Mao and Marx in the Marxis t Leninist Tradition: A Critique of "The China Field" and a Contribution to a Preliminary Reappraisal

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Mao and Marx in the Marxist-Leninist Tradition

A Critique of "The China Field" and a Contribution to a Preliminary Reappraisal

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The issue is: how are we to understand the thought of Mao Ze-dong in its relation to Marxism-Leninism? The answer is: by understanding it as an evolving Marxist-Leninist theory and strategy of revolutionary development aimed at realizing Marx's goals in China. The thought of Mao Ze-dong involves the application of Marx's epistemology, modes of analysis, and concepts like class struggle, the division of labor, and the dictatorship of the proletariat to Chinese experience in order to comprehend and change Chinese reality

Part I of this article considers how "the China field" has handled this issue. The good faith of members of the field is not in question. But the fact remains that the field has only recently and haltingly begun to address itself to the issue as posed Most analysts have denied the relevance of Marx's work as a

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theoretical approach to understanding Chinese society and politics and have tended to minimize the influence of Marx on Mao.[1] Instead, for example, they often have focused one-sidedly on the origins of the thought of Mao Ze-dong in the history of Leninism and international communism and have generally seen the development of the thought of Mao Ze-dong as an alleged deviation from presumed immutable axioms and principles of a sacred orthodoxy.

If we are to achieve a deeper understanding of the thought of Mao Ze-dong and of the Chinese revolution, we must struggle to understand Marx's work and transcend the reigning conceptions in our field. This is a task of particular importance for those of us who were first seriously introduced to Mao, and even to Marx, in the writings of China scholars. It may be useful, therefore, to begin to answer the issue posed through a critique of "the field."

PART I THE CRITIQUE

For purposes of convenience and brevity, the work of Benjamin Schwartz, Stuart Schram and Maurice Meisner can be taken as representative of trends in the China field. All three have contributed substantially to our understanding of Mao's development. In summarizing and criticizing some of their work, I may at times miss subtleties in their arguments. That is not my intention. Rather, through this critique, I hope to stimulate a broader intellectual and political exchange.

The chronological progression from Schwartz to Schram to Meisner reflects progress within the field in confronting the question of the relationship between the thought of Mao Ze-dong and Marxism-Leninism. This progress can be characterized by a shift from considering the thought of Mao Ze-dong almost exclusively as it relates to a reified Leninism, to considering it, in a more balanced way, as it relates to the work of both Lenin and Marx and to the achievement of Marx's ultimate goals The ingredient that has been added here to an

understanding of the relationship between the thought of Mao Ze-dong and Marxism-Leninism is, ironically, original Marxism, which is to say, the body of Marx's own writings.

Schwartz, whose ground-breaking work *Chinese Communism and the Rise of Mao* (1951) dominated the field for more than a decade, reduced Mao's Marxism-Leninism to Leninism, and to a partial deviation from the Leninist tradition at that. Schwartz argues that pre-Leninist Marxism had no immediate appeal or relevance to the conditions in which Chinese intellectuals found themselves during the May Fourth period. It was the Leninist theory of imperialism that served to link Marxism-Leninism with prevailing "Asiatic resentments" (pp. 7, 204). Thereafter, Schwartz argues, Chinese Communism, as it developed along Maoist lines, came to violate Leninism as well, and "can simply not be understood within the narrow framework of Marxist-Leninist premises" (p. 198). In Schwartz's eyes the history of Marxism-Leninism is a process of "disintegration" and "decomposition" through time and space. The great Marxist revolutionary leaders, Lenin and Mao, are seen essentially as deviants. To Schwartz's mind they could be nothing else, since Marx's work is taken to be irrelevant to their particular historical conditions, political problems, and the need for rapid change.

In dismissing Lenin and Mao as the unwitting gravediggers of Marx's intellectual corpse, Schwartz raises an issue that still shapes Western scholarship on the thought of Mao Ze-dong. Responding thoughtfully to ideologues who uncritically and ritualistically proclaim their own Marxist-Leninist pedigrees, he writes:

> How far can a historic movement, based on certain beliefs, drift from basic original premises and still maintain its identity? This is, of course, one of the most perplexing questions in the history of human thought To some extent this may be a question of semantics, for our ultimate judgment may depend in no small measure on our evaluation of the relative importance of various premises of the movement at its beginnings What, for instance, are the essential premises of early Marxism? To what extent is Lenin still a true Marxist? To what extent is Stalin a good Marxist-Leninist?

> Our answers to each of these questions will depend, of course, on where we seek *the crucial elements* of Marxism-Leninism-Stalinism respectively. [Schwartz, 1951 201, emphasis added]

Answers to such questions are not only of interest to intellectual historians looking for intellectual continuity and consistency. Activists, too, have debated these questions for decades, and the answers may influence our own evaluation of the usefulness of Marxism-Leninism. Given Schwartz's choice of premises, it is not surprising that he found "early Marxism" irrelevant to China and that he was able to discern significant signs of "disintegration" in its spread eastward

Schwartz saw "the crucial elements" of Marxism-Leninism in the relationship that should exist between party and class. Since he believes Marx saw the proletariat as the universal savior of mankind and Lenin saw a communist party as necessary for the creation of a revolutionary proletariat, it was logical for Schwartz to conclude that a communist party leading a "peasant revolution" is outright nonsense in Marxist-Leninist terms [2] So, Schwartz's answer to the question he posed concerning the relationship between early Marxism and the thought of Mao Ze-dong was

> the general trend of Marxism in its Leninist form has been toward disintegration and not toward "enrichment" and "deepening" as its orthodox adherents would have us believe . [T]he Maoist heresy *in action* on the matter of the relations of party to class represents yet another major step in this process of disintegration [Schwartz, 1951 201-202]

This implied image of a static Marxist writ and a disintegrating Leninism is, however, sufficiently qualified by Schwartz to maintain Mao's identification with a Leninist totalitarianism, if not with original Marxism Despite the "movement toward disintegration," Schwartz claims "that other core elements of Marxism-Leninism still remain integral living elements of Chinese Communism." These elements are (1) the Chinese Communists' erroneous but "abiding conviction" that they "are unswerving Marxist-Leninists", (2) their basic Hegelian-Marxist

faith "in a redemptive historic process and the Leninist faith that the Communist Party is itself the sole agent of historic redemption", (3) "the Leninist theory and practice of party organization [which] has remained a hard and unchanging core in the midst of change"; (4) the totalitarian "tendency inherent in the Leninist conception of the party. . . . , [which is] part of the vital core of Chinese Communism", and (5) "the Leninist doctrine of imperialism" (pp. 202-203).

This understanding of Mao's relation to Marxism-Leninism might be explicable partly in terms of Schwartz's focus on the pre-1936 period in China and partly in terms of the fact that *Chinese Communism and the Rise of Mao* was itself a pioneering effort, written shortly after the Chinese Communist accession to power. It is less easy, however, to understand Schwartz's narrow and brittle approach to the whole of Marx's writings and his arbitrary categorization of "the crucial elements" of the Marxist-Leninist tradition.[3] Moreover, fifteen years later the essence of Schwartz's earlier thesis is reaffirmed and even extended in his introductory essay to *Communism and China* (1968), written during the Cultural Revolution. There he again asks, "What then remains of the link between Mao and Marx?" He answers

> Obviously many terms have survived *If* there is *any* substantive rather than verbal link, it is with the side of Marx that sees history in terms of a gigantic moral engagement fought out on a global scale between the forces of good and . . evil . The Marxist labels have in China been preserved, but content has gone its own way [Schwartz, 1968 21-22, emphasis added]

In this essay Schwartz sees the "apparent devaluation of the concept of the party" in the Cultural Revolution as effectively marking "a final qualitative break with the whole Marxist-Leninist tradition in which the concept of the party as the bearer of proletarian virtue is itself the holy of holies" (p. 42). Finally, then, in violation of selected "crucial elements" of Marxism-Leninism, Mao is taken, in theory and in practice, to have barely more than a terminological relation to and a shared Manichean vision with the tradition.

Schram, by contrast, recognizes that original Marxism was developed into Leninism, and that at least some elements of original Marxism can be identified in Mao's writings. But, like Schwartz, Schram believes that the real origin of non-European revolutions, and of the Chinese Communist Revolution in particular, lies in Leninism—a long way from the Western-Europe-centered theories of Marx about proletarian revolutions ushering in the golden age of communism. Schram's analysis, however subtle, remains largely within the tradition of those who conceive of the thought of Mao Ze-dong primarily as a deviation from Marxism and to a lesser extent from Leninism as well.

