ; we must cease our dogmatism, and replace it by a new and vital Chinese style and Chinese manner, pleasing to the eye and to the ear of the Chinese common people.”¹

It is clear from this passage how complex and ambiguous is the meaning of “the sinification of Marxism,” even in Mao’s own mind. On the simplest level, it involves, as the last sentence quoted above suggests, the use of a *language* accessible to the average Chinese, enlivened with popular proverbs and colorful turns of phrase, with an occasional classical quotation to give it added weight. Mao is an extremely skillful practitioner of this kind of sinification.² But the kind of “sinification” ger-

¹ This passage has been so modified in the current edition of the *Selected Works* that it is hardly worthwhile to cite the reference; Vol. II, pp. 258-261. For the original Chinese text, see *Lun Hsin Chieh Tuan*, (Chieh Fang She, 1944), pp. 125-128. (Only a short extract from Mao’s very long report to the Sixth Plenum is included in the current edition of his works.) An extract from this report, translated from the original version, is included in the anthology of Mao’s writings which I have recently compiled under the tentative title, *The Political Ideas of Mao Tse-tung*, to be published by Frederick A. Praeger. (This book was originally prepared in French, and will be published simultaneously in Paris by Armand Colin.) This volume will be cited below whenever the examples I mention are included in it, and are not available elsewhere in a satisfactory translation. The above message is from text II A of this anthology.

² As John Fairbank has suggested. *The United States and China*, (2nd ed.), p. 303.

mane to the subject of this paper is the sinification of the substance rather than the form of Marxism—though obviously the two things cannot be separated completely.

The ultimate in “sinification” would be the production of an ideology in which the very concepts and methods of Marxism had somehow become peculiarly Chinese. It is extremely doubtful whether Mao has “sinified” Marxism in this sense.

One would expect to find such a contribution, if anywhere, in Mao’s analysis of Chinese history and society. In fact, if we look at the most detailed and lengthy piece of writing of this kind, the first part of “The Chinese Revolution and the Chinese Communist Party,” we find that Mao has changed his views since 1939, but neither the original nor the current version can be said to break new ground theoretically.

In the original version of this text, Mao affirms that traditional Chinese society has been completely stagnant for centuries, and was only prodded into motion by the impact of the West. In the current version, he has inserted the thesis, more flattering to his countrymen, that changes were already at work which would have led to the birth of capitalism in China even without foreign intervention.³ But far from advancing any original theoretical ideas to elucidate the unique traits of Chinese society, he endeavors, like any Soviet historian of the period, to force Chinese society into the Procrustean bed of the schema “primitive communism—slave-owning society—feudalism—capitalism—socialism” which Marx himself had clearly said was not necessarily valid for all societies.⁴

A second and somewhat broader meaning for “sinification” would be the adaptation of Marxism-Leninism to the conditions of China as an underdeveloped country which had undergone the experience of Western domination. This is referred to by Mao himself in the above passage as the application of Marxism to “the concrete struggle in the concrete conditions prevailing in China.” Liu Shao-ch’i, in his well-known interview with Anna Louise Strong in 1946, defined this type of ideological development somewhat more precisely:

Mao Tse-tung’s great accomplishment has been to change Marxism from a European to an Asiatic form. Marx and Lenin were Europeans; they wrote in European languages about European histories and problems, seldom discussing Asia or China. The basic principles of Marxism are undoubtedly adaptable to all countries, but to apply their general truth to concrete revolutionary practice in China is a

³ This theory regarding the existence of “sprouts of capitalism” in China as early as the Ming dynasty was the subject of a vast debate among Chinese historians a few years ago.

⁴ For the original version of “The Chinese Revolution and the Chinese Communist Party,” see *Chung-kuo Ko-ming yü Chung-kuo Kung-ch’an-tang*, (Chieh Fang She, n.d.), 36 pp. For the current version, see *Selected Works*, Vol. III, pp. 72-101. K. A. Wittfogel has dealt with the variants between these two versions in a recent article. [*China Quarterly*, no. 10 (December 1962).] For a further discussion of my own views, see introduction to Schram, *op. cit.*

difficult task. Mao Tse-tung is Chinese; he analyzes Chinese problems and guides the Chinese people in their struggle to victory. He uses Marxist-Leninist principles to explain Chinese history and the practical problems of China. He is the first that has succeeded in doing so. . . . He has created a Chinese or Asiatic form of Marxism. China is a semi-feudal, semi-colonial country in which vast numbers of people live at the edge of starvation, tilling small bits of soil. . . . In attempting the transition to a more industrialized economy, China faces . . . the pressures . . . of advanced industrial lands. . . . There are similar conditions in other lands of southeast Asia. The courses chosen by China will influence them all.⁵

