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Source: *The China Quarterly*, No. 2 (Apr. - Jun., 1960), pp. 16-34

Published by: [Cambridge University Press](#) on behalf of the [School of Oriental and African Studies](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/651437>

Accessed: 20/10/2010 09:00

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DEBATE : Part 2

The Legend of "Maoism" (concluded)

By KARL A. WITTFOGEL

The second part of our debate on the originality of Mao Tse-tung contains the conclusion of Prof. Wittfogel's The Legend of "Maoism," including a documentary annex, and Prof. Schwartz's reply, The Legend of the "Legend of 'Maoism.'"

In the first part of this article I argued that the "Maoist" thesis is a "Maoist" legend. It is so because it is based on a false concept of Marxist-Leninist orthodoxy. And it is so also for two other reasons. Contrary to "Maoist" assertions, Mao in his Hunan Report did not outline a concept for a Communist-led peasant-supported revolution; and he did not, in 1940, present himself as an original top-ranking Marxist-Leninist theoretician.

The study of Mao's behaviour during and immediately after the first Kuomintang-Communist United Front is valuable for an understanding of Communist ways of exploiting national revolutionary (anti-imperialist) movements. In the mid-twenties Mao, a vigorous young Communist, unhampered by a deep knowledge of Marxism-Leninism,⁹² occupied several high posts in the Kuomintang, which from 1923 on the Communists were permitted to join, not *en bloc*, but as individuals. In 1925 Mao was the editor of the K.M.T. magazine, *Political Weekly*,⁹³ and from 1925 to 1926 he was acting head of the propaganda department of the K.M.T.⁹⁴ At that time he was also an alternate in the Central Committees of both parties. And while in his autobiographical account he depicts himself early in 1927 as essentially combating the timid agrarian policy of the Communist Party,⁹⁵ he continued to work actively in and with

⁹² His later statement that from 1924 the Chinese Communists "only vaguely" understood the theory of the peculiarities of the Chinese revolution (Mao Tse-tung, *Selected Works*, 4 vols. (New York: International Publishers, 1954), Vol. III, p. 112 [hereafter cited as Mao, SW]), did not do justice to such mature Communists as Ch'en Tu-hsiu, but it was probably true enough of the young Mao.

⁹³ Edgar Snow, *Red Star Over China* (New York: Random House, 1938), p. 143 (hereafter cited as Snow 1938).

⁹⁴ See *Protocol of the Second National Congress of the K.M.T. (Chung-kuo kuo-min-tang ti erh tz'u ch'üan-kuo tai-piao-hui hui-chi-lu)* (Canton, 1926), p. 43. As acting head, Mao obviously ran the department. Hence he was substantially correct when, in his account to Snow, he claimed to have been "chief of the Agitprop department of the Kuomintang" (Snow 1938, p. 143).

⁹⁵ Snow 1938, p. 144.

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the Kuomintang. A photograph in the *People's Tribune*, Hankow, of March 18, 1927, reveals that Mao participated in the Third Enlarged Plenary Session of the Central Executive Committee of the K.M.T. This conference got under way on March 10; that is, little more than a week after Mao completed his Hunan Report.⁹⁶

Forgoing in this context a detailed analysis of the textual history and the political substance of Mao's Report,⁹⁷ I shall deal primarily with facts that have a direct bearing on the "Maoist" argument.

The text of Mao's Hunan Report as presented in the *Documentary History* is based on a Chinese edition, dated 1944⁹⁸: it comprises only the first section of the document—Chapters I and II. The second section—Chapter III, entitled "The Fourteen Great Deeds"—is more than twice as long. Its fate during the time of the first civil war and the Sino-Japanese War is obscure, but it appeared again at the end of 1947.⁹⁹ The post-1947 editions generally give both sections, including several pages of statistics in the second. In 1951 there began to appear in Chinese an official edition of Mao's *Selected Works* revised—and often substantially revised—by Mao himself. Volume I of this edition, dated 1951, gives both sections of the Hunan Report without the statistics, which are politically irrelevant, but with certain textual changes, which have considerable political significance.

Since the "Maoist" thesis is largely based on an interpretation of the first section of the Hunan Report, I shall discuss its "Maoist" (or non-"Maoist") character essentially with reference to this section. When I cite the second section (more exactly: the earliest pre-1951 version of this section at my disposal) or the official 1951 version of both sections, I shall say so.

⁹⁶ On February 28, according to *Hsiang-tao chou-pao*, March 12, 1927, p. 2063.

⁹⁷ For a fuller political analysis, see *Short History*, Chap. V, A, 3. In the not too distant future I hope to give a detailed account of the various versions of the Hunan Report I have located during a search that I began in the early fifties.

⁹⁸ *Documentary History*, p. 495.

⁹⁹ An edition of the Report dated August 1946 published in Luan-nan Hsien (N.-E. Hopei) does not contain the second section. Two 1947 editions of Mao's *Selected Works* are equally deficient, as is a third published in March 1947 by the Chin-ch'achi Central Bureau of the C.C.P. But a supplement to this last collection dated December 1947 gives the full text. An undated edition of the Hunan Report by the Chi-tung branch of the Hsin-hua Book Company included Chap. III with an editorial note on the last page stating that this section had "very recently" been "recopied" (from an unidentified source, perhaps the just-mentioned December 1947 Supplement), but that the original text had "not yet been found."

The rediscovered text of December 1947 contains several passages which by Communist standards are embarrassing and which have been deleted in the official version of 1951. See Mao's story that as a student he had considered the peasants "stupid and hateful people" and his remark that the revolutionary cadres were riding in sedan chairs perpetuating for themselves the privileges denied to others (Mao Tse-tung, *Hsüan-chi* [Chin-ch'a-chi, ed., no place, 1947], Supplement I, pp. 37 and 33 [hereafter cited as Mao 1947]). I therefore believe that the 1947 text of the second section substantially reproduced the peculiarities of the original piece.

The basic features of the alleged "Maoist" policy are stress on Communist leadership—or struggle for leadership—in the national revolution and emphasis on the peasantry as the main force of this revolution which, as the executor of the agrarian revolution, is organized and led by the Communists. In his Hunan Report Mao entirely disregards the first issue, and he avoids discussing the agrarian revolution, which is the core of the second. These omissions are easily understood if we remember the curbs the Chinese Communist Party imposed on itself to keep its United Front with the Kuomintang intact.