Schram basically accepts the reduction of "Asian Marxism" to Leninism. Thus, the "Marxism" in *Marxism and Asia* (Schram and d'Encausse, 1969) is "primarily that of Lenin and his disciples," and the subject of that book is "the metamorphoses of a system of ideas"—apparently Leninist ideas (p. vii). While recognizing that "the work of Marx himself contains the elements of an adaptation to the conditions of the East to a far greater degree than the 'orthodox' interpretation of Marxism would lead one to believe," Schram and his co-author argue that those elements "were never systematically developed by Marx." Without discussing in any depth what those elements are, they assert that the "encounter between Marxism and the non-European world required a mediation, which was carried out by Lenin" (p. 4). But in the end that mediation, too, proved inadequate, and "Marxism is everywhere being revised today" (p. 111). And the "revision" for Schram seems tantamount to the rejection of Marx's central meaning. In a paean to Marx that safely enshrines him in a tomb, as it steadfastly avoids asking why Marx continues to have such broad appeal, the authors conclude their essay as follows

> when one considers both the various theories which call themselves Marxist, and the realities of the world today, it would seem that the only alternative lies in a choice between a scholastic Marxism which has nothing to do with revolution and a revolution which has nothing in common with Marxism Never, in the course of the past

> century, has the name of Marx been so widely invoked, never has this name served to justify so many ideas and actions totally foreign to the genius of Marx [Schram and d'Encausse, 1969 112]

Thus, at least in the Third World, it would appear impossible to be a revolutionary Marxist.

As to the Chinese revolution and the thought of Mao Ze-dong, Schram, in *The Political Thought of Mao Tse-tung [Mao Ze-dong]* (1969), incisively argues that the thought of Mao Ze-dong was molded by elements of Mao's youthful personality, by conditions in China, and by Mao's revolutionary experience. Schram stresses Mao's "revolutionary temperament," which was developed prior to his introduction to Marxism-Leninism. Mao's extreme emphasis on "voluntarism" and will as a force in history and his worship of martial values, including struggle, have apparently emerged victorious over his "natural Leninism." Notwithstanding Mao's continuing debt to Lenin's conception of a politically conscious vanguard party, to Lenin's theory and practice of democratic centralism, and to Lenin's theory of imperialism and its corollary notion of an alliance between the proletariat and the peasantry against imperialism, Mao's "extreme voluntarism"—apotheosized in his theory of continuing revolution in which conscious will and action become a material-transforming force—is said by Schram to go beyond what even Lenin would have tolerated with his vision that "in periods of revolution, politics takes precedence over economics." Mao's allegedly increasing emphasis on the "poor and blank" thesis is also taken to violate the logic of Leninism and Marxism (pp. 134-138)

In terms of the Marxist-Leninist tradition, the ideological justifications for and practices based upon Mao's alleged voluntarism are seen by Schram as ludicrous Schram, like Schwartz, holds that the crucial element in Marx is his view that the industrial working class is the universal savior of humanity. Hence, regardless of the historical conditions in China,

> The suggestion that not merely the pampered children of the bourgeoisie, but the sons of the working class, can best learn from the peasant masses how to be proletarian revolutionaries,

> is . . wildly unorthodox. [and] the ultimate expression of Mao's reversion to the moral and intellectual universe of his childhood. [Schram, 1969 137]

So Mao has become a poor Marxist-Leninist, and perhaps senile to boot. More than that, the thought of Mao Ze-dong is taken to be obsolete as a method for coping with the developmental problems of Third World countries. Another Marxist-Leninist bites the dust.

Meisner has an understanding of Marxism-Leninism quite different from that of Schwartz and Schram. Consequently, his work reflects a different perspective on Mao's relationship to the Marxist-Leninist tradition. In his major work, *Li Ta-chao [Li Da-zhao] and the Origins of Chinese Marxism* (1967), Meisner rejects or at least severly qualifies the vision of original Marxism as a set body of dogmatic, categorical pigeonholes and immutable universalistic predictions. Noting the clear dialectic in Marx's own ideas concerning the relationship between human consciousness and human action, on the one hand, and objective socioeconomic forces, on the other, Meisner argues that Lenin's activist resolution of this ambiguity was seen by early Chinese Marxists as within the Marxist tradition. The Marxism so enthusiastically received in China in response to the Russian Revolution was not "orthodox" and "formal" Marxism—which employed Western-European terminology to describe the "inevitable" and "scientific" progress of global society on the European pattern, but rather the richer, and more flexible, original Marxism with its philosophical premises of dialectical logic and historical materialism. In receiving Marxism, Meisner writes, Li Da-zhao emphasized the role of human consciousness—an emphasis central to Marx's own theoretical approach (see especially pp. 125-154).

In his writing since *Li Ta-chao [Li Da-zhao]*, Meisner has continued to struggle to transcend his own and the field's preconceptions about Mao and Marx. He appears to be moving away from the perception in the field of the thought of Mao Ze-dong as a deviation from Marxism, with its origins in Mao's personality and in the history of international communism—a

perception that has obscured the role of the thought of Mao Ze-dong as an evolving development theory and strategy for achieving Marx's ultimate goals in China. As Meisner has moved beyond the Schwartz-Schram positions, he has very cautiously, but inevitably, suggested that the role of Mao's personality in the development of the thought of Mao Ze-dong has been overstressed, and concomitantly that the stress should be, instead, on why the thought of Mao Ze-dong, since Liberation, has continued to evoke such strong and positive responses from so substantial a portion of the Chinese people.

In his article "Leninism and Maoism" (1971a), Meisner illuminates certain similarities between Populism and Maoism and certain dissimilarities between Maoism and Leninism. He discusses how Mao has tried to deal with two revolutionary dilemmas that are central to Marx, Lenin, and Mao: reconciling, first, revolutionary means with revolutionary ends, and second, revolutionary vanguard leadership with mass spontaneity. But in discussing these dilemmas, Meisner seems to conceive of them almost as intellectual riddles that could be solved in contemplation, rather than as inherently contradictory parts of an evolving Maoist development strategy. That strategy, by forcing the masses and their leaders to confront each other, seeks simultaneously to minimize the evils of institutionalized elitism and the inconstancy of mass spontaneity, on the one hand, while trying, on the other, to maximize the benefits of mass enthusiasm and of a more conscious, recurrently renewed vanguard leadership.

The very structure of this article, moreover, which moves from an analysis of Russian Populism to a contrasting analysis of Leninism, and then to a consideration of the thought of Mao Ze-dong, emphasizing its similarities with Populism, facilitates an understanding of "Maoism" not as a dynamic, testing approach to Chinese reality within the framework of a Marxist analysis, in which the effort is to unite theory and practice, but instead as an abstracted body of thought to be understood and evaluated for its continuity with non-Chinese intellectual traditions.

But Meisner does not leave it at that. Belatedly, it seems to me, he goes beyond the confines of intellectual history, turning near the end of the article to the view that "Maoism" is "a conscious attempt to pursue economic and social development in a way consistent . . . with the achievement of Marxist goals" (p. 29). If this is the conclusion with which Meisner flirts, however, the question remains: why does he spend the bulk of his effort on what he calls Mao's populist and voluntarist aspects? Why not begin where he ends—considering the thought of Mao Ze-dong in terms of a continuing search by means of Marxist methods and categories of thought to create an appropriate revolutionary theory and strategy for achieving in China Marx's ultimate goals?

It appears that Meisner, like China itself and the China field of which he is a part, is in transition. The end of his articles repeatedly point, in carefully couched terms, to the direction in which he is moving: "The Populist elements of Maoism are combined with Marxian social theory to promote revolutionary change to realize a future egalitarian socialist society . . . [T]he Maoist combination of Marxism and Populism appears as a not illogical outcome of the history of Marxism in an economically backward and largely peasant land threatened by foreign capitalist political and economic forces " Nevertheless, Meisner, in the vein of the Schwartz-Schram approach, continues to conceive of the history of Marxism-Leninism in China as "a paradox within a paradox," even while the Marxist revolutionary utility of Mao's "heresies" is recognized (pp 35 and 32-33).

