

China's Great Cultural Revolution Has Opened the Channel to Communism

by SIDNEY RITTENBERG*

(I)

WHEN I arrived in China, I did not know what Mao Tse-tung's thinking was at all. I did not understand anything about it, or about the line, orientation or policy of the Communist Party of China. It was all too different from what went on in the American Communist Party. It took quite a time before my mind began to adjust. And I began to understand and to recognize the difference between real Marxism-Leninism and phony Marxism-Leninism. I began to understand that the Communist Party of China was a genuine Marxist-Leninist revolutionary Party.

I had a very high respect for Chairman Mao. When I was a boy and worked in a cotton mill, our trade union used to meet on the second floor of a building, in a dilapidated room above a store. There was only one picture on the wall and that was of Mao Tse-tung. So at that time I already knew that there was a Mao Tse-tung. And I knew that Mao Tse-tung was the Chinese Lenin.

After I got to Yen-an, Chairman Mao had several talks with me. We did not talk for very long, but each time it left a deep impression. After each talk I used to wonder why Chairman Mao put something the way he did? Why was it, I thought, that he presented problems quite differently from the way I would look at them?

During China's war of liberation, I began to develop the idea that the solution to the problems of the American revolution lay in the earthen caves and the little flat-roof mud houses of China. Despite the great differences in the actual situation in America and China, I felt that the American revolution had to follow the road derived from Mao Tse-tung's thinking.

Last June I re-visited Yen-an, and talked with some old comrades there and also some young people. In the course of our conversation I described how our Communist Party in the southern parts of the United

States used to be very small but very powerful. Almost all the members of the Party in the south were beaten or jailed or persecuted in other ways in the course of their revolutionary activities, but the organization was never broken. It persisted, kept working and, to some extent, was even able to grow. So Ku Klux Klan persecution could not destroy the Party, government suppression could not destroy it, and all the spies and agents sent in to wreck it could not destroy it. Yet later, the Party and the mass organizations around it were all destroyed. This was after the American Communist Party became revisionist. And the order came from on top that we ourselves should dissolve our Party.

After I came to China, every time I thought of it I was furious. Because our Party was smashed not by the forces of imperialism working from the outside but by revisionism developed by the enemy from within.

In those days we knew nothing about how to combat slavish obedience. We did not understand the difference between blind bourgeois discipline and the conscious proletarian discipline that is based on understanding, and we did not understand that we had to rebel against the former. So of course we were not able to hold out against the counter-revolutionary backlash of revisionism.

What fundamental way was there to prevent revisionism from taking hold of a party? I was never able to find a clear solution to this problem.

During and right after China's liberation, the idea began to form itself in my mind that the fundamental way was to integrate Mao Tse-tung's thinking, the truth of Marxism-Leninism, with the actual situation of the revolution in one's own country. That was the way to prevent revisionism, or to counter it and overthrow it if it developed. At that time, I can say, I had only a theoretical comprehension of the problem.

However, during the great proletarian cultural revolution, my understanding of this problem has grown, not only theoretically but in practice.

So the cultural revolution has given me a kind of rebirth. I feel 20 years younger. The cultural revolution

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has shown the way to prevent and combat revisionism. With the appearance of the young Red Guards of China, with the revolutionary youth growing up under the influence of Mao Tse-tung's thinking, I feel that the future of the world revolution is in absolutely safe hands. China's great proletarian cultural revolution is decisive for the future of the world revolution.

(II)

The world picture today is that of a global struggle between the labouring people and all who love freedom on the one side, and the most vicious enemy of mankind, the U.S. imperialists and the reactionaries of all countries on the other side. We can call it a worldwide class war.

U.S. imperialism wants to dominate the globe. It is suppressing the revolutionary movement everywhere. The Soviet revisionist leading clique has allied itself with U.S. imperialism and is openly bearing down on the revolutionary masses, selling them out and working for U.S. imperialism. The great proletarian cultural revolution in China has dealt U.S. imperialism, revisionism and all reaction a devastating blow.

