

# Report from Revolutionary China

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AFTER SPENDING ELEVEN DAYS in China in late October and mid-November, on my way to and from North Vietnam, I feel only expert enough to disagree with most of the China experts, of both the left and the right, as to what is going on there.

In part I disagree because real life always defies the best efforts of those who study it from afar—no matter how fair and objective they may try to be. In part I disagree because most of our information comes from partisan sources in Hong Kong, Tokyo and Moscow and is just plain false—whether it happens to appear in the *New York Times* or in some less prestigious journal of public information. I might add that as near as I could tell most of the public information in Peking about Moscow is also false.

I don't know the truth about China. All I know is some truths, which I can report with the authority of personal observation. How these particular truths fit into a general framework or how one weighs them and other evidence in developing a theory of what is happening and what is apt to emerge—all this is more speculative. Although I do not promise to avoid such speculation altogether, my main interest is to present some firsthand observations of facts that are generally overlooked in the United States today but which in one way or another form part of the total picture. They should be made part of any educated guesswork as to what is going on in China.

Most discussions overlook the extent to which the Red Guards are expressing an indigenous youth revolt against the educational and cultural institutions of their society. Intent on interpreting the Cultural Revolution as a gimmick in a grim Communist struggle for personal power or for factional political control of Chinese society, most commentators ignore the personal stake of the Red Guards in what they are doing. To understand their motivations and dynamics, one would do well to start with the similarity of the Red Guards to the American students who revolted against the "multiversity" at Berkeley or dropped out of college to take part in the civil-rights movement or community organ-

izing. Given the difference in the two economies and cultures, the analogy is far from exact. On the other hand, it provides a more useful initial frame of reference than to imagine that the Red Guards are narrow political demagogues or simply youthful shock troops at the service of adult politicians.

One of the things that disturbed me the most in China was the apparent idolization of Mao, but it is worth quoting what a student from Tientsin said to me when I complained of it and said that it went ill with the student attitudes which he had been describing to me. His reply was:

I don't expect you, an American, to understand that for us Mao is the symbol of the masses in revolt against authoritarianism. For us, to study Chairman Mao's words means that we can cite them and our interpretation of them against any authorities above us. Chairman Mao wants to encourage young people to rebel so that no authoritarianism can suppress the individual and the spirit of rebellion.

I don't pretend to know what is going on in Mao's mind, with relation to the Red Guards or anything else. Nor am I privy to the internal conflicts within the Chinese Communist Party. But from talking to Red Guards and seeing them in action, I surmise that whatever Mao may have in mind, it is almost as inaccurate to think that Mao created or controls them as it was a few years ago to think that the civil-rights agitators who invaded Mississippi and the South had been sent there by the American Communist Party and were acting in its behalf.

I found Red Guards with whom I could talk at length not only in the cities of Peking, Wuhan, and Nanning, but also among the stewardesses and fellow passengers on the planes that carried me twice from one end of China to the other. I also spent five hours in intense discussion with an extremely intelligent and open graduate student, who was en route from Peking to London, where he was going to continue his studies in English literature. Always the subjects most on their minds were the nature of their schooling and the role of intellectu-

als and trained technicians in society. Everyone complained that the established educational system placed too great an emphasis on abstract intellectualism and verbal achievement. They always presented the Cultural Revolution as concerned primarily with the gap between academic and "real" life, the failure of Communism to extend its revolution into the areas of daily life that affected them most as students and prospective intellectuals. Most of them saw an interrelationship between the shortcomings of existing Communist pedagogy and the privileged economic status of brain workers in both China and the Soviet Union. In this way they reminded me of S.D.S. members who complain about the 2-S draft deferment for students—though (with the encouragement of Mao) up to the present time a lot more Chinese students than S.D.S. members have been ready to relinquish their privileges.

In Peking one of the Red Guards said to me:

We hope that a new system of education will come from this [the Cultural Revolution], though we don't know just what it will be. Some kind of system which places a new emphasis on first-hand knowledge. After all, the Russians copied their educational system from the West and China copied ours from the Soviet Union. The fact is that the true spirit of Communism has never been carried out in education, at least not on a large scale. Our schooling today is still based on second-hand knowledge. We want to find out what the function and limitations of the classroom are, the uses of travel, of seeing for oneself, of engaging in productive labor on the farms and in the factories. Then there is another question—what kind of education is good for all people, not just for those with a particular kind of talent who go on and on under the present system and become part of a privileged caste?

