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DEMOCRACY in CHINA

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THE NEW economy of China is now a viable working system which means that it is capable of living, surviving, growing and regenerating itself. It has been established under conditions which have tested severely its capacity to strike roots, to produce the means for its sustenance and growth, to conserve protect and develop its gains and improve the living conditions of the people upon whose consent and co-operation its future in the last analysis must depend. It has stood the test well; and though its trials are not yet over and it is possible that it may have to meet crisis created by world events, the assumption on which the helmsmen of the economy are acting is that they would be able to steer it through all storms and stresses, to develop and make it invulnerable to all attacks and to develop further its creative possibilities from within. This confidence owes a lot to the revolutionary fervour through which the present position has been attained and is being maintained; but it is also in a large measure based upon the material results which have already been achieved and objective appreciation of the actual conditions and prospects. Analysis of the concrete conditions is held to be an essential condition for the application of the revolutionary theory upon which action has been based and to which its successes are very largely attributed. Any tendency to outstrip or disregard the limitations of the concrete situation has been and is strongly deprecated; and the combination of theory and practice, upon which so much stress is laid, is interpreted as enriching the theory through vital contacts with the facts and shaping the course of action in the light of actual experience. There are two extremes which the leading cadres are constantly warned against—the extremes of empiricism and adventurism. It is held that inability to avoid these extremes has in practice meant either unprincipled opportunism or betrayal

of principles or the reckless pursuit of the ultimate objective irrespective of the limiting factors inherent in the actual conditions. Avoidance of these extremes calls for fine exercise of balanced judgement, and it is held that Mao Tse-tung and his distinguished compeers have, through their chequered careers, in practice largely avoided serious errors of judgement; and the situation, in spite of set-backs and stupendous difficulties, been retrieved, consolidated and advantageously developed because both empiricism and adventurism have been guarded against with skill and success, firm Marxian convictions been combined with right assessment of the objective situation, and a flexible strategy has been adopted in practice.

"The Chinese transformation with all its speed and smoothness," in the words of Prof. J. D. Bernal of the Cambridge University, "is no miracle. It is the logical consequence of the application of Marxism to a semi-colonial regime"—and it "shows the power of Marxist ideas to direct changes of a kind far more rapid and daring than anyone had before conceived possible."¹ This view is also very firmly held by the builders of the new economy of China; and though its validity can be established only by co-relating the essentials of the Marxian theory with the historical genesis and development of the new economy, its chief interest lies in the fact that its remarkable achievements are explained by the helmsmen of the new economy themselves as, being due to 'the power of the Marxian ideas, to the universal truth of Marxism and Leninism, and, to cite the oft-repeated statement, its application to the concrete needs of the Chinese revolution. This being the explanation of the makers of the Chinese revolution themselves of their record of great successes in war and peace has to be given its due weight in the context of their words and deeds. Objectively speaking, the statements of the actors in a great revolution have to be examined with reference to the whole historical situation, its antecedents and, of course, its final outcome, and it is yet too early to say how far the Marx-

¹ J. D. Bernal, *Some aspects of Chinese Transformation. The Marxist Quarterly*, April 1955, p. 77.

ian interpretation of the Chinese revolution would, absolutely speaking, stand the test of time. The premises which have determined the course of the Chinese revolution are, nevertheless, of the highest importance, and their value is all the greater because experience has strengthened the confidence of the revolutionary leaders in the essential soundness of their premises, given to their views and understanding greater clarity and enriched their content. The Chinese revolution without its Marxian premises would be unintelligible, for these have been the chief motive force of its principal actors and the basis of their strategy and tactics in war and peace. The new economy of China has been conceived, initiated, elaborated and developed as an experiment in building up a socialist economy on Marxian principles. It has, as stated before, been profoundly impressed by the Soviet practice which has been largely drawn upon for operating and developing the new economy as a whole, for the co-ordination of its different sectors and the working out the technique of its new institutional framework, its internal mechanism of operation, regulation and control. Whatever may be one's reactions to Marxism as a view of life and world outlook, it is a fact that it has provided the new universe in which the Chinese revolution has come into being, is operating and has found the ultimate goal towards which its course is being directed. In plain words, the Chinese revolution is a Marxian revolution in its origin, working and destination and has to be evaluated as such.

The essence of the Chinese revolution and its driving force being its Marxian purpose, its animating principle has defined its character, movement and direction. There are many, however, who view the position differently. They regard it unfortunate that the Chinese revolution is Marxian in its approach, but all the same consider the main changes that have occurred as beneficial and essentially revolutionary in character. After nearly four decades of anarchy of varying degrees, the establishment of a strong government is in itself considered a change of fundamental significance. It is as a matter of fact after centuries of misgovernment that China for the first time has a government which inspires confidence and respect and exercises unquestionable authority over its vast

territories and enormous population. That this government is also efficient, honest and free from the old evils of graft, nepotism and corruption gives to its strength a beneficent character and makes it an instrument of common good. That this government has put an end to the humiliations and serious disabilities to which the Chinese people had been subjected for a century or more by foreign powers, made the country truly independent and raised her international status is greatly to its credit, and this change also means not only a real revolution in China's position but has far-reaching consequences for the world as a whole. The elimination of feudal interests, the development of communications, the application of science to agriculture, enthusiasm for scientific knowledge and progress, industrialization of the Chinese economy, great advance in health services and education are all measures which have inherent advantages, are, in the context of Chinese history, revolutionary in character; but according to this view there is nothing particularly Marxian about these changes and their effects. They were long over-due; and the fact that they have been inspired by Marxism does not make them any the more desirable; and from this point of view, Marxism is not their substance but only an accident and their content and not the Marxian inspiration, makes them really revolutionary. Security of life and property, integration of the Chinese economy, establishment of an honest efficient government with a high standard of public service, termination of foreign control and interference, development of modern industries and communications, elimination of social parasites, and introduction of social services which are, by modern standards, essential for all good governments, and all taken together amount to a real revolution in China. They, however, could and should have been realized without Marxism; and the fact that the latter has, through a fortuitous concourse of events, become a part of these changes does not add to their revolutionary character, but offsets some of their manifest advantages and is from this standpoint really anything but a blessing.

