

MAO TSE-TUNG'S THOUGHT AND THE CHINESE REVOLUTION

—With Special Reference to the Main Force of the Revolution—

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Mao Tse-tung, taking the rural areas as his military base, and relying on the overwhelming majority of the peasantry, and also taking Marxism-Leninism as his theoretical support, was able to lead the Chinese revolution to success. How was the result possible at all? The key to the success of the Chinese revolution is to be found in the struggle in Ching kangshan, where a proletarian type of man was shaping out of the peasantry through a reconstruction of social consciousness. This type of man went on to form the main force of the Revolution, especially in the form of the Red Army. The interconnexion between Mao Tse-tung's thought and Marxism-Leninism, or again, the unique character of Mao Tse-tung's thought, can be made clear by tracing the above process.

INTRODUCTION

Since a few years ago, a loud outcry "Mao Tse-tung's thought is Marxism-Leninism at the highest level in the present era" has been falling upon our ears from Peking. This outcry seems to be growing more high pitched in the turmoil of the "Proletarian Cultural Revolution."

The proposition this outcry conveys may not be of primary importance for non-Marxist-Leninists, whose concern is of course the trend of actual developments in China. Also, Marxist-Leninists in Europe or elsewhere, especially in the Soviet Union, will, of course, readily reject such a proposition. That is only natural at least in the existing political circumstances, and as long as these continue, it will remain meaningless and nonproductive to discuss the validity of that proposition. Whether it is right or wrong must be a question to be answered when all its ideological embellishments have been taken off in the course of actual developments in China.

Notwithstanding this limitation coming from the existing political conditions, the relationship between the so-called Mao Tse-tung thought, particularly Mao's own ideas, and Marxism-Leninism still seems to pose certain problems which require consideration in many aspects. Mao Tse-tung's thought came into being apparently through contact with and dependence on Marxism-Leninism. It led the Chinese revolution to victory and has subsequently been leading revolutionary China. What then is the point where the two lines of Mao Tse-tung's thought and Marxism-Leninism

intersect? Or, what was the way in which Mao Tse-tung's thought accepted Marxism-Leninism in leading the Chinese revolution to success?

One may ask these questions, but it is not easy at all even to ascertain what are the ingredients of that vast system of thought known as Marxism-Leninism. At the same time, it is in no way possible to examine Mao Tse-tung's thought in all aspects of its history over half a century. Such an attempt at examination is made still more intricate and difficult by the "Great Cultural Revolution" in present-day China. I may therefore take up for discussion here the process in which Mao Tse-tung formed his thought and thus approach this subject, so to speak, from *his* side. In so doing, I limit the historical period, for the present, to the "early years of Mao Tse-tung" in the 1920's or the years ranging from the first influx of Marxism-Leninism into China through the first revolutionary civil war (the Northern Expedition, 1926-1927) to the establishment of a base of revolution in Ching-kangshan. To do so may end in a study from too limited a point of view, but will throw at least some light, through the analysis, on a few points which seem to constitute the characteristic features of this thought. Moreover, it seems to be an indispensable task to shoulder in studying this thought, no matter how it may be evaluated, to ascertain what characteristics it was given in its formative process or what changes Marxism-Leninism underwent when it was accepted.

I. THE INFLUX OF MARXISM-LENINISM AND THE CHINESE COMMUNIST MOVEMENT

"The salvos of the October Revolution brought us Marxism-Leninism" and "then, and only then, did the Chinese enter an entirely new era in their thinking and their life."¹

So does Mao Tse-tung write in the famous passage taken from his "On the People's Democratic Dictatorship." In fact, the impact from the fact that the October Revolution succeeded in Russia marked the start of an overwhelming influx of Marxism-Leninism into China at the beginning of the 20th century. On receiving the news of the October Revolution, Li Ta-chao, one of the founders of the Chinese Communist Party, prepared two articles, "Shu-min ti Sheng-li" (Victory of the Masses) and "Bolshevism ti Sheng-li" (Victory of Bolshevism) in which he foreshadowed the coming of a "workers' society," while *Hsin Ching-nien* (New Youth), the leading journal in the Chinese intellectual world at that time, had as early as May, 1919 a special issue on Marxism which was totally dedicated to commentary on and studies of this theory. The impact from the successful October Revolution was, in that sense, almost a "revelation" to China, a country which had been groping for an outlet from semi-colonial status for more than half a century. On account of that revolution, the imperialist West was declared bankrupt, while Russia,

¹ Mao Tse-tung, "On the People's Democratic Dictatorship," in *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung*, Volume IV, Peking, Foreign Languages Press, 1961, p. 413.

a backward area so far placed under the tsarist domination, was at once reborn a Socialist Soviet Republic.

Although the October Revolution was a "revelation" to China, this does not mean that Marxism-Leninism immediately took root in that country. The more "revealing" it was, the more did the impact comprise strangely mixed elements of prophecy and historical fact. If Marxism-Leninism, born in the industrial society of Europe and achieving reality in Russia, was to be accepted in semi-feudal and semi-colonial China, it is easy to see that a good deal of difficulty was involved therein. Before it could be accepted and develop into an actual movement in that country, there was the need for much imagination concerning a practical application of that theory as well as a full understanding of it. Mao Tse-tung's thought, which was afterward to become the orthodoxy of the Chinese revolution, was at this point to begin tackling, in its own fashion, the fundamental problem of how to apply Marxism-Leninism to Chinese realities. Here I may set about to give a very brief picture of the Marxist-Leninist movement of China in the first half of the 1920's, with an eye to bringing into light characteristic features of Mao Tse-tung's thought in those years.

