

10/23/66
COMMUNICATION TO THE EDITOR, THE NEW YORK REVIEW OF BOOKS

In contrast to the informative special supplements on America's barbaric war in Vietnam, The Review's special on China (10/20) takes us on a fairytale journey not only on the question of "the greatly improved chances for peace in Vietnam" (allegedly created by the so-called cultural revolution in China), but also in the matter of rewriting the history of Stalin's Russia during the 1930's. This period, according to Professor Franz Schurmann who authored "What Is Happening In China?", is supposed to have brought the sons of workers into cadre positions at all levels of the organizational system." So that is what Russia's establishment of forced labor camps was all about as the decade of the 1930's reached its climax, internally, in the infamous Moscow Frame-Up Trials that eliminated the general staff of the Revolution, and, externally, in the Hitler-Stalin Pact! Perhaps I should have been prepared for Prof. Schurmann's nightmarish presentation of counter-revolution as revolution by his fantastic statement that "A close analogy to what has happened in China may be found in the Jacobin appeal to the people of Paris." I admit I was not. It is true that the whitewashing of Mao's (and/or Lin's) self-created turmoil in China is not typical of Professor Schurmann's ^{writings that are a} strange admixture of erudition and fascist apologetics, but I did not think he would write that unabashedly about Russian history, singling out the very period in which the workers' state had been transformed into its opposite, a state-capitalist society.

Evidently, nothing, including his own writings, stops Prof. Schurmann from his unfounded assumptions and overconfident conclusions regarding either Russia or China. Thus, he modestly introduces his major work, Ideology and Organization in Communist China, with these words: "The writing of this book has been, like the Chinese Revolution, a long process climaxed by an act." This, despite the fact that a few pages later, he will ~~write~~ ^{write} to confess that, despite seven years of research (1957-65) in Chinese, Japanese and Malayan languages, ^{it was only} ~~it was only~~ ^{with the aid of} ~~it was only~~

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"After I had completed this book, I realized that I had omitted an important area of organization: the army." (p.12) This did not stop him the following year ^{revising} his article on "China's Power Structure" (The Diplomat, Sep.1966) with what should have been just as self-evident in 1965: "China is today ruled by a trinity of organized power: ~~China is today ruled by a trinity~~ only trouble is that by then a new, extra-legal force appeared, seemingly out of nowhere, and yet fully organized as well as "armed with Mao's Thought", imprinted on millions of leaflets, pamphlets, posters and photographs: the so-called Red Guards. Far from being dismayed by this unprecedented phenomenon, Professor Schurmann, who could conclude nearly 600 pages of text on Chinese Communist organization by leaving the Army out of consideration, appeared all too ready ^(NIR, 10/20) to testify to the spontaneity of the new "mass movement". (Thousands of young students swarmed into the streets and formed the red defense guards;—my emphasis, SB) ~~the~~ arose just in time so that "when Mao Tse-tung and Lin Piao felt that they had not completely carried the day at the plenary meeting of the Central Committee, they were called on to spearhead the campaign against Party oppositionists.... The use of these teen-age red defense (sic!) guards, with the army in the background, thus avoids the appearance of military power emerging as the leading organizing force of the country."

Now, whether, in the turmoil in China, we are allegedly participating in a "school of revolution", or are witnessing a new form of Bonapartism, the point is that what is immediately at stake are the lives of the Vietnamese people. Since Prof. Schurmann is also moved by this crucial factor in Chinese foreign policy, we should be able to find an area of agreement. Unfortunately, he is by now spinning new fairy tales that, "just as in Russia", in the 1930's, "so now in China, opponents to the 'left' and 'right' were eliminated... sons and daughters of the poor are coming into leadership positions in China." No one need, however, hold his breath too long; it turns out that the one who is really the golden mean is none other than Mao himself. We are told to act at once lest any further escalation of the Vietnam war "will arouse the voices of preventive action in China." The

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proof of Mao's opposition to "left adventurism?" "We might note," states Prof. Schurmann: "Lin Biao's strong advocacy of united front tactics in his article on people's war." What Prof. Schurmann doesn't tell us is the reason why he must quote ~~Lin Biao's article~~ by Lin instead of the official communique of the recently-concluded plenum of the CCP. Yet the reason is simple enough; ~~he~~ ^{the communique} states the exact opposite in most unequivocal terms: "It is impossible to have 'united action' with them." (Russian Communists) Moreover, as Prof. Schurmann knows very well even if he is silent on the question, this rejection of united action to aid Vietnam which is under US imperialist bombardment is not only rejection of united action with "revisionists", but with any who do not unquestioningly follow the Chinese Communist line. As Fidel Castro put it when Cuba had to break relations with China: "Our country had liberated itself from the imperialism 90 miles from our shores and it was not willing to permit another powerful state to come 20,000 kilometers to impose similar practices on us."

For a whole generation now the Vietnamese people have known nothing but war. And, because ^{of} their country's geographic position in the fight between military giants out for world domination, their lives are still being put to the stake. Under these circumstances, is it too much to ask that we stop apologetics for Mao's China long enough to work out anti-war action in favor of self-determination for the Vietnamese that would, while fighting US imperialism, be independent of Communist Chinese interpretation of ^{Chinese} world events?

October 23, 1966
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