It is my own conviction that Mao Tse-tung *has* made significant changes in the substance of Marxism which were suggested to him in the first instance by his experience in China, but which actually represent adaptations to the conditions of the underdeveloped countries in general. I would cite in this context the model for the conquest of power based on guerilla warfare and agrarian revolution, which Mao did not create out of whole cloth, but on which he has placed his stamp, even if Lenin pointed the way. I would cite the accent on ceaseless and perpetual change extending to infinity, which characterizes the most recent period in Chinese Communist ideology—the period of “permanent revolution.” I would cite the theory of the people’s democratic dictatorship, with its suggestion that one can go all the way to communism under the joint dictatorship of the four classes—even if real power belongs to the Communist Party as the “party of the proletariat.” In all of these instances, Mao elaborated his ideas on the basis of Chinese experience, but the factors which underly these theories—agrarian discontent, impatience with existing conditions, national solidarity in the face of the West—are to a considerable extent present in many Asian, African, and Latin American countries.

There is a third type of “sinification” which consists in making Marxism more comprehensible and meaningful to the Chinese, not only by clothing it in Chinese language, but by relating it to ideas and events of the past. It is primarily this third dimension of “sinification” which will be dealt with in this essay, and here the precise degree of innovation on Mao’s part is of little importance. For whether his thought is drawn almost word by word from the writings of Lenin and Stalin, as some claim, or whether it represents a distinctive variant of Leninism, there is no doubt that Mao Tse-tung stands firmly in the Leninist tradition, which is a Western tradition radically alien in many respects to Chinese ways of thought. The Leninist core of Mao’s thought, whether it be orthodox or heretical, therefore requires a certain mediation in order to make it accessible to the Chinese masses.

On the one hand, Mao’s references to the national past are not merely neutral “illustrations” of Marxist-Leninist verities—they are charged with values, which may become intertwined with Leninism to produce, not a

⁵ Anna Louise Strong, “The Thought of Mao Tse-tung,” *Amerasia* 6 (June 1947), 161.

modification in the substance of the latter, but a kind of amalgam in which the consciously-held ideology gradually becomes bound up with accretions from the past, which may add to its appeal, and at the same time distort it. On the other hand, there is involved not merely the mediation between Marxism-Leninism and the Chinese masses by the leaders of the Party, in their capacity as high priests of the ruling ideology, but the mediation between what Marx and Lenin actually thought and Mao's or Liu's ideas of Leninism by minds trained in a non-western tradition. In a word, Marxism is consciously "sinified" by the leaders for the masses; it is also unconsciously sinified for the leaders themselves by the very manner in which they perceive it.

The aspect of this problem with which I have chosen to deal here is Mao's use of language, metaphor, and example from the Chinese past as part of his style of leadership. I shall present a few instances of this, and attempt, on this basis, to draw some tentative conclusions as to the extent to which Mao simply exploits images of this type for purposes completely alien to their original meaning, and the extent to which, on the contrary, he uses them because they are a part of himself and actually influence his own thought.

Mao Tse-tung and Orthodox Tradition

It is well known that Mao Tse-tung's outlook in early years was tradition-oriented and relatively conservative. He has said himself in his autobiography that in 1910, at the age of 16 or 17, he still "considered the Emperor as well as most officials to be honest, good, and clever men" who only needed the help of K'ang Yu-wei's reforms.⁶ And as late as the winter of 1916-1917, when he was 23, he still showed himself remarkably respectful of China's traditional worthies, going so far as to refer to his great Hunanese compatriot Tseng Kuo-fan by his posthumously bestowed title "Wen-cheng."⁷

In fact, if one were to characterize Mao's mind on the eve of the May Fourth movement, the two most deeply-etched traits appear to have been a vigorous nationalism, which had long led him to mourn the loss to China of such territories as Annam and Burma, and an emphasis on courage and the martial spirit, which expressed itself among other things in an admiration for Han Wu-ti.⁸

Obviously, Mao's views have not remained unchanged over the past 45 years. In the current revised version of Mao's report to the October 1938 Party Plenum, there is a reference to two methods of selecting

⁶ Edgar Snow, *Red Star Over China* (New York: Random House, 1937), p. 121.

