

BREAKING AWAY FROM THE IDEA OF BOURGEOIS RIGHT*

Anyone who has an elementary knowledge of the Chinese Communist Party and the history of the Chinese revolution knows that equality between the army and the people, between officers and men and between the higher and lower levels has always been taken as a fundamental principle for handling the relations within the ranks of the people. This principle has always been observed by the Chinese people's army led by the Chinese Communist Party and in revolutionary base areas from the time the Workers and Peasants' Army existed to the time the Eighth Route Army, New Fourth Army, and the PLA came into being, and in all revolutionary base areas from Chinggangshan to the liberated areas. This principle was established first in the revolutionary base area of Chinggangshan under the immediate leadership of Comrade Mao Tsetung. Comrade Mao Tsetung writes in his report to the CCP Central Committee—*'The Struggle in Chinggangshan'*:

"The majority of the Red Army soldiers come from the mercenary armies, but their character changes once they are in the Red Army. First of all, the Red Army has abolished the mercenary system, making the men feel they are fighting for themselves and for the people and not for somebody else. So far the Red Army has no system of regular pay, but issues grain, money for cooking oil, salt, firewood, and vegetables, and a little pocket money....

Written in 1958 when the Great Leap Forward came under attack from the Liu Shao-chi clique which called this tremendous movement "crude and hasty". It is a powerful attack against the bourgeois concept of differential wage system and analyses the dangerous political consequences of such a system. Under Mao's instructions and with his editorial notes supporting the article it was reprinted in the *People's Daily*. This article explained the "supply system" practised in the revolutionary base areas and upheld its essence: comradesly relations of equality. Mao had to fight for this article even to be printed at the time.

"The Hunan Provincial Committee has asked us to attend to the material conditions of the soldiers and make them at least a little better than those of the average worker or peasant. Actually they are worse. In addition to grain, each man receives only five cents a day for cooking oil, salt, firewood and vegetables, and even this is hard to keep up. Cold as the weather is, many of our men are still wearing only two layers of thin clothing. Fortunately, we are inured to hardships. What is more, all of us share the same hardships; from the commander of the army to the cook everyone lives on the daily food allowance of five cents, apart from grain...

"Apart from the role played by the Party, the reason why the Red Army has been able to carry on in spite of such poor material conditions and such frequent engagements is its practice of democracy. The officers do not beat the men; officers and men receive equal treatment; soldiers are free to hold meetings and to speak out; trivial formalities have been done away with; and the accounts are open for all to inspect. The soldiers handle the mess arrangements and, out of the daily five cents for cooking oil, salt, firewood and vegetables, they can even save a little pocket money amounting to roughly six or seven coppers per person per day, which is called "mess savings". All this gives great satisfaction to the soldiers. The newly captured soldiers in particular feel that our army and the Kuomintang army are worlds apart. They feel spiritually liberated, even though material conditions in the Red Army are not equal to those in the White army. The very soldiers who had no courage in the White army yesterday are very brave in the Red Army today; such is the effect of democracy. The Red Army is like a furnace in which all captured soldiers are transmuted the moment they come over. In China the army needs democracy as much as the people do. Democracy in our army is an important weapon for undermining the feudal mercenary army."

As we know, these Marxist-Leninist and communist relations set an example of relations in the revolutionary base areas. These comradely relations of equality were also maintained between the army and the people, between the army and the government, between cadres, and between the higher and lower levels. They handled relations not with the aid of arms and power, but by means of persuasion and upholding of truth. Like the People's Liberation Army, the people in the revolutionary base areas handled their relations with each other. As soon as they arrived in the liberated

areas people from other areas instantly found out that with internal relations properly handled, all people in the liberated areas while leading a hard life were "fortunately inured to hardships and moreover all alike shared the same hardships". All lived on a supply system which was communist in character.* Although living standards differed because of work requirements, the difference was not great. Meanwhile, politics and the mass line prevailed everywhere. For this reason, workers, peasants, soldiers, students and traders were united as one like members of the same family; they fought hard against the enemy. Do you still remember how the big army corps fought during the period of the liberation war? To support the People's Liberation Army, thousands upon thousands of militiamen followed the army in their march to the south. They led the same life of military communism as the army. They did not aim at becoming officials or getting rich. No idea of wages, let alone "piece wages" entered into their mind. They came to join the revolution, bringing their own food. Their only aim was to overthrow the three major enemies and liberate the whole country. In the revolutionary base areas, men and women, old and young, front and rear formed a combat group with the same heart. It was precisely this life of military communism that marks the Marxist-Leninist thinking and working style. Mao Tsetung's thinking and working style took root among the millions, blossomed and bore fruit. And the army and people armed with communism and steeled in battle were invincible. Has not the history of the Chinese revolution fully borne this out?