As is well known, this period was characterized by a series of extraordinary political events such as the founding of the Chinese Communist Party at its first congress in July, 1921, its resolution to join the Comintern at the second congress in July (or May), 1922, its decision to collaborate with the Kuomintang (Nationalist Party) at the third congress in June, 1923, the May 30 Movement in 1925, the start of the Northern Expedition in July, 1926, the April 12 coup d'état in 1927 and the Nationalist-Communist break-up in July of the same year. It is already evident that, throughout the period, the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party acted consistently in compliance with instructions from the Comintern. There is no need to say that the party was founded under the leadership of G. Voitinsky, Comintern representative in the Far East. Also, in the instruction on Nationalist-Communist collaboration (at the Central Committee Meeting at Hangchow, August, 1922), the policy towards the April 12 coup d'état, and the Nationalist-Communist break-up at Wuhan are seen the Comintern's strong hands of direction working. In short, the Marxist-Leninist movement of China, which developed in parallel with the adoption of its ideas and principles, was accompanied with such concrete action as the co-operation with the Comintern, the founding of the Communist Party and the organization of labour unions. For this reason, it caused in this period, a good deal of controversy on strategy and tactics and eventually formed an extremely entangled political course resisting an easy solution. The Stalinist-Trotskyite feuding on the stage of the Comintern after Lenin's death, the conflict of views among various groups within the Chinese Communist Party, the triangular struggle of the Communists, Chiang Kai-shek, and the Wuhan Government—behind all these was the ferment of revolution threatening to sweep them away in a storm.

It is, however, not our present purpose to follow a digression to such an

intricate labyrinth of political history as this. I would rather present problems of the time in proper order while keeping in mind the central theme of the present article.

The political process in the period of the first internal strife of revolution, looked back upon in connexion with the political theory of Marxism-Leninism, seems to indicate that most issues originated in the following thesis of Lenin at the 2nd Comintern Congress.²

"With regard to the more backward states and nations, in which feudal or patriarchal and patriarchal-peasant relations predominate, it is particularly important to bear in mind: first, that all Communist Parties must assist the bourgeois-democratic liberation movement in these countries, . . . fourth, the need, in backward countries, to give special support to the peasant movement against the landowners, against landed proprietorship, and against all manifestations or survivals of feudalism, and to strive to lend the peasant movement the most revolutionary character by establishing the closest possible alliance between the West-European communist proletariat and the revolutionary peasant movement in the East, in the colonies, and in the backward countries generally. It is particularly necessary to exert every effort to apply the basic principles of the Soviet system in countries where pre-capitalist relations pre-dominate—by setting up 'working people's Soviets,' etc. . . ."

Needless to say, what Lenin found in World War I and its consequences was the need to combine "the masses of people in the oppressed non-European states" and "the proletarian movement in Europe." Thus the nationalist movement in the colonies and dependencies was considered an absolutely indispensable factor to ensure the achievements of the October Revolution. This requirement seems to have grown stronger when the failure of revolution became apparent particularly in Europe, and it led the Comintern to do all it could to assist the Chinese nationalist movement which was then foreshadowing an immense revolution. What then should be the concrete form of such assistance or direction was, however, in no way a question which could be answered beforehand. In respect to the two major problems in the thesis, namely, the communist party's assistance in the bourgeois-democratic liberation movement or the nationalist revolutionary movement and the establishment of workers' soviets, Lenin himself had to seek for a solution in "practical experience." Arising from the impact of the October Revolution, Chinese Marxism was thus entering the phase of "practical experience" as the Communist Party came into being and the workers were being organized and as it got more deeply involved in the matter of strategy and tactics for its movements. The time was to come shortly in China when that thesis was put into practice. The waves of revolution since the early 1920's posed an enormous problem, not only to speak of the Chinese Communist Party, but even more to the Comintern. As well known, the Comintern, centred around Stalin and Bukharin, actually sought to solve the problem of a revolutionary

² V. I. Lenin, "Preliminary Draft Theses on the National and the Colonial Questions," in *Collected Works*, Volume 31, Moscow, Progress Publishers, 1966, p. 149.

united front by choosing a political form of Nationalist-Communist "intra-party collaboration" and, along this line, was to lead the revolution through the quickly changing phases of the turbulent times.

Here I do not wish to take up for discussion the apparently interesting topic of whether or not Stalin's leadership in those years was correct. It would take me too far off our subject. Still it may be necessary to make even a tentative appraisal of the point insofar as this concerns the main theme of this article.

As far as I have checked together the insufficient material on this complicated phase of the history of the Comintern and the Chinese Communist Party, Stalin's leadership does not seem as appropriate as he often claimed afterward and said "Was our policy correct, Comrades? It was absolutely correct." I would rather feel there is more truth in the words of Benjamin Schwartz who writes:³

"In reading Lenin's writings, one is struck by the candor with which he often admits past errors without in the least diminishing the appearance of infallibility which hedges him about.... Stalin, however, whose leadership is of quite another order, has had to resort to other methods of maintaining the appearance of infallibility.... Whatever errors might have been committed must have stemmed not from the Comintern leadership, but from source."

The Comintern was perhaps right in directing the Chinese Communist Party to co-operate with Sun Yat-sen's Kuomintang for vigorously carrying out the nationalist revolution. True, without so doing, the precocious Communist Party would not have been able to grow nor would the nationalist revolution have risen that high. But, as pointed out, the Comintern's direction certainly seems to have been too circumstantial after real power began to pass into the hands of Chiang Kai-shek. Only a few weeks after the Comintern accepted the Kuomintang, or Nationalist Party, as its associate body and its executive chose Chiang Kai-shek as an honorary member, the Chungshan gunboat incident took place to bring Nationalist Communist feuding into the open (in March 1926). This was followed by the passage of the resolution of the Executive Committee of the Kuomintang which barred Communists from top posts in the Kuomintang organization (in May, 1926). Apparently Chiang Kai-shek had turned to the right. Nevertheless the Comintern leadership remained too defenseless to development in that direction. Also after the Northern Expedition force swept over the south of the Yellow River and after Stalin, in that situation, boasted "we will use the Chinese bourgeoisie and then toss it away like a squeezed-out lemon,"⁴ it did not take more than a week until another coup d'état took place on April 12. The Comintern's policy towards the Wuhan Government following the coup is well known. Under the new circumstances, the 8th Plenum of Comintern laid

³ Benjamin I. Schwartz, *Chinese Communism and the Rise of Mao*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1958, p. 86.