⁷ In his article "T'i-yü chih yen-chiu" ("A study of physical education"), published in *Hsin Ch'ing Nien* in April, 1917. For a full French translation of this article see Mao Ze-dong, *Une étude de l'éducation physique*, (Paris: Mouton, 1962); extracts in English translation are contained in Schram, *op. cit.*

⁸ For references, and an analysis of Mao's thought in its pre-Marxist phase, see my introductions to *Une étude de l'éducation physique* and Schram, *op. cit.*

cadres, according to merit and according to personal relations. The first is described as honest, the second as dishonest.⁹ Here only a few lines remain of what was originally a very interesting and suggestive passage, worth quoting at length:

With regard to this question of making use of cadres, in the history of our nation there have always been two lines, reflecting the opposition between the depraved and the upright. One was "appointing men according to merit," the other was "appointing men according to personal relations." The first was the policy of sagacious rulers and worthy ministers, the second was the policy of despots and traitors. Today, when we discuss the problem of making use of cadres, we look at it from a revolutionary standpoint, fundamentally different from that of ancient times, and yet there is no getting away from this standard of "employing men according to merit." It was wrong in ancient times, and is still wrong today, to pass judgment according to one's likes and dislikes, to reward fawning flatterers and to punish the honest and forthright."¹⁰

An English translation cannot convey the full force of this passage, which results partly from the use of traditional four- and six-character clichés. As far as the substance of this passage is concerned, Mao clearly implies in it that there are certain universal moral standards which apply to political behavior everywhere, independently of the historical or class context. This is a curious position for a Leninist. Secondly, he does not hesitate to use traditional expressions having not only a moral but a political connotation in order to get across his point. To be sure, he does not refer to himself as a *ming chün* (enlightened ruler), nor to, let us say, Chou En-lai as a *hsien ch'en* (faithful minister), but he does denounce Chang Kuo-t'ao not only in Leninist terms as a builder of factions, but in traditional terms as one who rewards flatterers and punishes the honest and forthright.

Another interesting instance of the use of traditional expressions in-crustured with many layers of meaning is to be found in an editorial of July 1945. In the current version of this article, Mao affirms that the Chinese people demand "independence, freedom, and unity." In the original text, the enumeration included "independence, freedom, democracy, unity, and *fu ch'iang*," (literally "rich and powerful"—a contraction for a phrase meaning "to make the country rich and militarily strong," earlier identified with the legalists, and much used in the late 19th century).¹¹ It would be far-fetched to use this as evidence in favor of the well-known thesis that the Chinese communists are latter-day legalists, but there is unquestionably in it an echo of the late nineteenth-century conservative nationalism to which Mao was exposed during his youth.

⁹ *Selected Works*, Vol. II (New York: International Publishers, 1954), p. 252.

¹⁰ *Lun Hsin Chieh-Tuan*, (Chieh Fang She, 1944), pp. 114-118.

¹¹ *Chieh Fang Jih Pao*, July 13, 1945; *Selected Works*, Vol. IV (New York), pp. 328-329. See Schram, *op. cit.*, text IX F.

Incidentally, he also stated in his speech at the Moscow airport on November 2, 1957, that the October revolution had enabled the Chinese people to find the way to emancipation, prosperity, and *fu ch'iang*. I do not know what the Soviets made of this expression.

Among the most interesting references to the rulers of the past are those in Mao Tse-tung's poetry. Here I shall mention only two poems, "Snow" and "Peitaiho."

The first is the well-known one purportedly written in the airplane carrying the author to Chungking for negotiations with Chiang Kai-shek in 1945. Here Mao appears to regard the past as over and done with, and largely unrelated to the present—except for the perennial beauty of the Chinese landscape:

. . . Ch'in Shih Huang and Han Wu Ti
Were rather lacking in culture . . .

To find men truly great and noble-hearted
We must look here in the present.

