

## **PRACTICAL ASPECTS OF THE THOUGHTS OF MAO TSE TUNG**

Mao's Theories are closely connected with his practice. On the one hand his theories are the rationalisation of the practical steps he has taken for the achievements of his objects; on the other he has propounded certain theories to support his practice. In my paper published IPQ Vol IV No.2, 1977, I have discussed the extent to which he has been influenced by the idealist, anarchist liberal and Marxist ideas and how in order to defend his actions in China and his policies abroad he has given new interpretation to Marxist ideas or has developed certain ideas of his own.

Here I propose to examine briefly certain practical aspects of his theory.

### **I**

His greatest contribution lies in the formation of United Front for the realisation of the object first of the Bourgeois Democratic Revolution, almost simultaneously followed by the Socialist Revolution under the leadership of the Communist Party of China and the achievement of this object through Armed Guerilla struggle.

A united front between the bourgeois nationalist Kuomintang and the Communist parties had been developed in China soon after the formation of the Communist Party in 1922. This failed in 1927 when Chiang Kai-Shek fearing the growing influence of the Communists disrupted it and began to attack the Communists. Taking advantage of the growing discontent in the country and the national army and the weak nature of the national bourgeoisie and the State, the Communists established soviets in different regions scattered over large parts of the country. Most of these were, however, eliminated by Chiang Kai-Shek with the assistance he received from the imperialist powers, and Mao had to give up his Soviet base in the South and march to the north-west in order to join the Yen-an base which was comparatively secure because of its remoteness from the sphere of Chiang's influence and because of its nearness to the borders of the Soviet Union which could render moral and material assistance. At this time war with Japan

had already started and on advice from the Communists the Chinese Communists gave a call of united front which included Chiang Kai-Shek as well. The Communists forged one of the broadest united front against Japan which included not only the working class, the peasantry and the petty bourgeoisie but also the national bourgeoisie and even some elements from the feudal lords and the compradore bourgeoisie who were interested in fighting the enemy. They took advantage of the inter-imperial conflict and obtained whatever assistance some anti-Japanese imperial powers could give to the Communists in fighting their rival power which wanted to monopolise power in an otherwise Semi-colony.

It was at this time that Mao discussed the concept of the People's or the New Democracy. Here he propounded the idea of forming a coalition with the Kuomintang. Supported by the U. S. A., Chiang Kai-Shek refused to share power with the Communists which led to Civil war, and finally the victory of the Communists. In the Civil war also Mao kept up the United Front and isolated only the landlord class and bureaucratic capital (four capitalist families led by Chiang-Kai-Shek which dominated the Government) which had the support of the U. S. imperialism.

## II

The formation of the United Front for the achievement of the bourgeois democratic revolution under the leadership of the Communist Party of China determined the nature of the new Chinese State. It was to include in the Government all those sections of the people who had participated in the anti-Chiang struggle and had helped in achieving success. These classes were the peasantry, the working class, the petty-bourgeoisie and the national bourgeoisie. There were some groups and individuals who also supported the Communists. All these people representing their respective parties were to be represented in the new State. These parties were allowed to exist. This was called a people's democracy because it was more broad-based representing as it did the interests of the working class, peasantry, petty-bourgeoisie and national bourgeoisie than the bourgeois democracy which represented the interest only of a narrow class, viz., the bourgeoisie. It was different from the Soviet State where there was no bourgeoisie and any other party than the Communist Party which controll-

ed the State. In the absence of any antagonistic class interests the Soviets did not feel the need of dictatorship of the proletariat while the People's Democracies had to have the dictatorships in order to fight the remnants of the bourgeois class and bourgeois ideologies. Thus the People's Democracies are considered a stage behind the Soviet State which is no more a dictatorship of the proletariat but is a State of the whole people, a higher type of democracy which is free from class-struggle. Under dictatorship of the Proletariat the working class was given some weightage in representation and certain remnants of the feudal and bourgeois classes were deprived of rights including the political right. Constitution promulgated in 1936 changed this when all citizens came to have equal rights.