⁴ Leon Trotsky, *Problems of the Chinese Revolution*, New York, Paragon Book Gallery, 1962, p. 91.

down a series of policies including the maintenance of Nationalist-Communist collaboration, reorganization of the Kuomintang into a mass party, intensifying the agrarian revolution, and the organization of a revolutionary army. Under such circumstances, however, the policies of intensifying the agrarian revolution and organizing a revolutionary army were by no means compatible with the requirement of maintaining collaboration with the Kuomintang. The first period of Nationalist-Communist collaboration was thus brought to an end when the Comintern representative M. N. Roy presented to Wang Ching-wei a letter suggesting the arming of 20,000 Communists and 50,000 worker-peasant elements and other matters.

The Chinese Communist Party's errors in this period have been attributed to the right-wing opportunism of Chen Tu-hsiu. It cannot be said of course that the Chen Tu-hsiu line was correct in strategy and tactics and also in the leading of party organizations. But, speaking only of whether or not its instructions were appropriate, the Comintern should have been accountable for the great part of them. When Trotsky, on the part of the opposition, wrote in his scathing denunciation, "the justice of the Comintern is thickly colored with Shanghai blood,"⁵ he certainly struck in the sense one aspect of the situation.

Here we may have to return to our central theme. At a time the Communist Party was growing at striking tempo and yet experiencing a miserable failure in the first revolutionary civil war, where then could one seek for a prospect of revolution in China? Also, how could one expect to solve the problems of strategy and tactics for revolution or of establishing soviets of workers and peasants in a backward agricultural country? It is of course in connexion with these problems that the Mao Tse-tung line came on to the scene. This new line had been shaping, so to speak, in a range different from that of either the Chen Tu-hsiu or the Comintern line. I may turn to Mao Tse-tung in a new section.

II. THE COMINTERN LINE AND MAO TSE-TUNG

A series of actions of Mao Tse-tung in those years is already known: he found the driving force of revolution in China in the peasant movement of Hunan Province; his almost absolute confidence in the peasant movement was, however, turned down by Chen Tu-hsiu; his action in the Autumn-Harvest Uprisings was reproached by the Central Committee of the Party with the subsequent deprivation of his Politbureau and Front Committee posts; and yet he held an unshakable belief in his own policy until finally he succeeded in building a base in Ching kangshan. In particular, his policies, following the Nationalist-Communist break-up, of "emphasizing the peasant movement," "arming the masses" and "building a base" constituted the essential of Mao Tse-tung's thought at that time. Since the Northern Expedition started, he, placed outside the main current of party leadership and

⁵ Leon Trotsky, *op. cit.*, p. 272.

yet remaining in the maelstrom of the Chinese revolutionary movement, had been assiduously groping for a prospect for the future.

What then was the factor that, at that point, decisively differentiated Mao Tse-tung's line from Central Committee of the Party or the Comintern? It was above all the issue of building soviets in the rural areas. True, Mao Tse-tung was deprived of his Front Committee post because of a plank urging "organization of soviets" in his programme for the Autumn-Harvest Uprisings (in the fall of 1927). But included in the problems of rural soviets was not only that of strategy and tactics, but one which could be most fundamental to the formative process of Marxism in China.

The timing of building soviets was, as well known, a topic of the most heated discussion within the Comintern. It was only at the 6th Congress of the Chinese Communist Party held at Moscow in July 1928 that the movement led by Mao Tse-tung, which was at first censured as a "rifle movement" and then shunned as reformism, narrowly survived to have its own existence approved or, more exactly, tacitly tolerated by the party. On the other hand, the Trotskyites had been urging the necessity for creation of soviets since before the April 12 coup d'état. The proposition of "creating soviets of workers" in the "backward countries," once directed by Lenin in his thesis, now came to form the severest test for political leadership in the revolutionary movement. It continues to develop further, producing "the Canton Commune" or Li Li-san's thesis of "initial victory in one or several provinces." There is no need to repeat here that these moves of political leadership and their consequences were closely related to the power struggle within the Comintern.

If we should approach these developments not as the effects of arguments in a closed chamber of Moscow but as conditions precedent to what happened to Marxism in China afterward, the real issue did never lie in the *timing* itself for establishing soviets, as in the Stalinist-Trotskyite feuding. It was obvious to all eyes that the revolution would be on the ebb throughout the country for some length of time after the Nationalist-Communist break-up. Not only in the cities but in the rural areas, white terror was raging. Could the Chinese soviet movement ever survive the low tide period of revolution? Or, if so, what could be such a soviet? These questions must have been the most fundamental ones vis-à-vis the actual conditions prevailing in China, in terms of the principles of Marxism-Leninism. It was precisely these questions that Mao Tse-tung started seeking to answer.

Mao Tse-tung, as well known, prepared a report, "Why Is It That Red Political Power Can Exist in China?" in October 1928. This was his first attempt at answering those questions. He sought to explain "the long-term survival inside a country of one or more small areas under Red political-power completely encircled by a White regime"⁶ by break-up among White

⁶ Mao Tse-tung, "Why Is It that Red Political Power Can Exist in China?" in *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung*, Volume I, Peking, Foreign Languages Press, 1964, p. 64.

regimes as well as imperialist powers. These causes or conditions were a product of the situation in which imperialism "indirectly rules" "the economically backward semi-colonial China (localized agricultural economy)." We may find in this analysis of Mao Tse-tung a similarity to the method Lenin applied to the October Revolution—the theory of the node of contradictions and unequal development as well as a foreshadowing of Mao's later work, *Mao-tun-lun* (On Contradiction). The conditions and phenomena then existing in China had never occurred anywhere else in the world; and accordingly the conclusion which he drew out of his analysis could have no parallel in the Russian experience after all. Contrary to Stalin who said at that time that "Soviets are formed and flourish only in circumstances of revolutionary upsurge,"⁷ Mao Tse-tung, at that low tide point in the revolutionary trend, concluded that the revolutionary would survive for a long time. Of course such an analysis of his was not generally approved. He had to continue fighting defeatism on the one hand and insurrectionism on the other. The struggle against the "liquidationists" or the "Li Li-san course" may be said to have coloured the Mao Tse-tung line at that time in all its aspects.