Whether "great men (or man)" here refers to modern man in general, as the official translation would indicate, to Mao himself, as hostile critics have suggested—an interpretation scarcely admissible if one considers the context in which the poem was written—or to Mao and Chiang as the two greatest men of the age, as Mr. Young-sang Ng has argued very convincingly in a recent article,¹² Mao expresses here a clear preference for the present. "Peitaiho" sounds a rather different note:

More than a thousand years in the past
The Emperor Wu of Wei brandished his whip;
"Eastward to Chiehshih," his poem, remains.
"The autumn wind is sighing" still today—
The world of men has changed!

The deliberate citation of two lines from a poem by Ts'ao Ts'ao has been taken as evidence that Mao Tse-tung identified himself with that ruler, or even with the caricature of him which has been popularized by the *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*. This is obviously reading too much into a passing reference. But one can deduce from this poem a certain feeling of community with a man who contemplated the same scenes in ages past, and who knew, like himself, the servitudes of power.

In reality, the two poems just cited are not contradictory, but illustrate different aspects of Mao's attitude toward his country's past. The first one displays the critical attitude of a revolutionary toward the grandeur of the past; the second, written after he came to power, emphasizes rather the continuity with the past. It is impossible to make any sense of Mao or of Chinese communism in general if one does not take into account both of these tendencies.

¹² Young-sang Ng, "The Poetry of Mao Tse-tung," unpublished manuscript, New York, 1962.

Mao Tse-tung and the Tradition of Peasant Revolt

The evaluation of Mao Tse-tung's attitude toward the legitimate holders of power and their ideology in pre-revolutionary China poses delicate problems, for whatever sentiment of continuity he may have there are limits to the extent to which he can openly identify himself with this particular past. The problem is obviously quite different as regards peasant insurrections and other forms of revolt against imperial authority. Here the Chinese communists openly proclaim themselves the heirs of all such movements. An extreme and highly picturesque example of this is Mao's appeal to the Ko Lao Hui (the well-known secret society, very influential among the peasantry, which played a certain role in the ferment leading to the 1911 revolution) in July 1936, a few sentences of which read as follows:

Brothers of the Ko Lao Hui!

. . . In the past you were partisans of restoring the Han and exterminating the Manchus; today we are partisans of resisting Japan and of saving the country. You are partisans of striking at the rich and helping the poor; we are partisans of striking at the local bullies and dividing up the land. You despise wealth and defend justice, and you gather together all the heroes and brave fellows (ying-hsiung hao-han) in the world; we do not spare ourselves to save the country and the world, we unite the exploited and oppressed peoples and groups of the whole world. Our standpoints and our positions are therefore quite close . . .¹³

To be sure, this is obviously a manipulative test designed to serve a political purpose, and I do not mean to suggest that Mao Tse-tung actually thought that Marxism-Leninism and the ideas of the Ko Lao Hui were substantially identical. But there may well be a residue of genuine feeling of fellowship here, which ought not to be overlooked.

Another curious resemblance between Mao Tse-tung's style of leadership and the ways of the past lies in his constant use, during the civil war, of exhortations to surrender and even to come over to the side of justice, addressed to enemy generals. He continued this practice down to 1949 and beyond.¹⁴ One can hardly imagine Lenin or Trotsky addressing the lieutenants of Kolchak or Denikin in exactly the same way, though an appeal was made, of course, to the patriotism of former Tsarist officers, especially, during the Polish campaign of 1919. Mao is building here upon a very characteristic Chinese tradition of exhorting, insulting, and expostulating with one's adversaries on the eve of a battle.

Once again, I do not wish to over-stress the import of these echoes of the past. A very large proportion of such references unquestionably represents merely an attempt to sinify the *language* of Marxism, to the

¹³ *Tou Cheng* no. 105, July 12, 1936, pp. 3b-5a; Schram, *op. cit.*, text IV G.

¹⁴ See, for example, "Message Urging Tu Yu-ming and others to surrender," *Selected Works*, IV (Peking), pp. 295-297.

exclusion of any substantive modification or even any smuggling in of elements foreign to Marxism. For example, if Mao Tse-tung in an appeal of September 25, 1931, castigated the *Kuomintang ti tiao cheng-fu*¹⁵ (this term will be familiar to all readers of *Shui Hu Chuan*), this can hardly be taken as proof that he identified himself with, for example, Lu Chih-shen; he was merely seeking an insult that would strike the imagination of his audience. Moreover, even while appealing to strands in the experience and tradition of the past, he clearly adopts a critical attitude toward them.

