

**SELECTED  
ARTICLES**

**CRITICIZING  
LIN PIAO  
AND  
CONFUCIUS**

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FOREIGN LANGUAGES PRESS PEKING

*Selected Articles*

# **CRITICIZING**

Lin Piao and Confucius

**I**

FOREIGN LANGUAGES PRESS  
PEKING 1974

## Publisher's Note

The bourgeois careerist, conspirator, double-dealer, renegade and traitor Lin Piao was an out-and-out devotee of Confucius. Like all reactionaries in Chinese history when on the verge of extinction, he revered Confucius and opposed the Legalist School, and attacked Chin Shih Huang, the first emperor of the Chin Dynasty (221-207 B.C.). He used the doctrines of Confucius and Mencius as a reactionary ideological weapon in his plotting to usurp Party leadership, seize state power and restore capitalism.

To inform foreign readers concerning the movement to criticize Lin Piao and Confucius now going on in China, we have compiled this booklet entitled *Selected Articles Criticizing Lin Piao and Confucius, I*. These articles were among the many widely published in Chinese, in pamphlet form and in the press, in the nationwide campaign of recent months.

Further such articles will be published later.

For the reader's convenience, some date references and brief explanatory notes have been added.

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## Yang Jung-kuo

### Confucius— a Thinker Who Stubbornly Supported the Slave System

What manner of man was Confucius, who was revered by China's reactionary ruling class as "the sage" for more than 2,000 years?

Lenin pointed out: "**The categorical requirement of Marxist theory in investigating any social question is that it be examined within definite historical limits.**"<sup>1</sup> To analyse Confucius from the historical-materialist viewpoint, one must put him in the context of the class struggle of his time and see which class standpoint he took and which class his ideology served.

<sup>1</sup>"The Right of Nations to Self-Determination."

## Confucius' Political Standpoint

Born in the state of Lu, Confucius (551-479 B.C.) was a descendant of the declining slave-owning aristocracy of the Yin clan. His was the late Spring and Autumn Period,<sup>2</sup> when the slaves frequently revolted against the ruthless exploitation and oppression by the slave-owners. As instances: slaves building city walls in the state of Chen staged an uprising in 550 B.C.; the "artisans" (mostly handicraft slaves) of the royal household of Chou<sup>3</sup> rebelled in 520 B.C.; the handicraft slaves of the state of Wei encircled and attacked Prince Chuang of Wei in 478 B.C., and eight years later they drove Marquis Cheh out of the country. Such resistance of slaves by armed uprising and flight shook the rule of slave-owning aristocracy to its foundations in that period; the slave system was teetering and

<sup>2</sup> "Spring and Autumn" was originally a title for the annals of the state of Lu about events that took place between 722 and 481 B.C. Later, the period between 770 B.C., when Eastern Chou began, and 476 B.C. was called the Spring and Autumn Period.

<sup>3</sup> Chou — The name of dynasty. The Shang Dynasty was destroyed in 1066 B.C. by King Wu of Chou, who established the Chou Dynasty with its capital in present-day Sian, Shensi Province. This is known as Western Chou in history. In 770 B.C. the Chou Dynasty moved its capital to present-day Loyang in Honan Province, and it is called Eastern Chou. Slave society was highly developed in China during Western Chou.

tottering; and the burgeoning feudal forces were on the ascendant. Therefore, the contradictions and the struggles between slaves and slave-owners and between the rising landlord class and the declining slave-owning aristocracy constituted the main class contradictions and class struggles of that time.

On which side did Confucius stand? The question can be answered by the examples given below.

Under the impact of the struggle waged by the slaves and the common people at that time, changes began to take place in the system of land ownership. In the Yin (around 16th-11th centuries B.C.) and Chou states when the slave system had prevailed, all the land of the country was crown-land, the property of the monarch (the royal household) — the biggest slave-owner and the chieftain of the aristocrats. The princes (the princely households), the ministers (*ching*), the senior officials (*ta fu*) and lesser slave-owners had some land allotted to or bestowed on them for their use, but they did not own it. Such land, therefore, was called "public land." By the middle of the Spring and Autumn Period, some of the rising feudal landlords had grown strong enough to reclaim more and more "waste" land as their private land, and this could be bought and sold. The royal and the princely households refused at first to sanction

such private land but later did so by levying taxes on this kind of land to replenish their dwindling purses, and thus feudal private ownership of land came to be sanctioned. The state of Lu where Confucius grew up had started collecting such a land tax in 594 B.C. As far as land ownership was concerned, this change marked the transformation from the slave to the feudal system. From it there emerged new relations of production, and there now appeared landlords, tenants and even landholding peasants from among the poor people. Individual economy began to develop.

In the state of Lu, representing the rising forces were the three families of Chisun, Mengsun and Shusun. In 562 B.C. they divided a part of the land belonging to the princely household into three shares and each took one. The Chisuns also initiated a new system of collecting land taxes. Twenty-five years later, the three families again divided land of the princely household, this time into four shares. Following the example of the Chisuns, the Mengsuns and Shusuns also switched to the new land tax system and thus changed the relations of production. This was in reality an offensive launched by the developing feudal system against the collapsing slave system, and it was a progressive change.

What was Confucius' attitude on this matter?

He took the view that the three families, being slave-owners and senior officials, had overstepped their authority and were undermining the traditional slave system that had existed since the Yin (also known as Shang) Dynasty. How could this be tolerated? Therefore, he did all in his power to weaken the influence of the three families so as to uphold the rule of the slave-owning princely household of the state of Lu.

It was Jan Chiu, a disciple of Confucius, who at that time helped the Chisuns carry out the reforms. Greatly enraged, Confucius denounced Jan Chiu as betraying the rules and regulations of slave society. Furthermore, he renounced Jan Chiu as his disciple and urged his other disciples to "beat the drums and attack him."<sup>4</sup> From this it is as clear as daylight which system Confucius upheld and which he opposed.

There were similar cases in the state of Chi. In order to oppose the corrupt slave-owning aristocracy that then ruled Chi, Tien Cheng-tzu, who represented the rising forces of that state, won over the people by using a big *dou* (a Chinese unit for dry measure) when lending grain and a small *dou* to measure the repaid grain. Eventually, in 485 B.C., he killed Prince Chien, the chief of the

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<sup>4</sup> *Analects*, "Hsien Chin."

slave-owning aristocrats in Chi. Confucius was bitterly opposed to this and he tried hard to persuade Prince Ai of the state of Lu to send a punitive expedition against Tien Cheng-tzu. Prince Ai flinched, knowing he was no match for the state of Chi.

A third example: Confucius opposed the casting of tripods with laws inscribed on them.

In that period, owing to the slaves' frequent resistance and the emergence of feudal forces, the slave system could no longer be preserved with the "rule by rites," which, as it turned out, had to be replaced with the "rule by law." Under the slave system the rites in fact stipulated the relative rank or status of slave-owners and slaves. The slave-owners ruled over the slaves and their will was law. They could oppress, exploit and even kill the slaves at will. What was expected from the latter was absolute obedience and no resistance. This was known as the "rule by rites." But in Confucius' time the slaves were extremely disobedient, and their resistance was reported everywhere. Some people, seeing this trend and being in favour of progress, realized it was necessary to change the old method of rule. Some articles of law, they maintained, must be drawn up to govern the relations between aristocrats and slaves and set certain restrictions on the former. These articles were

called the "penal code," and they were then inscribed on tripods, so that everybody could see and know them. The process was called "casting the penal tripods" and the code later developed into law — part of the superstructure in feudal society. Later, the advocates of the "rule by law" were called the "Legalists"<sup>5</sup> and they represented the rising feudal forces.

Confucius was firmly opposed to all this. When word came that in 513 B.C. the people of the state of Tsin had cast an iron penal tripod, his reaction was one of furious disapproval. When aristocrats mixed with slaves, he commented, how could the aristocrats display their dignity and greatness? Such conduct would eliminate all the differences between the high and the low, and in that case how could a state under the slave system maintain itself?

<sup>5</sup> The Legalist School, principally represented by Shang Yang (who died in 338 B.C.), Hsun Kuang (around 313-238 B.C.) and Han Fei (around 280-232 B.C.), was an important school of thought opposed to the Confucian School during the Warring States Period. It reflected the interests of the rising feudal landlord class and propagated the materialist view that "man's will can conquer Heaven," as against the idealist view of "abiding by the will of Heaven." It advocated political reform and opposed retrogression. It proposed "rule by law" instead of "rule by rites" and the exercise of the dictatorship of the landlord class in place of the dictatorship of the slave-owning class. These men were later known as Legalists.



The fourth instance: Confucius put Shaocheng Mao to death.

All his life Confucius wanted to be a high official so he could put into practice his reactionary political ideals. But not until 497 B.C. did he become minister of justice and acting prime minister of the state of Lu, and then for only three months. Seven days after taking office, he had Shaocheng Mao, a noted reformer of Lu, arrested and executed.

During the Spring and Autumn Period and the Warring States Period,<sup>6</sup> a hundred schools of thought contended. Thinkers representing different classes founded their own schools of thought and debated with each other. Both Shaocheng Mao and Confucius took in disciples and lectured in the state of Lu but their two schools of thought were diametrically opposed to each other. The execution of Shaocheng Mao was, in fact, a manifestation of the class struggle at that time.

Let us see how Confucius pronounced the "crimes" of Shaocheng Mao.

As Confucius saw it, anyone found "guilty" of one of the following "crimes" should be put to death.

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<sup>6</sup> The Warring States Period — The period between 475 B.C. and 221 B.C. before China was unified under the Chin Dynasty was later known as the Warring States Period, because incessant wars were fought among the various states.

1. He who was bent on taking venturesome actions because he was acquainted with the changes in the ancient and modern times and understood the development of things;

2. He who did not follow the orthodox ways prescribed by the slave system, but obdurately took the road of so-called reforms;

3. He who talked glibly about the reasons for such reforms;

4. He who knew a lot about the decadent and unstable phenomena under the rule of the slave system;

5. He who used stern and just words to describe why the slave system should be opposed.

Confucius held that Shaocheng Mao did all these five things and therefore must be executed. Thereupon the latter was put to death on the following charges:

1. Gathering a crowd to form an association;

2. Propagating heretical views;

3. Confusing right and wrong.<sup>7</sup>

The reforms advocated by Shaocheng Mao conformed to the historical development of the period and with the people's aspirations. When Shaocheng Mao was killed, even Tzu-kung — one of Confucius' disciples — considered it wrong. Shaocheng

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<sup>7</sup> *Hsun Tzu.*

Mao was loved and respected by the people of his day who praised him as an outstanding personage.

These instances should suffice for the conclusion that Confucius obstinately stood on the side of the declining slave system and resolutely opposed reforms advocated by the rising feudal system.

During the Spring and Autumn Period 52 slave states became extinct as the slave system continuously collapsed. In these circumstances Confucius put forward his political slogan: "Revive states that are extinct, restore families that have lost their positions, and call to office those who have fallen into obscurity."<sup>8</sup> What he advocated was to resurrect the slave states already destroyed, restore the authority of slave-owning aristocrats and return the reins of government to those in decline. These were utterly reactionary political slogans, calling for a return to the old. But Confucius took these slogans as "his duty," vowing to work for their realization "until his dying day." The masses of his own times considered him a nuisance; it is recorded that a door-keeper swore at him for not understanding the era. Others cursed him as a reactionary character opposed to progress. Confucius and his attending disciples carried their mission everywhere; in some places

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<sup>8</sup> *Analects*, "Yao Yueh."

they were so attacked and hounded by the masses that they had to turn tail like "homeless dogs." This was a fitting punishment for Confucius, the advocate of reaction.

### Confucius' Thought — "Benevolence"

The core of Confucius' thought was "benevolence," the origin of which can be traced to the ideology of the slave-owning class of the Yin and Chou dynasties.

The slave-owning rulers of the Yin and Chou dynasties advocated benevolence in order to consolidate the unity of the slave-owning class and the rule of its aristocracy. The Chinese character *jen* which may be rendered into English as "benevolence," has been found by archaeologists written on oracle bones as words of divination. The slave-owners advocated benevolence to promote affinity and unity among their own kind. Thereby, they sought also to hoodwink the enslaved labouring people, make them obedient and prevent them from rebelling. For instance, Duke Chou, the "sage" whom Confucius most worshipped, proclaimed that he himself was benevolent and obedient to his ancestors. From their point of view, as long as every member of the slave-owning class loved one another

and was obedient to his clan ancestors, the rule of slave-owning aristocrats could be consolidated. They accordingly concluded that "the exercise of benevolence among relatives" was a great "treasure."<sup>9</sup> This shows the tremendous importance the slave-owners attached to benevolence.

Confucius made a systematic study of this benevolence and elaborated its meaning. According to his interpretation, benevolence included filial piety, brotherly duty (proper behaviour towards elder brothers), loyalty, altruism, rectification of names, virtue and wisdom. An analysis of these contents shows what class interests the Confucian ideology served.

Confucius concluded that filial piety and brotherly duty were the fundamentals of benevolence.

Why? This was because under the slave system ancient society was ruled by the clan aristocracy. The slave-owners as a ruling class belonged to the same clan and had common ancestors. Confucius thought that the sharp contradictions and strife among the slave-owners would lead to the collapse of their rule. Therefore, he pointed out that so long as they showed filial respect to their ancestors and parents, the slave-owners would be united vertically. By brotherly duty he meant mutual af-

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<sup>9</sup> *The Book of Rites*.

fection and love among brothers, which would unite the slave-owners horizontally. With the slave-owners united both vertically and horizontally, there would be no insubordination and rebellion, and the rule of the clan slave-owning aristocracy could thus be made secure. At the same time, the prevalence of filial piety and brotherly duty among the slave-owners would exert such an influence on the slaves as to incline them to kindness and make them completely submissive to slave-owners' rule.

"Loyalty" and "altruism" were also meant entirely to serve the slave-owners' interests. By loyalty Confucius meant loyalty of the slaves to their owners, of the senior officials and subordinates to the princes, and of the princes to the monarch of Chou — the aim of all of which was to consolidate the rule of slave-owners at different levels. In advocating altruism, he said: "One should not do to others what he does not wish himself."<sup>10</sup> Altruism as such was meant to be shown only to the slave-owners then in decline, but never to the slaves. Himself a descendant of this declining slave-owning aristocracy, Confucius was obliged in his youth to accept what were then considered menial occupations such as managing

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<sup>10</sup> *Analects*, "Yen Yuan."

granaries or livestock-breeding. Thus he could be very sympathetic to persons in stations of life like himself. He proposed that one should not be too demanding of these declining slave-owners. Nor should one abandon them as long as they had done nothing seriously wrong. "Old friends should not be neglected" within the slave-owners' community, they should be united to prevent the slaves from staging rebellions.

As mentioned above, the Spring and Autumn Period was an era of great changes, an era when the new feudal forces were rising to power, like the families of the Chisuns in the state of Lu or the Tiens in the state of Chi. By attacking the reactionary rule of slave-owning aristocracy, these had changed the original relations of production and destroyed the "rule by rites" of the slave system. But according to Confucius, these new forces were not following the benevolent way because they had failed to suppress their desires and restrain their actions. He resorted to the device used since the Yin and Western Chou dynasties — "restrain oneself and return to the rites." Confucius told his disciple Yen Yuan: "Once self-restraint and return to the rites are achieved, all under heaven will submit to the benevolent rule." In other words, if all the slave-owners would control their desires and actions and return to the

rule by rites, their domination would be docilely obeyed by the slaves. This is what is meant by "all under heaven will submit to the benevolent rule." The rule of the slave-owners would thus be secured and prolonged.

Therefore, Confucius also clamoured for "rectifying names."<sup>11</sup>

What did he mean by "rectifying names"? He sought by using subjective concepts to define and confine the objective realities.

The savage rule of the slave-owners had brought serious disorder to slave society, with frequent slave uprisings, emerging feudal forces and continuous changes in the relations of production. It was no longer possible for political and military orders to be issued from the supreme ruler of the slave-owners—the monarch of Chou. The power of the princes of the various states was not stable either, and in some states it had fallen into the hands of senior officials and subordinates. On the other hand, persons like Shaocheng Mao were rallying the people to assemble, form associations freely and criticize the authorities. The situation had become such that "the sovereign is not a sovereign, the subject not a subject, the father not a father and the son not a son." If this state of affairs con-

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, "Tzu Lu."

tinued, how terrible would be the outcome! So Confucius decided to use the subjective concepts of the slave-owning class dating back to the Yin and Western Chou dynasties to define and confine the changing social realities. He hoped by this method to restore the original order — “The sovereign is a sovereign, the subject a subject, the father a father and the son a son” — it was a vain attempt to prop up the collapsing rule of slave-owning aristocracy.

With this purpose, it was said, he compiled a book of recent history called *The Spring and Autumn Annals*. According to Mencius,<sup>12</sup> the book terrified the “rebellious subjects and villainous sons.” Proceeding from the viewpoint of rectifying the names and the ranks, it set out to reverse the realities of a changing society and restore the old order. Mencius extolled Confucius as a man who wrote *The Spring and Autumn Annals* to set right the confused concepts and ranks and thereby exercised the supreme authority on behalf of the monarch of Chou, that is, to consolidate the rule of the slave system. Therefore, said Mencius, this

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<sup>12</sup> Mencius — His name was Meng Ko. The chief representative of the Confucians of the middle Warring States Period, Mencius was born in about 390 B.C. and died in 305 B.C.

was a matter of exceptional importance and worth special mention.

In fact, this was nothing but another instance of the dichard standpoint of Confucius. It was also the meaning and purpose of the benevolence advocated by him.

By “virtue,” or “exercising government by means of virtue,” Confucius did not mean government by virtue for the enslaved labouring people, but only for the slave-owning class. An article entitled “Li Lun” (“On Rites”) in *Hsun Tzu* said: “Those who live in the town are mainly officials and gentlemen (big and small slave-owners); the people (slaves) mostly live outside of the town.” A statement at the time went like this: “It is by virtue that those in the middle of the state are cherished; it is by punishment that the wild tribes around are awed.”<sup>13</sup> Using a whip to deal with the labouring people — this was the slave-owners’ “government by virtue”!

For Confucius benevolence also included “wisdom” — that is, knowledge. He spared no effort to spread the notion that “only the highest who are the wise and the lowest who are the stupid cannot be changed.”<sup>14</sup> In other words, the “sages,” or the

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<sup>13</sup> *Tso Chuan*.

<sup>14</sup> *Analects*, “Yang Huo.”

slave-owners, were the talents of the upper class and the slaves were merely lower-class servants. The former were endowed with absolute wisdom and the latter with crass stupidity; the status of these two classes could never be changed. Where did the knowledge of a genius come from? He said: "Those born with knowledge rank highest."<sup>15</sup> The knowledge of a "sage," he considered, was endowed by nature and did not come from practice. In this undisguised way Confucius advocated idealist apriorism and the reactionary fallacy that "history is made by heroes."

Confucius, therefore, despised productive labour. When his disciple Fan Chih (also named Fan Hsu) expressed the desire to learn something about farm labour, he flew into a rage. This was the kind of thing done by slaves, Confucius bellowed, I wouldn't have anything to do with it. He abused Fan Chih as a "mean man." But how did the labouring people answer him? An old peasant was weeding his field when Confucius passed by. He described Confucius as a parasite "whose four limbs do not toil and who does not know the difference between the five grains," a man who lived on the labour of others.<sup>16</sup> This is the correct appraisal of Confucius.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, "Chi Shih."

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, "Wei Tzu."

Confucius prated about benevolence, but he rigorously excluded the slaves and other enslaved labouring people from his benevolence. As he saw it, slaves were meant to be pushed around, to be enslaved, and they should never be allowed to know the whys or wherefores. He reviled them as "birds and beasts," whom no slave-owning aristocrat would care to associate with. He looked down upon women in particular. Both men and women slaves, he believed, were very hard to keep and deal with, and therefore should be kept at a distance. According to Confucius, there might be certain slave-owners who lacked benevolence; but the slaves and enslaved labouring people could never have benevolence.

Clearly, when Confucius said that "benevolence means love for men," he did not mean it. He never meant to love all people (including the slaves); he reserved his love exclusively for the slave-owning class. He spoke of "overflowing in love for people," which might seem to mean love for the general public. Owing to social changes, the character *chung* (people) had lost the meaning it had during the Yin Dynasty and the earlier years of the Western Chou Dynasty, when it included the slaves. In Confucius' time this character denoted only "teachers of the royal or princely houses" and

“ministers”; therefore, what Confucius loved was the slave-owning class alone.

Chairman Mao has pointed out: **“As for the so-called love of humanity, there has been no such all-inclusive love since humanity was divided into classes. All the ruling classes of the past were fond of advocating it, and so were many so-called sages and wise men, but nobody has ever really practised it, because it is impossible in class society.”**<sup>17</sup> We must never be deceived by Confucius. Though he used such high-sounding phrases as “conduct oneself well with relatives,” “give credit to the deeds of ministers,” “select men of virtue,” “employ the capable” and “supervise the beloved,” all these “benevolent measures” were to be applied only within the slave-owning class. The slaves were excluded from these measures, because they existed only to be enslaved, whipped and slaughtered.

From the simple analysis given above, we may conclude that despite the extravagant talk by Confucius about “benevolence, righteousness and virtue,” all his ideas essentially served the interests of the collapsing slave-owning aristocracy.

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<sup>17</sup> “Talks at the Yen-an Forum on Literature and Art,” *Selected Works*, Eng. ed., Foreign Languages Press, Peking, 1967, Vol. III, p. 91.

In those same times, there were Hsun Tzu and Legalists such as his disciple Han Fei who opposed Confucians<sup>18</sup> and took the progressive stand of the feudal class. This struggle between the Confucian and Legalist schools was an expression of the class struggle on the ideological front in the period before the Chin Dynasty (221-207 B.C.).

Taking the standpoint of the collapsing slave-owning aristocracy, Confucius opposed the emerging feudal forces. The essence of his thought was to uphold the rule of the slave-owning class and prove that the labouring people should only be exploited, enslaved and ruled. In other words, what he wanted to prove was that “exploitation is justified and rebellion is a crime.” Therefore, the latter-day exploiting classes — whether the feudal landlord class or the bourgeoisie — felt quite free

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<sup>18</sup> The Confucian (*Ju*) school of thought was founded by Confucius. At first, “*Ju*” referred to men serving at funeral ceremonies or performing similar services for slave-owning aristocrats. Confucius himself performed such services in his earlier years. He later set up a private school and solicited pupils. Advocating the restoration of the old order, he engaged in political activities against social change, tried his best to save the moribund slave system and eventually founded a school of philosophy. The adherents of this school were later known as Confucians. From the Chin and Han dynasties onwards, all those who followed and advocated the thinking of Confucius and Mencius were known as Confucians.

to oppose Confucius and shout "Down with the Confucian shop" before they came to power. But once they had seized political power and turned into reactionary ruling classes themselves, they would invariably make use of Confucius' thought to deceive the labouring people and serve the interests of their own reactionary rule. That was why they praised Confucius as "the Most Sage Ancient Teacher" for more than 2,000 years. Only by taking the proletarian standpoint and applying the Marxist historical-materialist viewpoint can we expose the reactionary character of Confucius.

Chairman Mao has taught us: **"Contemporary China has grown out of the China of the past; we are Marxist in our historical approach and must not lop off our history. We should sum up our history from Confucius to Sun Yat-sen and take over this valuable legacy. This is important for guiding the great movement of today."**<sup>19</sup>

In appraising a historical figure from the Marxist viewpoint, we must first analyse the class contradictions and the class struggle at his time, and then examine whether, under the conditions of historical development, he stood on the side of the progressive classes and advocated reform or on the

<sup>19</sup> "The Role of the Chinese Communist Party in the National War," *Selected Works*, Eng. ed., FLP, Peking, 1967, Vol. II, p. 209.

side of the reactionary classes and advocated conservatism. The task of Marxists is constantly to propel history forward. What we affirm is only that which has played a progressive role in history; as to things reactionary and conservative we must firmly negate and criticize them.