From the moment the United Front was established, and in conformity with Moscow's directives, the Chinese Communists accepted the K.M.T. as the leading party. And although by the close of 1926 the Communist position in the mass organizations was quite strong, Stalin hesitated to urge a change that might endanger the alliance. At an Enlarged Plenary Session of the Communist International in November of that year, he insisted that, for the time being, "the Chinese Communists ought to remain in the Kuo Min Tang and intensify their work in it."¹ And while pointing to the leadership of the Communist Party as a future goal, he made it clear that this was not the issue then. Designating the Chinese youth—students, young workers and peasants—as a force of the greatest importance, he declared that it "might drive the revolution forward with giant strides, if the young people were brought under the ideological and political influence of the Kuo Min Tang."²

This background goes far to explain why Mao in his Hunan Report does not raise the issue of Communist leadership. In the first section of the pre-1951 version, the Communist Party is not even mentioned. One reference to "the Party"³ manifestly pertains to the Kuomintang.⁴ In the second section one passage mentions both parties, but the Kuomintang is placed before the Communist Party.⁵

Nine years later Mao claimed that he wrote his Report for the "Central Committee,"⁶ probably meaning the Central Committee of the C.C.P. But whoever the official recipient was, Mao obviously did not intend it to be read exclusively by the C.C.P. since the account stresses political aims shared by the Communists and the Left Kuomintang.

¹ *Inprecor* 1926, p. 1583.

² *Inprecor* 1926, p. 1584.

³ Mao Tse-tung, "Hu-nan nung-min yüen-tung k'ao-ch'a (Report of an Investigation into the Peasant Movement in Hunan)," *Hsiang-tao chou-pao* 1927, p. 2067 (hereafter cited as Mao 1927); cf. *Documentary History*, p. 89.

⁴ This is confirmed by a footnote to this passage in the official 1951 edition (Mao Tse-tung, *Hsüan-chi* [Peking: Jen-min ch'u-pan shih, 1951], p. 46 [hereafter cited as Mao, HC]; Mao, SW I, p. 302).

⁵ Mao 1947, p. 30; Mao, SW I, p. 48.

⁶ Snow 1938, p. 144.

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Moreover, in the first sections Mao exhorts "all revolutionary parties" to face up to the leadership test presented by the rising peasant movement. And in the same context he gives advice on how to improve the peasant policy of "the revolutionary régime,"⁷ a designation which the authors of the *Documentary History* quite correctly interpret as connoting "the Wuhan government"⁸—that is, the national-revolutionary régime in Wuhan run by the Left Kuomintang and supported by the Communists. In a passage in the second section Mao addresses himself directly to "the revolutionary authorities in Hunan."⁹

Mao's attitude was that of a Communist leader who, as a high-ranking functionary in the Kuomintang, was closely co-operating with the Wuhan government and its principal provincial units. Quite appropriately, he was more cautious in his Report than the Comintern strategists had been at the November session (there the goal of Communist leadership in the Chinese revolution was proclaimed not only by Stalin, but also by the Chinese delegate, T'an P'ing-shan).¹⁰ Quite appropriately also, after the first section of the Hunan Report had appeared on March 12 in the C.C.P. Weekly, a condensed version including details from the second section appeared on March 15 in *Chinese Correspondence*, "Weekly Organ of the Central Executive Committee of the Kuomintang."¹¹

But in the vicissitudes of a shifting Communist line the correct policy of today may be rejected as "rightist" tomorrow. When Mao prepared the official version of his *Works*, he obviously felt that in February 1927 he should have raised the leadership issue. Hence the original omission is mended in the 1951 version of the Hunan Report. We find there one direct reference to Communist leadership in the first section,¹² and one equally direct and a few oblique references in the second section.¹³ Thus a basic feature of "Maoist" policy appeared in Mao's Hunan Report twenty-four years after it was written.

A position that did not involve a Communist drive for leadership on the basis of peasant support did not have to appeal to the peasants by proclaiming an economic revolution, especially the redistribution of the land. When discussing the rural revolution, Mao confined himself primarily to its political aspects. He set no limits on violence in advocating the political attacks against the traditional rural élite (the "village bullies [*t'u-hao*] and the bad gentry"); but in doing so he

⁷ Mao 1927, p. 2063; Mao, SW I, p. 21.

⁸ *Documentary History*, p. 80.

⁹ Mao 1947, p. 26; Mao SW I, p. 42.

¹⁰ *Inprecor* 1926, p. 1591.

¹¹ *Chinese Correspondence*, Vol. II, No. 8 (May 15), p. 10 *et seq.*

¹² Mao, SW I, p. 31.

¹³ Mao, SW I, p. 50; *cf.* p. 48.

was on firm ground, since their overthrow had been requested in January by the C.C.P.¹⁴ (it was requested by the Kuomintang in March).¹⁵ His demand that the peasants be armed¹⁶ was a left deviation in terms of the position taken by the head of the C.C.P. in January¹⁷; but it was in line with policies recommended by the Comintern¹⁸ and the Left K.M.T. in March.¹⁹

Mao's comments on the revolutionary potential of the peasants oscillated between a propagandistic extremism (calling the poor peasants the "vanguard" of the anti-feudal revolution)²⁰ and a certain reserve (ascribing only 70 per cent. of the accomplishments in the national revolution to the peasants).²¹ The "vanguard" formula followed a demagogic pattern invoked by Lenin, Zinoviev and Bela Kun; and the 70 per cent. formula was more cautious than a preceding Comintern appraisal that designated the peasants "the most important and decisive factor of the Chinese national-liberation movement."²² It was notably more cautious than Mao's later remark that the Chinese revolution was "virtually the peasants' revolution."²³

But however Mao may have wavered in his estimate of the peasants' revolutionary potential, he never asked in the Report that it be unleashed through a furtherance of the agrarian revolution. As noted above, the Comintern leaders feared to initiate a course that might shake the C.C.P.'s alliance with the Kuomintang.²⁴ And in December 1926, a month after the above-mentioned meeting of the Communist International, the Plenary Session of the Central Committee of the C.C.P. passed a resolution on the peasant question which, according to a Comintern observer, contained "not a word . . . on an agrarian programme."²⁵ Mao certainly was aware of this reticence when he was studying the Hunan peasant movement. His Report also contained not a word on the core of the agrarian revolution: the land question.