A good illustration of this, which will serve as a transition to the third part of my presentation, is provided by Mao's treatment of the *lumpenproletariat* or vagrants (*yu-min*). On the one hand, he praises these elements, and links them in colorful fashion to the protest movements of a traditional type. At the same time, he criticizes them.

The *lumpenproletariat* . . . can be divided into soldiers, bandits, robbers, beggars, and prostitutes. These five categories of people . . . each have a different way of making a living: the soldier fights, the bandit robs, the thief steals, the beggar begs, and the prostitute seduces. But to the extent that they must all earn their livelihood and cook rice to eat, they are one. . . . They have secret organizations in various places: for instance, the Triad Society . . . the Ko Lao Hui . . . the Big Sword society. . . . These serve as their mutual aid societies in the political and economic struggle. . . . These people are capable of fighting very bravely, and if properly led can become a revolutionary force. . . .¹⁶

The lumpen-proletarians form the majority of the Red Army soldiers. . . . As a result . . . there has arisen . . . a political mentality of roving insurgents. . . . But the type of large-scale actions by roving insurgents carried out by Huang Ch'ao, Li Ch'uang and Hung Hsiu-ch'üan are no longer permissible in imperialist-ruled China, . . . into which advanced weapons . . . advanced methods of communication, . . . and of transportation have already been imported. . . . The mentality of the roving insurgents seriously hampers the Red Army in accomplishing the great tasks which the revolution imposes on it; thus the elimination of this mentality is one of the most important aims of the ideological struggle. . . .¹⁷

These passages have been so extensively re-written in the current edi-

¹⁵ "A Letter from the Chinese Workers' and Peasants' Red Army to our Brothers and Officers and Soldiers of the White Army on the Subject of the Forced Occupation of Manchuria by Japanese Imperialism," *Su-wei-ai Chung-kuo*, pp. 60-64; Schram, *op. cit.*, text III F.

¹⁶ "An Analysis of the Various Classes of the Chinese Peasantry and their Attitudes toward Revolution," *Chung-kuo Nung-min* Vol. 1, no. 1, 1926. Schram, *op. cit.*, text IV B.

¹⁷ Resolution written for a conference of the Communist Party organizations of the Fourth Red Army, December 1929, in *Chung-kuo Kung-Ch'an-tang Hung-chun Ti-ssu-chün Ti-i-tz'u Tai piao Ta-hui-i Chieh-i-an*, (Hongkong: Hsinmin Ch'u-pan-she, 1949), pp. 14-15. Schram, *op. cit.*, text V D.

tion of Mao Tse-tung's *Selected Works* as to be unrecognizable, in the direction of removing some of the overly picturesque description of the *yu-min*, minimizing their role in the Red Army, and emphasizing their weaknesses. Nonetheless, it is clear that even in the 1920's Mao's sympathy for the outlaws and castoffs of traditional China did not lead him to identify himself with them.

The "Natural Leninism" of Mao Tse-tung

Hitherto I have stressed, with some reservations, the links which bind Mao Tse-tung to the Chinese past. This is, in my opinion, an important aspect of the truth about a very complex personality; but it is only an aspect of the truth, and not the whole. In years past, when the Chinese communist leaders, in order to adapt themselves to a position of weakness and dependence, undertook to minimize their own originality and to stress their conformity to the letter of Stalin's teaching, some people were misled into actually taking Mao and his colleagues for colorless Soviet puppets. Today, when news of the Sino-Soviet conflict fills the headlines, we should not fall into the opposite error of viewing them merely as Chinese nationalists with a Marxist veneer. Leninism may be, and indeed is, radically foreign to traditional Chinese culture; it may have, and indeed did, take Mao Tse-tung a long time to master it. But there is no doubt that he did master it a quarter of a century ago in Yen-an, and that he was deeply committed to it as a revolutionary creed long before he learned to use it effectively as a method of analysis. Moreover, there can be detected in his thinking from a very early date a kind of "natural Leninism," analogous to the "natural morality" of the theologians, i.e., a certain bent of mind congenial to the Leninist approach. This is particularly the case in the domain of leadership techniques, which is, of course, the heart of Leninism.

