

Letter from . . . Kwangchow

Red books and yellow books

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Our route out of China was the reverse of the journey in: a train ride from Kwangchow (Canton) to the Chinese border post of Shumchun, quick clearances at the passport, currency, and customs desks, a short walk over the covered bridge into British territory at Lo Wu, and another train ride to Kowloon. One was conscious of moving from order to relative chaos, but the Union Jack still looked good.

The trains offered time to read, and what could have been more suitable than the two coloured books? On the first page of the *Little Red Book*, or, as it is entitled, *Quotations from Chairman Mao Tsetung*, is the rallying cry, "Workers of all countries, unite!" A photograph shows the late Chairman, aged perhaps in his sixties, with characteristic high forehead, receding hairline, wart on the left side of the chin, and air of kindly benevolence. The table of contents and a note from the anonymous translator introduce the 312 pages of text.

Unlike Jesus, Mao did not preach turning the other cheek, nor did he recommend non-violence in Gandhi's style. His best-known statement, "Every communist must grasp the truth 'Political power grows out of the barrel of a gun,'" has a less well-known but more constructive rider: "We are advocates of the abolition of war . . . but . . . to get rid of the gun it is necessary to take up the gun." He divides war into two kinds, just and unjust, the former being those that advance the interests of communism. (Even Lord Russell regarded the second world war as just, though on different criteria.) Yet, unlike Stalin, Mao stopped the wholesale slaughter of his domestic opponents not long after his accession to power. Thus: "The only way to settle questions of an ideological nature or controversial issues among the people is by the democratic method, the method of discussion, of criticism, of persuasion and education, and not by the method of coercion and oppression."

Cultural revolution

Against this background of Mao's personal mixture of kindness and ferocity, how can one interpret the great proletarian cultural revolution? According to Chairman Hua, Mao pointed out the absolute necessity of cultural revolution for "consolidating the dictatorship of the proletariat, preventing capitalist restoration, and building socialism." By definition, anybody who places self ahead of the group or the State is bourgeois, and must be reformed, by criticism if possible. "The historical period of socialism" is a period of indefinite length

stretching to a future when class enemies have ceased to exist, when the present tendency of capitalist, imperialist, and bourgeois elements to reappear has ceased forever—in short, when *Homo sapiens* as he has existed up to now is replaced by *Homo communistus var sinensis*. (Rather like Nirvana—that state of beatitude reached only after the extinction of individuality and desire, but requiring many incarnations, or the much more easily accessible paradise, attained after only one carnal passage.) Was Mao, already an old man in 1966, impatient to see his New Man? Did he hope to advance his coming by not very bloody revolutionary measures?

Stanley Karnow devotes most of his book *Mao and China* to a study of the cultural revolution, which he dates as lasting from 1966 to 1969. Yet Chairman Hua considers that the revolution ended only in 1976, with the smashing of the gang of four. Looking forward, he states: "Political revolutions in the nature of the cultural revolution will take place many times in the future. We must follow Chairman Mao's teaching and . . . bring about the triumph of socialism over capitalism and eventually realise our ultimate goal—communism."

Chairman Hua's thoughts are expressed in his political report to the Eleventh National Congress of the Communist Party of China, delivered in a speech on 12 August 1977 and published in a yellow-covered book, available in several languages. Hua's speech occupies 115 pages, much of it devoted to exposure and criticism of the gang of four, which, as we often heard, he "smashed at one blow"—(actually he had them arrested by a colleague in the security forces). The book also contains a revised constitution of the Party with a commentary, a closing address by Vice-Chairman Teng (himself a minor victim of the cultural revolution), a press communique, and a list of delegates—altogether a mine of official information. It should be read in conjunction with the *Little Red Book*; while Mao's work is largely a statement of political philosophy, Hua gives a blueprint for action, and also confirms Mao's place as a gigantic figure in communist evolution.

Mao Tsetung Thought

Karnow speaks of Mao as a man in conflict with his country, but Hua repeatedly refers to "the great banner of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought" (the capital T of Thought is Hua's), and states as the plainest of facts that "Chairman Mao was the greatest Marxist of our time." The press communique goes further: "Mao Tsetung Thought is a new acquisition enriching the treasure-house of Marxist-Leninist theory and is Chairman Mao's most precious legacy to our era. . . . [His] monumental contributions . . . are immortal."

Certainly, some of Mao's ideas are new and attractive, and could be applied to any country or political system. Take revolution. In 1927 "a revolution is not a dinner party . . . a revolution is an insurrection, an act of violence by which one class overthrows another." But later the concept of perpetual

revolution developed. Hear Vice-Chairman Teng: "Carrying out Chairman Mao's revolutionary line correctly and comprehensively . . . the congress will go down . . . as a congress that has ushered in a new period of development of our socialist revolution and socialist construction . . . but class struggle will remain protracted and the revolutionary cause knows no end. . . . The people must . . . persist in continuing the revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat." Fine words—though some of the mass readership could be forgiven for feeling like Orwell's horse.

Vice-Chairman Yeh discusses at length the concept of democratic centralism. He states, "Our Party is organised on the principle of democratic centralism which means centralism on the basis of democracy and democracy under centralised guidance. . . . We should earnestly apply the principle of combining collective leadership with individual responsibility. . . . In the absence of centralised guidance democracy will lose the correct orientation and go astray." Quoting Mao, Vice-Chairman Yeh continues, "Our aim is to create a political situation in which we have both centralism and democracy, both discipline and freedom, both unity of will and personal ease of mind and liveliness." To Western ears, these pairs of objectives are not easily reconcilable. But did not Mao tell his old friend Siao-Yu that communist countries must practise a "new democracy"? And did not Siao-Yu liken Mao's type of freedom to that enjoyed by a chicken in its run?

