

Mao defied Stalin's principles

China's revolution—twenty years later

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Liberation News Service

Twenty years ago this month, decades of revolutionary struggle in the world's most populous country reached new heights. A new nation was born: the People's Republic of China, based on communist principles and led by a communist party and its revered leader, Mao Tse-tung.

Before the victory of the revolution, China, although technically a republic, was in reality an endless battlefield, a land characterized by chaos.

The people could not think of concerted, united action. Their lot was one of submission and suffering and fear. Already, grim reprisals were practiced against communists and anyone else who dared to challenge the system. Landlords, money-lenders, officials of the corrupt Kuomintang (Nationalist) Party, led by Chiang Kai-shek, and foreign businessmen were the beneficiaries of the opulent Chinese economy — the people did all the work and remained impoverished.

Overcoming this fear and submission was the greatest problem of the party whose task it was to liberate these millions of people. Forging a common will, a common purpose among the peasantry was the great victory of the Chinese Communist Party.

To build the greatest revolutionary force ever known, Mao turned to the peasantry — using example, persuasion and organization — and defying the principles laid out by the Communist International under Stalin. (The Soviet leader wanted the Chinese party to take a more orthodox approach involving the industrial workers; why the Chinese have gone on to praise

Stalin after his death is at best historically inconsistent, at worst opportunism designed to discredit Stalin's successors.)

The Chinese people, under Mao's leadership, expelled foreign invaders and, unlike the nationalist movements which were to sweep Africa in the subsequent decade, the Chinese revolution left no room for a neo-colonialist backslide.

The most genuine tribute paid to the Chinese by their detractors is, in fact, paid unconsciously. China is invariably spoken of today as a unified country. And the measuring sticks applied to her are those used to evaluate efficiently governed nations, not underdeveloped areas.

Something very unusual and special is going on inside China. While not all of it is easy to figure out, some things are clear. The Chinese are hip to the degeneration of socialism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe — they are hip to the bourgeois elements still present in Chinese society. Lenin teaches that after a revolution you have to be hip to that. That's what the "dictatorship of the proletariat" is all about.

In China, too, many leaders were unwilling to follow Lenin's ideas on this subject. There were many indications that a new elite set of mandarins was in the making. That is where the Red Guards came in — dozens, then hundreds and thousands of young people, learning from Mao and loyal to Mao and telling the new would-be fat cats that they must live to serve the people, not themselves.

The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, led by Mao, though initiated and implemented by the Red Guards, was no doubt costly. Disruptive, rude if not overwhelm-

ingly frightening to an older generation, even temporarily harmful to economic growth, the Cultural Revolution is an indicator of the desire of the Chinese to live up to principles of communism, to prevent a handful of selfish people from distorting and eventually destroying the goals of the revolution.

China's extreme self-reliance and apparent isolation from the west, and what seems to us like a bizarre and exaggerated reverence for one man, are a source of confusion to us, though probably not to the Chinese. Perhaps, however, these factors help explain China's strength.

China has been pronounced "isolated" time and again in Moscow and in Washington, but such verdicts have lost meaning. Just as there are state department schemers who fantasize Soviet-American alliances to wipe out China, there are state department schemers thinking of Chinese-American alliances to wipe out the Soviet Union. Every move by Peking in the political and economic sphere has repercussions in Europe, Africa, the Americas and above all, in Asia. Agronomists and merchants watch China carefully. This year the Yuan became the first currency of a planned economy nation to be used in international trade. Young technologists are taught Chinese so that they may study Chinese technical literature. And while some people in the West wave their Red Book without paying attention to the contents, the teachings of Mao Tse-tung are having a serious influence on the revolutionaries of our generation.

The transformation of Mao Tse-tung into a man above all other men makes us uncomfortable, but

there is some consolation. The Red Guard movement and the cultural revolution emerged from the masses of young people, and only after the guards were actively locked in combat with factory managers, school principals and professors did Mao intervene to endorse the movement and nominally assume its leadership. That proved that the people were not afraid to move and that Mao knew how to respect the people, in accordance with his own principles. This is something more than mere hero-worship.

Chinese propaganda speaks much about the need for world revolution. Mao has written that "the final victory of a socialist country requires not only the efforts of the proletariat and the broad masses of the people at home, but also involves the victory of the world revolution and the abolition of the system of exploitation of man by man on the whole globe, upon which all mankind will be emancipated."

China has in fact strained its limited resources to aid liberation movements, especially in Asia and Africa. Chinese aid to Vietnam is also considerable.

But the contradictions are many. The three countries most actively engaged in fighting U.S. imperialism — Vietnam, Korea,

and Cuba — seem to relate better to the Soviet Union than to China, and it would seem that this is more complex than a mere response to Soviet aid. China has aided non-revolutionary governments in Africa and Asia and continues to tolerate two imperialist outposts which it could crush at will: Hong Kong and Macao.

We need not worry too much, however, about China's long-range commitment to fighting imperialism. In Washington, D.C., where imperialism's evil heart beats loud, China is the passionately hated enemy.

The capitalists, and the politicians who serve them, understand full well the significance of China's victory in 1949.

The death knell of the capitalists sounds more or less the same, whether it is the cannon shots of the Aurora in 1917, the victory cries of Chinese peasants in 1949, the splash of a downed CIA airplane at the Bay of Pigs in 1961 or the rifle shots of a Vietnamese sniper in 1969.

As the Chinese joyfully celebrate the 20th anniversary of their revolution, as they strive to build a new society free of exploitation of man by man, people elsewhere are on the move toward freedom. That's what history is all about; that's what the Chinese revolution is all about.

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