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THE USES OF CONCEPTS AND DEFINITIONS IN MARX'S DIALECTICAL ANALYSIS[1]

Engels, in his preface to *Capital,* Volume 3, as part of his running commentary on "determinist" Marxists, warned that the reader should not expect to find "fixed, cut-to-measure, once and for all applicable definitions in Marx's works":

> It is self-evident that where things and their interrelations are conceived, not as fixed, but as changing, their mental images, the ideas, are likewise subject to change and transformation, and they are not encapsulated in rigid definitions, but are developed in their historical or logical process of formation. [Marx, 1967b: 13-14]

According to Engels, then, Marx's terms are meant to express a conception of things and their interrelations—"not as fixed, but as changing"—and, consequently, the definitions of these terms must also change. This usage of terms led Pareto to comment that

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Marx's words are like bats: one can see in them both birds and mice (Ollman, 1971: 3).

Accordingly, when Marx laid out his materialist conception of history in his "Preface" to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy,* he stated that the "mode of production" determines "the general process of social, political and intellectual life" (Marx, 1971: 20-21). Yet, on the very same page, the same "determining" role is attributed to "relations of production," "economic conditions of production," "productive forces," "the economic foundation," the "social forces of production," and the "social conditions of existence." These terms not only refer to different things—in the case of "social conditions of existence" this is quite clear—but, more important, some of them seem to include in their meaning the parts of society that Marx says they "determine" (Ollman, 1971: 6-7). Property relations, as a system of legal claims, for example, come under the heading of "superstructure," but they are also an integral part of the "relations of production," which are part of the "economic base" and which in turn "determine" the superstructure (Ollman, 1971: 6-7). The same is true for our previous example of the system of credit and national debt in Great Britain's early industrialization. When viewed from one perspective, credit and taxation are merely a set of laws within the legal and political superstructure. Yet how can a system of credit and taxation be clearly separated from the economic base? Does it not clearly include also, within its very definition, the actual workings of an economic system?

Until we examine the ways in which Marx conceived of these definitions and categories, his usage of definitions seems at best inconsistent, if not altogether haphazard. For Marx, concepts like "superstructure," "economic base," and "relations of production" could not be clearly distinguished and separated from one another because they do not exist, in reality, as separate entities. These concepts describe, for Marx, certain aspects of a densely interrelated, dynamic structure, sometimes likened to an "organic whole" of society. The interaction between these different aspects of society can be more properly referred to as

inneraction (Ollman, 1971: 17). Marx, after all, claims that it is the "inner connections" of society that he is studying, not the interaction between separate factors or "independent variables" in society (Marx, 1967a: 19). Indeed, "mutual" or "reciprocal interaction" between elements presupposes, according to Engels, the existence of an "organic" whole.[2] This "organic" conception allows Marx to treat his entire subject-matter as "different aspects of one unit" (Ollman, 1971: 17).

This "organic" conception is fundamentally different from the commonplace conception of superstructure and base as separate factors, between which a thinker chooses in line with his "deterministic" or "voluntaristic" tendencies. Different aspects of the social whole—like superstructure and economic base—are distinguished by Marx not because they are in reality separate "factors," but because they help to explain the social processes within the structured, "organic" whole: "these categories therefore express the forms of being, the characteristics of existence, and often only individual sides of this specific society, this subject" (Marx, 1973: 106). Further, these "political economic categories" are only "abstract expressions of the real, transitory, historic social relations," and "only remain true while these relations exist" (Marx and Engels, 1955: 34). Far from being strictly defined, mutually exclusive, and separate social factors, as they are almost universally treated in the China field, superstructure and economic base are acts of conceptualization that refer to different aspects of the social whole that Marx wishes to highlight for purposes of analysis. They contain, as Ollman so convincingly demonstrates, a "cluster" of qualities and social relations, all of which are so closely related that they, at times, overlap. This is true for all of Marx's concepts. The concept of "capital," for example, includes in its very meaning the social relations between capital and labor—the entire social significance of capitalism as a process of production in all its superstructural and material aspects (Ollman, 1971: 11-12). Capital, in "The Communist Manifesto," is described as "that kind of property which exploits wage-labour, and which cannot increase except upon condition of begetting a new supply of wage-labour for

fresh exploitation" (Marx and Engels, 1968: 47). This description necessarily entails a specific superstructure—a set of property laws sanctioning the private ownership of capital in the form of means of production, as well as laws enabling workers to sell their labor as free individuals on the marketplace. This description also necessarily entails a specific set of attitudes or "consciousness" on the part of workers. In order to willingly sell their labor-time or, in Marx's terms, in order to be exploited for their surplus labor for any period of time, an overwhelming proportion of the laboring population has to feel that in some sense this arrangement is right and proper, and that there is indeed no other way to go about production.

Capital, like all of Marx's terms, is a many-faceted concept that contains private property, a distinctive system of law, wage labor, the worker, the worker's product, commodities, means of production, the capitalist, money, and value and presupposes certain aspects of human consciousness (Ollman, 1971: 12). Elements of both superstructure and base combine to form the concept of capital which, for Marx, was of great help in describing an ongoing social process. This usage of concepts in no way separates superstructure from economic base, as they clearly must be separated in the common dualistic conception where superstructure and base are contrasted as counterparts of the poles of, respectively, voluntarism and determinism.

As he sought to understand society, Marx sometimes felt it necessary to create new concepts with which to analyze the social processes of capitalism. This is merely a matter of mentally dividing up the social whole in a distinct manner for a particular analytical purpose. "The result is a new social factor, a new unit in which to think about and refer to society" (Ollman, 1971: 20). The key social category created in this way is the "relations of production," the core of which lies "in the complex interaction of production, distribution, exchange and consumption" (Ollman, 1971: 20). Yet Marx assigns "relations of production" to the economic base of society and conceives of them as vitally important, because out of this entity the whole superstructure arises and because the relations of production comprise human material life, where workers interact with "nature," forming their

own consciousness (Marx, 1970: 86-88; 1971: 20-21). The prevalent conception of superstructure and base as separate factors, indeed as opposite poles of a determinist/voluntarist spectrum, appears here as a positive barrier to understanding either Marx or Mao. For although these relations of production are considered as part of the economic base, they incorporate not only the technical and economic aspects of production—for new types of technology transform the work process and are used to displace workers—but also the legal aspects of the superstructure, including ownership rights to the means of production, existing wage scales, and power and authority relations within the factory. Here superstructure and base interact so closely that they are scarcely distinguishable. A realization of this basic Marxian method of analysis is absolutely vital to any effort to assess Mao as a Marxist thinker.

CAUSATION AND DETERMINATION IN DIALECTICAL ANALYSIS

But if Marx's terms include such closely interrelated aspects that are, in many respects, indistinguishable, what did he mean when he suggested that the base "determines" the superstructure? Does not "determine," in the determinist interpretations of Marx, clearly imply a causal interaction between two mutually exclusive social factors? Did not Marx clearly say, in his "Preface" to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy,* as analysts of Mao so often point out (Meisner, 1971) that "The mode of production of material life conditions the general process of social, political, and intellectual life," and that "It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their existence that determines their consciousness"?