¹⁴ Political Report of the Central Committee of the C.C.P., dated January 26, 1927 (C. Martin Wilbur and Julie Lien-ying How, *Documents on Communism, Nationalism and Soviet Advisers in China 1918-27*, edited with Introductory Essays (New York: Columbia University Press, 1956), p. 433.)

¹⁵ Declaration to the Peasants by the Third Plenary Session of the Central Executive Committee of the K.M.T., March 1927 (*Chinese Correspondence*, Vol. II, No. 7 (1927), p. 9).

¹⁶ This demand was made in the second section of the Hunan Report (Mao 1947, p. 25; cf. Mao, SW I, p. 41 *et seq.*).

¹⁷ N. Nassonov, N. Fokine, A. Albrecht. "The Letter from Shanghai," in Leon Trotsky, *Problems of the Chinese Revolution*, translated by Max Shachtman (New York: Pioneer Publishers, 1932), p. 418 (hereafter cited as Nassonov 1932).

¹⁸ Stalin, W X, p. 21.

¹⁹ *Chinese Correspondence*, Vol. II, No. 7 (1927), p. 9.

²⁰ Mao 1927, p. 2066; *Documentary History*, p. 88.

²¹ Mao, 1927, p. 2065; *Documentary History*, p. 83.

²² *Inprecor* 1926, p. 649.

²³ Mao, SW III, p. 137. Italics mine. As his authority Mao cited Stalin.

²⁴ See Stalin W VIII, p. 384 *et seq.*; X, p. 18; cf. *Inprecor* 1926, pp. 1478 and 1548.

²⁵ Nassonov 1932, p. 418.

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The Comintern later condemned this attitude toward the agrarian revolution as "opportunistic," and Mao probably remembered this criticism when he was revising his Hunan Report. An altered sentence in the second section reads as follows: "An economic struggle should also be started immediately in order that the *land problem and other economic problems* of the poor peasants can be completely solved."²⁶ The italicised words were inserted in 1951.

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These, however, were *curae posteriores*. When Mao's Hunan Report first appeared, his Communist readers were not at all disturbed by the absence of "Maoist" demands that were not then the order of the day. The authors of the *Documentary History*, who present the Report as a manifestation of incipient "Maoism" and basically at odds with the Comintern line, could not help noticing that it was reproduced in Communist publications. In an attempt to explain this fact, they assert that the Communists printed Mao's Report "without comment."²⁷ Was this indeed the case?

At the Eighth Plenary Session of the Executive Committee of the Comintern (May 18–30, 1927)²⁸ the problem of the Chinese revolution played a crucial role in the fight between the leading Stalin faction and the Trotsky opposition. During this session Bukharin, then Stalin's close ally and chairman of the Comintern, mentioned in his discussion of the Chinese question a document to which apparently top-ranking members of the Comintern had access: "Perhaps some comrades have read the report in which one of our agitators describes his trip in Hunan Province."²⁹ Bukharin spoke of the document as "an excellent and interesting description"; and his comments on the Chinese peasant movement and particularly the one passage which he cited verbatim³⁰ indicate that the account to which he was referring was Mao's Hunan Report.

A document distinguished by the unqualified praise of the chairman of the Comintern was bound to be widely distributed in the Communist world. A Russian translation of the first section of Mao's Report appeared under his name some time in 1927 in *Revolutsionnyi Vostok*³¹; and an English translation appeared on June 15, 1927, in the *Communist International*.³² The editors of this magazine, the "Official Organ of

²⁶ Mao, SW I, p. 47. ²⁷ *Documentary History*, p. 78. ²⁸ *Inprecor* 1927, p. 706.

²⁹ *Die Chinesische Frage*. Auf dem 8. Plenum der Exekutive der Kommunistischen Internationale Mai 1927 (Hamburg/Berlin, 1928), p. 12 (hereafter cited as DCF).

³⁰ DCF, p. 13; cf. Mao 1927, p. 2063; *Documentary History*, p. 81.

³¹ No. 2, pp. 107–122. No date.

³² Excerpts from the Hunan Report were published in *Inprecor* 1927, p. 760 *et seq.*, and the Comintern official, Asiaticus, included a German translation of the *Chinese Correspondence* version in his book, *Von Kanton bis Shanghai* (Wien-Berlin, 1928), pp. 273–276.

the Executive Committee of the Communist International," made some textual changes, but they faithfully retained Mao's designation of the poor peasants as the revolutionary "vanguard" (which all later versions also do) and his cautious 70 per cent. formula (which the official 1951 edition omits). On the front page they proudly described Mao's story as "the most revealing report on conditions in the Chinese villages yet published in English."

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Moscow's wish to avoid a premature break with the Left Kuomintang accounts decisively for the caution with which the C.C.P. leaders approached the agrarian revolution. It influenced Mao when he wrote his Hunan Report; and it shaped his attitude as director of the All-China Peasant Federation (sometimes called "Union"), an organisation set up by the Central Committee and the Peasant Department of the Kuomintang on March 27,³³ ten days after the conclusion of the Third Plenary Session of the Kuomintang's Central Committee. In this position, Mao co-operated closely with the Peasant Department of the Kuomintang and the Wuhan government.

The All-China Peasant Federation called for patience when the Hunan peasant and labour organisations were being harshly suppressed by the Wuhan régime.³⁴ It asked the revolutionary peasant organisations "to conduct the movement in such a way as not to disturb or hamper the interest of other classes who are on the same battle front with the peasants."³⁵ Like the C.C.P. and Left Kuomintang, the Federation advocated the confiscation of the land of the "local rowdies, bad gentry and great landowners"; but it also urged the peasants "to place full confidence in the government which has our confidence," and it recommended a system of village self-government,³⁶ which the Comintern-directed emergency conference of the C.C.P. on August 7 branded as "harmful to the revolution."³⁷

This policy, which Mao implemented, does not fit the "Maoist" pattern. The authors of the *Documentary History* who recognise this fact explain Mao's un-"Maoist" behaviour as a manifestation of his "good Party discipline" and his skill in "sham compromise."³⁸ Quite so. Mao, who had manifested his Party discipline in February when he wrote the Hunan Report, continued to do so in May and June when he headed the Peasant Federation.

