

Is Mao Zedong a fallen idol?

From Vanguard, No.2, 1981.

There have been an enormous number of questions about Mao Zedong and his position. Revolutionaries are deeply concerned about this question. Various commentators have seized upon the subject. Some uphold him as infallible; some use the appraisal of him by Chinese Communists to attack Communism itself, to attack Mao Zedong and to attack the Chinese Communists on the one hand for equal responsibility for many things Chairman Mao is said to have done, and on the other hand praise for "dissociating" themselves from the Chairman Mao who is said to have gone to excess (De-Maoification).

Matters within the Chinese Communist Party are matters for that Party itself. Only they can appraise internal differences that have obviously existed for decades and in which Chairman Mao and some of his comrades were clearly in disagreement. There is room for disagreement but it is simply presumptuous for outsiders to pronounce on matters the intimate details of which (or even the general problem) they have no real knowledge.

On the general international and theoretical questions others are entitled and bound to have a view.

Chairman Mao has been dead but a little over four years. It is very early to make far-reaching pronouncements. One-sided arbitrary subjective and emotional pronouncements can easily be made when one is too close historically to the matter being considered.

But provisional opinions can be held.

In our opinion Chairman Mao Zedong was outstandingly the greatest figure in the world throughout the period in which he was active.

He made an immense contribution to the world revolutionary cause. His writings are readily available. Everyone can read them and make up his own mind on whether or not they conform to Marxism and develop Marxism. It is our opinion that they do. Others have other opinions. What-

ever the respective opinions, facts will determine the issue. Facts cannot be changed. We believe facts establish the claim that Chairman Mao was the greatest figure in his contemporary world.

That said, does not in any way preclude critical analytical appraisal of Mao Zedong. Nor does it mean that everything he said and did was correct. It does not mean that he was an individual abstracted from his comrades and the Chinese and world peoples.

His greatness lay in his supreme identification with the people, his capacity to divine and express the course of and for the people in making history. His very break from the convention of the thirties that everything that emanated internationally was correct and his insistence that on the contrary, Chinese Communists must integrate general truths with China's own conditions, was in itself a development of Marxism. It is of incalculable importance to all Communists, His philosophical writings are a systematic exposition of materialist dialectics. Like any other writings, one may differ here or there. This is to say nothing of military writings, comment on world and Chinese events. Lenin stressed the importance of the peoples of the East in revolutionary struggle — Mao Zedong was their representative.

It is quite wrong to see a leader as a thing in himself. There is no such thing. Mao Zedong along with Zhou Enlai, Zhu Deh, Liu Shaoqi and others were products of a particular world, a particular people. They learned from the people and from each other. They systematised the revolutionary mission of the people.

No doubt Lin Biao and the gang of four produced the little red book of Quotations from Mao Zedong for sinister purposes. The mere repetition of quotations and their attempted imposition on situations to which they had no application, could do great damage. Likewise their use to paralyse thought and actions of others and

Mao Zedong's life and works can assuredly be studied by all Australian revolutionaries. Revolutionaries need not be inhibited or intimidated in their studies. As with all other reading, it must not be mechanical as Mao himself opposed book *worship*. It is not to be studied in some mechanical fashion but as a guide to action. Marx condemned "Marxists" — people who arbitrarily applied his ideas. Likewise we can condemn "Maoists" — people who arbitrarily transplant his ideas to situations in which they have no application. But we can all learn from the method, the approach, the system of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought.

Mao Zedong and his colleagues taught that all Communists must deal with the actual situation in their own country. Australian Communists have learned that lesson above all from Chairman Mao. We are certain it is correct. Whether our striving to put it into effect is successful, is a matter upon which only the Australian people and the facts can pronounce.

to intimidate people, was pernicious in the extreme. In 1966, Chairman Mao himself said it was difficult to believe that his few words had the magical effect attributed to them. Nonetheless, the wide circulation of those quotations in the world introduced millions to Communism. It is simple fact that cannot be expunged that it enlightened millions.

Again it would be quite wrong internationally, to treat Chairman Mao as a God. It would be just as wrong to treat Marx, Engels, Lenin or Stalin as Gods, a tendency that has existed and to which Australian Communists have been party. All these men made mistakes of one kind or another. When Lenin said more than once that only he who does nothing makes no mistakes, he included himself. Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin and Mao all spoke of their own mistakes. Facts have proved that Marx, Engels and Lenin's mistakes were mostly secondary. In our opinion those of Stalin and Mao Zedong were secondary in a similar sense.