The Chinese revolution, it is admitted, is an event of great historical importance, it has brought with it very beneficial results and China has, because of them, risen high in inter-

national esteem; but their merits are derived not from the impact of Marxism but the needs of the people and their urgency. This view has a semblance of logic, but apart from its strong anti-Marxian bias, leaves out the historical fact that without Marxism China had after 1911 nearly 40 years in which to redeem her position and establish a government for the people if not of the people; but all these years, even during the anti-Japanese war, administration of China remained inept, dishonest and, as is well known, extremely callous, and but for the determined resistance by the communists, the Chinese contribution to the defeat of Japan would, as the Stillwell papers clearly show, have had hardly any significance. The areas under the communist control, as pointed out in Chapter III, not only served as a laboratory of social experiment but also a demonstration of the Chinese ability to dedicate themselves to the interests of the people and build up an efficient administrative system. Marxism not only provides the keynote of the new economy, but the historical fact is that without the Marxian party the benefits, which the present regime has undeniably conferred upon the people, would not have in fact accrued to them. That these advantages could and should have been realized without Marxism is an interesting speculation, but from the practical standpoint it is futile and cannot alter the historical sequence of events which have culminated in the inauguration of the new economy and the realization of the great benefits during the last seven years. The inescapable, objective conclusion, apart from subjective judgment on the merits and limitations of the Marxian approach, is that the new economy of China, historically speaking, owes its existence to the Marxian concepts and to the truly herculean efforts of those for whom the latter have been inspiration, guide and the informing spirit of their concrete measures and policies. The Chinese revolution, to repeat, is essentially a Marxian revolution and cannot be understood without its Marxian assumptions and implications.

It does not, therefore, follow that the Chinese revolution has been an unmixed good or some of its results, even on Marxian assumptions and within the limits set by the Chinese conditions, could not have been bettered. Every revolution

has its inevitable imperfections and its basic purposes and the qualities which it brings into play are conditioned by them. The Chinese revolution was born in the midst of war, has been developed through military strategy and victory, has still to reckon with serious dangers and it cannot relax its security measures in spite of the improvement that has taken place in the last few years. Moreover, all revolutions also involve over-simplification of issues, over-denunciation of the evils they are a revolt against and over-tones in the picture of the future which they seek to realize. They (the revolutions) are nevertheless needed for ending deadlocks, remedying the crying evils and releasing new creative forces. The position in China before 1949 had, as has been duly stressed before, become desperate, all springs of energy had been put out of action, sufferings of the people had become unbearable and they were in a state of blank despair. In order to understand the Chinese revolution and assess its achievement, it is necessary, to take, it may be repeated, into account its historical background and realize what a dead end the people had come to. These considerations are all important for understanding the Chinese revolution for it, as stated before, still bears on itself the marks of its birth, its working is largely determined by the dangers to which it has been and still is exposed and by the assumption that its future depends upon its getting the better of resistance from within and the danger of aggression from without. The Chinese revolution is, for all these reasons, to be interpreted with due understanding of its historical framework and should not be appraised as if it had come out of a social void and has a stratosphere of its own to function in. The limitations of its origin and the present position have to be allowed for, and it has to be realized there are also limitations inherent in the very premises of its thought and also in the faults of the qualities which the revolution has called forth and which have made the revolution possible. In other words, imperfections of the Chinese revolution are also a part of the revolution itself and its character, scope and results have to be appreciated with full insight into these imperfections as much as its positive achievements and contributions.

The Chinese revolution has been described by Mao Tse-tung as 'new democracy' and later as 'peoples' democracy' or 'peoples' democratic dictatorship.' The new economy of China has also to reflect and express the essential character of the revolution; and if it is a democracy with a difference and is both a democracy and dictatorship, it is necessary to know how the new economy partakes of this characteristic and fulfils its purpose. The revolution is taken to be a new democracy as distinguished from bourgeois democracy because it does not install the bourgeoisie in authority and as a democracy it has to work for the consummation of a socialist and not a capitalistic society. It is both a dictatorship and democracy because the discredited capitalists, the ex-landlords and the undependable elements like the rich peasants and capitalist merchants are definitely distrusted and disenfranchised and do not participate in the building and working of the new institutions. These classes are treated as potential enemies of the new economy, are kept under a vigilant watch and purposely discriminated against in filling all positions of trust and authority. This discrimination is, according to the theory of the new polity, the purpose and the measure of its dictatorial character, otherwise it is fully democratic in its purpose and working and functions for the best interest of the people and through them. Its dictatorial aspect is, according to this view, indispensable for its success as democracy without it would become a disguised tyranny exercised for the exploitation of the masses. Apart from this view, which is Marxism in action, it is necessary to know how far the polity, and therefore the economy, is essentially democratic and fulfils its real purpose. Is it new democracy merely, as it is often stated, as a camouflage for its non-democratic and anti-democratic character or does it really signify the substance, if not the form, of democracy?

Answer to this question raises the whole issue of what is democracy, how should it function and what should be its basic purpose? It is obviously not possible to write a discourse on the theory and practice of democracy in seeking a clarification of the points raised by this issue in relation to the working of the new economy of China. A few points, how-

ever, can with advantage be briefly stated. The state being the most important factor in the direction and management of the economy, its political apparatus is of importance for its operation. Even if the state in China is taken to be based on consent, the forms through which it is expressed are very different from those which are in use in parliamentary democracies; and those who are used to the latter are and have reason to be sceptical of the peoples' democracy as an instrument of expressing the general will of the people. Political system of China is highly centralized, the communist party is controlling and directing it, all important decisions are first taken by the Executive Committee or Politbureau of the Communist party and the state government, as a rule, agrees with them, or rather as the same men are in power in the Government and in the communist party, the decisions are formally expressed in two ways i.e. the decision of the communist party and those of the state council or cabinet. On this point there is no room for the difference of opinion as in fact all major decisions are announced in the joint name of the Communist party and the Peoples' Government, and the former is always given precedence in the joint declaration of policies and decisions.