*Kao Heng*

## Western Chou Slavery Upheld by Confucius

The Western Chou Dynasty (around 11th century-770 B.C.) was an age in which slavery still prevailed, the Spring and Autumn Period (770-476 B.C.) was one of transition from slavery to feudalism, while the Warring States Period (475-221 B.C.) marked the early stage of feudalism. The Spring and Autumn Period witnessed a rapid growth of the productive forces owing to the wide use of iron implements. This, together with the slaves' fierce struggles against the slave-owners, the power struggles among the aristocrats within each state, and the wars between the rulers of various states for the purpose of annexing land, resulted in a gradual transition from the economic

base of slavery (the relations of production between slave-owners and slaves) towards that of feudalism (the relations of production between landlords and peasants) and in a gradual change from the superstructure of slavery to that of feudalism, bringing about the breakdown of slave society and the establishment of feudal society. Under the old relations of production slave-owners remained slave-owners and slaves remained slaves, but with the changing relations of production, some slave-owners became landlords and some slaves became peasants. At the same time, because land could now be bought and sold, a number of wealthy merchants became new landlords by purchasing land and renting it out to peasants to till.

In this phase of social advance, in which the old classes and system were being superseded by the new, the slave-owners, and especially the princes, dukes and senior officials, all stubbornly upheld certain Western Chou slave society institutions in order to preserve their hereditary privileges through which they retained land and power and ruled over the people. But the landlords, and especially the new ones, demanded that these institutions and privileges be abolished. A struggle between the slave-owners and the emerging landlord class arose, but the new forces were as yet no match for the old.

Confucius, who was born towards the end of the Spring and Autumn Period, was a thinker who took the slave-owners' stand, upholding the slave system and defending the slave-owners' privileges. In this historical situation, his political programme was conservative, retrogressive and reactionary. But a number of people, including myself, formerly regarded Confucius as a progressive who formulated a set of feudal theories on politics, ethics and education for the landlord class in feudal society. This was entirely wrong. The correct thesis has been formulated by Comrade Yang Jung-kuo, who describes Confucius as a "thinker who stubbornly supported the slave system" in his book *A History of Ancient Chinese Thought* and in his recently published articles. Here I would like to elaborate on this viewpoint.

#### **Confucius' Political Line Upheld the Institutions of the Western Chou Slave System**

Confucius stood for the restoration of the old order. Politically he advocated a return to the rites of the Western Chou Dynasty, that is, to the institutions of the slave society of that age. (What Confucius termed "rites" were the social system and the ceremonial ritual for coronations, wed-

dings, burials and sacrifices. These rites, however, were only the branches of the tree of the social system, and what we shall discuss here is the social system itself.)

Confucius upheld the institutions of the Western Chou slave state. He said: "Chou had the advantage of reviewing the two previous dynasties. How complete and elegant are its regulations! I follow Chou."<sup>1</sup> He also said: "After the death of King Wen, was not the cause of truth lodged here in me?"<sup>2</sup> And, "Extreme is my decay. For a long time I have not dreamed, as I was wont to do, that I saw Duke Chou."<sup>3</sup><sup>4</sup> Tzu Kung, one of Confucius' disciples, said: "The doctrines of Kings Wen and Wu are not yet extinct. They are still found among men. Men of talent and virtue remember the major principles of these two, and others, not possessing such talent and virtue, remember the minor ones. Thus, all abide by the doctrines of Wen and Wu. Where could our Master go where he had not the opportunity of learning them?"<sup>5</sup> From this we

<sup>1</sup> *Analects*, "Pa Yi."

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, "Tzu Han."

<sup>3</sup> Duke Chou, surname Chi, personal name Tan, the formulator of the rules and regulations of the Chou Dynasty, a "sage" whom Confucius devoutly worshipped.

<sup>4</sup> *Analects*, "Shu Erh."

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, "Tzu Chang."

can see that Confucius advocated a return to the rites prevailing under the slave social system of the Western Chou Dynasty.

Confucius said: "The Yin Dynasty [around 16th-11th centuries B.C.] followed the regulations of Hsia [around 21st-16th centuries B.C.], what it took from or added to them may be known. The Chou Dynasty followed the regulations of Yin, what it took from or added to them may be known. Some other dynasty may follow Chou, but though it should be a hundred generations distant, its affairs may be known."<sup>6</sup> Some people, basing themselves on these words, consider that Confucius had certain reservations in his acceptance of Western Chou rites and that he advocated certain amendments to and reforms in them. They, therefore, praise him as having progressive ideas. But they do not stop to think which of the Chou rites Confucius accepted and which he wanted to revise, drawing conclusions from his words alone to whitewash Confucius. This is thoroughly idealist and metaphysical in view and method.

Chairman Mao tells us: "**Marxism teaches that in our approach to a problem we should start from objective facts, not from abstract definitions.**"<sup>7</sup> On

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, "Wei Cheng."

<sup>7</sup> "Talks at the Yen-an Forum on Literature and Art," *Selected Works*, Eng. ed., FLP, Peking, 1967, Vol. III, p. 74.

the basis of reliable historical records, my researches into this question of what Chou rites Confucius insisted on adopting and what he wanted to revise have led me to conclude that Confucius was determined to take over the essential features of the Western Chou political system in their entirety.

### **Confucius Upheld Three Slave Society Institutions**

The Western Chou Dynasty instituted a system of principalities, a hierarchy and a system of inheritance, all to safeguard the slave-owners' privileges in ruling and exploiting the working people (mainly slaves). The system of principalities consisted of higher order slave-owners granting territory, population and political power to lower order slave-owners. It was the institution through which the slave-owning class divided up its domains in order to rule over and exploit the working people. The slave-owners' hierarchy, introduced for the same purpose, classified all people into roughly six grades — the supreme ruler (Son of Heaven), princes, senior officials, scholars (in or out of office), commoners and slaves. The system of inheritance stipulated that a slave-owner's titles of nobility, land, people, political power and wealth were to be inherited primarily by the eldest son of

his legal wife, while the other children were also entitled to certain rights. It was an institution under which the slave-owners ruled and exploited the working people from generation to generation. These three institutions underwent a gradual elaboration.

Organizationally interlocked, they served to maintain the slave-owners' privileges in the political, economic and cultural spheres, as well as in everyday life. Despotic and predatory in nature, they glaringly represented the interests of slave-owning aristocrats.

The fact that Confucius upheld these three Western Chou institutions is shown by books written prior to the Chin Dynasty (221-207 B.C.).

(1) The *Analects* records: Confucius said, "When the Way prevails in the world, ceremonies, music and punitive military expeditions proceed from the Son of Heaven. When the Way declines in the world, these proceed from the princes. . . . When the Way prevails in the world, the supreme power of government will not be in the hands of the senior officials. When the Way prevails in the world, the common people will not grumble about the government."<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> *Analects*, "Chi Shih."

Judging from this, Confucius' ideal society in which "the Way" prevailed was one with a supreme ruler (Son of Heaven), princes, senior officials and commoners. In other words, the Western Chou principalities and hierarchical system were to be maintained. (The princes and senior officials of Confucius' time were the products of the principality system.)

The *Analects* also records: Confucius begged Prince Ai of the state of Lu to undertake the punishment of the minister of the state of Chi, Chen Heng (also called Tien Cheng-tzu), for slaying his sovereign. Confucius stressed "rectifying names" and opposed the state of Wei's dismissing Marquis Cheh and installing his grandson instead of his son as successor. He opposed the singing of a Yung ode by the three families of Chisun, Shusun and Mengsun of the state of Lu on the grounds that it was a rite reserved for the supreme ruler and not for senior officials; he opposed the Chisuns performing a dance with eight rows each having eight dancers — a form restricted to the supreme ruler's household and not for the households of senior officials; he opposed the Chisuns sacrificing to Mt. Tai, as it was a senior official encroaching on a prince's prerogatives. Confucius also opposed the senior official Kuan Chung putting a screen up at his gate, another princely right, and having a stand

on which he placed inverted cups when meeting friends, a practice likewise reserved for princes.

The *Tso Chuan* says: Confucius favoured dismantling three capital cities, which stood higher than the rites allowed, opposed the prince of Wei's permitting the exercise by a senior official, Chungshu Yuchi, of the princely right of setting up a U-shaped stand for musical instruments and using horse trappings decorated with seven or nine tassels. Confucius' position on these questions, large and small, fully shows his unqualified support for the three institutions of Western Chou.

(2) *The Spring and Autumn Annals* was compiled by Confucius. No matter how differently the *Tso Chuan*, the *Kung-yang Chuan* and the *Ku-liang Chuan*<sup>9</sup> interpreted it, the main themes of the *Annals* were undoubtedly support for the three Western Chou institutions and the rectification of the titles of sovereign, subject, father and son so as to preserve the order which Confucius described as "the sovereign is a sovereign, the subject a subject, the father a father and the son a son."

(3) After Confucius, Confucian scholars of the Warring States Period such as Tseng Shen and Mencius defended and elaborated the three

<sup>9</sup> These are books elaborating on *The Spring and Autumn Annals*.

Western Chou institutions in continuation of Confucius' preachings.

These three points prove that Confucius upheld the three Western Chou institutions of principalities, hierarchy and inheritance.

All three were slave society political institutions and protected the privileges of the slave-owning aristocracy. The later stages of the Spring and Autumn Period were an age of transition from the rule of the slave-owning class to that of the landlord class. It was the inevitable trend of historical development that the rising landlord class should become dominant. The landlord class did not want the Western Chou system of principalities but wanted to establish a system of prefectures and counties under centralized power and an autocratic monarchy. It did not want the Western Chou hierarchical system but wanted a different hierarchy under a centralized autocratic monarchy. It did not want the system of inheritance prevailing in the Western Chou Dynasty, but wanted to establish a patriarchal system which abolished the inheritance of titles of nobility, except in the case of the supreme ruler. In a word, the feudal landlord class wanted to abolish the slave-owning class institution of dividing up its domains according to rank for the purpose of ruling and exploiting the working people from generation to generation, and

to abolish the privileges of the slave-owning aristocrats, the supreme ruler excepted. The landlord class wanted to establish a system representing its own interests for ruling and exploiting the working people. This situation came about according to objective laws of social development. The three institutions upheld by Confucius were integral parts of the political system of slave society, not of feudal society. They represented the interests of the slave-owning aristocracy, not those of the rising landlord class. Confucius championed these out-dated institutions from the standpoint of the slave-owning aristocracy and in the service of the slave-owners. They were contrary to the laws of social development and impeded the advance of history. They were conservative, retrogressive and downright reactionary.

### **Confucius Upheld the Western Chou Penal Code**

The slave society rulers formulated a penal code which was an important tool in the hands of the slave-owning class for persecuting the working people, maintaining its rule and protecting its rights. This code was an important part of the slave society's political system. The *Tso Chuan* states: (When the government of Hsia had fallen

into disorder,) the penal code of Yu [ruler of the Hsia Dynasty] was drawn up; similarly with the decay of Shang, the penal code of Tang [ruler of Shang] was drawn up; and when Chou declined, the "code of the nine punishments"<sup>10</sup> came into being. "The Prince of Lu on Punishments" is found in *The Book of Documents*. In the Spring and Autumn Period, an age of transition from slavery to feudalism, the economic base and class relations were changing. Some of the slave-owning aristocracy instituted certain reforms in the penal code to suit the needs of their rule. According to the *Tso Chuan*: A penal code was engraved on iron in the state of Cheng; another was engraved on an iron tripod in the state of Tsin. The state of Cheng also used a penal code inscribed on bamboo by Teng Hsi. But the contents of these codes are either wholly surmised or only partly known. ("The Prince of Lu on Punishments" is the introduction to a penal code.) Evidences indicate that the penal codes of the Hsia, Shang and Western Chou dynasties exclusively served the rule of the slave-owning class, while those of the Spring and Autumn Period guaranteed certain landlord and peasant rights and abrogated certain

<sup>10</sup> The "nine punishments" were: exile, payment of ransom, whipping, flogging with rods, branding, cutting off the nose, cutting off the feet, castration, and death.

of the slave-owners' rights, infusing some essential features of feudal society and lessening those of slave society. The codes of the latter period, therefore, had a progressive significance in the prevailing historical conditions.

But Confucius upheld the Western Chou penal code and opposed any change in it. The *Tso Chuan* says: "Chao Yang and Hsun Yin of Tsin led a force and surrounded Ju Pin, after which they contributed a drum of iron to the districts of the state for the casting of tripods on which to inscribe the laws drawn up by Fan Hsuan-tzu. Confucius lamented, 'Tsin is going to ruin! It has lost its proper rules of administration. Tsin ought to keep the laws and rules handed down to Tang Shu to control its people. If the ministers and senior officials keep the people in their respective positions, the people will in turn honour their superiors, who will be able to preserve their inheritances, and there will be no disturbing the high and the low. We should have the proper rules. . . . Now that those laws are abandoned and tripods cast with the penal code inscribed on them, the people will study the tripods and not care to honour their men of rank, who will not be able to preserve their inheritance. When there is no distinction between high and low, how can a state continue to exist? Moreover, the penal code of Hsuan-tzu. . . enact-

ments which led to disorder in Tsin . . . how can they be made its laws?' "

Two points should be made here. First, the penal code of Fan Hsuan-tzu was progressive. Confucius opposed it, abusing the laws as "leading to disorder in Tsin." He advocated "keeping the laws and rules handed down to Tang Shu," that is, keeping "the nine punishments" of Western Chou times. This shows how Confucius defended the old penal code of slave society which maintained the slave-owners' prerogatives enabling them to exploit the working people more cruelly than under the newer order. He opposed the new penal code with its progressive drift, giving certain rights to the new landlord and peasant classes. His defence of the old and opposition to the new was not only conservative and retrogressive, it was actually reactionary. Second, the penal codes prior to the Spring and Autumn Period were in the hands of the slave-owning aristocracy, known to them but not to the common people. The aristocrats could add, cut or change the provisions of the penal code at will so as to deceive and persecute the common people. Now, since the penal code was inscribed on the tripods, it was made public; the aristocrats could not alter its provisions at will. This was to the advantage of the common people, especially the rising landlord class. Therefore, the

casting of the tripods with laws inscribed on them for all to see was a progressive political step. But Confucius was dead set against it, his reason being that only when the penal code was kept secret in the hands of the aristocrats, who could change it at will, would the common people respect and fear them. Only thus would their rights of ownership go unchallenged; otherwise the common people would not respect these rights and they would be in danger of being lost. Confucius took the stand of the slave-owning aristocrats and was their spokesman. His was a downright reactionary, not merely conservative and retrogressive, political stand.

The *Analects* records: Confucius said, "If you lead the people by laws, and keep them in order by penalties, they may keep away from wrongdoing, yet have no sense of shame about it."<sup>11</sup> Also, Chi Kang, distressed about the number of thieves in the state, inquired of Confucius how to eliminate them. Confucius said, "Were you, sir, not covetous, even if you should reward them for stealing they would not do so."<sup>12</sup> Chi Kang also asked Confucius about government as follows: "What do you say to killing the unprincipled for

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<sup>11</sup> *Analects*, "Wei Cheng."

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, "Yen Yuan."

the good of the principled?" Confucius replied, "Sir, in carrying on your government, why should you use killing at all? Let your manifest desires be for what is good, and the people too will be good."<sup>13</sup>

Was it true that Confucius opposed the rulers' cruel suppression of the people for rebelling against the laws and for "robbing"? Not at all. His anger at the tripods cast by the state of Tsin is an example.

The *Tso Chuan* also relates: Tzu Chan of the state of Cheng was ill and said to Tzu Ta Shu, "When I die, the government will pass into your hands. It is only the perfectly virtuous who can keep the people in submission by mildness. For the next rulers the best thing is severity." After several months of illness Tzu Chan died and Tzu Ta Shu took over the government. But he could not bear to use severity and tried mildness, with the result that there were many robbers in the state who plundered people around the marshes. Ta Shu regretted his course, mustered troops and attacked the robbers, killing them all, after which robbery was rare. Confucius said, "Good! When government is mild, the people despise it. Then severity must take over. When government is

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<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, "Yen Yuan."



severe, the people are slaughtered; then they must be dealt with mildly. Mildness serves to temper severity, and severity to regulate mildness. It is in this way that the administration of government is brought into harmony.”

It is quite clear that Confucius on the one hand advocated combining mildness and severity in governing, while on the other he praised the ruler of Cheng for slaughtering people forced into “robbery.”

### Conclusion

The institutions of Western Chou slave society Confucius tried so hard to defend were mainly the four discussed above, *i.e.*, principalities, hierarchy, inheritance, and the system of punishment. These institutions were on the verge of collapse by the Spring and Autumn Period, but Confucius, seeking to preserve the slave-owners’ privileges, travelled about campaigning for a restoration of the old order and opposing reform, hoping to make the slave system immutable and eternal.

This Confucius who opposed historical development and the people was a loyal servant of the slave-owners and defender of the Chou kings Wen and Wu and Duke Chou. Remnants of these slave

society institutions persisted in various states, at different times and in different degrees into the Warring States Period, to be cleared away in the main by the political reforms of Shang Yang in the state of Chin in the same period. But only after Chin Shih Huang (the first emperor of Chin) had unified China and established the system of prefectures and counties with centralized power and an autocratic monarchy was it possible to eliminate these remnants. The feudal dynasties following the Han adopted the principles of Shang Yang and other Legalists in their political system, observing the basic programme of the first Chin emperor. These dynasties discarded Confucius’ political tenets upholding slave society institutions while still practising Confucian doctrines in ethics and education, as a means of benumbing the people and consolidating their rule. The rulers employed the doctrines of both the Confucian and the Legalist schools simultaneously, but they tried their best to soft-pedal the Legalist School and promote reverence for the Confucian doctrines to give them a predominant position. They extolled Confucius and slandered Shang Yang and Chin Shih Huang, and for more than 2,000 years they continually placed great stress on the worship of Confucius and strained every nerve to poison the people with Confucian ideology. The damage done

by this poison was widespread and deep, and it has not been eradicated to this day. .

Liu Shao-chi, Lin Piao and other political swindlers tried to oppose Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought in all its brilliance with the nonsense of Confucius and Confucianism. In championing the doctrines of Confucius and Mencius and lauding "benevolence and righteousness, loyalty and altruism," they were shooting a dart at the dictatorship of the proletariat. They beat the drums for a capitalist restoration and echoed social-imperialism. Their ambition turned into a nightmarish failure, and their plots came to naught. But this struggle in the ideological sphere is far from ended. We must continue to expose to a greater extent the class nature of Confucius' political line in defending the slave system and all preachings related to that line, and subject them to serious criticism. Only by casting this image of the "sage" raised aloft to awesome heights by reactionary rulers through the ages down onto the rubbish-heap of history will Confucius end up "where he belongs."

*Cheh Chun*

## **Confucius' Doctrine of the Mean, a Philosophy of Opposition to Social Change**

The doctrine of the mean is a salient part of the thought of Confucius and the Confucian School. The bourgeois careerist, conspirator, counter-revolutionary double-dealer, renegade and traitor Lin Piao and his sworn follower Chen Po-ta, like all the reactionary exploiting classes of China's past, feverishly preached it. They described this doctrine as "rational," as "dialectical thinking" and as "one of our nation's great virtues." They also asserted that this doctrine of Confucius' "exercised great influence" on "the later development of dialectical philosophy in our country," that "this was a great merit for Confucius in the history of Chinese philosophy," and so on.

What kind of philosophy is the doctrine of the mean after all? What role has it played in Chinese history? Which classes does it really serve? This is a cardinal issue of right and wrong and it must be argued out to a clear conclusion.

The doctrine of the mean was first propounded by Confucius. He said that "the mean (*chung yung*)" was a supreme "virtue";<sup>1</sup> that "transgressing the limit" was equal to "falling short"<sup>2</sup> and that it was necessary to hold to *chung*<sup>3</sup> (meaning neither excess nor deficiency). This doctrine of Confucius was developed further by his grandson Tzu Ssu and by Mencius, a pupil of one of Tzu Ssu's pupils.

The doctrine of the mean was closely connected with Confucius' entire ideological system. One of his central ideas was to return to the "rites of the Chou Dynasty" without the slightest breach or deviation. That was the standard set by what Confucius called the supreme "virtue" — the doctrine of the mean. In reality it meant complete restoration of the hierarchy of the slave system of the Western Chou Dynasty (around 11th century-770 B.C.).

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<sup>1</sup> *Analects*, "Yung Yeh."

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, "Hsien Chin."

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, "Yao Yueh."

In terms of philosophy, the so-called doctrine of the mean is the striving to preserve for ever the old unity of opposites in a contradiction, *i.e.*, the stability of the old quality of things. According to it, if things transgress the bounds of the old quality ("excess") or fall short of them ("deficiency"), they should be opposed unconditionally. The *chung* alone is best, because once it is grasped, things will not go to the extreme and the stability of the old quality will not be destroyed.

A certain quality has its definite limits and within those limits can maintain its stability. The doctrine of the mean, however, sanctifies these limits and holds the stability of the old quality to be absolute. In this respect it presents old things as an unconquerable force, sacred and eternal. "Heaven changes not, likewise the Way changes not." Obviously this is out-and-out metaphysics.

As a conception of history, the doctrine of the mean regards the old social and economic formation and its superstructure as absolute and sacred, negates revolutionary changes and forward movement in society and advocates conservatism, restoration of the old and retrogression. Therefore, it is the philosophy of dyed-in-the-wool conservatives and reactionaries.

Marxist dialectics holds that the unity of the two contradictory aspects in a contradiction is relative

and that their struggle is absolute. The qualitative stability of a thing is relative and the leap of a thing from an old to a new quality is absolute. The immobility of things is relative, their movement is absolute. Dialectics recognizes the qualitative stability of things but is opposed to regarding it as an absolute state. According to dialectics, when the struggle of the two contradictory aspects in a contradiction develops beyond a certain limit, it inevitably destroys the stability of the old quality, breaks up the old unity, brings about the transformation of the contradiction and leads to the death of the old and the birth of the new. As Engels wrote: “. . . **in the course of development, all that was previously real becomes unreal, loses its necessity, its right of existence, its rationality. And in the place of moribund reality comes a new, viable reality. . . .**”<sup>4</sup>

Therefore, in the view of Marxists the development of history is inevitably a process in which new-born things (new social and economic formations, class forces, persons and ideas) successively defeat decadent things (old social and economic formations and their superstructure). New-born things are invincible. **“The supersession of the old**

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<sup>4</sup>“Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy.”

**by the new is a general, eternal and inviolable law of the universe.”**<sup>5</sup>

Hence it is clear that the doctrine of the mean is the diametric opposite of revolutionary dialectics. How absurd it is to call this doctrine identical with the idea of the unity of opposites or dialectics!

Chairman Mao has pointed out: **“It is only the reactionary ruling classes of the past and present and the metaphysicians in their service who regard opposites not as living, conditional, mobile and transforming themselves into one another, but as dead and rigid, and they propagate this fallacy everywhere to delude the masses of the people, thus seeking to perpetuate their rule.”**<sup>6</sup> Beginning with Confucius, all representatives of China’s reactionary exploiting classes preached the doctrine of the mean. Their purpose was to safeguard their reactionary rule and the old system, rules and culture and to oppose reform, revolution and the forward movement of society.