To limit the problems involved in red political power only to the possibility of its survival would, however, over-simplify the case. Certainly at a time the revolution was on the ebb and white terror was raging about, there was the need to analyse the possibility of such political power. At the same time, what needed much more consideration must have been the nature of red political power or the question of what would be its future prospect in the course of revolution. From such a point of view, it is easy to see that either Stalin or Trotsky was keenly conscious of that question in close connexion with the timing of establishing soviets. As far as they viewed the future of a socialist revolution from the position of Marxism, the hegemony of the proletariat was an indispensable factor. Only under the alliance of workers and peasants led by the proletariat, would a socialist revolution, as well as the direction of the national liberation movement, be possible. For this very reason, the Comintern, while barely tolerating the existence of the political power led by Mao Tse-tung at its 6th Congress, on the one hand, consistently demanded that the peasant movement be directed by the proletariat, particularly by the industrial proletariat. "The spontaneous guerrilla warfare of the peasants in various provinces and districts... can be a starting-point in the nationally victorious mass revolt only on the condition that it is carried on in alliance with a new revolutionary tide among the proletariat in the cities."⁸ This statement at the 6th Comintern Congress indisputably suggests the Comintern's attitude at that time and the direction in which the "Li Li-san course" was eventually to develop. The red government existing,

⁷ J. V. Stalin, "Notes on Contemporary Themes, II, China," in *Works*, Volume 9, Moscow, Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1954, p. 365.

⁸ C. Brandt, B. Schwartz, and J. K. Fairbank, *A Documentary History of Chinese Communism*, London, Allen & Unwin, 1952, p. 162.

encircled by the white districts, in the mountainous rural areas on the provincial borders was certainly an entity to be directed by the urban proletariat. In this connexion, the situation seemed much the same to Trotsky, too, who wrote :⁹

“The leading role of the isolated Communists and the isolated Communist groups in the peasant war does not decide the question of power The peasant war may support the dictatorship of the proletariat, if they coincide in point of time, but under no circumstances can it be substituted for the dictatorship of the proletariat.”

In short, such was a corollary from Marxism-Leninism. It is known too well how Lenin himself, while taking up the question of an alliance of workers and peasants as fundamental to the strategy of revolution in Russia, still insisted on the hegemony of the proletariat or, in other words, how he made a sharp distinction between the main objectives and the main force of revolution.

Well then, where did the rural soviets led by Mao Tse-tung stand in this context? Logic would not answer the question otherwise than in two directions: whether the rural soviets would always be united with uprisings of the proletariat in the cities or whether the red political power would survive as a body virtually led by the proletariat. It could not be expected to see “a new revolutionary upsurge among the urban proletariat” in the period when the revolution was on the ebb. The miserable outcome of the combination of the two—rural soviets and urban uprisings—has been proved above all by the historical fact of the “Li Li-san course.” Then, was Mao Tse-tung’s red political power ever led by the industrial proletariat?

We cannot be fully accurate in our appraisal of the red political power at that time. Still it is difficult to assume that the soviet power which once held a base in Ching kangshan and then developed into the Juichin Government was led by the industrial proletariat. Rather the Soviet could only discover the chance of survival because it was cut off from the cities and all the more hit the blind spot of the central government. Needless to say, it was, more than anything else, a rural soviet and a government with peasants, poor peasants in particular, as its main force. It is no doubt easy, as already pointed out, to regard, judging from these characteristics, the Chinese Marxist movement as one led by some élite elements. We certainly cannot but be surprised to see that those leaders of the movement successfully held to their theory for a long time in the rural areas encircled by the white regime. The real issue here may not be found only in such matters as their adamant will or their élite leadership. The questions we should ask are how, under such circumstances, Chinese Marxism developed itself and what characteristics that process gave to it.

Here I may rather abruptly turn to the struggle in Ching kangshan led by Mao Tse-tung and step inside the base, thereby inquiring further into our problems here in greater detail.

⁹ Leon Trotsky, *op. cit.*, p. 239.

III. THE STRUGGLE IN CHINGKANGSHAN—THE CREATION OF A PROLETARIAT

The struggle in Chingkangshan was coloured with a series of hardships. When Mao Tse-tung marched to Chingkangshan with the revolutionary army he had organized for the first time, consisting mainly of a self-defence corps of peasants from Hunan Province, miners from Hanyang, and rebel troops of the Kuomintang. Shortly Chu Teh's army joined them in Chingkangshan, bringing their total strength to about 10,000 men. It was no easy work to form, establish and maintain a base. No mention is necessary of the formidable economic and military difficulties. For instance, the report which Mao Tse-tung sent to the Central Committee of the Party at that time gives a picture as follows:

"The Hunan Provincial Committee has asked us to attend to the material conditions of the soldiers and make them at least a little better than those of the average worker of peasant. Actually they are worse. In addition to grain, each man receives only five cents a day for cooking oil, salt, firewood and vegetables, and even this is hard to keep up."¹⁰ Also, "we now have cotton padding for winter clothing for the whole army of five thousand men but are still short of cloth. Cold as the weather is, many of our men are still wearing only two layers of thin clothing."¹¹

