

# MAOISM AND THE CHINESE REVOLUTION

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## I

### *Stalinism and the Chinese Communist Party*

The socialist movement in China—as a mass movement, at least—was from its very beginning dependent upon the Russian Revolution. It began under the influence of the thunderclap of October 1917, and this **starting-point** in China which was a culmination in Russia caused the two movements to follow different courses. Chinese Communism was Leninist from the outset, but what might have seemed to be a short cut—China's revolutionaries being spared twenty years of struggle to shake off "reformism"—proved eventually a source of troubles. What gave Leninism its strength and precision was, in fact, its having matured in the course of struggles, both ideological and practical, in which it confronted and even clashed with other socialist trends, and had plenty of time to test out both the absolute adversary (Tsardom) and the bourgeois "allies", who first vacillated and then defaulted.

From this history, prosaic or glorious, often harsh, but relatively linear (without the Party being destroyed at any stage), Leninism emerged stronger, all the more so because it attracted to itself in 1917 a cohort of radicals, many of them talented, who by joining it enriched Leninism still further, and broadened its outlook (Trotsky typified these newcomers). As regards the road to revolution, Leninism had the benefit of thorough experience, and it was on this basis that Lenin was able to get accepted, if not easily then at least quickly, the sharp turn he made in April 1917. On the other hand, Bolshevism lacked previous experience of "socialist construction", whereas the Chinese Communists were to benefit from that which was accumulated by their northern neighbour.

Chinese Communism wished to be Leninist, but its **Leninism** was *vague* and *poorly assimilated*, revolving around these few themes: (1) the decisive role of the working class as the active force in the social revolution; (2) the Party as a gathering of the conscious vanguard, and conceived as a carbon-copy of the Russian "elder-brother" party; and (3) the importance of the USSR, the first workers' state, which became the guide and example to be followed.

The Chinese Communist Party resulted from the conjuncture of

radicalised sections of the bourgeois intellectuals—at once radicalised and frustrated by the revolution of **1911** and its failure, and exasperated by the plundering of China and its transformation into a semi-colony—with Leninism, which seemed to them the theory and the credible means for bringing about the real emancipation of their country. Communism meant the way to the liberation and independence of China, to genuine economic development, and at the same time revealed to them the historical "subject" that was to accomplish these tasks—the proletariat. Between **1921** and **1927**, like the Bolshevik Party down to **1917**, the Communist Party of China (C.P.C.) developed as essentially, and sometimes even exclusively, a party of the workers, its view being that the latter, by themselves, would be able to overthrow the social order in China. So far as Chen Tu-hsiu, the Party leader, was concerned—and the same applied to his comrades, including Mao down to **1925** or 1926—all attention and concern was focused upon the working class, while the peasantry was neglected and even despised, being assigned, in any case, a very subordinate role. (There were some exceptions: Peng Pai, Mao after **1925-26**, and others.)

Apart from these few borrowings from Leninism, the nascent C.P.C. was affected by a number of problematics and influences that reflected the complexity of China itself, the force of traditional forms of social behaviour and thought (Confucianism, etc.) and also by differing attitudes to modernisation seen as Westernisation or to modernisation seen as not implying, or as transcending, Westernisation. The unifying axis of the Party, that which in those days gave it coherence, was its attitude to the USSR, and, furthermore, its organisational and political assimilation to the "great brother-Party". Aware of its weaknesses and limitations, the C.P.C. subordinated itself to the C.P. of the USSR and to the Comintern, which became its mentors. This circumstance was to govern the troubled history of the Chinese Communist movement from **1921** to **1935**. Looking at things through Soviet spectacles meant bringing into play in China policies that were contradictory or ill-adapted to the tasks of the Chinese revolution.

Mao, as a "middle cadre" of the Party, was deeply affected by the experiences of his Party between **1921** and **1927**. Like all the other militants, he followed the directives of the Comintern without understanding what lay behind them and without grasping the reasons for changes in strategy which were comprehensible only on the basis of the situation in Russia. What was going on in that country was the gradual Stalinisation of the Communist movement, which meant covering up and concealing classical Marxism and its interpretation by Lenin. Stalinism became the Leninism of the C.P.C., and this "telescoping" was to prevent the Chinese Communist leaders from appreciating the specific nature of Stalinism in the Russian and international settings, and the character and scope of its break with Leninism—above all, with the central category of

"world revolution".

This telescoping process was all the more effective because the C.P.C. did not become a fully coherent structure until after the defeat of 1927. Before that date, the Chinese Communists followed the behests of the Comintern, either hesitantly or with conviction; they exercised no independent judgment of their own, and, besides, the Soviet advisers on the spot (Borodin, etc.)<sup>2</sup> were there to maintain direct and continuous supervision of the Chinese Party's policy.

The 1927 defeat destroyed the C.P.C. and threw its leading structures into confusion. After the departure or expulsion of Right and Left oppositionists (1927-1929), only two trends were left in the C.P.C. First, a Stalinist wing, dominant between 1928 and 1935, selected and imposed by Moscow, which had a view of China and the world that was articulated but false (divorced from reality) and represented close assimilation to Stalinism, or, more precisely, surrender thereto. For this wing it was recognition of the hegemony of the Russian Party and of the central role of the USSR, bulwark of socialism, that had to be defended at all costs. This was a "world-wide" outlook, to be sure, but one which was centred on the defence of a particular state, the USSR, from the standpoint of whose interests the whole world situation was evaluated. Here also, and above all, there was assimilation to that form of "Soviet" bureaucratism which expressed the basis and essence of Stalinism—a process of perpetuating bureaucratic structures, which was favoured by the formation in Moscow itself of a team devoted to the USSR, resulting from selection through intense factional struggle: the "28 Bolsheviks".<sup>3</sup>

Second, there was the Mao trend, which emerged gradually, slowly and modestly from 1927 onward. Marginal in relation to the first trend, it had only a regional basis, and no influence, at the outset, on the leadership of the Party. Less structured politically than the Stalinist group, it was also less well-armed and poorer in political training—but, paradoxically, it was protected by its very ideological poverty. Being more closely associated with social action it was less disposed to employ schemata which were coherent but false, and, above all, it was by virtue of its practical activity more aware of the inadequacy of these schemata.

Thus, the 1927 defeat reduced the C.P.C. to a sect upon which Stalinism, in process of consolidation in the USSR, was to swoop in order to carry out an activity of assimilation that would leave militants with only the choice (if there was any choice at all now!) between leaving the Party (or being expelled from it), submitting, or accepting a silent "marginality", facilitated by geographical remoteness. This last attitude was the one taken up by Mao.

Integration into Stalinism was effected in two senses—positively by internalising the specifically Russian bureaucratic system, and negatively by hiding Leninism away—but it expressed itself especially in defence of the

Soviet "bastion". This was the most fundamental and least perverted reason for the hegemony of Stalinism and for the impact of the theory of "socialism in one country". Gramsci showed, as early as 1926, the profound meaning for the Communists outside Russia of their acceptance of this theory.

In his letter to Togliatti of 26 October 1926 Gramsci criticised him not for supporting the Soviet leadership (Stalin and Bukharin) against the Left Opposition but for the bureaucratic form of his support. He declared: "... today, that is, nine years after October 1917, it is no longer the fact that the Bolsheviks *have taken power* that can revolutionise the masses in the West, for this is a situation that has already been accomplished and has produced all its effects; today, what has an ideological and political impact is the conviction (if it exists) that the proletariat, once it has come to power, *can build socialism*."<sup>4</sup> Undoubtedly it was this motive that explained why Gramsci accepted (with some qualifications) the theory of "socialism in one country"—and along with him the great majority of communist militants. Stalinism represented the conjuncture between a process of bureaucratisation which remained within the setting of a transition to socialism—a process embodied in the narrow but coherent concept of "socialism in one country"—and the extraordinary appeal which this "socialist construction" (actually, to a large extent distorted) had for the international proletariat, or at least for its Communist wing. From this standpoint Bettelheim is probably right when he **points**<sup>5</sup> to the unifying and mobilising value of this slogan for the Russian Party: in a period of retreat, it was a credible project (even if in fact an unrealisable one) and the credibility it possessed (even more, the fascination it exerted) affected the world Communist movement, probably contributing to Stalin's easy victory over Trotsky. The latter was particularly conscious of the absurdity of a project to build socialism in a single country, and a very backward one at that: he saw this as not only absurd, moreover, but also reactionary, in that it implied renunciation of the world revolution. But Trotsky did not perceive, or did not fully perceive, that this **proposition**—"building socialism in one country"<sup>7</sup>—provided a real response, in the short run at least, to the ebbing of the revolutionary tide.

Unquestionably, the USSR became thus established as the "pole of reference" above all because it was building a socialist society, or what was regarded as such: hence the way the Five-Year Plans were hailed. . . While, as a result, Stalin and the Comintern were able to impose on the world's Communist Parties strategic directives that were dubious or wrong, and were even seen to be so (by Mao among others), the USSR remained nevertheless the obligatory reference-point, the only acceptable and accessible model, and the "weight" of the USSR and its leader Stalin was for this reason all the more substantial. Hence the hegemony exercised by the USSR and the ease with which leaders and rank-and-file alike in the

Communist Parties accepted the most varied and inconsistent instructions. This submissiveness was especially striking in China. Between 1924 and 1927 the C.P.C. followed the Rightist line of subordination to the Kuomintang (which was supposed to represent the progressive national bourgeoisie), leading to the tragic defeat of 1927. Between 1927 and 1934, still under Moscow's orders, three ultra-Left lines were applied, in a situation so absurd that it calls for a brief explanation. The first of the ultra-Left lines, that of Chu Chiu-pai, came immediately after the 1927 defeat. It was a 180-degree turn the purpose of which was to get Stalin off the hook: the Party's meagre surviving forces were hurled into the adventurist revolt in Canton and the no less adventurist "Autumn Harvest Rising" (imposed upon, and led by, Mao). All this quickly ended in *débâcle*—in a period, moreover, when the international line was still Rightist.

The years 1928-1929 were years of uncertainty in the USSR. The Bukharinist Right was in process of being beaten. Yet in 1928, at the Sixth World Congress of the Comintern, practically coinciding with the Sixth Congress of the C.P.C., also held in Moscow, a moderate course was still promulgated (and was favourably received by Mao in the mountains where he had taken refuge). In 1929-1930, however, what was actually implemented was a new ultra-Left line, under the leadership of Li Li-san, corresponding to the ultra-Leftism of the Comintern as a whole in the period 1929-1934. Once more the C.P.C. was obliged to throw its skeletal forces into attacks on the cities of China, in a conquest-of-power strategy. The result was that it lost its last remaining militants in the cities. Curiously enough, the Party of the proletariat was attempting, all alone, to seize power not in order to establish the dictatorship of the proletariat but in the context of a "bourgeois-democratic" revolution. But what was more important, and worse, was that this attempt was undertaken in the midst of a period of ebb-tide, even regression, of the revolution. Li Li-san spoke of an impetuous upsurge of the masses because in Moscow they "saw" this proletarian breakthrough going on throughout the world, and in China especially.

The result was another catastrophe, for which Li Li-san was made the scapegoat and dismissed. As, however, the Comintern was still in an ultra-Left phase, the ultra-Leftism of Li Li-san was followed by the ultra-Leftism of Wang Ming, leader of the "28 Bolsheviks" and most Stalinist of China's Communists. He in turn applied an offensive policy, and attacked the Mao trend, which was sharply rebuked, isolated and made to submit. At the end of 1934, on the eve of the "Long March" (which was in fact a long flight) and of Mao's accession to power, the C.P.C. was nothing more than a Stalinist party, doomed to suffer the vicissitudes of the Comintern's directives and thereby cut off from all contact with the working class.

The effect of Stalinism on Chinese Communism was not, however,

merely negative. Stalinism presented itself as, and shaped the C.P.C. as, a Marxist trend, and so maintained—in a caricatural way, to be sure, but really, nevertheless—the *proletariat* as its reference-point. This was a paradoxical but decisive consequence of Stalinist influence: because its roots were in the *workers'* state, it had to maintain a corresponding outlook—distorted and "ideological", but with a certain minimum of consistency and conviction. This "Marxism" was to be the reference-point of generations of Communist militants. This system of thought (this superstructure of a power-system), prevented, if necessary by physical "liquidation", any open and living application of Marxism, while maintaining a proletarian political framework. And it was in this impoverished and restricted ideological setting, and by using what remained in it of Leninism, that Mao's specific line was to emerge, showing peculiar features that were sometimes alien to Marxism, even to Stalinist Marxism (if that makes sense), but nevertheless *internalising* in a consistent way an orientation that was proletarian and socialist.

Thus, in China, Stalinism both formed and deformed the local Marxism, and remained as the horizon of Chinese Communism, as a conception through which it was necessary to pass even in order to take one's distance from it. Stalin's Russia was the embodiment of hope and of a transferable model of socialist construction—and also, it confidently expected, the "great rear", the ally, the source of support. . .<sup>6</sup>

Where, then, is Maoism to be placed? In that political space which was both opened and shut by Stalinism. But it was also rooted in the contradictions of Chinese society, even while being profoundly shaped by the Russian Revolution and by Leninism: here too what is involved is a relation of absence-and-presence.

Most important, Maoism did not begin to assume concrete forms until the setting was that of the counter-revolution of 1927 and the problems this presented. In other words, Maoism was at first only a particular, conjunctural response to the way Chinese society had got into a dead-end, a situation the effects of which gradually became general, as a result of the 1927 setback.

The effect of Maoism, which will be examined later, also transcends the limits of China, in so far as it is in *fact* a response to the crisis of the "world revolution". This is so only objectively, however, but not consciously: Stalinism *fills* the whole of "revolutionary" space, distorting this and excluding every alternative, so that the space of the "revolution" can be occupied only *marginally*, rather than in opposition to Stalinism.