### Red Guards and Politics

A student movement with such far-reaching concerns is bound to be involved in a definite interaction with adult political figures even though its dominant mood and goals may stem from its own experiences. For one thing, many of the students refer to Mao's Yen-an experiences, when some of the leaders of the present Communist Party dug out their own caves for living quarters, grew their own food, and held classes on the principles and strategy of revolutionary Communism. There is a tendency to look to Yen-an as an example of successful revolutionary education which provides cues for the present intended revisions. When I was in Peking there was a public exhibition on *kangta*, the form of education organized by Lin Piao at Yen-an. I did not get to the exhibit but I was told it was thronged with Red Guards who were eagerly studying the displays and taking notes, in the manner that I saw them taking notes all over Peking and Nanning whenever new *tatzupao* (wall posters) were put up.

Part at least of Lin Piao's appeal to the youth is apparently based on the fact that he introduced into the army the sweeping egalitarian reforms and the kind of combined theoretical and practical education that the students want to see worked out, in somewhat different

form, in the educational system. Americans have interpreted Lin Piao's recent prominence as evidence of the dangerous ascendancy of the professional military, but in China one hears the opposite. It is said that he has liberated the army from the traditional military clique and the military mentality and transformed it into a genuine "people's instrument," in line with China's belief not only in "people's wars" (of defense and self-liberation, I might add) but also in the necessity for gradually remodeling all institutions in accord with Communist ideology. Lin Piao's reform of the army is hailed as a precursor of the present Cultural Revolution.

Recently I read an article in the American magazine *Dissent*, with the thesis that "Mao's revolution has nothing to do with the liberation of the people or, despite its continued use of Marxist language, with the class struggle and the emancipation of the proletariat." Writing in the name of democratic socialism, the author complains that "the army had to be transformed from top to bottom; its officers had to be placed under the supervision of political commissars; *privates were given political rights they have in no other army* (emphasis added); insignia were abolished. In short, the army was remade into a militia. . . . China now has an army which is good for home use and perhaps for a quickie raid into India, but which is hardly equipped and organized for a conflict with one of the major powers . . . the professional officers were overruled on all three counts: organization, defense, and foreign policy." (Henry Pachter, "Mao vs. Marx in China," *Dissent*, Jan.-Feb. 1967.)

Although Pachter's description may be influenced by

Despite the almost Mediterranean casualness of this September 1966 scene, it was included in UPI's "China's Unleashed Force" series. The legend reads: "A few girl members of the Red Guard use a police booth as a watching post on a street in Peking. Another member is inside the booth making contact with a control center of the youth movement." (UPI Photo)



his displeasure with these innovations, his summary of the reorganization of the army was remarkably close to that which the students described to me with pleasure. Where Pachter concludes that the Chinese army "is hardly equipped and organized for a conflict with one of the major powers," the students had said, with obvious pride, that the Chinese army is not organized for foreign wars, not even for a foreign war of liberation—which, according to Lin Piao must be the responsibility of the native population—but only for a war of self-defense.

The students' actions have had a cumulative impact on all aspects of life in China. My first week in Peking, there were an estimated million and a half Red Guards roaming the city. The majority of them had come to Peking from schools and universities all over China. Most of the ones I talked with had stories to tell about the ups and downs of student struggle and bureaucratic suppression by the university authorities, during 1964 and 1965, and especially in the spring of 1966. Then in June, after a student strike at Peita (Peking University) and administrative expulsion of some of the leaders, Mao intervened in behalf of the students. Public hearings were held, the students were reinstated and the university was at least partially reorganized.

The student rebels at Peita had called themselves Red Guards and Mao received them at a public ceremony in Tien An Men Square, at which their girl leader pinned a red band, the group's symbol, on Mao's arm. From then on Red Guards and student agitation sprang up all over China, as faltering organizations took encouragement from this high-level intervention and blessing. Many of these organizations dropped their old names and began to call themselves Red Guards, after the Peking group.