Meisner's struggle to transcend his professional inheritance and the constraints of the conventional vision of socioeconomic development is nowhere more apparent than in his article on "Maoist Utopianism" (1971b). There he argues that original Marxism, "Maoism," all great revolutions, and even all civilizations are founded upon utopian premises But "Maoism" is unprecedented in that it is becoming increasingly rather than less utopian. What makes post-1949 Maoist development unique is the refusal to allow the Chinese revolution to degenerate, the refusal to sanction both the indefinite "postponement and

ritualization of utopian social goals, and . . . their manipulation as rationalizations for new forms of institutionalized social and political inequality" (p. 535).

The source of this alleged "utopianism," Meisner declares, has not been "perceived [by the China field] as a problem demanding serious historical explanation." Until the Great Leap, Meisner wryly notes, Mao had generally been characterized by the field as a "pragmatic revolutionary willing to abandon ideological orthodoxy and useless theoretical baggage . . . to achieve realistic . . . goals." But after the Great Leap, and particularly in the 1960s, Mao came increasingly to be pictured as a "dogmatic ideologue." Explanations for the alleged transformation have fallen back on Mao's personality. Mao's "utopianism" is perceived as a "temporary historical aberration" attributable to "the idiosyncratic personality of an aging Mao . . . intent on recapturing the romantic heroism and purity of a now obsolete revolutionary past. . . . [a] utopian aberration [that must] . . . pass . . . with . . . Mao . . . and . . . necessarily will give way to the inexorable demands of 'the modernization process' " (p. 538).

Although Meisner is dissatisfied with this explanation, he is content to characterize Mao as increasingly "utopian," and to assume that a utopian transformation did indeed occur in Mao's thinking and approach While he recognizes that Mao has consistently been committed to achieving Marx's classless communist society, he argues that there is nothing that can be described as utopian in Mao's pre-Liberation writings, nor in the theory and practice of the first half-decade of the People's Republic Only in 1955 was a turning point reached Then Mao began explicitly to formulate and make felt his concern that Marx's communist goals were becoming ritualized, that the "means to achieve those goals—the means of modern economic development—were tending to become the final ends . . . and . . . the key determinants in social and political development . . ," which was increasingly characterized

> by growing institutionalized social inequality between bureaucratic elites and masses, by the increasing division between mental and

> manual labour, and by a growing separation between the modern cities and the backward countryside—in short, a process which seemed to be moving China further away from, rather than closer to, the socialist and communist goals which Marxism prophesies [Meisner, 1971b 547]

Both the success and the frustration encountered as a result of Mao's commitment to encouraging radical social transformation through reliance on mass enthusiasm and initiative and mass revolutionary consciousness and struggle are said to have "contributed to the increasingly utopian character Mao and 'Maoism' have assumed" (p 545). The putative transformation began with Mao's mid-1955, almost "chiliastic" speech urging that the masses would enthusiastically welcome socialism, "even if the party did not" (p. 546). The transformation of the thought of Mao Ze-dong developed, through the last half of the 1950s and through the Great Leap, into the utopianism of the Great Proletarian Revolution.

Mao's so-called "utopianism" is related, Meisner points out, to Marx's original vision a "highly utopian picture . of a future classless and totally egalitarian society, a vision of . . . the ideal 'all-round' new communist man who would emerge in that society" Marx himself, Meisner is aware, conceived of the proletarian socialist revolution "as a radical and fundamentally unprecedented break with the past; . a 'leap' from man's alienated 'prehistory' to his 'truly human history'" (pp 550-551). But, Meisner (1971b· 551) argues,

> the utopian elements in original Marxism are restrained by a basic belief in an objective historical process which conditions the thoughts and actions of men by generally defined socioeconomic prerequisites. . Marx believed that men make history, but only within the limits of the historical conditions they inherit.

The implication, made explicit, is that Mao believes otherwise Meisner writes,

> What gives the Maoist version of Marxism its *distinctively utopian* character is the virtually complete absence of these social, economic

> and historical restraints. The Maoist utopian mentality is characterized not only by a vision of a future perfect social order but by an essentially chiliastic conception that ultimate Marxian goals can and must be realized in the here and now .. In the Maoist world view, "new" men with a new morality are the creators, not the products of the new society. [Meisner, 1971b 551-552, emphasis added]

Thus, in the Great Leap,

> Whereas orthodox Marxist-Leninist theory teaches that a high level of economic productivity is the precondition for the future communist society that will usher in [such] ultimate Marxian goals. as the abolition of the gaps between mental and manual labor and between town and countryside, *Maoist theory teaches* that *these goals* themselves *are more the preconditions for a communist society than the products of it*—and, accordingly, demands immediate efforts to achieve them in an "uninterrupted" process of ever more radical social and ideological transformation. [Meisner, 1971b: 548; emphasis added]

So, Maoism appears as unrestrained utopianism, while Marxism, though utopian, is at least restrained by its vision of history and by historical conditions.

This understanding of the thought of Mao Ze-dong, though a decided improvement on the Schwartz-Schram approach because of its acceptance of the thought of Mao Ze-dong as a development of Marxism-Leninism and because of its strong ends-orientation, is nonetheless fundamentally incorrect for several reasons. First, it is not true that Mao's so-called "utopian impulse" is "unrestrained." It is restrained as only an "impulse" that is exercised in practice can be—by concrete reality Mao simply does not accept as immutable those constraints laid down in the European context by orthodox Marxism and, perhaps, to some extent by Marx himself. Enriched by an awareness that subsequent history has shown that advanced capitalist and industrialized Soviet societies have yet to lead to socialism, Mao has persistently, in confronting Chinese reality, tested the limits imposed on revolution by the social, economic, political and historical conditions in China. He has developed

his theory of uninterrupted revolution as he has tested those limits in practice.

Second, Mao indeed is concerned with shaping the industrializing means so as not to preclude the achievement of Marx's final ends. He has struggled, in particular, to reduce the socioeconomic gaps that conventional industrialization widens.[4] This does not prove, however, that Mao holds these Marxist end goals to be "more the preconditions for a communist society than the products of it." All it proves, as Meisner himself seems to acknowledge, is that Mao is intensely aware of the intimate, dialectical relationship between ends and means and, with Marx, rejects any mechanical vision that conventional industrialization is sufficient in itself to produce the communist man. Mao believes that a society of abundance is required for the full achievement of communist ideals, but he obviously also holds that societal steps toward achieving those ideals need not, and must not, be postponed until the day such a society is achieved. While such a view may not rank as "orthodox," why call it "distinctively utopian"?

Third, the case for a chiliastic Mao is build upon characterizations of the Great Leap that are arguable and that, in any event, do not seem to hold for the non-chiliastic Cultural Revolution. Like so many similarly partialized arguments in our field, Meisner's argument here is built on Chinese Communist rhetoric during the Great Leap, which proclaimed that Marxist goals were "more or less immediately realizable." This vision is exemplified by the rhetoric issued in connection with the launching of the communes, which

> were to combine industry with agriculture, education with production, and thus *eventually* eliminate the distinctions between mental and manual work, between the cities and the rural areas, and among workers, peasants and intellectuals. [Meisner, 1971b 547, emphasis added]

This rhetoric, Meisner notes, treated the transition from socialism to communism "sometimes . . . as imminent and always as in the process of becoming" (p. 547). True, but it

remains to be shown to what extent these claims are chiliastic and whether Mao himself was a victim of chiliasm, rather than the prescriber of doses of it to the masses for purposes of revolutionary mobilization. While Mao, no doubt, has at times seriously misperceived the potential for radical change in objective conditions, such mistakes are an inevitable part of the process of repeatedly testing the limits of historical conditions on societal change. Those who do not try to push to the limit, who do not risk serious short-run failures, are as unlikely to reach the limit as they are to learn where the limit is and to expand it through action. In the Cultural Revolution it was made clear from early on that, although a great transformation was expected (and achieved), pretensions to the imminent realization of ultimate goals were not to be sanctioned. this particular cultural revolution, it was stated, would have to be followed by several more—hardly chiliastic. And today, in communes established during the Great Leap it is apparent that the steps taken to reduce sociopolitical and economic gaps have achieved noticeable success. Consequently, insofar as Mao's "chiliasm" amounts to the belief that "the realization of the utopian vision is, if not more or less imminent, then at least in the process of becoming—a future new world that is being created in the here and now" (p. 552), there is some evidence to suggest that such "chiliasm" has proved to be revolutionary realism in the here and now.