Maoism began like that, as a marginal movement, localised both regionally and politically, remote from the working class, but, what made up for this, rooted in an original way in another Chinese reality: the countryside. And this "distance" from Stalinism was of far-reaching importance. From his first days as leader of the Party, in 1935, Mao's

authority was accepted, even tolerated, rather than truly approved by the Comintern. The C.P.C., having been largely destroyed, no longer interested Stalin. Besides, the C.P.C. on the march (in flight) was far away, difficult of access: what was happening over there signified little. So, let Mao or anybody else lead the C.P.C. . . .

Furthermore, even with Mao, the appearances (and not only the appearances) of total agreement with Moscow were kept up, especially after the C.P.C. proposed, apparently after strong pressure from Moscow, a united anti-Japanese front of the C.P.C. and the Kuomintang. Accepted reluctantly by Mao, the alliance with Chiang Kai-shek, in accordance with the world-wide "People's Front" line, showed that the Chinese Communist leader wished to appear an orthodox Stalinist. The real situation was more complex.

Stalin's underestimation of the C.P.C., which was obvious already in the 1930s (though in the Comintern press of that period the influence of the Chinese brother-party was exaggerated), and even a certain contempt for it, continued until 1948. And yet as early as 1937-1938 the Chinese revolutionaries had become a real force, which was considerable by 1945, and were even on the road to power in 1947-1948. Down to that time, however, they continued to be treated by Moscow as a negligible quantity,<sup>7</sup> or, at best, as a *masse de manoeuvre* to be employed in a diplomatic game.

In spite of this, Mao, being unable to rise above Stalinism, adopted it to some extent, while also "getting round" it, so to speak.

(a) He accepted Stalinism because he was unable to define and characterise it, and had, besides, no rich Marxist experience of his own, comparable to the history of Bolshevism.

(b) He adopted Stalinism, too, because he lacked the conceptual means, the political strength and the ideological prestige, even within his own party, to put forward any alternative. This was why he concealed or played down for so long the distinctiveness of his own ideas.

(c) But, above all, and this is the main point, his thinking was bounded by the horizon of Stalinism, as I have already stressed, and for this reason, though he might produce an original strategic plan for China, he was incapable of expanding it into a new international conception (and, indeed, he showed no inclination to do so.)

Thus, Maoism developed somewhere outside Stalinism and Leninism<sup>8</sup> in a space of its own which gave it a specific character as a "concrete totality" which integrated the constraints, old and new, of Chinese society, and the lessons drawn from China's two abortive revolutions (1911 and 1925-1927)—in short, taking up a Chinese problematic while remaining rooted in the proletarian ideology, but without a proletariat. Maoism was, consequently, a bastard solution—but perhaps the only solution—to the twofold crisis of Chinese society and of the Chinese Communist Party.

## II

*The Maoist road to revolution: China and the revolution*

In China the revolution was over-determined by an accumulation of tensions resulting from the particular effects of the break-up of a traditional society and from the various aspects, both negative and positive, of imperialist penetration, especially in its latest form, the Japanese invasion, and the accelerated collapse of Chinese society on the morrow of the Second World War. It was these experiences—more de-structuring in their effect (rending the social fabric) than re-structuring (re-establishing a stable society)—that made of 20th-century China a powder-barrel. And it was this over-determination—the confluence of all these effects towards a socialist revolution—that explains why a conception so woolly, so lacking in Marxist rigour, as Maoism could come into being.

Maoism, lacking in rigour, was also weak in its grasp of problems of such importance as the significance of Stalinism and the nature of the world revolution, and was unable to make a precise analysis of Chinese society and its classes, etc.

What this signified can be made clearer, perhaps, by means of a contemporary analogy. If the strategy of establishing revolutionary *focos* had proved adequate to lead Latin America to socialism in the 1960s, in the wake of the Cuban Revolution, the Marxism that would have resulted would doubtless have presented the same "practical" and "summary" aspect as we see in Maoism. But in fact the failure of the *foco* strategy showed that the ground was less favourable. It was indispensable to go over everything again from scratch, subjecting to close analysis local capitalism and its relations with imperialism, the class contradictions, the methods used by the ruling classes, etc. In short, a "summary" form of Marxism proved quite inadequate to the situation.

From this, however, it must not be concluded that Maoism, carried along by a process of "permanent revolution", was enabled to carry through an *easy* revolution.

After 1927, of the three main classes of Chinese society, two, the working class and the bourgeoisie, were out of the running as revolutionary "subjects". The urban working class had been crushed: a proletariat which had shown no less dynamism and determination than its Russian counterpart, and had formed the basis for the growth of the Communist Party, disappeared as an independent force for more than twenty years.

For its part, the bourgeoisie had failed to constitute itself as a homogeneous and resolute class: this is the clearest lesson to be drawn from the counter-revolution of 1927. The bourgeoisie had gone over to the counter-revolution. Or, more precisely, the Kuomintang, its political representative, had not detached itself (perhaps could not have done) from the other dominant social forces: the landlords, the compradors, the war-

lords—in short, an amalgam the impurity of which tarnished the brightness of the bourgeois radicalism that Lenin thought he had perceived in Sun-Yat-sen-ism. The hybrid character of the Kuomintang was incarnate in its new leader Chiang Kai-shek, who united in his person the modernistic businessman and the leader of a traditional sect. At village level the unifying axis of this party was maintenance of the social status quo and defence of the landlords. In the towns, however, it tended to favour industrial development, in which the state played an important role. It was this activity in the towns that most clearly revealed the bourgeois nature of the Kuomintang and the capitalist (even rising-capitalist) tendency of Chinese society, and also made more apparent the distorted character of the alliance between the bourgeoisie and the most conservative class of all, the landlords.

What remained, then, was the huge peasant mass—more than a class, a many-faceted world, sunk in thousand-year-old networks of social and cultural relations, scattered among hundreds of thousands of villages all over China. It was without any social representation, unlike its Russian counterpart, which had found in Narodism channels for the voicing of its demands, and intellectuals to express them.

The Chinese peasantry was diverse, but was above all deprived of any social leadership, this being the most noteworthy result of the break-up of traditional society and the disappearance of the mandarinat. The landlords (when they were not absentees), together with the rich peasants, dominated the villages, to be sure, but without giving expression to the peasants' demands: they did not so much weld rural society together as live at its expense.

Was the rural world of China in a state of crisis in the 20th century? Here we must be precise and must distinguish: more than the peasantry, it was agriculture that was in crisis. An increasingly numerous peasantry cultivated an agricultural area that grew only slightly, and the yield from which also increased only slowly. This had been the case for at least two centuries, made worse and worse by the steady increase in population.<sup>9</sup> A deterioration that was slow but steady was going on: and this increasingly difficult situation was made even harder by all the additional factors that were present in greater or less degree: usury, ground-rent, famine, the warlords and bandits, taxation. . .

But while there was great poverty and real crisis, what was typical of the countryside was comparative lethargy, punctuated by savage, sporadic revolts: a certain resistance to oppression, but, in the main, tolerance or resignation in the face of a poverty that was experienced as a gradual degradation." Furthermore, the peasants were still extremely atomised, and their horizon rarely extended beyond the walls of their own village: the peasantry was everything but an organised class, conscious of possessing a particular interest of its own. If it constituted a revolutionary

force, this was only as a *potential* which required an impulse from without if it was to develop consistent activity. As such it could not, therefore, take the place of the working class of the towns, which had been laid prostrate, for it lacked, in itself, comparable dynamism and coherence. The peasantry was to be for the revolutionaries as much a problem as an asset: a very difficult problem that must be mastered before the peasants' revolutionary potentialities could be deployed.

Accordingly, the relationship between the C.P.C. and the peasantry would never be what it had been with the proletariat in the days down to 1927, when the Party had indeed been the party of the working class, inspiring and organising that class. Moreover, the basic reality of Chinese Communism, namely, a workers' party led by intellectuals, was smashed in 1927. What was left was a structured party: one that had lost its basis, but a party all the same. It was confronted by no peasant party: the political space of the peasantry was virgin territory, which Maoism, in search of a new way forward, was consciously to occupy.

The multiplicity of the causes of revolution (over-determination) did not diminish the importance of the revolutionary party and its methods: quite the contrary, despite an allegation which is often met with." While China was undoubtedly pregnant with revolution—like other countries, where, however, no revolution took place—to bring this revolution about required a definite instrument, adapted to special and unforeseen situations (absence of the proletariat, etc.), a party that was ready, also, to react adequately to new events. To put the matter more concretely, the party of the revolution had, after 1927, **first** and foremost to survive, and that was not easy. It had to survive, but also to strike root in a new social foundation the support of which would enable it to go on existing. If it was to continue as the party of the revolution, however, it must retain its proletarian point of reference, and without a working-class basis that would be hard to achieve. Above all, the party had to maintain its *cohesion*, in fact, to continue to function as a *party* and not as a heterogeneous conglomerate: and this, too, was not a simple matter.

In the 1930s, besides, there were two other problems that needed to be solved successfully: the war against Japan, which necessitated a correct appreciation of the Party's anti-imperialist role; and defence of the Party's independence against Stalinist pressure for subordinating it to the Kuomintang. This created a delicate situation: without actually breaking with Stalinism, it was necessary to set the Party at a certain distance from it

Here, then, was a complex and difficult task, which called not so much for an acute conception of Marxism as for great political and organisational talent.

Maoism meant insistence on revolution in a counter-revolutionary situation, with all that that implied in terms of voluntarism, but also the

power to perceive everything that objectively favoured re-emergence of the revolution. But Maoism also meant a brake on the revolution, or rather a tendency to compel the revolution to follow a determined path, with precisely-defined phases (cf., *infra*, on "New Democracy"). Maoism meant, as has been said, an impoverished but adequate view of **revolution**—impoverished indeed, but above all turned inwards upon China, and showing, at this level, a rich understanding of the peculiarities of China, an unusual sense of the impulses at work in the masses, and great skill in military strategy and tactics. And it meant also a revolutionary sense which Stalinism had, if not warped, then at least narrowed.

At the outset, the action undertaken by the Chinese leader was nothing but a gamble: would he be able to hold out under the difficult circumstances of the countryside and in a period of counter-revolution? Or, rather, it was a tireless search to discover the conditions and mediations that would safeguard the space—social, political and geographical—of the revolution.

It was from this special situation that Maoism as a specific trend emerged: one that was both genuine and yet also a denaturing and twisting of Leninism and to a certain extent even (and fortunately!) of Stalinism (cf., *infra*, on "New Democracy").

With Maoism the revolution was the more genuine and creative in proportion as it was Chinese, and the more Chinese it was the farther it departed from Leninism, accepting Stalinism as its only international horizon (or its lack of an international horizon—this was the separation between China and the world, the introversion, that was characteristic of Maoism), while partly rejecting Stalinism in its *local* strategy.

While Mao was wrong to confine his conception to a "revolution by stages", when in fact, as will be seen, the movement revealed an irresistible dynamic of permanent revolution that justified Trotsky's forecasts, he was nevertheless superior to Trotsky, in relation to China at least, in his outstanding and highly Leninist sense of "concrete analysis of the concrete situation" and his capacity to bring forth solutions to problems that seemed insoluble (or at least were considered so by Marxists) such as revolutionising the world of the peasant smallholders, finding forms suitable for relations between the Party and the petty-bourgeois masses, etc. Mao's imagination exploited every possible means to cause Communism to rise again in the apparently preposterous setting of exclusively peasant Soviets. But he had, above all, an amazing intuition: *properly worked upon*, the world of the peasantry could serve as an excellent terrain for the revolution, not just because it was all that was available, but by virtue of its own value.

For Trotsky, the peasant Soviets were the rearguard of a struggle against a counter-revolution which, starting from the cities, spread gradually over the land of China, and the Russian revolutionary saw this circumstance as offering no great future for these Soviets. He conceived

that they might be able to survive, here and there, but for him their isolation from the proletariat doomed them, if they failed to recover contact with the working-class world, to the worst anti-proletarian peasant deviations, petty-bourgeois in social content.<sup>12</sup>

Mao argued differently. For him, the counter-revolution would never succeed in crushing the revolution in the huge expanse of China: this would take too much time, and the time-factor was important, for the class contradictions in China and the greed of the imperialists would not leave Chiang Kai-shek free to destroy the revolution at leisure. Thus, Mao declared in his letter of 5 January 1930 to Lin Liao: "While the imperialist contention over China becomes more intense, both the contradiction between imperialism and the whole Chinese nation and the contradictions among the imperialists themselves develop simultaneously on Chinese soil, thereby creating the tangled warfare which is expanding and intensifying daily and giving rise to the continuous development of the contradictions among the different cliques of China's reactionary rulers. . . In the wake of the contradiction between imperialism and China's national industry comes the failure of the Chinese industrialists to obtain concessions from the imperialists, which sharpens the contradiction between the Chinese bourgeoisie and the Chinese working class, with the Chinese capitalists trying to find a way out by frantically exploiting the workers and with the workers resisting. . . Once we understand all these contradictions, we shall see in what a desperate situation, in what a chaotic state, China finds herself. We shall also see that the high tide of revolution against the imperialists, the warlords and the landlords is inevitable, and will come very soon. All China is littered with dry faggots, which will soon be aflame. The saying, 'A single spark can start a prairie fire', is an apt description of how the current situation will develop."<sup>13</sup>

Meanwhile one had to hold on, to prepare for this revolutionary future, building bases (the Soviets) as firmly as possible wherever this could be done—in the South, and then, when it was no longer possible to hold out there, in some other part of China: in the North, whether by choice or by force of circumstances<sup>14</sup> mattered little. The most important thing was to hold on.

And events justified Mao. This analysis of his, both implicit and explicit, is the only aspect of Maoist strategy that has world-wide significance. This aspect was, too, the earliest to show itself, in 1928-1930, revealing that this poorly-educated leader was capable of great intellectual acuteness as well as of undeniable revolutionary faith. Mao's capacity for concrete analysis was his strength, expressed in a definite talent, regardless of theoretical limitations, for finding the practical mediations between the end (to hold on) and the means (the Soviets, leadership and organisation of the peasants, the Red Army). Beyond question, Mao showed in this respect, a kinship with, even a resemblance

to, Lenin.