The cultural revolution has sharply placed before the revolutionary people of the whole world the question of the leader of the world revolution, its guiding concepts and its centre, in such a way that it has given proletarian revolutionaries everywhere a clear guiding light. Here is the key to success or failure in revolution. The Chinese proletarian cultural revolution has opened a new chapter in the world revolution.

I believe that one of the most serious blows struck by the Khrushchov revisionists at the world revolution was their propaganda about so-called opposition to the cult of the individual. This criminal move of Khrushchov's caused the greatest damage to the revolutionary movement all over the world. It gave rise to a counter-revolutionary current which, if not beaten back, would prevent the revolution from advancing and winning victory, because to deny the proletariat its revolutionary leader is, in effect, to affirm the bourgeois leaders.

The Afro-Americans in the United States have risen in struggle, and it is very easy for them to see the point. I have seen some of their little mimeographed papers — very sharp politically — and they affirm: "Mao Tse-tung! Mao Tse-tung! Mao Tse-tung!" The Afro-American people are at the bottom of society in the United States. They have the highest class consciousness and, with the addition of the national oppression which they suffer, their political sensitivity is all the more acute. Their point of departure is very simple: U.S. imperialism is their most vicious enemy and U.S. imperialism reserves its strongest opposition for Mao Tse-tung. Therefore, Mao Tse-tung must be right, he must be the most correct of all. So they do everything possible to get hold of his books and writings and,

when they read them, find them very close to their own hearts. They feel these are written for them, show them their own path of struggle, and so they are quite clear as to who is their leader and their teacher.

They proceed from one of the fundamental points in Mao Tse-tung's teachings: "We should support whatever the enemy opposes and oppose whatever the enemy supports." They shout "Long live Mao Tse-tung" from the bottom of their hearts.

A friend who works in Peking was in America recently. At one meeting he attended a discussion arose on the use of the phrase "Chairman Mao is the red sun in the hearts of revolutionary people everywhere." A young Afro-American got up and said: "I don't understand a lot of the theory you people have been arguing about, but on this point, as far as I am concerned, there is nothing to discuss. Chairman Mao is the red sun in my heart."

Chairman Mao is the greatest Marxist-Leninist of our time, the great genius of the world revolution and its great standard-bearer. The cultural revolution has made it abundantly clear that when things are done according to Chairman Mao's teachings the revolution advances, and when one departs from Chairman Mao's teachings the revolution is defeated. This is true of China and it is true for revolutionaries all over the world.

Chairman Mao has inherited, defended and developed Marxism-Leninism with great genius and creativeness and in a comprehensive way, so that Marxism-Leninism has been advanced to a new stage. Mao Tse-tung's thought is Marxism-Leninism in the period in which imperialism is heading for collapse all along the line and in which socialism is moving towards world victory. Mao Tse-tung's thinking is the only Marxist-Leninist doctrine of our time which can give correct guidance to the revolution and lead it to victory.

The great proletarian cultural revolution in China has solved the question of the leader of the world revolution, its guiding concepts and the centre of the world revolution, and it has clarified these problems, as never before, in the minds of revolutionary people everywhere.

This is a most fundamental contribution to the world revolution. All genuine proletarian revolutionaries are raising high the banner of Mao Tse-tung's thinking, raising high the banner of Chairman Mao as the leader of the world revolution and, regardless of all the persecution coming from the reactionaries, are going boldly forward. With tremendous feeling for the thought of Mao Tse-tung, they are making greater and greater contributions to the revolution in their own countries.

(III)

The great proletarian cultural revolution in China has solved a tremendously important problem for the

whole proletarian revolution in our time, and that is the problem of how to guard against the restoration of capitalism after the proletariat has taken power, how to consolidate and develop the dictatorship of the proletariat and socialist system, and, furthermore, how to open the way forward to communism. The solution to this problem creates a new picture in the whole world revolutionary movement and begins a new stage, the stage in which imperialism will be smashed all over the world and the cause of socialism and communism will be victorious.

