CONCLUSION OF THE GREAT CULTURAL REVOLUTION: WITH REFERENCE TO SIMILAR EXAMPLES FROM CHINESE HISTORY

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WHEN MAO TSE-TUNG SET the Great Cultural Revolution into motion in May 1966, he had no clear notion as to the future course of such a revolutionary movement. As summer passed and autumn came, the Red Guard Movement acquired momentum, and people gathered from all over the country filling Peking's T'ienanmen square to hold frequent mass meetings. In midst of such activities the Central Political Work Report Conference (October 25, 1966) was held, at which Mao made a speech in reference to the revolution's onset.

> The second problem [for which I myself feel greatly responsible] is that the Cultural Revolution has developed into such a great upheaval. I merely sanctioned a big-character poster written by Nieh Yüan-tzu of Peking University [she was instructor of philosophy there, the wall poster being critical of university president Lu P'ing], wrote a letter [of support] to the secondary school attached to Ch'inghua University, and wrote a big-character poster myself [ordering thorough-going attacks on head-quarters], and all that in a very short period of time [from July to October]. Even I could not foresee that once the big-character poster at Peking University was written the whole country would arose in this manner. [3, p. 395]

Mao Tse-tung thus shows a certain bewilderment at the turn of events by October and the great turmoil from when he first initiated the Red Guard's Cultural Revolution.

The following year, in 1967, the New Year's Day editorials of *Jênmin jihpao* and *Hungch'i* stated that it would be the year for "the struggle, the criticism, and the transformation" [1, p. 11]. That is, first comes the fight, second comes criticism, and third comes reconstruction, and in this manner the year will be one of decisive victory. By September of the same year, however, Mao Tse-tung is taking a different position. He points out in his lecture on "strategic deployment": "The first year of the Great Cultural Revolution is a year of preparation, the second is one to gain victory, to set up an emergency authority structure and start an ideological revolution, and the third is a year to conclude the revolution. What is important for us right now is to carry out the great criticism, form a great union and organize the three-way alliance [among leading cadres, members of the People's Liberation Army, and representatives of the rebel groups]" [2, p. 89]. Accordingly, the strategy for 1967 is to actualize revolutionary unity and the union of the three elements through great criticism. The objective for the third year, that is 1968, is to finalize the Cultural Revolution.

Events did not follow according to this schedule. It was not until April 1969 that the Ninth Congress of the Chinese Communist Party was held, an article of the party constitution was revised to designate Lin Piao as "a close comrade and successor to Chairman Mao." With this event, it appeared that the revolution, although delayed by six months, was finally brought to a close. Mao's plan for concluding the revolution had up till then been repeatedly delayed. In the process of the Cultural Revolution, to the surprise of Mao Tse-tung and other party leaders, a number of unforeseen events had cropped up in succession to prevent the normal course of the revolution.

Then later, in autumn of 1971, right before the National Day, the parade in T'ienanmen square was suddenly called off. At the same time it was reported that Lin Piao, designated by the new constitution as the successor to Chairman Mao, had disappeared from the public scene, indicating a further postponement of the final conclusion of the Cultural Revolution to still a future date. Various interpretations have been given to this event, but the truth of the matter is still unknown.

During the course of the Great Cultural Revolution, contrary to the expectations of Mao Tse-tung himself, the revolution expanded tremendously in scale, its scheduled completion continuously postponed, and it finally brought about the downfall of Vice-Chairman Lin Piao. As there is a great dearth of accurate information on events during the course of the Cultural Revolution, I would like to look back through Chinese history for similar examples of revolutionary regimes with various degrees of stability, which may help us to understand when and how the conclusion will be brought to the present revolution.