There are representative institutions from the directly elected committees at the basic level to indirectly elected representatives' conference at the Hsien, Provincial and Central levels; and these do provide forums for the expression of opinions, for discussions and even debate within limits, important laws are passed by the National Peoples' Congress and their sessions are used for submitting reports and making statements. These institutions, however, are not Parliaments in the ordinary accepted sense, the clash of opinions do not arise at the sessions; there is no opposition worth the name and the Governments are neither made or unmade by parliamentary votes nor do they owe their position to election. There are non-communist parties in the country; but the communist party is the leading party i.e. it is the only party that matters and the other parties, though actively associated with it in the execution of policies, are not in a position to take a line of their own on important matters. They are, it may be

assumed, consulted before the final decisions are taken, but the communist party's point of view is the prevailing point of view and, as stated above, its decision as a rule, becomes the decision of the state. The principle of democratic centralism requires that supremacy of the central state council should be recognized, all Provincial and local governments be subject to its control and whenever there is difference of opinion between the higher and lower governments, view of the former should prevail. At the basic level there is direct democracy, the executive committee members are elected by the voters and are responsible to them; they have to convene the meetings of the voters often and are subject to their criticism, direction and control. The political system, as a whole, however is very differently constructed from the parliamentary political systems and it has still to develop its own safeguards, correctives and modes of effective formulation and expression of views.

This conclusion is, however, not entirely unfavourable to the Chinese political system for the students of parliamentary democracy know that its revision, it is clear from the experience of its working, is called for; and though it has not been found easy to suggest concrete means and measures by which its revision can be carried out, there is a growing agreement of opinion that it should (a) eliminate the power of wealth in the working of the parliamentary institutions (b) put a premium on thought, maturity of judgment and wisdom in policy-making and administration, secure continuity of policy and make it difficult for political bosses to acquire or exercise power (c) provide safeguards against clever orators swaying elections and judgments, and also against clever party managers and utilizing passions and mass feelings for winning elections, confusing the issues and clouding the judgment. (d) reduce the intensity and importance of party warfare, develop as far as possible non-partisan mentality in discussing and deciding important issues, educate the voters and appeal to their minds and not their prejudices and passions for securing their active consent for public policies and measures and (e) recognize the obvious fact that the primary voter as a rule is in no position to form or express judgment on basic and

complicated public issues, and therefore the need for a hierarchy of levels at which decisions are to be taken in the ascending order of importance has to be admitted and as far as possible provided, for Parliamentary democracy as an institution has been and is under criticism and its inadequacies, as means of political education of the people and of transacting serious public business of the community, have been made so clearly manifest by the actual experience of its working in all countries that no serious student of political science can and should dismiss out of hand the other political systems, merely on the ground that the latter have serious inadequacies of their own and in some respects compare unfavourably with the parliamentary institutions.

Freedom is and should be the essence of democracy in its political aspects and should not be lightly sacrificed. The political system of China imposes serious restrictions on personal and social freedom which should neither be denied nor explained away, but it also has merits which, in the opinion of political thinkers, parliamentary democracy should definitely acquire in order to serve the higher interests of mankind and survive in a rapidly changing world as an instrument of creative community life. Wealth has no power in Chinese politics, the men in authority do not owe their position to the gift of the gab and a process of selection has been adopted which prizes maturity of judgment and wisdom, passions and prejudices have not been eliminated altogether but definitely discounted as decisive factors, elections are not swayed by arousing and utilizing mass feelings, non-partisan approach to public issues is being fostered and developed, minds of the voters are being informed and educated and hierarchy of judgments is being recognized and provided for. These advantages are being realized only in incipient forms; channels for their full developments have still to be created and they have to be linked to the supreme need for free expression of thoughts and views. The Chinese political system is not a parliamentary democracy, but it is also free from some of the admitted serious defects of the latter and as just stated, has advantage of its own, not yet fully developed or realized, which may, in due course, invest its working with a significance of

its own and make it valuable for solving the age-old problem of taming of power which has still to be satisfactorily solved.

Parliamentary democracy, in spite of its certain merits, is fortunately not the climax of the political thought or achievements of man; if it were there would be no prospect of our being able to face or adequately deal with the tasks of the future. It has to be altered, modified and greatly improved; and should not be taken as the standard for judging political thought and endeavours in countries like China where different political systems are being experimented with and developed to answer the specific needs of planned socialist economies. These systems also carry the impress of their immaturity on their face and cannot be held as models for other countries, much less for all times to come. They have to grow from within, shed some of their contingent characteristics and solve the old riddle of combining authority derived duly from appraised fitness for and proper discharge of social functions with freedom of the masses for whose benefit and with whose intelligent consent the authority should be exercised. This riddle has not been solved as yet; and creative social engineering of the highest order would be needed, and, in the context of the present world situation, also long period of peace free from haunting sense of insecurity before its solution can begin to take shape. China and the other communist countries may, given circumstances favourable for orderly development of their political and all other social institutions, be in a position to make valuable contributions to the pool of common experience for solving one of the most intractable problems of community life—i.e. the problem of taming and channelizing public power, power derived from the community and used primarily and entirely in its service.

The bearing of China's polity on her economy is that, besides the state power being fully utilized for financing and developing it, it ensures the paramountcy of the public interest in the working of the economy, provides consistency and continuity of policy in its development and its economic and political structures are built up and administered for their mutual benefit and assistance. In the economic institution also the principle of democratic centralism is followed, attempt is