Meisner, of course, is not unaware of the tension within his own analysis. He ends this article in a kind of retreat from his initial position. He moves toward the position that Mao's "utopianism" may not really be "utopian" at all, as we normally understand the word, but functionally developmental. Mao's utopianism, he says, has "struck deeply responsive chords in Chinese society," which suggests that the "utopian impulse" of the Chinese revolution "may well survive the passing of Mao" (pp. 554-555). This, Meisner argues, means that what is crucial "is not so much the personality of the utopian prophet . as the mass response." Consequently, "however important and fascinating the personality of the utopian leader may be, the

ultimate focus of attention must be on the nature of the relationship between leader and followers" (p. 554). Although one might wish that Meisner had not attributed a kind of unusual utopian potential to the Chinese masses, shifting the focus from Mao's person to Mao's relationship to hundreds of millions of Chinese surely is a step forward in understanding the Chinese revolution and Mao's theory and practice.

Meisner goes still further. He affirms that Mao's "utopianism" has in fact "served to forestall the bureaucratic institutionalization of the Chinese revolution and the ritualization of Marxist goals." Beyond that, he suggests—ever so judiciously—that

> At the same time, Maoism has not proved incompatible with modern economic development. Although it has sacrificed immediate economic gains to social, political and ideological considerations in some areas, in other respects it is an ideology highly favorable to the building of a modern economy. The anti-traditionalist impulses (which encourage a spirit of experimentation and innovation) and the stress on ascetic values (such as diligence, frugality and the ethical value of hard work)—both of which the Maoist utopian mentality reinforces—facilitate what is vaguely known as "modernization." And possibly most important of all is the sense of hope for a better future which the Maoist utopian vision conveys. [Meisner, 1971b: 555]

So, the Maoist approach is widely appreciated by the masses of Chinese; it has thus far successfuly, and without precedent, defended Marx's ultimate goals from ritualization and from postponement into an ever-receding future, and "Maoism" may even have been conducive, on balance, to a kind of "modernization." In fact,

> it may be that Maoist utopianism will prove less obsolete than our own conventional assumptions about the "objective" imperatives of "the modernization process" and our conventional views about the fate of all revolutions. [p. 555]

Precisely! But, then, why characterize such pragmatic, ends-oriented policies as increasingly utopian? Is it because we

are unaccustomed to the Maoist maintenance of a high degree of secular consciousness of ultimate ends and of what means are appropriate to achieve them? Is it because we do not accept Marx's ends? Or is it because we are uncomfortable with Maoist means? Whatever the case, describing the thought of Mao Ze-dong as utopian seems to reflect a basic disbelief in Marx's conception of the potential of human beings and human society. Needless to say, such intellectual postures, like their opposites, are neither value-neutral nor without political implications.

CONCLUSION TO PART I

The China field's treatment of Mao's relation to Marxism-Leninism and of the relationship between Marxism-Leninism-Mao Ze-dong thought and "modernization" is part of a more general approach to history and social science that far transcends the relatively narrow boundaries of the China field. Beginning with a mechanistic caricature of the Marxist intellectual tradition, this approach has largely ignored the dynamic theory-practice relationships, the dialectical reasoning, the historical materialism, and the themes of consciousness that are not only central components of Marx's theory but are also basic to his specific analysis of nineteenth-century European capitalist civilization.

Within the field this approach has been based on a preoccupation with how Mao came to develop as he did, rather than on trying to understand what Mao, within a Marxist-Leninist framework, has been attempting to accomplish and how. It has led to the view that the thought of Mao Ze-dong constitutes a deviation from certain presumed immutable principles of an over-rigidly conceived orthodoxy. That *idealist* view has dominated the field for two decades. It has been complemented, moreover, by a *mechanical materialist* view that repeatedly brands Mao's dialectical methods as "voluntarist."[5] Both views have tended to cut the thought of Mao Ze-dong off from its

ends, as well as from part of its origins. Whatever their contributions to our knowledge, these views therefore have impeded our understanding the thought of Mao Ze-dong as a revolutionary Marxist way of analyzing Chinese reality and of transforming it into the communist society envisioned by Marx. Even where, as in the case of Meisner and to some extent in the case of Schram, there is a more complex reading of the Marxist tradition, the view presented is one in which Marx is portrayed as irrelevant and/or one in which Mao is characterized as "distinctively utopian."

In all of this one feels an uncomfortable awareness that the way the China field has interpreted Marx and Mao is not totally unrelated to certain political currents that have defined the larger context of intellectual inquiry and analysis in the United States. During the 1950s and early 1960s, in a political climate that still bore the imprint of the disillusionment of the American left after the 1930s, of U.S.-Soviet antagonism after World War II, of American hositlity to China's revolutionary government, and of the fears and oppression of the McCarthy period, Marxism and Maoism were treated in the media and by our government as part of a Soviet-dominated, and narrowly organization-focused, international Leninist movement. In that context Schwartz's argument for "the Maoist heresy" was a partial corrective to the prevailing view of a monolithic communism centered in Moscow. As years passed, the Sino-Soviet dispute grew and became obvious, and the focus changed, along with the political and intellectual climate of capitalist civilization and international politics. The emphasis shifted away from seeing Mao primarily in the context of Lenin and the Soviet Union toward seeing him in the context of China's "modernization."

Yet China's "modernization" has been consistently understood in terms of presumed bureaucratic, technocratic and capitalistic imperatives. Hence, Mao's Marxism has been interpreted variously as "hopelessly utopian" and "romantic," or cynically "ideological," or both. Meisner's ambiguity in dealing with the thought of Mao Ze-dong as a Marxist development

strategy illustrates the kind of flux now occurring in the field. Understanding has not progressed very far, however, as can be seen from Frederic Wakeman, Jr.'s review of "The Use and Abuse of Ideology in the Study of Contemporary China" (1975).

There is scant evidence of a widespread effort to seriously understand Marx. Understanding Marx is necessary if we are to understand just what the relationship is between Mao and Marxism-Leninism, and how it can be anything but an intellectually tenuous and ideologically rationalized one, given the enormous differences between nineteenth-century Europe and twentieth-century China. There is, for example, little recognition of the implications of the fact that industrial capitalism became a world system and a world-transforming system soon after it became a European and a Europe-transforming system.

Insofar as treatment of the Marx-Mao relationship has been part of a more general negative approach to Marx, both as a relevant critic of capitalism and as a source for an alternative to the liberal world view, a re-examination of Mao's Marxism might raise issues that many people consider beyond debate. It might also enhance our capacity to understand the Chinese revolution as it continues to unfold.

PART II MAO AND MARX

The main proposition of the second part of this article is that understanding the thought of Mao Ze-dong in theory and practice requires seeing it as a revolutionary development strategy evolved from within the Marxist-Leninist tradition to achieve Marx's communist goals in China.[6] A secondary proposition is that the Marxist-Leninist tradition is far more flexible and far richer than its portrayal by critics and by many defenders would suggest.

Twenty-five years ago Schwartz, in his *Chinese Communism and the Rise of Mao* (1951), raised an issue that has shaped the field: at what point does Marxism become something else? What

are the modifications, refinements, and revisions that can be made to any "ism" or tradition before what is being considered can no longer be identified as part of the tradition? With regard to the relationship between Mao and Marx, however, that issue of change and continuity has not been seriously and concretely debated in the China field. The dominant conclusion, which was reached after hardly any debate and has persisted for over two decades, is that "Maoism" is a major deviation from Marxism.

This conclusion, as any reader of the *Peking [Beijing] Review* will be aware, presents some difficulties. Mao, like Lenin before him, conceives of himself as a good Marxist-Leninist. He frequently quotes from Marx and Lenin, uses Marxist modes of analysis and concepts, seeks to achieve Marx's final goals in China, and constantly encourages cadres, leaders, and the Chinese people to diligently study Marx, Engels, and Lenin.[7]

No matter. We know better. Mao, we know, must make this claim in order to legitimate both his rule and the Chinese revolution within the most widely (the only?) accepted revolutionary tradition of the twentieth century. The Chinese Communists, we know, must claim to be true Marxist-Leninists to be able to vie for control of "the international communist movement," fragmented as it may be.