Mao's theory of contradictions deserves detailed study, as do his papers on guerrilla war. One sample of the latter must suffice—beautiful in its simplicity, deadly in its effectiveness, as the French and Americans found in Vietnam: "If the enemy advances, we retreat. If the enemy halts and encamps, we harass. If the enemy seeks to avoid battle, we attack. If the enemy retreats, we pursue."

The two books contain much instructional material clearly and often numerically expressed. Thus there are two forms of deviation, to Left and to Right, and three do's and three don'ts to promote Party unity. There are the three groups of world powers, the criminal gang of four, the four modernisations, five rules for peaceful coexistence, the seven social sectors, and the eight categories of class enemies. For the Army, there are three main rules of discipline and eight points for attention. For the Party, there are four rules of discipline and there have been eleven internal struggles on the direction of the mass line. For the whole nation, for the present and immediate future, there are the eight fighting tasks, presented in detail by Chairman Hua.

Fighting tasks

The Party rules of discipline are unambiguous. To begin with, it is axiomatic that "the Chinese Communist Party is the core of leadership of the whole Chinese people." The rules, set out by Mao in 1938 and reaffirmed by Hua in 1977, are:

- (1) The individual is subordinate to the organisation.
- (2) The minority is subordinate to the majority.
- (3) The lower level is subordinate to the higher level.
- (4) The entire membership is subordinate to the central committee.

Add to these rules the principles that "The Chinese Army is an armed body for carrying out the political tasks of the revolution," and "The Party commands the gun, and the gun must never be allowed to command the Party," and you have the recipe for a certain type of stability in society. But even this stability is vulnerable, as disagreement at a high level causes shock waves that spread confusion and disorder, as happened in the Red Guard phase of the cultural revolution and more recently with the gang of four. Perhaps that is why one saw so many huge red hoardings carrying the directive in Chinese and English, "Grasp the key link of class struggle and bring great order across the land," indicating that a period of storm and stress had ended, and one of consolidation was about to begin.

Envoi

It is a foolish visitor who imagines himself to be an expert on a new country after a visit of three weeks, and a naive one who fails to realise that a host shows foreign guests the best views of his homeland. The day has not yet come when one can buy a Chinairail ticket and roam at will—to the superb mountains of Kweilin, to Hangchow with its magnificent West Lake, to the western deserts and north-western snows of the Long March. Perhaps some day other Australians will be able to retrace the footsteps of "Chinese" Morrison, doctor turned journalist and Far-east correspondent for *The Times*, who journeyed from Shanghai to Burma and on to Calcutta. But though the visitor cannot go wherever the spirit moves, the prearranged itinerary offers many attractions. There are the Ming Tombs, the Great Wall, the former Imperial Palace (9000 rooms, but not all open), the Summer Palace on its frozen lake, Slender West Lake at Yangchow, factories making jade, lacquer ware, and silk. Nanking offers its Archaeological Museum and Observatory, the latter with a remarkable collection of instruments dating back eight centuries. In the evening the hard-working guides take their guests to opera, ballet, concert, circus, films—to see the Lovely Sister Lieu the Third and to follow the exploits of that great folk hero, the Canadian Dr Norman Bethune. For the medical visitor there is acupuncture in history and practice, as well as barefoot doctors' clinics and modern hospitals, and displays of traditional and Western pharmaceuticals and modern electromedical equipment at the huge Industrial Exhibition Building in Shanghai. There are visits to private homes in communes and city housing developments, and shopping with the locals in their neighbourhood stores or with other foreigners in the Friendship Stores, where the tourist is encouraged to disgorge his travellers' cheques on articles that would cost his hosts a month's or even several years' pay. (You like this bracelet, Madam? A real bargain—only \$A1750.)

An irresistible attraction

If a journey through the *Red Book* and the *Yellow Book* is full of interest, how much more fascination is there in a journey through China? A beautiful country, a friendly people, an efficient and reliable travel agency, good accommodation and a busy programme, and a quarter of the world's population keen to display its great achievements—where else can a traveller find such an irresistible attraction?

What are the eyesight requirements for holders of public service vehicle and heavy goods vehicle driving licences?

The legal requirements for holders of PSV and HGV driving licences require the examining practitioner to state whether the applicant's field of vision by hand testing is satisfactory and whether the examiner considers that the applicant's vision is likely to cause his driving of a public service vehicle or heavy goods vehicle to be a source of danger to the public. The latter question need only be answered if the acuity with glasses, if worn, is below 6/12 with one eye and 6/36 with the other eye, or if the field of vision is unsatisfactory. *Medical Aspects of Fitness to Drive*,¹ however, recommends that those drivers who reach 6/12 6/36 only with glasses should always carry a spare pair, but questions how safe drivers with myopia of six dioptres or more are even if they can reach the corrected standard. It also recommends one-eyed drivers and those who have had a cataract removed from one or both eyes should not drive heavy goods vehicles or public service vehicles and that those with diplopia should not drive. Investigation has failed to show any significant correlation, the report points out, between defective colour vision and road accidents.

¹ *Medical Aspects of Fitness to Drive*, ed Andrew Raffle, 3rd edn, ch 6. London, Medical Commission on Accident Prevention, 1976.