The Paris Commune of 1871 provided us with some experience of proletarian seizure of power. The Russian revolution of October, 1917, carried this experience further. But the only experience we had on consolidating and developing this power was how to resist armed attack from the outside and how to fight civil war within the country to defend the new political power, the new regime.

Another question that remained to be solved was how to avoid the emergence of revisionism after the proletariat has seized political power. How can you prevent a capitalist restoration? How can you be sure that proletarian power will continue to advance and the revolution will be carried on to the end? How can you continue to develop the victorious socialist state so that the proletarian revolution moves steadily forward and the socialist state becomes the base of world revolution? How can you defend the proletarian revolution?

This tremendously important problem was never solved, but a clear-cut solution has been found through China's cultural revolution.

After the proletariat seizes political power, it must continue to rebel against the bourgeoisie. It must continue to rebel against revisionism and against all the ideology of the exploiting classes. It must smash the bourgeois world outlook and arm the broad masses of the people with the proletarian world outlook.

The proletariat seizes political power through armed force; that is a universal law. After seizing power, it must arouse the masses of the people, so that coming up from below a proletarian cultural revolution is unleashed, sweeping away the ideology of the bourgeoisie and thus accomplishing a second seizure of power. That is also a universal law.

But it is something that was unknown in the past. Now it is something which we not only know in theory but of which we already have practical experience.

After the seizure of political power, we must continue to seize power over the bourgeois ideology in our minds. Otherwise, we shall not be able to thoroughly smash the old world and, therefore, not be able to create the new world.

That book on self-cultivation by Communists has done a great deal of harm. I am one of those who

was harmed. I could denounce it for days on end. It is really a poisonous weed. It trains people to be slaves. If you act according to that book, if you fail to resist it, it will simply lead you to become a climber. And whenever you make a mistake, it teaches you how to cover up, dodge criticism and get by. The book advocates "taking small losses for the sake of big gains." In other words, if you carry out this kind of "self-cultivation," it is for your personal advantage and for the advantage of the little group you belong to. This is out-and-out bourgeois exploiter ideology.

That book on "self-cultivation" goes flatly contrary to Mao Tse-tung's thinking. Chairman Mao advocates establishing the proletarian world outlook, the concept of complete and wholehearted service to the people with no thought of personal gain. Concern for the benefit of others is the only concern. The concept of service to the people is used to test each person in the struggle.

We all used to place our faith in the Soviet Union. The red star on top of the Kremlin was our hope. But that light went out.

We could not help wondering about the Chinese revolution. It had great youth and vigour and it supported revolutionaries of all lands. But what guarantee was there that it, too, would not change?

Comrades from Asia, Africa and Latin America often raised this question as soon as they arrived in China. In 1963, when Chairman Mao issued a statement in support of the Afro-American people of the United States, he invited two of us Americans and 18 African delegates. One delegate from the Cameroons got up and said:

"I have something to say which I find embarrassing, but the young revolutionaries in my country entrusted me to say it. They told me to ask how can we be sure that China which supports us today will not withdraw its support tomorrow?"

The cultural revolution has delivered a clear-cut reply to this question. It is the guarantee that socialist China will retain its revolutionary youthfulness for ever, the pledge that the revolution will be carried through to the end. The cultural revolution tells us to rest assured about the question of whether or not China will change.

The revolutionary youth and all the revolutionary masses of China who have passed through these storms of class struggle and who have been steeled in them are the guarantee. Chairman Mao's thinking is the guarantee.

Just as the revolution is being carried forward to its conclusion in China, so the revolution is bound to go forward to the end throughout the world. China's great proletarian cultural revolution has once again

broken open the channel to communism which was blocked by Khrushchov revisionism.