³³ *People's Tribune*, March 31, 1927.

³⁴ *People's Tribune*, May 28.

³⁵ *People's Tribune*, June 9.

³⁶ *People's Tribune*, June 11.

³⁷ *Documentary History*, p. 112.

³⁸ *Ibid.* p. 100.

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Harold Isaacs, in discussing the latter period, was wrong when he said that Mao then was "the head of the Peasant Department of the Kuomintang," but he was right in claiming that Mao "carried out the policy of keeping the peasants in check while the counter-revolution advanced upon them."³⁹ M. N. Roy, who had headed a Comintern delegation to China in the spring of 1927, stated retrospectively: "The chairman of the Federation of Peasant Unions, Mao Tse-tung, in the critical days of 1927, represented the extreme right-wing view in the leadership of the Communist Party."⁴⁰

Yet Mao cannot be written off simply as a "right-winger." Early in 1926 he stressed socio-economic differences within the peasantry—prematurely from the standpoint of Comintern policy, but probably with a radical intent. And in the Hunan Report he revealed his readiness to promote the political revolution in the villages by military means that, whatever their tactical rationale, can hardly be termed moderate. Mao's "leftist" trends found limited expression in a situation that demanded continual adjustments to the Kuomintang and outright "counter-revolutionary" concessions in the spring and early summer of 1927. It was this kind of operation that the emergency conference of the C.C.P. on August 7 labelled "opportunistic."

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Mao's autobiographical account of 1936 is a first major attempt to remove this stain on his record. Being then the supreme leader of the Party, Mao claimed that he had advocated "a radical land policy and vigorous organisation of the peasantry under the Communist Party" in his article "An Analysis of the Different Classes of Chinese Society."⁴¹ An examination of this article reveals no such suggestions.⁴² He also claimed that prior to the Fifth Congress of the C.C.P. in March–April 1927 he had made "recommendations for a widespread redistribution of land."⁴³ Unfortunately not even the official Party historians offer any evidence to support this allegation.

However, in September 1927, and perhaps because of the August 7 criticism, Mao did pursue a markedly different policy. Professor Schwartz sees this policy as expressing his view that "a judicious co-ordination of military organisation with local peasant uprisings would provide the formula for a country-wide agrarian insurrection."⁴⁴ In

³⁹ Isaacs 1938, p. 397.

⁴⁰ M. N. Roy, *Revolution and Counter-Revolution in China* (Calcutta: Renaissance Publishers, 1946), p. 615.

⁴¹ Snow 1938, p. 143 *et seq.*

⁴² *Chung-kuo nung-min*, March 1926, pp. 1–13.

⁴³ Snow 1938, p. 144.

⁴⁴ Schwartz 1951, p. 100 *et seq.*

essence this is Mao's *post-festum* interpretation of his behaviour. But again history has it otherwise.

According to a resolution passed by the Enlarged Plenary Session of the new (provisional) Politburo of the Central Committee of the C.C.P. in November 1927, the August 7 conference had ordered the Party "to execute the programme of the agrarian revolution and lead the peasants of the four provinces of Hunan, Hupei, Kiangsi and Kwangtung to rise at the time of the autumn harvest and thus to carry on the struggle for the agrarian revolution."⁴⁵ [See Document No. 2, appended to this article.] Mao was delegated to carry out this programme in his home province, Hunan, and in preparing for his task he outlined five policy points, which included the "confiscation of property of small and middle, as well as great, landlords" and the "organisation of soviets." Commenting on these points, Mao told Snow that the organisation of soviets "at that time was opposed by the Comintern, and not till *later* did it advance it as a *slogan*."⁴⁶ He also told Snow that after the campaign collapsed he was dismissed from the Politburo "because the programme of the Autumn Crop Uprising had not been sanctioned by the Central Committee, because also the First Army had suffered some severe losses, and from the angle of the cities the movement appeared doomed to failure."⁴⁷ This statement, which Schwartz takes at face value,⁴⁸ misrepresents both the Soviet position and the reasons for Mao's demotion by the Enlarged Plenary Conference of the Central Committee of the C.C.P. on November 14, 1927.

The Comintern raised the *slogan* of soviets for China not after but before the September uprisings, to be precise on August 9.⁴⁹ And while Mao demanded the *organisation* of soviets before the Comintern did,⁵⁰ he did so apparently in terms of the October Revolution—that is, in terms of a *proletarian* revolution.⁵¹ Thus, if Ch'ü Ch'iu-pai's statement of these events is correct—and the Party historians indirectly confirm it by avoiding the issue—then Mao failed to give his plan for setting up soviets the specific "Maoist" orientation which the Party, under the guidance of the Comintern representative, requested. At this time the Comintern leaders saw the only chance for immediate success in China, not in an October-like, but in a rural insurrection. It was the organisation of *rural* soviets that Stalin in a somewhat involved argument sanctioned on September 27.⁵²

⁴⁵ *Kuo-wen Chou-pao* 1928, No. 3, p. 5.

⁴⁶ Snow 1938, p. 149. Italics mine.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* p. 151. ⁴⁸ Schwartz 1951, p. 101.

⁴⁹ *Inprecor* 1927, p. 1075 *et seq.*
⁵⁰ Ch'ü Ch'iu-pai, *Chung-kuo ko-ming yü kung-ch'an-tang* (the Chinese Revolution and the Communist Party) (no place, 1928), p. 127 (hereafter cited as Ch'ü 1928).

⁵¹ Ch'ü 1928, p. 127.

⁵² Speech on the Political Complexion of the Russian Opposition (Stalin, W X, p. 163).
Cf. also *Pravda* of September 30 (*Inprecor* 1927, p. 1239).

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On November 14, 1927, the Enlarged Plenary Session of the Politburo stressed the desirability of establishing soviet governments in the future in large areas including cities and industrial centres⁵³; and it warned against making the city workers mere appendages of the peasant movements.⁵⁴ But it declared that peasant soviets should be established whenever the rising guerrilla forces in the countryside "can obtain victory and hold out in certain areas."⁵⁵

Under these circumstances the new leaders of the C.C.P. would have been justified technically if they had censured Mao for organising soviets before the Comintern did. But such a course was inadvisable because of the delicacy of the underlying international issue: Stalin's previous reluctance to proclaim soviets in China and Trotsky's denunciation of this policy. Hence the November session concentrated its fire on a mistake which Mao had committed together with a number of other Party functionaries and which the Comintern considered especially grave in the new phase of Chinese Communist strategy: the neglect of the agrarian revolution.