Let us bring together in a few strokes the elements that gave coherence to Maoism, a coherence that was only gradually established:

- (a) Mao started from the conviction that the Kuomintang had failed to accomplish its tasks. Thereby that party had exhausted its role in history; and even when Mao was saying the opposite (in 1938, for instance), the Communist Party's practice was based on this conviction.
- (b) The urban working class had been finally destroyed as an organised and active force: struck to the ground in the cities, it was no longer the vanguard of the revolution, and other social forces must take over from it.
- (c) The poor peasantry was, in this situation, the only social force at the disposal of the revolution, while at the same time it was the most fundamental element in Chinese society.
- (d) The revolution thus became a "revolutionary peasant war" (1927-1937): what was at stake in this conflict, on the economic and social plane, was agrarian reform, but the basic aim was to transform the peasantry into a revolutionised element in society.
- (e) The task of the revolution in China was to carry through the unfinished work of the bourgeoisie—to rescue China from the stagnation, which implied bringing about national unity, industrialisation, agrarian reform, and national independence.
- (f) In realising these aims, one example alone was credible, that of socialist construction in the USSR. As already mentioned, the USSR, the first workers' state, came to be seen as the model, the guarantor and perhaps the supporter in economic development. This accounts for the impact made by Stalin on Mao, even though the Soviet dictator's directives inspired only reserve and mistrust.
- (g) Because the future lay with industrialisation, and so with the town and the proletariat, the leaders of the CPC. adopted, or rather maintained, the proletariat as their pole of reference.
- (h) The instrument appropriate to this special situation, in which a "proletarian horizon" dominated although no actual proletariat was present, was the Party: more than merely the instrument, indeed, it was the guarantor.
- (i) The history of Maoism was thus the history of its special methods, and especially of its "substitutism":<sup>15</sup> one class, the peasantry, took the place of another, the proletariat, which was absent but continued to be the pole of reference, and this reference was maintained by the Communist Party, which substituted itself for the missing class and acted in its stead. This substitution was more negative—a matter of avoiding contamination of the Party by the peasantry's petty-bourgeois tendencies—than positive, in the sense

of effectively taking the place of the working class. Thus, a little nucleus of Communist cadres (themselves sons of bourgeois, landlords or rich peasants) took into their hands alone the proletarian task in the name of which they mobilised, inspired and led the peasantry, as a revolutionary force both acting and acted upon.

Along with this strategic conception went the means for **realising** it.

- (a) While the Party was the master-planner and the peasantry the social force for carrying out the Party's aim, the agent for transforming these peasants into Communists was the army, and the general framework for this work was the Soviets (or, after 1937, with a change of name: "the liberated areas"). This army was adapted to the performance of different roles, both resistance and going over to the offensive, which called for appropriate military strategy and tactics, guerrilla warfare and regular army operations. The internal regulations of the army were designed to alter the ways of thinking of the peasant soldiers (who were sometimes peasants who had become bandits before they joined the Red Army), "de-ruralising" them to some extent. The Soviets ("the Red bases"), structures that embodied the hegemony of the Communists, rather as in a state system, also provided the setting for organising, activising and rendering conscious the whole peasant community.
- (b) The Party's centralism, and later (in 1942), the "rectification campaigns", served not only to safeguard the proletarian line and keep the Party up to its tasks, but also provided forms for social control and activation of the Party members, and methods whereby heterogeneous (and rarely proletarian) social groups were homogenised and shaped in the same mould. In the last analysis, the "rectification campaigns" (which must not be divorced from the Party's centralism) were the 'terrain' on which specific constraints (particularly those which concerned social provenance) were directed towards the constitution of a revolutionary instrument that would be Communist and proletarian.

The specific nature of Maoism can be clarified more precisely by considering some "moments" in which it has revealed itself in typical fashion, namely, its methodology, its conception of the stages of the revolution, and its form of hegemony (its bureaucratism).

### *Methodology*

When we examine *On Practice* and *On Contradictions* we penetrate to the heart of Mao's thinking. These are not perhaps works of lofty philosophical quality, expressing theoretical thought of wide scope and solid foundations, but they do offer certain original features. It seems to me, moreover, that where a number of important points are concerned,

Mao returns to the original inspiration of Marx, after decades in which this had been neglected and even falsified. (These writings are dated 1937, at the height of the reign of Stalinist dogmatism.) If we take into account the conditions in which Mao's work was carried out, in isolation from the sources of living Marxism, subject to contamination by Stalinist distortions, and with only a limited body of translations of Marx's works as its basis, it must be seen as a remarkable achievement in the field of theory.

Only a few Marxist theoreticians have followed Marx in applying his essential methodology: one may mention the "Italian" trend, with Labriola and Gramsci, and the German-speaking thinkers of the 1920s, Korsch and Lukács; but all of these, together with their problematics, were unknown to Mao.<sup>16</sup> On the other hand Mao had retained a certain contact with the work of Lenin as thinker and practitioner of the Communist movement, and Lenin, too, had, through his study of Hegel, undertaken a methodological dialogue with Marxism. Lenin's Philosophical Notebooks of 1914-1915, consisting of notes and comments on Hegel's writings, had been partly translated into Chinese, and they served as the essential link between Marxist dialectics and Mao's working out of his own dialectical conception on the basis of the theoretical materials and experience at his disposal. Let me explain this more fully.

What has been called the "Marxist dialectical tradition" is the form of theoretical structuring which runs all through the evolution of Marxism, with Marx himself as its chief representative. At the heart and centre of this problematic lies the determining role of the dialectical method. It was on the basis of a relation to Hegelian dialectics—a complex relation which is still subject to lively discussion—that the original form of Marxist dialectics took shape. In the Theses on Feuerbach (1845), which Mao knew, and also in Marx's economic writings—Capital, the Grundrisse (which Mao did not have), etc.—we can see a method being applied. This method is undoubtedly one of the fundamentals of Marxism, and the one on which Mao concentrated: there can be no theory that is not also practice, and vice versa. The basis for Marxist methodology is praxis, practical work.

Accordingly, Mao begins his exposition by analysing "practice"—an approach that expresses a profound understanding of Marxism. Contrary to the claim made by hosts of Marxists, from Kautsky to the Social-Democrats of today, and including Bernstein and the Stalinist movement, there is no Marxist metaphysics, that is, Marxism has no ontological basis. Practice and practice alone is there at the outset. To have grasped that was a great achievement on Mao's part. But perhaps it will be said that this achievement was a mere triviality? Certainly not! For Kautsky, for the Austro-Marxists, for the younger Lenin (before the Philosophical Notebooks), for the entire Stalinist movement (which was, nevertheless, the reference-point for the Chinese Communists), and for many others, though practice is essential it is not the point of departure. At the start, as the

basis, are various forms of metaphysics—Darwinian (in Kautsky's case), sociological or mechanistic, depending on the particular writer—and through this metaphysics is imposed the imprint of the surrounding type of society, whether bourgeois or (in the USSR) bureaucratic. "

For many sinologists of the English-speaking world, Maoism is a "Chinese" version of Stalinism, and they find it hard, therefore, to perceive what is original in Mao. They concentrate on the simple and and, as they see it, "summary" aspect of Mao's thought. His originality in fact lies elsewhere, in his rejection of metaphysics, on the basis of the primacy of "practice". (As we shall see later, a certain "dose" of metaphysics does reappear, all the same, in the text and the problematic of *On Contradictions*.)

For Mao there is no a *priori* materialism: "Knowledge begins with experience—this is the materialism of the theory of knowledge."<sup>18</sup> Here is an extraordinary statement, which comes straight out of the problematic of praxis (Marx's famous Theses on Feuerbach, of 1845) and stands in opposition to Stalinist Marxism. The latter is centred, like the Lenin of *Materialism and Empirio-criticism* (1909), on the doctrine of the primacy of matter, in the sense of the existence of matter before mind. For Marx explicitly and for Mao implicitly, this is a metaphysical thesis, a discussion that remains enclosed within bourgeois categories. Practice alone, the work of praxis, provides the key to the questions man asks himself. "Man's knowledge depends mainly on his activity in material production, through which he comes gradually to understand the phenomena, the properties and the laws of nature, and the relations between himself and nature; and through his activity in production he also gradually comes to understand, in varying degrees, certain relations that exist between man and man. None of this knowledge can be acquired apart *from* activity in production" (my emphasis, R.L.).<sup>19</sup> And Mao also says that "dialectical materialism. . . emphasises the dependence of theory on practice, emphasises that theory is based on practice and in turn serves practice."<sup>20</sup> Further, he brings into the sphere of cognition the "class standpoint": "In class society everyone lives as a member of a particular class, and every kind of thinking, without exception, is stamped with the brand of a class."<sup>21</sup> There is thus an "absolute" starting-point, practice, and a particular standpoint, membership of a certain class, which can be correct when it rises to the level of universality, that is, when it transcends the social limitations of the individuals concerned, to grasp what is required for great transformations of society.

While knowledge begins with experience (practice), "the second point is that knowledge needs to be deepened, that the perceptual stage of knowledge needs to be developed to the rational stage—this is the dialectics of the theory of knowledge."<sup>22</sup> Practice is only a starting-point. Dialectics is conceptual. "Concepts are no longer the phenomena, the separate aspects

and the external relations of things; they grasp the essence, the totality and the internal relations of things."<sup>23</sup>

The political function of this passage is clear. For Mao, the C.P.C. possesses a practice, and it is on this that the Party's activity must be based, not on stereotyped (Mao's word is "formalistic") conceptions. But it is necessary to go beyond experience and strive toward theorisation, that is, rational knowledge. Confining oneself to practice leads to empiricism, to subordination to whatever is immediately present. Criticism of these two errors recurs in many of the writings of Mao and of other Communist leaders.

Now Mao—he, and not the leaders imposed by Moscow—had applied a creative political line, and by showing, in addition, that he was capable of developing theory, he legitimised his position as Party leader. Thus, in face of the reproach of empiricism and pragmatism frequently levelled at him, his philosophical writings were not merely useful in relation to a particular situation, they represented a simple but genuine "re-appropriation" of Marxism. This was not altogether the case, however, with the essay in which Mao analysed the process of rational cognition, his study of contradictions.

*On Contradictions* bears the date August 1937, and so was written a month later than *On Practice*. Like its predecessor this work is said to have been presented in lecture form to the "Institute for Resistance to Japan" (Kangda). In it Mao sets contradiction at the centre of the theory of cognition. Here, too, despite appearances, there is no mere platitude. It was indeed far from platitudinous, in 1937, to centre the theory of dialectics not on a rigid set of laws, the famous "laws of dialectics", but on a close analysis of contradictions. And it was **equally** unusual to refer, in support of this exercise, mainly to the Lenin of the *Philosophical Notebooks* (1914–1915) rather than to the still somewhat mechanistic author of *Materialism and Empiriocriticism* (1909).<sup>24</sup>

Further, it seems to me that the reference to Lenin's *Philosophical Notebooks* was the only one that could give a semblance of legitimacy to Mao's views. The essay touches on philosophical discussions in the Soviet Union but does not reproduce the exposition that was orthodox at that time—unlike the essay entitled *Dialectical Materialism*<sup>25</sup> which is attributed to Mao but seems to have been written earlier.

Putting the stress on the analysis of contradictions gave new life to dialectics and made it once again an instrument of analysis that could grasp a complex, living, many-sided reality. Here again, in order to defend the living, multiform, paradoxical practice of the C.P.C. under his leadership, Mao could not rest satisfied with the dried-up thing that was later to be nicknamed "Diamat". I have already pointed out that he ascribes an essential role to the analysis of contradictions. "There is internal contradiction in every single thing, hence its motion and development.

Contradictoriness within a thing is the fundamental cause of its development, while its interrelation and interactions with other things are secondary causes.<sup>136</sup> Thus, there is no question of "laws of dialectics" that are all of "equal" significance: one element, the movement of contradictions, is predominant.<sup>137</sup>

Furthermore, Mao defines the different forms of contradiction: "the universality of contradiction, the particularity of contradiction, the principal contradiction and the principal aspect of a contradiction, the identity and struggle of the aspects of a contradiction, and the place of antagonism in contradiction."<sup>138</sup> This "detailed" conception of dialectics is essential to Maoist theory, and is to be found throughout the history of the CPC. down to the present time.

Once again it seems to me that, over and above the circumstantial motives that were certainly relevant, we can see here a methodology that is deeply rooted in reality, but also, and, much more, a *Weltanschauung*. What is characteristic of this conception is, no less than the (certainly original) analysis of the forms of contradiction, the ontological view of the world that Mao presents. Contradiction becomes the world-principle, the essence of all that exists. "The universality or absoluteness of contradiction has a twofold meaning. One is that contradiction exists in the process of development of all things, and the other is that in the process of development of each thing a movement of opposites exists from beginning to end."<sup>139</sup> A view of history from beginning to end, a veritable teleology, one might say!<sup>140</sup> Here we see the metaphysical aspect of Mao's thinking which was mentioned above, and which is basically alien to Marx's thought. Marx declined to be a new Hegel, a thinker about the meaning of history and founder of the ontology of what exists and of its "becoming", Contradiction is for Marx the movement of concrete history, of the concrete "becoming" of concrete societies: it is *never* an ontological principle, I shall come back later to this metaphysical aspect of Mao's thought, which differs from his conception in *On Practice*.

Mao also distinguishes, moreover, the specificity of contradictions: "The particular essence of each form of motion is determined by its own particular contradiction."<sup>141</sup> And he defines the ways in which specific contradictions are resolved: "The contradiction between the great masses of the people and the feudal system is resolved by the method of democratic revolution; the contradiction between the colonies and imperialism is resolved by the method of national revolutionary war; the contradiction between the working class and the peasant class in socialist society is resolved by the method of collectivisation and mechanisation in agriculture; contradiction within the Communist Party is resolved by the method of criticism and self-criticism; the contradiction between society and nature is resolved by the method of developing the productive forces."<sup>142</sup> Furthermore, Mao considers that it is necessary to distinguish among contra-

dictions between that which is the principal contradiction and the ones that are secondary. Thus, in China: "At such a time, the contradiction between imperialism and the country concerned becomes the principal contradiction, while all the contradictions among the various classes within the **country...** are temporarily relegated to a secondary and subordinate **position.**"<sup>33</sup> Here we find the methodological justification of Maoist strategy. This strategy, and even Maoist tactics as well, would always base itself on this principle—concentrate against the principal enemy of the moment while dealing tactfully with the enemy (persons, things, social tendencies) that is for the time being secondary, and even, if possible, making use of this enemy.

