

942 Yale Station, New Haven, Conn. May 30th, 1961.

*Mao p5 Lenin*

Dear Raya, thank you for the letter of solace and the enclosure, which has been passed on to Augie. With reference to men talking to trees; I recall that George the III did actually talk to the trees in Windsor Great Park, and they put him inside for it. And you know what happened to the American colonies. Fit that into your schema.

But now straight down to business, no nonsense, no interpretation at present, that is your department, but the cold facts as it is possible to ascertain them at present.

General chronological outline.

1. Early years. Mao's Hunan report of 1927.

2. The period of the Kiangsi Soviet, 1928-34.

3. Yenan communism, 1936 through to 1949 and victory.

4. 1949 to the present, the communists in power.

1. Early years. Mao's Hunan report of 1927.

In this report, as far as we can possibly tell, Mao spoke of the peasants as a revolutionary, not just a petit-bourgeois, class. He supported the peasants lowest on the economic scale, the landless and the poor peasants, praising their struggle and condoning their violent methods. In fact it is my opinion that in this report he takes a whimsical approach to terrorism. It is a strong document that breathes true revolutionary fervour. And it was well received by Bukharin and published in Russia. Interpretations of this phenomenon - Wittfogel, that this proves all along that Mao was an orthodox communist, and that naturally the report was published since it echoed Lenin's and Stalin's views on the peasants. Spence, any attempt to show that Lenin or Stalin thought of the peasantry as a revolutionary class in Mao's sense bases itself on a few scattered sentences from their works, out of context. I think the report was welcomed because the whole comintern policy had been going increasingly disastrously in

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China since the 1926 Canton coup by Chiang, which forced the communists into a subservient position in the KMT. Stalin and Bukharin were scared of Trotsky's criticisms, and took anything that might help them to show that there was in fact some genuinely revolutionary activity in China. But after the Shanghai massacre in April 1927 and the debacle with the left KMT at Wuhan in July 1927, the comintern policy was really out in the open, and discredited. Thus when the Autumn crop risings of fall 1927 failed, Mao was censured along with everyone else, in the series of CCP manoeuvres that led to the fall of Ch'en Tu-hsiu, Ch'ü Ch'iu-pai, Li Li-san, and the installation of Wang Ming and the "returned students" all safe comintern yes-men.

2. The period of the Kiangsi Soviet. 1928-34.

*Juichin Rep*

The first soviets were established in Kwangtung province by P'eng Pai in Oct 1927 and lasted till Feb 1928. Unfortunately I have found no writings on these. The CCP and Western historians concentrate on Mao in the area of Kiangsi, where the Chinese Soviet Republic was established in 1931, and to which area the CC of the CCP finally moved in the fall of 1932, perhaps because blackmailed by Mao. (This period is also known as the "Juichin Republic" / Juichin being a town in Kiangsi). Like everything else in CCP history this period is damn hard to get at save through glorifitzatory CCP writings. However I have one lead that should interest us both more than these works. This is a strange document called The present condition of China, published without imprint and without date, anonymously. This document, to which I have found no references, is in the Yale Sterling Memorial Library catalog number Bj 18 j/A3/932 jb. An inscription inside the cover says that it was presented to Yale by the Imperial Japanese Embassy in 1932. On a fairly close analysis I would say that this was a deliberate propoganda piece put out by the Japanese government to demonstrate the internal chaos of China, the inadequacy of the KMT, and hence to

<sup>justifies</sup>  
 Japanese Imperialism in Manchuria; i.e. to show that the Japanese were a responsible government interested only in bringing order to the Chinese mainland and of course in protecting their own financial interests, which were by this time considerable. All this has a familiar ring to it. But the important thing is that the Japanese observers are neither hostile nor favorable to the CCP; they just want to show that the CCP is too strong to be beaten by the incompetent KMT, but itself too weak to bring order to China.

The major part of this document for our purposes is Appendix ~~xxx~~ A-3, Communism in China, written in the middle of (1931). A list of those holding "the actual power of the party at present" (p.5) does not include Mao, though this may not be important since the Japanese are probably referring to the party leadership proper, which was of course still in Shanghai, desperately trying to get the shattered and disillusioned urban proletariat to rise and bring the victory of socialism.