The permanent head of the Hunan Provincial Committee was the Party secretary, P'eng Kung-ta. P'eng therefore was the first target of the part of the November decisions dealing with Hunan. But the ultimate responsibility rested with the commissioner, who, in the Communist chain of command, exercised supreme authority. And this commissioner was Mao.

In the November Resolution on Party Discipline the Politburo stated that it had admonished P'eng Kung-ta to avoid "military opportunism" (meaning: one-sided concentration on military action) and to "make the peasant masses the main force of the insurrection." But this was not done. Because of this improper guidance "the insurrection of the Hunan peasants turned into a failure of pure military opportunism."⁵⁶

Having dealt with the provincial leaders generally and with P'eng Kung-ta particularly, the Resolution proceeded to lay the main blame on Mao Tse-tung as the agent of the Central Committee in Hunan and dismissed him from the Politburo.⁵⁷

We need not accept out of hand the stereotyped Party judgment that Mao was an opportunist. But if in September 1927 he did one-sidedly concentrate on the military aspect of his assignment—and the Party historians offer no evidence to the contrary—we can come to only one conclusion: Mao, who failed to proclaim the so-called "Maoist" strategy in his Hunan Report and who failed to promote this strategy

⁵³ *Kuo-wen Chou-pao* 1928, No. 2, p. 7.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.* p. 6.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* p. 7.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.* No. 3, p. 6.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.* No. 3, p. 7.

as director of the All-China Peasant Federation, implemented in the Autumn Crop Uprisings only one of its two major features: Communist leadership. The other—appealing to the peasants by promising them land—he neglected.

From the standpoint of Leninist strategy his behaviour in September was immature, but not unorthodox. He became more mature and more conspicuously orthodox when, from 1928 on, he rose to ever higher positions and finally to supreme leadership in the Communist Party of China.

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Limitation of space prevents me from demonstrating in detail that Mao during the period of the rural soviets did not lose sight of the long-range goal: return to the cities. Late in 1928 he complained of “an acute sense of loneliness.” He yearned for an extension of the revolution “all over the country.”⁵⁸ In 1929 he drafted plans for seizing Kiangsi, Fukien and Chekiang,⁵⁹ and in a passage written in April 1929, but deleted in 1951, he proposed that within a year “the foundations should be laid for the proletarian struggle in Shanghai, Wusih, Ningpo, Hangchow, Fuchow and Amoy,” with the aim “to lead the peasant struggle in the three provinces of Chekiang, Kiangsi and Fukien. The Provincial Committee of Kiangsi must be sound, and workers’ bases must be vigorously established at Nanchang, Kiukiang, Sian and the Nanchang-Kiukiang Railroad.”⁶⁰ Mao’s protracted stay in the rural areas, first in Central China and then in the North-west, was due not to any peculiar theory of the revolution, but to the limited strength of the Communist forces.

Manifestly then Mao did not “in act” demonstrate his strategic originality when from the winter of 1927–28 on he organised Communist-controlled rural power bases. Nor did he, as the authors of the *Documentary History* suggest, claim theoretical originality when he commented on the peculiarity of the Chinese revolution in his pamphlet, *On New Democracy*, published in Yen-an at the beginning of 1940.

Mao wrote *On New Democracy* in the middle phase of the Sino-Japanese war, after the conclusion of the Hitler-Stalin Pact, which got the European war going and greatly strengthened Moscow. At that time the Chinese Communists were under less pressure to make concessions to the Chinese Nationalists than in the pre-Pact period. In accordance with Moscow’s desire to protect its eastern flank, Mao continued to maintain the anti-Japanese alliance with the Kuomintang, but he

⁵⁸ Mao, SW I, p. 99.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.* p. 126 *et seq.*

⁶⁰ Mao 1947, Supplement IV, p. 98.

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felt free to discuss the future development of China in terms of a not-yet-completed revolution. The second stage of this development was the socialist revolution, but the first and immediately significant stage was the bourgeois-democratic revolution, which looked to the establishment of a democracy. Challenging the political ideas of his Kuomintang allies, Mao stated that the to-be-created order would be a "new" democracy, which would come into being through a new type of bourgeois-democratic revolution. Instead of being led by the bourgeoisie, this new bourgeois-democratic revolution would be led by the proletariat and, being part of the proletarian and socialist world revolution, it would evolve into socialism. [See Document No. 3, appended to this article.]

As noted above, these ideas were initiated by Lenin as early as 1905; and after the Bolshevik Revolution they were further developed by Lenin and Stalin. Both men stressed two important features: (1) the relation between the bourgeois-democratic revolution, Leninist style, and the proletarian world revolution; and (2) the supreme significance of bourgeois-democratic revolutions, Leninist style, for the colonial and semi-colonial countries of the East, including, of course, India and China.

The authors of the *Documentary History* are aware of the Leninist-Stalinist origin of the theory of the new bourgeois-democratic revolution and democracy⁶¹; but they claim that in *On New Democracy* "it is presented to us . . . as a genuinely new contribution to Marxist-Leninist theory—a contribution which had originated in China and which presumably placed its author, Mao Tse-tung, in the ranks of the great theoreticians of Marxism." Presented by whom? "*The presumption is . . . legitimate that the gesture to create a new theory re-emphasising 'the historic peculiarities of the Chinese revolution' originated with Mao Tse-tung himself. It was a gesture with profound implications. It suggested that innovations within the Marxist-Leninist tradition could originate not only in Moscow but in other sectors of the world Communist movement as well; that the tradition is still capable of further 'original' developments which rank in importance with those of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin.*"⁶²

I agree with Messrs. Brandt, Schwartz and Fairbank that a claim by Mao to theoretical originality, however unjustified, would have profound implications. But did Mao really make such a claim? Did he deny or hide the Soviet root of his concept of the peculiarities of China's new bourgeois-democratic revolution? An examination of Mao's *On New Democracy* shows that he did nothing of the kind.