Mao **emphasises**, finally, the uneven development of contradictions. He makes more precise his definition of the identity of opposites. "Identity, unity, coincidence, interpenetration, interpermeation, interdependence (or mutual dependence for existence), interconnexion or mutual **co-operation**—all these different terms mean the same thing, and refer to the following two points: first, the existence of each of the two aspects of a contradiction in the process of the development of a thing presupposes the existence of the other aspect, and both aspects coexist **in a single** entity; second, in given conditions each of the two contradictory aspects transforms itself into its opposite. This is the meaning of **identity.**"<sup>34</sup> And he adds, regarding antagonism: "Antagonism is one form, but not the only form, of the struggle of **opposites.**"<sup>35</sup>

As we see, his is a rich, subtle conception devised as an instrument for strategy, for action—but with an underlying element of metaphysics to which I shall turn.

How are we to evaluate **Mao's** Marxism on the basis of his two philosophical essays? I have mentioned his references to Lenin and Marx; but what about his relation to Chinese thought, to Chinese culture? This is a difficult question.

Mao **has** never denied the powerful impression made upon him by Chinese culture and thought. Educated as he was by reading the classical works of Chinese **literature,**<sup>36</sup> it was not until he was about 18 that he came under his first Western influences.

Quite recently, in 1971, in the discussion about Lin Piao and in order to refute the theory of the "Genius", Mao recalled the early influence of Confucius upon him, but as a stage which he passed through and left **behind.**<sup>37</sup>

Westernising influence came to Mao through a few direct readings of translations of European works. Thus, **Mao's marginal** notes on the book by the German **neo-Kantian** Paulsen on ethics have been preserved. In these notes one may or may not discern elements of dialectical thinking (very embryonic, in any **case).**<sup>38</sup>

But was this way of approaching the new Western culture, whether

precociously dialectical or not, rooted in Chinese civilisation? And in what particular source?

Let us try to particularise this question. As has been said, Mao's dialectics is a reappropriation of the Marxist conception of praxis, but includes an ontological view of contradiction which separates Mao from Marx (perhaps less so from Engels). Can China's cultural tradition throw light on this paradox? In general, "*in China's past*, the dialectical and even materialist elements in Chinese thought formed a soil favourable to the implantation of Marxism. . . In the first place, Chinese culture, more than any other, retains an essentially practical, quasi-pragmatic aspect, and it is correct to speak, in connexion with it, of the 'prestige of the concrete'. . . This of-en empirical thinking has no taste for abstraction, classification or generalisation. . . things must correspond to the names given them. . ."39 This is the "anti-metaphysical side of Chinese thought."<sup>40</sup>

Moreover, "the pragmatic element in Chinese thought, which values only effectiveness and utility, prefigures the thesis that Mao was to emphasise so strongly, that a theory is true only if it is verified by practice."<sup>41</sup> Thus, in continuity with Confucian and also with Taoist culture, but altering radically the sphere of its application, Mao was able to some extent to make the leap to a Marxist conception of praxis for which every question always comes back to practice, to theoretical practice, to human practice—and to no *a priori* metaphysics.

Mao could find embryonic notions for this theory of contradictions in the Chinese conception of Yin and Yang.<sup>42</sup> It is noteworthy that he refers to a (very embryonic) Chinese dialectics: "The dialectical world outlook emerged in ancient times both in China and in Europe. Ancient dialectics, however, had a somewhat spontaneous and naive character. . ."43

The French sinologist Michelle Loi, who quotes this passage, comments that: "according. . . to Mao Tse-tung. . . primitive Taoist thought (called the doctrine of the 'two elements', of I-ching) was a rudimentary dialectical materialism like that of Heraclitus, which he distinguishes both from 'metaphysics' and from idealist dialectics à la Hegel."<sup>44</sup> Still on the subject of Yin and Yang: "This conception of the world is neither monist nor fixist. Every phenomenon, natural or social, presents two opposed and complementary aspects, the Yin and the Yang (male and female, winter and summer, night and day, moon and sun, prudence and vitality), the alternate and reciprocal play of which gives the world its movement, the Tao (the 'way'). Some have considered that this elementary dialectics of Yin and Yang, this very old-established sense of contradiction, provided for the spread of Marxism a much more favourable soil than the other traditional systems of thought in the East."<sup>45</sup>

In other words, in Chinese culture there were some rudiments of "dialectical thinking", but, as in Europe, a radical leap had to be made in order to arrive at dialectical materialism, which emerged in a quite specific

socio-historical setting,<sup>45</sup> that of capitalism in the West.

To say that Mao was able to draw upon a dialectical tradition, but that he had to make the conceptual leap to Western Marxism, and to acknowledge that he not only largely accomplished this task but contributed to reformulating a more dialectical Marxism—more dialectical, at any rate, than the Stalinist tradition in the USSR, which had been imported into China—is quite simply to admit that this non-philosopher possessed very great intellectual acuteness and undeniable creative capacity.

But how, then, are we to account for the metaphysical elements to be found in Mao, so alien to the Chinese tradition and to the original outlook of Marxism, and even differing from Stalinist metaphysics?

Some hypotheses can be offered, without claiming to exhaust this difficult subject. The metaphysical notion of the timeless universality of contradiction, so remote from the "utilitarian" and "without any *a priori*" notion of praxis, is essential if we are to understand all the practical activities of Maoism. It gives a special tone to Mao's undertakings, marking them off from those of other Marxists, both Chinese and non-Chinese.<sup>46</sup> Maoist praxis has this "view of the world" as its underlying **preconception**. By "view of the world" I mean, like Lukács and Goldman,<sup>48</sup> the structured and coherent (or partly coherent) set of ideas by which a social group (a class or part of a class) apprehends the world, situating this group in a given society as regards its own place and its relations with other groups, and giving it its "possible consciousness", that is, the maximum possible understanding of its situation in the world, allowing for the period of history. This "view of the world", this possible consciousness, can be embodied in thinkers, writers, etc. What view of the world does Mao hold and on behalf of what social group does he express it? As the son of peasants, formed first by Chinese and then by Westernising ideas, a Marxist cadre in a proletarian party, dealing exclusively with the peasantry but doing this in the name of the proletariat, Mao bears within him a complex "view of the world" that must be the resultant of these varied influences. Without trying here to sort out the threads, let us ask whether there is not some connexion between peasant millennialist notions and "Maoist millennialism", in the sense of treating as eternal some problematics which in fact are specific (until practice proves them not to be),<sup>49</sup> or which at least are situated temporally and historically: to postulate the eternal movement of contradictions is to come into conflict with the Marxist and Maoist theory of praxis (Mao's own theory in *On Practice*), which refuses to deal with abstract questions, meaning those which have no basis in concrete history. This does not signify that future societies will not possess contradictions that will move them onward, but that it is nonsensical ("metaphysical"), starting from something we can observe today, to project this feature into the whole history of the universe, human and natural, past, present and future.

This relative correspondence between peasant tradition and Maoist theory is perhaps the price paid for a two-sided phenomenon, namely, remoteness from the proletariat, and submergence in the rural world, the latter being conceived not only as where the peasants are but as a horizon, a system of values, a situation from which certain phenomena are absent (town life, industry, etc.).

This proposition can be explained in another way, by means of a somewhat paradoxical comparison. Let us take two conceptions of Marxism that are very distant from each other: Maoism, with its peasant practice, and Western **ultra-Leftism**,<sup>50</sup> which is centred on the physical presence of an industrial proletariat. These two trends have developed a rather similar conception of praxis, rejecting metaphysics and ontology—especially in **Mao's** case—and linking every theory with the "class standpoint". But Mao, **the** proletarian leader in a peasant milieu, invokes a proletariat which is absent and works out a dialectics reflecting not the rise and class struggles of a proletariat actually operating on the historical scene, but in fact based on one abstraction and one reality: the abstract theory of an absent proletariat and the reality of an actually present and acting peasantry.

For the ultra-Left, the reality is the proletariat, the millions of German, Dutch or American proletarians. This trend exalts this proletariat, which is indeed present, as a colossal force in bourgeois society. It is upon the transforming practice of this class, and on nothing else, that the ultra-Left bases its Marxist programme. Any other consideration is held to be reactionary, or bourgeois metaphysics. There can be no "ontology" here, but only the observed practice of the proletariat in a defined historical setting, that of bourgeois society and the socialist society developing from **it**. Each of the concrete, acting classes—the proletariat and the **peasantry**—thus structures its own distinct "world-view", even if the class which is taken as the pole of reference is the same, the proletariat. Maoism is perhaps metaphysical because that social group, the working class, which would have enabled it to transcend ontology has set the mark of its absence upon the special course taken by the Chinese revolution.

It remains to consider what this implies. It seems to me to be something important, even if its consequences appear to have been limited before 1949, and even to have been offset, as I have already pointed out (and I shall come back to the point in my conclusion), by everything that tended objectively, even necessarily, to keep the C.P.C. on a Marxist and proletarian line. On the other hand, this particular aspect of Maoism is vital to our understanding of its practice in the last 25 years. Maoist ideas about socialist construction are based on the conviction that disequilibrium, perpetual contradiction, is the general norm, and equilibrium the exception: from the "Great Leap Forward" to the "Cultural Revolution", this belief has produced certain consequences. What now has to be

considered is whether this conception breaks away from Marxism, or is, on the contrary, a deepening of Marxism. This is an open question!

### *The nature and stages of the revolution*

At a very important plenum of the Central Committee held in **1938** Mao made a long speech, only a small part of which appears in the *Selected Works*. In the original text Mao justified at length the Party's alliance with the Kuomintang, attributing to the latter the leadership in the **struggle** against Japan, in terms so flattering that he was unable, a few years later, to reproduce **them**.<sup>51</sup>

This speech **was** addressed to the Party, but was also intended for **non-Party** circles, and was made as a justification of the policy then being followed. Nevertheless, it did not reflect Mao's real feelings towards the Kuomintang, which were filled with mistrust. Seeking to muster as much power as possible, and not to give up an inch wherever it had established itself, the C.P.C. was in fact fighting for hegemony over all China, even if its struggle was for some years confined to the north of the country.

Seeking out the principal contradiction, the struggle against Japan, and, especially, so as to appear as a dynamic and unifying element in the fight against the invader, Mao emphasised the Party's *formal* subordination to the Kuomintang. The main thing for the Communist leader was to be seen by the masses as the most resolute fighter, if not the only one really determined to drive out the enemy.

In this context it became possible to restore substance to the Party, mobilising the masses and revolutionising them. Formulations of the moment, opportunist in style, mattered little: **all** that signified was the political function they served, and from this standpoint the C.P.C. had great success, becoming once more, in the course of a year or two (**1937-1938**) a force in which the Chinese nation could believe.

Thus, political effectiveness took precedence over correspondence between programme and actual activity. The alliance with Chiang Kai-shek had been imposed by Moscow. So be it, Mao must have thought. What advantages can be got from the alliance, and what must be done to ensure that *this* "united front" does not turn to the Party's disadvantage in the way the first one did?

The advantage of the alliance lay in the way that the nation could be brought to acknowledge the outstanding role played by the C.P.C., so that the latter might take the forefront of the stage. The safeguard against things going wrong consisted in the independence of the Party, of the Army and of the Communist-ruled territories. And then, "while one can find statements in Mao's writings both before and after [1939] acknowledging the leading role of the bourgeoisie, after **1939** it is clear that these are mere verbal concessions; in fact, he envisages that the reality of power will rapidly fall to the **communists**."<sup>52</sup> I am not sure that "rapidly" is right

here, but the rest of this statement is unquestionably sound, as can be seen in a work of Mao's which was both important and paradoxical, namely, *On New Democracy* (January 1940).

This piece of writing, which outlined the future prospect as seen by the C.P.C., needs to be read at several different levels. First of all, in the setting of the anti-Japanese struggle, it was necessary to smile reassuringly upon the urban petty-bourgeoisie. The C.P.C. wished to gather as many social forces as possible around itself. In addition to its main support, the poor and middle peasantry, it aimed to win as allies or to neutralise the other elements in society—the national bourgeoisie of the towns, the rich peasantry and so on.

Mao's famous essay *On New Democracy* synthesised in 1940 Mao's method and what he had achieved. According to him, China was moving towards "New Democracy", that is, towards a bourgeois order, which must remain China's regime for a long period, and only after which could a socialist stage be conceived.

It is also possible to read this work in a different way, in which it becomes the expression of an *apparently* flawless Stalinist orthodoxy. Talking of revolution by stages and postponing socialism to a distant future—what could be more in line with the directives of the Stalinised Third International, especially after its Seventh Congress (1935)?<sup>53</sup> Here was a Mao whom the USSR and Stalin would find it hard to excommunicate, for he was following the official line. And yet. . .