(1)	Ch'in Empire (221 B.C.–207 B.C.)	14 years	short-term regime
	Early Han Empire (202 B.C.–A.D. 5)	206 years	long-term dynasty
(2)	Hsin (Wang Mang) Empire (A.D. 6–A.D. 23)	17 years	short-term regime
	Later Han Empire (A.D. 26–A.D. 220)	194 years	long-term dynasty
(3)	Sui Empire (A.D. 589–A.D. 619)	30 years	short-term regime
	T'ang Empire (A.D. 618–A.D. 907)	289 years	long-term dynasty

Many dynasties have risen and fallen in succession in China, during the period of more than two thousand years since the latter part of the third century B.C. when the Ch'in Empire was established over the whole country. It was believed that each dynasty ruled by the "mandate of heaven," and the emperor was regarded as a child of heaven. When the emperor of a regime loses the support of the people due to his tyrannic rule, the mandate of heaven is transferred to another man of virtue who will assume the throne as emperor and establish a new dynasty. Based on this theory on the change of dynasties rooted in ancient

religion, the Chinese characters *koming* have been used to express any forceful alternation of dynasty. Since the close of the Ch'ing dynasty, this word has become the equivalent for the Western word "revolution." Some of the new regimes, founded by revolution under an emperor, such as Ch'in, Hsin, and Sui perished within a short span of ten to thirty years. But dynasties that followed these such as Early Han, Later Han, and T'ang continued to rule steadily for two to three hundred years. As shown in the table above, the short-term, revolutionary regimes and the long-term, stabilized regimes exist in three complementary sets.

Ch'in, Hsin, Sui, and the following Early Han, Later Han, and T'ang dynasties all began as revolutionary regimes. The difference between the two sets in this respect is only that the former ended as short-term regimes while the latter were stabilized into long-term dynasties. The unstabilized characteristics of the short-term, revolutionary regimes stand in contrast to the stable characteristics of the long-term dynasties. As this is a fascinating phenomenon in Chinese history, it may be fruitful to explore the causes behind it.

A common characteristic of the short-term revolutionary regimes is their adoption of policies of radical reform. Shihhuangti (meaning the First Emperor) of Ch'in was born at the close of an age of contending states as the lord of a barbarian state on the western border. He conquered six civilized states including Ch'i and Han, thus creating the first unified dynasty in Chinese history. He might be taken as a representative example of a revolutionary administrator, and in this sense Mao Tse-tung has praised him in a well known lengthy poem. The emperor was so full of energy that every day, so the story goes, he could not fall asleep unless he had personally looked over and made decisions on one hundred and twenty pounds of documents.

Shihhuangti built a centralized bureaucratic state by reorganizing the feudalistic, decentralized system into a prefectural system. He founded a new political structure dividing the whole country into thirty-six prefectures, and then sent officials from the central government as governors directly administering the prefectures. He also standardized Chinese characters, weights and measures, and currency which had not been uniform among the Seven States. To facilitate imperial tours, he ordered construction of imperial highways throughout his vast dynasty. Massive public works were another aspect of his program including the great palace Afangkung and his own mausoleum in Lishanling, constructed during his lifetime.

Among these large-scale public works, the roads for imperial tours, like the Roman military roads, were essential for maintaining order within the vast territory. The large-scale palaces were also effective in symbolizing the dignity of the emperor of a new state. Confucian scholars, have blamed Shihhuangti of Ch'in for leading an extravagant life, but their ideological argument is little more than a moral treatise by Confucianists who lack experience in actual politics. At the same time, suffering of the common people was a grave reality, forcedly recruited from far away to work for huge construction projects without pay.

The Ch'in dynasty was short lived due to these great construction works, the frequent imperial tours and aggressive wars fought against barbarians. Invaders from the north, a tribe of furious horsemen called Hsiungnu, were driven away

and the Breat Wall constructed. In the south, present-day Vietnam was subdued, and in the east, a large army was sent to the Korean Peninsula and its northern half conquered after a long battle. These protracted wars, coming on top of the great public works, caused dissatisfaction among the people.