A "victory" for the students at Peita did not herald automatic victories for the other student groups in their particular battles, but it increased the ferment. In July a large group of students at Tientsin University decided to walk to Peking to visit the university where students had successfully challenged the administration and, if possible, to present their own grievances directly to Mao. I was told that the Tientsin officials called out the police to stop them and that many of the Peking Communist Party officials sided with the Tientsin authorities. Mao, however, intervened again by sending a special train to meet them. Then, as one of the Tientsin students explained to me:

We took over the train. We had it stop at all the stations along the way. We held meetings and exchanged ideas with the young people. Many of them decided to go to Peking too. After Chairman Mao's initial decision to send the train, everything happened spontaneously, without authorization from anyone, parents, school or government.

Student enthusiasm and ferment spread. So did opposition. I don't want to give the impression that I think I know all the steps and stages of the immensely complicated development that followed or the forms in which the conflict expressed itself in different parts of

that vast land. I can only report a few things that I saw and interpretations that were made to me by Red Guards themselves or by other persons I talked with in China (not only Chinese, by the way, but also a Mongolian, an Indonesian, a French woman, several Russians, Japanese, Vietnamese, and East Europeans, as well as half a dozen Americans, most of whom have lived in China since World War II or before the triumph of Chinese Communism in 1949).

By the time I first arrived in Peking (October 20), the universities and middle schools (high schools) had been closed for several months, so that students and faculty could engage in a searching reexamination of the educational process. Part of this reexamination was taking place through travel and the exchange of ideas with people from other sections of the country, part of it through meetings and manifestoes, principally the *tatzupao*, or wall posters. Every college student was guaranteed free public transportation on the trains and buses. Middle school students were encouraged to elect one representative for every 20 students, and this delegate was also provided free transportation. Food and accommodations were provided for those who came to Peking. (Probably they were provided in other cities as well, but I realize now that I did not check this out, and it is conceivable that the reception varied from city to city according to the attitudes of those in power.)

Students spoke to me about stopping in communes along the way, helping in the work, being fed and sheltered, and engaging in an exciting process of exchanging ideas. I was told of several instances where students had made arrangements for moving their schools to one of the communes they visited, with an idea of effecting a more meaningful combination of academic and productive work. I was not able to determine the likelihood that this would come about or if so, what this would mean in terms of "bureaucratic relationships"—with the academic administration or various political authorities. What was clear from the conversations was that some of the Red Guards and at least a few faculty were going through explorations similar to those that have led to experimental free universities and S.D.S. community organizing projects in the States.

### The Wall Posters

One night when I was walking through Peking with a friend who was translating some of the wall posters for me, he said, "Here is one attacking the mayor of Peking." "Oh yes," I replied, "Peng Chen." "No," he responded, "the new one." According to most Western observers, Mao had used the Red Guards to get rid of Peng Chen, one of his political opponents—and perhaps he had. But the students had other things in mind. The *tatzupao* was criticizing the new mayor for having sent out "work teams" from Party headquarters to assist in local reorganizations. It complained that the outsiders 1) didn't really understand local situations, 2) brought the apparent authority and prestige of the Party into the local conflict, and 3) put local people in the position of seeming to attack the Party when they protested against its method of intervention. During the time I



Another September photo in the "China's Unleashed Force" series. The caption reads: "A young girl member of Communist China's Red Guards chants the slogans written on the placard . . ." The placard begins: "The entire third grade class fervently supports the eighth annual Communist Party . . ." [balance illegible]. (UPI Photo from Peking)

was in Peking, many of the manifestoes were making this same point, and the Party was definitely put on notice that the Red Guards were revolting in order to gain some control over their own lives and institutions rather than to exchange one set of bureaucratic administrators for another. They wanted the Party to intervene, if necessary, in order to open up or guarantee what we Westerners would call freedom of speech and the rights of dissenters but they wanted the speaking and reorganization to be done by local people.