Our incredible intellectual and ethical arrogance aside, it may be that the motives we impute to the Chinese for making themselves appear to be good Marxist-Leninists are not entirely misconceived. But, on the other hand, that motivation does not provide an even remotely satisfactory explanation for the domestic behavior of the Chinese Communists during the last several decades. If we are to understand that behavior, we must begin with an understanding of Marx and of Mao's relation to him.[8]

Perhaps I can best begin to answer the question posed by Schwartz by asking a question, in turn, which changes the focus of inquiry from a concern with intellectual continuity to a concern with correct political action. For example, what would a revolutionary Marxist—say, Marx himself—have thought and done in China in 1935, or in 1949, as the Chinese Communists seized state power, or in 1956, when the ownership of industry

was socialized and the cooperativization of agriculture was virtually completed?

For Marx, as for anyone else, there would have been at each juncture two possible action alternatives: to do something, or to do nothing. If the former were chosen, then the issue would have been: what specifically is to be done? What, for example, should have been done in 1949? Would Marx or any other revolutionary Marxist have pressed for capitalist industrialization, in the dogmatic belief that only thus could a sufficiently large and alienated proletariat be developed to fuel a true socialist revolution? What should have been done in 1956, when a transformation of the ownership of the means of production in both industry and agriculture had already taken place? Would a revolutionary Marxist have declined to take the initiative to further transform aspects of then-existing institutions of the economy and the superstructure on the grounds that such transformations would inevitably come about through the working out of contradictions between the forces of production and the relations of production? Would such a Marxist, in short, have espoused non-interference? Would he or she have advocated a relatively passive state and party? Given what Marx has written, particularly in his all-too-brief, but rich, references to the dictatorship of the proletariat, I think not.

Posed in this way, the resolution of the issue of Mao's relation to Marx cannot be reduced—as those in the China field have been inclined to do—to the fact that Mao has been attempting to lead a continuing socialist revolution under conditions that, at least upon a fundamentalist reading of Marx, would seem to be hardly conducive to such a transformation and, worse still, might even seem to preclude it altogether. Rather, accepting for the sake of argument that the conditions Mao has had to deal with were "unorthodox," the central issue for revolutionary Marxists must be: what is to be done to move China as quickly and effectively as possible toward communism? That is an issue to which Marxist-Leninist revolutionaries like Mao can and have addressed themselves. Mao concluded, over thirty years ago, that dogma is "worthless" and

that Marxism-Leninism should be conceived not as "a dogma but [as] a guide to action" (1965, vol. III: 43).

Once we have disposed of the notion that Marx himself would have mechanically applied a nineteenth-century, Europe-derived model to the conditions of twentiety-century China, we are free to begin to conceive of how the thought of Mao Ze-dong operates as a Marxist-Leninist development strategy. In addressing this problem it is necessary to put Marx in perspective.

For Marx, socialism and communism were as much reflections of human needs and human efforts to meet those needs as they were reflections of the dynamics of capitalism. The evolution of capitalism and the development of socialism can be explained only by human action taken to fulfill human needs. To Marx there was no reified force called "history," apart from the history that is made by real people, working and living to satisfy their needs and to reproduce the human species.

Marx was a genius—probably the greatest social scientist the Western world has produced. But he was, after all, a nineteenth-century European, who used historical materialism and dialectical analysis primarily to interpret and criticize the world he knew best, European capitalism. He was not a man who knew everything about the world in which he lived, not to mention the world in which he could not have lived because it did not yet exist.

The questions posed for revolutionary Marxists in China are those posed to theory and practice by concrete historical conditions. The fact is, for example, that in 1949 the Chinese Communists achieved victory in an underdeveloped country within the context of a world that was being transformed by the world capitalist system. What significance does the revolutionary seizure of state power in China have for developmental issues? How, given China's historical conditions, is the dictatorship of the proletariat to operate in the long transition period to communism? How, in short, does China's reality affect Marxist-Leninist theory, and how, conversely, is Marxist-Leninist theory to affect subsequent developments in China? I have no easy

answers to such monumental questions, for I am just beginning to think seriously about them myself

In trying, however tentatively, to suggest the contours of the answers sought, three perspectives for relating Mao and Marx may be useful First, did Marx, unlike Mao, believe that with the seizure of state power and the transformation of the ownership of the means of production the proletarian revolution was over? Second, did Marx, like Mao, view the relationship between theory and practice and between subject and object in history dialectically? And third, is Marx's strategic and tactical sense of how revolutionary politics are to be advanced at all similar to Mao's?

To begin, how did Marx conceive the socialist revolution and its relation to the seizure of state power? To Marx's mind the socialist revolution was related intimately to certain material conditions—in his specific, Europe-centered analysis it was related to the evolution of a particular socioeconomic order, capitalism, and to the revolt from within that order of a particular oppressed class, the proletariat. The socioeconomic conditions were to produce in that class, "which forms the majority of all members of society, and from which emanates the consciousness of the necessity of a fundamental revolution, the communist consciousness" (Marx, 1972: 156-157). But the communist consciousness was not just a product of material conditions. It was also developed by the acts of human beings. The very political revolution that seizes state power, overthrows the ruling class, and begins to change the relations of production is vital not only to transform the target-objects of revolution, but also, as Mao has repeatedly affirmed, to transform the very subjects of revolution. On this point Marx is clear:

> Both for the production on a mass scale of this communist consciousness, and for the success of the cause itself, *the alteration of men on a mass scale is necessary, an alteration which can only take place in a practical movement, a revolution; this revolution is necessary, therefore,* not only because the ruling class cannot be overthrown in any other way, but also *because the class overthrowing it can only in a revolution succeed in ridding itself of all the*

> *muck of ages and become fitted to found society anew [Marx, 1972 157, certain emphasis added]*

For Marx, creating society anew could not be a one-shot affair, because "[c]ommunism is . . . not a state of affairs which is to be established, an ideal to which reality [will] have to adjust itself. . . . communism [is] the real movement which abolishes the present state of things" (Marx, 1972: 126; emphasis deleted). More explicitly, Marx proclaimed revolutionary socialism to be:

> *the declaration of the permanence of the revolution, the class dictatorship of the proletariat as the necessary transit point to the abolition of class distinctions generally, to the abolition of all the relations of production on which they rest, to the abolition of all the social relations that correspond to these relations of production, to the revolutionizing of all the ideas that result from these social relations.* [Marx, 1962, Vol. I· 223; certain emphasis added].

For Marx, then, the society produced by revolution is a socialist society "not as it has *developed* on its own foundations, but, on the contrary, just as it *emerges* from [the prior] capitalist society" (Marx, 1962, Vol. II: 23) Consequently, while it is crucial for the revolutionary class to capture state power and transform the ownership of the means of production, the continued revolutionizing of economic institutions, of social relations, of human beings, and of ideas is far from over It is precisely the fact that state power has been seized and the private ownership of the means of production to a large extent transformed that makes the remaining bases for capitalism in the economy and the superstructure at this juncture a central concern

In writings that range from his youthful *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844* (1972) to his later 1875 *Critique of the Gotha Programme* (1962), Marx consistently, if sketchily, suggests that socialism after the proletarian revolution will continue to develop phase by phase, each phase evolving from the prior phase until the final stage of communism is reached. The first stage, that of crude communism (read

socialism), produces only a "negation" of the "negation" of private property under capitalism, leveling all citizens, making them equally wage workers and equally "owners" of a kind of private property now owned by the state (Marx, 1972· 68-69). What this stage does not do is transcend the bourgeois concern for private property reflected in the universal leveling envy that no one should have more private property than anyone else. Nor does this stage transcend the material reality and consciousness of man as a wage worker, since remuneration for labor remains based upon the value of work done, rather than upon the needs of a particular worker as a total person In short, during the socialist phases of transition, society fails to transcend what has been called "bourgeois right" and bourgeois consciousness, which are grounded in the division of labor and incorporated in privilege, property, authority, "equal" rights, and the like.[9] It is only in the next stage of communism, under a productive system capable of abundantly producing and distributing all that is necessary for each individual to realize his or her own humanity, that men and women can become conscious of the fact that they do not have to compete with one another for such benefits. Only then, according to Marx, do material conditions, including the elimination of the division of labor, allow all the inherited institutions and the consciousness of both bourgeois and socialist societies to be totally transcended.