As early as 1920, when he had only just become converted to Marxism,¹⁸ and had not even begun to understand the Leninist strategy for revolution in the underdeveloped countries,¹⁹ Mao Tse-tung put forward ideas regarding the importance of organization in the labor movement which may be regarded as very close to the Leninist conception of democratic centralism. In his view, the labor unions should have democratically formed executive organs entrusted with full powers, for if authority were too much divided, the result would be unsatisfactory.²⁰ Some of these conceptions may have grown out of his experience as a labor organizer, but he also seems to have had a kind of intuitive under-

¹⁸ He dates his conversion from the spring of 1920, following his second visit to Peking. Edgar Snow, *Red Star Over China*, pp. 139-140.

¹⁹ See introduction to Schram, *op. cit.*

²⁰ Extracts cited by Li Jui, *Mao Tse-tung t'ung-chih ti ch'u-ch'i ko-ming huo-tung*, p. 176. I have no confidence whatever in this author's methods of dealing with his sources, but this particular citation may be authentic.

standing of the importance of organization which is no doubt one of the reasons for his emergence as the leader of the Chinese Communist Party.

Once again, in the fall of 1926, when he was as yet far from an adequate grasp of Leninist theory, Mao wrote, regarding a peasant uprising in Chekiang: "The reason for the failure of this movement is that the masses did not fully organize themselves, and did not have leadership, so that the movement barely got started and then failed."²¹

During the two decades from 1920 to 1940, Mao Tse-tung thoroughly absorbed the categories of Leninist analysis, and began to speak with precision and confidence, and in impeccably orthodox tones, of the organization of the Communist Party and its role in the revolution. But this does not mean that he dissociated himself from the past, as the text of 1938 regarding the "sinification of Marxism" suffices to illustrate. There is no reason, of course, why, as a good Leninist, he *should* have repudiated his national background completely; even Stalin frequently spoke of adapting Marxism-Leninism to national conditions, though Mao claimed a degree of latitude in this respect going well beyond what the leader of the world communist movement was inclined to admit. The question which interests us here is to what extent Mao Tse-tung, as a Leninist revolutionary, dominated his Chinese background, and to what extent it dominated him.

The balance in this respect was undoubtedly influenced by the fact that for nearly a quarter of a century the context in which Mao Tse-tung had to apply his Leninist theories was that of peasant-based guerilla warfare. In this situation, the example and traditions of the past, especially those of the innumerable peasant uprisings in Chinese history, were closer and more immediately meaningful than they would have been in any other. And yet, Mao Tse-tung made continuous and determined efforts to impose a Leninist mentality and a Leninist system of democratic centralism on the army of dubious and mixed class composition which he commanded.

At the same time, the fact that Mao Tse-tung accepts the theories of organization and leadership developed in the Soviet Union does not mean that he accepts the Soviet application of these as a model to be blindly followed. As a matter of fact, he clearly affirmed, as early as 1936, that although the Soviet Union and its leaders were worthy of emulation, Chinese communists should pay even more attention to their own experience. In the original version of *Strategic Problems of China's Revolutionary War*, he wrote: "Although we must cherish Soviet experience, and even cherish it somewhat more than experiences in other countries throughout history, because they are the most recent experiences of revolutionary war, we must cherish even more the experience of

²¹ "The Bitter Sufferings of the Peasants in Kiangsu and Chekiang, and their Movements of Resistance," *Hsiang-tao* no. 179, Nov. 25, 1926, pp. 1869-1871, (signed with Mao's *tzu*, Jun-chih). See Schram, *op. cit.*, text IV D.