As we discussed the opposition to the "work teams," which really were investigators from Regional or Central Party headquarters, my translator offered his version of what was taking place:

The Central Party will remove or defend no one unless or until there has been full local debate. This must take place over an extended period of time so that the truth can gradually emerge. The Central Party only insists on the right of Red Guards to make the charges and the right of the accused to defend themselves. Also it insists that there must be a "way out" for those found guilty. This is Mao's interpretation of Marx.

One of the things missed in the West is the fact that the wall posters are used as a means of public argumentation and debate and therefore express a wide range of opinions. At all hours of the day and night one could see students solemnly discussing the contents of posters, taking notes and, in many cases, preparing answers. Barbara Deming, who passed through China in late December, 1966 and January, 1967, told me that the same "fascinating process" was going on when she was there. She said that she just did not know how to relate what she had seen to the accounts of violence and intimidation and other "terrible things" that she read in the Western press as soon as she got back.

When I was in Peking, if a poster appeared attacking a public figure, soon there would appear another poster defending him. Western analysts have usually assumed that to be able to quote a poster which attacks a man by name is to prove that he has fallen from favor and been "purged." Or that to quote a poster which takes a certain ideological approach is to reveal what the "official line" is. Occasionally a contrary poster is quoted a few days later as an indication that the balance of power has shifted and a new group has got the upper hand (usually, it is assumed, as a result of violent combat or the cracking of skulls). Some of this confusion is undoubtedly innocent, and in particular I can understand how readers of the newspapers would fall into these traps, especially after years of being told that Chinese Communism is monolithic and totalitarian. On the other hand, those knowledgeable enough to supply the quotations in the first place should be in a position to provide more accurate information about the context in which they appear. We should never forget that most of the "facts" that we read about China in the American press have been supplied by Chiang Kai-shek Nationalists or American government agencies, such as the C.I.A. and the U.S.I.S. (United States Information Service). Both the Nationalists and the American agencies own or control newspapers, "research institutes" and other seemingly impartial sources of information in Hong Kong and other Asian cities.

Whatever else may be unclear about what is happening in China, there is no doubt in my mind as to the eagerness with which students have been exploring new ideas and formulating new programs. Most of the slogans that were painted in huge red letters on the upper walls of public buildings seemed to me as routine and devoid of content or imagination as most official exhortations to virtue in any culture: "Long Live The Glorious Cultural Revolution!" "Long Live The Proletarian Cultural Revolution!" "Down with Soviet Revisionism!" "Mao is our Helmsman!" etc. On the other hand, one could take them as endorsements of the whole process of exploration and revitalization that was reflected in the thousands of manifestoes that lined the walls at eye level. In any event, there was no doubt about the seriousness with which individual students and small groups of students went about composing their own posters to express their own thoughts and sentiments. One could see them kneeling on the sidewalks after midnight putting their thoughts on paper, discussing a particular



The legend for this photo begins: "PEKING: Communist Chinese youths here read the latest edicts issued by Red Guard students." While one might question the use of the word "edict," UPI would have been well advised to stop there. However it continued: "Travelers from Red China in Hong Kong August 27th told terrifying tales of attacks by gangs of youthful Red Guards in Canton, South China's major city. They said stones and orange peels were thrown at priests of 'foreign' religious orders. They also told of the Red Guards' raiding shops, grabbing people, and carrying placards." However accurate these reports may be, the fact remains that they have nothing to do with the photograph, the suggested title for which, by the way, is "Travelers Tell of Terror." (UPI Photo)

turn of phrase, and then pasting their own views as close as possible to a poster with which they disagreed. The ground rules apparently didn't permit tearing down a poster you disagreed with or covering it over with your own.

All of this democracy of debate conflicts, of course, with the reports and photographs (undoubtedly genuine) of people being led through the streets in disgrace with dunce caps on their hands. How much of this has taken place I could not tell. I can only report what I saw and was told. I saw no such incidents myself but no one denied that some acts of violence had taken place. On the other hand, I talked with no one who had seen such things himself or justified them. Everyone seemed vague about where and when they had happened and no one thought they had been extensive or typical. One professor told me:

Don't forget that this is a real revolution, not play-acting. A revolution is very serious and very deep and is bound to arouse opposition from people whose special privileges are being taken away. At the beginning the Red Guards had no experience in how to do it. This is a revolution of the people and the leaders can't do it for them. Naturally some of the Red Guards got out of hand in the beginning but the leaders came out strongly against violence and most of that seems to be over now.