Shihhuangti of Ch'in acquired notoriety as a tyrant for oppressing learning and suppressing speech. The period of contending states, in contrast, was the golden age of Chinese philosophy during which Confucianism and various doctrines of Chinese philosophy had been widely and freely promulgated. Shihhuangti was offended by those scholars. The followers of Confucianism in particular, who had an ideal of administration based on morals, sharply criticized Ch'in's despotic government which depended solely on laws for its existence. Moreover, they tried to restore the old system of the Chou dynasty. When Shihhuangti buried alive several hundred Confucians, confiscated privately-held books and burned them, he finally lost the support of the entire intellectual class. This happened in addition to the great public works and the foreign expeditions which had already been enough to cause dissatisfaction among the peasants. When Shihhuangti died and the second emperor succeeded him, a nationwide agrarian uprising took place and the dynasty crumbled only fourteen years after its initiation.

Shihhuangti of Ch'in was labelled a tyrant by the Confucians and thus became known as one of the most unpopular sovereigns in Chinese history. Mao Tse-tung, however, has revalued the emperor to be a great sovereign for the progressive character in his policies, and this new interpretation of history has overthrown the old Confucian view.

The leader of the agrarian uprising, Kaotsu of Han, soon conquered all his rivals and founded the Han dynasty. Among the founders of Chinese dynasties, he came from the lowest social stratum, but is still respected as one of the great sovereigns. Kaotsu was uneducated and probably could not even read, but he could accurately estimate the abilities of generals and high officials, so he favored those who were competent and listened to their opinions. By employing such men, he succeeded in unifying the whole country. As he came into power by dint of his own sword, he was confident that in the same manner he could easily rule the whole country. But he realized the shortcomings of his view when a Confucian scholar Lu Chia told him, "It is possible to come into power on a horse, but it is not possible to rule a country on a horse." In other words, it is possible to usurp power by military might but it is impossible to maintain the usurped power by military action alone. Military force is necessary for gaining political power but it becomes unstable when it depends solely on its force after that. Having realized this, Kaotsu left politics in the hands of competent scholars and administrative officials who acted as his advisors. Thus he laid the foundation for a long-term dynasty which lasted for two hundred years.

When a revolutionary regime uniting China by force continues to rule by force, that regime will not become a long-term dynasty. Later Chinese politicians learned a pertinent lesson from the contrasting failure and success of the heroes, Shihhuangti of Ch'in and Kaotsu of Han.

Kaotsu who did not have his own ideals at all in policy making left business

to such able ministers as Hsiao Ho. Having learned frmo his own bitter experiences as a peasant, he tried not to needlessly burden the people with such expenditures as imperial tours. To the general populace who had been exhausted by wars, this attitude of Kaotsu brought a meaningful measure of relief. Thus, with little effort, the national power was restored and the solid foundation for the Han dynasty laid.

As a maternal relative to the imperial family of the Early Han, Wang Mang took over the reins of government to found the Hsin dynasty. Wang Mang was a devoted Confucian scholar. Among the succeeding emperors in long history of China, he was surely one of the most learned.

It can be said that the failure of Wang Mang's regime was due to abuse of the elaborate scholarship in Confucianism which the emperor so much valued. As a devotee of Confucianism, he tried to introduce into the actual government the ancient system called the *Chouli* which he took as an ideal. During the entire Han period, large landowners and aristocrats combined to hold the farming land, and a portion of the peasants became their slaves and were ill-treated. In introducing the system of *Chouli*, Wang Mang confiscated these farms of landlords and turned them into the imperial domain. Such a policy was too idealistic to be applicable in a country like China which had such a vast territory and inhabitants with diverse culture. In China, therefore, the rulers who neglected this reality in implementing idealistic measures were bound to fail.

Not only were the policies of the legalistic Ch'in dynasty and of the Confucian Hsin dynasty different in character, but the ways they were succeeded by long-term dynasties, that is, the Early Han and the Later Han, were of great contrast. The Ch'in dynasty itself was completely destroyed, but its system of centralized authoritarian rule in the form of a prefectural system, set up by Shihhuangti of Ch'in, was adopted by the succeeding Early Han emperors in its original form. Up until the recent Ch'ing dynasty, this system remained the basic administrative structure of each dynastic state. In contrast to this, the system of the Hsin dynasty based on *Chouli* disappeared with the fall of that dynasty. Except for some minor details, the system was not adopted by the succeeding Later Han dynasty. While Ch'in's system suited the needs of the society at that time, the utopian system of *Chouli* was far-removed from the realities of the Han period, and was thus discarded.