China's revolutionary war . . ." In 1951, he felt himself obliged to stand this passage on its head, writing that "although we must especially cherish the Soviet experiences of war because they are the most recent experiences of revolutionary war, and have been acquired under the guidance of Lenin and Stalin, we must also cherish the experiences of China's revolutionary war."²²

This brings us to the question, particularly interesting in the light of recent developments, of Mao Tse-tung's attitude toward Stalin. Throughout the last two decades of Stalin's life, Mao frequently praised the Soviet leader as his teacher and model. This praise was expressed in particularly fulsome tones on the occasion of Stalin's death, when Mao wrote in a commemorative article:

Since the passing of Lenin, Comrade Stalin has always been the central figure in the world Communist movement. We rallied round him, ceaselessly asked his advice, and constantly drew ideological strength from his works. . . . Everyone knows that Comrade Stalin had an ardent love for the Chinese people and believed the might of the Chinese revolution to be immeasurable. To the problems of the Chinese revolution, he contributed his sublime wisdom. And it was by following the theories of Lenin and Stalin, and with the support of the great Soviet Union . . . that the Chinese Communist Party and the Chinese people . . . won their historic victory.²³

Even at the time, these words can hardly have been written entirely without tongue in cheek, for Mao well knew that Stalin's "sublime wisdom" regarding the Chinese revolution had almost caused its defeat on several occasions. And in 1956, the editorial "On the Historical Experience of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat," in which Mao undoubtedly had a hand, severely criticized Stalin's errors, and his enjoyment of the "cult of his own personality." But in fact, the contrast between this text and Mao's previous utterances regarding Stalin is far less violent than at first appears.

Since 1927 or thereabouts, Mao Tse-tung appears to have had a remarkably consistent view of Stalin. On the one hand, he was clearly conscious of Stalin's errors, for he had been the victim of them. On the other hand, he admired in Stalin the dedicated revolutionary, and also the universal leader whose existence he believed indispensable to the world revolutionary movement. This dual attitude comes through clearly in the editorial "On the Historical Experience of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat," which sharply criticizes Stalin for many failings, and yet continues:

²² The original text (or at least a relatively early version) appears in the supplement to the 1947 edition of the *Hsüan Chi*, pp. 109-112. See Schram, *op. cit.*, text V E. The current version is in *Selected Works*, I, p. 177.

²³ "The Greatest Friendship," Hsinhua Agency Daily News Release no. 1265, March 10, 1953.

. . . Some people consider that Stalin was wrong in everything. This is a grave misconception. Stalin was a great Marxist-Leninist, yet at the same time a Marxist-Leninist who committed several gross errors. . . . We should view Stalin from an historical standpoint. . . . Both the things he did right and the things he did wrong were phenomena of the international communist movement and bore the imprint of the times.²⁴

This last phrase reveals, incidentally, one of the roots of the Chinese leaders' opposition to the extremes of "destalinization" to which Khrushchev has recently gone—apart from resentment against the fact that they were not consulted. Mao Tse-tung is too consistent and too historically-minded a thinker to imagine that the whole epoch of terror initiated in the 1930's can be blamed on one man. To reject it root and branch, he undoubtedly realizes, means to condemn not only Stalin but the system which permitted such abuses. Hence the balanced approach, blaming Stalin and yet recognizing his stature, illustrated by the editorial of April 1956. Moreover, as affirmed in the same text, "Marxist-Leninists hold that leaders play a big role in history. The people and their parties need forerunners who are able to represent the interest and the will of the people, stand in the forefront of their heroic struggles, and serve as their leaders." This conviction undoubtedly occupies a central place not only in Mao Tse-tung's doctrine of leadership, but in his image of his own role.

Conclusion

There is not the slightest doubt that Mao Tse-tung is a faithful Leninist in the dual sense that his conception of the Chinese revolution is drawn from Lenin and Stalin, and that he is loyal to the ideal of a united world communist movement. But, as recent developments have shown, these two strains in Mao's Leninism may ultimately prove contradictory. Lenin's voluntarism expressed itself in the statement that politics takes precedence over economics.²⁵ In the special conditions of the underdeveloped countries, Mao Tse-tung, or those who speak in his name, has carried this one step further and affirmed that "the subjective creates the objective."²⁶ This attitude, which has recently been defined as a kind of "voluntarist illuminism,"²⁷ has obvious implications for leadership techniques. It leads to the "mass line," the great leap forward, and in general to the notion that there are no limits to what the liberated energies of the masses can achieve, or the speed at which they can achieve it. As Mao said in 1945, he believes that "revolution

²⁴ *Jen Min Jih Pao*, April 5, 1956.