(IV)

The great victory of China's proletarian cultural revolution has dealt a heavy blow at imperialism, modern revisionism and all the reactionaries. With great daring, it spreads the idea that all reactionaries are paper tigers, and links this idea with another one, that is, with the idea of strategically scorning imperialism, revisionism and all the reactionaries. And the "five dares" put this strategic scorn into practice. Once we realize the enemy is a paper tiger, what should we do? The answer is to apply the spirit of the "five dares": dare to think, dare to speak out, dare to act, dare to break new ground and dare to make revolution.

The finest example has been provided by China's cultural revolution. The heroic young Red Guards are a model. In the cultural revolution, the spirit of the "five dares," the idea that revolutionary rebellion is right, has been given first place.

The idea that revolutionary rebellion is always right—and the spread of this idea to the revolutionaries of all countries—is of tremendous importance for the advancement of the world revolution. China's great cultural revolution is giving powerful support to proletarian revolutionaries all over the world, political and other support. This has badly frightened imperialism and revisionism. A *New York Times* reporter named Durdin, one of their special agent reporters who has made a study of China, wrote an article at the beginning of the cultural revolution in which he said that hopes were being placed on the second generation after Mao Tse-tung, but it now appeared that that generation might be tougher than the first.

China's cultural revolution provides the strategy and tactics for combating and preventing revisionism, and in itself is a great rehearsal for this.

The Soviet revisionist leading clique fully understands this and is therefore desperately fighting it. Especially since the "January Revolution" took place in Shanghai, the Soviet revisionists have thrown themselves recklessly into the struggle against it.

Kosygin vilified China and the cultural revolution in the presence of the Queen of England, and, without any sense of shame, publicly pleaded for understanding from the imperialists, begging them to give him aid and support.

It is because China's cultural revolution has stirred the revolutionary people all over the world, including the people of the Soviet Union, and has exposed what is really at the bottom of Soviet revisionism, that the

revisionists have become terribly frightened and are spreading all sorts of rumours and slanders.

They are putting out a lot of rubbish saying that the proletarian cultural revolution is neither proletarian nor cultural, had nothing to do with culture and is not a revolution, and even that it is a counter-revolution. In all this, the Soviet revisionist ruling clique is vilifying China worse than the imperialists are doing because it feels itself weak.

The revisionists are especially afraid of slogans like "Down with servility!" "Down with those in authority in the Party taking the capitalist road!" and "Proletarian revolutionary rebellion is always right!" They are mortally afraid of these resounding slogans.

The Chinese people in the cultural revolution have raised high the great red banner of Mao Tse-tung's thought, and Chairman Mao has become the red sun in the hearts of the revolutionary people all over the world. That is making life harder for the Soviet revisionists. Those revisionist gentlemen are shouting and screaming that the cultural revolution has ulterior motives. We can tell them frankly what the motives are. The motives are to dig out the roots of revisionism in China. And China's cultural revolution has strengthened the fighting spirit and confidence of the people in the revisionist countries, who are bound to carry out their own revolutionary rebellion, using whatever methods they find necessary.

Why did Durdin write such an article? Why is it that whenever the imperialists speak of Vietnam, they tie it up with the cultural revolution in China? The answer is that the reactionary class character of imperialism forces it to pay attention to the cultural revolution. For this revolution has blocked the way to the so-called peaceful evolution which the imperialists and revisionists were planning for China and has dealt a telling blow to the global designs of U.S. imperialism. In doing so, it has given powerful support to the revolutionary people of all countries.

The great achievements of China's proletarian cultural revolution are an inspiration to revolutionaries everywhere. As this base for the whole world revolution grows stronger day by day, it strengthens the fighting spirit and confidence of the revolutionary people everywhere.

Comrade Anna Louise Strong is full of life and spirit these days. She said to me: "I'm already over 81 years old, but can still do revolutionary propaganda. New things are taking place around me every day. I now think I shall probably witness events far beyond what I ever expected in the development of China's revolution and the world revolution. What wonderful vistas for an old revolutionary!"

I am sure that her feelings are shared by many revolutionaries abroad, and especially by the young revolutionaries.