The Maoists alleged that the Soviets are also a dictatorship of the Proletariat like the Peoples Republic of China and that until the stage of communism is achieved the States in the period of transition including the Stage of Socialism continue to be the Dictatorship of the Proletariat. The Soviets assert that the Dictatorship of the Proletariat lasts only during the period of transition from capitalism to socialism, and that socialism is not a period of transition. The State at this stage is the State of the whole people and it is not a dictatorship of any one class or of a number of classes. Further the Maoists assert that this period of transition to communism which includes the stage of socialism will be a prolonged one which may last for centuries. Thus the dream of communism according to them is a distant one. It is therefore, not very alluring because as it has been stated earlier, according to them, during the prolonged socialist stage there is constant danger of relapse into capitalism and hence the need of continuous (permanent) revolutions every three or four years like the Cultural Revolution to counteract the capitalist roaders.

### III

The method suggested by the Maoists for the achievement of the object of the Bourgeois Democratic or Socialist Revolutions is the Armed Guerilla struggle which is sought to be universalised. It is just one of the methods which is practicable in the developing and less industrialised, predominantly rural communities where they have the hilly and forest terrain. This is not likely to succeed in the industrially advanced countries or in the States with strongly

centralised States. Further, it requires complete isolation of the ruling class and strong popular support for the movement which launches it. Without this political mass base, it is bound to fail. Even though numerically weak, the Guerillas succeed because of the familiarity with the terrain, mass support and absolute superiority in men and equipment at the point of attack. It is not their inferiority at this point which brings them success but their superiority and the element of surprise. They can and should be able to deceive the enemy. The Guerillas have to be extremely sacrificing and highly disciplined. This comes to them from the ideological, moral and political motivation. They have to subsist on the minimum and their bases have to be self-sufficient.

It is this experience of the Armed Guerilla struggle with its emphasis on discipline, frugal living, ideological, political and moral motivations and self-sufficient rural bases which the Maoists seek to universalise in theory and use it as the basis of the Great Leap Forward and the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution in China. In fact Mao tends to consider the People's Liberation Army and not the proletariat or the Communist Party as ideal and in course of the Cultural Revolution he appealed to it to bombard the Party Head Quarters, and thus to help him to capture power.

#### IV

The most important cause for the Great Leap Forward and the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution appears to be the power struggle in China and the assertion of Maoist Leadership over the world communist movement. The experience of guerilla war helped Mao to develop theories as justification for these actions. Mao whose thoughts had been made the basic ideology of the Communist Party of China along with Marxism-Leninism in 1945 when he was at the height of his popularity, had lost ground by 1956 when his thoughts were dropped and Marxism-Leninism alone was retained as the ideology of the Party. The problem was one of assertion of leadership over the party and the Government. It may be noted that ever since the anti-Japanese war Mao has continued to exercise personal influence in the Party as well as in the country. He has acquired a charismatic personality which helped him to rally round the masses and a section of the Party—Leadership and assert his influence, with the help of the People's Liberation Army.

In the World Communist movement also his position was threatened. His line was not acceptable to the communist parties which in 1957 accepted Khrushchev thesis on war and tactics of revolutions in the post second world war period. Mao wanted to discredit the Soviet leadership by proving the efficacy and superiority of his ideas as applied in China and in the international field. He would like to show that by the methods advocated and adopted by him China could achieve a higher growth rate and could reach the goal of socialism and communism quicker than the soviets and that his ideas and the political system based on them were superior to those propounded and practised by the latter.

Soon after the Revolution ( 1949 ) China was able to reconstruct the war-ravaged economy and to attain and even exceed the pre-Japanese war level within the first three years after which the first five year plan was introduced. During this period the industrial growth rate rose at the unprecedented rate of 19 per cent per annum which gave the Maoists the hope that it could be quickened still further by making the people work harder by means of political propaganda and by making them accept the minimum payment for the work. Thus, China could achieve socialism and communism quicker than the Soviets.