made to secure direct representation and active participation of the primary members at the basic level and the superstructure is raised through indirect and territorially widening system of representation till the apex is reached and the topmost committee of management is constituted which operates on a nation-wide basis, acts in concert with all other committees at national level and co-ordinates the policy of the organizations with the state policy and the policies of the other organizations to the extent to which they are interconnected and their co-operation is needed in the interest of the economy as a whole. The fact that primary members are directly associated with and actively participate in policy-making and administration at the basic level is very significant. It gives opportunity to millions of men and women at the level which is of immediate and direct interest to them to develop interest in, acquire understanding of and to show their ability in administration and intelligent discussion of the matters of importance to the entire body of members and the community. The primary members of labour unions, of consumers' co-operatives, of co-operative marketing and supply societies, of handicraft co-operatives, of farming co-operatives and mutual aid teams and of the various other mass organizations are actively engaged in a democratic process of great importance, through experience they are getting insight into the working and the problem of administration of the economy, and being given education in real grass root democracy at the level which is within their reach and understanding and which can become a stepping stone for them to rise to higher levels of policy-making and administration by their intelligence, devotion to public duty, initiative and capacity to inspire confidence and for working in real team spirit. Criticism and self-criticism, which are in China considered indispensable for the working of democracy, are meant to be freely exercised particularly at the basic level. Through the participation at the primary level new cadres are discovered, given opportunity to show their worth and ability, afforded opportunities for training and qualifying themselves for their work and for higher positions; and a process of natural selection of leaders is set into motion which discourages scramble

for power through manoeuvres, glib talking, group and party alliances and other undesirable means. The enthusiasm and initiative of the masses, which the new economy has evoked abundantly and utilized to such advantage, have been created, besides, of course, the impact of the fundamental social changes and the termination of social parasitism in all forms, by the democratic process which is operating on a mass basis and providing direct experience to the people of the new economy in action and its immanent purposes. The limitations of the Chinese polity are counterbalanced by the extensive participation of the people in the work of economic construction and administration on a truly democratic basis and provide a factual basis for the view that the new society is "peoples' democracy"—i.e. a system which works for the people and largely through them.

Democracy, by common agreement, is more than merely a political mechanism or an organizational arrangement. It is and has to be an adventure of the realm of spirit and a way of life. The new economy of China has, from this point of view, its intangible aspects which also need to be understood for the appraisal of its nature and operation. The new economy attaches the highest importance to the expansion of production, to industrialization and particularly the development of heavy industries, to the rationalization and modernization of agriculture and to the improvement of the technical level of cadres and the workers in all fields and at all levels. The emphasis, however, is combined with the understanding that production is essentially not a technical but a social process, and besides being the source from which the community derives its sustenance and material basis for growth, is of fundamental importance as a means through which human values express themselves, are conserved, realized and made effective for the growth of individuals and the well-being of the community. The Marxian view that labour should not be a commodity in a rational, socialist society but the source and measure of all values is in itself an affirmation of a great ethical imperative, and if clearly understood and carefully and intelligently applied, cannot but humanize production and make its processes humane in their purpose and

performance. The full application of this view is and cannot but be limited by the wealth and income of the nation and the technical level of its development; but as the primary purpose of economic construction is and must be fuller realization of human values, even in the initial stages of its transformation this view has to be steadily and consistently kept in the forefront of social endeavour and, within the limits of the available means, applied as fully as possible. The essence of human values is the spirit of true fellowship and its manifestation in action by which the health of body, mind and spirit of the people is conserved, social relations, including relations in production, express an attitude of real concern for the well-being of the producers, the good of the community and the preservation of genuine co-operative spirit in the internal economy of every economic enterprise; and through equality of opportunity, discovery and cultivation of talents and provision of personal and social incentives the best in each is brought out and used for individual growth and social good. This spirit is essential for democracy in action and, it alone can give to it a real meaning in the life of an individual and a fuller content to the articulate life of the community. As a way of life democracy can be a success only if human values, as briefly indicated above, are given their due place in a country's economy and become its sustaining, guiding and moving force.

This spirit is present in the new economy of China and is expressing itself in a multitude of ways. The very impulse behind the revolution being emancipation of the masses from the bondage of ages, the whole atmosphere is charged with the special solicitude for the welfare of the classes who in the past were exploited ruthlessly and denied all opportunities for personal growth and advancement. With these impulses is combined a firm conviction that these classes have immense creative possibilities and their ability, potential initiative and intellectual and artistic gifts are unlimited wealth of the community; and if properly tapped, their exploitation would be put an end to and the country would be enriched in the best sense of the word beyond the dreams of the most ardent visionaries. This conviction

tion accounts for the workers and the poor peasants being given full opportunities to train themselves for all responsible positions, the short-term schools being attached to all higher institutes through which they can qualify themselves for admission to the latter and become technically competent to occupy positions of authority in the working of the economy. In economic enterprises, as already indicated, the workers' initiative is highly prized, fostered and developed, and they are placed in a position to take positive and constructive part in the planning and administration of the enterprises in which they work; and there is a constant endeavour to discover ability among the workers and promote them to the managerial posts. Measures for preserving and improving the health of the people, raising their cultural level and providing wide and varied opportunities for acquiring and developing cultural interests, and making merit the only test of admission to the higher institutes and universities and providing free tuition, and if necessary, board and lodging for all students are all intended to treasure and utilize the latent capacities of the masses and express boundless faith in their ability to guarantee their country's and their own future. This faith has, as pointed out before, been justified and strengthened by the results which have already been achieved and its ardour is now greater than ever. The new position of the women in the Chinese economy not only rights a great historic wrong, provides opportunities for richer emotional life to them and enables them to use their abilities to the full but changes the whole basis of the economy, makes it a common adventure of both the men and the women and introduces the spirit of a real home in its working. Again the results already achieved indicate the soundness of the new approach and its real democratic content. Attitudes towards and new relations with the minorities are also an expression of the same spirit and have already shown what genuine faith in fellow men can do to open new vistas of hope and amity in human relations. New life in the villages and all that it means in terms of production, creative effort, cultural renaissance and human happiness is, it is needless to add, the most significant manifestation and realisation of the new democracy. Life of self-imposed auste-

rity which all are sharing in order to build the future and the narrow range to which inequalities of income and wealth are limited and which, it may be hoped, will not be unduly widened, are, of course, new democracy *par excellence*. Equality and fraternity are the new economy's special acquisitions and assets and to these liberty has also to be added for the vast majority of the people are now experiencing freedom which they have never known before, though liberty in the context of the new political structure is subject to real reservations and their mitigation and removal is necessary for fuller realization of democratic spirit. All these facts point to the conclusion that democracy as a spirit of true fellowship and co-operation is a reality in China and gives to the new economy its most distinctive and fruitful character and significance.