In this work Mao describes the Chinese bourgeois-democratic revolution as part of the proletarian world revolution, and he continues:

⁶¹ *Documentary History*, p. 261.

⁶² *Ibid.* p. 260 *et seq.* Italics mine.

this “correct thesis” of the Chinese revolution was already being propounded in China between 1924 and 1927, but “at that time the meaning of this theoretical proposition was not yet fully expounded, and consequently it was only vaguely understood.”⁶³ Thus Mao does not claim that he created this theory in 1940 or that the Chinese Communists, who were “vaguely” familiar with it since the twenties, created it then. Instead he states: “*This correct thesis [of the Chinese revolution] propounded by the Chinese Communists is based on Stalin’s theory.*”⁶⁴ And to make his point crystal-clear he reproduced two long Stalin quotations, the second tracing the key argument back to Lenin. In a concluding sentence, “From this, it can be seen that there are two kinds of world revolution,”⁶⁵ Mao once more acknowledges that he received his “correct thesis” of the new democratic revolution and the new democracy from Stalin and Lenin.

The avowed purpose of the *Documentary History* is to provide textual documentation for the major developments of Chinese Communism. How then do its authors deal with these passages that are crucial for establishing Mao’s alleged claim to theoretical originality? Very simply indeed. They omit them. After presenting Mao’s exposition of the “correct thesis,” they skip over his remark that it was poorly understood by the Chinese Communists in 1924–27 and over his decisive statement that it was “based on Stalin’s theory.” They also skip over Mao’s quotations from Stalin. The passage they then reproduce begins with the words: “From the above it is clear” (The official translation, as given above, is “From this, it can be seen . . .”). No reader would know from this arrangement that the summarising phrase refers, not to Mao’s presentation of the “correct thesis,” but to its acknowledged Soviet source.

It may be argued that *On New Democracy* is a long pamphlet and that therefore a selective reproduction is entirely legitimate. This is true with one obvious qualification: The selected passages should indicate the major points of the text. And if the introductory note stresses the importance of a certain thesis, then the editors are in honour bound not to omit passages that are crucial to its validity. Anyone may reproduce whatever he wants from Hitler’s *Mein Kampf*, but if he claims that Hitler was not really an anti-Semite and then omits passages that prove the contrary, he would violate fundamental rules of scholarship. And he would distort history as well.

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The authors of the *Documentary History*, who created the “Maoist” myth in 1951–52, had ample opportunity in subsequent studies of Chinese

⁶³ Mao, SW III, p. 112. ⁶⁴ Mao, SW III, p. 112. Italics mine. ⁶⁵ *Ibid.* p. 114.

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thought to correct their errors. But instead of doing so, they kept repeating their key conclusions, which, as we have seen, are based on an inadequate reproduction of Lenin's ideas of 1920 and on the misrepresentation of Mao's behaviour in 1927 and 1940.

In a review article of Mao's *Selected Works*, written in 1955, Schwartz comments on the three first volumes of the official edition with particular reference to "the much-discussed question of Mao Tse-tung's 'originality' or lack thereof."⁶⁶ In "a spot comparison of the Chinese, Russian and English texts" he finds nothing to "suggest any tampering via translation," but "evidence of some tampering with the texts of the various items themselves. At least one deletion of an unhappy phrase has been noted and a detailed comparison of these texts with some of the older butcher-paper editions of Yen-an days may yield more."⁶⁷

In view of the fact that the "Maoist" thesis is predominantly based on the Hunan Report and—in a supplementary way—on the pamphlet *On New Democracy*, it is surprising that Schwartz's "spot comparison" yielded nothing worth mentioning except the deletion of an unspecified "unhappy phrase."⁶⁸ Did Professor Schwartz not notice that what the *Documentary History* offers as Mao's Hunan Report is actually less than one-third of the original document? Did he not notice that two key features of the "Maoist" strategy—Communist leadership and the appeal to the peasants by means of the agrarian revolution—were inserted by Mao only in 1951? Did he not notice that Mao knew the concept of the Chinese bourgeois-democratic revolution as a Comintern concept at least as early as 1928?⁶⁹ And did not a rereading of the text of *On New Democracy* convince him that whatever else Mao did in this pamphlet, he did not present himself as an original theoretician on the Chinese revolution?

Uninfluenced by the new evidence, Schwartz in 1955 still speaks of "the Maoist strategy" as meaning the "concentration on the peasantry, the establishment of rural bases and the build-up of a peasant-based Red Army"⁷⁰; and he also speaks of "Mao's exclusive obsession with peasant bases and guerrilla warfare."⁷¹

⁶⁶ Benjamin Schwartz, "On the 'Originality' of Mao Tse-tung," *Foreign Affairs* XXXIV, No. 1 (October 1955), p. 68 (hereafter cited as Schwartz 1955).

⁶⁷ *Ibid.* p. 67 *et seq.*

⁶⁸ Could this be the 70 per cent. formula that Schwartz and his colleagues consider one of the manifestations of a "Maoist" bent in the Hunan Report? Robert North noted its deletion in 1953 (Robert C. North, *Moscow and Chinese Communists* [Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1953], p. 171), as did Brandt recently (see below, footnote 72).

⁶⁹ See Mao, SW I, p. 99; *cf.* pp. 172, 278.

⁷⁰ Schwartz 1955, p. 70.

⁷¹ *Ibid.* p. 71.

In 1958 a second member of the group, Conrad Brandt, shows a similar unconcern with the mounting evidence. In a monograph on the first period of the Chinese revolution he repeats the claim that in the Hunan Report Mao "put himself on record with a view that conflicted sharply with Moscow's."⁷² In the same year, the senior member of the group, John K. Fairbank, in a revised edition of *The United States and China*, reiterated the two key theses of the "Maoist" school. According to him, Mao in 1927 asserted the vanguard role of the poor peasants "heretically"⁷³; and in *On New Democracy* Mao "put himself on the level of Marx-Engels-Lenin-Stalin as an original contributor to Communist theory."⁷⁴

In 1951-52 the Western world had many illusions—and relatively few data—about the Chinese Communists. However, developments in the last years have made it abundantly clear that Chinese Communism, like its Soviet root and counterpart, is a very complex phenomenon. What are the relations of Chinese Communism to China's traditional society and to the U.S.S.R.? What is the meaning of the recent conflicts between the Chinese Communists and Moscow?⁷⁵

For a variety of reasons the study of the Chinese segment of the totalitarian revolution has been particularly unsatisfactory. Circumstances require that this deficiency be repaired. They require the co-operation of all persons of good will, whatever their previous differences may have been.