²⁵ Lenin, *Sochineniia* (3rd ed.), vol. 26, p. 126.

²⁶ Wu Chiang, "A Partisan of the theory of the permanent revolution must be a consistent dialectical materialist," *Che-hsüeh Yen-chiu* 8 (1958), p. 28.

²⁷ Enrica Collotti Pischel, *La Rivoluzione ininterrotta* (Torino: Einaudi, 1962), p. 77.

can change everything."²⁸ Or, as he put it in the fall of 1958, after inspecting a variety of industrial and agricultural enterprises, just as the drive to create the communes was gathering momentum:

During this trip, I have witnessed the tremendous energy of the masses. On this foundation, it is possible to accomplish any task at all.²⁹

The encounter between this chiliastic variant of Leninism, born out of the impatience of the non-Western countries with their situation of poverty and inferiority, and the ideology engendered by a highly industrialized Soviet society, which might be defined as "the Leninism of the organization man," was bound to produce a rude shock. This shock could not conceivably incite Mao Tse-tung to abandon Leninism; on the contrary, as is now perfectly clear, it has led him to set himself up as its only true exponent. At the same time, the position of isolation into which his interpretation of Leninism has brought him may reinforce in Mao Tse-tung those national reflexes which link him to China's past. He may well compromise with the laws of nature and the logic of modern industrial society; he will be less inclined to compromise with the foreigners, whether they be American or Russian. In this he is clearly a true heir to the Chinese tradition.

I have suggested that both Chinese and Western components play a significant role in Mao Tse-tung's patterns of thought and behavior. The question naturally arises: where are the deepest springs of his conduct? Is he, as was Lenin, a revolutionary who merely *used* nationalism for his own ends? Or is he above all a nationalist for whom Marxism-Leninism is merely a convenient slogan?

Most certainly he is neither of these things. He has thoroughly assimilated Marxist categories, and he is deeply committed to world revolution. It would be absurd to say that he is above all a nationalist, who merely uses Marxism-Leninism for nationalist ends. Moreover, the very aim of the "war against nature," though Mao Tse-tung may expound it in terms impregnated with Chinese folklore, is a Western idea, radically foreign to traditional Chinese culture, with its ideal of adaptation to nature. And yet, nationalism is certainly not for Mao Tse-tung, as it was for Lenin, simply a necessary evil. The glory of the Han is clearly a living thing to him, a value no less precious than revolution. And though he is thoroughly committed to Leninism, he has stated very brutally that this commitment is of a purely utilitarian nature:

The arrow of Marxism must be used to hit the target of the Chinese Revolution. If it were otherwise, why would we want to study Marxism-Leninism? . . .

Our comrades must understand that we do not study Marxism-

²⁸ *Selected Works*, IV (Peking), p. 454.

²⁹ SCMP no. 1871, Oct. 9, 1958. Translation modified after comparison with the original in *Hung Ch'i*, no. 10, 1958.

Leninism because it is pleasing to the eye, or because it has some mystical value, like the doctrine of the Taoist priests who ascend Mao Shan to learn how to subdue devils and evil spirits. Marxism-Leninism has not beauty, nor has it any mystical value. It is only extremely useful. . . ."³⁰

Indeed, it could be argued that, if the categories in which he reasons are basically Marxist, Mao Tse-tung's deepest emotional tie is still to the Chinese nation; and if he is bent on transforming China's society and economy in the shortest possible time, in order to turn her into a powerful modern nation, it is above all in order that she may once more assume that rank in the world which he regards as rightfully hers. In this sense, Mao has "sinified" Marxism indeed.

Mao's use of examples from the past is no doubt in part manipulative, a technique for making his revolutionary theories more comprehensible and acceptable to the Chinese masses. And yet, there is a residue which is spontaneous. Mao Tse-tung's style and techniques of leadership are a mixture of Leninist democratic centralism and the flamboyant moralism and faith in the triumph of a just cause which characterizes the heroes of his favorite novels. Though he has not produced an explicit intellectual synthesis between Marxism and the Chinese tradition, he is himself a living synthesis.

³⁰ Speech of February 1, 1942, launching the rectification campaign. Boyd Compton, *Mao's China*, p. 21; Schram, *op. cit.*, text II B. Most of the above passage does not appear in the current edition of the *Selected Works*.