As stated already, the communist party is the mainstay of the new economy of China; and though in the constitution of the country, in the organic laws, in structures of its new institutions like the People's Bank, the farming, the trading, the industrial and the credit cooperatives, in the regulations governing the state-owned commercial and industrial enterprises and in the organization of the educational, scientific and cultural institutions there is no specific provision for the communist party or any indication that it is to have the key position in the new economy and its administration, it is yet a fact that the communist party, as stated before, controls and administers the whole economy, no major decision can be taken without its express consent and approval and the main responsibility for defending, managing, regulating, steering and developing the new economy rests upon its shoulders. Most of the important positions in the state structure, the defence forces, the economic enterprises, the mass organizations, the educational and cultural institutions are all held by the members of the communist party, and the latter work under its directives, are subject to its vigilant supervision and can be and are called to account by it for lapses in the discharge of their duties. They receive their assignments from the Party Executive, are responsible to the latter and can be and are transferred to any new assignments, possibly in a very different sphere and of course to any part of the country, and have

to maintain an unblemished record in their private life. With the responsibilities go special obligations which make it necessary for the members to maintain high standard of performance, have to be completely above suspicion as far as possible, be the custodians of the integrity of the Party policy and put it across to the people successfully through their influence and example. The communist party is in fact the ruling party of the country and all levers of authority in the new economy are in its hands.

This is an all-important fact, and it is necessary to understand its significance in relation to the economy as a whole and its place in the 'new democracy.' The Communist Party is a party of members who form it on a voluntary basis, submit to severe tests which are applied to new admissions, are subject to the rules of discipline which are known to be very strict and exacting, have to carry out its decisions without any demur or hesitation and are severely penalized for any tendency to manoeuvre for power, position or any group alliances within the party. It is like all communist parties, a monolithic party,¹ and its members are subject to strict discipline, are under an obligation to obey orders implicitly and carry out party directives and their own ability and initiative are used to win and maintain support for the decisions which are to be put into effect. In June 1956 there were 10.7 million members of the Communist Party, only 1.74 p.c. of the total population, but they represent not only the highest authority but great concentration of power in the country.² Its members like all citizens, are subject to the laws of the state and have

¹ On the 30th anniversary of the communist party in 1951 Mr. Liu Shao-chi gave the following figures in his speech "Our party has now 5,800,000 members. Among these more than 2,700,000 are serving in the armed force, state organs, factories, mines and schools and over 3,000,000 are distributed through the countryside. There are over 600,000 women members and over 1,200,000 young members under the age of 25. These members have built about 250,000 Party branches, the basic organizations of the Party."

² Of the 10.7 millions 1.5 million were workers (14 p.c.) 7.4 million peasants (69.1 p.c.) 1.3 million intellectuals (11.7 p.c.) and .5 million others (5.2 p.c.) 10 p.c. of the total members of the party were women. It is clear that, in spite of the increase of number of workers in the Party, it still largely remains a party of peasants.

no exemptions, privileges or special dispensation for their benefit; but all the same they, as members of the communist party, are in a very special position, they are not a state within a state, but its very core—the force which moves it, keeps it on the rails, sets its direction, regulates its speed, assesses its results and determines its future course. The Communist Party is completely autonomous, is not subject to any regulations and is accountable only to itself. This description of the functions and position of the communist party can be cited to support the view, which is sincerely held by its critics, that the Chinese economy is really a totalitarian economy, its democracy is only a veneer and the communist party, which in itself is a totalitarian organization and completely controls the economy, represents irresponsible power which is used without any reference to the wishes of the people. This view directly contradicts the conclusion of the preceding paragraphs and has to be examined with care.

The authoritarianism implicit in the constitution and working of the communist party is not denied by the communists themselves, is considered necessary because the party is taken to be vanguard of the revolution and dictatorship a necessary part of it; it has to assume the leading role in inaugurating and carrying out the revolution because without it neither its success can be ensured nor counter-revolution effectively combated. The communist party has, according to this view, to be a well-knit and disciplined party otherwise it would not be equal to its historic tasks. Its history shows that without strict discipline it could not have won the position it has won for itself against the overwhelming odds; and even now the immensity of the task which it has undertaken makes it necessary and the dangers to which their country is exposed makes it essential that its members should maintain and jealously guard the solidarity of the party, and directives of the latter be followed without question. The communist party, having been the decisive factor in bringing the revolution to the present level of its achievement, has to complete it by guiding its development step by step and realising its possibilities to the full. A well-organized and a well-disciplined Marxian party is, on the

assumption on which the Communist party has been and is acting, indispensable for the success of the Marxian revolution in China. The point, however, which needs to be clarified, if party like the communist party is needed in the existing circumstances in China, is whether its existence and operation on the Marxian premises is compatible with political, social and economic democracy. If parliamentary democracy is not to be taken as the only form of democracy or its highest or final expression, the underlying principles and working of the communist party have to be appraised from a broader standpoint than the one which is held valid within the limits of a parliamentary political system. The communist party having created the revolution in China and brought it to its present position, cannot, from the broader standpoint, be treated merely as an organ of totalitarianism and in its working and effects an anti-thesis of democracy.

The strength of the communist party and its success has been due to its having identified itself with the people, given them self-confidence and the capacity to understand and defend their interests and worked with earnestness and clear purpose for their well-being. That in China it has been and is a party of the people and worked with a single-minded devotion for their welfare and liberation is borne out by the facts of the Chinese history since 1934, and even 1921. The Long March is not only an epic performance in itself but a measure of the devotion of the communist party to the needs and the good of the people. Throughout the years of the struggle upto 1949 they have served their country and people with perseverance and a real spirit of consecration and shown understanding and organizing capacity of a high order. Their rise to power has materially changed the situation; but the results being what they are, their interest in and efforts for promoting the well-being of the people have not, it is evident, in any way abated. The fact that they are the ruling party has created new problems, the problem of guarding the party against the corrupting effects of power, the problem of educating the new and younger members of the party, whose proportion has been and is increasing, and training them to realise and maintain high standards in performing the much more

complicated tasks of administering the country and developing and completing the revolution and lastly the problem of maintaining living contact with the people and fulfilling their tasks with their intelligent co-operation, full support and largely through their efforts. The communist party, it is clear from the published documents, is fully aware of the importance of their new problems and has succeeded in a large measure in making the necessary re-adjustments. The communist party is in power, its members are occupying almost all important posts and, as stated above, all levers of authority in the new economy, are in their hands. They are, however, still the peoples' party; their devotion to their needs and their future has not diminished and they are making special efforts to maintain their confidence, mobilize them for their new tasks and develop their innate capacities to the utmost. If totalitarianism means coercive imposition of policies and views on supine or resentful people, the communist party is not in that sense, totalitarian in its objects and methods. Its efficient organization and firm faith are known to be very necessary for effective action, but without active co-operation and understanding on the part of the people, they also know, they would not be adequate for their tasks, and this knowledge has stood them in good stead in dealing with the people and their problems.