Confucius lived in the period of transition from slave to feudal society, an era of major social change in which the system of slavery was rapidly collapsing. Stubbornly adhering to the reactionary

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<sup>5</sup> Mao Tsetung, “On Contradiction,” *Selected Works*, Eng. ed., FLP, Peking, 1967, Vol. I, p. 333.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 340.

stand of the declining slave-owning aristocracy, he put forward the doctrine of the mean in an effort to preserve the dying slave system and oppose social change. He said: "The supreme virtue is to act according to the mean! It is a pity that the common people have long failed to do so." His grandson, Tzu Ssu, said: "I now know that this doctrine of the mean cannot be practised by the common people."<sup>7</sup> This was their hopeless lament in the face of the collapse of the slave system in that era of major social change. According to them, the society in which "the rites were lost and music was ruined" was in a bad mess, the present was not as good as the past, and each generation was inferior to the previous one. Successive slave revolts, the steady growth of the forces of the emerging landlord class and incessant violations of the code of the slave system, the so-called "rites," — all these were contrary to the doctrine of the mean which they preached.

To take an example, the three families of Chisun, Mengsun and Shusun of the state of Lu were representatives of the emerging feudal landlord class. With the constant expansion of their privately-owned land, power and influence, they encroached upon the interests of the ruler of Lu who repre-

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<sup>7</sup> *Doctrine of the Mean.*

sented the dominance of the slave-owning aristocrats. Confucius denounced them for "transgressing their proper limits." Previously only the ruler of a state had been entitled to build a capital, but now each of these three families also built one. How could this be permitted? So Confucius incited some people to destroy the citadels built by the Chisuns and Shusuns. Only the supreme ruler was entitled to put on a dance ceremony with 64 performers, but the Chisuns staged one in their ancestral temple. Unable to contain his anger, Confucius said: "If this can be tolerated, what then is intolerable?"<sup>8</sup>

In view of this situation, Confucius called for "rectification of names" to ensure strict observance of the code of the slave system, under which "the sovereign is a sovereign, the subject a subject, the father a father and the son a son," and no "transgressing" or "falling short" of these limits was permissible. The limits were laid by the "rites of Chou." Confucius said repeatedly that one should "go by the rites" and not transgress or fall short of them. Violation of the "rites" was impermissible as a deviation from *chung*. Hence the essential meaning of Confucius' doctrine of the mean was to

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<sup>8</sup> *Analects*, "Pa Yi."

uphold the hierarchy of the old slave system as sacred and eternal.

Therefore when Fan Hsuan-tzu, a minister of the state of Tsin, enacted laws and inscribed them on a tripod, Confucius held that this would lead slaves to stop showing respect for slave-owning aristocrats and bring about the end of the latter's rule. He lamented: "Tsin is going to ruin! It has lost its proper rules of administration."<sup>9</sup> The "proper rules" referred to were the "rites," the code of slave-owning aristocracy, without which the doctrine of the mean would be destroyed. That was why Confucius preached that one should "restrain oneself and return to the rites" and "not look at, listen to, say or do things not conforming to the rites."<sup>10</sup> His purpose was to rigidly confine people's words and actions within the code of the declining system of slave-owning aristocracy.

Tzu Ssu also advocated that people should be "without perversity, without one-sidedness," "without any selfish dislikes" and "pursue the Kingly Way."<sup>11</sup> Here, too, the aim was to exhort people to be content with their stations in life within the bounds of the old system and old rules of

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<sup>9</sup> *Tso Chuan*.

<sup>10</sup> *Analects*, "Yen Yuan."

<sup>11</sup> *The Book of Historical Documents*.

slave-owning aristocrats, and not to be insubordinate and rebellious, violate the old code and order or betray the "Way" of the system of slave-owning aristocracy. "The superior man acts according to the mean and the inferior man violates the mean."<sup>12</sup> By "the superior man," he meant the declining slave-owning aristocrats. Since they could suit their actions to the "rites of Chou," their behaviour naturally conformed with the doctrine of the mean. By "the inferior man," he meant the rebellious slaves and the emerging feudal forces which were "insubordinate and rebellious." They violated the "rites of Chou" and therefore behaved contrary to the doctrine of the mean. Tzu Ssu cursed them as "ignorant but fond of using their own judgment, base but wanting power themselves."<sup>13</sup> Such "inferior men" were to be mercilessly suppressed, by violence.

A big slave revolt of the time in the state of Cheng was ruthlessly put down by the slave-owners who slaughtered all the participants. Confucius exultantly praised this action: "Good! When government is mild, the people despise it. Then severity must take over."<sup>14</sup> Did not Confucius him-

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<sup>12</sup> *Doctrine of the Mean*.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>14</sup> *Tso Chuan*.

self have Shaocheng Mao executed? Shaocheng Mao stood for reforms, and was a grave threat to the system of slave-owning aristocracy. Confucius declared: "This hero of the inferior men must be killed." The execution of Shaocheng Mao was precisely intended to preserve the existence of the slave system, and as such conformed to the needs of the doctrine of the mean.

All these facts show that Confucius' doctrine of the mean was in fact an ideological weapon used by the declining slave-owning aristocrats to uphold the old system and oppose social change.

After Confucius and Mencius, the School of Principles (*li hsueh*) in the Sung Dynasty (960-1279), as represented by Cheng Hao (1032-1085), Cheng Yi (1033-1107) and Chu Hsi (1130-1200), also laid great stress on preaching the doctrine of the mean. Class struggle had become very intense by that time and peasant uprisings followed one another. Some of them put forward the slogans "equalize the high and the low" and "even up the rich and the poor," shaking the rule of the feudal hierarchy. At the same time, reformers like Wang An-shih<sup>15</sup> emerged from among the ruling class. He maintained that society was developing and chang-

<sup>15</sup> Wang An-shih (1021-1086) was a comparatively progressive statesman of the landlord class and a representative of the political reform group in the Sung Dynasty.

ing, advocated reform and opposed any return to the old order. He said: "Natural changes need not be feared, ancestral ways need not be followed and others' slanders need not be heeded." This had a certain progressive significance at the time.

Under such circumstances, the idealist School of Principles represented by Cheng Hao, Cheng Yi and Chu Hsi put special emphasis on the doctrine of the mean, talking such stuff as: "Not leaning to either side is called *chung*; being unchangeable is called *yung*. *Chung* is the correct way to be followed by all under heaven. *Yung* is the fixed principle governing all under heaven." "Not leaning to either side" meant absolutely no deviation from feudal hierarchy; "being unchangeable" meant making absolutely no change in this hierarchy.

These persons used the doctrine of the mean to sanctify the feudal hierarchy in order to create public opinion for the suppression of the peasant uprisings. In diametric opposition to such slogans of the revolting peasants as "equalize the high and the low" and "even up the rich and the poor," they said: "The order of ranks between the high and the low is the principle of heaven and should not be undermined. How can one go against it?" They tried to make the masses accept their stations in life and take no excessive action, so that the order

and code of the feudal hierarchy could be safeguarded.

They also used the doctrine of the mean to oppose Wang An-shih's reforms. They denounced his new laws as "using the lowly to offend the noble, and heresy to obstruct orthodoxy." In their eyes, even slight changes in the old system and old rules might endanger the existence of the feudal hierarchy and hence were impermissible. Obviously the School of Principles represented by the Cheng brothers and Chu Hsi was also using the doctrine of the mean as a reactionary ideological weapon against revolution and reform.

It should be pointed out that during the prolonged period of feudal society the rulers not only made use of the doctrine of the mean but continuously adapted and modified it. Originally this doctrine had stressed the absoluteness of the limits and scope of the old quality (to Confucius these were the "rites" — the hierarchical code of the slave system) in order to oppose a qualitative leap, revolutionary change and the forward movement of society. Later, the stress was placed on another related aspect, that is, preaching compromise and eclecticism in relation to contradictions and negating their struggle. Here too the aim was to oppose a qualitative leap, revolutionary change and the movement for social progress.

Such adaptations began from the Han Dynasty (206 B.C.-A.D. 220). In his annotations to the *Analects* and the *Doctrine of the Mean*, Cheng Hsuan in the Eastern Han Dynasty (25-220) interpreted the mean as a compromise of opposites. In his annotation to the latter work, Chu Hsi in the Sung Dynasty also stressed that the mean implied compromise and eclecticism in relation to contradictions.

The purpose of all these adaptations, in the final analysis, was to meet the needs of the economic base of feudal society. The basic contradiction in feudal society — that between the landlords and the peasants — grew constantly sharper, especially after the great peasant uprising at the end of the Chin Dynasty (221-207 B.C.) and the two great peasant uprisings at the end of the Western and Eastern Han dynasties. In this situation the feudal ruling class sensed that the consolidation of its rule and exploitation of the peasants required not only a continued positive stress on the sacredness and inviolability of the feudal hierarchy, but also advocacy of class conciliation for direct negation of the class struggle waged by the oppressed people. That is why it adapted the doctrine of the mean and widely propagated it.

Many centuries later, Chiang Kai-shek, too, laid special stress on the doctrine of the mean. During



the ten-year civil war,<sup>16</sup> on the one hand he carried out counter-revolutionary military encirclement and suppression against the people's revolutionary forces led by the Chinese Communist Party, and on the other he wildly trumpeted the doctrine of the mean. This doctrine, he asserted, was "the subtlest and most practical philosophy of life," "an excellent ethical philosophy and excellent political philosophy" and "an eternally unchanging principle." Chiang Kai-shek tried in vain to use the threadbare doctrine of the mean to maintain the semi-feudal and semi-colonial social system and his fascist landlord and comprador-bourgeois dictatorship, as well as to sap the people's revolutionary will, bind them hand and foot and restrain them from rising in revolutionary rebellion. In a word, "everyone follows his nature, everyone enjoys his place and there are no conflicts." His purpose was to maintain the reactionary rule of imperialism, feudalism and bureaucrat-capitalism in China. Military encirclement and suppression plus advocacy of the doctrines of Confucius and Mencius — such were Chiang Kai-shek's dual tactics to suppress the revolution.

In the historical period of socialism the doctrine of the mean continues to be an ideological weapon

<sup>16</sup> The Second Revolutionary Civil War (1927-36) led by the Chinese Communist Party.

used by the landlord and bourgeois classes to oppose the revolution. There is a very sharp struggle between change and sticking to the old, between revolution and restoration and between progress and retrogression. Its reflection in philosophy is the sharp struggle between dialectics and metaphysics. Applying the Marxist-Leninist law of unity of opposites in observing socialist society, Chairman Mao has advanced the theory of continuing the revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat and formulated for the Communist Party of China the basic line for the whole historical period of socialism. To uphold the political and economic interests of the declining and moribund bourgeoisie and all other exploiting classes, and to realize their criminal plots for subverting the dictatorship of the proletariat and restoring capitalism, Liu Shao-chi, Lin Piao and other chieftains of the revisionist line, like all reactionary classes of China's history, used the doctrine of the mean as an important ideological weapon. They employed it to oppose proletarian revolution, the dictatorship of the proletariat and the continuation of the revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat, to oppose the Party's basic line for the whole historical period of socialism.

In his extremely poisonous article "Why Do People Make Mistakes?" written during the period

of the democratic revolution, Liu Shao-chi talked a lot about "transgressing the limit is as bad as falling short," thus taking Confucius' doctrine of the mean as his own philosophical maxim. And after the liberation, when we carried out socialist transformation in ownership and on other fronts under the guidance of the Party's general line for the transition period, he hastily brought out the slogan "Strive to consolidate the new-democratic system" to oppose this transformation in ownership. He babbled that "socialism is a question for the future and it is premature to raise it now" and that "to bring about state and collective ownership prematurely is contrary to the interests of the majority of the people and to progress."

Liu Shao-chi also opposed reforms in culture, saying, "In reforming the theatre, don't be impetuous and change excessively," and "you can't change too early or go too far from the original." "You can't change too early," "don't change excessively" and "can't go too far from the original" — all this in fact meant not permitting transformation, qualitative change, progress. In other words, it was the use of the doctrine of the mean to oppose the Party's general line for the transition period and oppose socialist transformation, in the vain effort to perpetuate capitalism in town and countryside.

In 1958, when the people of the whole country brought about the big leap forward under the guidance of the Party's general line for socialist construction, Liu Shao-chi and Lin Piao hurled all kinds of abuse to vent their hatred for the big leap. Liu Shao-chi assailed it as "going crazy" and "moving too hastily and getting into trouble." Lin Piao attacked the Party's general line, the big leap forward and the people's communes, saying that they were all "Leftist," "a losing business" and "acting on illusions." They clamoured for turning back, saying that "industry should retreat as far as possible and so should agriculture and this should include fixing output quotas on the basis of separate households and reversion to individual farming." They vainly attempted to use reactionary philosophy — the idea that "transgressing the limit is as bad as falling short" and the doctrine of the mean — to resist the Party's general line of going all out, aiming high and achieving greater, faster, better and more economical results in building socialism, and to oppose the big leap forward in socialist construction. Their purpose was to fan up counter-revolutionary opinion for their restoration of capitalism, for retrogression.

The struggle has been even sharper since the start of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. This revolution, carried out under the

guidance of the Party's basic line for the whole historical period of socialism, constitutes the great practice of continuing the revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat. It has dealt heavy blows at the reactionary forces of imperialism, revisionism and reaction abroad and the landlord class and the bourgeoisie at home, and given the old ideas, old culture, old customs and old habits of the exploiting classes a severe pounding. In the course of this revolution, a whole series of new socialist phenomena has emerged. All this constitutes a very profound social change.

Like all other representatives of the exploiting classes, Lin Piao harboured inveterate hatred for the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. He ranted that the doctrine of the mean was "rational," maliciously slandered the Cultural Revolution, attacked the new things that have emerged in it, described the current excellent situation as bleak and spread the reactionary theme of the present being worse than the past. He used the doctrine of the mean as a theoretical pillar for his launching of a counter-revolutionary coup d'etat and vengeful counter-attack against the proletariat and the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. This shows that in the socialist period the doctrine of the mean has become a reactionary ideological weapon used by the bourgeois reactionaries to op-

pose the Party's basic line, oppose continuing the revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat and try to restore capitalism.

However, the objective law governing historical development cannot be altered by the subjective will of renegades and traitors like Liu Shao-chi and Lin Piao. The reactionary philosophy of the doctrine of the mean cannot hold back the advance of history. The truth is that **"In man's world seas change into mulberry fields."** Revolutionary leaps take place one after another and the reactionary philosophy of the doctrine of the mean is proved bankrupt each time. Exactly as our great teacher Chairman Mao has concluded: **"Opportunists who want to stem the tide are to be found almost everywhere, but the tide can never be stemmed. Socialism is everywhere advancing triumphantly, leaving all obstructions behind."**

Of course, the downfall of Liu Shao-chi and Lin Piao does not spell the end of the struggle. The struggle between change and sticking to the old, between revolution and restoration and between advance and retrogression will continue throughout the historical period of socialism. The reactionary forces of the bourgeoisie are always trying to stage a come-back and turn back the wheel of history. We must heighten our vigilance. We must firmly resist the tides of sticking to the old, of res-

toration and retrogression. We must use Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought as our sharp weapon for thorough criticism of the doctrine of the mean, the reactionary ideas of Confucius and the ideas of reverence for Confucius and opposition to the Legalist School, and carry the socialist revolution in the realm of the superstructure through to the end.

Chairman Mao said in 1956: **“Things develop ceaselessly. It is only forty-five years since the Revolution of 1911, but the face of China has completely changed. In another forty-five years, that is, in the year 2001, or the beginning of the 21st century, China will have undergone an even greater change.”** Chairman Mao said in 1962: **“The next 50 to 100 years or so, beginning from now, will be a great era of radical change in the social system throughout the world, an earth-shaking era without equal in any previous historical period.”** We oppose conservatism, restoration and retrogression. We stand for change, revolution and social progress. We firmly believe that no force on earth can obstruct the forward movement of history.

*Tang Hsiao-wen*

## Was Confucius “an Educator of the Whole People”?

Reactionary rulers of China's past hailed Confucius as “the eternal paragon for teachers.” The May 4th Movement of 1919 denounced him, raising the slogan “Down with the Confucian shop!” Later, bourgeois literary men and scholars, accommodating themselves to the needs of reactionary rulers, once more launched a reactionary counter-current of veneration for Confucius and study of the Confucian canon. They gave much publicity to the formula *yu chiao wu lui* 有教无类 (“there being instruction, there will be no distinction of clans”) advocated by Confucius, alleging that it showed his desire to recruit students regardless of class. Thus they disguised Confucius as “an educator of the whole people.”

Hu Shih, bourgeois man of letters and running dog of imperialism, claimed that the formula *yu chiao wu lui* represented Confucius' belief that "education can break down all class or other barriers" and was "a revolutionary theory that shook society." He went all out to present Confucius as "an educator of the whole people." Hu Shih served imperialism and the landlord and comprador-capitalist classes in their enslavement and poisoning of the Chinese people.

The Chinese Trotskyite, Li Chi, saluted Confucius as "the vigorous representative of the rising landlord class prior to the age of capitalism." He did so to serve his foul work of opposing communism and the people.

Liu Shao-chi and Lin Piao, representatives of the landlord and capitalist classes who had wormed their way into the Chinese Communist Party, had all along been venerated of Confucius. After the liberation they promoted a revisionist line in education, spread the fallacy of *yu chiao wu lui*, and exerted a most pernicious influence. Even now, when we are criticizing and condemning Confucius' ideas, some people still hold that his thinking on education should be affirmed.

Was Confucius really "an educator of the whole people"?

What did the *yu chiao wu lui* advocated by Confucius really mean?

Should Confucius' ideas on education be affirmed?

We must employ the microscope-and-telescope of Marxism to examine these questions.

### **What Kind of Education Did Confucius Practise?**

Confucius lived in the late Spring and Autumn Period (770-476 B.C.), a time of great social upheaval when China was in transition from the slave system to feudalism. Obstinate taking the reactionary stand of the declining slave-owning aristocracy, he dreamed of halting the advance of history. Confucius nursed an inveterate hatred for the social changes in his time. "How the Way declines!" he wailed. "The rites are lost and music is ruined." He set himself the task of restoring the slave system of the Western Chou Dynasty (around 11th century-770 B.C.) and advanced a series of reactionary political and ethical ideas with what he called "benevolence" as their core. He clamoured for the revival of slave-owning aristocratic states that were already extinct, for the continuation of the hereditary prerogatives of these aristocrats and for the restoration to power of those

among them who had already been toppled. This, in his opinion, would make the slaves everywhere docile and obedient.

Confucius wandered from place to place through a number of states, in search of an official post that would enable him to realize his dream of "return to the rites," that is, of reviving the Western Chou slave system and its codes and institutions. He also ran a private school for the purpose of cultivating students into "worthies," "men with high aspirations," "gentlemen" and "virtuous men." These persons would not only rigorously observe the "rites of Chou" but, he hoped, "excel in learning so as to become officials" in order to restore Western Chou slavery. It can be seen that Confucius' educational activities served the reactionary politics of slave-owning aristocracy. His reactionary political aim determined his educational line and ran through all aspects of his educational strivings. The allegation of the Trotskyite Li Chi that Confucius represented the rising landlord class was an absurd distortion and a reversal of history.

What kind of men did Confucius want to mould in his efforts to attain his reactionary political aims? Would it have been possible for him to admit students regardless of class, as some people have asserted?

In slave society, the slaves and the slave-owners were the two classes in fundamental opposition to each other. In judging whether Confucius recruited students regardless of class, we must first of all see whether he had any from among the broad masses of that society — the slaves. Under the slave system, the slaves were not regarded as human beings at all by their owners. They were regarded only as "talking tools" who could be persecuted, bought, sold or slaughtered in cold blood. Archaeological excavations and ancient records prove that the slave-owning aristocrats of ancient China killed hundreds and thousands of slaves as sacrifices in ancestor worship or buried them alive in graves to accompany the dead. How could they have given the slaves any education? Actually, Confucius himself quite brazenly excluded the slaves from those to be educated. Proceeding from idealist apriorism, he divided people into several grades: "Those born with knowledge rank highest. Those who acquire knowledge through learning rank lower. Those who have difficulty but learn rank lower still. Those who have difficulty and refuse to learn are the lowest — the common people." And he stated unequivocally his view that "the highest, who are the wise," and "the lowest, who

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<sup>1</sup> *Analects*, "Chi Shih."

are the stupid," were born that way and could not be changed.<sup>2</sup> In Confucius' concept the slaves, being "the lowest" and "the stupid," were not worth educating. Slaves, he believed, were only good for doing as they were told and must not be given any reasons.<sup>3</sup> See how clear-cut this decaying slave-owning aristocrat was in his reactionary hostility to the slaves! His reactionary class instinct determined his hostility, determined his advocacy of the reactionary policy of keeping the common people in ignorance.

Confucius proclaimed that he was ready to teach anyone who would present him with a large strip of cured meat.<sup>4</sup> Those words themselves give the lie to the statement that he took in students regardless of class. In a society where one horse plus a hank of silk could be bartered for five slaves,<sup>5</sup> in which slaves were human chattels to be bought or sold and were deprived of all personal rights, where could a slave get so much meat to pay as tuition fee? Confucius indeed had many students,

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<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, "Yang Huo."

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, "Tai Po."

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, "Shu Erh."

<sup>5</sup> From an inscription on a bronze tripod in the middle of the Western Chou Dynasty which mentions that the tripod maker traded a horse and a hank of silk for five *fu* (meaning slaves).

as many as "70 worthies and 3,000 disciples" according to one record, and among them were a number of "poor students." One described as such was Yen Yuan, who "lived in a dilapidated hut." Another was Tseng Shen "who hoed melon fields with his father and whose mother wove cloth." These passages, too, were considered by some as evidence that Confucius took students regardless of class. But this was not really the case. In fact, Yen Yuan's forefathers for fourteen generations had been assistant ministers of the state of Lu and Tseng Shen was the descendant of a slave-owning aristocrat. Their families had declined from wealth and influence but, though "poor" compared with slave-owning aristocrats, still belonged to the slave-owning class. To cite such "evidence" to prove that Confucius accepted students regardless of class is completely unconvincing.

Among Confucius' students, there were also persons of "low" birth. Jan Yung, for example, was described as the son of a "humble commoner," and Tzu Kung as a "tradesman." Some people used this to support their contention that Confucius recruited students irrespective of class. But it does not hold water either. In the eyes of slave-owning aristocrats, only influential officials were high-bred. Other persons, engaged in farming, handi-

crafts and trade, were all "low." Confucius said of himself: "When I was young, my condition was low, and therefore I acquired ability in many things, but they were mean matters."<sup>6</sup> Yet he himself did not belong to the slave class, but came from a declining family of slave-owning aristocrats. By saying "low," he meant that he was not an official. And "mean matters" meant the mastering of some skill or other. So when Jan Yung's father was referred to as a "humble commoner," it simply meant he held no official post. As for Tzu Kung, according to *Historical Records* and other books he was a tradesman of the state of Wei, "who maintained a rich equipage and huge wealth." He was obviously a commercial slave-owner. In any case, these two so-called men of "low birth" could not possibly have been slaves. For in ancient slave society slaves were not regarded as men at all. They were called *min* (in the sense of people of inferior birth) or by other similar terms, but not *jen*, "human beings." Thus, if Confucius were said to have "chosen students irrespective of high or low birth," it would at best show non-discrimination between persons, official or non-official, of some social strata other than the slaves. It is equally futile to use this to prove that Confucius accepted students regardless of class.

<sup>6</sup> *Analects*, "Tzu Han."

What Confucius taught his students likewise showed that he certainly did not practise "education for the whole people." To bring up his students to serve slave-owning aristocracy he made it a rule that the curriculum should be confined to slave-owning aristocracy's rites, music, poetry and history, with special emphasis on the "rites of the Chou Dynasty." He designated himself the inheritor of the codes and institutions of the slave system, one who "succeeds to and hands down the doctrines of Emperors Yao and Shun and takes Kings Wen and Wu as models." He maintained that study of the rites was fundamental, and that a systematic education in the codes and institutions of the slave system had to come first if the culture and knowledge one acquired were to be of use. As for anything to do with productive labour, there was no sense in learning it, nor any need to do so. When Confucius' student Fan Hsu asked how to plough the soil and grow vegetables, he retorted angrily: "I am not as good at that as a farmer, a vegetable gardener." And Fan Hsu had no sooner turned his back than Confucius growled: "Fan Hsu is indeed a mean man!"<sup>7</sup> For a reactionary like Confucius, opposed to students taking part in productive labour and hostile to the working peo-

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, "Tzu Lu."



ple, to have taken slaves as his students would have been strange indeed.