After the nation-wide liberation, this life of military communism marked by the "supply system" was still very popular. One took pride in the "supply system" as if it signified the old revolution and hard struggle. Some revolutionary youth also expected a "supply system" when they first joined the revolution. They wanted this to show that like old comrades they sincerely took part in revolution. Comrades who were inured to the life of the supply system did not covet the wage system. They were fond of this system of life which demonstrated the relations of equality. But shortly afterwards this system of life was subjected to the impact

*This means people were paid directly with the supplies they needed and not in wages.—Ed.

of the idea of bourgeois right. The idea of bourgeois right has its kernel in hierarchy. In the view of persons imbued with the idea of bourgeois right, the supply system was undesirable. They looked upon it as a "rural working style" and "guerilla habits." There was nothing strange in such arguments brought forth by the bourgeoisie. But soon a number of Party cadres were subjected to the impact of this idea. Among them were heard more criticisms of the drawbacks of the supply system while more talk was heard about the merits of the wage system. By and by, "supply system" almost became a bad term. Lack of enthusiasm in work was attributed to the supply system. The use of an official envelope was also attributed to the defect of the supply system.** Poor management of factories and stores and loss of money were again attributed to the defect of the supply system. In a word, the communist supply system, which insured the victory of the Chinese revolution, was condemned by some people as a serious offense which must be punished.

The main argument against the supply system is that it cannot stimulate production enthusiasm. Its theoretical basis is the "principle of material interest" stressed by economists. It is said that since survivals of the old division of labour still exist under the socialist system—that is, some distinctions still exist between mental labor and physical labor, between workers and peasants and between skilled labor and unskilled labor—the "principle of developing production through the material interests of workers" is represented as a wonderful principle. It is said that "wage scales" and "piece wages" can stimulate workers to "show maximum interest in the product of their labor" and stimulate "socialist emulations" because a higher labor productivity deserves higher wages. It is said that this system is the "most important lever in the growth of national economy as a whole." The arguments seem to be very convincing but reduced to popular language it is the same as the old saying: "money talks." If high wages are used to "stimulate," then socialism and communism can be bought like a piece of candy.

What do we have to say about such a theory?

When the supply system was in force, millions upon millions of people fought an armed struggle for several decades, climbed snow-clad mountains, passing through grassland and undertook the

**This refers to using official mailing envelopes (and one would assume other things as well) for personal use.—Ed.

25,000-li long march. Whoever received wages at the time? Can it be said that the victory in the anti-Japanese war, the liberation war and the resist-US and aid-Korea war was won through the stimulation of wages? Each communist-minded person feels insulted when hearing such arguments. Take construction work. It is precisely the workers, who according to the above-mentioned economists are the most concerned with the wage levels, who express fundamentally contrary views. Shanghai's workers, after contending, blossoming and debate, pointed out that advocates of this theory and measure, want to "let money instead of politics assume command". These words hit the bull's eye. Of course, we do not deny that at the elementary stage of communism the socialist society still bears the economic, moral and ideological traces of the old society of which it was born, as stated by Karl Marx in his *'Critique of the Gotha Programme'* and that the inequality in "bourgeois right" cannot be done away with at once. We admit that at this stage we can only observe the principle "from each according to his ability; to each according to his work" and not the principle of "from each according to his ability; to each according to his need." But did Marx tell us that bourgeois right and bourgeois hierarchy of inequality must not be destroyed but should be systematized and developed? Did he not say that the principle of "material interests" should only be partially stressed, and that communist education should be intensified politically, ideologically, and morally in order to break down the bourgeois right? It was Marx himself and not others who answered this question. Summing up the experiences of the Paris Commune in his *'The Civil War in France'* he paid tribute to the measures taken by the heroes of the Paris Commune: "From members of the Commune downward, the public service had to be done at *workmen's wages*. The vested interests and the representation allowances of the high dignitaries of State disappeared along with the high dignitaries themselves." Mark well, did not the revolutionary measure taken by the first commune of the proletariat in the world—the Paris Commune—precisely destroy the bourgeois hierarchy and do away with the principle of material interests? Can it be said that in stressing this experience Marx and later Engels and Lenin did not remember bourgeois right? Thus, Marx, Engels and Lenin did not render service to these economists who "see things and not men" and "money and not men" and who believe that "money talks." On the contrary, Lenin indignantly said in his *'State and Revolution'*: "And it is on this particularly striking point, perhaps the most important

as far as the problem of the state is concerned, that the ideas of Marx have been most completely ignored!" In referring to this experience, many people always regard it as "out-dated and naive." Have not these, who declaim against the supply system and want money to assume command, also said that the supply system is "guerilla style" and "rural habits" and "out-dated"? Have not they, too, forgotten completely the lessons of Marx?