The difficulties were not only economic and military. The greatest of them perhaps lay in the revolutionary troops or the Red Army itself. If the Marxist-Leninist in a semi-colonial country in the period of imperialism is described as a man who thinks "the completion of the national liberation and a democratic revolution of that country are possible only by dint of the leadership of the proletariat," what did the establishment of such a base mean to him? As mentioned before, the Red Army in Chingkangshan comprised miners, peasants, and rebel soldiers (mercenaries) of the Kuomintang. They were workers who left workshops, peasants, and lumpen-proletarians. The Army was located in the remotest mountain district on the provincial border and far away from the large cities near the sea coast. At least the image of the industrial proletariat as the leading force of revolution was entirely unknown to that district. Could then such a base provide the centre and leadership for the carrying out of a revolution in China? Taking all these into account, it is virtually no wonder that a Marxist trained in Moscow, Li Li-san came to follow the so-called "Li Li-san course," a plan of attack against Changsha, Nanchang and Wuhan or of "initial victory in one or several provinces." The leadership of the urban proletariat was perhaps an inalienable, central link of the issue for him. By the same token, the Red Army at the base was a powerful yet subsidiary means or entity.

What was then the case of Mao Tse-tung? A close examination of

¹⁰ Mao Tse-tung, "Struggle in the Chingkaang Mountains," in *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung*, Volume I, p. 82. (Hereafter cited as "Struggle.")

¹¹ Mao Tse-tung, "Struggle," p. 83.

reports and resolutions at that time leads us to come up to some problems over the leadership of revolution.

A soldier of the Red Army who experienced the struggle in Ching kang-shan wrote afterward in his recollections:¹²

"On the way of retreat to Ching kang-shan after the failure of the Autumn-Harvest Uprisings in the fall of 1927, many ran away one after another from our unit. After a learned Party member and Division Commander deserted, the usual greeting in certain quarters of the unit was 'Where are you going?' and 'Haven't you run away yet?' On one occasion, a whole platoon, which had been ordered posted on guard duty, took flight, including the commander himself."

Agnes Smedley also gives a description of Chu Teh's troops taking part in various battles, as follows:¹³

"Here he [Chu Teh] called a conference to settle once and for all with the defeatists who, he charged, were responsible for the demoralization and despair of the troops, for desertions, and troops for the acts of robbery in which some of the troops had engaged.

"Speaking fiercely, General Chu proposed that every man who wanted to leave the army should do so at once. His proposal was accepted and acted on at once. His chief of staff was the first to go, leaving for Shanghai. Even in 1937, ten years later, General Chu spoke of this 'desertion' with hatred. Then others began to follow until over three hundred commanders and fighters had left. Fear and despair are at Chu Teh's heart as he watched man after man step out of the ranks, stack his rifles and leave."

Indeed, in spite of Chu Teh's heart-breaking grief, such a scene may have been inevitable to an army fighting a hopeless fight following a defeated insurrection. It was perhaps through such a trial that the army for revolution marching to Ching kang-shan could be really built up.

Such a case was, however, not limited to the march to Ching kang-shan. It meant more than anything else a problem involved in the construction of the base of revolution itself. I may, once again, quote from a report.¹⁴

"When the major detachment of the Red Army had arrived in Lingsien in mid-July, the officers and men of the 29th Regiment, who were wavering politically and wanted to return to their homes in southern Hunan, refused to obey orders.... As Tu Hsiu-ching encouraged the 29th Regiment in their mistaken ideas and the Army Committee failed to dissuade them, the major detachment set out.... Thereupon, acting on its own, the 29th Regiment hurried homeward to Yichang....

¹² Essay by Lei Yi, in the Cheng-wen Editorial Committee (ed.), *Chung-kuo Jen-min Chieh-fang-chün San-shih-nien—Hsing-huo Liao-yüan*, I, (Thirty Years of the Chinese Liberation People's Army—A Single Spark Can Start a Prairie Fire, I), The Peoples Publishing Company, 1958.

¹³ Agnes Smedley, *The Great Road—The Life and Times of Chu Teh*, New York, Monthly Review Press, 1956, pp. 211-213.

¹⁴ Mao Tse-tung, "Struggle," pp. 77-78.

"The causes of our August defeat were as follows: (1) some officers and men, who were wavering and homesick, lost their fighting capacity, while others, who were unwilling to go to southern Hunan, were lacking in enthusiasm...."

As seen easily, this problem appeared not only in the troops but also in the party under the same form. The report continued to say:¹⁵

"In our opinion the question of proletarian ideological leadership is very important. The Party organizations in the border area counties, which are composed almost exclusively of peasants, will go astray without the ideological leadership of the proletariat."

When one comes to think of it, how difficult it was to realize proletarian leadership in the mountainous border area markedly characterized by feudal relations. Localism, familialism, authoritarianism and all other types of non-proletarian relationship constituted the very ground from which Mao Tse-tung's Red Army had to draw its strength. The resolution of the "Kutien Conference" (December, 1929) is the most direct expression of the problem that Mao had to face.

This resolution entitled "On Correcting Mistaken Ideas in the Party" pointed out non-proletarian ideas existing in the Red Army and called them "the purely military viewpoint," "ultra-democracy," "the disregard of organizational discipline," "absolute equalitarianism," "subjectivism," "individualism," "the ideology of robing rebel bands," and "the remnants of putschism." All these are, as easily seen, indications of the bent of thought common among petty bourgeoisie, peasants, mercenaries and lumpens based on the small-scale farming and handicraft economy. Particularly such ideas as absolute equalitarianism, the ideology of robing rebel bands or subjectivism were a mirror of how the movement was and had to be based on the peasantry and hence agrarian in its nature. It is not too much to say that a look at such a bent thought naturally brings up in our memory a number of peasant revolts in the past—even the rising of Huang Chao of late Tang or Li Tzu-cheng of the late Ming period. In fact it was far from easy to check the once victorious peasant army from going on a reckless fight. "The peasants were so emboldened by victories that they hurled themselves against regular Kuomintang troops and time and again were slaughtered."¹⁶

Here there may be no denying that the Red Army was still marked with those unmistakable characteristics such as peasants' frenzy or hatred which Engels once pointed out in *Der deutsche Bauernkrieg* (Peasant War in Germany). These characteristics were nothing more than that "subjectivism" that Mao Tse-tung pointed out.