**“What is knowledge? Ever since class society came into being the world has had only two kinds of knowledge, knowledge of the struggle for production and knowledge of the class struggle.”**<sup>8</sup> It was the landlord and bourgeois classes that created the myth of Confucius. Actually he didn’t amount to much. He knew nothing about handicrafts, farming or vegetable growing and had no understanding of the social-historical trend of his time — his so-called “erudition” was worthless trash. In the eyes of the working people, Confucius was nothing but a parasite and a fool whose “four limbs do not toil” and who “does not know the difference between the five grains,” entirely unqualified to be a teacher.

Chairman Mao has pointed out: **“Any given culture (as an ideological form) is a reflection of the politics and economics of a given society, and the former in turn has a tremendous influence and effect upon the latter; economics is the base and politics the concentrated expression of economics. This is our fundamental view of the relation of culture to politics and economics and of the rela-**

<sup>8</sup> Mao Tsetung, “Rectify the Party’s Style of Work,” *Selected Works*, Eng. ed., FLP, Peking, 1967, Vol. III, p.39.

**tion of politics to economics.”**<sup>9</sup> Education, in any period, serves the politics of the ruling class at the time. Where classes exist, there has never been, nor can there be, any “education of the whole people” that transcends class. Viewed from any angle, Confucius’ educational endeavours were in the service of the reactionary politics of restoring Western Chou slavery. Confucius himself was every inch the faithful lackey of slave-owning aristocracy. Talk of his being “an educator of the whole people” is nothing but an attempt by some people to cloak him in a disguise.

#### **What Sort of Thing was Yu Chiao Wu Lui?**

Some people assert that in advocating *yu chiao wu lui* Confucius meant to “break down class barriers” in his teaching of students. This is sheer absurdity.

China’s ancient slave society had a patriarchal clan system extremely rigid in its stratification. Not only were the different classes and social strata clearly marked off, but intellectuals, peasants, artisans and tradesmen were not permitted to mix with one another. Intellectuals’ sons remained intellectuals; peasants’ sons remained peasants;

<sup>9</sup> “On New Democracy,” *Selected Works*, Eng. ed., FLP, Peking, 1967, Vol. II, p. 340.

handicraftsmen's sons remained handicraftsmen and tradesmen's sons remained tradesmen. And the various strata of the ruling slave-owning aristocracy itself — the supreme ruler, princes, ministers, etc. — were strictly hereditary, and such status could not be arrogated. As a faithful apologist of the "rites of the Chou Dynasty," Confucius was saddened to see how, as a result of "insubordination and rebellion," the hierarchy of the slave system of the Spring and Autumn Period was collapsing. He described this in such pained terms: "The sovereign is not a sovereign, the subject not a subject, the father not a father and the son not a son." How would it have been possible for such men as Confucius, with his obsessive craving for an order in which "the sovereign is a sovereign, the subject a subject, the father a father and the son a son," to "break down class barriers"? It is obvious that *yu chiao wu lui* did not at all mean "breaking down class barriers" in educating students but referred to something else.

In the *Analects*, compiled by the disciples of Confucius to record his important sayings, the terms *jen* 人 (human being or person) and *min* 民 (people) generally stood for two different concepts. *Jen* was a sweeping term referring to members of all classes and social strata other than the slaves — it included slave-owning aristocrats, ordinary

slave-owners, members of the rising landlord class and individual labourers. *Min*, on the other hand, then referred specifically and exclusively to slaves. Correspondingly, the two characters *hui* 海 (teaching) and *chiao* 教 (training or instruction) used in the *Analects* also denoted two different concepts. There are five passages in the *Analects* where Confucius used the term *hui*:

1. Yu, shall I teach (*hui*) you what knowledge is? When you know a thing, to hold that you know it; and when you do not know a thing, to allow that you do not know it; — this is knowledge.<sup>10</sup>

2. The silent treasuring up of knowledge; learning without satiety; and teaching (*hui*) others without being wearied: — which one of these things belongs to me?<sup>11</sup>

3. From the man bringing his strip of dried meat upwards, I have never refused teaching (*hui*) anyone.<sup>12</sup>

4. The sage and the man of perfect virtue; — how dare I rank myself with them? It may simply be said of me, that I strive to become such without satiety, and teach (*hui*) others without weariness.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>10</sup> "Wei Cheng."

<sup>11</sup> "Shu Erh."

<sup>12</sup> "Shu Erh."

<sup>13</sup> "Shu Erh."

5. Can there be love which does not lead to strictness with its object? Can there be loyalty which does not lead to teaching (*hui*) its object?<sup>14</sup>

In the above five passages one can read between the lines that the teaching connoted by *hui* was linked to men who were not slaves (*jen*). It was the non-slave man (*jen*) who did such teaching (*hui*) and was its object. Those who received such "teaching" did so voluntarily, without compulsion, on condition that they paid their tuition fees. In a sense, what Confucius meant by *hui* was what later became known as "education." It was education for persons of all classes and social strata except the slaves.

There are seven passages in the *Analects* where Confucius used the word *chiao* (training or instruction).

1. Chi Kang Tzu asked how to cause the people to revere their ruler, to be faithful to him, and to go on to nerve themselves to virtue. Confucius replied: "Let him preside over them with gravity; — then they will revere him. Let him be filial and kind to all; — then they will be faithful to him. Let him advance the good and train (*chiao*) the incompetent; — then they will eagerly seek to be virtuous."<sup>15</sup>

<sup>14</sup> "Hsien Wen."

<sup>15</sup> "Wei Cheng."

2. Let a good man train (*chiao*) the people seven years, and they may then likewise be employed in war.<sup>16</sup>

3. To lead people without training (*chiao*) to war, is to throw them away.<sup>17</sup>

4. When Confucius went to Wei, Jan Yu acted as driver of his carriage. Confucius observed, "How numerous are the people!" Jan Yu said: "Since they are thus numerous, what more shall be done for them?" Confucius replied: "Give them enough." Jan Yu asked: "And when they have enough, what more shall be done?" Confucius said: "Train (*chiao*) them."<sup>18</sup>

5. To put the people to death without having instructed (*chiao*) them, — this is called cruelty.<sup>19</sup>

6. *Yu chiao wu lui*<sup>20</sup> (the meaning of this will be analysed in detail below).

7. There were four things in which Confucius gave instruction (*chiao*) — letters, ethics, devotion and truthfulness.<sup>21</sup>

The first six statements were made by Confucius himself while the last one was a general statement

<sup>16</sup> "Tzu Lu."

<sup>17</sup> "Tzu Lu."

<sup>18</sup> "Tzu Lu."

<sup>19</sup> "Yao Yueh."

<sup>20</sup> "Wei Ling Kung."

<sup>21</sup> "Shu Erh."

by his students about the courses he had taught. So in this last passage the words were different from those used by Confucius. From the first five passages, citing Confucius' own words, we can see that the verb *chiao* was used in relation to *min* (people, at that time denoting only the slaves) who were its object. The content of *chiao* was military training and ideological indoctrination. It was men or persons (*jen*) who gave such training, and the people or slaves (*min*) who received it. The relationship between the two was between those who ruled and those who were required to submit. This *chiao* (training) was unconditional and compulsory, not voluntary. What Confucius meant by *chiao* was the training of slaves, and it was entirely different in nature from the education for which he used the word *hui*.

*Yu chiao wu lui* explicitly uses the word *chiao*, which denoted compulsory military training and ideological indoctrination for the slaves; it is erroneous to confuse this with what Confucius termed *hui*, that is, education for classes and social strata other than the slaves. In ancient times “*yu*” (有) (the first word in this formula) was interchangeably used with two other words meaning “region.” (“*圍*” or “*域*”) And “*lui*” (类) (the last character) referred to different

clans, not “distinction of classes,” or “family origin.”

Thus, what Confucius really wanted with his *yu chiao wu lui* was simply to give slaves compulsory training, not divided according to clan but based on the regions in which they lived. It certainly did not mean “breaking down class barriers” in educating students. In the Spring and Autumn Period, the slaves were continuously rising in revolt, and there were constant wars among the slave-owners. The patriarchal clan system of slave society was heading for total breakdown. Aristocrats of different clans and families had become mixed with each other, and so had their respective slaves. It was impossible for rulers to any longer govern according to clan, as in the Western Chou Dynasty, so they had to rule according to region. In adaptation to this, the training of the slaves also had to be carried on by region. A principality by that time would have ministers belonging to different families, each with *min* (slaves) and soldiers at his command which constituted a great danger to the “ruling house.” Therefore Confucius advocated *yu chiao wu lui*, that is, the compulsory training of slaves according to region and without distinction of clan. This was meant to weaken the power of the “ministers,” (mainly of the rising feudal landlord class) so as to protect the interests

of the "ruling house" (that is, of the slave-owning ruling class). More important still, it also was meant to strengthen control over the slaves and prevent them from rebelling. How then could *yu chiao wu lui* be interpreted as "breaking down class barriers," and "popularizing education"?

In fact, no interpretation of the Confucian formula *yu chiao wu lui* was made by scholars before the Chin Dynasty (221-207 B.C.). It was only in the Eastern Han Dynasty (A.D. 25-220) that Ma Yung explained it as "men are to be educated regardless of class."<sup>22</sup> Huang Kan in the period of the Northern and Southern Dynasties (420-589) interpreted it to mean, "Though men are divided into high and low, they are all fit for education."<sup>23</sup> From that time on the fallacy spread. Later thinkers of the feudal landlord class, catering to their own political needs, also decked out *yu chiao wu lui* as non-discrimination between the high and the low, the rich and the poor.

In short, Confucius' formula *yu chiao wu lui* referred to an entirely different field of activity from his actual educational endeavours. Therefore it can in no way be used to support the argument that he wished to "break down class barriers."

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<sup>22</sup> A Collection of Notes on "Analects."

<sup>23</sup> Explanatory Notes on "Analects."

### Why Was Confucius Disguised as "an Educator of the Whole People"?

Lenin said: "The very term 'apolitical' or 'non-political' education is a piece of bourgeois hypocrisy, nothing but humbuggerly practised on the masses, 99 per cent of whom are humiliated and degraded by the rule of the church, private property and the like."<sup>24</sup> Bourgeois education, in fact, invariably puts bourgeois politics first; its schools serve to bring up men of talent for this class and its "universal compulsory education" is intended to train slaves of capital. The bourgeoisie has never intended that education should serve "the whole people" regardless of class. However, in order to deceive the masses, it has resorted to cowardly concealment of this fact, shouting instead that "in the face of education all are equal"!

China's bourgeoisie is just as hypocritical as that of the West. What is different is that its talk of education transcending classes has some Chinese flavour. The May 4th Movement of 1919 had the character of thorough and uncompromising opposition to imperialism and feudalism. The cultural revolution of that time was diametrically opposed

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<sup>24</sup> "Speech Delivered at an All-Russia Conference of Political Education Workers of Gubernia and Uyezd Education Departments."

to feudal culture. It raised aloft the banner of opposing the old ethics and old literature and advocating the new ethics and new literature. It raised the slogan "Down with the Confucian shop!" It opposed the worship of Confucius and the study of the Confucian canon and trampled the prestige of Confucius, "the sage" of feudal society, in the dust. This movement played a great part in history.

China's bourgeois intellectuals joined in the May 4th Movement, making up its Right wing. Later, most of them went over to the side of reaction. Especially was this true after Chiang Kai-shek's counter-revolutionary coup of April 12, 1927. Immediately after it, Chiang hastened to make a pilgrimage to the Temple of Confucius in Chufu, Shantung Province. Later he gave the feudal dregs of Confucianism an important place in his own feudal, comprador and fascist educational programme. To serve the needs of the Chiang dynasty, the bourgeois men of letters and scholars imported to China the Western bourgeois nonsense about education transcending classes, then stuck the "Confucian shop" label on it, and stirred up a reactionary counter-current of renewed worship of Confucius. One of them made the silly statement that Confucius "recruited large numbers of students regardless of their family origin...,"

teaching them different subjects without discrimination, helping them study the various valuable classics. This was really a big liberation."

Such tunes made quite a din for a time. Trailing after the bourgeois litterateurs and scholars came the anti-Communist Kuomintang element Chen Po-ta, with his shouts that Confucius in practising *yu chiao wu lui* had "made a unique achievement" which "ought to be prominently written into the history of Chinese culture." This was how Confucius, disguised as "an educator of the whole people," was moulded to suit the needs of the Kuomintang reactionaries in carrying out their feudal, comprador and fascist dictatorship. Lu Hsun put it well: "It was those in authority who raised Confucius up in China, making him the sage of those in authority or those anxious to be in authority, a sage having nothing to do with the common people."<sup>25</sup>

Liu Shao-chi and Lin Piao, agents of the landlord and capitalist classes in the Party, had long been fanatical devotees of the "doctrines of Confucius and Mencius." After nationwide liberation in 1949, they appeared as inheritors of the reactionary counter-current of Confucius-worship. In 1962, when Liu Shao-chi and his cohorts were

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<sup>25</sup> "Confucius in Modern China."

feverishly working for a counter-revolutionary come-back, they publicly sponsored the repulsive farce of a "pilgrimage to the Temple of Confucius" and so-called "forums on Confucius." Thus they sought to enlist this wraith in their efforts to subvert the dictatorship of the proletariat and restore capitalism. In doing so they proclaimed far and wide that Confucius had practised *yu chiao wu lui* to "break down class barriers" in educating students and "popularize education," and other such fallacies. When the revolutionary people led by Chairman Mao rebuffed this counter-current, Lu Ting-yi, who was Liu Shao-chi's agent in the cultural and educational field, bellowed: "Isn't '*yu chiao wu lui*' right? I say it is, and that '*yu chiao wu lui*' should still be followed."

When the bourgeois careerist and conspirator Lin Piao was burrowing away at his counter-revolutionary plot to usurp Party leadership and seize state power, he too enshrined Confucius. He took as his motto the Confucian formula "restrain oneself and return to the rites," and adopted Chiang Kai-shek's Confucian watchword "Succeed, or die to preserve virtue," to demonstrate his counter-revolutionary determination.

Events in the class struggle since the founding of the People's Republic of China prove that the

struggle between veneration for Confucius and opposition to him is a reflection of the struggle between restoration and counter-restoration in the realm of ideology. Liu Shao-chi, Lin Piao and their like were so eager in lauding Confucius as "an educator of the whole people" and publicizing the worn-out formula *yu chiao wu lui*, because they hoped thus to create a theoretical basis for their revisionist line in education and obliterate the class character of proletarian education. They wanted to turn our schools and colleges into places for bringing up successors to the bourgeoisie so that the landlord and capitalist classes could continue their monopoly over culture and education, subvert the dictatorship of the proletariat and restore capitalism. But the corpse of Confucius could not help the reactionaries of China's past evade their doom. Nor could it save Liu Shao-chi and Lin Piao from theirs. The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution and the campaign to criticize Lin Piao and Confucius have swept them, and the shrine of Confucius at which they worshipped, into the dustbin of history.

Now the proletarian revolution in education is advancing vigorously and gaining in depth. The old bourgeois, revisionist educational system is confronted with total collapse. The new proletarian

system of education is taking shape. But new things in their growth are bound to encounter stubborn resistance from the old ideology, traditions and force of habit. Confucius' reactionary thinking still has its influence and the bourgeoisie constantly dreams of reconquering its old position. Marx said: **"What is antiquated tries to re-establish itself and maintain its position within the newly acquired form."**<sup>26</sup> A struggle between the two lines and the two ideologies is going on with regard to the criteria and methods for recruiting students, content of courses, ways of teaching and system of examinations. This is a continuation, under new conditions, of the struggle over whether to persist in the education that serves proletarian politics or stick to bourgeois education. We must carry through the spirit of the documents of the Tenth Party Congress and place the emphasis on the class struggle in the realm of the superstructure including the various spheres of culture. Everything in the superstructure that does not conform to the economic base must be transformed, the revisionist educational line must be further criticized and the influence of Confucius' reactionary thinking must be thoroughly cleaned out. We must persist in the

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<sup>26</sup> "K. Marx to F. Bolte, November 23, 1871."

principle that **education must serve proletarian politics and be combined with productive labour**, bring up hundreds of thousands of successors to the cause of the proletarian revolution, and fight for the consolidation of the dictatorship of the proletariat and the building of socialism.



Feng Yu-lan<sup>1</sup>

## A Criticism of Confucius and Self-Criticism of My Own Past Veneration for Confucius

Ever since the May 4th Movement in 1919, the question of whether to knock down or to protect "the Confucian shop" has been an important part of the struggle between the two classes and the two lines in the field of ideology in China. Before the Cultural Revolution I had all along defended "the Confucian shop." By doing so I served the big landlords, big bourgeoisie and Kuomintang reactionaries before the liberation, and after it the counter-revolutionary revisionist line of Liu Shao-chi, Lin Piao and other political swindlers.

The Cultural Revolution has raised my understanding of Confucius. My present criticism of

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him is also a criticism of my past errors of thought and action in protecting "the Confucian shop."

The ideas of Confucius have many aspects. I shall begin with his thesis of "government by virtue."

Confucius said: "If you govern the people by virtue, you may be compared to the pole-star, which keeps its place while all the other stars revolve round it."<sup>2</sup> He also said, "If you lead the people by laws, and keep them in order by penalties, they may keep away from wrong-doing, yet have no sense of shame about it; if you lead them by virtue, and keep them in order by the rites, they will have a sense of shame about wrong-doing and live up to the standard."<sup>3</sup> These are Confucius' explicit references to "government by virtue."

There have been three stages in my understanding and evaluation of these sayings of Confucius.

In 1958, in the guise of lecturing on "The Question of Inheriting the Legacy of Chinese Philosophy," I proposed using the method of "abstract inheritance" from Chinese philosophy in order to counter the Marxist-Leninist method of class analysis. This was the method I had used in all my

<sup>2</sup> *Analects*, "Wei Cheng."

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, "Wei Cheng."

past lectures on Chinese philosophical history. It led to concentration on the superficial and literal meaning of sentences, in disregard of their actual, and especially of their class, content. For instance, in the old edition of my *History of Chinese Philosophy*, I interpreted the “virtue” Confucius spoke of as personal moral quality, and the “rites” as social standards, including social customs and habits and political and social systems. Therefore, as I understood it, to “lead the people by virtue” as advocated by Confucius meant to elevate the moral qualities of the people. And to “keep them in order by the rites” meant to use social standards to control individual conduct more strictly so as to form social customs and habits, and create public opinion that would make the people feel ashamed of acting immorally or illegally, so that obedience to law would come naturally to them. I believed that in advocating these methods, Confucius meant to raise the moral qualities of the people and strengthen social pressure against wrong-doing. All this would be much better than to frighten the people away from law-breaking by decrees and penalties. I thought it manifested Confucius’ “respect” for men.

Actually I was explaining Confucius’ words “virtue” and “rites” literally and in their abstract sense. All veneration of Confucius have in the

main used this method. And I myself resorted to it very consciously in order to cover up the class content of the various schools of thought in the history of philosophy, blur the lines of demarcation in the class struggle of those times and distort the law of development of the history of philosophy. This was not merely a question of methodology; in the final analysis it was a question of class stand, of which side I took in the struggle between the two classes and the two lines at the time of my statements.

Before the Cultural Revolution I did some superficial criticism on the method of abstract inheritance, but my exploiting-class stand did not change. So in writing the *New Edition of the History of Chinese Philosophy*, especially in the section about Confucius, I still used the same method.

During the Cultural Revolution I gradually came to understand the significance of Lenin’s teaching: **“Truth is always concrete.”**<sup>4</sup> The “virtue” and “rites” advocated by Confucius also had their concrete content, and particularly important was their class content. Take moral qualities. The moral qualities upheld by different classes differ in their class content. Those encouraged by the proletariat

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<sup>4</sup> “Two Tactics of Social-Democracy in the Democratic Revolution.”

are aimed at service to the people, the overthrow of all exploiting classes and the establishment of socialist and communist society. But in the eyes of the exploiting classes these same qualities constitute "insubordination and rebellion," the greatest of crimes. Different classes also have different social standards. Proletarian revolution aims at destroying the social standards of the exploiting classes and establishing those of the proletariat.

Only after realizing this did I come to see that "leading the people by virtue" and the other means advocated by Confucius were in every case intended to benumb and deceive the working people more and more so that they would neither want nor dare to resist. The purpose was to uproot and destroy all ideas and acts of "insubordination and rebellion."

Lenin says: **"All oppressing classes stand in need of two social functions to safeguard their rule: the function of the hangman and the function of the priest. The hangman is required to quell the protests and the indignation of the oppressed; the priest is required to console the oppressed, to depict to them the prospects of their sufferings and sacrifices being mitigated (this is particularly easy to do without guaranteeing that these prospects will be 'achieved'), while preserving class rule, and thereby to reconcile them to class rule, win them**

**away from revolutionary action, undermine their revolutionary spirit and destroy their revolutionary determination."**<sup>5</sup>

In other words, use one hand to oppress and suppress, and the other to benumb and deceive. What Confucius preached with his "leading the people by laws" and "leading the people by virtue" was precisely the two means of rule over the people described by Lenin. Confucius thought up ways and means for the rulers of that time, and considered the function of the priest more effective than that of the hangman. In a sense, under particular conditions, it is indeed more vicious than that of the hangman.

However, Confucius also regarded "punishment" as indispensable. At that time the state of Cheng used soldiers to suppress "robbers" and "to kill them all." Confucius approved of this, saying: "Good! When government is mild, the people despise it. Then severity must take over." When Confucius was acting chief minister of the state of Lu, he caused the execution of Shaocheng Mao, who stood for social reform.

The Confucians of the Han Dynasty (206 B.C.-A.D. 220) held that "rites, music, laws and penalties" were all indispensable to governing the people

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<sup>5</sup> "The Collapse of the Second International."

and the consolidation of feudal rule. "These things serve the same purpose. The way to rule lies in the one-heartedness of the people." They also said: "If rites, music, laws and penalties are all observed and never violated, there is the Kingly Way."<sup>6</sup> That is to say, the function of the hangman and that of the priest were both needed.

In the present movement to criticize Lin Piao and Confucius my understanding of Confucius has again been raised.

Now I feel that the criticism of Confucius given above also applies to the later philosophers of feudalism. However it does not sufficiently expose the characteristics of Confucius' ideas, and must be extended a step further.

Confucius' disciple Fan Hsu once expressed to his teacher a desire to learn farming and vegetable-growing. Confucius cursed and ridiculed him as an "inferior man." He said: "Fan Hsu is indeed a mean man! If the ruler loves propriety, the common people will not dare to be irreverent. If he loves righteousness, they will not dare to disobey. If he loves sincerity, they will not dare to hide what is in their minds. If he does all this, the common people will flock to him from all quarters,

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<sup>6</sup> *The Book of Rites.*

carrying their children on their backs. What need has he to know farming?"<sup>7</sup>

In the above passage Confucius plainly defined the antagonism of the two classes in the society of his time. One he called the "superior men," (a term which then meant the lords) or "those above" (that is, rulers, oppressors) who did no farming (that is, they were exploiters who did not labour). Opposed to it was the other class called the "inferior men," "those below," the "people" or the "common people" (that is, the ruled, the oppressed), who tilled the land (the working people who were exploited).

In the same passage Confucius declared that "the ruler loves propriety" in order that the common people "will not dare to be irreverent"; "the ruler loves righteousness" in order that the common people "will not dare to disobey"; and "the ruler loves sincerity" in order that the common people "will not dare to hide what is in their minds." This reveals that such love for propriety, righteousness and sincerity was the affair of "those above," whose sole purpose was to rule over the people. Confucius held that if "those above" displayed such attitudes, it would have some effect on the people, who would revere, obey and toil for them.