"Determine," in nondialectical analysis envisaging separate "independent variables," normally entails a causal interaction between separate social factors, but in Marx's dialectical method it means something quite different. When Marx, for example, writes about production, distribution, exchange, and consumption, he asserts, characteristically, that they are "links of a single whole, different aspects of one unit" (Marx, 1971: 204).

But when he continues, sketching out the causal relations between these aspects, he seems to contradict himself. First he writes that production "determines" all the others and is "decisive," then he asserts that those aspects "determined" by production in turn determine it:

> Production is the decisive phase, both with regard to the contradictory aspects of production and with regard to other phases. A distinct mode of production thus determines the specific mode of consumption, distribution, exchange and the *specific relations of these different phases to one another.* Production *in the narrow sense,* however, is in its turn also determined by the other aspects. For example, if the market, or the sphere of exchange, expands, then the volume of production grows and tends to become more differentiated. Production also changes in consequence of changes in distribution of the population in town and countryside, and the like. Production is, finally, determined by the demands of consumption. There is an interaction between the various aspects. Such interaction takes place in any organic entity. [Marx, 1971: 204-205]

This contradiction is only apparent. Remember that Marx talks about exchange, consumption, and distribution as being, along with production, merely aspects of a single structural unit. In this sense production determines the others because the others are all "links of a single whole," called, in this perspective, "mode of production." The distinct "mode of production" Marx is referring to is not "determining" in the sense of "cause"—it is "determining" in the sense of *presuppose,* for a certain type of exchange, consumption, and distribution are included within the concept of "mode of production."

Marx spells this point out more clearly in his *Capital,* a work subsequent to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy.* At one point he explained that the capitalist mode of production "presupposes" capital, commodity production, landed property, and wage labor (Marx, 1967b: 820-826). In other words, the process of production as a whole is viewed as a "unity of the direct production process and the circulation process" which under capitalism "presupposes" specific forms

of exchange, consumption, distribution, and property (Marx, 1967b: 828). In a related sense, Marx explained that the concept of capital "presupposes" a specific distribution of property—the expropriation of the landed rural laborer, concentration of means of production into the hands of a minority, and exclusive ownership of land by another minority. All of these social-economic relations, Marx says, "determine" the "entire character and movement of production" (Marx, 1967b: 879). In all of these senses, by the word "determine" Marx clearly means that given a certain mode of production, you must necessarily also find a certain form of exchange, consumption, property, and social relations connected with it.

Marx makes manifestly clear in the cited paragraph that "determine" does not mean "cause" when he shifts his perspective by inserting "in the narrow sense" after "production." After this point he is talking about production not in the sense of the whole social process or "mode" of production, but in the narrow sense of the specific act of manufacturing the commodities that are to be distributed, exchanged, and consumed. When Marx shifts his perspective in this manner, production no longer "determines" the other aspects, but it is reciprocally interrelated with them—it is "in turn also determined by the other aspects." Such dynamic, reciprocal inneraction between the different aspects is the process that generates change in any structured whole.

Similarly, when Marx asserts that "the mode of production of material life conditions the general process of social, political and intellectual life," he does not mean, as asserted in determinist interpretations, that the production process, in the narrow sense, "determines" (in the sense of "cause") social, political, and intellectual life. Indeed, all of these social, political, and intellectual aspects are included within and presupposed by the concept "mode of production" (Harvey, 1973: 197-206). This is Marx's way of asserting that the process of production (in the narrow sense) and human social and intellectual life are so densely interrelated that they are parts of a single structural whole. When subsequently he asserts that

"It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their existence that determines their consciousness," he is merely stressing, in opposition to "idealist" philosophers, that the dialectic of social change is firmly rooted in human material life. The economic base no more *causally* determines human consciousness than human consciousness *causally* determines the economic base. Instead, a dense *structure* exists, with a change in any one of the aspects of the structure necessitating a shift in the relations of all the aspects and perhaps even changing the nature of the structure as a whole (Harvey, 1974; Ollman, 1973). An insensitivity to the difficulties inherent in Marx's use of concepts and definitions leads to an interpretation of Marx that sees causation between separate social factors if, perhaps, with some secondary, vestigal reaction—rather than mutual "inneraction" between the densely interrelated aspects of a single conceptual structure. This first interpretation accounts for the "economic determinism of orthodox Marxism" that is so often unjustifiably used as a yardstick with which to measure the first aspect of Mao's voluntarism.

CONCEPTUAL FOUNDATIONS OF THE SECOND ASPECT OF MAO'S "VOLUNTARISM"

If Marx was clearly no determinist in the sense attributed to him by interpreters of Mao—in other words, if the economic base is no separate, "objective" force which "predetermines" history, but is instead closely interrelated with and modified by the various aspects of the superstructure, which together form a mode of production and develop in distinctive histories in different geographical areas—then it stands to reason that Marx could never have logically asserted a world-theory of "stages" of history or even a theory of the "timing" of revolution which would be applicable across the board to all times and places. Yet this is precisely the type of theory commonly attributed to Marx and used as the standard to measure Mao's voluntarism in the second sense of the word. Mao is said to exhibit an "impatience" with these "objectively determined" stages that is even more "extreme" than Lenin's (Schram, 1969: 266). He went

so far as to rely heavily upon an aroused peasantry instead of waiting for the further development of capitalism and then relying upon the working class, as Marx is alleged to have laid down as a general revolutionary proposition applicable to all times and places (Meisner, 1967: 267). For Schram, nothing is more indicative of Mao's "extreme voluntarism" than his idea of "telescoping" the stages of revolution, and his declarations that "sprouts" of communism are developing at present within Chinese society. To Schram's mind, this is a total abrogation of Marx's conception of distinct and "objectively determined" stages—a voluntaristic abrogation which he finds to be barely distinguishable from Trotsky's own allegedly "total" denial of distinctions between stages within a revolution (Schram, 1971: 230-231).