Moreover, it is a part of their working theory that they have to sum up the experience of the people and learn from them before they can lead them with success. Close contact with the people is held to be necessary not only for winning and maintaining their confidence but getting insight into their common experience, understanding its significance and using it fully for the development of their work. An attitude of humility towards the people is being constantly enjoined upon the members of the communist party and they are required to avoid with the utmost care 'commandism' i.e. the use of dictatorial methods in the performance of their duties. For a party in power and in a dominant position, it is not easy not to dictate measures or persuade the people to adopt them through their own understanding of their need and importance; and the fact that continuous warnings are still necessary against re-

lapsing into this habit shows that the temptation to follow the line of least resistance and demanding acquiescence rather than winning co-operation cannot unoften be resisted in practice. The general approach, however, is clear, and the norms of conduct are reported to be mainly determined by it. In the working of the Party itself the need for 'internal democracy' is emphasised and is, according to the available accounts, largely practised. Solidarity of the party is not taken to mean the suppression of dissent or complete conformity in thought. All important decisions of the Party are, according to the established procedure, preceded by free and full discussion at all levels and are taken on the basis of the greatest measure of common agreement. The majority opinion prevails, the minority has not only to accept it but to carry it out loyally; and once the directive is issued, all have to present a common front in words and deeds. The difference between this process and the process ordinarily adopted in what is generally known as democratic formulation of policies is that the dissentients are expected to merge their own opinion in the final opinion of the Party as a whole and put into effect the latter, as stated above, with unquestioning loyalty. All these considerations indicate that taking the communist party, as it is, with its faith, organization, premises, position and its *modus operandi*, it is in its constitution, working, aims and practices not a negation of democracy but its specific though imperfect expression.

Being avowedly a party which stands for 'dictatorship' as it understands it, its ways and methods need to be understood, interpreted and assessed in the entire context of its theory, practice, performance and the fruits of its action. The fact that the new economy of China has been created by the communist party and its continuous assistance, guidance, vigilance and organized strength are needed for sustaining and developing it, is the basic fact of the situation and is not a matter of opinion. The fact that the Party has so much power and has certain premises of thought and action has its inherent limitations which are different but not distinctly more serious than the limitations of the alternative premises of thought and action. Its position and functions being an integral part of the new economy of China, it has to be understood as such and

in the context of the economy as a whole. It may be hoped with experience, growing sense of security, easing of world tensions and maturity of revolutionary thought and practice the communist party will also acquire a more balanced and objective understanding of its own position and also greater poise, catholicity and appreciation of the vital need for and importance of freedom for growth in a socialist society. It has to learn to see itself as others see it. That would be an indication of the growth, maturity and realization of the need for constant practice of criticism and self-criticism' on which so much stress is laid in the internal administration of the party and the economy. It may be that the Party would eventually develop into a non-party organization, evolve the technique of taking decision by general consent without having to take into account the majority and minority views and transcend the need for militancy in theory and practice. That would be in the dialectic line of its evolution when counter-revolution and its contradiction, the revolution, both become a matter of historic past. That, however, can happen, if at all, when the Marxian millenium in which the state will wither away is somewhere in sight, but until then the communist party can increasingly temper its militancy with considerations for the points of view other than its own, create conditions for the development of concord between antagonistic elements in the community and extend more and more the area of international understanding and agreement. This is the direction in which the Chinese economy has to move on its own working hypothesis, and the sooner it moves through the deliberate action of the communist party, the prime-mover of the economy, the better it would be for its growth and the fulfilment of its avowed inner purpose.

The points mentioned above are already receiving consideration in China. After XX Congress of the communist party in Soviet Union and subsequent events in the countries of Eastern Europe it has become more urgent than ever to realise that there are very serious dangers inherent in the power and position of the communist party, and even terror as an instrument of policy can be and has been condoned in practice in the name of democratic centralism and led to re-

volting miscarriage of its real purpose. Experience of the Soviet Union has a great negative as well as a positive value, and it is as necessary to learn from the former as from the latter. With greater balance of power already attained by the communist countries, it is and should be possible for them to emphasize the importance and need for freedom of thought and expression, not only permit but also promote diversity of views and take stern measures against arbitrary exercise of power and its gross abuse in practice. Regular periodical meetings of the party at different levels, for which specific provision has been made recently in the new constitution of the Communist Party of China, would be an important step in 'democratization,' but the spirit in which it works would be far more important than the changes in the constitutional provisions. The recent events have carried such a clear warning against 'monolithic' character of the party becoming a real nightmare; and it is necessary to underline the importance of civil liberties, of internal democracy of the Party and of creating an atmosphere in which thought is really free and can be creative in the best sense of the word.¹ Allowing for imper-

¹ A reference to Chairman Mao's Statement made on February 27, 1957, which has been widely publicised, is needed to indicate the present position in this regard. The cardinal point of the Statement, to quote the author's own words, is that "in settling matters of ideological nature or controversial issues among the people, we can only use democratic methods, methods of discussion, of criticism and education, not coercive or high-handed methods." This statement not only permits dissent but regards it essential for growth; and 'blossoming of a hundred flowers and contending of a hundred schools' to use the figures of speech used in this Statement, can be taken to point to need of higher unity through diversity of views and freedom of expression.