The Hsin dynasty of Wang Mang also fell under a nationwide agrarian uprising. Kuangwuti of the Later Han, who was a great landowner and originally a member of the Han royalty, then came to power. He was extremely well educated in Confucianism and was a person of integrity, and for this reason people had strong faith in him. Kuangwuti revived the system of the Han dynasty in place of *Chouli*, and with the support of the aristocrats and intellectuals, he initiated the Later Han rule of policies based on Confucian ideas but which did not neglect reality.

How can a regime brought into existence by revolution continue to rule as a stable dynasty? It was Li Shih-min, T'aitsung of T'ang, who secured the foundation of T'ang dynasty, the longest dynasty in Chinese history. He enthusiastically

studied the lessons of Chinese history, especially on how a revolutionary regime can become a stable and long-term power. And what he learned, he consistently put into policy.

Succeeding the Sui Empire which collapsed under a nationwide agrarian uprising, T'aitsung of T'ang brought order to the confusion. But the Sui dynasty, which had succeeded the Northern Chou dynasty, had been able to overthrow the southern dynasty and unify China after a period of disintegration that had lasted nearly three hundred years. Sui's major accomplishment was organization of a statute system. But even so, the dynasty was overthrown within thirty years. Why was the vast Sui Empire destroyed, thus ending up as a short-term revolutionary regime? And why was it possible for the succeeding T'ang dynasty to become a long-lasting empire? By comparing the two dynasties, I would like to roughly elucidate the dividing point between a short-lived revolutionary regime and a stabilized, long-term dynasty.

First, the Sui dynasty economically was one of the wealthiest in Chinese history and enjoyed great prosperity. One scale for measuring the real power of a Chinese dynasty is the population. Population statistics are available from the end of Early Han, A.D. 2, when the population of the whole China was 12,331,000 families or 59,499,708 persons by the record of the last emperor of the Early Han. This is the oldest population record available anywhere in the world, and although some economic historians are skeptical about its accuracy, we are able to use it as an indicator of political sway. This is because the territories of united dynasties in China did not change significantly in size. Therefore, the population statistics show how far the government of each period extended its rule over the rural districts within its vast territory. In other words, the population size of each dynasty increases in direct proportion to the efficacy of the government rule in reaching into the remote districts.

When there was domestic disorder in China, peasants would flee the heavy taxes to seek the protection of powerful clans. Thus, the influence of war appears directly in the statistics. As actual population level declines, the number of registered population decreases even faster, reflecting fleeing peasants. Increase or decrease in population statistics thus becomes an expression of the fluctuation of political power of a dynastic state.

In A.D. 589, when Sui first unified the whole country, the population of the northern dynasty was approximately 9 million, the southern dynasty 2 million, and the total thus only 11 million. By the time Yangti, the second emperor of Sui, acceded to the throne, the population statistics show 46 million. That is an increase of more than four times within seventeen years, but since it is impossible that the population grew actually by four times, a theory has been put forward that the population of Northern Ch'i in the east was not included in the population of the northern dynasty. Even so, the increase also shows the result of a governmental ruling power that reached the remotest corners of the empire so that fleeing peasants settled and registered finally.

In contrast, when the T'ang came into power for the first time, agrarian unrest in the latter Sui days had reduced the estimated population by the beginning of

the Chênkuan period to around 3 million families or 10 million persons. Thirty-three years later, the total had increased to only 3,800,000 families. One hundred and thirty-six years after the founding of the T'ang empire, at the time of Emperor Hsüantsung, population had finally increased to 8,910,000 families or 52,910,000 persons, thus recapturing the standard of the Sui dynasty.

The record indicates that while the Sui dynasty collapsed because it promoted rapid growth in order to increase agricultural production, the T'ang dynasty's policy of stable growth succeeded in increasing productivity gradually and naturally without undue interference to the lives of peasants. The contrast in this way is rooted in a feudalistic opposition to the intervention of outside political power on the part of the Chinese peasants.