The ultimate source for a supposed theory of stages in Marx is his "materialist conception of history," which he laid down in outline form in his "Preface" to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*. This same short piece serves also as the source for determinist misinterpretations of Marx, based upon a misreading that attributes a causal function to productive forces, rather than a set of dense interrelations between productive forces, relations of production, and superstructure—all of which constitute, for Marx, a "mode of production." But when Marx says in this "Preface" that "The mode of production of material life conditions the general process of social, political and intellectual life," he is commonly taken to mean that the "economic base," a separate factor from social, political, and intellectual life, *causes* all these other aspects of society, which are all drawn along in its inevitable, "predetermined" movement (Meisner, 1971: 6-7; Schram and d'Encausse, 1969: 17). With the forces of production thus mistakenly given an almost mystical life of their own, the implications of the sentences immediately following the "Preface" provide the raw material for reading into Marx a rigid, a priori conception of stages of history:

> At a certain stage of development, the material productive forces of society come into conflict with the existing relations of production or—this merely expresses the same thing in legal terms—within the property relations within the framework of

> which they have operated hitherto. From forms of development of the productive forces these relations turn into their fetters. Then begins an era of social revolution. . . . No social order is ever destroyed before all the productive forces for which it is sufficient have been developed, and new superior relations of production never replace older ones before the material conditions for their existence have matured within the framework of the old society. Mankind thus inevitably sets itself only such tasks as it is able to solve, since closer examination will always show that the problem itself arises only when the material conditions for its solution are already present or at least in the course of formation. In broad outline, the Asiatic, ancient, feudal and modern bourgeois modes of production may be designated as epochs marking progress in the economic development of society. [Marx, 1971: 21]

From a determinist perspective, this passage has two broad implications. First, Marx appears to be saying that a political revolution will only come about when existing relations of production "fetter" the development of productive forces. In other words, a socialist revolution will not be possible until all the productive forces for which capitalism is "sufficient" have been developed. And, as the four different modes of production are listed as "epochs marking progress in the economic development of society," Marx seems to be saying that capitalism is a necessary and inevitable stage between feudal and/or Asiatic and socialist modes of production. Second, upon this determinist reading, Marx seems to imply in this passage that these stages of history are distinct and separate, punctuated by the great political revolutions that mark their passing. In other words, feudal relations of production are not and cannot be transformed until after the bourgeois revolution, and capitalist relations of production will not be transformed until after the proletarian revolution, and so forth. As Schram asserts, the "class nature of a given historical phase and the actual role of the various classes during this phase" must be closely associated in the determinist Marx. So, quite naturally, the "bourgeois-democratic revolution which constituted the transition from feudalism to capitalism would likewise be carried out by the bourgeoisie" (Schram and d'Encausse, 1969: 19). From this

determinist perspective, Mao, who advocated revolution before capitalism had "fully" developed in China, who relied on the peasantry to carry out this "premature" revolution, and who subsequently blurred the distinction between historical stages by encouraging the development of "sprouts" of future modes of production within the present society, exhibits an "impatience" with "objectively determined" stages of history characteristic of an extreme voluntarist.

DETERMINISM AND STAGES OF HISTORY

Of these two aspects of the determinist concepts of stages, the second—that of the necessity of distinct, separate stages—is most clearly without firm basis in Marx's writings. Closer examination of Marx's histories clarifies this point. Marx's historical treatment in *Capital* of Great Britain's transition from feudalism to capitalism makes clear that the "revolution" marking the boundary between feudalism and capitalism was not a political revolution clearly demarcating separate stages, but a complex, permanent process of social revolution lasting over 300 years. In this lengthy, continuous process, where old feudal relations of production were continually being transformed, different forms of production existed simultaneously within British feudal society. To Schram (1971), who pursues this "blurring of stages" theme much further than others in the field are willing,[3] it may come as a complete surprise that Marx saw "sprouts" of capitalism dating to the late 1400s, and that these sprouts were fostered not by the actions of the bourgeoisie but by those of the crown and nobility.

This misconception of stages of history as distinct and separable is an integral part of the same conception that conceives of superstructure and base in a similar manner. Marx's concept of stages in history is not an "ideal typology" (Schram and d'Encausse, 1969: 8), but is, like all his other concepts, dynamic and changing. Almost from its inception, the British feudal order underwent continual changes in form, gradually developing elements that presaged the emergence of capitalism. This gradual quantitative change in the importance of capitalist

forms within feudal society made, Marx felt, the final qualitative change from feudalism to capitalism possible (Harvey, 1973: 202).[4] This process consisted of a gradual expropriation of the rural British population from small, self-supporting farms into a class who needed to sell their labor-power in order to live. As part of this process, these small landholdings were concentrated, by legal and illegal means, into large private capitalist farms producing food commodities and market goods for the growing domestic market. This was, as Marx conceptualized it, a self-feeding process: the expropriated peasants both became a source of labor on the large farms and sheep ranches and provided a market for the farm commodities. Others migrated to towns and fed a gradually emerging proletariat (Marx, 1967a: 723-749).

This dynamic process of change within the "stage" of feudalism concretizes Marx's conception of old relations of production being destroyed as they become "fetters" upon the development of productive forces. This does not take place only after a political "bourgeois-democratic" revolution, as the determinist view would have it, but it happens for hundreds of years before capitalism becomes even recognizable, gradually and in a "permanently revolutionary" fashion. This process was carried out not solely by the bourgeoisie, moreover, but also by the conscious actions of the crown, Parliament, and landed nobility long before the modern bourgeoisie had emerged.

The gradual process of "freeing" serfs, for example, culminating only at the time of the Stuart restoration, had the effect of changing what were essentially communal property relations with mutual obligation between lord and vassal into private property relations between landlord and tenant (Marx, 1967a: 723-727). Large estates were thereafter owned by landed elites and were farmed in hundreds of small parcels by tenants. These tenant farmers were self-supporting, owned their own means of production (farming tools, spinning wheels, and so forth), and produced almost every daily necessity for themselves. As the price of wool grew by leaps and bounds with the development of the early Flemish textile industry, landlords began to see the financial advantage of commercial sheep farming. But the old relations of

production, with thousands of self-supporting tenants farming this potentially profitable sheep-grazing land, acted as a real "fetter" on the development of commercial sheep-ranching and the textile industry of which it was an arm. This contradiction between the forces and relations of production was resolved in the overthrow of the old relations through a process of "estate clearing." Whole tenant populations were often forcibly evicted from their old way of life and into new relations where they owed no means of production and were forced to sell their labor to someone else (Marx, 1967a: 728-733). Land formerly populated and farmed by thousands of families became, instead, populated by thousands of sheep. In this case, a real social revolution, continuously turning subsistence farmers into wage laborers, land into capital, landlords into capitalist farmers, and self-supporting families into consumers, was underway long before the "stage" of capitalism was even distinguishable. Thus, when Marx asserts that "the problem itself arises only when the material conditions for its solution are already present or at least in the course of formation" (Marx, 1971: 21), he in no way means that a bourgeois-democratic revolution will not come about until feudalism has "exhausted" its forces of production. On the contrary, Marx means precisely what the above passage suggests—the "problem" of old relations of production (land tenancy) arises only when the Flemish wool industry (the material conditions for its solution) is present or in the course of formation. This necessarily implies that a great deal of development of the "solution"—capitalist forms of production—must be present in feudal society before a problem of "fettering" can possibly arise. There could be no clearer example of "telescoping" stages of history and of blurring the distinction between them.