Practice of the past years proves that the attack on the "supply system", on "rural style" and "guerilla habits" is actually an attack on the revolutionary tradition of the proletariat and on the communist principle of properly handling the relations among the working people on the basis of equality, and is actually designed to defend the bourgeois right of inequality. All exploiting and oppressing classes defend a strict hierarchy. They do not hesitate to fabricate the myth that they are "inborn masters of mankind." Chiang Kai-shek claimed without shame in his "China's Destiny" that he was a descendant of Wen Wang. A biographical sketch claims that he is a son of Wen Wang—descendant of Duke Chou. This story deserves a place in the *Hsiao Lin Kuang Chi* but it also shows how anxious Chiang Kai-shek and his ilk are to disguise themselves as the "highest" Chinese. Shanghai's compradors took pride in being "high-class Chinese." Ah Q said only "I belong to the same clan as old Mr. Chao" and Mr Chao gave him a slap in the face, saying: "How can your surname be Chao!" In the old time, social status was the most important thing and class was all-important. Everything was governed by "propriety": what was "propriety" was legal. Bourgeois right was found everywhere. Persons who attack the supply system on the grounds that it does not stimulate production actually want to substitute the "propriety" of bourgeois hierarchy for the proletarian relation of equality. According to them, this will stimulate production enthusiasm. Is that really the case? As a result of attack on the supply system, the living standard which did not show much difference in the past has changed among our Party cadres and some who were not inured to hardship have rapidly learned manners of gentlemen, high-class Chinese, and old Mr. Chao. Some cadres feel displeased when they are not addressed as "heads". This indeed stimulates something. But it does not stimulate production enthusiasm but enthusiasm in fighting for fame and wealth. It stimulates waste. It stimulates estrangement from the masses. Some elements soon degenerate into bourgeois rightists and corrupt elements. Some persons expressed the opinion that the

supply system would encourage laziness. It has been proved that the opposite is the case: hierarchy has encouraged laziness. Some cadres expect extra pay when they work for only one extra hour. Under the supply system, did those who dedicated everything, even their lives, in revolutionary wars expect pay? What is more serious, since this habit has developed, the relations between cadres and the working people have changed; the "three trends" and "five airs" have developed among leading cadres.*** Some people have completely forgotten the lessons that politics must assume command; equality must be practised toward others, the masses must be persuaded and not coerced and they must become one with the masses. They have gone to such lengths that when the Party Centre issued the directive on the correct handling of contradictions among the people, they put up resistance.

A recollection of this is of profound educational significance to each and all. In this process, we can learn the necessary lessons even though we do not support and object to the same things and even though we are subject to different impacts.

The Party's tradition is Marxist-Leninist and is deeply rooted among our Party cadres and people. Although it has been damaged in certain ways, it is not too difficult to restore it. Now under the call of the Party Centre and Comrade Mao Tsetung and through the rectification campaign this tradition has been restored. But we still cannot say that it has been completely restored. The bourgeois idea of right and the Kuomintang's official airs still make themselves felt among the people. Certain people still put up resistance to the policy of correctly handling the contradictions among the people. We are still confronted with a long and recurrent process of struggle. But inasmuch as the situation for the Great Leap Forward requires us to leap forward in readjusting inter-relations, all comrades devoted to the communist cause will certainly be able to stand on the forefront of the movement and restore and develop the fine tradition of our Party under new conditions. They will certainly be able to break away from the idea of bourgeois right, establish relations of equality with the masses, form a closely united whole, live and work together and struggle in common for socialism and communism. Can there be any doubt about this?

***The "three trends" were bad trends of work to be corrected: bureaucratism, subjectivism and sectarianism. The "five airs" were five kinds of attitudes to be avoided: bureaucratic, apathetic, extravagant, arrogant and finicky.
—Ed.