Though occasionally the Maoists paid lip service to the idea of peace and peaceful co-existence of the two systems viz., Capitalism and Socialism they never believed it sincerely and regarded war as inevitable and helpful for the defeat of imperialism and victory of socialism. During the fifties and early sixties they considered the U. S. A. as their main enemy, but almost since the mid-fifties they had developed differences with and distrust of the Soviet Union. The Soviets had refused to help China in the development of nuclear arms and by 1960 they had withdrawn all the experts and economic assistance which they had been giving to her. War hysteria is also a method of keeping the people under control and to persuade them to make the maximum sacrifice in the cause of the country, a tactic which Maoists appear to be using.

Large scale industrialisation which was taking place in China had thrown up a new class of technicians and specialist administrators which had the result of strengthening the bureaucratic element in the country. Economic progress was strengthening the bourgeois element and rich peasant and the trends which

they represented. Maoists wanted to resist this trend as well as the trend towards bureaucratisation and centralisation of authority.

Theoretical basis for the change in policy was found in some of the old Marxist-Leninist ideas and their interpretation and in some of the new ideas propounded by Mao.

The movement was named as the Great Leap Forward. The idea of leap has been borrowed from Marxism-Leninism. This only means that under certain circumstances it is possible to leap over a stage of development. For instance in the age of imperialism a country in the stage of feudalism may jump over the capitalist stage and achieve socialism. The social democrats believing in the theory of gradual evolution were opposed to this idea. Here Maoist intention was to seek quick transition to communism.

The other idea of Maoist was that between the Socialist Revolution and achievement of the stage of communist ideal there is a prolonged period of transition during which it is always Possible for a society to relapse into capitalist stage unless constant vigilance is exercised, a sort of continuous revolution is resorted to. According to them this relapse has taken place in the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia and other socialist countries of East Europe (except Albani ).

The Maoists say that the material incentives given to workers lead to wide economic disparities and to development of capitalism and imperialism in a socialist system. Further, this sort of capitalist mentality and classes and contradictory interests continue under socialism, which, if not controlled, can lead to the growth of anti-socialist tendencies. Such contradictions are between the Government and the people, party and the cadre, leader and the led, etc. Hence there is need for continuous revolution and the right to rebel even under conditions of socialism.

According to the Maoists the super-structure under socialism begins to exercise great pull unless it is brought in line with the base i. e., the socialist economic structure. The ideas such as material profit motive persist leading to degeneration. Hence there is constant need for moral incentives and the dominance of politics and ideology.

In course of industrialisation there is danger of centralisation, bureaucratisation and expert domination. It is necessary to keep these tendencies in check by emphasising decentralisation, demo-

cratisation and socialist revolutionary politics. As between "redness" and "expertness" the former is to be preferred. Another version of redness vs expertness is "man versus material". Man is to be preferred to material.

It has been stated above that the main reason for this movement was the reassertion of the Maoist leadership in China and in the Communist movement in the world and to make China strong economically and militarily to face any threat to her security and to achieve the stage of communism ahead of the Soviet Union.

The main features of the Great Leap Forward are:

1. Emphasis on moral and political incentives and as far as possible, parity of income. No bonus, piece time payment, etc. There is an attempt at egalitarianism, at reduction of economic differences to the minimum. This was applicable to both—industry as well as agriculture, and to other spheres as well.

2. Collectivisation of agriculture and setting up of the village commune system comprising of some 70,000 to 1,00,000 people. This would include several villages and small townships in between. These rural communes were to be self-sufficient units economically politically (administratively) and militarily.

3. Authority was decentralised from centre downward and industries were dispersed. Until then there was concentration of industry in a few cities specially in the coastal region.

4. Small scale industry was encouraged. Mao advocated walking on two legs, i. e., encouragement to the large as well as the small scale industry.

Even before the national calamities such as floods and famines, and the withdrawal of the Soviet aid overtook it, the experiment had begun to fail. The reasons were that the plan was too ambitious for the human nature to sustain. People could not be enthused by the moral, political and ideological incentives. The commune was cumbersome and it demanded a great deal from the rural people. The peasant who had only recently obtained the ownership of the land could not feel happy over its surrender to communal ownership, nor could the rich or the middle peasant or the former landlord who had become a rich farmer be satisfied by this arrangement. Administratively also the commune was rather unwieldy for the inexperienced rural administrators who found



themselves saddled with too many responsibilities all at once. The experiment of increasing steel production through backyard steel mills also misfired for lack of necessary skill and wastage involved in small units. The experiment had to be given up.