DETERMINISM AND REVOLUTIONARY STRATEGY

Even if this concept of clearly demarcated stages of history has no basis in Marx and cannot be used as evidence of voluntarism in Mao, there is another, more complex problem raised by the issue of "speeding" the stages of history. The difficulty, no doubt, is

due to the fact that Marx's theoretical writings were based upon the development of capitalism in Western Europe. He simply never clearly sketched out the implications of his analysis of capitalism for the rest of the world, much less prescribed revolutionary strategies. Yet despite the lack of an overall conception in Marx of how non-Western European, nonfeudal societies were to develop, we find Mao condemned as a voluntarist for not waiting for capitalism to develop a large working class with which to lead a revolution. Without such a coherent body of Marx's writings on non-European situations, how can Mao's strategy be so evaluated? The only way, clearly, is to understand Marx's method of analysis and evaluate Mao's use or misuse of it in the unique conditions of China. Far too frequently, Marx's writings on history and revolution are not treated as embodiments of a method of analysis to be applied to the unique material and historical conditions of an area, but, strangely, are reduced in the manner that they have so often been in sectarian left-wing polemics—into a rigid ecumenical dogma from which only an infidel deviates. Thus, for those commentators who interpret Marx as a determinist, Mao has sinned by refusing to wait for the "predetermined" full-scale development of capitalism (Meisner, 1971: 7) and by arousing and leading the peasantry—signs for which Mao is excommunicated from the very "essence" of Marxism (Schram and d'Encausse, 1969: 110-112).

This position is predicated upon the belief that Marx's writings on Western Europe embody eternal "objective laws" for world social development. Such eternal laws, applicable to all material and historical situations, were clearly precluded in Marx's method, which stressed empirical study of the economic basis of society, its social relations, its superstructure, and the interrelations between them. No "eternal laws," divorced from concrete analysis, are possible—this was the core of Marx's critique of German idealist philosophers (Marx and Engels, 1970). Yet interpreters of Mao-thought who, upon a determinist interpretation of Marx's method, are convinced that there are such objective laws, strain to find them. Not surprisingly, they find a variety of statements by Marx that are contradictory and "incon-

clusive" (Schram and d'Encausse, 1969: 9-15). Marx, referring to different geographical areas, each with distinctive economies, social structures, cultures, and histories, said in some places that peasants could become a revolutionary force, and in others that they could not; he seemed to say at one point that non-European countries had to be "Europeanized" as part of their development, but at another he implied that they could take an independent course of development; and his "objective laws" seemed to make capitalism a "predetermined stage," yet at other times he clearly said that capitalism was by no means inevitable under all conditions. The conclusion, of course, is that Marx was a somewhat inconsistent thinker, embodying both voluntaristic and deterministic "strands." Mao is said to have "accented" the "voluntaristic strands," while the "deterministic strands," since Marx was "really" a determinist, are used to evaluate Mao (Schram and d'Encausse, 1969: 14-19, 110-112).

This interpretation takes Marx's theoretical treatment of Western Europe and, upon a determinist reading, mechanically extrapolates it to the rest of the world. When Marx subsequently makes statements contradicting his so-called "determinist" formulations for Europe, they are taken only as fragmentary "voluntaristic strands" that have served subsequent revolutionaries as legitimating devices for their voluntaristic revisions of Marx. Yet Marx's seemingly inconsistent pronouncements on non-European countries are ample testament to the fact that he saw an infinite variety of historical alternatives facing a non-European country. When an open, flexible method of analysis is applied to widely different historical and material situations, the conclusions are, quite naturally, widely different. It is a fundamentally fruitless undertaking to search for a single Marxian position toward the revolutionary potential of the peasantry, the probability of the development of capitalism in undeveloped areas, or of the "timing" of revolutions.

Marx clearly specified that the capitalist mode of production was a "special kind"—one "with specific historical features" (Marx, 1967b: 878). It presupposes, as does any mode of production, a given level of social productive forces and a

specific "form" of their development as a historical precondition. This precondition is itself the result of a previous, highly specific historical process (Marx, 1967b: 878). Marx often separated the terms "modern society" from the "capitalist mode of production," and, although he saw the possibility of a "higher form of society" developing out of capitalism, he studiously avoided the assertion that capitalism is the only path of development to a "higher form" (Marx, 1967b: 819-820, 883, 885). Indeed, Marx's "objective laws" are labeled the "law of development of the capitalist mode of production"—not simply the law of historical development (Marx, 1967b: 885). More explicitly, Marx replied to the "misunderstanding concerning my so-called theory" that the "historical inevitability" of the process of the development of capitalism was "*expressly* limited to the *countries of Western Europe*" and could by no means be mechanically transferred to other areas of the world (Marx and Engels, 1955: 319).

The reason why, as Marx felt, capitalism developed in Western Europe was the existence of a politically fixed relation between property and labor—feudalism—which regulated the distribution of all surplus-product, making accumulation a possibility (Meszaros, 1972: 140). This distinctive Western European form of social organization, further, developed in distinctive, often seemingly accidental, ways. Squabbles between the crown and feudal lords hastened the dissolution of the "bands of feudal retainers," transferring a form of communal property into large, landed private property (Marx, 1967a: 718-719). This large landed property was a prerequisite to the historical process of large-scale destruction of small subsistence farming, forcing the rural population to sell its labor and buy means of subsistence, while transforming land into capital to be used in the commercial farming of food commodities or in sheep-ranching (Marx, 1967a: 714-715; 1967b: 821). All of this represents a specific historical development of a distinctive mode of production into another, equally distinctive mode.

This process of the expropriation of the small-landholding and tenant peasantry, which was in England a precondition for the development of capitalism, was in no way predetermined or

inevitable even once underway. Marx explicitly noted that a similar "freeing" of Roman slaves from their traditional ties to land and master transformed them not into a proletariat but into a "rabble," much like the "poor whites" of the southern United States. An analogous "freeing" of serfs in Eastern Europe likewise failed to lead to capitalist relations of production. In both of these cases, Marx explained, what was lacking were the specific forms of property relations that preceded capitalism in Western Europe (Marx and Engels, 1955: 319-320).

Moreover, once the process of genuine capitalist growth is begun, it is still in no way predetermined, but is contingent upon a whole range of historical and geographical factors. The early development of capitalist production in Northern Italy, for example, which emancipated and expropriated serfs earlier than in the rest of Europe, and which saw large-scale migrations to towns, actually reversed itself at the end of the fifteenth century, after world markets and trade routes changed dramatically. In this case the emerging proletariat actually moved back into the countryside and reverted to earlier forms of small-holding and tenant-farming (Marx, 1967a: 716).

Just as the development of capitalism, even in parts of Western Europe, was in no way unilinear or predetermined, neither were the fates of non-European countries predetermined in Marx's writings. In India, where the British were already performing the often brutal process Marx ironically referred to as "Europeanization," Marx saw that the country would probably be drawn completely into the capitalist system, eventually being united by new forms of transportation and communication before it would be able to throw off the yoke of British imperialism (Schram and d'Encausse, 1969: 115-119). For capitalism to develop in India, traditional Indian society had to be radically transformed. During Marx's lifetime the British were carrying out this transformation, "speeding" and "telescoping" into the space of several decades the process of transformation that had taken over 300 years in Britain. As a prerequisite to this "Europeanization," traditional small-village "relations of production" were transformed as the British, by manipulating markets and

setting up unfavorable trade regulations, were able to destroy the indigenous Indian textile industry, transforming a self-sufficient textile-producing society into a cotton-growing population and a dependent, textile-consuming market (Schram and d'Encausse, 1969: 116-119). In analyzing this historical process, Marx in no way implied that it was inevitable, nor did he imply, as Schram seems to suggest (Schram and d'Encausse, 1969: 9), that this was a desirable or "unfortunately necessary" process.