Finally, the work can be read at a third level, the most important—"New Democracy" as an expression of Maoism in its most specific, least orthodox aspect in relation to *Stalinism*.<sup>54</sup> Mao brought in two scarcely orthodox aspects which modified the structure of his essay and, so to speak, made it "more Left". "New Democracy", he said, was part of the struggle for socialism; and the C.P.C. must lead the revolutionary process.<sup>55</sup>

Let me illustrate this with a few quotations. Writing of China since the Russian Revolution, he said: "Since these events, the Chinese **bourgeois-democratic** revolution has changed, it has come within the new category of bourgeois-democratic revolutions and, as far as the alignment of revolutionary forces is concerned, forms part of the proletarian-socialist world revolution. Why? Because the first: imperialist world war and the first victorious Socialist revolution, the October Revolution, have changed the whole course of world history and ushered in a new era."<sup>56</sup> "In this era, any revolution in a colony or semi-colony that is directed against imperialism. . . is no longer part of the old bourgeois, or capitalist, world revolution, but is part of the new world revolution, the proletarian-socialist world revolution. Such revolutionary colonies and semi-colonies. . . have become allies of the revolutionary front of world **socialism**."<sup>57</sup> "No matter what classes, parties or individuals in an oppressed nation join the

revolution, and no matter whether they themselves are conscious of the point, or understand it, so long as they oppose imperialism, their revolution becomes part of the proletarian-socialist world revolution and they become its **allies**.<sup>58</sup>

Thus, in face of (Japanese) "fascism", the socialist forces, with the USSR at their head, have become guarantors of the stage of "New Democracy". In China itself, "history has proved that the Chinese bourgeoisie cannot fulfil this responsibility, which inevitably falls upon the shoulders of the **proletariat**,"<sup>59</sup>—and by the proletariat must be understood its representative, the C.P.C.

Looking back to before the age of Stalinism we see here the same logic as in the discussions among Russian revolutionaries in 1905 about the nature of the Russian **Revolution**, and the conclusion drawn by Mao cannot but recall 1917: the bourgeoisie is incapable of carrying out the democratic **revolution**.<sup>60</sup> Finally, a bourgeois revolution led by the proletariat (by the C.P.C.) would be followed through into a socialist revolution, just as **Trotsky**, with his theory of "**permanent** revolution", had seen—would happen, and as the Chinese would acknowledge later on by talking of "uninterrupted revolution".

Did Mao really think, in 1940, that the C.P.C., after imposing "New Democracy", would halt there? It seems doubtful. But perhaps he did sincerely believe in a long bourgeois period under the hegemony of the C.P.C., a stage the chief purpose of which would be to develop the productive forces in a China that was too backward to enter the socialist phase. If that was indeed so, then Mao changed his ideas after the course of history had swept China towards socialism.

By insisting on hegemony for the C.P.C., Mao showed that, in his view, China was moving in the direction of socialism, with, at first, a stage that would be bourgeois in social significance, *but under close Communist control*, and **so**, naturally, **without** any break in continuity as it went forward to socialism. Later, from 1958 onward, the Chinese Communists were to speak of "uninterrupted revolution" in describing the process of their revolution, and of what might be called "revolution within the **revolution**."<sup>61</sup> It had become impossible, after the Communists had been in power for almost a decade, to maintain the outlook of 1940 or 1945 in accounting for what happened in 1949.

With the theory of "uninterrupted revolution" the Chinese Communists introduced a view of their revolution that was more dialectical, even if the concept still showed a certain confusion, since it spoke both of an uninterrupted revolution and of a revolution by stages. The "stages" served to justify the positions of 1940 ("New Democracy") and 1945 ("Coalition Government"), while "**uninterrupted** revolution" explained the rapid transition to the building of socialism. In short, this was a kind of compromise between a past that had been traversed under the sign of

Stalinism (the "stages") and the real history of the revolution: an explanation, too, that reminds us of Lenin's abandonment of a conception of revolution by stages in favour of the theory of the bourgeois revolution 'growing over' into the socialist revolution.

However, as we have seen, Maoism had cherished this compromise in its bosom since 1940, when the C.P.C. undertook to preside over a 'bourgeois stage' in China. Was this due to genuine uncertainty, or was it just the obligatory reference to Stalinist orthodoxy of a leader who did not want to break with the USSR? Probably it was both.

### *The C.P.C. and bureaucracy*

Despite the radical novelty of social life in the "liberated areas", one ought not to underestimate the presence of a bureaucracy in **Yenan**. According to Mark Selden, who has specially studied Shen Kan Ning, the "liberated area" round **Yenan**: "From 1937 to 1941 government developed so rapidly that flexibility was at a premium even within the bureaucracy; mobilisation continued to play a part in campaigns for production, elections, taxation, and so forth; a shortage of skills, primitive channels of communication, a lack of time-sanctioned procedures, and a dearth of supplies hampered administrative regularisation; finally, a tradition of direct action and local autonomy militated against absolute bureaucratic control. Nonetheless, the major development in government from 1937 to 1941 was the growing strength and independence of the bureaucracy and the concentration of administrative functions in its hands."<sup>62</sup> Selden explains: "By December 1941 the bureaucracy had attained peak development. Communist-controlled portions of the region then encompassed twenty-nine districts with a population of approximately 1,400,000. At this time there were an estimated 7,900 full-time salaried government officials, of whom 'over' 1,000 served at the regional level, 4,021 served at the sub-regional district and sub-district levels, and the remainder served in township governments."<sup>63</sup> But he mentions a detail which modifies this picture: "In 1937 and 1938, in addition to meeting subsistence needs, the Government paid a top salary of five dollars per month to heads of regional departments and two-and-one-half dollars to district magistrates."<sup>64</sup>

These three quotations bring us to the heart of a question of central importance: what connexion can be found between Maoism and bureaucracy? Selden provides information which, though meagre, is very valuable, about bureaucracy in **Yenan**. In order to get to grips with this problem we need to distinguish between the different forms of bureaucracy in the Chinese Communist system, beginning with the bureaucratisation of the Party itself.

The C.P.C. experienced very early on a process of internal bureaucratisation, resulting from the young party's rapid subordination to the

Third International, itself a huge body that underwent rapid **bureaucratisation**. This process took root and spread in connexion with the bureaucratic excrescence that developed in the first and only workers' state, the USSR, and parallel with the ebbing of the revolutionary tide throughout the world, which transformed the Third International into a mere appendage, a network of supports and defences for the Soviet state. From the outset, let us note the existence of two **inter-connected** forms of bureaucracy. First, the bureaucracy in the USSR, with material privileges (in salaries, etc.) and power of command (management of factories, administration of the state), and **fulfilling** functions (either essential or parasitic, depending on one's theory) at the level of the relations of production.

Along with this bureaucracy there was the bureaucracy of the international Communist movement, that is, the leaderships of the Communist Parties, who swore by Stalinism and were often selected, or even imposed, by the USSR. This type of bureaucratism differed from the first-mentioned: it was a form of bureaucracy by proxy, and by assimilation of the Soviet social system, with its foreign policy and its pattern of industrialisation, in return for which this bureaucracy was given "credit", the value ascribed to which depended on recognition of the "first workers' state", which was "building socialism in one country extending over one-sixth of the world." **This** bureaucracy was not marked out by its privileges, which were often limited and sometimes non-existent. It controlled sections of the working-class movement that were of greater or less importance, in the hope, which was realised for some of its members, of one day becoming leaders of states "like the USSR".

This was the kind of bureaucracy that the C.P.C. knew, and which led the Party until 1935. Even when Mao took over the Party leadership, this bureaucracy continued to exist, being marked by its unconditional loyalty to the USSR, its lack of understanding of the peasantry, and its hatred of everything unorthodox. Mao's ambiguous attitude to Stalinism favoured the more or less "underground" survival of this trend. It was to re-emerge in strength after 1949.

A second form of bureaucracy in the C.P.C. was that described by **Selden**. This resulted from the existence of a state authority based on a separate body of men, the officials. But it is certain that the material privileges of these officials were rather limited: between two and five dollars—even in poverty-stricken China that was not Byzantine! Besides, it is clear that the C.P.C. made considerable efforts to immerse these cadres in rural life so far as **possible**,<sup>65</sup> and, with the "rectification campaigns", they were subjected to pressure and tension which did not facilitate the consolidation of an authority independent of and separated from the masses.

Nevertheless, these germs of bureaucracy, restricted within the limits of

the rural setting, which was too poor to afford privileges, and with a Communist movement that depended on support from the peasant population, prefigured the huge bureaucratic system that developed in the People's Republic of China after 1949, and which was violently denounced in the "Cultural Revolution".

We must now consider *Maoist bureaucratism* resulting from what I have called, following Deutscher, the (twofold) process of *substitution*.<sup>66</sup> It is indeed essential to **appreciate** the profoundly bureaucratic aspects of Maoism, no less than its permanent struggle against bureaucratism. This paradox can be understood only if we distinguish between the different forms of bureaucratic relationship.

The ties between Maoism and the masses, as they were formed in the late 1920s, appeared originally and, one might add, almost necessarily, as a relationship of hegemony which was the source of a particular form of bureaucratism, precisely because what was involved was a relationship with the masses *and not with a class*. The C.P.C., a proletarian party, had been formed and developed on the basis of the activity of the proletariat, and had been shaped, in the Marxist style, in close connexion with the industrial towns and their working class. Losing its ties with the latter after the defeat of 1927, but succeeding in maintaining the Marxist coherence of its outlook, the C.P.C. under Mao's leadership could only function as a "substituting" force.

The masses, that vague term, which meant mainly the small peasantry, and to some small degree the urban petty-bourgeoisie, took the place of the missing proletariat, and the Party, acting on its own, substituted itself for the proletariat as *leader* and master of the revolutionary *process*.<sup>67</sup> It alone took charge, in the absence of any correspondence between the revolutionary social forces at work (the peasantry instead of the proletariat, the national struggle instead of working-class struggles) and the overall Marxist, and so proletarian, aim of the revolution.

Under the extraordinarily difficult conditions of Party work among the poor peasantry, with the conscious risk of deviations (focusing on exclusively peasant aspirations: ownership of land, *etc.*), the maintenance of a Marxist cadre for the Party could only be ensured by an act of will, a superimposition. "Historical" conditions transformed the national struggle and the agrarian struggle into a movement that was "objectively" and in its tendency *socialist*: but at the concrete level of the peasants' aspirations "objectivity" was confined to desire for land and for the invader to be driven out, and did not include any prospect of socialism. . .

The Party thus internalised a socialist aim which did not correspond to its social basis. The "authoritarian" structure of the Party, its rigorous centralisation, resulted from this difficulty: the Party, which, according to the Leninist tradition, was supposed to combine integration of its members in the class with separation of them from it, became transformed in

Maoism into a party that was isolated from its own class (the proletariat), but linked with the masses who took the place of that class, while maintaining its Marxist orientation against the spontaneous, non-socialist tendencies coming from its peasant base.

This special relationship is well typified by what is called the "mass line": listen to the masses and keep going back to them. Listening to the people means preserving deep-going links with them, and this aim, or rather this necessity, has been at the heart of Maoism for nearly half a century. But "listening to the masses" is something very different from a living dialectic between Party and class, which implies a party conceived as the vanguard of a class which bears within itself the socialist aim, even if only in embryonic or confused form. Listening to the masses means also, for Maoism, a way of activising, of revolutionising, the various strata of the population. In order to lead them adequately one needs to know them, to understand their needs, to absorb their "best" elements into the Party, sometimes also to refuse to subordinate the Party's line of action to various pressures. In other words, Mao advocates a relationship of effective command that can make it possible to work thoroughly upon the deepest layers of society.

From this standpoint, the Party, even when most closely linked with the toiling population, is a body that is bureaucratised in an all-round way, in the sense of being separated and hegemonic, and, above all, of giving orders rather than acting as a representative or spokesman.

*This* form of bureaucratism, corresponding to an effort to maintain the Party's proletarian aim, always tended to become transformed into other forms, by adding material privileges to those conferred by the power of command. The phenomenon grew extensively after 1949. During the **Yenan** period, when the C.P.C. wielded real state power, a bureaucratic authority had already begun to take shape, and this implied privileges, including material ones.

The two forms of bureaucratism continue to fight each other. "Substitutionist" bureaucratism forms part of the Maoist "world-view" and is adorned with all possible virtues (the "mass line"). Not so in the case of the other form of bureaucracy. . .

### III

#### *Maoism's first achievement: The People's Republic of China*

Isaac Deutscher pointed out that the process of "permanent revolution" took on new life and strength with the entry of the Communists into the cities, from **1948-1949** onward. This is true, but needs qualification. When the C.P.C. occupied the cities it fundamentally changed its orientation rather than its practice. Mao explained this in his report to the second plenary session of the Central Committee at the Seventh Congress of the

C.P.C. (5 March 1949): "From 1927 to the present the centre of gravity of our work has been in the villages—gathering strength in the villages, using the villages in order to surround the cities and then taking the cities. The period for this method of work has now ended. The period of 'from the city to the village' and of the city leading the village has now begun. The centre of gravity of the party's work has shifted from the village to the city."<sup>68</sup> But even if the city had again become the centre of the Party's work the working class was not mobilised, though its vital role was strongly reasserted. The conception of the state in 1949 remained within the category of "New Democracy". In comparison with the explanations given in 1940 and 1945, however, the tone had changed: the central axis was no longer the necessary bourgeois stage, but the dominant role of the Communist Party, and behind this hegemony loomed a different social order.

The Party's declarations became more radical, even if the old formulations were not given up. Thus, Mao, in his article *On People's Democratic Dictatorship* (30 June 1949) spoke of the possibility that "China can develop... from a new-democratic into a socialist and communist society, can abolish classes and realise the Great Harmony."<sup>69</sup> More sharply still, he insisted that "all Chinese without exception must lean either to the side of imperialism or to the side of socialism."<sup>70</sup> These expressions contrasted with the more reserved formulations, often referring to the desirability of capitalist development, found in his earlier writings.

Mao mentioned the reason underlying this new assurance: "The people have a powerful state apparatus in their hands—there is no need to fear rebellion by the national bourgeoisie."<sup>71</sup> That was indeed the essential point: the Communist movement held power, and it could tolerate—tolerate, and no longer promote!—the existence of a bourgeoisie, without abandoning its socialist aim.