After the statement was made a debate has been in progress in China. On the one hand the Communist Party has embarked upon what is called self-rectification campaign, i.e. it is inviting criticism of its measures, policy, personnel and is reported to have taken corrective measures against the mistakes which can be brought home to it through free and fair criticism. On the other hand a large number of 'the rightists'—mostly 'middle of the road' intellectuals—have come in for severe criticism owing to their actions, according to the official view, being directed against socialist transformation and the leadership of the Communist Party. The criticism of the rightists' has assumed large dimensions and taken a very severe form.

In the context of the existing situation it is quite clear that

fections of all revolutions in practice the stress on what are ordinarily called democratic values would be a real service in the context of the existing situation and the needs of the future. This is as essential for the healthy development of the economy as for the growth of the community itself. The fact that to so many freedom under communism seems to be a contradiction in terms is of primary importance for re-valuation of its theory and practice. The problem of right relation between freedom and authority, which has been found full of perplexities in every social order, becomes even more difficult

displacement of the Communist Party and reversing of socialist transformation are not only impracticable but also undesirable. Rectification of the policies and the pattern of behaviour of the Communist Party is called for but can be carried out with advantage only within the constitutional framework of the country which definitely provides for and enjoins socialist transformation and leadership of the Communist Party. Parliamentary system, as stated already, has its merits but also its limitations. Any way, any attempt to introduce it in China at present cannot but be resisted and would show a lack of understanding of the real significance of the historical sequence of events.

It is, however, a matter of the utmost importance that with the decreasing sense of insecurity there should be a definite abatement of the dictatorial character of the regime and to use the Chairman's words again 'contradiction among the people' should be resolved by democratic methods, i.e. "far from compelling them to do this or that" complete reliance must be placed on 'the democratic methods, education and persuasion. This education is self-education among the people and criticism and self-criticism is the fundamental method of self-education.' Chairman Mao's view that 'socialist society grows more united and consolidated precisely through the ceaseless process of correctly dealing with and resolving contradictions' has to be increasingly acted upon and the use of coercive methods reduced to the very minimum. "Struggle in the ideological field" has to be waged but "crude, coercive methods should not be used in this struggle but only the method of painstaking reasoning." (Mao's words.)

This is the right lead and has to be followed with understanding and determination if the Chinese economy is to transcend its limitations. It is not possible for the Marxists to grant that non-Marxian 'world outlook' can also provide a valid basis for socialist transformation; but the assumption, that it (non-Marxian world outlook) may, must necessarily be part of democratic process. At any rate, painstaking reasoning; for which Chairman Mao puts in earnest plea, must be taken to imply that the non-Marxism outlook is perfectly legitimate even if its validity is open to question from the Marxian standpoint and has to be given its due consideration.

in the revolutionary context. A revolution which can go beyond the limitations of its history, and acquire confidence in its capacity to face the future has to find a way of dealing with and solving this problem. There is no practical alternative to the Communist Party in China; and its achievements indicate that it may be able to realize the substance of democracy in spite of the fact that a parliamentary system cannot be introduced or developed in the concrete situation which exists in China. It may, provided the future events are favourable, be possible to work out a real *modus vivendi* in which authority and freedom become really complementary in practice and not mutually exclusive in any sense of the word.

This object is of special importance in the working and the development of the economy and has to be steadily kept in view. Now that a framework of a socialist society has already been created in China through transformation of industry, trade, agriculture and handicrafts, it is essential that the problem of economic democracy, of the development of social techniques, of the flexible management of economic enterprises on a truly co-operative basis, of economic differentiation and integration, of the preservation of human values in the working of the planned, regulated and controlled economy, of combating bureaucracy in economic administration and similar other issues should be faced and solved. It is admitted that experience of the Soviet Union is, in this respect, only of partial value, and she has in practice in economic sphere also committed very grave errors. Value of her pioneer work lies in the fact that its shortcomings, serious or otherwise, have to be and should be consciously provided against. An objective analyses of the Soviet economy, its successes and failures, is necessary for the purpose; experience of other countries can and should also be drawn upon freely and the unfoldment and fulfilment of the purposes of the new economy should be realized with increasing adequacy. Conditions in China require that it should not only avoid mistakes of the Soviet Union but also make contributions of her own to the development of the theory and practice of a socialist economy in the making. Planning, administrative co-ordination, working of the price system, supervision of the masses over the

state organs and economic enterprises and many other cardinal features of the new economy raise issues which can be dealt with only by a truly scientific approach—i.e. without any doctrinaire assumptions or inhibitions. Future of the economy would largely depend upon the success with which these problems are faced and creatively solved. Re-education of millions of people, who have been recently brought into socialist economy, needs organizational work, but more than that it requires understanding of and social efficiency in dealing with human beings both in mass and as individuals. Increase in production and the introduction and development of new techniques in agriculture and industry are important, but even more important are the social techniques of changing men's minds, attitudes and patterns of behaviour and developing an economy, which would realize fully 'socialist values' and reduce the risk of deviations from them to the very minimum. This is necessarily a 'slow and prolonged' process and future of the economy, to repeat, would mainly depend upon the success with which it is completed.

Planned socialist transformation of the country raises the issues referred to above which would tax the resourcefulness and capacity for integrated advance in many directions on the part of the topmost leaders of the Chinese economy. Among them, as stated above, the most significant and really of the most fundamental importance is the problem of the transformation of the erstwhile independent agricultural and industrial producers who were until recently in overwhelming majority, into consenting active members of a socialist society. It has been estimated that there were about 110 million agriculture farms in China and about 20 million independent artisans and craftsmen. Socialist transformation of these small, dispersed units of production presents one of the most difficult problems of social construction and re-organization. There can be hardly any difference of opinion that formation and development of the co-operatives is the right road to the goal of bringing these millions of independent producers with their own private means of production into the framework of a socialist society, but that does not make the problem any easier or guarantee that its inherent difficulty will not create