Indeed, under certain historical and material social conditions, the "inevitable" stage of capitalism can be dispensed with altogether. Marx's studies of Russian society convinced him that a revolution was imminent there (Marx and Engels, 1955: 103, 241, 289). Further, his understanding of land tenancy and social conditions in rural Russia led him to the belief that under Russia's specific, "communal" form of rural relations of production, the mass of the agricultural population were "non-proletarian" members of a "working-class" that was far more impoverished than actual proletarians (Marx and Engels, 1955: 220, 289, 319-320). This created a historical condition where, after a political revolution of a specific character, Russia could embark upon a unique course of industrial and social development. Moreover, this course of development entailed some sort of conscious choice on the part of power-holders in Russia's political superstructure. Western-influenced modernizers, for example, had recently been trying to transform Russia along Western lines:

> If Russia wants to become a capitalist nation after the example of the West-European countries—and during the last few years she has been taking a lot of trouble in this direction—she will not succeed without having first transformed a good part of her peasants into proletarians; and then, once drawn into the whirlpool of the capitalist economy, she will have to endure its inexorable laws like other profane nations. [Marx and Engels, 1955: 293]

But if the imminent Russian revolution does not assume a specific character, and if instead of pursuing an independent path

of development Russia "continues to pursue the path she has followed since 1861," then "she will lose the finest chance ever offered by history to a people and undergo all the fatal vicissitudes of the capitalist regime" (Marx and Engels, 1955: 292). This opportunity was afforded by the existence of communal rather than private property relations in Russian village communities. The destruction of this communal property—a destruction so necessary for the development of capitalism—would have to be halted before Russia could pursue an independent path of development based upon these communal forms of rural property relations:

> Thus the analysis in *Capital* does not provide any arguments for or against the viability of the village community, but the special research into this subject which I conducted, and for which I obtained material from original sources, has convinced me that this community is the fulcrum of Russia's social revival, but in order that it might function in this way one would first have to eliminate the destructive influences which assail it from every quarter and then ensure the conditions normal for spontaneous development. [Marx and Engels, 1955: 320]

These passages cannot be dismissed as mere "voluntaristic strands" within a body of largely determinist writings which have served only to legitimate "extreme voluntarism" on the part of others. They are, in fact, the logical outcome of Marx's method, which was not to develop "ideal types" or "stages" applicable to all of history and to all societies, but to examine the specific material and historical conditions of a specific area before coming to conclusions applicable only where those conditions hold. Thus, Marx, in a reply to a critic who attributed to him such an a priori conception of stages of world history, explained:

> The chapter on primitive accumulation does not claim to do more than trace the path by which, in Western Europe, the capitalist economic system emerged from the womb of the feudal economic system.
>
> That is all. But this is too little for my critic. He insists on transforming my historical sketch of the genesis of capitalism in

> Western Europe into an historico-philosophic theory of the general path of development prescribed by fate to all nations, whatever the historical circumstances in which they find themselves, in order that they may ultimately arrive at the economic system which ensures, together with the greatest expansion of the productive powers of social labour, the most complete development of man. But I beg his pardon. [Marx and Engels, 1955: 293-294]

This misconception of Marx as having set forth a theory of stages of world development is ultimately based upon the common determinist interpretation that conceives of the process of production "causing" all other aspects of society, which are all drawn along in its inexorable, "predetermined" movement. But, far from being a theory of stages from which only a voluntarist would deviate, Marx's method of analysis is flexible and contingent upon the unique material conditions of a given society. This flexible method requires only that historically developed material and economic conditions be conceived in their dense, structural interrelations with all aspects of the superstructure.

> Thus events strikingly analogous but taking place in different historical surroundings led to totally different results. By studying each of these forms of evolution separately and then comparing them one can easily find the clue to this phenomenon, but one will never arrive there by using as one's master key a general historico-philosophical theory, the supreme virtue of which consists in being supra-historical. [Marx and Engels, 1955: 294]

Such a "suprahistorical" conception of stages of history can in no way be used to measure Mao's voluntaristic deviation from Marx, since no such theory exists in Marx's own writings. Instead, the key to understanding Mao's relationship to Marx is to examine how Mao employs this often-misconceived Marxian method of analysis. Mao's understanding of the relationship between superstructure and base, and his usages of terms and definitions, will indicate far more about Mao's position in relation to Marx than his supposed deviation from Marx's

"determinism" and its spurious counterpart—the conception of a rigidly defined, predetermined progression of stages of history.

MAO'S "VOLUNTARISM"

Even if we accept this argument that Marx was not an "economic determinist," and even if there is no fixed conception of a progression of rigidly defined world-historical stages in Marx's writings against which to measure Mao's "deviation," is it not still true that Mao is a voluntarist in the sense that he feels direct "moral transformation" to be the force generating social change? No matter how one interprets Marx, if Mao feels simply that "the making of a new revolutionary soul" is the key to eliciting social change, then he is indeed a thorough-going voluntarist. But Mao's reliance upon "the human factor" has in fact been exaggerated in the prevailing literature on Mao, just as Marx's reliance on the economic factor has been. Mao, we are told, has neglected the vital link in Marx between the superstructure and the material life of human beings—the "economic base" including the centrally important relations of production. He is taken to assert that changes in people's attitudes can become an independent, all-powerful source of social change. "In modern China, socialist man did not determine his social self by his own labor; he was fashioned by internalizing noneconomic ideas imposed upon him by a personalistic state" (Wakeman, 1973: 28). The state must directly shape the consciousness of human beings because in "the Maoist view" the transformation of society "depends entirely on the consciousness, the wills and the activities of men" (Meisner, 1971: 31). Indeed, such a view purportedly reveals that Mao is one of the "heirs of Marx" who imagines "that the methods of analysis of the founder of scientific socialism fail to apply to a whole historical epoch" (Schram and d'Encausse, 1969: 112).

Mao then, according to this view, has moved away from the Marxian idea that human consciousness is created in the material work process—in concrete relations of production—and now asserts that social change will follow from the direct socializa-

tion of people by a moralistic state. Forsaking the "economic and technical transformation" that was an integral part of Marx's theory, Mao has supposedly come increasingly to believe that social change "would come with moral transformation, the making of a new revolutionary soul" (Goldman, 1973: 246). This is a voluntarism of the crudest sort. Mao now appears to be closer to the idealist Hegel than to the materialist Marx.