\* What emerges from this report is the very great power of the Red Army, behind which it appears that the political cadres, of whom Mao was probably the most important, followed. The report describes this process as follows (all italics will be mine, to emphasise points that should be of especial interest to you); On taking a town the Red Army loots and raids public buildings, banks and foreign settlements, murders or drives out the rich and the officials, calls mass meetings of workers, peasants and soldiers, forms soviet government, (remember Trotsky's scorn), lowers food prices, raises the ratio between copper and silver (the peasants had to pay taxes in silver and were always being cheated by the officials; but I don't see that this raising of the ratio is really feasible in economic terms, it sounds like a bid for popularity), destroys loan bonds and land certificates and distributes the land to the poor (p.10). Then follows this observation by the Japanese observer:

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 "As a matter of fact it may be definitely stated that the communist party, planning to make use of the power possessed by the red armies, is attempting to direct and control them by sending to them its representatives and political agents, and moreover, is trying to turn the frequent raids of the grades to occasions for progoganda and practice of communism".(p.12)

This observation is then expanded in a paragraph on communist practice:

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 "As soon as a red army occupies a certain point, the Communist Party at once calls out local workers and peasants, and convenes "Soviet Congress" or "Workers and Peasants' Congress", which elects a "Soviet Committee". This committee in its turn forms a soviet government. The territory under the rule of the Soviet government is designated as a "Soviet area". In outward form a Soviet government is a popular organ founded by the people themselves. But in point of fact, it comes into existence through the raid of a red army and the conspiracy of the Communist Party, which accounts for the fact that a Soviet area usually coincides with a red army's sphere of action".(p.17)

"A Soviet government, being an offspring of the Communist Party and a red army, is under a complete contrl of the party, which sends a representative to it as the supreme adviser of the government to supervise its administration".(p.18)

It is, I think, inconceivable that the Imperial Japanese Government should have sent a Trotskyist to make a confidential report on the Kiangsi Soviet, and extremely unlikely that members of their staff were secret marxist-humanists. Therefore it is quite probable that what we have here is a genuine description of the imposition of the party bureaucracy at the very beginning of the revolution, of an absolute denial of peasants' and workers' spontaneity. At least in Hunan they either rose by themselves against intolerable oppressions or were led to rise by a few revolutionists (this is no new phenomenon in Chinese or medieval European history); but in Kiangsi and neighboring provinces their "liberation" in the early thirties has a suspicious flavor. But we must also remember, in fairness to the Party cadres, that they were

fighting a bloody war of attrition against the forces of the KMT with vastly superior numbers and equipment, under the direction of German generals, and that the KMT were known for their extreme ruthlessness to communists or sympathisers, and that therefore a soviet could not be formed unless it were also under the protection of the red army, who fought brilliantly and courageously for six years, until Chiang's fifth "extermination campaign" almost succeeded and drove them onto the long march.

3. Yen-an communism, 1936 through to 1949 and victory.

The period of Yen-an communism was ~~a~~ period of compromise, arrived at with the KMT after the kidnaping of Chiang at Sian in December 1936, the period of the United Front. Thus whereas the Land Law of the first all-China Soviet in 1931 had stipulated the confiscation of the land of all those above middle peasants without compensation, and that all rents and debts be null and void, the Yen-an program right up until December 1946 was one just of rent and interest reduction, leaving not only the rich peasants but also the landlords more or less untouched. As Mao said in New Democracy, 1940, "it is not to build up socialist agriculture, but to turn the land into the private property of the peasants. A rich-peasant economy will also be allowed to exist". In Dec 1946 the CCP began a policy of the compulsory purchase, at a very low rate, of the land-lords' "excess" lands. In October 1947 they began an extremely radical program for the redistribution of all land and the elimination of the rich peasants as a class; this phase was carried through with wide-scale terror and violence, <sup>with</sup> ~~and~~ a swing of line in the spring of 1948 condemned this policy as "ultra-left", and there was a reversion to a moderate policy, to guarantee the rights of the middle peasants and proceed more cautiously with the rich peasants. This was the operational policy at the time of the final victory in Dec 1949.

\* Mao says New Democracy was written in 1940, but probably not till 1951, and the back-dated. Such chronological difficulty, is true of much of Mao.

Perhaps the most important change from the Kiangsi days was that now in Yenan it was the party that controlled the army, and the army was seen as an educative instrument. Again of course the CCP was in a crisis situation, fighting continual guerrilla actions against the Japanese and sporadically against the KMT, so the army usually had to be in the background to ensure the survival of the party. But many of the leaders both in the party and the army were now coming from the anti-Japanese, communist, military and political academies called the Y'angta. The other major phenomenon was the development of mass movements. The various mass organizations (formed according to sex, age, occupation etc) were formed and guided by the party cadres and picked the candidates for local office; once the candidates were chosen, then the ordinary people could exercise their democratic vote. These local organizations then chose the candidates for national office, and so under an impressive façade of majority rule there was of course absolute minority (party) control. The young cadres who founded the schools in remote areas among the peasants worked with energy and zeal, and with great efficiency only very slowly introducing party propaganda into the curricula. So it is essential to remember that Yenan was a time of great dedication and enthusiasm, Mao was making his apparently enlightened and exciting speeches on culture, and that hope was in the air that visiting foreign journalists, wearied of the KMT corruption, were so infected by. While after the surrender of Japan, the fighting was again bitter, and all were too occupied in attaining eventual victory to worry overmuch about freedoms or spontaneity.

4. 1949 to the present, the communists in power.