serious obstacles in the way of their socialist transformation. This point is fully understood in China and its importance appreciated. In the words of Lenin these millions of "small commodity producers cannot be driven out or crushed, they can and must be remoulded and re-educated by very prolonged, slow, cautious organizational work," for "the force of habit of millions and tens of millions is a most terrible force. It is a thousand times easier to vanquish the centralized big bourgeoisie than to vanquish the millions of small owners; and yet they by their ordinary everyday imperceptible, elusive demoralizing activity achieve the very results which the bourgeoisie need and which tend to restore the bourgeoisie." This point is even more forcefully brought out when Lenin states that "small production engenders capitalism and the bourgeoisie continuously, daily, hourly, spontaneously and on a mass scale." This view has been fully accepted in the programme of the transformation of the Chinese economy and accounts for the planned accelerated development of the farming, industrial and trading co-operatives. In the Soviet Union owing to the urgency of the situation the pace had to be forced in this respect and created, as is well known, severe strains in its economy. Collectivization of agriculture is a more radical measure than its co-operativization; but even the latter is a change of such far-reaching significance and has to reckon with, in the words of Lenin with "the force of habit, the strength of small production for those small commodity producers by their ordinary, every day imperceptible, elusive activity' engenders capitalism all the time" and have to be re-moulded and re-educated completely before China can be made safe for socialism.

This transformation is in progress, its tempo is increasing the increasing industrialization of the country, adds greatly to its urgency and importance and the growing population make it all the more imperative that the change should be completed with the utmost speed and without causing any serious dislocation of the economy. In the transformation are inherent the problems of the displacement of labour on a mass scale, the need for finding fruitful subsidiary and even primary occupations for

labour whose disguised unemployment would, through this change, become massive guiseless unemployment, the problem of more even territorial distribution of population and of reclamation of soil on a much more extensive scale. All these problems raise the organizational problem of great immensity. China having embarked on socialist revolution to quote from Lenin again, 'as a result of turning point in history,' has to go ahead with this transformation. Mao Tse-tung has recently made it quite clear that there can be no turning back in the transformation of the small commodity producers. If force as a major instrument of social policy has, both from practical and ethical standpoint, to be renounced as a method of this socialist transformation—and the Soviet experience clearly points to the conclusion that it should be—the situation becomes really a great challenge, and if the Chinese can meet it with success, they would be rendering a great service not only to themselves but also to many countries in the world for still dispersed production by multitudes of owners is very widespread and is very seriously blocking the advance of socialism. It may be hoped that it will be understood that real problem is not technical but essentially human. Advance of technique may make it possible through distribution of power on a decentralised basis to have small but efficient and low cost units of production on a wide scale in industry and agriculture and therefore production which provides scope for decentralized initiative; but what is needed for this transformation is not only decentralized production, initiative or direction, but change in small owners' force of habit, concentration on personal gain and complete disregard of the interests of the community. Peasant proprietors and small artisans have many admirable qualities which need to be fostered and preserved, but the capacity to see the 'contradiction between individual ownership and socialized production' is not one of them. They are the most tenacious property-minded producers and are as a rule lacking completely in understanding of the wider aspects of production under modern conditions. They do not realize that small properties are, in the existing circumstances, incapable of giving security, economic independence, freedom from exploitation or decent living. Socialism is even

more necessary for them than for the industrial proletariat, but they have been and are so conditioned that they cannot see this point. This fact makes it all the more essential that if capitalism is not to be 'engendered' continuously, they should pool their property, skill and interests and undertake production on socialist lines. The urgency of the need, however, to repeat, does not remove the enormous difficulties in the way of this change. The latter is, it has been clearly realized in China, immediately called for and can be accomplished only by a constructive social endeavour on a vast scale. Future of socialism in China depends upon the successful completion of this task without having recourse to coercive processes on any significant scale.

The new economy of China expresses, promotes, realizes and defends the new faith in China; and it is professedly an economy not only sure of its position and prospects, but its builders, as those of the Soviet economy, are convinced that it is prototype of world economy of the future. Revolutions always are created and carried out on the assumption that they have discovered the final truth and the world is to be redeemed through it. From the theoretical standpoint, the position is entirely wrong as a statement of the Marxian credo for according to the latter, once pre-history ends and history begins, there should and can be no limit to what human mind can discover, know, achieve and ascend to. In practice however every revolution is limited by the necessity of having to build anew on the debris of the past and assumes that it has a key or rather *the* key to the future, and once it is applied, regenerate man would emerge and follies of the past would never be repeated or hamper progress. The Chinese revolution is no exception to this rule; and as it has already achieved so much, it believes that nothing is beyond it and the revolutionary dreams will certainly come true. As it has never been and cannot be otherwise, it is no criticism of the Chinese revolutionaries that they do not know their limitations of even some of the less obvious implications of their own dialectics. The new economy has been launched, its outline is fairly clear, its results have brought great gains and considerable improvement in the condition of the people; it has given con-

fidence to the masses who were almost in a state of despair, thrown up leaders of great eminence and creative power and produced momentum which so far shows no signs of abating. The economy is being steered by the men who do not show the slightest disposition to rest on their laurels, have, in spite of their confidence and firm conviction, genuine humility and are willing to learn from experience and their own mistakes. The historic importance of the revolution in China and the economy, which it has brought into being and is building up with such speed and care for the fundamentals, provide a reasonable assurance that though it has still to go a long way, it will not come up against insurmountable difficulties—at least not through any fault of its men. The economy has just started on its own career, has only defined its tasks, taken a stock of its position and planned its future. It is in its interest, in the interest of Asia and in the larger interest of the world that it should realise its possibilities and make the six hundred millions, for whom it is designed, a force for real good, primarily through the full utilization of their human and material resources. The new economy of China is a great historical process, and it can well be hoped that the vistas which it has opened for itself will broaden out really into a new epoch for itself, and through parallel, though not identical, developments in other countries, also a new epoch for the world. The Chinese themselves are acting upon the assumption that the revolution, its achievements and experience are an event of world importance. This assumption is obviously true. It is essential to co-operate with the people of China, to give them an assurance that they can count upon the benevolent interest, and if possible active assistance of other peoples, in realising their destiny. The distorting effect of hostility to it, to the extent to which it does exist, has to be mitigated and, if possible, dispelled. Understanding of the new economy, would, it may be hoped, remove suspicion, give a real appreciation of its achievements and perspective and promote good will and international understanding.