What then was needed to rectify such a tendency or aptitude? If the struggle in Ching kangshan was not to end up in a mere peasant uprising or peasant war, it was vital for the party to lay its proletarian foundation. The party must be built by the working class and led by the proletarian ideology.

¹⁵ Mao Tse-tung, "Struggle," p. 97.

¹⁶ Agnes Smedley, *op. cit.*, p. 224.

"Proletarian leadership is the sole key to victory in the revolution. Building a proletarian foundation for the Party and setting up Party branches in industrial enterprises in key districts are important organizational tasks for the Party at present..."¹⁷ Accordingly, "Besides paying close attention to the labour movement in the county towns and other big towns, we should increase the workers' representation in the government bodies. The proportion of workers and poor peasants should also be increased in the leading organs of the Party at all levels."¹⁸

As Smedley vividly pictured in *China's Red Army Marches*, to organize workers and win them over to the party was one of the objectives which the Red Army took greatest interest in achieving. As soon as a town was liberated, a "peasant league," "commercial union," "agricultural workers' union," "women's league," and other organizations would be made.

Representatives elected therefrom would form a revolutionary committee. At the same time, "comrades who can represent the Party" and "activists who can serve as secretaries" were requests Mao Tse-tung addressed from Ching kangshan to the Central Committee of the Party and the two provincial committees.

What was the extent to which such a proletarian party or Marxist-Leninist Party could actually be maintained in Ching kangshan?

It is obvious that the struggle of Ching kangshan was possible because it had as its prelude the Northern Expedition or a "National Revolution" involving the whole country, and that it could find important support in cooperation with the working class in the large cities and also in constant touch with the Central Committee of the Party, no matter how adversely these may have been affected. The struggle was, in this sense, neither an isolated fight nor a mere uprising. What comes into question here concerns the aptitude of the "fighting Bolshevik party," i.e., the fact that "the greatest part of the Party's organizational basis" "was composed of those from the peasantry and other small bourgeoisie." As long as the party continued to work in the agrarian districts in the mountainous border area, such limitations would be inevitable. An overwhelming majority of the party members were still peasants, while workers in the towns were more or less handicraft workers. These were the actual components of the "fighting Bolshevik party."

What was to happen to the party, then? Or, indeed, what Mao Tse-tung sought to do? I have no idea at all of excluding various political and economic conditions from consideration.

As Mao Tse-tung, more than anyone else, admitted, the development of history is determined by the objective conditions, and the expansion of the base depended on the realities of China "oppressed by imperialism, feudalism and bureaucratic capitalism." In the light of our present concern, however, Mao Tse-tung's efforts seem to have been concentrated on only one point.

¹⁷ Mao Tse-tung, "A Single Spark Can Start a Prairie Fire," in *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung*, Volume I, p. 123.

¹⁸ Mao Tse-tung, "Struggle," p. 97.

That was to create a proletariat out of the peasants, petty bourgeoisie and lumpen-proletarians. It was exactly a creation. For instance, the resolution cited above, after enumerating those wrong ideas, suggests remedies and says as follows:¹⁹

"Raise the political level in the Party by means of education, destroy the theoretical roots of the purely military viewpoint, and be clear on the fundamental difference between the Red Army and the White Army."

"In the sphere of theory, destroy the roots of ultra-democracy."

How about individualism?

"The method of correction is primarily to strengthen education so as to rectify individualism ideologically."

"Intensify education, criticize incorrect ideas, and eradicate the ideology of roving rebel bands."

"Eradicate putschism ideologically."

Two problems may be involved here. First, in forming and maintaining a proletarian party in the provincial border area, there was no other means than starting mainly or exclusively in the fields of ideology and education. That was the most important, if not the only, method that Mao could actually choose.

Second, as far as he was concerned, it was possible. I would not denote this process of ideological change by such a term as "brain washing." In the sense that the Red Army was composed of workers, peasants, poor peasants in particular and lumpen-proletarians, its soldiers were from the exploited classes. They should rise against exploitation. Nevertheless, needless to say once again, they were never from the proletariat in the sense understood in the context of the Marxism originating in Europe. Such were the circumstances in which an attempt at creating a proletariat out of the peasants and lumpen-proletarians was being made by means of ideology and education in order to provide the leading body for the revolution, and it was actually gaining success in the form of an established and expanding base. For example, Anna Louise Strong tells of the following episode:²⁰

"Liu Hsiao-chi, when for an entire day he described what he called 'Mao's inventions in Marxism.'... Even the concept of the 'proletariat,' said Liu, gets a new meaning in China. 'According to Marx, the industrial workers lead the revolution... But in China we have very few such people.... So Mao Tse-tung has been training another kind of people—the farm hands and poor peasants in the army—who have the same qualities of discipline and devotion that the industrial workers have.'"

We may note that the corresponding passage of the Chinese version of Strong's report reads as follows:²¹

¹⁹ Mao Tse-tung, "On Correcting Mistaken Ideas in the Party," in *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung*, Volume I, pp. 107, 108, 113, 114, 115.

²⁰ A. L. Strong, *The Chinese Conquer China*, New York, Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1949, p. 58.

²¹ Meng Chun, *Mao Tse-tung ti Ssu-hsiang* (Mao Tse-tung's Thought) translated from the English of Anna Louise Strong and published by the Kuang-hua Shu-wu, 1947, p. 7.

"According to Marx, the factory workers are the only class that can accept and complete communism, because (1) they do not own tools of production, (2) they make a living by selling their labour, and working collectively together with other workers at factories, they have the quality of discipline. In China, however, they are very small in number, and out of 450 million people only 2 or 3 million can be called factory workers. Imperialism and capitalists are training them into a reserve army for the Communist Party. At the same time, Mao Tse-tung has trained 2 or 3 million people of another origin. The quality of their discipline and the spirit of devotion are no less good than those of the factory workers."