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<sup>7</sup> *Analects*, "Tzu Lu."

He said: "The relation between superior men and inferior men is like that between the wind and the grass. The grass must bend, when the wind blows across it."<sup>8</sup> He meant that if the "superior men" blew "a wind of morality," then the "grass," *i.e.*, the "inferior men," would "bend." This was the kernel of "leading the people by virtue."

In the passage cited above Confucius used "will not dare" thrice in relation to the people. This fully unmasks the ferocious features of the "superior men."

Confucius held that the highest form of morality was "benevolence." The *Analects* contain many of his statements, made to disciples, about "benevolence," conveying varying shades of meaning. Below are some striking examples:

1. "Yen Yuan asked about benevolence. Confucius said: 'Benevolence means to restrain oneself and return to the rites. Once self-restraint and return to the rites are achieved, all under heaven will submit to the benevolent rule.'<sup>9</sup>"

2. "Chung Kung asked about benevolence. Confucius said: 'It is, when you go abroad, to behave to everyone as if you were receiving a great guest; to employ the people as if you were assisting

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, "Yen Yuan."

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, "Yen Yuan."

at a great sacrifice; one should not do to others what he does not wish himself.'<sup>10</sup>"

3. "Fan Hsu asked about benevolence. Confucius said: 'Love for men.'<sup>11</sup>"

4. "Tzu Chang asked about benevolence. Confucius said: 'If a man possesses the five aspects of moral quality and can apply them in practice wherever he goes, he will be a man of benevolence.' Tzu Chang then asked him to elaborate. He went on to say: 'The five aspects are: respect, generosity, sincerity, energy and charity. If you respect others, you will be respected in return; if generous you will win over the people; if you are sincere people will trust you; if energetic you will achieve a great deal, and if you are charitable people will serve you well.'<sup>12</sup>"

In his first, second and fourth replies Confucius seemed to relate "benevolence" chiefly to the "superior man." He preached that if a man restrained himself and returned to the rites, all men under heaven would submit to such a "benevolent" person. This plainly referred to persons of very high political position. No "inferior man" could ever make the people submit to him under any circumstances.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, "Yen Yuan."

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, "Yen Yuan."

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, "Yang Huo."

In his second reply Confucius said that to employ the people was as solemn a matter as performing a great sacrifice. This, too, of course referred to persons of high political status. The "inferior men" were themselves "the people," who could only be "employed" and not entitled to "employ" others.

In the fourth reply, Confucius preached that if the ruler was generous to the people he would win them over. If he was charitable, he could get the people to serve him better. This again indicates persons with high political position. The "inferior men" themselves were "the people" and they did not need to win over "the people," — for them there was no such problem. They themselves were "employed" and not entitled to "employ others."

From what Confucius said about "generosity" and "charity," it can be seen that his "love for men" at best meant giving small favours to the working people in order to win them over and make it easier to enslave them.

One can see that, to Confucius "benevolence" meant a moral quality that only the "superior man" should possess. The "inferior man" was placed outside its scope. Confucius stated explicitly: "There may be some 'superior men' who are not benevolent, but never has there been any 'inferior

man' who is benevolent."<sup>13</sup> He also said: "The people may be directed to do things but not made to understand them."<sup>14</sup> He believed that "when the superior man is well instructed, he loves men; when the inferior man is well instructed, he is easily employed."<sup>15</sup> These sayings lay bare the class content of Confucius' "benevolence."

Not only was the "benevolence" spoken of by Confucius a moral quality intended for the "superior man," the other moral qualities he preached were in the same category. When he said to Chung Kung, "one should not do to others what he does not wish himself," he was again referring to the "superior man." It was a kind of contract among "superior men."

All the above shows that by "superior men" Confucius meant precisely slave-owning aristocrats. For by his own description, these "superior men" dealt with the "inferior men" exactly as the slave-owners did with the slaves. The relations between "superior men" and "inferior men" were those between the slave-owners and the slaves. In slave society, the slaves were viewed by their owners as no more than tools of production, having nothing to do with virtue. If there was any

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, "Hsien Wen."

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, "Tai Po."

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, "Yang Huo."

“virtue” they could have, it was obedience to the slave-owners’ orders. Confucius’ ideas reflected these relations of production. Plato, typical philosopher of the slave-owning class in the West, had similar ideas.

On this particular point of “virtue,” the ideas of philosophers of the feudal landlord class sometimes differed from those of the philosophers of the slave-owning class. Thus Wang Yang-ming, a thinker of the landlord class, declared: “Everywhere there are sages,” and “Everyone has a conscience.” But though admitting in words that everybody had a conscience, he in fact still assumed that there was a fundamental distinction between sages and ordinary men, and that only persons of the ruling class could become sages, and not the labouring people. His formulations were only another means of deceiving and numbing the working people. But the way he put things was different from that of the philosophers of the slave-owning class. This reflected the difference between the relations of production of slavery and of feudalism. Bourgeois philosophers talk of “freedom, equality and fraternity.” These, likewise, are a further means of deceiving and dulling the labouring people. But they are again different from philosophers of the feudal landlord class, which once more reflects different relations of pro-

duction. There used to be people, including myself, who in speaking of Confucius’ “benevolence” held that he possessed the concepts of equality and fraternity, and that Confucius had discovered “Man.” Such assertions implied that a philosopher could hatch ideas from his brain in isolation from the relations of production in his time. This is absolutely impossible and is the idealist, not the materialist, conception of history.

In the later years of the Spring and Autumn Period (770-476 B.C.), China’s slave society was on the verge of total collapse. The slave-owners were on the decline. Confucius’ advocacy of the ideas discussed above was clearly in the service of the slave-owners. He was in fact philosopher of the declining slave-owner class.

In the *Analects* (Chapter “Yao Yueh”) Confucius praised King Wu of the Western Chou Dynasty (around 11th century-770 B.C.) for his achievements in “reviving states that are extinct, restoring families that have lost their positions, and calling to office those who have fallen into obscurity.” Advocacy of such action was part of Confucius’ political programme for restoring the old order of the slave-owners of the Eastern Chou Dynasty (770-221 B.C.). He aimed at reviving those slave-owners’ states that had already been vanquished, and propping up the political status of descendants

of the slave-owning aristocrats who had “sunk” into common people. This spelled the all-round restoration of the old order of slave society.

I am not here going into comprehensive criticism of Confucius’ political attitude and of his ideas in all their aspects, but will supplement the criticism made by other comrades with some further evidence I have thought of.

I formerly interpreted Confucius’ “love for men” to mean love for all men. But, as can be seen from all said above, Confucius could not possibly have regarded the “superior man” as loving *all* men. Confucius’ love, in fact, was only for a handful of slave-owning aristocrats. He did say once: “A youth should overflow in love for people.”<sup>16</sup> But this did not go beyond his “if a ‘superior man’ is generous he will win over the people.” The word “all” was added by myself. Confucius never said “love for *all* men.” Nor did he ever say that his term “men” was all-embracing. Actually judging by Confucius’ fourth reply, quoted earlier, his advocacy of “love for men” was meant as a display of minor generosity and charity towards the working people.

What was the purpose of his advising the giving of small favours? In the later years of the Spring

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, “Hsueh Erh.”

and Autumn Period, the slave system was declining like the setting sun and faced collapse. The slave-owners had lost control of the slaves. The latter were rising in rebellion, or fleeing. In order to soften the slaves’ resistance, lessen the number of runaways and contend for labour power with the feudal class, some stress was laid on offering the slaves a few small favours. Confucius’ ideas were a reflection of this situation in the class struggle of that time.

Lenin quoted from Feuerbach: “**Whoever consoles the slave instead of arousing him to rise up against slavery is aiding the slave-owner.**”<sup>17</sup> This well applies to Confucius.

In feudal society after the Han Dynasty, Confucius became the “grand master” in feudal ideology. Later, Yuan Shih-kai<sup>18</sup> and Chiang Kai-shek, as well as Liu Shao-chi and Lin Piao and company, all venerated Confucius. This is because they all maintained that exploitation and oppression was justified and rebellion unjustified.

In the Temple of Confucius in Chufu, Shantung Province, there are stone tablets recording the honours bestowed posthumously on Confucius by

<sup>17</sup> “The Collapse of the Second International.”

<sup>18</sup> Yuan Shih-kai (1859-1916) was the head of the Northern warlords. After the Revolution of 1911, he was the first reactionary to seize the reins of power in China.



emperors of various dynasties. One, inscribed during the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368), succinctly eulogizes Confucius' "meritorious deeds" for the feudal ruling class, which were in fact crimes against the working people. To the working people, this inscription itself is a brief exposé of the crimes committed by Confucius.

The inscription begins: "It is said that the sages before Confucius would not be clearly known if not for Confucius. And sages after Confucius would have nothing to guide themselves by if not for Confucius." And it ends with: "Lo! The kinship of father and son, the relationship between a sovereign and his subjects will eternally depend on reverence for the sacred teachings. How can the immensity of heaven and earth and the brightness of sun and moon exhaust the excellence of those celebrated sayings! Let us rely on the divine transforming force to protect the imperial succession of Yuan!" This inscription, in fact, gives away the reactionary essence of Confucius' doctrines and the political objectives of various feudal dynasties in eulogizing Confucius.

Chiang Kai-shek, Liu Shao-chi and Lin Piao also glorified Confucius for the "protection" of their "imperial succession."

The Forum on the History of Chinese Philosophy in 1957 and the Tsinan Conference to commemo-

rate Confucius in 1962 were expressions of the trend of the revisionist line of the time to return to the old. At that forum, I advocated the method of "abstract inheritance" as against the Marxist method of class analysis. At the Tsinan Conference, I spread the view of Confucius that I had elaborated in the *New Edition of the History of Chinese Philosophy*. I argued that Confucius in his own time was the ideological representative of the feudal landlord class and that the "benevolence" he preached was "universal in form" and played a progressive role at that time. All this abetted the "deification" of Confucius in the service of the revisionist line.

Educated by the Cultural Revolution, I have gained a somewhat better understanding of Confucius.

The Cultural Revolution is developing in breadth and depth. With Chairman Mao at the helm, a new revolution is going on in the field of the history of Chinese philosophy. I am nearing eighty. After half a century of studying and teaching the history of Chinese philosophy, it is a great joy for me to be able to witness this great revolution, and still more to take part in it. I am determined to follow Chairman Mao's teachings, conscientiously study Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought,

remould my world outlook, revise the published section of the *New Edition of the History of Chinese Philosophy* and complete its unfinished parts and thus to contribute my bit to China's socialist revolution and construction.

*Lo Szu-ting*

## Struggle Between Restoration and Counter-Restoration in the Course of Founding the Chin Dynasty

— *In Relation to the Social Basis of the Polemics  
Between the Confucian and Legalist Schools*

The Chin Dynasty (221-206 B.C.) was the first feudal dynasty in Chinese history. The feudal unity established by Chin Shih Huang (246-210 B.C.) and the series of political measures he took cannot simply be attributed to accidental causes. They were the inevitable outcome of the social-historical development of the time.

In *On Contradiction*, Chairman Mao points out that in studying the process of the movement of opposites in the development of a thing, "**each stage in the process has its particular features**" to which we must pay attention. The transition from the slave to the feudal system in the state of Chin, which began with Prince Hsiao (361-338 B.C.) and

was accomplished by Chin Shih Huang, extended through the reign of seven Chin rulers. This 150-year period was fraught with sharp struggles between reform and counter-reform and between restoration and counter-restoration. Conforming with the trend of social development which determined that feudalism would succeed slavery, Chin Shih Huang unified the whole of China and founded the first unified feudal dynasty in Chinese history.

Afterwards, "The system founded by the Chin Dynasty was followed by the Han Dynasty."<sup>1</sup> (206 B.C.-A.D. 220) This showed that the feudal social system of the dictatorship of the landlord class, initiated by the Chin Dynasty, could not be turned back. In studying the history of feudal society in China and criticizing the thinking that reveres the Confucian School and opposes the Legalist School, it is necessary to have a clear understanding of the social basis of the contention between the two schools and of Chin Shih Huang's historical role. For a correct understanding of these two matters, it is necessary to have a clear view of the history of the struggle between restoration and counter-restoration in the 150 years from Prince Hsiao to Chin Shih Huang and the distinctive features of each stage in this period.

<sup>1</sup> *History of the Later Han Dynasty.*

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"The Chin Dynasty carried out Lord Shang Yang's reform and became rich and strong."<sup>2</sup> This occurred in the reign of Prince Hsiao of Chin and was a turning point in the history of the replacement of slavery by feudalism in the state of Chin.

Shang Yang's reform reflected the social-historical trend of the time. As early as the Spring and Autumn Period (770-476 B.C.), the slaves had waged successive struggles against the slave-owners' enslavement and oppression, thus propelling the change in land ownership. In 594 B.C. the state of Lu first adopted the system of collecting a tax on private land. This recognition of private ownership of land made a big breach in the slave economy. By the early years of the Warring States Period (475-221 B.C.), with Li Kuei's reform in the state of Wei and Wu Chi's reform in the state of Chu, the transition from slavery to feudalism was being effected in varying degrees in the principalities on the central plain. During the Spring and Autumn Period and the Warring States Period slave resistance was very fierce in Chin and it was there that the big and famous slave uprising led by Chih occurred. According to *Chuang Tzu*, Chih led "nine thousand followers, fighting in

<sup>2</sup> *Han Fei Tzu.*

many places and attacking the princes." This was a heavy blow to the slave-owning aristocrats' rule in Chin. Before Shang Yang's reform the state power of Chin had fallen into the hands of the ministers — certain slave-owning clan aristocrats who had acquired the decisive say in the choice of rulers. Internal strife among princes for the throne was frequent. In their sharp conflicts with the ministers, the rulers often turned to other political forces for support. This gave the landlord class in the state of Chin the opportunity to break through the weak link of the slave-owners' rule and grow gradually stronger.

In 408 B.C. the state of Chin started "levying a tax in grain on private land,"<sup>3</sup> which meant legal recognition of the landlord class in the state. In 384 B.C., Prince Hsien of Chin began to abolish the burial of the living with the dead<sup>4</sup> — a cruel practice under the slave system. Ten years later, he adopted the new system of "grouping every five households into a basic community."<sup>5</sup> The development of new feudal relations of production and the growing strength of the emerging landlord class required a corresponding degree of political recognition. Prince Hsiao, an agent of the landlord

<sup>3</sup> Szuma Chien, *Historical Records*,

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

class, was eager to "rule through reform."<sup>6</sup> Upon assuming power, he decreed: "I will honour with high office and land holdings those guests and ministers who offer excellent plans to make Chin powerful."<sup>7</sup>

What political line should the reform follow? Because Chin was located in the remote north-western area of Yungchow, and was unable to take part in the "conferences and agreements"<sup>8</sup> of the states on China's central plain, its slave-owning class was relatively weak in its rule in the ideological sphere and lacked a complete ideological system. "In his travel in the west Confucius did not reach the land of Chin."<sup>9</sup> This showed that the influence of the Confucian School was far weaker and less widespread there than in the other states on the central plain. Therefore, a ruler of Chin could frankly advocate a political line contrary to Confucius' thought: "In the present struggle among principalities we should lay stress only on the army and grain. To use 'benevolence' and 'righteousness' to rule our state would lead it to doom."<sup>10</sup> To practise what Confucius preached

<sup>6</sup> *Works of Shang Yang*.

<sup>7</sup> *Historical Records*.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> A line from Han Yu's poem "Song of the Stone Drum."

<sup>10</sup> *Lieh Tzu*.

would bring ruin on a state — this summed up the historical experience of that time.

Shang Yang, whose original name was Kungsun Yang, was the Legalist Li Kuei's student and a native of the state of Wei. He was a Legalist who "stood for reform through enacting new laws."<sup>11</sup> Moving from Wei to Chin, he was welcomed by the emerging landlord class but opposed by the declining slave-owning class there.

There was great contention in the Chin court at the time. Political representatives of its old aristocrats, like Kan Lung and Tu Chih, were trying to transform Chin by applying the line of the Confucian School. Their cry was, "adopting the ancient ways one will commit no mistakes, following the rites one will ensure that there are no heretical deviations."<sup>12</sup> They did all they could to uphold the slave system's "rule by rites." Shang Yang refuted this traditional idea of the slave-owners as a "vulgar concept." He said: "The arts of government are varied. It is beneficial to the state not to follow the ancient way."<sup>13</sup> He vigorously advocated reform.

In this heated controversy between the reformers of the landlord class and the conservatives of slave-

<sup>11</sup> *Historical Records.*

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

owning aristocracy, Prince Hsiao gave firm support to the course advocated by Shang Yang and approved the line of reform. From 356 B.C. on, Shang Yang introduced drastic changes through a series of reform measures. These included "eliminating the paths and earthen banks that formed farmland borders,"<sup>14</sup> encouraging the landlords to reclaim waste land, developing farming, abolishing the old aristocracy's hereditary privileges, popularizing the law which "grouped every five or ten families into a basic community"<sup>15</sup> and held them collectively responsible for the crimes of any family in the community, dividing the state into counties as administrative units, and unifying weights and measurements.

Upholding the interests of the landlord class, Shang Yang strongly advocated "devoting more effort to farming and weaving"<sup>16</sup> and considered that "a state's prosperity depends on farming and war."<sup>17</sup> His reform stipulated that "those who work hard at farming and weaving and produce more grain and silk" could be exempted from taxes and corvée, and that "those who engage in com-

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> *Works of Shang Yang.*

merce or who become poor through laziness"<sup>18</sup> should be made slaves of the state together with their wives. The adoption of this policy of stressing farming and restricting commerce helped to strengthen the emerging landlord class and dealt a heavy blow to the power of the slave-owners in the fields of handicrafts and commerce.

Shang Yang's reform was a profound social change. As such it inevitably came up against stubborn resistance from the reactionary forces represented by the old aristocrats. When it was introduced, in the capital of Chin "those who considered the initial orders inappropriate were counted by the thousand" and "many members of the ruling house grumbled."<sup>19</sup> The slave-owning aristocrats were terrified and furious, "nursing more hatred for Shang Yang's laws than for their foes in private feuds."<sup>20</sup> "Their hatred rose higher than the mountains."<sup>21</sup>

Rallying under the banner of Lord Chien, they incited the heir-apparent to "violate the law" and did all they could to obstruct the reform. Confronted with "resistance to law enforcement from

<sup>18</sup> *Historical Records*.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>20</sup> *Discourses on the State Control of Salt and Iron*.

<sup>21</sup> Liu Hsiang, *New Discourses*.

members of the ruling house,"<sup>22</sup> Shang Yang, with support from Prince Hsiao, struck hard at its slave-owning clique. He sentenced Lord Chien to have his nose cut off, punished Kungsun Ku — who had instigated the heir-apparent — by branding on the face and killed Chu Kuan, an aristocratic wrecker of the reform law. Moreover, in a resounding attack on the counter-revolution he had more than 700 members of the old aristocracy killed on the bank of the Weishui River near Hsienyang, so safeguarding and consolidating the new feudal system. It is recorded that after the new laws "had been enforced for ten years, the people of Chin were very happy," "order prevailed in town and countryside,"<sup>23</sup> and even women and children "talked about Shang Yang's laws."<sup>24</sup> As Chang Tai-yen (1869-1936) correctly pointed out when he was still a bourgeois revolutionary in his early life: "The world see only the severity of Shang Yang's new law without considering its positive consequences."<sup>25</sup>

Badly hit, the slave-owning clique of the Chin ruling house turned to underground activities. Though Lord Chien shut himself behind closed

<sup>22</sup> *Historical Records*.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>24</sup> *Sayings of the Warring States*.

<sup>25</sup> *Chiu Shu*.

doors for eight years, he conspired day and night for a restoration. On the other hand Shang Yang, being a political representative of the landlord class, could not rid himself of its limitations and essential weakness. Though he realized the grave nature of the struggle, it was impossible for him to rely on the people. He did not even adequately estimate or widely mobilize the strength of the landlord class itself. His line was reform from above. So after the death of Prince Hsiao, Shang Yang's reform could no longer be carried on. In particular, as soon as the heir-apparent who had always sided with the old aristocracy took over power as Prince Hui of Chin, the forces of restoration headed by Lord Chien counter-attacked to settle scores, and "accused Lord Shang of attempting rebellion."<sup>26</sup> In 338 B.C. the slave-owning aristocrats killed Shang Yang by the savage method of "dismemberment by chariots."

After Shang Yang's death, the adverse current of restoration dominated Chin for a time. Prince Hui followed a political line entirely different from Shang Yang's, rejecting the Legalists and relying on the old aristocracy. The prince's brother-in-law, Wei Jan, became an "elder statesman" serving him and the two succeeding Chin rulers. Econom-

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<sup>26</sup> *Historical Records.*

ically, Wei Jan was "richer than the ruling house." Politically his "power covered the entire state of Chin."<sup>27</sup> He persecuted the Legalists mercilessly and branded all the counsellors of the landlord class coming from the states of Han, Chao and Wei as persons "merely making trouble in the state."<sup>28</sup> All this fully revealed the reactionary class nature of slave-owning aristocracy.

At the same time an adverse current against the Legalist School also arose in the states of China's central plain. Shang Yang's reform had shaken the economic base of the slave-owning class to its foundations, striking terror and fear into the slave-owners of all the states. They regarded Chin as a "state of wolves and tigers" which "knew not propriety and righteousness" and "preferred benefits at the expense of honesty."<sup>29</sup> Mencius (390-305 B.C.), of the Confucian School, was in the van of the attack on the Legalists. The Confucianism of the time represented an extremely reactionary ideological trend and school of thought. Its founder Confucius had himself been a diehard spokesman of the declining slave-owning class, whose whole life had been spent in wandering everywhere to uphold the rule of slavery.

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<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> *Sayings of the Warring States.*

Inheriting Confucius' reactionary cause, Mencius openly opposed the abolition of the hereditary privileges of slave-owning aristocracy and clamoured that their interests should not be encroached on. He called for maintenance of the system of "hereditary officials" and "hereditary emoluments,"<sup>30</sup> asserting that "the administration of government is not difficult; it lies in not offending the great families."<sup>31</sup> Just as Confucius had killed Shaocheng Mao who advocated social reform, so Mencius called for the suppression of the Legalists, slandering them as "robbers of the people."<sup>32</sup> Shang Yang by his "elimination of the paths between the fields"<sup>33</sup> and "land boundaries"<sup>34</sup> had abolished land ownership by the slave-holders. Mencius declared far and wide that "benevolent rule must begin with the restoration of land boundaries"<sup>35</sup> in a vain effort to restore the already disintegrating land system of nine squares (*ching tien*). Shang Yang advocated the policy of "farming and war," encouraging the emerging landlord class to advance their social position by "reclamation of land and

<sup>30</sup> Mencius, "Liang Hui Wang, Part II."

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, "Li Lou, Part I."

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, "Kao Tzu, Part II."

<sup>33</sup> *Historical Records*.

<sup>34</sup> *A General Chronological History*.

<sup>35</sup> Mencius, "Teng Wen Kung, Part I."

conquest of enemies."<sup>36</sup> Mencius preached the theory of "assured livelihood" and said, "The Way of the people is this: If their livelihood is assured, their minds will be stable."<sup>37</sup> He held that "those who enclose grassy commons"<sup>38</sup> should be punished. Shang Yang stood for "rule by law," while Mencius preached the "Kingly Way" and "benevolence and righteousness." Mencius' political and economic stand was a reaction to Shang Yang's reform. It completely suited the needs of the aristocratic slave-owners in their pursuit of restoration.