The Communist leader Li Wei-han, in his pamphlet *The Struggle for Proletarian Leadership in the Period of the New-Democratic Revolution in China*,<sup>72</sup> spells this out. After distinguishing between the minimum programme ("New Democracy") and the maximum programme (socialism and communism), he notes that "the new-democratic programme already includes preparations for the development of the democratic revolution, which mainly consist in establishing and consolidating the proletarian leadership of the revolution, thoroughly mobilising and arming the mass of workers and peasants, establishing and developing the state-owned economy and the co-operative economy of the working people, a thorough carrying out of the revolution, etc."<sup>73</sup> And as, later, he criticises those who "built a 'Great Wall' between the democratic revolution and the socialist revolution,"<sup>74</sup> employing a phrase of Lenin's, it can be seen that what he has in mind is precisely the Leninist conception of a rapid "growing over"

into the socialist state. But this, it will be said, is an *a posteriori* view of the matter. This is the opinion of Claude Cadart, in his interesting and well-documented *Note sur la Chine de 1949 à 1964*.<sup>75</sup> He challenges the official periodisation of the early years of the People's Republic of China, which sets out the two first stages as:

- (a) Phase of economic reconstruction and socialist revolution (1949-1952), and
- (b) Phase of the first stage in the building of socialism and the First Five-Year Plan (1953-1957).

Cadart counterposes to this his own periodisation:

- (a) Phase of the last "moment" of the regime of people's democratic dictatorship (1949-1954), and
- (b) Phase of socialist revolution (1954-1957).<sup>76</sup>

As this discussion deals with points that are essential to the present work, and moreover makes possible a general appreciation of Maoism as it was in 1949, I shall first summarise it and then answer its argument.

For Cadart the official view is incompatible both with the theories of the C.P.C. and with the facts. In the first place, it conflicts with the Party's theories, and especially with the **original** version and the spirit of *On New Democracy*, which assigned an important role to the bourgeoisie.

Thus, "from 1949 to 1954, and in particular from 1949 to 1952, official truth in China held that the Chinese state, although 'led' by the proletariat and based on the alliance between the proletariat and the peasantry, was still a state of the dictatorship of the four classes making up the 'people'."<sup>77</sup> It was only in September 1956, at the Eighth Congress of the C.P.C., that Liu Shao-chi declared that, "with the establishment of the People's Republic of China, the people's democratic dictatorship became in essence a form of the dictatorship of the proletariat."<sup>78</sup>

There is incompatibility also with the facts, says Cadart. "Between 1937 and 1949 the line of the C.P.C. was one of class collaboration, in particular of collaboration between the oppressed classes and the bourgeoisie. . . [a line] which had been prepared, on the world scale, by the turn made in 1935-1936 by the Comintern and in the foreign policy of the USSR."<sup>79</sup> I shall discuss these ideas later. but let me remind the reader straight away that I have already pointed to the difference, nay, the gulf, between the line proclaimed and the reality established, which was one of exclusive hegemony of the C.P.C., in the areas under its control—extending from 1949-1950 onward to the whole of China, except Formosa and Hong Kong.

But Cadart brings forward another interesting argument, which seems to be irrefutable: "It was nevertheless in the towns that this line of class collaboration was most obvious between 1937 and 1949, and not only during the war against Japan but also during the 'Third Revolutionary Civil War'. . . While it had hardly any negative effect on the morale of the

peasantry, for whom the main enemy was not the bourgeoisie but the landlord class, it did have such an effect, and to a considerable extent, upon the morale of the proletariat of the towns, for whom the main enemy was the bourgeoisie. The unquestionable 'rightism' of the policy being followed at that time by **Mao Tse-tung** resulted in preventing the urban revolutionary elements *who had remained in the towns* from playing a decisive part in the struggle against the **Kuomintang**.<sup>80</sup>

**Cadart** further notes that between **1949** and **1952** "the so-called national bourgeoisie was the object of most careful attention by the C.P.C. Its profits did not decline, but **increased**";<sup>81</sup> and "the old state apparatus was only half-smashed during the years **1949-1951**";<sup>82</sup> And he concludes that, "eventually, it was a bourgeois revolution that the new regime accomplished, or finished accomplishing, in China between **1949** and **1952**, **much more** than a socialist one. The elements of socialism that could be seen appearing here and there were rather negligible." More plainly still, he affirms that "this period (**1949-1954**) was for China a period of hesitation between the socialist road and the capitalist road, and in any case it is impossible to date from **1 October 1949**, or even from the period **1949-1952**. . . the triumph of the socialist revolution."<sup>83</sup>

These stimulating remarks bring us into the heart of the problematic of Marxism in **1949**, and discussing them will enable us to deepen our understanding of Maoism.

With the occupation of the cities, I have said, there came an irresistible dynamic of "permanent revolution", that is, the building of a workers' state which opened a period of socialist construction. It is this statement that must now be explained and justified.

In principle, to be sure, the first years of the regime were placed under the sign of "New Democracy". This was certainly the signboard, but behind it lay the hegemonic authority of the C.P.C.; and this state of undivided rule by the Communists raised, in theory and still more in practice, the problem of *socialism*, as we have already seen in Mao's formulation of **1949**, quoted above.

For "New Democracy" to be anything more than a **façade** for the absolute and exclusive power of the C.P.C. it would have been necessary for it to correspond to a real social and political content, that is, participation in the government by a bourgeois political force *acting independently*. As has been shown, however, the poor and middle peasantry (the petty bourgeoisie) never possessed any political independence but were always represented by the Communist Party, with all the ambiguities resulting from this "substitutive" relationship.

As for the urban bourgeoisie, when the C.P.C. occupied the big cities, it began expropriating the property of the "bureaucratic capitalism" of the Kuomintang, and thereby a large section of the economy was automatically nationalised, providing the new rulers with the foundation for

socialist industry. It will be objected that an important capitalist element remained. This was important socially and economically, to be sure, but not politically.

That bourgeoisie was not given any political independence by the Communists: indeed, for such independence to exist it would have been necessary not merely to grant it, but literally to invent it. The C.P.C., sole master of the situation, had no interest in, and no intention of, stimulating any independent political activity by the bourgeoisie. It was content, therefore, to establish a fictitious representation for them, a mere screen for its own hegemony. This was not *just* a charade, though, for it also served to provide a little reward for some sections of the bourgeoisie for having, belatedly, taken the road of revolution, or at least of neutrality, and, especially, a bait for these sections, which included cadres that the new republic could not do without.

Cadart's strongest argument is that the working class was not mobilised in the "third revolution". This is certainly true. But what does that mean? Simply that for the C.P.C. the working class was not (was no longer?) needed in order to take power, whereas some sections of the petty-bourgeoisie brought it support by their activity, and the Communists wanted, above all, to inherit a *functioning* economy. This accounts for the right-wing, pro-capitalist emphasis given to policy in the towns between **1945** and **1949**.<sup>84</sup>

The real social agent of the revolution was clearly the poor peasantry, and where they were concerned the policy of the C.P.C. was radical and uncompromising (at least from **1946** onward). This indifference—even perhaps a certain disdain—in relation to the working class was certainly very significant, but it would be a mistake to define the C.P.C.'s attitude on this basis. Even if the working class was not needed in order to carry through the third revolution, it was indispensable, in the Communists' view, for the building of the future republic. This was why, as soon as they arrived in the cities, the C.P.C. began recruiting large **numbers** of workers, even though it did not mobilise them until some years later. Actually, the discussion revolved around a confusion between two phenomena which, though connected, are nevertheless different, namely: the nature of the new state (the "workers' state", in the Marxist sense), and the building of socialism. Because the People's Republic was a workers' state from the start, with a class dictatorship established, it was socialism that was being built. That it was a workers' state followed from the fact that the C.P.C. was in power—or, more precisely, from **the** fact that the C.P.C. had remained (in a substitutive role) a *proletarian* movement. And in this context, the reality of the People's Republic was the rapid transition to socialist construction, in contrast to the decades of "New Democracy" that had been forecast. The period **1950-1952** in China in some ways resembled **1917-1918** in Russia, with the workers' state making itself felt

in the various spheres of social and economic life. In the countryside agrarian reform was made general, destroying the landlord class and weakening the rich peasantry. In the towns the need for political control led to consolidation of the nationalised sector. And the indispensable mobilisation of the working class in order to strengthen the new state, not to mention the C.P.C.'s mistrust of the bourgeoisie, led to more and more systematic encroachments on bourgeois property and, in any case, to close control over this being established by the workers' state. The nationalisations of 1951-1952, together with the anti-bourgeois campaigns,<sup>85</sup> swept away the fictions of "New Democracy", along with the illusions of the bourgeoisie, and adjusted the social system to the regime of class dictatorship represented by the rule of the C.P.C. Thereafter socialism was being built openly, and this was proclaimed, even if belatedly, from 1956 onward. Bourgeois property was tolerated, but on an ever smaller scale,<sup>86</sup> the bourgeoisie being reduced to the level (a still quite agreeable one) of *rentiers*, or of executives in their own former enterprises.

We can now see the difference between Mao's "New Democracy" and what was supposed to have inspired it—the directive of the Stalinist Comintern, which called, at its Seventh Congress (1935), for a "democratic dictatorship of the workers and peasants"—in other words, a bourgeois regime headed by a coalition of bourgeois and proletarian parties (the latter being provided by the Communists). In China this formula signified a coalition between the C.P.C. and the Kuomintang (the latter being seen as a party of the national bourgeoisie and not as the bastard party it actually was), and that in turn implied subordination to the bourgeoisie, with China under the leadership of Chiang Kai-shek. "New Democracy" certainly looked like that—but only looked: the reality was the deliberate and openly-proclaimed will to Communist hegemony, meaning not a coalition or a situation of dual power (which existed between 1937 and 1949 over a large area of China) but all power to the Communist Party. On this basis, clearly, there could only be a rapid "growing-over" to the socialist revolution, even if Mao was sincerely contemplating a protracted phase of "New Democracy", as may have been the case. Did not Mao in 1945 justify this prolonged bourgeois phase by saying that capitalism would mean progress? In these words there was more than just an obvious excuse for the moderate policy of that time: there was the solid conviction that, for backward China, capitalism could only be advantageous. However, in China, as elsewhere, a developed capitalism proved unable to emerge, and the "third revolution" was the penalty for that failure. This was the real foundation, and justification, of the theory of "permanent revolution": a capitalism embracing all social and economic spheres, including agriculture, would indeed have been desirable, but under the conditions existing in China—and not only in China—this was unattainable, for many reasons, **all** relating to the confrontation between Chinese traditional

society and the imperialist world. The tasks of the bourgeois revolution had therefore to be carried out, whether well or ill, by the socialist revolution. The revolutionary authenticity of Maoism lay not in the precision of its slogans—which were woolly, illusory and sometimes merely cynical: certainly never free from opportunism, through Mao's concern to appear "a good Stalinist"<sup>87</sup>—but in the means adopted in order to realise its aims. Maoism thus followed a line of advance comparable to Lenin's between 1905 and 1917: the revolution would be bourgeois, but in day-to-day practice it was necessary to safeguard the independence of action of the proletariat and its party, which meant always keeping in the forefront the ultimate aim of socialism. The year 1949 was Mao's 1917: the moment of truth that placed on the agenda the move towards socialism which followed from the whole course of the revolution.

Thus, despite the ambiguities, nuances and insincerities to be found in its programme, Maoism went through to the culmination of its activity in the dictatorship of the proletariat. This it did in circumstances which both facilitated the task (the over-determination of the revolution) and made it more difficult (the concealment of reality by Stalinist doctrine; the absence of the proletariat). From this standpoint, Mao was undoubtedly a Chinese Lenin—the leader without whom, very probably, the revolution would never have succeeded. Whatever one's final judgment on Maoism—I have already spoken of bureaucratism, and will conclude by showing how this grew under the People's Republic—Mao has an achievement to his credit that he shares with only a handful of revolutionaries: Lenin, Trotsky, Castro, Ho Chi Minh. This marks him off from Stalin; and it was a fact that counted for much in the dispute between the two rulers.

While the socialist orientation of the new regime was established from the start, at least de facto, it had two other characteristics—a revolutionary proselytism that was soon dropped, and an internalisation of the Soviet model, with emphasis on the tendency to bureaucracy inherent in this.

Under the impact of a victory that came sooner than had been expected,<sup>87</sup> and impelled also by the historic scale of their revolution, which smashed capitalist domination over a quarter of mankind, the Chinese Communists were seized by an urge to proselytise which was in contrast to their usual isolation and their tradition of confining themselves to China's own problems. The Chinese revolutionaries kindled the flames of a new October, and by their revolutionary fervour made plain the gulf separating Stalinism from its ancestor, Leninism, which had, though canonised, been in fact buried and forgotten.

For Stalin the revolutionary fire blazing up on his Asian frontier, in the country with the largest population in the world, was something unexpected and disquieting. China had been the subject of a deal at Yalta<sup>88</sup> from which he felt confident he had got the best of bargains, and he neither allowed for nor wished for China's advance from the status

of "friend" to that of "disciple", and still less to that of a regime socially and politically allied to his own. For this to happen would be more of a nuisance than an advantage to the Soviet dictator; and his mistrustful feeling was all the stronger, because of the recent defection by **Tito** (1948). The Marshal feared nothing so much as a revolution that was independent, dynamic, uncontrolled and expansionist. The fresh revolutionary breeze brought a risk—for the ponderous Russian bureaucracy—of arousing the Russian people from **their** lethargy, from that passivity and lack of independent activity by the proletariat which had enabled the bureaucratic virus to flourish.

The American threat, which was a very real one, to the young Republic provided the Soviet leader with an excellent card to play in his dealings with the Chinese Communists, and compelled the latter to subordinate themselves to the USSR. Although he had failed to control, or at least to restrict, the Chinese revolution, Stalin tried with some success to keep it within its national framework, reducing the impact of this revolution outside China and so its possible influence on the USSR or other countries. This pressure obliged the Chinese Communists to turn inward again upon their own country—which corresponded to a profound tendency in Maoism itself.