In my university I sometimes felt bad. It was unpleasant to see people being criticized so strongly by their students. Yet the vice-chairman really was arrogant and had assumed too much power. He was very lordly to his students and was acting as a member of a privileged class.

It was better to stop it then, before it did more and more harm. He has lost his power but he will have a chance to remedy his ways.

A student said to me:

So far as I know no one has been put in prison or executed. That never has been our way of doing things. You must remember that for us a purge means that there is open criticism and discussion and if a person is found to be wrong he loses his position in the government, the university or wherever it is. No harm comes to him.

Destroying the "four olds" means destroying only the bad in the old, not all old things. There has been practically no old Chinese art destroyed, such as that Buddha there [referring to a photo in *Life* magazine that I had shown him]. Naturally some young people didn't understand at first and in some places things like that did take place, but Chairman Mao and Lin Piao and Chou En-lai—all the adult leaders—came out against such things.

Another person to whom I showed the *Life* account of violence rampant in the streets was an American who has been in China since 1946. He rubbed his head in disbelief.

"Some of those things must have happened," he said. "We know that things got a little out of hand in some places, but that gives a very false picture of what is going on. You've been here [Peking] for nearly a week. Have you seen anything like that?"

When I pressed him and said that many intelligent radicals in the United States thought of the Red Guards as bands of roving vigilantes he said:

You've seen them in the streets. You know how gentle they are. When did you see a group of vigilantes that was so lovable that the biggest problem is that you have to remember that you're not supposed to kiss them?

Of course the Red Guards are very serious about what they are doing. They get a big kick out of walking from town to town and when they get to Peking they gawk and stare like any farm boy his first time in the big city. The romance and the adventure is a very important part of their excitement. But at the same time, they are also walking because they want to go through a Long March that links them with their elders and toughens them up for the expected American invasion. Don't forget that they stop and harvest crops and talk about these things with peasants. The government provided free transportation for them but many of them prefer to walk in the manner of the Long March.

In Nanning, I talked at length on two different days with Huang Ji Zhu, a Red Guard in his early twenties who worked for the China International Travel Service and spoke excellent English. He translated the Nanning newspaper for me and read various *tatzipao*. He said that he had seen no violence in his city and hadn't heard of any, but he made no claims that there couldn't have been some local violence that he didn't know about. Nor did he see any reason to turn against the Cultural Revolution if some of its enthusiasts had mistakenly attacked its enemies physically:

People are very serious about the struggle to get rid of bourgeois institutions and ways of thinking. The Cultural Revolution is badly needed. I don't think there is much opposition to Mao but old ideas about special privileges die slowly. Also, we know about the American plans to attack us and we are getting ready. But the main thing is to get rid of our own revisionists and bureaucracies with capitalist ideas. Naturally some of the people who were used to living better than other people have wormed their way into the Party, in some places. We have to take their power away but it doesn't do any good to beat them or humiliate them by parading them through the streets. Our chairman, Chairman Mao, teaches us that you have to give them a way back. You have to change their ideas.

Huang insisted on translating for me sections of a speech by Lin Piao, which Lin had made at a rally of Red Guards in Peking on August 31. I already had an English version that I had picked up in Peking and I quote the key passage from it:

We must carry out the struggle by reasoning and not by coercion or force. Don't hit people. This applies also to the struggle against those persons in authority who are taking the capitalist road as well as to the struggle against landlords, rich peasants, counter-revolutionaries, bad elements and Rightists. Coercion or force in the struggle against them can only touch their skins. Only by reasoning is it possible to touch their souls. Only by reasoning, by exposing them fully and criticizing them profoundly, is it possible to expose their counter-revolutionary features thoroughly.

Similar sentiments have been expressed over and over again by Mao and Chou En-lai.