But the inevitable replacement of slavery by feudalism was a law of historical development independent of man's will. All the activities for restoration by reactionaries in and outside the state of Chin could not change this over-all trend. Han Fei (280-233 B.C.) said: "After the deaths of Prince Hsiao and Shang Yang and during the reign of Prince Hui the new law still prevailed over the state of Chin."<sup>39</sup> This was well stated. After the abolition of the nine-squares land system in Chin, the tide of the establishment and development of feudal private land ownership became irreversible. According to records, "Prince Hui of Chin annexed

<sup>36</sup> *A General Chronological History*.

<sup>37</sup> Mencius, "Teng Wen Kung, Part I."

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, "Li Lou, Part I."

<sup>39</sup> *Han Fei Tzu*.



the central part of the state of Pa. . . . Its prince paid Chin a tribute of 2,016 coins every year and an additional tribute of 1,800 coins every three years."<sup>40</sup> This was a typical example of exploitation by feudal taxation. During the reign of Prince Chao, agriculture flourished not only in the Kuan-chung area (roughly the present Shensi Province) of Chin but even in its outlying Shu area (present-day western Szechuan) which became known as a "heaven-endowed place" with "vast fertile land."<sup>41</sup> All this showed that the breaking of the fetters of the old system of land ownership of the slaveholders inevitably brought prosperity to the new, landlord economy.

With the further advances of this new type of economy, the landlord class became increasingly dissatisfied with their lack of political power and strove to establish a form of rule corresponding to the economic base. Their struggle against slave-owning aristocracy entered a new stage. If we say that during Shang Yang's reform it revolved mainly around land ownership, then with the basic solution of this question the struggle between the two classes gradually came to focus on political power.

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<sup>40</sup> *History of the Later Han Dynasty.*

<sup>41</sup> *Hua Yang Kuo Chih.*

During the reign of Prince Chao of Chin (306-251 B.C.), the lion's share of the power had fallen into the hands of a few persons like Wei Jan, and some "private houses were richer than the ruling house."<sup>42</sup> To recapture his lost power, Prince Chao began to find a common language with the rising landlord class. Gradually he inclined to the Legalist School and came to the unequivocal view that "Confucian scholars could not bring any benefits to a state."<sup>43</sup> Once, when Prince Chao became ill, some slave-owning aristocrats offered beef as a sacrifice in prayers for his health. This was a deliberate violation of the new law. Prince Chao considered that "if the new law was not enforced, it would lead to disorder or extinction of the state."<sup>44</sup> So he ordered the offenders to be punished, imposing a fine of two helmets and suits of mail on each of them.

It was in this situation that Fan Chu, a noted representative of the Legalist School, came to Chin from the state of Wei. In his memorial to Prince Chao, he said: "Your humble subject has heard that when a wise ruler is governing, he must reward those who render meritorious service and

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<sup>42</sup> *Historical Records.*

<sup>43</sup> *Hsun Tzu.*

<sup>44</sup> *Han Fei Tzu.*

appoint the capable to official posts. Those who work hard get bigger emoluments, those who render more meritorious service enjoy superior rank, and those who can govern a larger number of people become higher officials.”<sup>45</sup>

In diametrical opposition to the concept of the ruler sharing power with the aristocrats, as advocated by the Confucianists, Fan Chu advanced the Legalist concept of establishing a centralized feudal state. He inherited and developed Shang Yang’s idea that “those who have made merits should win high honours and those who are wealthy but do nothing for the state should not gain a popular reputation.”<sup>46</sup> Fan Chu opposed the system of hereditary officials and hereditary emoluments. He advised Prince Chao: “A wise ruler never allows any princely households to take presumptuous actions on their own.”<sup>47</sup> That is to say, only by strengthening centralized authority could a ruler’s absolute position be ensured. On the question of wiping out the other warring states, Fan Chu criticized the policy of “attacking the distant states and keeping friendly relations with nearby states,” advocated by the slave-owning aristocrats headed by Wei Jan for the protection

<sup>45</sup> *Historical Records.*

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

of their own hereditary privileges. Instead he put forward the policy of “keeping friendly relations with distant states and attacking nearby ones.”<sup>48</sup> Prince Chao approved Fan Chu’s line and appointed him “guest minister counselling on military affairs.”<sup>49</sup>

With Fan Chu in his service, Prince Chao won victory after victory in the wars he waged to unify China, and this strengthened the position of the landlord class which he represented. On this basis, the prince took a further step “to strengthen the power of the ruler and to weaken the position of the aristocrats”<sup>50</sup> by expelling Wei Jan and a handful of other old aristocrats from Chin and making Fan Chu prime minister. Thereafter, the rising landlord class regained its supremacy in the political structure of the Chin state.

Although Fan Chu had become prime minister, he was actually sitting on a volcano that could erupt at any time. The influence of the old aristocrats was still quite powerful in Chin. Against such a background of class struggle, Fan Chu wavered and “asked to return the seal of prime minister because of illness”<sup>51</sup> in 256 B.C. His successor

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

Tsai Tse stayed in office only for some months, then voluntarily resigned for fear of attacks by the aristocratic slave-owning clique. That Fan Chu and Tsai Tse stepped down in this way showed that they dared not carry the cause of reform through to the end, because they wanted to protect their lives and their families. It was also a profound indication that after the landlord class seized political power in the state of Chin, a grave struggle continued between restoration and counter-restoration.

## II

In these prolonged, tortuous and repeated struggles between the landlord class and slave-owning aristocracy, Chin Shih Huang carried on the work of Shang Yang and Fan Chu and became the powerful emperor who accomplished the unification of China under feudal rule.

The struggle to establish the dictatorship of the landlord class developed to a new stage after Chin Shih Huang's accession to power. He took two steps of strategic significance. The first, the elimination of the clique headed by Lu Pu-wei (?-235 B.C.), ensured victory in the war of unification and the founding of the Chin Dynasty. The

second, "burning books and burying Confucian scholars," was a revolutionary measure that consolidated the political power of the landlord class. These two historic events constituted the continuation of the protracted struggle between the rising landlord class and the declining slave-owning aristocracy, and of the struggle between restoration and counter-restoration in the state of Chin which had gone on for 150 years since Shang Yang's reform.

Lu Pu-wei was a representative not of the landlord class but of slave-owning aristocracy. Towards the end of the Warring States Period, the prime ministers of Chi, Chu and the rest of the six states other than Chin were all members of aristocratic families belonging to the respective ruling houses. This was true of such persons as Tien Chi, Tien Ying and Tien Wen of Chi, Tzu-lan and Huang Hsieh of Chu and Chao Sheng of Chao. The state of Chin was exceptional in its employment of many men who had come as "guests" — that is, fled there because they could not remain in the other six states. These were intellectuals of the landlord class, including Fan Chu, Tsai Tse and Li Szu (?-208 B.C.). At that time slave-owners operating in handicraft production and commerce were still powerful in Chin, and constituted the most important social basis for the restorationist

activities of the old aristocrats. According to Szu-ma Chien's *Historical Records*, Wu Lo, a widow called Ching in the Pa area, and the House of Chuo in the Shu area each had 1,000 slaves and were "rich as rulers."

The best known representative of this social force was Lu Pu-wei. He was a "big merchant of Yangchai" (now Yuhsien County in Honan Province) possessing 10,000 slaves and "fabulous wealth." Through political juggling, this big slave-owner had become prime minister to Prince Chuanghsiang, Chin Shih Huang's father. His rise to power had the support of the clique of aristocratic slave-owners in the state of Chin and was the outcome of their restorationist activities.

After assuming power in Chin, Lu vigorously promoted a reactionary political line for the purpose of restoring slavery. In the economic sphere, he bitterly opposed Chin's traditional policy of "strengthening the fundamental (agriculture) and weakening the trivial (trade)," contending nonsensically that "filial piety" and "good character," and not "planting and cultivation," should be regarded as "fundamental."<sup>52</sup> This was a vain attempt to defend the interests of the slave-owning class and sabotage the economic base of the landlord class —

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<sup>52</sup> *Lu's Historical Records*.

the feudal agricultural economy. In the field of culture and ideology, Lu recruited a group of intellectuals dissatisfied with the new system to compile a book, *Lu's Historical Records*. Thus he tried to oppose and supplant the thought of the Legalist School that had traditionally dominated the state of Chin.

This book's appearance reflected a new trend in the class struggle and in the polemics between the Confucian and Legalist schools. At that time, near the end of the Warring States Period, the forces of the moribund slave-owning class were declining, so the position of the Confucian School represented by Confucius and Mencius had likewise become shaky and was disintegrating. On the other hand, the steadily rising landlord class produced such outstanding representatives of the Legalist School as Hsun Tzu and Han Fei. Therefore, it was impossible to openly raise the banner of the Confucian School in the state of Chin. In such a situation, Lu Pu-wei and his ilk could only resort to eclecticism and peddle their sinister Confucian goods under the label of a "miscellaneous school."

Lu's book pretended to have assimilated the doctrines of all schools of thought, but it was Confucian at its core, with some Taoist ideas pulled in. The Confucians preached that the old order under the rule of slavery should not be changed; the

Taoists preached that it was unnecessary and impossible to establish the new order of feudalism. The two used different phraseology, but their common essence was the effort to uphold the rule of the declining old slave-owning aristocracy. *Lu's Historical Records* was a hodgepodge of every kind of slave-owner class ideology. It propagated the "benevolence" and "righteousness" of the Confucian School and mixed in such Taoist ideas as governing by non-action. Its basic aim was retrogression, a return to the old order and restoration of the slave system as advocated by the Confucian School.

A serious struggle against the clique of aristocratic slave-owners headed by Lu Pu-wei faced Chin Shih Huang immediately upon his accession as Prince of Chin. As chief representative of the rising landlord class, he naturally found in Han Fei's Legalist thinking an ideological weapon against restoration. Both Han Fei and Li Szu were disciples of Hsun Tzu (313-238 B.C.). It was recorded that when Chin Shih Huang read Han Fei's writings, he exclaimed: "If I could see the author and be in his company, I would have no regrets when I die!"<sup>53</sup> The year after he took over power, Chin Shih Huang dismissed Lu Pu-wei, thereby

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<sup>53</sup> *Historical Records*.

acting in conformity with Han Fei's principle that "high officials are not exempt from punishment for crimes, while the common people are not denied rewards for good deeds"<sup>54</sup> and the policy advocated by Han Fei that "prime ministers must be drawn from among local officials and brave generals from the ranks."<sup>55</sup>

After his dismissal, Lu Pu-wei refused to repent; instead he continued to collude secretly with the old aristocrats of the six states other than Chin and plotted rebellion in Chin itself. In 235 B.C. when his plot was exposed, he committed suicide. The elimination of Lu's influence marked the further consolidation of the landlord-class rule in the state of Chin. Fourteen years later, in 221 B.C. Chin Shih Huang unified the whole of China and founded the centralized feudal empire. This was a big victory for the rising landlord class and the Legalist ideology. It marked the end of slave society and the beginning of feudal society in China.

What led to the "burning of books and burying of Confucian scholars" was the debate over whether to uphold the centralized system of prefectures and counties or to restore the principality system under slave society. It was a fundamental

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<sup>54</sup> *Han Fei Tzu*.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

question that concerned the character of the state system and political power. Representing the interests of slave-owning aristocracy on this question were a group of diehard Confucian scholars.

After the founding of the Chin Dynasty, the political and economic power of slave-owning aristocrats was in a virtual state of collapse. But they still had considerable influence in ideology because of the many Confucian scholars who had infiltrated the government and its cultural institutions. History records that many of the seventy court academicians were Confucians and in the prefectures, too, there were famous Confucian scholars like Kung Fu, Chang Erh and Chen Yu. Some were dissatisfied with the new system and provoked a new debate on which way the Chin Dynasty should go.

First to speak out in this debate was the chief minister, Wang Wan. Taking the stand of slave-owning aristocrats, he proposed the restoration of the principality system. The minister of justice Li Szu took the stand of the Legalist School and firmly opposed such retrogression. If the principality system were restored, he pointed out, the princes "would attack each other as foes"<sup>56</sup> and the division and chaotic warfare of slave society would

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<sup>56</sup> *Historical Records.*

be revived. After summing up the historical experience of the struggle between restoration and counter-restoration in the state of Chin, Chin Shih Huang approved Li Szu's view that unification should be preserved and division opposed. He said, "The country suffered from incessant strife because there were principalities." He also pointed out: "To re-establish the states soon after unification will bring more wars." He resolutely adopted the system of prefectures and counties, "dividing the country into thirty-six prefectures"<sup>57</sup> administered by centrally appointed officials. Thus, Chin Shih Huang set up the centralized feudal empire.

But no overthrown class withdraws from the stage of history of its own accord. Through their agents in the Chin Dynasty court, the slave-owning aristocrats continued to stir up opinion against the system of prefectures and counties. At a banquet in Hsienyang Palace in 213 B.C., Chunyu Yueh, a court academician who took the Confucian stand, came out with the statement: "Never have I heard of a state that did not take the past as its teacher being able to last long."<sup>58</sup> His open advocacy of restoration of the slave system of the dynasties of

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<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

Yin (around 16th-11th centuries B.C.) and Chou (around 11th century-221 B.C.) touched off a new debate in the court.

In this controversy Li Szu firmly refuted the Confucian School's fallacy of "using the ancient to oppose the present." He stressed that "no dynasty took over the political system of its predecessor"<sup>59</sup> and that retrogression was a blind alley. "The reason these scholars take the past, not the present, as their teacher," he said, "is to slander the present."<sup>60</sup> Since they were creating public opinion for restoration, he demanded that they be suppressed. The Confucians, he pointed out, paraded their learning, "use the standards of their school to find fault with orders issued by the government, refute these orders in their hearts while in office and openly criticize them when out in public."<sup>61</sup> If this continued, it would inevitably threaten the stability of the political power of the landlord class. Li Szu therefore called for exercising the dictatorship of the landlord class over the slave-owners in the ideological and cultural spheres. Approving his proposals, Chin Shih Huang ordered the confiscation of the "Confucian classics

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<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

and works of other prohibited schools," forbade "preaching the ancient to the detriment of the present," and laid down that "a distinction should be made between right and wrong so as to establish which school is to be revered."<sup>62</sup>

Facing their doom, the reactionary slave-owning aristocracy mounted a last-ditch struggle. With two men named Lu and Hou as their representatives, the Confucian scholars frantically vilified "rule by law" as "rejoicing in authority by punishments and killing," attacked the centralized state as the outcome of Chin Shih Huang's "self-centred arrogance" and "greed for power,"<sup>63</sup> fanned discontent everywhere and spread rumours to confuse the people. It was to consolidate the newly established dictatorship of the feudal landlord class that Chin Shih Huang suppressed the reactionary Confucian scholars who were working actively to restore the slave system and had 460 of them buried alive in Hsienyang.

The state machine has always been an instrument with which one class oppresses another. "Burning books and burying Confucian scholars" was a necessary measure of dictatorship by the landlord class to consolidate the new political

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<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

power of the time. Precisely as Chairman Mao has pointed out: **“To overthrow a political power, it is always necessary first of all to create public opinion, to do work in the ideological sphere. This is true for the revolutionary class as well as for the counter-revolutionary class.”**

Much earlier, in the reign of Prince Hsiao of the state of Chin, Shang Yang had proposed “burning Confucian classics to bring laws and orders into prominence”<sup>64</sup> and thus consolidate the fruits of reform. The Legalist Han Fei in debate with the Confucians made the proposal, “Disband that clique.”<sup>65</sup> But because the earlier struggles were mainly in the political and economic fields, and the contradictions and struggles in the ideological field had not assumed the sharpness and prominence they did later under Chin Shih Huang, the previous princes of Chin had not acted firmly to suppress Confucianism by law. Chin Shih Huang enforced the policy of “burning books and burying Confucian scholars” only after summing up the experience of repeated struggles between restoration and counter-restoration in the course of founding the Chin Dynasty, and gradually coming to understand why “the new sovereign cannot be

<sup>64</sup> Han Fei Tzu.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*

revered if the six Confucian classics are not burned.”<sup>66</sup>

From the above it can be seen that this step was not a result of Chin Shih Huang’s “cruelty,” but was an inevitable development of the contemporary class struggle. History records, in fact, that he “cherished literature more than other rulers” and was not “bent on slaughtering the literati.” It also records that at least eight of the seventy court academicians in the Chin Dynasty were not buried. Some of the scholars, even though they held dissenting political views, could still “leisurely devote themselves to writing”<sup>67</sup> because they did not take part in conspiracies.

However, those scholars who stubbornly stuck to the stand of the declining slave-owning class were different from the general run of Confucians. They acted secretly to stir up trouble and were extremely hostile to the new feudal power. They were the extreme Right wing of the Confucian scholars. Without suppressing them, the economic position and state power of the rising landlord class could not have been consolidated, and all China

<sup>66</sup> Chang Tai-yen, *Chin Hsien Chi*. The six Confucian classics are: *The Book of Odes*, *The Book of Documents*, *The Book of Rites*, *The Book of Change*, *The Spring and Autumn Annals* and *The Book of Music*.

<sup>67</sup> Chang Tai-yen, *Chin Hsien Chi*.



would have been thrown back into slave society. Therefore, "burning books and burying Confucian scholars" was a class measure of self-defence which Chin Shih Huang was compelled to adopt in the face of the attacks by the slave-owning aristocracy. It was also a historically revolutionary act in defence of the new relations of production.

Progressive thinkers in Chinese history have generally hailed this revolutionary act of strengthening the unification of China. Li Po (A.D. 701-762) wrote in one of his poems: "The Chin emperor conquered the whole of China, what a mighty deed!" Li Chih, a Confucian rebel in the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), praised Chin Shih Huang as "the best emperor that ever lived in ancient times."<sup>68</sup> The bourgeois revolutionary Chang Tai-yen stressed that Chin Shih Huang "neither passed over ordinary men when giving rewards nor shielded his intimates when enforcing punishment" and "would not kill a single official without evidence of guilt." Chang Tai-yen held the opinion that had there been worthy successors to the Chin Dynasty throne, they "would have surpassed the sage emperors and wise kings of more ancient

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<sup>68</sup> *Chang Shu.*

times."<sup>69</sup> China's reactionaries of all periods down to the agents of the landlord and capitalist classes and of imperialism, revisionism and reaction in our own day, such as Liu Shao-chi and Lin Piao, have all damned Chin Shih Huang and extolled the Confucians. Historical facts prove that the issue of how to appraise Chin Shih Huang and Confucius has been a constant theme of prolonged class struggle in the field of ideology.

### III

Chairman Mao has pointed out: **"In past history, before they won state power and for some time afterwards, the slave-owning class, the feudal landlord class and the bourgeoisie were vigorous, revolutionary and progressive; they were real tigers. But with the lapse of time, because their opposites — the slave class, the peasant class and the proletariat — grew in strength step by step, struggled against them more and more fiercely, these ruling classes changed step by step into the reverse, changed into reactionaries, changed into backward people, changed into paper tigers. And eventually they were overthrown, or will be overthrown, by the people."** The change by the landlord-class rulers

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<sup>69</sup> *Chin Cheng Chi.*

from reverence for the Legalist School and opposition to the Confucian School to reverence for the Confucians and opposition to the Legalists conformed with the course of historical transformation in which the landlord class, as pointed out by Chairman Mao, changed from revolutionary to reactionary and from advanced to backward.

The Chin Dynasty was the first in Chinese history to be founded by the landlord class. After seizing political power, this exploiting class cruelly oppressed and squeezed the peasants, intensifying its class contradiction with the peasantry. The revolt led by Chen Sheng and Wu Kuang in 209 B.C. finally precipitated the first great peasant uprising in China's history, which propelled the progress of history and displayed the tremendous strength of the oppressed and the exploited masses as creators of history. Precisely as Liu Tsung-yuan (773-819) pointed out in his "A Dissertation on the System of Principalities": the fall of Chin "should be attributed to the people's discontent and not to the system of prefectures and counties." In the process of the founding of the next dynasty, the Han, there were again debates between the advocates of advance to feudalism and those of reversion to the slave system. A Confucian scholar Li Yi-chi advised Liu Pang, founder of the Han Dynasty, to re-establish the system of principalities and even

made ready the princely seals. Thanks to objections by his counsellor Chang Liang, Liu Pang ultimately came to see that retrogression would be a blind alley. He angrily cursed Li Yi-chi, saying: "You worthless scholar, you almost ruined my affairs of state!"<sup>70</sup>

The Han Dynasty took over the system established by the Chin. In the reign of Emperor Wu Ti (140-87 B.C.), the rebellion of Wu, Chu and five other states was crushed and the critical time for a restoration of slavery passed. The contradictions between the landlord class and the peasantry, which had existed from the beginnings of these two classes, rose to a position of prime importance. The landlord class had gradually changed from a real tiger to a paper tiger, losing the vigour and revolutionary character it had possessed while still a progressive class. In these historical circumstances, the Confucian School's hypocritical and conservative exhortations to the people to be content with their lot were more beneficial to feudal rule than the Legalists' open advocacy of the landlord-class dictatorship and of reform. This gave rise to the measure of "honouring only the doctrines of Confucius and banning all other schools" taken by the landlord class. From then

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<sup>70</sup> *Historical Records.*

on, the remoulded Confucian ideology was turned to the service of this new master, and Confucianism became the ruling ideology of later feudal society.

Summarizing the struggles between restoration and counter-restoration in the course of the founding of the Chin Dynasty, we can see that the replacement of one social system by another is a tortuous process, full of bloodshed and sacrifices and with possibilities of temporary retrogression and partial restoration. Nonetheless, the law of historical development is irresistible and the new social system eventually replaces the old. Though Chin Shih Huang died a long time ago, his system continued through the entire period of feudal society. The Tang Dynasty (618-907) materialist thinker Liu Tsung-yuan said that ever since the Han Dynasty this system had proved to be superior to the principality system and would remain so in a hundred generations to come.<sup>71</sup> The materialist thinker Wang Fu-chih, in the Ming Dynasty, pointed out: "The system of prefectures and counties has lasted for 2,000 years without change."<sup>72</sup> These comments tally with the historical facts.

<sup>71</sup> "A Dissertation on the System of Principalities."

<sup>72</sup> *On Reading General History.*

**Were Nature sentient, she too would pass from  
youth to age,  
But in man's world seas change into mulberry  
fields.<sup>73</sup>**

No reactionary force can prevent history from advancing! Under the leadership of our great leader Chairman Mao, the Chinese people have now founded the socialist, new China under the dictatorship of the proletariat. We are continuing with socialist revolution and construction and striving to consolidate the dictatorship of the proletariat and develop the cause of socialism. This too cannot be prevented by any reactionary force. **"The socialist system will eventually replace the capitalist system; this is an objective law independent of man's will."**<sup>74</sup> Studying the historical experience of class struggle strengthens our belief in this truth. Although Chin Shih Huang has been denounced by reactionaries, past and present, at home and abroad, including the Soviet revisionists and Lin Piao and his like, he had his historical merits. He was an expert at stressing the present

<sup>73</sup> From Mao Tsetung's poem "The Capture of Nanking by the People's Liberation Army," written in April 1949.

<sup>74</sup> Mao Tsetung, "Speech at the Meeting of the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R. in Celebration of the 40th Anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution."

over the past, thorough and effective in putting the thought of the Legalist School into practice, and the statesman of the landlord class who established and defended the unification of China. This is the conclusion of history.

*Yang Jung-kuo*

## The Struggle of Materialism Against Idealist Apriorism During the Western and Eastern Han Dynasties

Lenin described idealism as “**a weapon in the hands of the reactionaries, a vehicle of reaction.**”<sup>1</sup> Throughout history, the apriorism advocated by the idealist philosophers has been the “weapon” and “vehicle” of reactionary ruling classes for deceiving and benumbing the people in order to consolidate their own reactionary rule.