To Mao Tse-tung's thought are applied such phrases as an "Asiatic pattern of Marxism" or "Asian Marxism." Certainly, unless such a main force was created, the anti-imperialist, anti-feudal revolution would have been impossible from the first. And such a force was being formed out of "people other than the factory workers." Considering these circumstances, those phrases should probably be applicable to, among other things, this aspect of Mao Tse-tung's thought.

In this connexion, however, we may remember that famous treatise of Lenin, "Chto delat'?" (What Is to Be Done?) (1902). Writing on the revolutionary parties of Russia at the beginning of the 20th century, Lenin scathingly denounced the cult of a spontaneous growth of the movement and emphasized conscious intention to the utmost. Consciousness of socialism could be brought to the working class from outside. From this point, Lenin proceeded to the forming of a revolutionary party with iron discipline—the Bolsheviks. In this respect, and only in this respect, Lenin and Mao would find themselves in the same circumstances and in the same dimension of theory. Probably the greatest effect Marxism had on the Chinese revolutionary movement was the emphasis placed on conscious intention. It was the greatest gift of Marxism to China in the period from Sun Yat-sen's reorganization of the Kuomintang to the struggle in Ching kangshan to infuse firm consciousness and give organization to the almost inevitably and spontaneously arising struggle. One word of confirmation is needed here concerning "the concept of the proletariat getting a new meaning in China." There was after all a decisive, *historical* difference between Lenin's party and Mao Tse-tung's. It was historical in that it determined the movement and was to continue on to later years. Notwithstanding this, Lenin, as well known, had taken note of the importance of the peasants, which had changed since Marx's time. Such theses as a workers and peasants alliance and the establishment of a peasant committee by poor peasants meant the most important strategic and tactical problems for Lenin in the Russian revolution. Frankly, it seems to me, however, that Lenin was always haunted with some sense of distrust of the peasants. At least there was in Lenin no such unbounded optimism as seen in Mao Tse-tung or Chu Teh. This can be regarded as one remarkable feature of Mao Tse-tung's thought after all. I cannot afford to, nor am I interested to, look further into the manner in which the problem of the peasants has been con-

ceived in Marxism or into its changes. Important is the fact that, probably against the expectations on the part of the Comintern, or beyond its doctrine, Mao Tse-tung was carrying forward such a form of struggle in the realities of China. Speaking in terms of Mao's ideology shaping, it implied further problems such as I would dwell upon at some length in the following.

People are not born but become the proletariat. Most important to this process is the change of consciousness or the reform of thought. As long as there are oppressed masses or oppressed people, there is the possibility of the main force of revolution being formed and a revolution for liberation of the people taking place. I would shun any hasty assertion as to how such an approach is related to historical materialism or to the category of the proletariat in Marxism. I have to admit, however, that without such an approach, the struggle in Ching-kang-shan would have been impossible at all. The expansion of the base, the encirclement of cities by rural areas and the Chinese revolution itself would have been impossible. Not only the Chinese revolution but more broadly the possibility of revolution in the backward states in "Asia and Africa" following World War II are in correlation with the validity of that approach. The grasping of conditions or the understanding of realities which holds that the "people's revolution is rising like a storm in the three quarters of the globe" is not at all alien to this aspect of Mao Tse-tung's thought.

Second, this manner in which the proletariat was created was to give a peculiar shading to the "fighting Bolshevik party" of China. Although this was a party of communists guided by and armed with the principles of Marxism-Leninism, it will be easily seen in the circumstances stated here that it should come to look much more like a party of far-sighted forerunners of the people devoted to the cause of revolution than a "vanguard party of the proletariat, the class which is to anticipate the future and support the history of the coming times." It was composed partially of Kuomintang rebel soldiers and partially of peasants, poor peasants in particular who had left their land. They would like to rove around the country and "go to the big cities to eat and drink to their hearts' content."²² As such they became aware that "they are the main force of the revolution" and devoted themselves to that cause—this was the most important process of reform. They were not simply a promised class. Rather they were far-sighted forerunners of the people who rose against oppression and suppression. In them was there at least no nuance of an anticipated or an inherent value such as implied in the word "vanguard." The proletariat meant nothing but a group of men who serve the people "with the qualities of discipline and devotion."

I would for a time withhold making further inquiry into these characteristic features of Mao Tse-tung's thought in this period. In a deeper analysis, these may prove a revision, modification or development of Marxism or, if not so, a mark which history had left on Mao Tse-tung's thought as the ideology of the Chinese revolution. But one more point must be made on

²² Mao Tse-tung, "On Correcting Mistaken Ideas in the Party," p. 114.

the problem relating to the creation of a proletariat. It concerns the problem of the "fighting Bolshevik party" or the Red Army. I have so far discussed how the proletarian party was built, exclusively in the aspect of ideological and educational reform of consciousness. One would over-simplify the situation if one supposes that the party was built only because of such a reform. Or, history would be too simple. Needless to say, the greatest problem was how to carry out the party construction on a realistic basis. As it can be expected to a certain extent, the task was carried out through by constructing the Red Army more than anything else. Certainly, the Red Army was, as Mao Tse-tung said, the very "melting pot" of everything, in which people were trained to become aware of themselves as the "main force of the revolution" and work as the forerunners of popular liberation. Conversely speaking, this meant that the change was no easy task as long as "the masses of lumpen elements existing broadly in the country, particularly in the southern provinces" were roving about from one place to another and also as long as the peasants adhered closely to their land and held fast to "absolute equalitarianism." If this reform of mind is denoted by the word, "conversion," at the risk of misunderstanding, it was attended with many difficulties in the soviet where people tended to settle on the land. Although the base was established, the soviet district expanded and the soviet government came into being, the class struggle over the land question went on implicitly and explicitly in that course of events. Degeneration occurred to the soviet district as is known in the party history as the A.B. (Anti-Bolshevik) League or the Fut'ien Incident, where even such groups as the "Big Eaters' Alliance," the "Free Love Group" and the "Love Makers' Group" were organized. It was in such circumstances that peasants in the soviet district cried out, "The soviet is no good: the Red Army is good."²³ In the course of the Russian revolution, too, muzhiks are said to have cried "Long live the Soviet government! Down with the kom-muna." Apart from the similarity of the situations, the episode in China shows that the ideas and practice of the Chinese Communist Party had become crystallized in the Red Army in every sense. I have to add in haste that I am not deliberately emphasizing the military quality or colouring of the Chinese Communist Party. Nor am I going to say, dependent on Izaak Deutscher's theory of "substitution," that the Army acted for the party. (This is a question to be answered only after studying the whole history of revolutions, and the idea of "substitution" would presuppose the concept of a vanguard party in Lenin's sense.) My question here concerns the intellectual-historical meaning of the Red Army or the later Liberation Army and the historical role it played.