In the Marxist-Leninist vision, then, there are, as several important articles translated in the *Peking [Beijing] Review* in 1975 have made clear, at least two main domestic sources for the continuing existence of classes and class struggle and, thus, for the absolute necessity of continuing the revolution. The first source is from elements of the former society. In China, unreconstructed landlords, rich peasants and capitalists, and their families were estimated by then Premier Zhou En-lai in 1971 to number at least thirty million people (Zhou, 1975 12-13). The second source of classes and class struggle is socialist society itself, which is still in its present stage predicated upon the existence of the division of labor and of

"bourgeois right" and is therefore capable of producing a "new bourgeoisie." Because these "remnants" from the old society persist and because the material base exists under socialism to reproduce new classes, the dictatorship of the proletariat, as Marx saw, is critical for the continuation of the revolution toward full communism (Marx, 1962, Vol. II. 32-33). Although bourgeois right must be protected during the protracted transition to communism, it must also be gradually restricted by the dictatorship of the proletariat if it is not to lead to the restoration of capitalism. Otherwise, why would a dictatorship of the proletariat have been necessary in the first place?

The problem confronting Marxism-Leninism in this regard has been summarized recently by several leading Chinese Maoists. One of them, Yao Wen-yuan, writes (1975: 6):

> the existence of bourgeois right provides the vital economic basis for . . . [the] emergence . . of new bourgeois elements.
>
> Lenin pointed out: "In the first phase of communist society (usually called Socialism) 'bourgeois right' is *not* abolished in its entirety, but only in part, only in proportion to the economic revolution so far attained, i.e., only in respect of the means of production. However, it continues to exist as far as its other part is concerned, it continues to exist in the capacity of regulator (determining factor) in the distribution of products and the allotment of labour among the members of society. The socialist principle 'He who does not work, neither shall he eat,' is *already* realized, the other socialist principle 'An equal amount of products for an equal amount of labour,' is also *already* realized But this is not yet Communism, and it does not yet abolish 'bourgeois right,' which gives to unequal individuals, in return for unequal (really unequal) amounts of labour, equal amounts of products "
>
> Chairman Mao has pointed out "China is a socialist country Before liberation, she was more or less like capitalism Even now she practices an eight-grade wage system, distribution to each according to his work and exchange by means of money, which are scarcely different from those in the old society. What is different is that the system of ownership has changed. . Our country at present practices a commondity system, and the wage system is unequal too, there being an eight-grade wage system, etc. These can only be restricted under the dictatorship of the proletariat."
>
> In socialist society, there still exist two kinds of socialist ownership, namely ownership by the whole people and collective ownership

> This determines that China at present practices a commodity system The analyses made by Lenin and Chairman Mao tell us that bourgeois right which inevitably exists as regards production and exchange under the socialist system should be restricted under the dictatorship of the proletariat, so that in the long course of the socialist revolution the three major differences between workers and peasants, between town and country and between manual and mental labour will gradually be narrowed and the discrepancies between the various grades will be reduced and the material and ideological conditions for closing such gaps will gradually be created. If we do not follow this course, but call instead for the consolidation, extension and strengthening of bourgeois right and that part of inequality it entails, the inevitable result will be polarization.

Yao, quoting "worker-comrades," continues:

> If bourgeois right is not restricted, it will check the development of socialism and aid the growth of capitalism. When the economic strength of the bourgeoisie grows to a certain extent, its agents will ask for political rule, try to overthrow the dictatorship of the proletariat and the socialist system, completely change the socialist ownership, and openly restore and develop the capitalist system Once in power, the new bourgeoisie will first of all carry out a bloody suppression of the people and restore capitalism in the superstructure, including all spheres of ideology and culture, then they will conduct distribution in proportion to the amount of capital and power each has, and the principle of "to each according to his work" will be nothing but an empty shell, and a handful of new bourgeois elements monopolizing the means of production will at the same time monopolize the power of distributing consumer goods and other products Such is the process of restoration that has already taken place in the Soviet Union

If Marx could not have forseen the concrete struggles going on today in China, these struggles nonetheless bear out Marx's (and Lenin's) concern for maintaining the dictatorship of the proletariat during the transition period to communism in order to assure that the revolution be made permanent. Although Mao has often been taken in the West as violating Marx's understanding of the relationship between material and subjective realities because he refuses to inflexibly relate consciousness to economic class, in this case at least Yao's explanation of the social

conditions and material bases for the reproduction of a bourgeois class and bourgeois consciousness after 1949 contributes to a more satisfactory understanding of this relationship in both Marx and Mao.[10]

The current Chinese understanding of the present stage of class struggle in China, embodied in a series of articles from the *People's Daily* and the *Red Flag*—translated in the *Peking [Beijing] Review*—is itself a product of the historic struggles China has been experiencing since Liberation.[11] Theory has been articulated on the basis of the concrete experience of class struggle, just as class struggle has been guided by theoretical understanding of the issues involved. This ongoing interaction between theory and practice exemplifies Marx's approach to both understanding and changing the world.

Marx, in his dialectical conception of the relationship between theory and practice, saw the understanding and the changing of the world as intimately connected. For Marx both theory and practice are human- and action-centered. Theory and practice are dynamically related, as are subject and object. Although recognizing in his rejection of idealism that "the arm of criticism cannot replace the criticism of arms . . . [and that] material force can only be overthrown by material force . ," Marx goes on to say.

> *but theory itself becomes a material force when it has seized the masses* Theory is capable of seizing the masses when it demonstrates ad hominem, and it demonstrates ad hominem as soon as it becomes radical To be radical is to grasp things by the root. But for man the root is man himself The criticism of religion ends with the doctrine that man is the supreme being for man. It ends, therefore, with the categorical imperative to overthrow all those conditions in which man is an abased, enslaved, abandoned, contemptible being [1964 52, certain emphases added and deleted]

And, in a passage suggestive of Mao's "serve-the-people" ethic, Marx further writes (1964 53), "Theory is only realized in a people so far as it fulfills the needs of the people"—which needs themselves are the products of history.[12]

Marx's appreciation of the active role of humans in history, a role that in the final analysis can be determined only by revolutionizing practice, is at the basis of his criticism of Feuerbach's passive determinism. Speaking of Feuerbachian materialism, Marx wrote.

> The materialist doctrine that men are products of circumstances and upbringing, and that, therefore, changed men are products of other circumstances and changed upbringing, forgets that it is men that change circumstances and that the educator himself needs educating .
>
> The coincidence of the changing of circumstances and of human activity can be conceived and rationally understood only as revolutionizing practice.

And again,

> Social life is essentially *practical.* All mysteries which mislead theory to mysticism find their rational solution in human practice and in the comprehension of this practice. [Marx, 1968 28-29]

Although some might insist that revolutionizing the world depends upon a prior and adequate understanding of it, Marx holds that that understanding itself is derived from practice, particularly revolutionary practice, which continually tests the capacity for and the resistance to change in the world. Correct theory comes from and can only be validated through practice Such revolutionary practice leads to new objective circumstances and also to a new consciousness, which further changes the world. A change in human consciousness constitutes a change in the world, since "man is the human world, the state, society" (quoted in Avineri, 1971 148-149). The purpose of revolutionary socialism is finally to subject the world to the conscious power of people, who recreate the world and themselves as fully human

This human-centered, consciousness-oriented vision of the relations between theory and practice and between subject-actor and object is identical to Mao's In the thought of Mao Ze-dong, knowledge is produced through practice, empirical investigation, and analysis based on Marxist methods, cate-

gories, and theory. For Mao, revolutionary practice entails a continual testing of the limits imposed by material and subjective conditions on the achievement of Marxist-Leninist goals. Theory and social science are not used as rationalizations for and "pragmatic" adaptations to "what is." They are employed to chart the course to communism and to resolve the complex problems that arise along the way.

The process of creating theory from and linking theory to practice in China is partially institutionalized in the Maoist mass line. Theory becomes a material force in practice when it seizes the masses, persuading them to exert greater efforts to meet, in a more rapid and rational way, their developing needs as human beings. The Maoist strategy for the protracted socialist transition period, which is reflected in the progressive cycles of mass movements in China, parallels the process of achieving correct ideas in Marxist epistemology. Both are characterized by the furthering of relatively gradual, quantitative change until a point is reached at which a qualitative, more conscious leap becomes possible in societal development and understanding. At such times revolutionary activity and consciousness redefine human existence.