This left its legacy in embittering relations between the Maoists and the non-Maoists. Mao used his own personal influence to have the Defence Minister, Peng Teh-huai, an eminent general and an old comrade removed from the office for criticising his Great Leap experiment. Many others felt like Peng but did not have the courage to speak. Mao had his favourite General Lin Biao installed in place of Peng. This led to subtle and sub-terranean sort of criticism of Mao. An opera was written which attacked Mao and praised Peng in an indirect way. It became popular. In the meantime, the Great Leap experiment was abandoned, incentives were restored, some private land was permitted to the peasant and the workers began to be paid according to the work done. The economy which had suffered during the Great Leap was revived by 1964. Maoists lost ground in the Party and the Government once again, and the section known as the moderates was back to power.

## V

As soon as the situation became normal the Maoist criticism of their opponents was revived. This time it started with the criticism of art and educational system. It was alleged that the art forms were classical and bourgeois and not proletarian. Except for technological and to some extent science education the system of education was out of date and it supported the vested interests in the matter of admissions. The courses were unnecessarily long and took long time to study them. The older generation of teachers cherished old values. Thus the cultural front in China was following the capitalist path and it needed reform. The leader of this cultural reform movement was Mao's own wife who was an actress and thus an artist in her own right.

Most of the other reasons behind this great proletarian Cultural Revolution were the same as those behind the Great Leap Forward except that though the movement began as a Cultural Revolution, it was clear that its main purpose was political, viz., removal of the Party Leadership and assertion of the Leftist Leadership with Mao at the head.



The programme of this movement had three extra items: the abolition of capitalism and the declaration of China as a Socialist State; thought reform and elimination of the bourgeois trends, and the removal of the non-Maoist Leadership of the Party. At the same time it aimed at the removal of the gulf between the intellectual and manual labour, between the worker and the peasant and the city dweller and the village folk. The commune system and the moral incentives were to be revived but the communes were to be reduced in size and were to be made more manageable.

To gain success Mao developed two extra-constitutional and extra-party organisations under the leadership of the Maoists. They were *Hung Weiping* (Red Guards) and Tsopan (Red Rebels). At the same time, Lin Piao, the new defence minister, propagated Maoist ideas in the Army and created his pro-Mao faction in it. These three organisations, the last one in particular, were to play a significant role in Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. The slogan was, "Learn from the People's Liberation Army (P.L.A.)". It was highly politicalised, disciplined and sacrificing. Its strength was about two and a half million with about seven million demob and retired P. L. A. men the total came to about ten million. As politically conscious and active Party members many of them occupied key positions in the Party.

The movement started with the Red Guards who were mostly school boys. They attacked the educational system and criticised their teachers for their conservatism and wrong system of education. Soon it spread to other fields of culture, art and literature. Mass of the students was mobilised with the help of the People's Liberation army which gave them transport to come to Peking and other cities for demonstrations. These boys wore red arm bands and flaunted the red book of Mao's quotations. It is said that even this book was printed in the army press. Big wall size posters were brought out attacking those who were not with Mao. One such rally in Peking was addressed by Mao himself. These students got not only free transport but free accommodation and free food. Soon the cities were flooded with the youth. Peking had two million of them. Then they were asked to go to villages on foot and spread the message of Mao.

From Culture the movement spread to the economic sphere. The capitalist and rich peasantry were attacked. Finally, the Red

Guards and the red rebels began to attack the party and the Government Cadre. Then there was conflict between the Party and the Government Cadre on the one hand and the Red Guards on the other. The latter had been thrown on the Defensive and there was danger of a prolonged Civil War and the Defeat for the Cultural Revolution. At this juncture, in January 1967, Mao made an appeal to the People's Liberation Army not to remain neutral but to intervene and help the movement. The P. L. A. moved and brought the situation under control. Even though the P. L. A. was not completely with the Maoists, on this issue it helped Mao and the Cultural Revolution succeeded in bombarding the Party Head Quarters and in removing from power in the Party and the Government those who were not with him.