The errors of yesterday can prepare us for the insights of tomorrow. They can—if we approach the doctrine and strategy of the totalitarian revolution with the utmost seriousness. Engels once said, "With the

⁷² Conrad Brandt, *Stalin's Failure in China 1924-27* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1958), p. 107. Brandt views the omission of the 70 per cent. formula as a confirmation of the "Maoist" thesis. He tells us: "Mao's mathematics . . . revealed with mathematical clearness how sharply his view of the struggle in China differed from that of Stalin. They revealed more, in any case, than he cared to show to the public once he was in power." Hence, the new editions of Mao's Report "omit the formula which conveyed its meaning too clearly" (*op. cit.* p. 109 *et seq.*).

In a footnote Brandt also states that "an English translation of Mao's report" appears in the *Documentary History* (*op. cit.* p. 209). Thus as late as 1958 he still shows no awareness of the fact that the piece he, Schwartz and Fairbank included in the *History* was not "Mao's report," but less than one-third of it.

⁷³ John King Fairbank, *The United States and China*. New edition. Completely revised and enlarged (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1958), p. 233; *cf.* p. 240 *et seq.*

⁷⁴ *Ibid.* p. 243.

⁷⁵ On a number of occasions and frequently in connection with the problem of Chinese "Titoism" I have discussed these conflicts (see Karl A. Wittfogel, "How to Checkmate Stalin in Asia," *Commentary* [October 1950], p. 338 *et seq.*; Wittfogel 1951, p. 30; Wittfogel, 1954; and *idem.*, "A Stronger Oriental Despotism," *The China Quarterly*, 1960, No. 1).

insurrection one must not play." ⁷⁶ We may well add: With the theory of insurrection one must not play either.

⁷⁶ This famous statement of Engels appeared in one of the articles that were first printed in the *New York Daily Tribune* and later published as *Revolution and Counter-revolution* in Germany, in both cases under Marx's name (*Marx-Engels Lenin-Stalin. Zur Deutschen Geschichte*, Vol. II [Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1954], p. 448). The correspondence between Marx and Engels shows that the series was actually written by Engels (MEGA III, 1, pp. 229, 236, 241, 242, 244, 259, 261, and *passim*). The article with the rules for insurrection is probably the one mentioned in Engels' letter of August 2, 1852 (*op. cit.* p. 365). Lenin, who from 1913 was thoroughly familiar with the Marx-Engels correspondence, disregarded Engels' authorship and ascribed the insurrection formula to Marx (see his article of October 21 (8), 1917, in Lenin, SWG XXI, p. 407 *et seq.*).

Documentation: (1) Lenin on the role of the peasantry in the East

The Russian revolution was an example of how the proletarians, having defeated capitalism and united with the vast diffuse mass of peasant toilers, rose up victoriously against mediaeval oppression. Now our Soviet Republic has to group around it all the awakening peoples of the East and, together with them, wage a struggle against international imperialism.

Here you are confronted with a task which until now did not confront the Communists anywhere in the world: relying upon the general theory and practice of Communism, you must adapt yourselves to peculiar conditions which do not exist in the European countries and be able to apply that theory and practice to conditions in which the bulk of the population are peasants, and in which the task is to wage a struggle not against capitalism but against mediaeval survivals. That is a difficult and unique task, but a very thankful one, because those masses are being drawn into the struggle which until now have taken no part in it, and, on the other hand, because the organisation of Communist units in the East gives you the opportunity to maintain the closest contact with the Third International. You must find specific forms for this alliance of the foremost proletarians of the world with the toiling and exploited masses of the East whose conditions are in many cases mediaeval. We have accomplished on a small scale in our country that which you will accomplish on a big scale in big countries. And that latter task you will, I hope, perform with success. Thanks to the Communist organisations in the East, of which you here are the representatives, you have contact with the advanced revolutionary proletariat. Your task is to continue to see to it that Communist propaganda is carried on in every country in the language intelligible to its people.

It is self-evident that final victory can be won only by the proletariat of all the advanced countries of the world, and we, the Russians, are beginning the work which the British, the French or the German proletariat will seal. But we see that they will not be victorious without the aid of the toiling masses of all the oppressed colonial peoples, and of the Eastern

peoples in the first place. We must realise that the transition to Communism cannot be accomplished by the vanguard alone. The task is to arouse the toiling masses to revolutionary activity, to independent action and organisation, regardless of the level on which they may happen to be; to translate the true Communist doctrine, which was intended for the Communists of the more advanced countries, into the language of every people; to carry out those practical tasks which must be carried out immediately, and to merge with the proletarians of other countries in a common struggle. . . .

[*Address to the Second All-Russian Congress of Communist Organisations of the Peoples of the East, November 22, 1919. "Izvestia" of the C. C. R.C.P.(B) No. 9, December 20, 1919.—From V. I. Lenin. "The National-Liberation Movement in the East." (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1957), pp. 234–235. This speech is referred to in the first half of Prof. Wittfogel's article. See The China Quarterly, No. 1, p. 78.]*

(2) Excerpts from the C.C.P. Politburo Resolution on Political Discipline (November 14, 1927)

(1) The Fifth National Congress of our Party treated political discipline within the Party as a matter of great importance. Only by a most rigorous political discipline can the fighting strength of a proletarian class party be augmented. This is the minimum requirement every community party must fulfil.

(2) Since the August incident this year [the Chinese Communist Party] publicly announced its withdrawal from the National Government and decided that its previous policy of compromise with the leaders of the petty bourgeoisie must be abandoned and that it must resolutely lead the masses of the workers and peasants to rise in armed insurrection. The Conference of August 7 pointed out in greater detail that our Party, having previously committed errors of opportunism, from now on should without the slightest hesitation rely on the strength of the masses and thoroughly execute the program of the agrarian revolution and decide to lead the peasants of the four provinces of Hunan, Hupei, Kiangsi, and Kwangtung to rise at the time of the autumn crop, thus to carry out the struggle of the agrarian revolution.