\* Mao Tse-tung, On People's Democratic Dictatorship, July 1, 1949 \*

"Without the socialization of agriculture, there will be no complete and consolidated socialism. And to carry out the socialization of agriculture, a powerful industry with state-owned enterprises as the main component must be developed. The State of

of the Peoples' Democratic Dictatorship must step by step solve this problem of the industrialization of the country".

From now on the subordination of the peasantry to the leadership of the urban working class was to be emphasized both in theory and practice, whereas from 1928-1949 it had been in theory only. And the subordination of both to the CCP was undeniable. The movement to state collectivization of agriculture lay through a) individual ownership, b) mutual aid teams, c) cooperative farming, d) collectivization. Mao had experimented with the first three both at Kiangsi and Yen-an, but in China of the fifties we can witness the most herculean efforts of the state plan. The process was as follows:

1. A program of land reform and land redistribution between 1950 and 1953 which by the spring of 1953 left only an estimated 3 million out of 500 million peasants unaffected. (Most of these details are from an excellent book Agrarian policy of the Chinese Communist Party 1921-1959 by Chao Kuo-chun, Asia Publishing House, New Delhi, 1960). After redistribution the average land holding per capita was under 2 mou (a mou is 1/6 of an acre) so it was clearly a transitional stage, as no one could support themselves for long on that. The redistribution eliminated 20 million landowners as a class, many of whom were killed, perhaps 5 million. The redistribution was carried out through local "Peasant Organizations", "People's Representative Congresses", the people's militia, local tribunals and various mass organizations. At all times it was directed by the Party.

2. The bringing of the peasants into Agricultural Producers' Cooperatives, 1955-8. This process carried out steadily through work teams and cadres, propaganda through mass media, and the selection of "positive" elements in the villages. The aim was to improve the lot of the poor peasant and to bring production into line with the requirements of the state. There were legal stipulations guaranteeing that

the joining or withdrawal from cooperatives be voluntary. It is not known if any peasants availed themselves of these stipulations. The peasants continued to have "ownership" of their lands, private property was allowed and they could work 10% of their land for themselves. High increases in production were attained. (This seems undeniable).

3. The formation of People's Communes, 1958. This was done by amalgamating the cooperatives, and absolutely fantastic as it sounds this was achieved between April and November 1958. In these eight months 120 million peasant households, who had formed 740,000 APC's (agricultural producers' cooperatives) of 160 households each were concentrated into 24,000 people's communes averaging 5,000 households.

This transition is held to be the crucial stage in moving China from a socialist to a communist society. It happened to coincide with the inauguration of China's second five year plan. Over the last year there have been reports that the communes have been in trouble; there is certainly a serious famine at the moment. But though there might be some relaxation of pressure on the peasants, the theory at least seems to be stable. The Communist China Digest for May 2, 1960 has an article (p. 21) attacking the notion that people's cooperatives are almost the same as people's communes. It points out that the fixed system of free supply in the communes is the first stage on the way to giving to each according to his needs, and that moreover the commune gives the people an "element" in the ownership of the means of production.

"The people's communes is the combination of industry, agriculture, commerce, education and military affairs within the scope of their activities".

The only criticism from within mainland China is to be found in those writings by intellectuals and students, of whom the greatest is the young girl student of nineteen or twenty, Lin Hsi-ling, who I believe has been shot. On this whole movement there is one indispensable book,



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The hundred flowers campaign and the Chinese intellectuals by Roderick MacFarquhar, Praeger, New York, 1960. I won't attempt to summarize this here, and you must read what the Chinese say themselves: the whole book consists of their criticisms, with a minimum of guiding and informed commentary by MacFarquhar. But the crucial thing is this, that the most constant criticism was simply that the CCP was nothing other than a new class, indistinguishable from the exploiting classes of the past, and that it is not truly Marxist.

There I think I shall leave you. For foreign policy the best book is Communist China and Asia by A. Doak Barnett, Harper bros 1960, chapters 4, 5, 6 & 8 especially.

This is only a surface treatment. What I have tried to do is to bring up some aspects that should be of especial interest to you and try to ensure that you don't miss anything of major importance. The more I think about it, the harder it is to find spontaneity after 1927 at the workers and peasants level, though there was no lack of enthusiasm and hope at all times and into the present.

We must not forget though that the four men who have had most part in shaping communist China and who are still in power, Mao Tse-tung, Liu Shao-ch'i, Chu Teh and Chou En-lai, were all involved in a fight for survival for 22 years, suffering the severest strains of privation and physical danger, feeling their way at all times through Japanese Imperialism, Western Imperialism, Russian Imperialism and the certain knowledge of torture and death if caught by the KMT. They were never even peacefully in exile in Switzerland, England or anywhere else. None of them wrote a word of theory until they had been fighting for some time. All of them were profoundly nationalistic, and deeply loved China, which above all they wanted to be strong, so it could forge its own destiny. Whether in such circumstances they could have made it free is a profound enigma, which perhaps we can try to answer together.

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Sincerely

Donathan