And yet, at first, it was not at all self-evident that this would happen. As the Chinese revolution advanced in its forced march to victory, in 1948-1949, it preached to the world its own pattern of development, so remote from Stalinism. Thus, Liu Shao-chi, the Party's Number Two at that time, called for revolution throughout Asia, in his speech to the World Federation of Trade Unions in November 1949, a month after the proclamation of the Chinese People's Republic, and put forward China as the example. He stressed especially the hegemony of the working class and the Communist Party and the need for an army led by the Party. While "a broad front" was essential, it "must not be led by the wavering and compromising national bourgeoisie or petty-bourgeoisie or their parties." For the Chinese leader, "this way is the way of Mao Tse-tung."<sup>89</sup>

In 1950 a pamphlet was published in china<sup>90</sup> which upheld the same positions as Liu Shao-chi in 1949, reasserting the decisive role played by China in the revolution in the East, and, what was even worse from **Stalin's** standpoint, declaring that the Chinese example was valid universally. "The people's democratic revolution in China has already obtained a great victory, a victory of world-wide historical significance. In the future, the victory of the Chinese revolution will influence not only the destiny of all the nationalities making up the Chinese people but also the world as a whole, and more particularly the historical destiny of the people of all the other Eastern nations."<sup>91</sup> Again, later: "The great victory of the Chinese revolution struck new and powerful blows at the whole world-wide system of imperialism. . . The general crisis of capitalism has been further

accentuated, and the ineluctable day which will see the end of bourgeois domination. . . has been brought **even** closer. Thus the final victory of the working people and of communism in the entire world will come more quickly. "92

Despite the stress on the necessity for "New Democracy", the tone of the passage is unquestionably that of an anti-capitalist appeal which is, in tendency at least, socialist. And this was no mere verbal **proclamation**.<sup>93</sup> A revolutionary wind was blowing in this pressing incitement to follow the Chinese road and destroy imperialist domination as quickly as possible. Such **feravour**, recalling the early years of the Comintern, sounded harshly in Stalin's ears.

It was urgent, therefore, for the Soviet leader to restrict these revolutionary excesses, and in the first place to bring the Chinese Revolution back into the Stalinist framework. And yet, as in all the periods of the history of Maoism, the statements issued by the Soviet and Chinese leaderships seemed to employ the same arguments. The Zhdanovist radicalism of the time in the USSR seemed to echo the radicalism of the Chinese. The difference went deep, however, and was shown first and foremost in the refusal of the Soviet leaders to endorse the claims of Maoism. On the contrary, they stressed the quite specific character of the Chinese revolution and its inapplicability to other countries in Asia: "In particular, it is difficult to imagine that other Eastern countries pursuing the path of people's democracy would necessarily be able to count on acquiring one of the Chinese revolution's most important advantages—a revolutionary army like the one in **China**."<sup>94</sup> Furthermore, "people's democracy [in the Eastern countries]. . . was not faced with the immediate **prospect** of constructing socialism and, consequently, did not function as a proletarian **dictatorship**."<sup>95</sup> Yet it was indeed this dictatorship that had been set up by the Chinese revolution!

The article by Astafiev, "staff member of the Academy of Sciences", ascribed the credit for the victory in China to **Stalin's** directives. It is unlikely that Mao found it easy to digest such a statement, which was a flagrant falsehood. What can he have thought of this phrase? "Comrade Stalin defined the characteristics of the Chinese revolution, brilliantly predicted its course and indicated the conditions in which it would succeed. . ."<sup>96</sup> This apologia for Stalin's organisation of the defeat in 1927 must have stuck in the throats of the Chinese leaders, fostering a secret resentment that was to find open expression ten years or so later, when they accused Stalin of having made mistakes regarding China in the **1920s**, the **1930s**, the **1940s**—at every stage, in fact.

Writings of **the** eriod show that the two sides were acutely aware of what divided them.' In the situation that then obtained, however, China's posture was one of weakness and seeking for help. The combined effects of the imperialist threat (and the Korean War intensified China's dependence

on the USSR) and of Stalin's pressure forced Maoism back inside the confines of China. Proselytising came to an end. **Thereafter**<sup>98</sup> only China's national interests were taken into account. At the outset the change was not very perceptible: it became so, gradually, only after Stalin's death.

More than submission to the USSR, what was going on was a process of assimilation of China to the USSR and internalisation of the Soviet system by China. With the Sino-Soviet treaty of **1950** the USSR, as sole protector of the new regime, could easily impose its conditions. But in **1950**, just as twenty years earlier, the USSR was in any case the only credible model—or at least, was seen as such—of rapid and independent economic development, as well as the only possible source of material aid.

Consequently, the threatening presence of the USA forced China to swear allegiance to the "Soviet elder brother", but this was indeed a decision forced upon her, and when Mao said that China "leaned towards one side" he was expressing an objective condition rather than a genuine choice. It was this situation that caused the Chinese to turn inward upon themselves, a movement that came all the easier because the national tendencies of Maoism predisposed it that way, and also because China's leader had become aware that the world context was one of fixed bipolarity between the USA and the USSR.

Close identification with the USSR led to China's internalising the social and economic structures of that country, copying its forms of organisation and social leadership and reproducing its ideological clichés (the notorious "wooden language"). The C.P.C.'s past and traditions favoured this process of incorporation. After all, the cult of Mao's personality, and, to a smaller extent, of Stalin's, was widely present in the Chinese Party, and bureaucratism, even though in a specific form, was what formed the web of relations between the Party and the masses. As a whole, the state then being constituted in China was pretty similar to that found in the "People's Democracies of Europe and Asia."

By copying so **closely** the Stalinist model and drawing away from the egalitarianism of the Maoist tradition, the People's Republic of China transformed itself into a "bureaucratically-distorted workers' state". It was a matter of distortion and not of degeneration: the distinction is important. The revolution was a recent event, and the C.P.C., which had been through twenty-two years of civil war, had in that period formed many ties with the peasant masses, and had even become merged with them. Its roots in the world of the poor countryfolk were too deep to wither altogether upon contact with the realities and advantages of power. Besides, the Chinese revolution was too original, and carried forward by fighters of too nationalist a fibre, to be capable of remaining a mere copy—often a caricature at that—of the USSR. The extremely bureaucratic behaviour of the Russian brother-party resulted from the absence, for decades on end, of ties between this party and the masses, and that was not

the case with the C.P.C., which enjoyed a considerable consensus, active or passive, in China's population. Finally, and this was not the least important factor, Mao was the least Stalinist of the cadres of the Chinese Party, or, more precisely, the leader whose veneer of Stalinism was the most superficial: in addition to which, the Chinese President felt a mistrust towards Stalin that had been quickened by distressing experiences.

Gradually, therefore, resistance to the Soviet model began to be expressed: "qualified" appreciations were voiced, then criticisms that were more and more outspoken came to be formulated—though only inside the Party—against strict application of the Soviet model. Above all, this questioning arose from doubt as to the capacity of the Soviet model to answer the complex problems, both old and new, of Chinese society. And Mao, the builder of an original revolution, set himself to seek, gropingly, for a specific road of socialist construction, or at least, one that he conceived to be such.

Opposition to Stalinism has grown out of criticism of everything in the USSR which gives particular expression to the situation in that country, everything that is distinctive of it and results from the conditions of its industrialisation (considered from a positive angle) and of the **collectivisation** of its agriculture (considered more negatively). This has meant challenging the universality of "Stalinist socialist construction" and has compelled, willy-nilly, those revolutionaries who possess a certain independence of the USSR (China, Yugoslavia) to look in other directions for the solution of their problems.

These new "roads to socialism" have departed, no less than Stalinism, from the Leninist conception of a national revolution forming part of a strategy of world revolution. The Chinese revolution has attempted to put into effect a national form of socialist construction; and this has been the background to the turbulent history of Maoism in the last twenty years.

*Translated by Brian Pearce*

#### NOTES

1. For example, Chen Tu-hsiu, the Party's general secretary from **1921** until **1927**, disapproved of the C.P.C.'s entry into the Kuomintang.
2. Though the C.P.C.'s entry into the Kuomintang, and the relations between the parties, with their consequences, might appear to constitute a single **strategical** scheme, in fact there were several different political projects. The one proposed by Sneevliet was different from that which was put into effect in **1924**, and especially in **1925**, at the moment of the revolution.
3. On the origins of the group of "**28** Bolsheviks", formed from among the students of the Sun Yat-sen University in Moscow, see Yueh Sheng, *Sun Yat-sen University in Moscow and the Chinese Revolution: A Personal Account*, University of Kansas Center for East Asian Studies, **1971**. The autobiography of Yueh Sheng, who was a student at the University, shows the close connexion

between the formation of the "28" group and the **Stalinisation** of the C.P.C. This group emerged during the **struggle** against Trotskyism in the university in **1927-1928**; was backed by **Pavel Mif**, Rector of the university, after **Bukharin's** departure; and took over the leadership of the C.P.C. when (preceded by their mentor, **Mif**) they returned to China in **1930**. They were thus carefully selected young Stalinist cadres, who had proved themselves not on the battleground of the class struggle but in intense factional conflict. After **attacking** Li Li-san they turned on the "right opportunists", that is, on Mao, whom they saw as guilty of a petty-bourgeois peasant deviation. (See Yueh Sheng, op. cit., pp. **205** et seq. and **231** et seq.).

4. The letter is included in the appendices to the French edition of M.A. Macciocchi's *Per Gramsci: Pour Gramsci*, Paris, **Seuil**, **1974**: see p. **389**.
5. C. Bettelheim, *Les Luittes de classes en URSS, 1917-1923*, Paris, Maspero, **1974**, pp. **37-38**.
6. Cf. Isaac Deutscher, "Maoism—its Origins and **Outlook**", in *Socialist Register 1964*, p. **25**; reprinted in his *Ironies of History*, London, O.U.P., **1966**, pp. **106-107**.

Everyone has heard of the epithet "margarine" communists" applied by **Stalin** to the Chinese Communists during a conversation in June **1944** with **Averell** Harriman, the U.S. Ambassador in Moscow (quoted in C. **McLane**, *Soviet Policy and the Chinese Communists, 1931-1946*, New York, Columbia University Press, **1958**, p. **1**). Remarks of a similar sort were uttered by **Molotov** in the same year when talking to Patrick Hurley and Donald Nelson (ibid, p. **1**). Again, in April **1945**, Russian officials **confirmed** to Hurley that in their view the Chinese Communists were "not real Communists in the Soviet sense" (ibid, p. **2**). Already in late **1937**, at the beginning of the Japanese invasion, in the pages of *Pravda* and *Izvestiya* "the Kuomintang, not the Communists, received the lion's share of Moscow's praise of China" (ibid., p. **103**).

"Mao's party bore, in ideology and organisation, little resemblance either to Lenin's party or to Stalin's. Lenin's party had its roots deep in the working class. Mao's was based almost exclusively on the peasantry. The Bolsheviki had grown up within a multi-party system which had existed, half-submerged, in Tsarist Russia. . . The Maoists, living for over twenty years in complete isolation. . . had become wholly introverted. . . Unconventional and revolutionary though their militarism was, it stood in **striking** contrast to the predominantly civilian character of the Bolsheviki Party." (I. Deutscher, *The Unfinished Revolution*, London, O.U.P., **1967**, pp. **85-86**).

9. Cf. among others: Ho Ping-ti, *Studies on the Population of China, 1368-1953*, Cambridge (Mass.), Harvard U.P., **1959**.
10. On the Chinese **peasantry** under the Republic, see the writings of L. Bianco: *The Origins of the Chinese Revolution, 1915-1949*, London, O.U.P., **1971**; *Peasants and Revolution: the Case of China*, discussion paper (duplicated), **18** May **1973**, for **Peasants** Seminar, University of London Centre of International and-Area Studies; "Les **paysans** et la **révolution** Chine, 1919-1949", in *Politique étrangère*, Paris, No. **2**, **1968**, pp. **117-141**.
11. E.g., Graham Peck, *Two Kinds of Time*, p. **189**, quoted in **Bianco**, *The Origins. . .*, op. cit., p. **199**: "In a society like China's, revolution can be a fundamental and entirely natural fact of life, as hard to slow up as a pregnancy."
12. "While the revolution is beaten in the cities and in the most important centres. . . there will always be, especially in a country as vast as China, fresh regions, fresh just because they are backward, containing not yet exhausted revolutionary forces. . . But in the period under consideration it is only one

- form of the dissolution and the liquidation of the Communist Party of China, for, by losing its proletarian nucleus, it ceases to be in conformity with its historical destiny." (Trotsky, "The Chinese Question after the Sixth Congress" [October 1928], in *Problems of the Chinese Revolution*, London, New Park Publications, 1969, pp. 122-123). See also Trotsky, "Peasant War in China and the Proletariat" (September 1932), in *Writings of Leon Trotsky, 1932*, New York, Pathfinder, 1973, pp. 192 et seq.
13. "A Single Spark Can Start A Prairie Fire", in Mao Tse-tung, *Selected Works* (English version published in China), Vol. I, Peking, 1969, pp. 120-121.
  14. This aspect of what happened cannot be left out of account. The "Long March" went northward more by necessity than by choice. It ended, in Shensi, in a region which, while isolated and difficult of access, was also remote from the heart of China.
  15. See Deutscher, *The Unfinished Revolution*, op. cit., p. 87, and his *Socialist Register 1964* article (see note 6); also R. Lew, "La genèse du maoïsme, 1927-1937", in *Mai*, Brussels, May-June 1973.
  16. On Mao's intellectual training, see Stuart R. Schram's introduction to his *The Political Thought of Mao Tse-tung*, 2nd edition, London, Penguin, 1969, and also the same writer's preface to Mao's earliest known work, *Une Etude sur l'éducation physique (1917)*, Paris, Mouton, 1962.
  17. This thesis deserves to be developed at length. A remarkable proof so far as Kautsky is concerned was provided by Karl Korsch, in his (1929) work *Die Materialistische Geschichtsauffassung: eine Auseinandersetzung mit Karl Kautsky* (reprinted Frankfurt, Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1971).
  18. Mao Tse-tung, *On Practice*, in *Selected Works* (Peking English edition op. cit.), Vol. I, p. 303.
  19. Ibid., p. 295.
  20. Ibid., p. 297.
  21. Ibid., p. 296.
  22. Ibid., p. 303.
  23. Ibid., p. 298.
  24. It is not possible here to go in detail into the evolution of Lenin's philosophical views. For a critical assessment, see A. Pannekoek, *Lenin as Philosopher* (New York, New Essays, 1948), and for a general analysis, see H. Lefebvre, *La Pensée de Lenine*, Paris, Bordas, 1957.
  25. This was published anonymously in 1940. See Schram, *The Political Thought of Mao Tse-tung*, op. cit., pp. 180-194.
  26. Mao Tse-tung, *Selected Works* (Peking English edition, op. cit.), Vol. I, p. 313.
  27. A comparison with orthodox Marxist works of the same period brings this out clearly: cf. for instance, Georges Politzer's classic work: *Principes Élémentaires de philosophie* (Paris, Editions Sociales, 1961: based on the author's lectures delivered in 1935-1936).
  28. Mao Tse-tung, *Selected Works* (Peking English edition, op. cit.), Vol. I, p. 311.
  29. Ibid., p. 316.
  30. This truly "cosmic" view of history was to be strongly reaffirmed during the period of the "Cultural Revolution". Cf. an editorial of 2 June 1966: "There will always be contradictions, in a thousand years, in ten thousand years, even in a hundred million years' time. Even when the Earth is destroyed and the Sun extinguished, there will still be contradictions in the Universe." (Quoted in J. Guillermez, *Histoire du Parti Communiste Chinois*, Vol. 2, *Le Parti Communiste Chinois au pouvoir*, Paris, Payot, 1972).
  31. Mao Tse-tung, *Selected Works* (Peking English edition, op. cit.), Vol. I, p. 320.
  32. Ibid., p. 321.