This misinterpretation of Mao is made possible by a corresponding misconception of Marx's method—the idea that superstructure and base are distinct, separable entities. But Mao does not, any more than did Marx, see these aspects of society in such a manner. On the contrary, Mao sees the two as interpenetrating. Mao's "Reading Notes on the Soviet Union's *Political Economy*" reveal that Mao in fact sees that certain superstructural changes entail basic changes in the relations of production—themselves an integral part of the economic base. In many cases Mao clearly pushes superstructural change for the very reason that it will necessarily effect a change in relations of production. A reduction in wage differentials, intended to restrict "bourgeois right" in the superstructure, for example, changes the social relations of production in basic ways, altering distribution patterns and lessening material and social status stratification. In terms of voluntarism, this is of vital importance, for it reveals that Mao has not forsaken the material conditions out of which the superstructure arises in Marxism. Marx saw these relations of production—human material life—as needing transformation before human consciousness and the other aspects of the superstructure could undergo lasting change. Mao's method has consistently been to stress both direct superstructural change and changes in these "relations of production." This is far from a voluntarism that conceives of social change as flowing primarily from attitudinal socialization, "internalization of non-economic ideas," or "the making of a new revolutionary soul."

Mao's earliest theoretical writings reflect his conscious avoidance of "determinist" interpretations of Marx. Mao clearly conceives of "economic base" and "superstructure" not as separate factors between which a causal relation exists, but as

aspects "internal" to society, densely and dialectically interrelated. It is this appreciation, not the voluntarist's exclusive reliance upon superstructure and "will," that leads Mao to assert that theory and superstructure can play, at times, decisive roles.

In "On Contradiction," Mao begins by outlining Marx's materialist conception of history:

> Changes in society are due chiefly to the development of the internal contradictions in society, that is, the contradiction between the productive forces and the relations of production, the contradiction between the old and the new; it is the development of these contradictions that pushes society forward and gives the impetus for the supersession of the old society by the new. [Mao, 1966: 27-28]

Mao clearly does not see this materialist conception as denying the importance of noneconomic factors in producing social change. The "relations of production," "theory," and "superstructure," as is proper in any dialectical conception, all play important roles. Mao feels this to be rooted firmly in Marx's dialectical, materialist method of analysis. However, "some people" do not recognize this:

> Some people think that this is not true of certain contradictions. For instance, in the contradiction between productive forces and the relations of production, the productive forces are the principal aspect; in the contradiction between theory and practice, practice is the principal aspect; in the contradiction between the economic base and the superstructure, the economic base is the principal aspect; and there is no change in their respective positions. This is a mechanical materialist conception, not the dialectical materialist conception. [Mao, 1966: 58]

People who attribute primary importance exclusively to the forces of production and economic base, Mao feels, have fallen into "mechanical materialism"—a form of economic determinism. Mao explains that this interpretation neglects the dialectical component in Marx's thought. Materialism, for Mao, is by no means inconsistent with mutual interrelation:

> True, the productive forces, practice and the economic base generally play the principal and decisive role; whoever denies this is not a materialist. But it must also be admitted that in certain conditions, such aspects as the relations of production, theory and the superstructure in turn manifest themselves in the principal and decisive roles. When it is impossible for the productive forces to develop without a change in the relations of production, then change in the relations of production plays the principal and decisive role. . . . When a task, no matter which, has to be performed, but there is as yet no guiding line, method, plan or policy, the principal and decisive thing is to decide on a guiding line, method, plan or policy. When the superstructure (politics, culture, etc.) obstructs the development of the economic base, political and cultural changes become principal and decisive. Are we going against materialism when we say this? No. The reason is that while we recognize that in the general development of history the material determines the mental and the social being determines social consciousness, we also—and indeed must—recognize the reaction of mental on material things, of social consciousness on social being and of the superstructure on the economic base. This does not go against materialism; on the contrary, it avoids mechanical materialism and firmly upholds dialectical materialism. [Mao, 1966: 58-59]

Here Mao, far from inverting Marx's dialectic, is simply asserting, as did Engels before him, the dialectical aspects of Marx's method over the common mechanical, "determinist" misconception that apparently existed in the China of the 1930s as well as in the Europe of the 1890s and in the modern-day China field. There is nothing in this passage, given Marx's dialectical conception and use of terms, to indicate a deviation from Marx in the direction of voluntarism.

MAO AND MARX ON HUMAN CONSCIOUSNESS AND RELATIONS OF PRODUCTION

Mao's assertions in "On Contradiction" that the mental and superstructural can at times react decisively upon the material and the economic in no way preclude a systematic conception of direct links between material and mental life. In Marx, this link is the concept of "practical human activity"—the direct and

constant human interaction with nature in the work process where human beings produce their means of subsistence, as well as an understanding of the world and of social relations with other human beings (Meszaros, 1972: 93-113; Ollman, 1971: 131-157). Different relations of production—entailing different forms of division of labor and different patterns of human interaction in the work process—necessarily produce human beings with different understandings of their social relations with each other. These understandings are reflected in human actions which manifest an apparent "human nature" (Ollman, 1971: 75-130). Any Marxian strategy to transform human beings must of necessity transform these relations of production, which profoundly shape the work process in which humans develop a consciousness of the world.

Those relations of production distinctive to capitalism comprise, for Marx, a work process that shapes human beings in distinctive ways. In capitalist production Marx saw that people were "alienated" from their own work process—the worker plays no part in deciding what to produce or how to produce it. This is a break between the individual and what Marx termed the "most important life-activity"—self-conscious, purposeful labor. People subsequently come to see this entire portion of their lives as a commodity to be exchanged for wages, and often find little interest or fulfillment in dull, repetitive work tasks. Second, people in capitalist society, Marx felt, are separated from the products of their own labor—workers have little control over or contact with the objects of labor after they have been produced. This is a "break between the individual and the material world." Workers, because of this, are no longer able to see their many interdependencies with "nature" and with society as a whole. Third, a worker engaged in an autonomous, repetitive work task, with very little interaction or communication with other workers during the labor process, is unable to see the manifold social connections between individuals in human society, and this results in the individual conceiving of the self as an autonomous being, owing nothing to society for attained positions or abilities. And finally, the competition and class

hostility characteristic of capitalism place real barriers between human beings. As a result, people come to see themselves as they actually are under capitalism—as isolated individuals with a basically competitive stance toward one another (Marx, 1964: 106-119, 128-164; Meszaros, 1972: 14-15, 130-150; Ollman, 1971: 137-153, 205-228). Since the specific form of capitalist relations of production are, in Marx, the material source of these competitive and individualistic outlooks, the relations of production themselves must be transformed before any lasting changes in human consciousness can be effected. A voluntarist is one who ignores these relations of production and who proceeds to transform human beings through moral exhortation and ritualistic participation, heedless of the material sources of consciousness.

Mao, in his earliest theoretical writings, has traced out these direct links between practical human activity and consciousness. In "On Practice," where these links between the material and the mental are his central theme, Mao declares that the material basis of human knowledge and consciousness is his notion of "practice" —the ongoing human interaction with and activity in the real world of "production" and "class struggle" (Mao, 1966: 1). For Mao as well as for Marx, "Man's knowledge depends mainly on his activity in material production, through which he comes gradually to understand the phenomena, the properties and the laws of nature, and the relations between himself and nature; and through this activity he also gradually comes to understand, in varying degrees, certain relations that exist between man and man" (Mao, 1966: 1-2). But the development of human consciousness does not take place solely in the workplace, because "Man's social practice is not confined to activity in production, but takes many other forms—class struggle, political life, scientific and artistic pursuits; in short, as a social being, man participates in all spheres of the practical life of society" (Mao, 1966: 2). So Mao includes in his concept of practice not only the work process but also both political and cultural life— "both of which are intimately bound up with material life" (Mao, 1966: 2).