Should a philosopher advocate self-cultivation behind closed doors for meditation on the so-called inborn goodness of man’s nature and principles of Heaven? Or should he affirm the need for bringing one’s sense organs into contact with external things in order to know those things? Throughout

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<sup>1</sup> “Those Who Would Liquidate Us.”

the history of Chinese philosophy, this question has been a prominent one in the struggle between the two lines in philosophy, between idealist apriorism and the materialist theory of knowledge. In the period before the Chin Dynasty (221-207 B.C.) the two-line struggle in philosophy was very sharp and it continued on into the succeeding Western Han (206 B.C.-A.D. 23) and Eastern Han (25-220) dynasties.

In the time of these "two Hans" feudal society and feudal relations of production were already established, but vestiges of the slave system remained. The families with hereditary influence and power were, by and large, descendants of the slave-owning aristocratic rulers of the states in the Spring and Autumn Period (770-476 B.C.) and the Warring States Period (475-221 B.C.). They still compelled large numbers of slaves to engage in handicrafts and trade for their enrichment, and wielded considerable influence. The *History of the Han Dynasty*, in its chapter on geography, described their unruliness and tyranny: "In Taiyuan and Shangtang, many sons and grandsons of aristocratic families of the Tsin state used deceit and treachery against one another, each bragging about his own fame and exploits." The feudal ruling class of the Han Dynasty had contradictions

with these powerful old families and adopted certain measures to restrain them. But at the same time, because the two sections of the exploiting class had interests in common, they colluded in ruthlessly exploiting and oppressing the working people. The principal contradiction in that society was between the feudal landlords and the powerful old families on the one hand and the masses of people on the other.

In the reign of Emperor Wu Ti (140-87 B.C.) the division of the country into separate principalities which had still existed at the beginning of the Han Dynasty came to an end and, on the surface of things, the centralized feudal monarchy seemed to have been stabilized further. The working people, however, continued to be cruelly oppressed; multitudes fled their homes, vast numbers died, and many rose in revolt. In 99 B.C. the peasant armed uprising led by Hsu Pei and others broke out in Shantung Province and its neighbouring areas. Capturing cities, seizing arms, freeing prisoners and overthrowing and killing officials, this revolt shook the entire feudal ruling class.

It was to meet the need of the feudal ruling class of the time for the consolidation of its centralized rule that Tung Chung-shu's reactionary philosophical theories came into being.

### Tung Chung-shu and the Apriorism of "Comprehensive Discussions in White Tiger Hall"

Tung Chung-shu (179-104 B.C.) saw that although the doctrines of Confucius and Mencius in the hands of the Confucian School prior to the Chin Dynasty had been apologies for the disintegrating slave-owning aristocracy, with certain modifications they could be fully turned to the service of the feudal ruling class as well. Hence he proposed that the activities of all other schools of thought be banned — "Honour only the doctrine of Confucius and ban all other schools." Emperor Wu Ti of the Han Dynasty accepted his proposal in order to consolidate the centralized feudal rule through strengthening ideological control.

In his memorial to Wu Ti, entitled "Recommend Competent Officials," and his book *Luxuriant Dew from the "Spring and Autumn Annals,"* Tung Chung-shu propagated the mystic Yin-Yang Theory of Five Elements (wood, fire, earth, metal and water), describing everything in the world including the rule of the feudal monarchy as having been arranged by Heaven with a definite purpose. Thus, he linked the authority of God in Heaven with that of the monarch on the earth, and developed Mencius' idea concerning "the merging of Heaven and man into one" to provide the theoret-

ical basis for the concept, "The authority of the monarch is the mandate of Heaven." To firmly establish the feudal order he propounded the "three guidances," namely, that of the ruler over the subject, the father over the son and the husband over the wife. All these were supposed to be arranged by "Heaven" and immutable. They became the sacred and inviolable moral code of China's feudal society for two thousand years.

Chairman Mao points out: **"These four authorities — political, clan, religious and masculine — are the embodiment of the whole feudal-patriarchal system and ideology, and are the four thick ropes binding the Chinese people, particularly the peasants."**<sup>2</sup>

Tung Chung-shu preached *a priori* idealism in order to create a basis for his reactionary political theory in the realm of the theory of knowledge.

Elaborating the *a priori* doctrines of Confucius and Mencius, he divided human nature into three kinds: "the nature of the sage, the nature of the labourer and the nature of the intermediate man." Only the last could gradually become good through education and study. The "nature of the sage" comprised "loyalty, sincerity and universal love,

<sup>2</sup> "Report on an Investigation of the Peasant Movement in Hunan," *Selected Works*, Eng. ed., FLP, Peking, 1967, Vol. I, p. 44.

honesty and observance of propriety”<sup>3</sup> and was innately good. The “nature of the labourer” was that of the enslaved working people, who were regarded as born ignorant and able only to accept rule by the “sage.” Confucius himself had abused these “lowly people” as mean, insignificant and negligible.<sup>4</sup>

Tung Chung-shu’s theory of “three kinds of nature” was in fact a replica of Confucian balderdash such as that “the highest are the wise and the lowest are the stupid,”<sup>5</sup> and “to those whose talents are above mediocrity, the highest subjects may be announced; to those who are below mediocrity the highest subjects may not be announced.”<sup>6</sup> In the eyes of Tung Chung-shu and his like the “sage” was born good while the “labourer” was born base; the first was absolutely wise, the second absolutely stupid. Therefore the first should sit high as the ruler, while the second could only be oppressed and enslaved. These things were regarded as in-born, predestined and absolutely unchangeable. Such were the arguments seeking to prove by apriorism that the arrangements of the feudal rule were absolutely “rational.”

<sup>3</sup> *Luxuriant Dew from the “Spring and Autumn Annals.”*

<sup>4</sup> *Analects*, “Tzu Lu.”

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, “Yang Huo.”

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, “Yung Yeh.”

The peasant uprising in the last years of the Western Han Dynasty virtually shattered feudal rule and struck hard at the powerful old families. However, Liu Hsiu (Emperor Kuang Wu), a representative of the landlord class, seized the fruits of victory of the peasant uprising and established rule of Eastern Han. In A.D. 79, in the reign of Emperor Chang Ti, a meeting for the further consolidation of centralized feudal rule was held in White Tiger Hall. There the Confucian scholars were called together to discuss how to interpret the classics. They gave wide currency to Tung Chung-shu’s mystic theory of “the merging of Heaven and man into one” and the superstitious Yin-Yang Theory of the Five Elements — all forms of idealist apriorism. The results of this discussion were compiled by Pan Ku (A.D. 32-92) into the book *Comprehensive Discussions in White Tiger Hall*.

This book described a sage as one to whom nothing about the Way was unknown and who alone could possess rich *a priori* knowledge, foresee the course of future events and communicate with Heaven. Hence the emperor, the highest feudal ruler, had necessarily to be a sage, for “none but a sage could have the mandate of Heaven” and be the “Son of Heaven.” Only such a sage could have abundant *a priori* knowledge and know “the manifest from the minute.” The idealist phrase

“seeing the minute, knowing the manifest” meant that any problem that began to stir a man’s heart, though it might be hidden and minute, would be seen to be a big one later. Tzu Ssu (Confucius’ grandson and the teacher of Mencius’ teacher) summed it up thus: “There is nothing more visible than what is secret, and nothing more manifest than what is minute. Therefore the superior man is watchful over himself, when he is alone.”<sup>7</sup> From this flowed the fallacy that a man did not need to bring his sense organs into contact with the external world, but only to cultivate himself behind closed doors and experience in his heart the *a priori* knowledge and *a priori* ethical standards bestowed by God, with which he could regulate feudal society. This was a further elaboration of Tung Chung-shu’s idea that the “three guides of the Kingly Way originate from Heaven.” It preached the view that man’s knowledge began from subjective concepts and proceeded from the subjective to the objective. It was out-and-out idealist apriorism.

In *Comprehensive Discussions in White Tiger Hall* the enslaved people were presented as devoid of *a priori* knowledge, “simple in nature,” ignorant of the Way of “benevolence,” fit only to toil in

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<sup>7</sup> *Doctrine of the Mean.*

production and be enslaved by the ruling class. If the working people rose in revolt, they were to be made to “return to the right Way.” Accordingly, the “rites” were held to be formulated exclusively for the feudal ruling class endowed with *a priori* knowledge, while punishments were designed for the exploited classes who lacked knowledge. This was a nakedly absurd theory of defence of feudal rule.

### **Wang Chung's Refutation of Apriorism**

The materialist philosophers of the time, represented by Wang Chung, carried out vigorous and all-sided criticism of the idealist apriorism preached by Tung Chung-shu and the book *Comprehensive Discussions in White Tiger Hall*.

Wang Chung (around A.D. 27-97) came from a plebian family engaged in farming and trade, had contacts with the lower social strata and had been oppressed by the powerful old families. Hence he sympathized with the oppressed and exploited working people. He saw that the reason the peasants were rising in revolt was that “food-grain was lacking or exhausted, and they could not bear the cold and hunger,” and stated that “insufficiency was the cause of the conflict.” He made friends



with persons from social strata beneath his own and could take a rather practical approach to problems. Wang Chung's famous book *Lun Heng* (*Discourses Weighed in the Balance*) pointedly criticized the idealist philosophy spread by Tung Chung-shu. In that period the Han rulers were energetically promoting veneration for Confucius and Mencius. Particularly noteworthy is the fact that Wang Chung in his later years, when the supreme feudal ruler was convening the meeting in White Tiger Hall, possessed the courage to write the chapters "Questioning Confucius" and "Stinging Mencius" in the book *Lun Heng*. There he pointed out sharply that many words and deeds of Confucius and Mencius were mutually contradictory, inconsistent with the facts and some were not correct. Wang Chung had the fearless spirit of a materialist.

In his criticism of the idealist apriorism of Confucius and Mencius as propagated by Tung Chung-shu and others, Wang Chung first pointed out that Tung's idea of the "absolute goodness" of human nature was wrong and "not in accord with reality." He also criticized as "untrue" Mencius' theory that "man's nature at birth is good." Wang Chung contended that a man's nature, whether good or bad, is gradually shaped after birth. He compared the process to the dyeing of silk. Silk dyed with

indigo turns blue; subjected to a red dye it turns red. An inexperienced child becomes good or bad just as silk changes colour under different dyes. In other words, man's nature, good or bad, is determined by his environment after birth. No one is born with knowledge and talent. These are acquired through continuous practice after birth. To refute apriorism Wang Chung took other examples from the handicrafts. He noted that in the capital of the state of Chi, where the art of embroidery had been handed down for generations, every ordinary woman had the skill. In the district of Hsiang, known for its traditional skill in silk tapestry weaving, even women who were not thought clever were good at it. Why? Because they had seen it done every day, practised it, and so become adept. This showed that knowledge and talent were not "the gift of Heaven."

Wang Chung described as sheer deception the sayings that a sage "could know what happened a thousand years ago and will happen ten thousand years later," and "understand without learning and know without asking." In real life, a being without sight, hearing and the other senses could know nothing of the external world. So, how could *a priori* knowledge exist?

In his article "Knowledge of Truth," Wang Chung declared that "the sage is not a god knowing

things before they happen” and, to prove this, cited sixteen examples.

For instance, Confucius and his disciple Yen Yuan had been harried by the people of Kuang. Confucius escaped first, followed later by Yen Yuan. Confucius said, “I thought you had been killed by the Kuang people.” If Confucius had possessed prior knowledge, he would have been aware that Yen Yuan was not killed. That he thought Yen Yuan was dead showed him to be incapable of fore-knowledge.

Another instance: Confucius did not want to see Yang Huo. But Yang Huo sent him a ham, so he had to make a visit in return. He purposely chose a time when he had heard that Yang Huo would not be at home. But on his way back, he unexpectedly met Yang Huo. If Confucius had possessed fore-knowledge, said Wang Chung, he would neither have gone to see Yang Huo then nor run into him on the way back. This again showed that Confucius could not have known things in advance.

These and the rest of the sixteen instances cited by Wang Chung proved that there was no such thing as *a priori* knowledge, even for a “sage” like Confucius. Wang Chung pointed out that, while talents may vary, anyone who wants to know something has to learn it; and whoever does not

ask will not know. There is not and never has been any such thing as “knowing what happened a thousand years ago and will happen ten thousand years later.”

Since even a “sage” like Confucius had to learn before he could know, it followed that there were no born “sages.” Man can get to know things in the external world only through study and practice after his birth.

While denying the existence of *a priori* knowledge, Wang Chung stressed that knowledge must be acquired through the senses. He further pointed out that to determine the right or wrong of things, it is not enough to rely on the sense organs but also necessary to use the brain to think — only thus can one gain a deeper knowledge of things.

Tung Chung-shu, proceeding from idealism, thought Heaven had a will, — that it was God. This Heaven with a will, this God, he held to be eternal and unchangeable. Hence, the “Way” and “Reason” produced by this will were also eternal and unchangeable. “The greatness of the Way is derived from Heaven. Heaven changes not, likewise the Way changes not.” This was a through-and-through idealist, metaphysical view. Proceeding from this reactionary view, Tung Chung-shu considered that things themselves did not change or develop and that *a priori* feudal ethics and moral

standards were likewise eternal and immutable. Wang Chung, on the contrary, held firmly to the viewpoint of change and development, citing the example that in very ancient times people had nothing to wear but that now they all wear clothes, to show that things change and develop and time advances. He criticized both Tung Chung-shu's metaphysical outlook and the view spread by conservatives from the powerful old families that "the present is not as good as the past."

A later philosopher named Wang Fu who lived in the reigns of the emperors Ho Ti and An Ti of the Eastern Han Dynasty and had frequent contacts with the outstanding scientist Chang Heng, was influenced by Wang Chung's materialism. In his *Chien Fu Lun (Discourses of the Anonymous)*, Wang Fu, too, took the viewpoint of the materialist theory of knowledge and denied the existence of *a priori* knowledge and of sages born with knowledge. He said a sage was not born with either knowledge or talent, but had to learn after birth to acquire "wide knowledge and high moral character." He took as example a wooden tool. Originally part of a tree growing in the forest, it became a useful instrument only after a carpenter made a design, then shaped the wood with axe and knife. The same was true of men. There were

no born "geniuses." A man could become useful only through tempering and learning.

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The foregoing shows that the struggle between the two ideologies in philosophy at that time was very sharp, reflecting the class struggle raging in society. An important issue was whether to adhere to the materialist theory of knowledge or to propagate idealist apriorism. The materialists maintained that all knowledge was derived from learning and experience after birth, and there was no *a priori* knowledge. They said that things were not immutable but changed and developed, that there was progress in time, that the present surpassed the past and was not retrogressive nor reactionary, and it was untrue that "the present is not as good as the past." The upholders of idealist apriorism said the opposite. They insisted on making a breach between the subjective and the objective, and spread absurdities to poison and deceive the masses. In our own day, Liu Shao-chi, Lin Piao and other similar political swindlers have done the same. They propagated idealist apriorism, spreading nonsense about "genius" and "super-genius," about "proceeding from the subjective to the objective," and so on. They did this

to pursue their criminal aim of vainly attempting to pull history back, subvert the dictatorship of the proletariat and restore capitalism. Isn't this entirely clear?

By studying the struggles of materialism against idealist apriorism in the history of philosophy, we can gain a deeper understanding of the reactionary nature of idealist apriorism, which serves reactionary ruling classes. For example, in Chinese history, the idealist apriorism of Confucius first served the collapsing slave-owner rule of his time. Later it was elaborated by Tung Chung-shu and others to become the theoretical basis for the oppression of the people by feudal rulers for over two thousand years. To learn about the struggle between the two lines in the history of Chinese philosophy will help us comprehend the importance of the class struggle in the ideological sphere.

Chairman Mao has pointed out: **“To overthrow a political power, it is always necessary first of all to create public opinion, to do work in the ideological sphere. This is true for the revolutionary class as well as for the counter-revolutionary class.”** Therefore it is of great importance, as Chairman Mao teaches us, to grasp the class struggle in the superstructure.

*Chou Yi-liang*

## Liu Tsung-yuan's "A Dissertation on the System of Principalities"

Most people commenting in the past on Chin Shih Huang, the first emperor of the Chin Dynasty (221-207 B.C.), condemned him; only a very few gave him credit for his achievements. Among these Liu Tsung-yuan (773-819) of the Tang Dynasty (618-907) gave a correct appraisal of Chin Shih Huang in his outstanding work "A Dissertation on the System of Principalities." (Henceforth called "Dissertation" for short.) It affirmed the progressive character of such Chin measures as the abolition of the principality system, the setting up of prefectures and counties and the centralization of state authority, and pointed out that they were necessary for safeguarding the unity of the empire and for consolidating the rule of the

landlord class; it thus made a correct evaluation of the historical significance of Chin Shih Huang's reforming and progressive measures. While commenting on the past, Liu Tsung-yuan also expressed his views on the contemporary political situation; in this way he made his views on history serve the need of politics.

Chin Shih Huang upheld the Legalist school of thought and opposed the doctrines of Confucius and Mencius. His aim was to prevent the restoration of the slave system which had already collapsed and to safeguard and consolidate the feudal landlord system which was progressive at that stage of social development. By adopting various measures, the Chin Dynasty destroyed the ancient system of setting up principalities in slave society which had prevailed from the time of the Western Chou Dynasty (around 11th century-700 B.C.), and founded a united, autocratic state with centralized authority. Official ranks were no longer hereditary, and all rewards and punishments were based on individual services and disservices in the interest of the feudal landlord state. After the Chin Dynasty united the whole of China, all carriages had uniform track, all writing used the same script, and all weights and measurements were standardized. Chin Shih Huang resolutely suppressed those Confucian scholars who opposed

these measures, who attempted to restore the rule of the warring states and who hoped to turn history back to the slave society of the past. He also banned the writings with which these Confucians tried to influence public opinion. Confucian classics were burnt and some Confucian scholars buried alive. Chin Shih Huang's greatest contribution as a Chinese monarch was that he was the first ruler to unify the whole of China. Of course, in a society in which feudal relations of production prevailed, the unity of the empire could only be limited. Nevertheless, his achievement as the first ruler in Chinese history to unify all of China should not be ignored. In the early period after the rising landlord class assumed power, socio-economic development required the unification of the whole country and the establishment of a centralized state authority. Chin Shih Huang responded to this situation, drastically curtailed the influence of those forces which were moribund, and created a united empire under centralized authority. He set up prefectures and counties, and their heads were appointed by the central government to cover the whole country. Many of these institutions created in the process of unification by the Chin Dynasty were adopted and followed by later feudal dynasties for more than two thousand years. All these measures adopted by Chin Shih

Huang involved the task of unification. In the ten years after he conquered the six other warring states, he conducted inspection tours throughout the empire and had his achievements inscribed on stone. He made these trips not for pleasure but mainly in order to further enhance the authority of the central government and to consolidate the unity of the empire. Chairman Mao has pointed out: before the feudal landlord class won state power and for some time after, they were **“vigorous, revolutionary and progressive; they were real tigers.”** Chin Shih Huang was just such a representative of the rising feudal landlord class.

Abolishing the principalities and setting up prefectures and counties were the key measures adopted by the Chin Dynasty to destroy the old institutions of the Warring States Period (475-221 B.C.) and to unify the whole country. Political thinkers had argued ever since about the relative merits and demerits of the principality system and the system of prefectures and counties. Many people attributed the basis of the contradictions within the ruling class in feudal society and the ensuing political instability to the abolition of the principalities and the adoption of the prefecture system by the Chin Dynasty. Liu Tsung-yuan's "Dissertation" was a forceful refutation of the views held by those opposing the Chin reform. He

conclusively proved the superiority of the prefecture system and gave credit to Chin Shih Huang for his reforms and progressive measures.

Liu Tsung-yuan lived at the end of the eighth and the beginning of the ninth century, more than a thousand years after the unification of China by Chin Shih Huang. He reviewed subsequent Chinese history, paid attention to historical experience and made his observations on the past from a dynamic viewpoint.

He started his essay by considering the primitive period of social development. He said that at that time there were wild jungles everywhere abounding with ferocious beasts; since men could not catch prey and devour it like beasts nor protect themselves with furs and feathers, they were unable to defend or feed themselves. This description resembled the statement of Han Fei (280-233 B.C.), a famous Legalist of the Warring States Period: "In ancient times there were few human beings and many beasts and vultures, and men were unable to cope with these beasts and vultures, insects and snakes."<sup>1</sup> This observation on ancient human society from an evolutionary viewpoint contains materialist elements and is in accordance with objective reality. The Confucians,

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<sup>1</sup> *Han Fei Tzu.*

on the other hand, claimed that ancient human society was an ideal golden age, and so society should not go forward but backward. They asserted that the present was not as good as the past, and so they advocated "following the ways of ancient kings," in other words, a return to the old order. This reactionary and idealist viewpoint was pushed by Confucius in his effort to turn history back, and it served his purpose in trying to restore the slave system and oppose the new feudal system. By observing history from a dynamic viewpoint, Liu was able to recognize that the earlier principality system was bound to be replaced by the later prefecture system, and thus he made a correct appraisal of the progressive character of Chin Shih Huang's reform.

Before proving why the ancient principality system needed to be replaced by the prefecture system, Liu first reviewed the origin of the former. He believed that in primitive times, if men were to survive, they had to "make use of other things," as Hsun Tzu (313-238 B.C.) had already pointed out. When they made use of certain tools, there would naturally be struggles for them; as these struggles persisted, they had to have some person to arbitrate between right and wrong; in this way leaders at different levels began to appear. As the struggles increased in scale, leaders in various

districts had to listen to the words of someone who commanded the greatest awe and respect; this person then became the Son of Heaven, the supreme ruler, who was the last to appear in a long process. Accordingly, since these rulers, from the Son of Heaven down to the grass-root leaders, won people's gratitude and respect for their services, their descendants were again made rulers after their deaths, and this was the origin of the hereditary principality system. Liu's conclusion was: the hereditary principality system, which existed before the Chin Dynasty and which carved the country up into many independent principalities (states), was the result, not of the wishes of particular individuals, but of the trends of the times — the objective conditions of historical development. Of course, when he spoke of these "trends," he could not see them in terms of the development of the productive forces and of irreconcilable class contradictions, but at least he realized that the ancient principality system was the result of objective trends or conditions. At that time this view was quite progressive.

There are two other points worth noting in Liu's exposition of the origin of the principality system. Hsun Tzu said that people who used carriages and horses could travel for a thousand *li*, though their feet were no better than others', and that those who

used boats could travel on rivers and streams, though they might not know how to swim. The reason was because they were good at making use of things. This was also Liu's view. But when Liu spoke of making use of things, it seems that he was not only referring to things for people's sustenance but was also including tools for production. Engels said: "**Labour begins with the making of tools.**" And "**No simian hand has ever fashioned even the crudest of stone knives.**"<sup>2</sup> When men first became different from other animals, this manifested itself in the making of tools in their manual labour. Once they started doing so, primitive men opened a new page by acquiring means with which to struggle against nature, so that they could begin to subdue and transform it. In describing how early men could neither feed nor protect themselves until they proceeded to make use of things Liu might have had some inkling of the great significance of men's making and using tools. As for the rise of the rulers of various states and of the Son of Heaven who unified the whole country, Liu believed that they were at first chosen by the people as a result of a gradual process of develop-

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<sup>2</sup> "The Part Played by Labour in the Transition from Ape to Man," Marx and Engels, *Selected Works*, Eng. ed., FLPH, Moscow, 1951, Vol. II, pp. 79 and 75.

ment. This view of course is not in accordance with the Marxist theory of the origin of the state. However, his ideas were much more progressive than the Confucian-Mencian theory of "the mandate of heaven," which aimed at consolidating and enhancing the sovereign's absolute authority. This was "the divine right of emperors" Tung Chung-shu (179-104 B.C.) had claimed in the Han Dynasty (206 B.C.-A.D. 220), namely that "the Son of Heaven was ordained by Heaven, and the princes were ordained by him,"<sup>3</sup> meaning that the emergence of a supreme ruler was due to the will of heaven. It is worth noting that during the Cultural Revolution the bourgeois careerist, conspirator and counter-revolutionary double-dealer Lin Piao called upon the revolutionary masses to act like Tung Chung-shu, and that the anti-Communist Kuomintang element and renegade Chen Po-ta hastily sang the same tune. Clearly the reason the Lin Piao anti-Party clique were fervent in their praise of Tung Chung-shu was because they wanted to use this Confucian-Mencian rubbish as their ideological weapon in trying to restore capitalism and to usurp the supreme power of the Party and state. When they upheld Confucianism, attacked the Legalists and fulsomely praised Tung Chung-shu, it exactly

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<sup>3</sup> *Luxuriant Dew from the "Spring and Autumn Annals."*



paralleled their denunciation of Chin Shih Huang. They did this to serve their criminal purpose of attacking the Party and the dictatorship of the proletariat. This we must expose and repudiate.