## Beyond Education

By stressing the concern of the Red Guards over the form, content and context of their education, I do not mean to minimize their concern with substantive political questions of economics and foreign policy. Most American student rebels tend to see the American educational system as both a reflection and a perpetuator of the larger dehumanized and undemocratic society. Such "Red Guard type" activities as sit-ins during draft-deferment exams or at university centers for chemical and biological research programs combine indignation at the passive role assigned students in university decision-making with revulsion from American foreign policy and war atrocities. Similarly the Chinese Red Guards move naturally from discussing the stupidity of exams and grading to the shallowness of the "bourgeois literature" they have been studying—with its "exaltation of capitalist virtues"—the "errors" of "Soviet Revisionism" and the necessity of combating those who are anxious to restore capitalism to China. As with a lot of the Chinese polemics, the language about "capitalism" is apt to be misleading for Americans. Talk about the persistence of capitalist attitudes and the dangers of a capitalist restoration has gladdened the hearts of U.S. Senators, editorial writers for the *Daily News* and countless other Americans who believe that freedom and democracy cannot exist unless the owner-

ship and control of the economy is in the hands of private individuals and corporations operating on the basis of the profit motive. Visions have been created of a China ready to welcome back Chiang Kai-shek and the big industrialists.

When I was in China, the people I spoke with talked as if something very different was involved—not the restoration of private corporations and the return to a system of vast private and corporate holdings in agriculture and industry, but rather the perpetuation and growth of excessive income differentials. The Chinese were having basically the same debate that the Cubans had been having when I visited Cuba in the spring of 1964, though the slogans and the methods of carrying it on were different. In Cuba they were arguing about the relative importance of "material" and "moral" incentives. Apart from questions of foreign policy, the debate in both countries and throughout the Communist world is essentially over how far and how fast to travel in the transition from socialism ("To each according to his work"—and those who won't work won't eat) to communism ("From each according to his abilities and to each according to his needs").<sup>1</sup>

In Cuba, which had seen so many of its engineers, doctors and other trained professionals lured away by the capitalist "freedom" of the United States, there was a tendency in 1964 to increase slightly the emoluments and other privileges of the professionals who were holdovers from the old society, while at the same time appealing to the newly trained professionals to put their talents and training at the service of their fellows without demanding exorbitant rewards. Different institutional opportunities were available to the old professionals than to the new, but both groups were exhorted and encouraged to follow the more egalitarian example of the Communist leaders. There was general agreement that the Communists had not succumbed to corruption and luxury but lived simply and inexpensively, close to the rural and urban poor. In 1964, I noticed that various governmental agencies had begun to operate a number of more expensive facilities (restaurants, hotels, night clubs) than in 1960 on the dual theory that they kept the bourgeoisie happier and served as a means of get-

<sup>1</sup>A complicating factor is the emergence of new economic conditions in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. So long as there was a shortage of consumer goods, everything that was produced was sold, but when the socialist countries achieved a substantial expansion of production, the buying public began to be more choosy. If a factory produced items that were unattractive or of poor quality, no one bought them. So the various countries began to experiment with new methods of planning and marketing that would make output and quality more responsive to consumer demand. From talking with Poles, Romanians, Czechs and Russians, I got the impression that the key shift in economics has been the experimentation with decentralized contracts between producing organizations and marketing organizations. On the other hand if one listens to the American or Chinese critics, the more affluent socialist countries are reintroducing the capitalist free market and the profit motive and beginning a shift back toward capitalism.

In Cuba and China, where production is at a lower level than in the Soviet Union, the problems are different and revolve around the importance of increasing production while maintaining (or achieving) equitable distribution.

ting back from them some of the extra money they were allowed to earn.

In China, Red Guards and Maoists said very little about the people who coveted special rewards and privileges and fled to Taiwan or Hong Kong (this was not a current issue) but rather complained about those who had looked after their selfish interests by entrenching themselves in certain sections of the Party and in other bureaucratic posts, where they were slowing down and even trying to reverse the progress towards communism. The educational system was faulted for perpetuating class divisions by preserving a curriculum and system of examinations that had been inherited from a class society and had never been thoroughly revolutionized. Not only were there natural privileges that inhered to the sons of intellectuals and the middle class under the present system, but it was charged that in certain universities special discrimination had been practiced against the sons of peasants and workers because of the snobbishness and "revisionist attitudes" of the professors and administrators. Certain magazines and other cultural institutions, such as theatre groups and (until recently) the opera were charged with promoting bourgeois virtues such as individualism and philanthropy, rather than encouraging the ideologic and spiritual attitudes of communism.