The implication of this concept of practice for people living in a changing socialist society is that they must actively involve themselves in transforming the political and cultural life of society, as well as economic life, in order to transform their consciousness to the point where they are able to "grasp the essence, the totality and the internal relations of things" (Mao, 1966: 5). To transform your consciousness, "to know a certain class of things directly, you must personally participate in the practical struggle to change reality, to change that thing or class of things, for only thus can you come into contact with them as phenomena; only through personal participation in practical struggle to change reality can you uncover the essence of that thing or class of things and comprehend them" (Mao, 1966: 7-8). Those who do not actively involve themselves in the material activity of social change will remain entrenched in their earlier forms of consciousness—their "thinking lags behind reality; this is because man's cognition is limited by numerous social conditions" (Mao, 1966: 17). The centrality of this link between the material and the mental is reflected in the concept of education in China, which stresses both the role of the teacher in instilling new ideas into the pupil and the role of practice, or taking part in both production tasks and political "struggles" (Munro, 1971: 631-634). Indeed, one of the major educational reforms pushed during the Cultural Revolution was the linking of schools and factories.

Further, this Maoist notion of "practice"—just as is its counterpart, Marx's concept of "practical human activity"—is directly linked with the central Marxian category, the "relations of production." For Mao as well as for Marx, these relations of production, an integral part of a society's economic base, profoundly shape the human activity out of which consciousness is formed. Far from being a voluntarist, Mao feels that these relations of production must be transformed before a lasting change in human consciousness can be achieved. One of the factors holding back desired social change, Mao explains in "Dialectical Materialism," is "idealist philosophy," or the "reactionary ideology of the ruling classes." This ideology, Mao

explains, is firmly rooted in the material process of production with its technical and social division of labor:

> with the development of production, the separation between manual labor and intellectual labor was responsible for ranking idealism first among currents of philosophical thought. With the development of the productive forces of society, the division of labor saw the emergence of persons elevating themselves entirely and exclusively to intellectual labor. . . . Intellectual labor then becomes the exclusive privilege of the ruling class, while manual labor becomes the fate of the oppressed classes. [Schram, 1969: 182]

The necessary elimination of this ideological aspect of the superstructure, therefore, cannot be accomplished by mere exhortation. Rather, a necessary precondition for superstructural change is a change in the division of labor—a crucial factor historically and at present in the "relations of production." Thus, "To eliminate the distinction between manual labor and intellectual labor is one of the preconditions for eliminating idealist philosophy" (Schram, 1969: 182). Here Mao is asserting that a necessary precondition for superstructural change is a change in the division of labor—a central aspect of the relations of production.

RELATIONS OF PRODUCTION AND CHINA'S MASS CAMPAIGNS

A voluntarist would ignore these direct links between human consciousness and the relations of production, and assert that attitudinal change can come about solely in mass movements or campaigns that tend to heighten the individual's socialist consciousness. Maoists certainly employ mass campaigns, but they have not ignored the links between consciousness and material life. A central, but often misunderstood, part of China's major campaigns has been a consistent effort to transform China's work process—particularly to minimize status differences between mental and manual labor, to encourage some sort of worker involvement in the decision-making process, and to reduce income differentials. Most often referred to in the Chinese

press as changes in "those portions of the superstructure not in line with a socialist economic base"—which, in part, they are—these changes also entail, as Maoists recognize, a basic transformation of the relations of production—which for Marx was an integral part of the economic base.

Most of the literature in the China field, however, fails to recognize this. Wakeman, for example, sees the Cultural Revolution as an act of will limited to superstructural change: "The Cultural Revolution was an ideological paradox: a class war within the superstructure of public opinion" (Wakeman, 1973: 306). In fact, social change during the Cultural Revolution was not limited to the superstructure, but aimed for real changes in what are properly termed the relations of production. Each of those aspects of capitalist relations of production that Marx saw as generating an "alienated," individualistic, and competitive outlook were attacked during the Great Leap Forward and Cultural Revolution experiments, as the attitudes themselves were directly attacked as well. Instead of the worker playing no part in deciding what to produce or how to produce it, models during both the Great Leap and the Cultural Revolution prescribed the active involvement of workers in basic-level discussion groups, whose role was to criticize and suggest improvements in the product and in the methods of producing it (Bastid, 1974: 184-188). Instead of the worker having no control over or contact with the product after it is produced, the Maoist model has stressed a similar process of participation in making contracts for delivery of the product. In the course of discussions, the worker learns where the product is going and to what social use it will be put (Bettelheim, 1974: 69-90; Schurmann, 1968: 293-307). Finally, the separation between human beings arising out of competition is to be alleviated by reducing individual competition over material rewards. According to the Dazhai and Daqing models, individual material rewards will be linked with "ideological" or attitudinal criteria, while bonuses and raises will be, whenever possible, tied to group rather than to individual performance. Coupled with this is a constant stress on the social and political significance of work (Hoffman, 1974; Andors, 1969, 1974).

Although this model for factory management is not yet described in China as a program to eliminate human alienation,[5] and although it does not attempt immediately to eliminate the fragmented jobs associated with production-line activity, it nonetheless entails significant changes in relations of production. Power relationships, status differentials, distribution, and even certain aspects of the division of labor have been the objects of change.

The theoretical significance of these changes is easy to miss, for an ostensible campaign to produce superstructural change in China often only implies these changes in relations of production. References to relations of production, while usually present, are most often relegated to the more theoretical articles accompanying a campaign. A prime example of the difficulties in analyzing what, on the surface, are merely superstructural changes is the recent "dictatorship of the proletariat" campaign. Ostensibly an ideological campaign, it would seem to be aimed solely at superstructural change, but attacks on "bourgeois right" show that Maoists intend this campaign to further transform China's relations of production.