At this time there should not have been the slightest hesitation in pursuing our policy. However, in the course of the insurrection in the various provinces the leading organs of our Party and the responsible comrades committed many serious mistakes in violation of the strategy. . . .

C. In guiding the uprising of the peasants the Hunan Provincial Committee violated the strategy of the Central Committee even more seriously [than the Kwangtung Provincial Committee]. The Central Committee had pointed out repeatedly that the insurrection in Hunan should rely chiefly on the peasant masses, and it openly reprimanded Comrade P'eng Kung-ta, the Secretary of the Provincial Committee, for having committed the mistake of military opportunism. It asked the Provincial Committee to rectify this mistake and rely on the peasant masses as the main force in the uprising, and to make practical preparations in accordance with the Central Committee's plan for insurrection in Hunan and Hupei. At that

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time, after the argument had gone back and forth, and although in the end Comrade Kung-ta reluctantly agreed, the Provincial Committee, in directing the uprising, still did not rectify its old mistake of military opportunism.

(1) Kung-ta violated the Central Committee's instruction and regarded the uprising as a purely military operation. He made contact only with bandits and troops of various colors without getting the broad peasant masses to rise. Consequently, at the beginning of the uprising only the workers of An-yuan bravely participated in the struggle; the peasant masses of the different regions did not participate at all.

(2) In areas of insurrection there was no agrarian revolution and no [setting up of] political power. Hence the peasants only thought the Communist Party wanted to make trouble, and even the Provincial Committee doubted whether the peasants wanted land. Instead [the Committee] launched the slogan for an eight-hour day.

(3) In areas through which the Peasants' and Workers' Army passed the policy of butchering the local bullies and the bad gentry was not carried out. Hence the peasants regarded it as a guest army on the move. Because of these mistakes in guidance and their problematic results, the peasant insurrection in Hunan was a failure of purely military opportunism. . . .

5. The Enlarged Conference of the Provisional Political Bureau of the Central Committee decides that the above-listed Party organs, which carried out the policy wrongly, and the responsible comrades be punished as follows. . . .

F. The Provincial Committeemen, P'eng Kung-ta, Mao Tse-tung, Yi Li-jung, and Hsia Ming-han, should be deprived of their membership of the Hunan Provincial Committee. Comrade P'eng Kung-ta should be deprived of his alternate membership in the Central Political Bureau and placed on probation in the Party for one year. The Central Committee sent Comrade Mao Tse-tung to Hunan after the August 7 Emergency Conference as Special Commissioner to reorganise the Provincial Committee and carry out the Autumn Uprising policy of the Central Committee. He was in fact the core of the Hunan Provincial Committee. Therefore Comrade Mao should shoulder the most serious responsibility for the mistakes made by the Hunan Provincial Committee. He should be dismissed from his position as alternate member of the Provisional Political Bureau of the Central Committee. . . .

I. Comrade Wang Jo-fei should be reprimanded for the mistakes in leadership he committed on the Party and national levels. . . .

[*Kuo-wen Chou-pao*, Vol. 5, No. 3 (Jan. 15, 1928), pp. 5-7. The above Resolution of the Enlarged Provisional Politburo of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party is one of several documents which the Wuhan garrison of the National Army seized in a raid on December 5, 1927. Soon afterwards the garrison released this and two other resolutions of the November meeting, one concerned with the political situation and one with organisational matters. The *Kuo-wen Chou-pao*, a serious independent weekly, published the three documents on January 8 and 15, 1928, respectively. An introductory note shows that the editors considered the Resolution authentic. Internal and external evidence supports this assumption.

The passages printed above deal with the political goal of the "Autumn Crop Uprisings" and the way in which this goal was accomplished—or disregarded—at the Hunan sector of the campaign, for which Mao Tse-tung, as special commissioner of the Central Committee, was primarily responsible. The document has been translated by Mr. Chao Chen-sung, research assistant of the Chinese History Project.]

(3) Mao's "On New Democracy"

The correct thesis that "the Chinese revolution is part of the world revolution" was propounded as early as 1924-27, during the period of China's First Great Revolution. It was propounded by the Chinese Communists and approved by all who participated in the anti-imperialist and anti-feudal struggle of the time. But at that time the meaning of this theoretical proposition was not yet fully expounded, and consequently it was only vaguely understood.

This "world revolution" refers no longer to the old world revolution—for the old bourgeois world revolution has long become a thing of the past—but to a new world revolution, the Socialist world revolution. Similarly, to form "part" of the world revolution means to form no longer a part of the old bourgeois revolution but of the new Socialist revolution. This is an exceedingly great change unparalleled in the history of China and of the world.

This correct thesis propounded by the Chinese Communists is based on Stalin's theory. . . .

Since writing this article [commemorating the first anniversary of the October Revolution], Stalin has again and again expounded the theoretical proposition that revolutions in colonies and semi-colonies have already departed from the old category and become part of the proletarian-socialist revolution. The article that gives the clearest and most precise explanation was published on June 30, 1925, in which Stalin carried on a controversy with the Yugoslav nationalists of that time. This article, entitled "The National Question Once Again," is included in a book translated by Chang Chung-shih, published under the title *Stalin on the National Question*. It contains the following passage:

"Semich refers to a passage in Stalin's pamphlet *Marxism and the National Question*, written at the end of 1912. It is stated there that 'the national struggle under the conditions of rising capitalism is a struggle of the bourgeois classes among themselves.' By this he is evidently trying to hint that his own formula defining the social meaning of the national movement in present historical conditions is correct. But Stalin's pamphlet was written before the imperialist war, at a time when the national question in the eyes of Marxists had not yet assumed world significance, and when the basic demand of the Marxists, the right to self-determination, was judged to be not a part of the proletarian revolution but a part of the bourgeois-democratic revolution. It would be absurd to ignore the fact that the international situation has radically changed since that time, that the war on the one hand and the October Revolution in Russia on the other have converted the national question from a part of the bourgeois-democratic revolution into a part of the proletarian-socialist revolution. . . . In view of all this, what interpretation can be placed on Comrade Semich's reference. . . . The only interpretation that can be placed on it is that . . . he is . . . failing to take account of the fact that what is correct in one historical situation may prove incorrect in another historical situation." . . .

[*On New Democracy*. "Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung." (London: Lawrence & Wishart, Ltd., 1954.) Vol. 3. pp. 112-114.]