It is said that agrarian rebellion at the end of Sui was on an unusually widespread level in Chinese history. The record shows that peasants rose in revolt all over the country, conquered prefectural capitals, and massacred the prefectural governors and bureaucrats. This indicates how violently the peasants revolted against the hasty and harsh policy of growth adopted by Sui.

The Chinese Communist Party fits under the Sui type of regime. This is shown by the famous Great Leap Forward policy taken under Mao which created people's communes all over the country. Forceful policy is acceptable as a policy of emergency, such as right after the founding of a state, when it is necessary to achieve the economic recovery in a short period of time. But now, eighteen years after the revolution and when the country is entering a period of stability, it may not be wise to coerce the Chinese peasants into a policy of accelerated progress. This is what I apprehend most about the future of Mao Tse-tung's new policy of the Great Cultural Revolution. The Ch'in rule that lasted for fourteen years and the Hsin dynasty of Wang Mang which collapsed after seventeen years are good lesson to the Communist Party. Of course, the lack of detailed historical records makes unclear the precise process by which these two revolutionary regimes ended after such a short time. But in their final stage, the revolutionary regimes of Ch'in and Hsin, in the same manner as Sui, collapsed under agrarian uprisings. The fundamental reason for their failure must thus have been the enforcement of policies causing discontent among the peasants.

A second reason that can be offered for the early collapse of the Sui Empire was that Yangti was a literary person and often a dreamer. He has been criticized by others for building magnificent palaces and great canals where he sailed boats, for vacationing at Yangchou on the lower Yangtze River, and indulging in a life of luxury. The criticism, however, comes from a Confucian view of life where such accusations are too conventional to be made particular note of. After all, not all emperors who have led a life of luxury were overthrown.

A more important point is that Yangti, a descendant of northern dynasties, was strongly influenced by the civilization of southern dynasties and especially by the literature which flourished in the lower Yangtze River. The construction of great canals was a revolutionary policy taken in order to transport the abundant rice of Chiangnan to the northern regions. It was not a policy to fulfill his extravagant desires but a necessary development policy for this dynasty which had

its capital in a northern agricultural district where production could not catch up with the rapidly increasing population. But this policy laid a great burden on the shoulder of peasants. Unable to tolerate it, eventually they revolted.

As I have already shown by the example of Wang Mang, Chinese politicians and especially state leaders drafting new policies for the people and the state should not become overly idealistic.

Even a policy formulated for the welfare of the people and the state with good intentions, if it ignores the times and is beyond the understanding of the ordinary people, will not be successfully implemented and can arouse violent opposition from the people. For instance, the laws formulated by Wang An-shih, a reputed Confucian and a premier during the period of the Sung dynasty, were progressive in logic, intended to rationalize the feudal tax system. Late Dr. T. Naitō has stated his views on the matter as follows:

> In their intention, they [the new laws of Wang An-shih] were all fine laws. It is without a doubt that the policy would have succeeded if the people had been hard-working and prepared to take advantage of government efforts to increase their income, for then people would automatically have profited from that policy and the government too would have increased its revenue. But in order to carry out such a policy, it is necessary that the bureaucrats be without self-interest and the people hard-working. By long tradition, neither are bureaucrats incorruptible nor peasants progressive. It was the adoption of such progressive policies without considering these characteristics of bureaucrats and people that caused the trouble. [4, pp. 435–36]

Chinese peasants are essentially conservative people who tend to stick to old customs. China is a country of propriety and the Chinese culture also a culture of propriety. Propriety, expressed in other words, is an accumulation of social customs.

The people, who should theoretically be the first to welcome reform, are tied down by old customs and do not accept reforms readily. In the same manner, bureaucrats who should be supporting reforms do not do so readily as they are tied to customs of the past. Dr. Naitō said, "Wang An-shih was originally well known for his scholastic writings and was respected even by his seniors, but in carrying out his policy of reform, he met opposition from young and old alike including the seniors who had shown their respect" [4, p. 436]. Among those who opposed Wang's policies was Su Tung-p'o, a famous poet.