"Bourgeois right"—part of which includes the principle of pay according to work—we are told, continues to exist in China in the form of the eight-grade wage scale. As a system of rules governing wage policy, this aspect of "bourgeois right" is part of the superstructure, and "all this differs very little from the old society" (Zhang, 1975: 6). So the campaign against bourgeois right appears to be aimed at transforming elements of the superstructure left over from the old society. This it certainly is, but it is far more. As we saw in Marx's treatment of superstructure and base, these aspects are not entirely separable. The Maoist treatment of social factors appears to reflect a recognition of this fact. Bourgeois right, when viewed from one perspective, is a system of rules within the superstructure. But bourgeois right, as a system of laws that reinforces a system of ownership and distribution, belongs also to the economic base and has important consequences there. Indeed, without a superstructure of rules to regulate economic activity, the concept of "economic base" would

be meaningless. Maoists feel that the very existence of this stratified system of distribution "makes up the important economic base giving rise to new bourgeois elements" (Zhe, 1975: 15). For Yao Wen-yuan, the primary significance of this ideological campaign is contained wholly within the central concept of relations of production:

> we must consolidate and develop socialist ownership by the whole people and socialist collective ownership by working people, prevent the restoration of *bourgeois right already liquidated with regard to the system of ownership* and continue to fulfill, gradually and over a fairly long period of time, that part of the task which is yet to be fulfilled in the transformation of ownership; and with regard to *the two other aspects of the relations of production,* namely, the *mutual relations between men and the relations of distribution,* we must restrict bourgeois right, criticize the idea of bourgeois right and *continually weaken the basis that engenders capitalism.* So we must persevere in the revolution in the realm of the superstructure. [Yao, 1975: 8; emphasis added]

For Yao, the only significance of this superstructural change is that it entails basic changes in relations of production. In this sense, superstructural changes and changes in the economic base are inseparable.

MAO'S CONCEPTION OF RELATIONS OF PRODUCTION

Yao's conception of the theoretical significance of the relations of production is patterned closely after Mao's own. What has been only implicit in Mao's previous treatments of relations of production—specifically in his concept of "practice"—has only recently been spelled out for the West in *Mao Ze-dong sixiang wansui* (*Joint Publication Research Service* [*JPRS*], 1974). In Mao's "Reading Notes on the Soviet Union's *Political Economy,*" his strategy for permanent revolutionary social change clearly does not stress the superstructure at the expense of other aspects of society, but aims *simultaneously* to transform superstructure and base during the industrialization process. Mao's relative emphasis on transforming the superstructure is not

predicated upon the belief that this alone generates social change—it stems from his idea that the old superstructure is a barrier to further change:

> In the course of the revolution, only after the backward superstructure was overthrown was it possible to put an end to the old relations of production. The old relations of production were wiped out and new relations of production set up. This paved the way for the development of new social productive forces. Consequently, we were able to organize a technical revolution vigorously so as to develop social productive forces on a large scale. Simultaneously with the development of productive forces, we must continue to carry out the transformation of relations of production and ideological remolding. [JPRS, 1974: 259]

During this period of transition, Mao feels it is necessary to transform all social relations. This includes both the relations of production and the different political and cultural elements of the superstructure (JPRS, 1974: 248). Mao conceives of the relations of production as consisting of three "sectors"—"ownership of the means of production, relationships between individuals in the midst of work, and the distribution system"—to each of which closely corresponds certain aspects of the superstructure (JPRS, 1974: 270). The system of ownership of the means of production has already been substantially transformed, but for Mao there is a limit to the changes that can be made in this sector within a given period (JPRS, 1974: 302). In regard to the "relationships between individuals in the midst of production," which entail the social division of labor and management practices, and "distribution relations," which entail wage policy, "there is the need for steady improvement all the more" (JPRS, 1974: 270). In order to transform the division of labor aspect of the relations of production (the relationships between individuals), Mao explains, "we have adopted such measures as the combining of centralized leadership with mass movements, leadership by the Party, the integration of workers and technicians, participation of cadres in manual labor, participation of workers in management, and continuous change of unreasonable codes and conventions" (JPRS, 1974: 302). In order to transform the "distribution"

sector of the relations of production, continual changes in work incentive policies and campaigns against "bourgeois right" have been carried out.

For Mao, "relations of production" is clearly a central concept in his strategy for social change. It subsumes under its heading aspects of both "productive forces" and "superstructure," while remaining, as for Marx, within the "economic base,"

> to make a study of production relations, clearly we have to link it with the study of productive forces on the one hand, and on the other hand link it with the study of the positive and negative roles the superstructure plays on production relations. [JPRS, 1974: 280][6]

Too much of a reliance on the superstructure, Mao argues, reduces Marx's conception to a form of voluntarism: to either "a theory of the state or the theory of the class struggle" (JPRS, 1974: 280). Far from being a strategy stressing the superstructure as the "leading factor," Mao sees social change as proceeding simultaneously in both superstructure and base, with the relations of production as the *central* link. Superstructural and attitudinal changes which, given Mao's concept of "practice," necessarily entail changes in the relations of production, are only part of an overall conception of social change that seeks to strike a delicate balance between changes in superstructure and base:

> We should make the balance and imbalance between productive forces and production relations, and the balance and imbalance between production relations and the superstructure, serve as the key to the study of the economic problems of socialism. [JPRS, 1974: 280]

CONCLUSIONS

This Maoist strategy is in no way indicative of a voluntarism that seeks to induce social change solely, or even primarily, by

transforming human consciousness and other aspects of the superstructure. Mao's continuous, unique message has been that the economic basis of human society—of which the relations of production are a central part for Mao as well as for Marx—must be transformed simultaneously with ideology, laws, and institutions. Mao has consistently asserted that ideological and superstructural change cannot be sustained without an underlying change in the relations of production—and, simultaneously, that changes in the relations of production cannot be sustained without attitudinal and superstructural change. For Mao, there exists a reciprocal relationship between the two, indicating a Marxian conception of society as a densely interrelated, "organic" structure, with social factors scarcely separable.

Past interpretations of Mao as a voluntarist have been predicated upon a basic misreading of Marx as a determinist, and upon the conception of rigid, a priori stages of history that flows from this fundamental misconception of Marx's method of analysis. Without a clear conception of Marx's method of analysis and usage of terms and definitions, future efforts to gauge Mao within the Marxist tradition can serve only to reproduce the prevailing stereotypes of Mao as a voluntarist and Marx as a determinist. This essay, an initial effort to explore the basic implications of Marx's method for interpreting Mao, can serve only as a point of departure for the development of a complex, rather than a caricatured appreciation of the positions of Marx and Mao within the Marxist tradition.

NOTES

1. This section on Marx's usage of concepts and definitions draws heavily from Ollman's (1968, 1971, 1973) highly illuminating interpretation of Marx's thought.

2. Ollman (1971: 17) cites Engels' *Dialectics of Nature,* where Engels wrote that "What Hegel calls reciprocal action is the organic body." To explain changes in the physical world by referring to the reciprocal action of its parts, Engels asserts, is the same thing as presenting the world as an organic body.

3. It is noteworthy that Meisner (1965: 166) explicitly rejects the concept of stages of history as fixed and distinct in Marx, even though some of his other positions on Mao's voluntarism are necessarily connected with such a view.

4. Schram (1971: 230-231) recites this original Marxian formulation—that quantitative change within stages will lead to a qualitative change between stages—as evidence of Mao's voluntaristic, anti-Marxist blurring of distinct, rigid stages.

5. The fact that Marx's concept of "alienation" has not been evoked may be due to the fact that the concept has been associated with revisionism in the communist movement since it became popular in Eastern Europe during the 1950s as a justification for anti-Soviet liberalization policies (Zhou, 1963). Munro (1974) has written a brief research note on this concept and its use in China.

6. I have throughout changed the "production relationship" of the awkward JPRS translation into the more appropriate "production relations."

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