For instance, in his answer to the question as to "whether or not a party of which nearly 80 per cent of members are from the peasantry is ensured to be 'an organized advance guard of the working class,' the ex-Central Committee member P'eng Chen, on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the Chinese Communist Party, looked back upon history and refuted as fol-

²³ Agnes Smedley, *China's Red Army Marches*, New York, Vanguard Press, 1934.

lows :²⁴

"The party members of peasant origin in our meaning are not those from the wealthy farmers but a great majority of them are from the employed or poor peasants, that is, from the rural proletariat or the proletariat. At the same time, more than 30 per cent of these party members of peasant origin are those who have long left their old farming villages to work with all their might for the party, the people and the state or those who have served as commanders and fighters in the Chinese People's Liberation Army which has many years of battles behind it. Since they left the villages, they have been living in the military revolutionary organization. Such a life means a special kind of supply system of military communism. Therefore not only have they always received strict ideological and political education as well as the trial of battles but they always live a strict collective life and have at least no less good qualities of organization, discipline and self-consciousness than the industrial workers."

The fighters of the Red Army certainly had no less good qualities of organization, discipline and self-consciousness than the industrial workers. They were an army for the people's liberation and a group of advanced and conscious people for liberation. In this sense, the Red Army—the Liberation Army—was not a mere armed force but may be regarded even as the basic group for the carrying out of the Chinese revolution or the symbol of it. It is said that at the 8th Central Committee meeting at Lushan in 1959, Mao Tse-tung refuted P'eng Teh-huai's proposal for modernizing the army and his criticism of the "Great Leap" and said, "If the Army should move in sympathy for P'eng, I will go back to the villages of Hunan and 'once again enrol and organize peasants into a new army.'" The truth of this report is entirely unknown. As a symbolic story, however, it would suggest excellently what the Liberation Army signifies to the Chinese revolution and revolutionary China. The recent campaign to "learn from the Liberation Army" and the moves of the *Chieh-fang-chün Pao* (Liberation Army Daily) which criticized the party committee and took the lead of the Cultural Revolution may as well be taken to mean the same thing. Also, speaking allegorically, such a mentality as seen with Mao Tse-tung seems, in one aspect, basically to lead to the attempt at setting up a militia of 600 million people.

IV. CONCLUSION

Although I have limited discussion to a certain period, I may have adhered too closely to one aspect of it, namely, the struggle in Ching-kang-shan. This struggle was to mark only the starting-point of the Chinese

²⁴ P'eng Chen, "Marukusu-Rēnin shugi no Chūgoku ni okeru shōri" (The Victory of Marxism-Leninism in China), in *Mō Takutō to Chūgoku Kakumei—Chūkyō 30-shūnen kinen rombun-shū* (Mao Tse-tung's Thought and the Chinese Revolution—A Collection of Essays to Celebrate the 30th Anniversary of the Chinese Communist Party), Volume I, (Japanese translation), Shenyang, Min-chu Hsin-wen-she, 1951, pp. 83-85.

revolution. As the later course of historical development was a zigzag one, Mao Tse-tung's thought accordingly shaped and developed diversely. If, however, we take into account all these together—how his thought shaped at first, what characteristics it acquired and how it was related to Marxism-Leninism—would not we be able to appreciate that such ideological characteristics have found their way into the ideas, understanding of realities, and knowledge of the world of contemporary China? For instance, the important document which played a decisive role in directing the "Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution," namely, the editorial of the *Liberation Army Daily* dated April 18, 1966 reads:

"In order to carry out the cultural revolution of socialism thoroughly, it is needed to re-educate the cadres relating to literature and art and reorganize the ranks in these fields. As early as the struggle in Chingkangshan, the Red Army of workers and peasants, under the direct leadership of Chairman Mao, was led by the bright light of the 'Kutien Conference' to form the ranks of red literature and art....

"Various questions which the activists in literature and art of our army have are, for most of those people, the question of how to think and how to elevate people through education.... We must certainly observe Chairman Mao's teaching—unite ourselves with the workers, peasants and soldiers, reform our thought, elevate self-consciousness, and devotedly serve the whole people of China and the world without running after reputation and wealth and fearing hardship and death."

"The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution" now under way presents a confused picture in the political, economic and cultural fields. Its consequences still remain too dim to forecast. Also a variety of interpretations are possible as to how and whether 'Mao Tse-tung's thought' as proclaimed therein is related to Marxism-Leninism. I do not wish to give any hasty interpretation to that question on this occasion. Still it seems essential to confirm as a prerequisite to all consideration that Mao Tse-tung's thought, which was brought into being at least through contact with Marxism-Leninism, has since taken unique shape and that it has been working as the logic of the Chinese revolution, to say nothing of how it should be appreciated. Leaving the later development of Mao Tse-tung's thought to be studied on another occasion, I have to be content for a time with the analysis I could make in the present article.