To overcome such opposition, Wang An-shih looked about for those who would support him. But neither famous politicians nor men of letters would cooperate. Finally,

> the young government officials who wanted to get ahead in life gathered around him. These men were young and competent, but lacked political conscience. From their different views on policies, they split into two parties [one supporting the new laws, the other the old laws]. [4, p. 436]

In short, laws which were rationally conceived and well-intended ended up as a failure because they were in direct conflict with the conservatism of the scholars, the government officials and the people, with their only support coming from thirsting opportunists.

Mao Tse-tung's concept of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, and especially his educational program for human reform is very admirable as an ideal. But the way this theory was applied was not equally admirable. The Red Guards, for instance, are boys full of youthful zest for the revolution who are ready to serve the public unselfishly. In this respect they are substantially different from the government officials who supported the new laws of Wang An-shih or those of Wang Mang. Because of a similarity in age, the Red Guards actually have more in common with the youth who took part in the agrarian revolts ending the Ch'in and Sui dynasties and introducing the Han and T'ang. What could be the reason for the heroes of the Cultural Revolution to have been relegated to the background?

Politically, it is said that they lost the limelight as the result of a purge in the latter half of 1967 when most of the members in the Cultural Revolution squad excepting Chiang Ch'ing, wife of Mao Tse-tung, were driven out of power. These party members, who were leaders of the Cultural Revolution around Chiang Ch'ing as the central figure, armed the Red Guards so that they might carry out the revolution thoroughly. It was then that they came into violent opposition with the views of Lin Piao, head of People's Liberation Army, who had formerly been working together with Chiang Ch'ing and others.

Mao Tse-tung, in his lecture at the Central Political Work Report Conference of October 25, 1966, compares and contrasts the democratic revolution continuing for twenty-eight years since the formation of the Chinese Communist Party and the socialist revolution continuing for seventeen years since the founding of the People's Republic of China. He says,

> [for seventeen years since the founding of the state, and particularly since the end of the Great Leap Forward in 1958] I have allowed my comrades to move to the forefront while I myself have withdrawn to the background. As I think back, this was really unwise as it brought about an undesirable side-effect of decentralization. In the cities, it was impossible to effectively unite forces, and a considerable number of the cities were turned into a kind of independent monarchy. For that reason, the policy line had to be reformulated at the Eleventh General Meeting [on August 12]. [3, p. 394]

The seventeen years of socialist revolution since the founding of the state, when studied in reference to similar examples from Chinese history as those I have elucidated above, corresponds to the period of a short-term revolutionary regime. Various efforts have been made by Mao Tse-tung to stabilize the government as a long-term dynasty. For this reason the Cultural Revolution was officially promulgated, the socialist regime and the party intentionally brought to a crisis and the independent states united. That is, Mao tried to dissolve actual power factions in order to realize a mature socialist society during his own lifetime. But beyond the expectations of Mao Tse-tung, the proletarian movement shook the foundations not only of the Communist Party but the entire country, whose momentum could not be brought to a ready conclusion.

Some people have said that Lin Piao's fall from power and the purge of the People's Liberation Army, high virtue of whose members stands out even in the

long history of China and who had been enthusiastic in serving the public, made the conclusion of the revolution more difficult. This, however, is not my position.

Ever since Kaotsu of Han corrected his mistake of trying to rule the country from horseback, that is with military force alone, all Chinese dynasties have purged the militant politicians who distinguished themselves in the course of revolutions in order to set up a system of civilian rule. By doing so, these regimes were able to survive as stable, long-term dynasties. In the Cultural Revolution, the recent action taken against the People's Liberation Army, which contributed in bringing some stability, was nothing but another historical example of the process of establishing a stable, long-term dynasty and civilian, bureaucratic control over government. Here, however, the civilians were not the former bureaucrats of the intellectual class but members of the Chinese Communist Party serving in the interest of the proletariat. By reorganizing the party structure, efforts have been made to put the Liberation Army under the control of the Communist Party. In that sense, this may not have been a bad strategy. Though Lin Piao's downfall has caused a measure of confusion, it is an important step in establishing a true foundation for stability.

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