I don't want to be misleading. The Chinese were very definite in stating that capitalism had been restored in the Soviet Union or (depending on who I was talking too) that it was in the process of being restored. They also said that there were Revisionists in China, some of them within the Communist Party, who wanted to restore capitalism to China. But when I said that I had spent three weeks in the Soviet Union and was convinced that the Russians had not gone capitalist and from what I could see did not intend to, they answered by referring to exaggerated Russian differentials in wages and income. They told me that the maximum income differentials in China were about five to one. In the early days of the Revolution the gap was approximately ten to one, but this had been gradually reduced by a process of freezing the top levels and gradually raising the lower ones. By contrast they argued that the differentials were far greater in the Soviet Union—for movie stars, administrators, managers, famous intellectuals, etc. They argued that in contrast to China, the Soviet Union was widening the gap. This is what they called the restoration of capitalism. The main political conflict in China, they argued, was between those who wanted to reduce the five-to-one differential and a small minority who wanted to increase it.

### Strength or Weakness?

The turmoil of the Cultural Revolution is generally interpreted in the United States, on both the left and the right, as evidence of weakness and failure in China. After watching this revolution for eleven short days and talking at length with some of those taking part, I tend to think that it is a sign of strength and vitality. Of course there are aspects that I find distasteful, including the sloganeering and the ritualistic study and praise of the writings of Mao. Will the pressures to

conformism sap the strongly libertarian attitudes which are so noticeable in the Red Guards and (contrary to the assumptions of most Westerners) in Chinese society generally? One would have to spend much longer in China than I did to appraise the dynamics of this turbulent continuing revolution. But it is clear to me that many of the participants are striving to achieve an unprecedented combination of communist solidarity and individual freedom, which would avoid both the drab conformism of the ant heap and capitalism's individualistic rat race for special privilege at the expense of one's fellows.

My impression was that the loudspeakers and mass rallies, the shouting of slogans and the beating of cymbals and drums, the public readings of the words of Mao on airplanes and trains—most of which I found offensive—were not as coercive as they sound second-hand. There were times when I was reminded of the singing of "The Star Spangled Banner" at baseball games or the group recitals of the pledge of allegiance in our schools and at P.T.A. meetings. There were other times when I wondered whether a more apt comparison might not be with the singing of "We Shall Overcome" at civil-rights rallies or in preparation for an encounter with the authorities in a civil-disobedience action.

I especially deplore the humiliation of revisionists and other "sinners" by placing dunce caps on their heads and parading them through the streets. Who can judge whether robbing a man of his dignity in this manner is not both as cruel to the victim and as spiritually corrupting to the practitioners as shooting a man or sentencing him to prison? I have already said that I spoke to no one in China who justified such incidents and that the top Maoist leadership has condemned them, but I have no way of knowing how widespread this and similar practices have become. The Western press delights in presenting them as typical of what is going on in China but we may find out later that they represent but a few instances in which the holligan spirit has taken over.

It is ironic that Americans condemn the turbulence and excesses of the Cultural Revolution as if they reflected an innate Communist evil and a Chinese predisposition to violence. Americans should at least take care to place these activities in the context of the expected American invasion. The nuclear bomb tests of the fifties, the consciousness of omnipresent fallout, the sense of impending doom in a nuclear holocaust contributed to the emergence of a new mood in the United States, and the end of student apathy. The American invasion of Vietnam, with its million dead or mutilated child victims, and its message (as read in China) that the United States will go to any extreme to prevent Asian self-determination and dignity is a major factor in producing the present mood in China. The massacre of nearly a million Indonesians in a Washington-aided pro-Western coup was hailed in the United States as a triumph of American foreign policy but not surprisingly it helped produce a different psychology in neighboring China—a psychology in which the Chinese may find a new unity of purpose.