Apart from the support which Mao received from the Red-Guards, the Red Rebels and the P. L. A., his success was due to the radical egalitarian programme which he advocated. His charismatic personality and the support which he received from the Radicals also accounts for this.

In the course of this movement such eminent, old and tried leaders of the Party as General Chu Teh, Peng Teh-huai and Liu Shao-Chi (President) were humiliated. Some of them were brought before the crowd and were asked to make confessions, others were made to put on buffoon caps and were paraded in the streets. Out of sense of shame a number of these persons committed suicide.

The army which helped the Maoists to remove from power the elements opposed to them got entrenched in the Party and the Government. Although the Maoists wanted the Revolutionary Committees which replaced the Party Units to follow the three-in-one formula, i. e., one member from the P. L. A., one from the party and one from the public, usually from the poorer section of it, in practice, even the party was also represented by the P. L. A. man. Thus from top to bottom the army men were entrenched in effective positions in the party, the Government and even in economy. The Cultural Revolution which lasted for some three years affected country's economy and unity of the people. The Party was virtually paralysed.

Owing to the aggressive foreign policy followed by the People's Republic of China during this period and the attack which the

Red Guards launched on the foreign envoys, her diplomatic relations with other countries were also spoilt. During this period there was a fairly large scale armed clash with the Soviet Union which embittered relations between the two. The U. S. A. took advantage of this situation and launched large scale attack on Vietnam.

The Ninth Party Congress held in 1969 restored the thoughts of Mao Tse Tung as the basis of the ideology of the Communist Party of China. Some party members belonging to the moderate section were taken back in to the Party. Attempts were made to revive and unite the Party. Lin Piao who had helped Mao emerged as the strong man while Liu Shao-Chi was removed from the Presidency of the Republic, Lin got himself appointed as Mao's successor. Soon it was found that this man who had praised Mao skyhigh was extremely ambitious and wanted to assassinate the leader in order to usurp power. In the last stages of his career (he died in 1971) he had begun to ridicule Mao's Cultural Revolution and like his predecessor Peng who had attacked Mao's Great Leap, he was quite vocal about the failure of this second experiment.

The Tenth Party Congress in 1973 and the convening of the National Peoples Congress (1974-75) are the attempts to undo the damage done to China by Mao's two costly experiments. The slogan has been unity, and economic advance. And, to please the Maoists class struggle has been retained as the third slogan.

Since China has not published any figures about her economic growth it is difficult to give any idea of her rate of growth but despite the set backs suffered by her economy growth is considerable because of the crisis-free socialist system.

No discussions about the framing of the new constitution or the detailed reports of the Party or the National People's Congress have been published. How the delegates to the Congresses or Members of the National Peoples Congress have been elected is also not quite clear. The procedure adopted appears to be arbitrary; but an attempt at compromise between the radicals and the extremists appears to have been made. During this whole period of the Cultural Revolution very few meetings of the Party bodies or of the National People's Congress, (the Sovereign body) have been held. Members to these bodies have been appointed

or dropped arbitrarily and not in accordance with any law. At one stage the Polit Bureau was flooded with Mao and his relation, Lin and his relation and the P. L. A. Thus, no democratic norms have been observed.

The new constitution permits material incentives which signifies the failure of Maoist philosophy. It declares China as a unitary State which takes away the right of the Nationals to self-determination or autonomous status. This is an indication of the weakness of the State which cannot afford even autonomy to its units. In the meantime, the party has been reconstituted and after Lin Piao its leadership over the Army has been re-established; but the Radical charge about it is that it is dominated by the old and moderate leadership.

Will Mao's thoughts survive Mao ? It is clear that a number of his ideas and experiments have not succeeded. Material incentives have been found necessary. His attack on the so-called capitalist roaders succeeds because of his personal prestige which will not be available to his followers. Though Maoists justify the continuous shift in leadership on the basis of the Maoist theory of continuous revolution, it causes instability and weakness in the system. It is a sign of factionalism and not democratic functioning. China is a socialist State but the foreign policy which it is pursuing helps the cause of capitalism and imperialism.

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