33. Ibid, p. 331.
34. Ibid., p. 337.
35. Ibid., p. 343.
36. See Schram, preface to **Mao Tse-tung**, *Une Etude sur l'éducation physique*, **op. cit.**, and introduction to *The Political Thought of Mao Tse-tung*, **op. cit.**
37. In Schram, *Mao Tse-tung Unrehearsed*, London, Penguin, 1974, p. 293.
38. The extracts given by Schram, in *The Political Thought of Mao Tse-tung*, **op. cit.**, p. 26, refute the apologetical notion of a precociously dialectical Mao. Those given by Jerome Chen, in *Mao et la révolution chinoise*, Paris, Mercure de France, 1968, pp. 61-62, provide some slight credibility to this thesis.
39. **Jørgen Bel Lassen**, *Philosophie et conservation des tomates*, Paris, *L'Impensé Radical*, 1973, p. 37. The book's title conveys plainly enough what the author sees as the utilitarian function of Maoist philosophy.
40. Ibid., p. 38.
41. Ibid., p. 38.
42. Ibid., pp. 43 and 47.
43. **Mao Tse-tung**, *Selected Works* (Peking English edition, **op. cit.**), Vol. I, p. 315.
44. Michelle **Loi**, preface to **Mao Tse-tung**, *De la Pratique*, Paris, Montaigne, 1973, p. 62.
45. **J. Chesneaux** and **M. Bastid**, *Des Guerres de l'Opium à la Guerre Franco-Chinoise, 1840-1885* (Vol. I of *Histoire de la Chine*, ed. **J. Chesneaux**), Paris, **Hatier**, 1969, p. 7.
46. As regards Taoism, regarded as a form of idealism (and by some as a form of mysticism), see the paradoxical and controversial thesis of **Joseph Needham** on the materialist significance of Taoism, in his book *The Grand Titration: Science and Society in East and West*, London, Allen and Unwin, 1969.
47. Except *perhaps* for tendencies observable in Engels.
48. **G. Lukács**, *History and Class-consciousness*, London, Merlin Press, 1971; **L. Goldmann**, *The Human Sciences and Philosophy*, London, Cape, 1969 (French original published 1952); **L. Goldmann**, *Marxisme et Sciences Humaines*, Paris, Gallimard, 1970.
49. This would be in accordance with the logic of "Maoist practice"!
50. In which the most significant names include **Korsch**, **Mattick**, **Ruhle**, and **Bordiga** (who came from not very proletarian Naples).
51. "The Kuomintang and the Communist Party are the foundation of the Anti-Japanese United Front, but of these two it is the Kuomintang that occupies first place.. . In the course of its glorious history, the Kuomintang has been responsible for the overthrow of the Ch'ing.. . It enjoys the historic heritage of the Three People's Principles; it has had two great leaders in succession—Mr. Sun Yat-sen and Mr. Chiang Kai-shek.. . (Schram, *The Political Thought of Mao Tse-tung*, **op. cit.**, p. 228).
52. Ibid, p. 68.
53. This was the congress (the last to be held by the Comintern) when a turn to the Right was made, leading to attempts to form "People's Fronts" in alliance with the petty-bourgeoisie.
54. "New Democracy" was subjected to practical experiment, like most of Mao's conceptions, from 1937 onward in the frontier region of Shen Kan Ning (around **Yenan**). Profiting by a certain stability that prevailed between 1937 and 1941, "New Democracy" was put into practice: all classes took part in elections and in institutions, but under the unchallenged hegemony of the CPC. Private property was preserved and a moderate measure of agrarian reform carried out. This policy, applied with strictness between 1937 and 1941 (the two dates correspond to the two elections), barely concealed its

real content, which was one of all power in the hands of the Communists. From 1941 onward, however, the C.P.C. turned to more radical practices, and was **obliged**, in a very difficult period of split with the Kuomintang and blockade by the Japanese, to reconsider the system of "New Democracy". The traditional order, still in force in the villages, was attacked, and a more thoroughgoing agrarian reform carried out. This was, in a way, a prefiguring of the socialist transcending of "New Democracy" that was to take place after 1949. Cf. Mark Selden, *The Yenan Way in Revolutionary China*, Cambridge, (Mass.), Harvard U.P., 1971, pp. 121 et seq.

55. To be more precise, some of Mao's formulations were orthodox enough, being the same ones that Stalin had used in his writings of 1926-1927, but for Stalin they were mere formulations without real significance; and, besides, they were not being used ten years later. For Mao they corresponded to a concrete content
56. **Mao Tse-tung**, *Selected Works* (Peking English edition, op. cit.), Vol. 2, p. 343.
57. Ibid, pp. 343-344.
58. Ibid., pp. 346-347.
59. Ibid., p. 350.
60. Here we must point out, following Schram: "To be sure, in the original version of 'On New Democracy', written in January 1940, Mao included a sentence (now deleted) stating that, if the Chinese bourgeoisie (i.e. the Kuomintang) was capable of assuming the responsibility of driving out Japanese imperialism and introducing democratic government, 'no one will be able to refuse his admiration.'" But **Mao** added at once that if the bourgeoisie were to fail in this task, the main responsibility for the nation's future would inevitably fall upon the shoulders of the proletariat, (*The Political Thought of Mao Tse-tung*, op. cit., p. 68).
61. See Schram, introduction to *The Political Thought of Mao Tse-tung*, op. cit., pp. 98 et. seq., and also his introduction to the collection of Mao's writings *Sur la 'Révolution Permanente' en Chine*, Paris, Mouton, 1963, p. xv ("It is not accidental that these writings are dated 1958, the year of the 'Great Leap Forward' regarded as one aspect of the 'uninterrupted revolution'. . .").
62. Selden, op. cit., p. 148.
63. Ibid, p. 152.
64. Ibid., p. 154.
65. The caesura between the periods 1937-1941 and after 1941 in the practice of the C.P.C. in **Yenan** is to be noted. In 1937-1941 there was a stable authority, increasing bureaucratisation, a moderate agrarian reform, administrative centralisation, the status quo in the villages. After 1941 there was struggle against bureaucratisation, with decentralisation, dynamisation of the masses, a certain radicalising of agrarian policy, agricultural **co-operatives**, and a challenging of the status quo in the villages. Cf. Selden, op. cit., pp. 121 et. seq. and 177 et. seq.
66. **Deutscher's** article in *Socialist Register* 1964, op. cit., and R. Lew, op. cit.
67. On Mao's conception of the Party, see Schram, "The Party in Chinese Communist Ideology", in *The China Quarterly*, April-June 1969, p. 2: "To a large extent, the 'Party' was for Mao merely a name for the leading nucleus in another organisation. . ."
68. **Mao Tse-tung**, *Selected Works* (Peking English edition, op. cit.), Vol. 4, p.363.
69. Ibid., p. 418.
70. Ibid., p. 415.
71. Ibid., p. 419.
72. Peking, Foreign Languages Press, 1962.

73. Li Wei-han, op. cit., p. 90.  
 74. Ibid, p. 98.  
 75. In Cahier 146 (*Régime Interne et Politique Extérieure dans les Pays d'Asie*),  
 Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques, Paris, Armand Colin, 1966,  
 pp. 269-288.  
 76. Ibid., p. 269.  
 77. Ibid., pp. 272-273.  
 78. Ibid., p. 273.  
 79. Ibid., p. 273.  
 80. Ibid., p. 274.  
 81. Ibid., p. 274.  
 82. Ibid., p. 274.  
 83. Ibid, pp. 274-275.  
 84. Cf. K. Lieberthal, "Mao versus Liu? Policy towards industry and commerce,  
 1946-1949", in *China Quarterly*, No. 47, July-September 1971: "In essence,  
 one basis of the policy [of the C.P.C. when they first began to occupy cities] was  
 to import the notions of class struggle from the rural areas into the cities,  
 and to support every demand of the workers as a means of waging this class  
 struggle" (p. 497). After 1948, however, when the Communists really started  
 to take over the big cities, their policy changed: "The real meaning of the new  
 urban policy was that production must be increased so as to enlarge the  
 volume of supplies, munitions and money available to the C.P.C. to wage the  
 civil war" (p. 505). Further, when Liu Shao-chi was sent in 1949 to Tientsin,  
 an industrial centre recently occupied, "he affirmed the right of capitalists to  
 dismiss workers if keeping them on the payrolls would be uneconomical. He  
 admitted that a workday of more than eight hours would be permissible and  
 stressed the obligation of the workers to maintain labour discipline" (p. 514).  
 Liu also spoke of the capitalists' right to a reasonable profit. Here was  
 undoubtedly a policy of defending, if not of promoting, capitalism.

85. There were campaigns against opponents on the Left, as well. All active  
 Trotskyists were arrested on 24 December 1952. By these campaigns the  
*proletarian* and *bureaucratic* content of the new regime was manifested at one  
 and the same time.

86. This is shown, at the level of ownership of industrial production, by the  
 official figures reproduced in Cadart, op. cit., p. 276:

	1950	1952	1954	1956
Socialist sector	45.3	56	62.8	67.5
Mixed sector	2.9	5.0	12.3	32.5
Private sector	51.8	39.0	24.9	—
Total	100	100	100	100

87. "In order to smash Chiang Kai-shek's offensive we must plan on a long-term  
 basis", wrote Mao on 20 July 1946 (*Selected Works*, Peking English edition,  
 op. cit., Vol. 4, p. 90). Already in May 1947, however, he noted that "The  
 march of events in China is faster than people expected." (Ibid., p. 138).

88. Cf. the article by Thai Quang Trung in *Le Monde Diplomatique*, March 1975:  
 "L'Asie, les illusions de Roosevelt et la synthèse de Yalta."

"... Stalin, who distrusted the Chinese Communists, behaved towards China as  
 if that country was not for a long time yet to emerge from its divided state  
 and become a viable power. He also intended to advance Soviet power as far as  
 possible in East Asia, considering that China was bound to fall into the  
 American sphere of influence. And, to the Americans' prospect of a united

China, playing the stabilising role of a structure of equilibrium in East Asia, Stalin preferred the reality of a Soviet-American agreement on a divided China"

89. Liu's speech is in *Marxism and Asia, 1853-1964*, edited by Stuart R. Schram and H. Carrère d'Encausse, London, Penguin, 1969, pp. 271-272.

90. An extract is given in *ibid.*, pp. 274 et. seq.

91. *Ibid.*, p. 276.

92. *Ibid.*, p. 277.

93. This was the period of a "hard" policy in relations with the countries of the Third World. The Chinese Communists showed little interest in the "bourgeois" governments of these countries, even when they were "neutralist". Cf. Cadart, *op. cit.*, p. 277.

94. Russian article, dated November 1951, reproduced in Schram and Carrère d'Encausse, *op. cit.*, p. 274.

95. *Ibid.*, p. 273.

96. *Ibid.*, p. 268.

97. See in this connexion the article by P. Bridgham, A. Cohen, L. Joffe, etc., written in September 1953, in their capacity as "propaganda analysts" for the C.I.A. (which also has its place among the sinologists of the English speaking world), on "Mao's road and Sino-Soviet relations", which was reprinted in *China Quarterly*, No. 52, Oct.-Dec. 1972. As an appendix to their article, these writers give the Chinese version (dated 15 December 1949) and the Russian version (17 September 1950) of the opening paragraphs of an article by Chen Po-ta, (who was at that time very close to Mao), entitled "Stalin and the Chinese Revolution" (*op. cit.*, pp. 695 et seq.) The differences are significant, and include the following:

*Chinese version*

p. 695. "Comrade Mao Tse-tung is correct."

p. 696. "Comrade Mao Tse-tung's views on the nature and tactics of the Chinese revolution were *completely identical* with those of Stalin.

p. 697. *"It was a great misfortune for our Party that the opportunists, in the interests of disseminating the various erroneous viewpoints and proposals, either intentionally or unintentionally kept back Stalin's works on China. But, despite this situation, Comrade Mao Tse-tung has been able to reach the same conclusions as Stalin on many fundamental problems through his independent thinking based on the fundamental revolutionary science of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin. Thus, the correctness of Mao himself and his comrades-in-arms was maintained."*  
[A patently ironical passage!—R.L.]

*Russian version*

Missing.

"Comrade Mao Tse-tung, in [matters relating to] problems regarding the nature of the revolution and its strategy [the Chinese version says "tactics"! — R.L.] *followed* Stalin."

Suppressed in the Russian version. How could they have been unaware of Stalin's views?!

98. No precise date can be given, but the new line was clearly apparent at the time of the Bandoeng conference in 1955.