If, then, Mao and Marx can be said to share the same epistemology and the view that revolution is a continuing process, can they also be said to share an approach to revolutionary politics? Do they share a sense of the tactics and strategy necessary for implementing revolution and an appreciation for the problems of "institutionalization" that arise before and after the revolutionary seizure of power? Given his limited revolutionary experience and the historical conditions under which he lived, Marx's notion of revolutionary politics and revolutionary "institution building" may not have been highly developed. Here, as in other areas, Lenin has made major contributions. Yet, even in this area, there are striking similarities between Marx and Mao

In the 1850 "Address of the Central Committee to the Communist League" (Marx and Engels, 1972), for example, Marx and Engels, in the context of a hoped-for revolutionary

wave in Germany, discuss a difficult political problem familiar to any student of Mao· the necessity of forging broad political coalitions while maintaining throughout the revolutionary process the integrity of such working class institutions as the party-league. The general caveat raised is that the allies of one period–in Marx's and Engels' case, the petty bourgeois democrats in Germany–will become the enemy in the next period, during which time their appeal to workers would be "far more dangerous" than that of the previous enemy. When the petty bourgeois democrats come to power, Marx and Engels argue, they will try to "bribe the workers by more or less concealed alms and to break their revolutionary potency by making their position tolerable for the moment." They will seek, these former allies, to "bring the revolution to a conclusion as quickly as possible."

In the face of such economism, the task for the league-party is

> *to make the revolution permanent until* all more or less possessing classes have been forced out of their position of dominance, *until* the proletariat has conquered state power, *and* the association of proletarians, not only in one country but in all the dominant countries of the world, has advanced so far that competition among the proletarians of these countries has ceased and that at least the decisive productive forces are concentrated in the hands of the proletarians. *For us the issue cannot be the alteration of private property but only its annihilation, not the smoothing over of class antagonisms but the abolition of classes,* not the improvement of existing society but the foundation of a new one. [Marx and Engels, 1972 367, emphasis added]

Thus, during the period of alliance with the democratic petty bourgeoisie, the workers must be careful to maintain their ideological and organizational integrity When common victory is achieved, the workers must be on guard to prevent the petty bourgeois democrats from consolidating their power.[13] To this effect, Marx and Engels (1972. 368-369) write:

> *Above all things, the workers must counteract* as much as is at all possible, during the conflict and immediately after the struggle, *the*

> *bourgeois endeavors to allay the storm* . . Their actions must be so aimed as to prevent the direct revolutionary excitement from being suppressed again immediately after the victory On the contrary, they must keep it alive as long as possible *Far from opposing so-called excesses* . , such instances *must not only be tolerated but the leadership of them taken in hand. . . In general, they must in every way restrain as far as possible the intoxication of victory and the enthusiasm for the new state of things, which make their appearance after every victorious street battle. . In a word, from the first moment of victory, mistrust must be directed no longer against the conquered reactionary party, but against the workers' previous allies, against the party that wishes to exploit the common victory for itself alone.* [emphasis added]

But what of after the socialist revolution? How does what Marx and Engels say above relate to the Maoist vision of the two-line struggle under socialism? Although Marx and Engels are discussing tactics and strategy in the period before the socialist revolution, they can be understood to be warning more generally of the propensity for revolutionary coalitions to degenerate into various factions, one or a number of which will seek to end the revolution and reduce it to reformism at precisely the point at which its own privileges are threatened by continued change Given the continued existence of classes and of bourgeois right throughout the period of the socialist transition to communism, are not these warnings of Marx and Engels equally applicable to the post-seizure period? If, as indicated, Marx believed that the revolution had to be continued even after the seizure of power by the proletariat, does not the same need for class struggle exist after that initial socialist victory? And does not the same need exist, *mutatis mutandis,* to combat proponents of the bourgeois line who, as members of the coalition that forged the earlier victory, may be expected at some point to try to end the revolution and to reduce it to reformism? If, in short, there is a need to make the revolution permanent, does that not imply that bourgeois elements, "enemies," will arise who must be struggled against? And will not each subsequent victory before the "final victory" produce its own body of people within the revolutionary

coalition who will seek to "allay the storm" of continuing revolution? If so, then Mao's development strategy for continuing the revolution seems to be consistent with the concerns of Marx, who did not live to see the concrete, practical problems of socialist society.

Mao and the Maoists have been very explicit on this point, as recent translations in the *Peking [Beijing] Review* have made clear. Mao Ze-dong's development as a Marxist since 1949 is a product of direct confrontation with these and other problems of post-Liberation society. Mao, over the past quarter-century, has written about an incredibly wide variety of political, social, economic, cultural, and military matters that theory has confronted as they have emerged in practice during the transition to communism. The scope of his concerns—including issues regarding the pace of socialization, the relationship between industry and agriculture, the balance between vanguard leadership and mass spontaneity, the impact of the relations of production on work and daily life, and the revolutionization of culture—reflects the scope of the complicated, interlocking problems China faces in struggling to achieve communism. In many of these areas of concern China has made unprecedented progress.

CONCLUSION

Mao's contribution to the Marxist-Leninist revolutionary tradition includes the following First, he has appreciated and articulated the existence and development of class struggle within socialist society, and the need to live with and then confront opposing forces as they move to the fore, in a way that marks him at once as the most prudent and most daring of revolutionary leaders. Second, he has shown the capacity to keep Marx's ultimate ends in sight while constantly experimenting with and refashioning the means by which to propel Chinese society toward those ends Third, he has repeatedly renewed his understanding of the concrete, practical, multi-

faceted, and interrelated problems arising out of the existing division of labor in post-Liberation China, and he has developed an appreciation of how ideas, institutions, and group and individual behavior are dialectically shaped by and linked to the division of labor and to each other. And, fourth, he has communicated a sense of the complex and uneven revolutionary process necessary to confront the problems that arise in revolutionary practice. Mao's contribution to the Marxist-Leninist tradition lies, in sum, in his leadership—both in theory and in practice—of the most successful socialist revolution in world history.

His Marxism-Leninism has a kind of flexibility and rigor that is neither inevitably assured nor a priori precluded by the original intellectual constructs of Marx and Lenin when divorced from a particular political leadership.[14] Marxism is a tradition far richer than it has been portrayed by prevailing scholarship in America. It can be abused as well as it can be used. It can lend itself to "Stalinism" as well as to "Maoism," just as capitalism can lend itself both to fascism and to bourgeois democracy. Mao's writings, his life, and the revolution he has led show the intellectual and emotional potential of a tradition that we have systematically failed to appreciate.

Why have we failed? Why have most of us, if I am correct, tended either to ignore or to caricature Marx rather than to struggle to understand his profound analysis? The way American academics in general, and most of us within the China field in particular, have handled Marx and Mao and the relationship between them seems to be more a function of prevailing American liberal ideology and its attendant social sciences, which denigrate the serious study of Marx, than it is a function of either the substance or the ambiguities of the Marxist tradition The impact of the prevailing ideology is reflected in an astoundingly firm pattern among American scholars in the China field the degree to which the individual scholar accepts liberal ideology and refuses to take Marxism seriously is projected in the degree to which he or she does not take Mao's Marsixm seriously. Conversely, the degree to which certain

scholars have rejected or are in the process of seriously questioning prevailing American ideology is reflected in the degree to which they do take Marxism and Mao's Marxism seriously. This pattern is as evident in the work of Richard Solomon, James Townsend, Franz Schurmann and John Gurley, to name only a few, as it is in the work of the scholars discussed above.[15]

A continuing critique of prevailing American ideology is, consequently, still necessary if we are to go beyond our trained incapacity to understand what is going on in China, in our own society, and in the world. Marx is, after all, more than anything else a critic of capitalism and of the intellectual foundations of the liberal world view. And Mao is more than anything else a Marxist-Leninist. The thought of Mao Ze-dong must be placed within the Marxist-Leninist tradition not to certify its intellectual and revolutionary pedigree, but to enable us to better understand it and the Chinese Communist Revolution.[16] For, Mao and a good portion of the Chinese people today are involved in the difficult struggle to build a communist alternative to the evolving capitalism Marx criticized—a capitalism that in its twentieth-century form impinges on us all.

NOTES

1 The Marx of whom I write is neither "the early Marx," nor "the late Marx"; neither "the humanist Marx," nor "the scientific Marx"; neither "the intellectual Marx," nor "the activist Marx " *There is only one Marx,* as Ollman (1971) has definitively shown.

2. I do not mean to seem flippant about the argument that Marx conceived of the proletariat as the universal savior of mankind There certainly is language in Marx that would seem to justify such an interpretation Nevertheless, I believe that at the least there are very serious problems with that interpretation Although the proletariat doubtless plays a very important role in Marx's analysis of Western history (as well as in the Chinese Communists' conception of history), what precisely that role is, I submit, is less clear than most of us may have assumed If, for example, a highly developed proletariat was seen by Marx as necessary to wage a socialist revolution, how are we to account for Marx's call before the mid-nineteenth century for revolution in France, where he knew the proletariat was hardly well developed, or

even in England, where, according to E P Thompson (1966), a Marxist, the English working class really had only just come into being as a class by 1832? Furthermore, if the role for the proletarian class, which is created in capitalism, is taken, on a conventional reading of Marx, to be fixed, necessary, and universal, how are we to account for the following statement by Marx in response to a reviewer of *Capital*?

> *My critic feels himself obliged to metamorphose my historical sketch of the genesis of Capitalism in Western Europe into an historico-philosophic theory of the "march generale" imposed by fate upon every people whatever the historic circumstances in which it finds itself* in order that it may ultimately arrive at the form of economy which will ensure, together with the greatest expansion of productive power of social labour, the most complete development of men. *But I beg his pardon* [Marx and Engels, 1934: 354]

If every country in order to achieve socialism does not have to pass through its own indigenous capitalist stage, then presumably every country does not have to produce its own developed proletariat

China, we know, did not have a highly developed or very large proletariat prior to Liberation. If, therefore, it does not seem right to describe the pre-1949 stage of the Chinese revolution as a "proletarian revolution," is it, on the other hand, really accurate to characterize it as a "peasant revolution?" Surely it was in substantial part a peasant-*based* revolution, but is it valid to ignore the vital non-peasant elements in the revolution? And, even if one answers that question in the affirmative, were "the peasants" in China of the twentieth century essentially the same as "the peasants" of peasant rebellions there and elsewhere centuries before? Or had not the combination of imperialism and native capitalism begun to integrate many peasants into a capitalizing system?

In asking such questions I do not mean to imply the answers are apparent On the contrary, my minimal point is only to suggest that, on the one hand, the nature of Marx's understanding of the role of the proletariat in world history and, on the other, the actual nature of the Chinese peasants may well be more problematical than we have believed

3 On the basis of this approach, one wonders whether a substantial portion of Marx's own writings, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (1963), for example, would also fail to qualify as "Marxist-Leninist" or even as "Marxist "

4 For a fascinating, if empirically limited, theoretical discussion in Marxist terms of this effort, see Charles Bettelheim (1974)

5 The notion of "voluntarism" as it has functioned in the China field reflects, I believe, a two-sided caricature: a caricature of Marx as a mechanical materialist and an economic determinist; and a caricature of Mao as a romantic revolutionary, who more or less behaves as if he refuses to accept the limits on action imposed by objective conditions These caricatures have facilitated the avoidance by scholars of the extremely difficult task of trying to understand the problematic relationship between material conditions, on the one hand, and consciousness and action, on the other Unwilling or unable to understand original Marxism, scholars have by these caricatures seemingly legitimated their inattention to the meaning of dialectics and historical materialism in Marx and Mao

6 Although this part tends to focus on post-Liberation China in its discussion

of Mao's Marxism, his Marxism had been developing for at least two decades before 1949. For those who heretofore have been unable to recognize this fact, recent articles have made it still clearer See especially John G Gurley (1975) And for a discussion of the dependence of pre-Liberation land reform legislation upon concrete class analysis, see Philip C C Huang (1975)

7 The fact that people may conceive of and present themselves as Marxists, of course, cannot be taken in itself as conclusive proof that they are But it does at least present a *prima facie* case requiring serious rebuttal

8 In trying to further the understanding of Marx and of Mao's relation to him, this article, as its subtitle suggests, is conceived by me only a preliminary contribution

9 The notion of "bourgeois right" is briefly discussed by Marx in his *Critique of the Gotha Programme* (1962, Vol II: 23-25) Marx's understanding of bourgeois right may well have developed on the basis of his understanding of liberalism and individual rights in general, which he brilliantly criticized as amounting to sharm equality in his much maligned *The Jewish Qestion* (1964: 3-31)

10. Marx himself was sufficiently ambiguous about the specific relationship between consciousness and class position to make the notion that he conceived of a simple one-to-one relationship between socioeconomic class and political consciousness a gross oversimplification.

11. In addition to the Yao article quoted above, see especially Zhang Chun-qiao (1975).

12. Compare Marx's assertion that theory can become a material force when it serves the needs of the people with Mao's statement at the end of the *Selected Works* about the role of Marxism-Leninism in China: "The reason why Marxism-Leninism has played such a great role in China since its introduction is that China's social conditions call for it, that it has been linked with the actual practice of the Chinese people's revolution and that the Chinese people have grasped it. *Any ideology*—even the best, even Marxism-Leninism itself—*is ineffective unless it is linked with objective realities, meets objectively existing needs and has been grasped by the masses of the people* We are historical materialists, opposed to historical idealism" (1965, Vol IV: 457; emphasis added)

13 With this declaration of the necessity for vigilance in the face of victory compare Mao's statement of March 5, 1949, made on the eve of Chinese Communist victory in the civil war: "With victory, certain moods may grow within the Party—arrogance, the airs of self-styled hero, inertia and unwillingness to make progress, love of pleasure and distaste for continued hard living With victory, the people will be grateful to us and the bourgeoisie will come forward to flatter us It has been proved that the enemy cannot conquer us by force of arms However, the flattery of the bourgeoisie may conquer the weak-willed in our ranks. There may be some Communists, who were not conquered by enemies with guns and were worthy of the name of heroes for standing up to these enemies, but who cannot withstand sugar-coated bullets; they will be defeated by sugar-coated bullets We must guard against such a situation To win country-wide victory is only the first step in a long march of ten thousand *li* After several decades, the victory of the Chinese people's democratic revolution, viewed in retrospect, will seem like only a brief prologue to a long drama" (1965, Vol IV: 374)

14. One component of political leadership in China has been Mao's personality. I have chosen in this article, however, to ignore the matter of Mao's personality which has so obsessed the China field To the extent that Mao has indeed performed unique and correct services for the revolution that can best be understood in terms of his peculiar personality, to that extent is a serious problem posed for continuing correct political leadership. Mao and his coleaders, I believe, have been aware of this problem. They are, thus, concerned not with producing another Mao Ze-dong, which is neither possible nor really to be desired, but with producing a "successor generation" as a firm foundation for correct political leadership

15. No doubt there are exceptions to this pattern—perhaps Donald J. Munro, for one How the pattern will be affected by the recent availability of two more unofficial volumes of Mao's writings and speeches remains to be seen. Judging by an analysis of a portion of these documents by a young China scholar who takes Marxism and Mao's Marxism seriously, the two volumes expectably provide further evidence of Mao's debt to and development within the Marxist tradition (Levy, 1975). If, however, Schram's introduction to *Chairman Mao Talks to the People* (1974) is taken as indicative of how the pattern within "the field" is likely to be affected, there is little reason to hope that Mao's Marxism will be taken much more seriously.

16. A prime example of how understanding Marx's writings is vital to understanding the continuing Chinese revolution is provided by the issue of the division of labor The division of labor in class society, as I understand it, shapes all human relations in production and all social relations. It is the basis for class. As such, no single issue is more central to understanding the continuing Chinese revolution. And yet, to the best of my knowledge, few if any members of the establishment in the China field have seriously dealt with the implications of this issue. To date, the best published work focusing on the division of labor in China has been written by a French Marxist, who is outside the China field (Bettelheim, 1974) For very recent pieces concerning the division of labor in China, which is analyzed with particular reference to the relations of production, see Andrew G. Walder, "Marxism, Maoism and Social Change," forthcoming in *Modern China*; and William McNamara's unpublished working paper, tentatively titled "Revolutionary Coal Mining."

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