After discussing the origin of the principalities in ancient slave society, Liu pointed out in the "Dissertation" the superiority of the Chin measure abolishing the principality system and replacing it with the prefecture system, giving full credit to this reform. He compared the two systems and said that the fault of the Chou principality system was that the princes grew too powerful and the king of Chou could not make them obey his orders; this was like "a tail that had outgrown the body and become unwieldy." After King Ping of Chou moved the capital to the east, the king's position fell to that of a prince. "The Chou Dynasty had perished long before; there was only an empty title left hanging over the princes' heads." After Chin Shih Huang had annexed the six other states, he removed the princes, got rid of the old institutions, set up prefectures and counties and sent officers to govern them, concentrating authority in the central government. Liu praised Chin Shih Huang for his reform, saying that "he had the whole empire within his grip, and this was an advantage." Thus he made clear the significance of the unification of the empire which consolidated monarchical rule. He

then reviewed the previous thousand years, using as his criterion the strength or weakness of the feudal authority, and proved the "advantage of the Chin system" of setting up prefectures and counties and the disadvantage of the system adopted in the early Han Dynasty when princes of the imperial clan and officials who had won merit were given landholdings. He pointed out that during this period when the principality system was again adopted in certain districts, there had been several rebellions by local princes, but none by the heads of prefectures and counties. "There were rebellious principalities, but no rebellious prefectures." This proved the superiority of the Chin system. Liu said that ever since the Han Dynasty, the prefecture system had proved to be superior to the principality system and this would remain so for generations to come. Finally he commented on his own period: "When our Tang Dynasty began, prefectures were set up and magistrates appointed. This measure was well suited to our situation." So he affirmed that it was right to adopt the Chin system. Actually, though the Tang Dynasty had adopted the prefecture system, after the revolt of An Lu-shan and Shih Ssu-ming (755-763) local military governors came to power and formed many independent regimes, so that the central government's authority was very much weakened.

But Liu argued that the cause did not lie in the prefecture system but in the local armies. He pointed out that at that time "there were rebellious generals but no rebellious prefectures, therefore the system of prefectures and counties should not be changed." When Liu praised the Chin system and considered it suitable for adoption to the Tang Dynasty, he was in a sense criticizing the contemporary local warlords. He felt that if the existing government could properly control the armed forces and choose local officers, the empire could be well administered. He was against those insubordinate generals and local armies that disobeyed the central government at Changan.

Someone asked him: If the prefecture system was really superior, how was it that the Chin Dynasty perished so quickly? Liu's answer was: It was because the Chin rulers had cruelly oppressed and exploited the masses, and "those below were full of bitter complaints"; consequently, in response to a call, men formed groups, took up arms under some banner or other and speedily overthrew the Chin rule. "This was the fault of the political administration," "not the fault of the prefecture system." Again someone asked: How could he explain the fact that the Hsia (around 21st-16th centuries B.C.), Shang (around 16th-11th centuries B.C.), Chou and Han dynasties had lasted so long despite

the fact that they all had principalities; the Chin Dynasty adopted the prefecture system, yet its reign was brief. Liu scoffed at this and said: The Wei Dynasty also adopted the Han system; then the Tsin Dynasty followed the Wei; they all allotted landholdings to princes, but they did not last long either. However, the Tang Dynasty instituted a change and adopted the prefecture system; but the dynasty had already lasted for nearly two hundred years by Liu's time. This showed that the consolidation of the regime did not depend on the principality system. Liu further pointed out: During the Han Dynasty, the principality system was only partially adopted in certain periods and for certain districts, so it was actually still a unified state with centralized authority. Liu said also that under the principality system the rulers were hereditary, whether or not they had ability, but truly capable men might not have the chance to show their ability. On the other hand, under the prefecture system when local officers had faults, they could immediately be dismissed, while when they showed ability, they could be rewarded. If an officer was appointed in the morning and then found unsatisfactory, he could be dismissed on the same evening. In this way the central government could exercise its authority unhampered throughout the empire

and the rule of the feudal landlord class could be ensured.

From his landlord class stand, Liu devised means to strengthen the authority of the feudal rulers and tried his best to explain why the prefecture system was advantageous for the unification of the country. At the same time, in reviewing the development of Chinese history through the ages, he affirmed the positive significance of the abolition of the principalities and the adoption of the prefecture system during the Chin Dynasty, and he succeeded in making a correct appraisal. When we use the viewpoint of dialectical and historical materialism and the method of class analysis, we can correctly evaluate his words and deeds and see him as a thinker and statesman of the feudal landlord class having certain materialist ideas. Similarly with Chin Shih Huang. Though the Chin emperor harshly oppressed and ruthlessly exploited the masses, his boldness in reform and his policy based on Legalist ideas with its emphasis on the present and not on the past were in accordance with the historical trend. By abolishing the principality system, which had long been enforced in slave society, and by setting up prefectures and counties, thereby consolidating the unity of China, he made a historic contribution to the nation.

From the point of view of world history, principalities have existed in both slave and feudal societies in a number of Eastern and Western countries; also, there have been many instances where empires with centralized authority adopted the prefecture system in both types of society. For instance, the autocratic central government of the ancient Egyptian slave-owners divided their empire into nomes (provinces of ancient Egypt), and governors or nomarchs were appointed and ordered about by the Pharaoh himself. The ancient Persian empire, which too was a slave society, also divided its territory into satrapies, and satraps were appointed by the king to govern these regions. The Roman empire likewise adopted the prefecture system, and the emperor, the chief slave-owner, sent governors to administer the provinces. This shows that the prefecture system was not always incompatible with slave society, nor necessarily linked up with feudal society. However the strengthening of the central authority in these autocratic slave-owning states and the consolidation of these empires were all closely linked to the adoption of this system. Take for example ancient Egypt in its later period, when the nomarchs gradually became hereditary, and the country was in fact adopting a kind of principality system; the central authority of the government then became

weak and unification became insecure. During the early period of Chin Shih Huang's reign, those who opposed the unification of the empire and wanted to restore the principality system of the old warring states were mainly Confucian scholars and ex-aristocrats, who followed the doctrines of Confucius and Mencius and wished to return to the slave system of the Shang and Chou dynasties and "rule by rites and music." So in order to consolidate the new feudal landlord system as well as to safeguard the unification of the empire under centralized authority, Chin Shih Huang had to sweep away the impediments to these two goals, impediments which actually stemmed from the same reactionary forces. Therefore his two tasks entailed opposition to the same reactionary forces, and their accomplishment had a progressive significance both for his own time and for later centuries in Chinese history. The bourgeois careerist, conspirator, counter-revolutionary double-dealer, renegade and traitor Lin Piao strongly opposed Chin Shih Huang, denouncing him for the burning of Confucian books and the killing of Confucian scholars, and he claimed that our dictatorship of the proletariat was "carrying out the laws of Chin Shih Huang." Yes, we do give credit to Chin Shih Huang for his progressive spirit in not taking ancient kings as models, for his historical role in at-

tacking the reactionary forces which wanted to restore the moribund slave system and in defending the new landlord system, for his contribution as the first ruler to unify the whole of China by abolishing the principality system in favour of the prefecture system. It is in this sense that we recommend people to study well Liu Tsung-yuan's "Dissertation" on the subject. Lin Piao slandered Chin Shih Huang because Lin Piao opposed progress and opposed revolutionary violence and wished to restore capitalism. This retrogressive anti-historical trend was bound to end in utter failure.

As Chairman Mao has said in one of his poems, **"We should always take a long view of world events."**<sup>4</sup> We now live in the twentieth century, more than a thousand years after Liu Tsung-yuan. As for the significance of the unification of China under centralized authority 2,200 years ago, we now have Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought as our powerful ideological weapon to help us observe and analyse it. Moreover we are in a position to consider it in a longer and broader historical perspective. In China during the feudal period, the duration of political unity for a fairly long time had always exerted a positive influence on the progress

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<sup>4</sup> "To Mr. Liu Ya-tzu," written on April 29, 1949.

of the country's economy and culture, on the coming together of nationalities and the consolidation of the multi-national state. The unification of China was also an asset in preserving independence and in enabling the various nationalities composing the Chinese people to resist capitalist-imperialist aggression in later periods. If during the Ching Dynasty China had not been a politically united country but a disunited one with warring states or independent local warlords, the imperialist aggressors would have been able to take greater advantage and could have gone even further in their scheme to "divide and rule," and the joint resistance of the Chinese people of all nationalities against partition by the imperialists would have been weaker. After liquidating two thousand years of feudal rule and a hundred years of imperialist servitude, the situation in China throughout the 9,600,000 square kilometres of our territory has now completely changed. Under the leadership of our great leader Chairman Mao and the Chinese Communist Party, our seven hundred million people are united as one and are vigorously continuing the revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat — a task that could never have been attempted by our forefathers. For the consolidation of the dictatorship of the proletariat and for building socialism, unification is likewise imperative.

Chairman Mao in his brilliant work *On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People* has pointed out: **"The unification of our country, the unity of our people and the unity of our various nationalities — these are the basic guarantees of the sure triumph of our cause."** Of course, our political, economic and cultural unity today, the historical conditions of this unity and its profound significance, are quite different from the unification of China in the time of Chin Shih Huang more than two thousand years ago. As Chairman Mao has said: **"Never before has our country been as united as it is today."** Still, certain loose parallels can be drawn between the unification of China more than two thousand years ago and that of China today, with respect to its function of promoting change and progress to meet the need of the rising progressive class.

The unification of China in the feudal period was linked up with the centralization of authority under the monarchy. As Engels pointed out, in the elimination of a country's disunity, **"the monarchy was the progressive element."**<sup>5</sup> The centralization of state authority initiated by Chin Shih Huang had a positive effect in consolidating the feudal

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<sup>5</sup> "The Decline of Feudalism and the Rise of the Bourgeoisie."

system and blocked the return to the slave system; it also facilitated economic and cultural progress during the long feudal period. However, in the later period of feudalism, when the feudal relations of production hampered the growth of the forces of production, when new elements of embryonic capitalism began to emerge, the more powerful the centralized authority of the monarchy which protected the interests of the feudal land-owners, the more obvious its negative role in obstructing and oppressing the emerging capitalist elements. This is the dialectical nature of historical development. But we should not on this account deny the positive role of the centralization of state authority under monarchical rule when it blocked the return to the slave system and defended the rising feudal landlord system. Nor must we deny the advantages of national unification in the feudal period. When we review the development of Chinese history since Liu Tsung-yuan from a Marxist standpoint, we cannot but come to this conclusion: In the Chin Dynasty China became united as a single country for the first time, a fact which had profound significance in subsequent history, and Liu's appraisal of the Chin reform is correct. In the two thousand-odd years of Chinese history since the Chin Dynasty, China was a united state for two-thirds of the time; disunity prevailed for only one-third

of the period and the intervals of national disunity became shorter and shorter. Throughout the Yuan (1271-1368), the Ming (1368-1644) and the Ching (1644-1911) dynasties, China remained united for more than six hundred years. Therefore national unity has been the main and irresistible trend in China's historical development, and it has been the common wish of the Chinese people throughout the ages. Our Party, our army and our people all insist on national unity and are opposed to disunity. When the traitor Lin Piao and Soviet revisionist social-imperialism conspired to set up another central authority in China, placing their hopes on the so-called "healthy elements," they were attempting to sabotage the unity of our nation and the solidarity of our people, and plotting to subvert our government, split up our country and eventually restore capitalism in China so as to turn her into a colony of Soviet revisionist social-imperialism. Their fond dream runs counter to the trend of historical development, counter to the wishes of the seven hundred million Chinese people, and is therefore doomed to failure.

The reason why Liu Tsung-yuan was able correctly to evaluate the merits of unification under Chin Shih Huang is that his philosophy contained certain materialist ideas. In another of his essays, "On Heaven," he claimed that heaven was simply

nature, and it could never "reward those who are worthy nor punish those who cause trouble." Liu also wrote a book containing 67 essays in refutation of an ancient work entitled "Anecdotes of the Warring States," in which he repudiated such ideas of the author's as "the Way of heaven" or "the mandate of heaven," and other reactionary Confucian interpretations of history. For example, this work recorded that the people in the state of Sung killed their prince and that the state of Tsin took this opportunity to attack them, claiming that the people of Sung had acted out of accordance with the Way of heaven, so that heaven would necessarily punish them. Liu Tsung-yuan scoffed at this idea and said: Since ancient times there have been many people who committed worse murders and worse robbery, yet they lived long and well; so where was the punishment bestowed by heaven? He also asked: With regard to heaven, how am I to know its likes or dislikes? These views and interpretations of heaven expressed by Liu were based on the ideas of Hsun Tzu, the materialist thinker and the outstanding representative of the Legalists in the Warring States Period. They were fundamentally opposed to the apriorism of the Confucian School. Because there was an unmistakable element of materialism in his philosophical thinking, Liu was able to observe history in terms of objective condi-

tions and of the environment, of evolution and change, and he could thus make a correct evaluation of the unification of China under Chin Shih Huang.

In contemporary politics, Liu Tsung-yuan was also totally different from those diehard Confucians who wanted to turn history back, and he was invariably inclined to reform and progress. In A.D. 805, during the reign of Emperor Shun-tsung, Liu joined Wang Shu-wen and his faction who favoured political reform, resolutely opposed letting the eunuchs control the central government and the armed forces, and changed certain measures adopted in the reign of the previous emperor Teh-tsung (779-805). Although the Tang Dynasty had adopted the prefecture system, there were still local rebellions against the central government, of which Liu gave the following explanation: "The fault does not lie with the prefectures but with the armies." "There were rebellious generals, but no rebellious prefectures." So it was not because of the absence of a principality system that local rebellions arose. The group headed by Wang Shu-wen who favoured reform was attacked by the eunuchs and certain diehards in both the central government and the provinces. They set Emperor Hsien-tsung on the throne, forced Emperor Shun-tsung to abdicate and persecuted Wang Shu-wen

and his group. Liu Tsung-yuan was also banished from the capital Changan to a remote province and demoted to be a minor local official. In commenting on Liu, post-Tang Dynasty feudal scholars mostly praised him for his achievements in literary reform and his scholarship in the field of ancient literature, but few sympathized with his political activities. This was due to the persistent and pernicious influence of Confucianism which advocated conservatism and retrogression throughout the centuries.

During the Northern Sung Dynasty (960-1127), there were two men who held diametrically opposite political views and who had totally different opinions of Liu Tsung-yuan. This divergence of opinions might help us in our understanding of Liu. Wang An-shih (1021-1086), who favoured political reform, praised Liu as "an extraordinarily talented man"<sup>6</sup> and expressed admiration for his progressive views. Wang said that though Liu got banished and could not serve in the central government and that though politically he was a failure, nevertheless he had great achievements in other fields to his credit and left his name in history. Wang gave full credit to Liu's achievements in philosophy and literature. On the other hand, Su Shih (1037-1101),

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<sup>6</sup> "Commentary on Liu Tsung-yuan's Biography."

who opposed Wang An-shih's reform and strongly defended the old institutions, saw Liu in a very different light. Though he agreed with some of the ideas expressed in Liu's "Dissertation" he ruthlessly attacked Liu, calling him "a most reckless villain." Su Shih did not endorse Liu's book *Refutation of Anecdotes of the Warring States* and so summed up his appraisal of Liu as follows: "In general, Liu's thinking consists in maintaining that the rites and music are empty paraphernalia and that there is no communication between heaven and men."<sup>7</sup> The "rites and music" were the symbols of the "rule by rites" vehemently advocated by Confucius. By negating their worth and regarding them as empty paraphernalia, Liu was taking the line of the ancient Legalists in his political thinking. The Confucians advocated "communication between heaven and men," claiming that heaven had a will of its own, was omnipotent and could influence human society, and that heaven could reward those who were good and chastise those who were evil. Liu, however, denied this when he said: "How can the blue sky above interfere with our affairs?"<sup>8</sup> This is materialist thinking. In the struggle between materialism and idealism in philosophy during the Tang Dynasty, Liu was on the

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<sup>7</sup> "Letter of Reply to Chiang Chi-kung."

<sup>8</sup> "On Jurisprudence."



side of the materialists. His views on history and politics were consistent with his philosophical thinking, a fact which is concretely manifested in his "Dissertation." Though Su Shih openly condemned Liu, in fact his malicious observations aptly assessed Liu as a political thinker, and from our point of view today it may well be considered high praise for Liu. This idea would probably never have occurred to the diehard Su Shih.

*Lo Szu-ting*

## Evolution of the Debate Between the Confucians and Legalists as Seen from Wang An-shih's Reform

— On Reading "A Brief Study of the Biography of Wang Ching Kung"<sup>1</sup>

Wang An-shih (1021-1086), twice prime minister in the reign of Emperor Shen Tsung (1068-1085) of the Northern Sung Dynasty (960-1127), was a fairly progressive statesman of the landlord class notable chiefly for the reforms<sup>2</sup> he introduced. For centuries afterwards the exponents of the School

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<sup>1</sup> Wang Ching Kung (Wang, Duke of Ching) was the title awarded to Wang An-shih in his late years when he retired to Nanking.

<sup>2</sup> Wang An-shih's main reforms were: the granting of pre-harvest loans, equalization of taxation, control of prices, exemption from corvée upon payment of a fee, and the development of water conservancy. These measures were aimed at restraining land annexation, tax and corvée evasion and concealment of landed property by a section of the big landlords and other powerful persons.

of Principles (*Tao Hsueh Chia* or *Li Hsueh Chia*, usually termed "neo-Confucians" in the West), who claimed to be orthodox followers of the Confucian School, regarded him as a thorn in their side. Recently, the bourgeois conspirator Lin Piao seized upon as a treasure, and used as a theoretical basis for his abortive coup d'état, the essay "On Knowing a Man of Great Evil," full of fabrications and slanders against Wang An-shih and written under a pseudonym by one of the exponents of this school.

A contrast to this slander is provided by the book *A Brief Study of the Biography of Wang Ching Kung* (abbreviated as "Brief Study" in subsequent references in this article). Written by Tsai Shang-hsiang of the Ching Dynasty (1644-1911), it defended Wang An-shih and his reform. In refuting the attacks made by the School of Principles against this reformer statesman from the Sung Dynasty onward, it provides a good deal of historical data valuable for the study of the polemics between the Confucian and the Legalist viewpoints at the time of Wang An-shih's reform.

In the course of the present criticism of Lin Piao and Confucius, the study of the contention between these two schools in feudal society will help us deepen the criticism of Lin Piao's counter-revolutionary revisionist line and conspiratorial methods and at the same time help expose the roots of his

reactionary world outlook. It will enhance our understanding of the reactionary nature of Confucian thought and of the historical development of the ideological contention between the Confucian and Legalist schools, and thus enable us to benefit from some of the historical experience of class struggle in China.

I

In China's feudal society, starting from the time when Tung Chung-shu (179-104 B.C.) proposed to Emperor Wu Ti of the Han Dynasty the policy of "honouring only the doctrine of Confucius and banning all other schools," the doctrine of Confucius as refurbished by Tung Chung-shu and his like gradually developed into the orthodoxy of the landlord class. In practice, the Legalist ideas that supported the landlord class in its dictatorship were followed by the feudal rulers throughout many centuries. But, the Legalist School as such, with its advocacy of reform, opposition to returning to the old and critique of Confucianism, was increasingly reviled and rejected by those same rulers. From the Han Dynasty (206 B.C.-A.D. 220) onward, the Legalist School increasingly fell into obscurity.

However, such reformer statesmen of the landlord class as Sang Hung-yang (152-80 B.C.), Tsao

Tsao (155-220), and later Liu Tsung-yuan (773-819) and Wang An-shih himself often sought ideological weapons from the arsenal of the pre-Chin Dynasty Legalists who had been advocates of reform. Consequently, the struggle between reformism and conservatism within the feudal ruling class after the Han Dynasty frequently found its ideological expression in the form of struggles between Confucian and Legalist thought. In the Sung Dynasty, this contention was directly reflected in the opposition between the new doctrine of Wang An-shih and the reactionary theory of the School of Principles.

Chairman Mao has said, "**A given culture is the ideological reflection of the politics and economics of a given society.**"<sup>3</sup> The new doctrine of Wang An-shih was the new school of thought built up by Wang An-shih before and after his prime-minister-ship. Seeking to provide a theoretical basis for his reform, it assimilated Legalist principles. However, whenever there is progress, there is also bound to be reaction. Standing opposed to Wang An-shih were the diehards of the big landlord class represented by Szuma Kuang (1019-1086). The ideological spokesmen of this political group, the Cheng

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<sup>3</sup> "On New Democracy," *Selected Works*, Eng. ed., FLP, Peking, 1967, Vol. II, p. 369.

brothers [Cheng Hao (1032-1085) and Cheng Yi (1033-1107)], opposed the new doctrine, and in doing so further developed reactionary Confucianism and founded the utterly idealist School of Principles. This struggle between Wang An-shih's new doctrine and the School of Principles was, in substance, the continuation of the protracted contention between Confucianism and Legalism into the whole of China's feudal period.

The diehards of the big landlord class in the Northern Sung Dynasty were all extreme veneration of Confucianism and opponents of the Legalist School. They regarded their struggle with Wang An-shih as a defence of the traditions of Confucius and Mencius. The "Brief Study" points out that these diehards accused Wang An-shih of "employing the tactics of Kuan Chung (?-645 B.C.) and Shang Yang (?-338 B.C.)," the early founders of Legalism, and branded him as a reformist of the type of Shaocheng Mao who had been killed on the order of Confucius in 498 B.C. The Cheng brothers were the first to attack Wang An-shih's new doctrine, vowing that they would fight it to the finish. They clamorously declared that "the greatest trouble lay with Wang An-shih's doctrine" which would be "harmful to the coming generations of scholars."<sup>4</sup> Lu Hui, a henchman of Szuma Kuang,

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<sup>4</sup> *Complete Works of Cheng Hao and Cheng Yi*.

attacked Wang An-shih as "having the traits of Shaocheng Mao, eloquent with false arguments, obstinate but hypocritical in conduct."<sup>5</sup> Fan Chun-jen, also of that time, vehemently denounced Wang An-shih for having "followed Shang Yang in stressing the rule by law, and contradicted Mencius when talking of material benefits."<sup>6</sup> After the Southern Sung Dynasty (1127-1279), representatives of the School of Principles such as Chu Hsi (1130-1200) became positively merciless in their opposition, clamouring that Wang An-shih's learning was completely derived from Legalist theories and that had he lived in Confucius' time and fallen into the latter's hands, he would have been "punished with death like Shaocheng Mao."<sup>7</sup>

This truly revealed the nature of these disciples of Confucius, who talked so glibly about benevolence, righteousness and morality but in practice brutally suppressed the labouring masses, and the reformers within their own class as well. And it was precisely this hypocritical strategy of the "cunning double-dealer" Confucius that Lin Piao, who was in fact a follower of his ideas, inherited from his master. On the one hand, Lin Piao engaged in deceitful preachments such as "harmony is to be

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<sup>5</sup> "Brief Study."

<sup>6</sup> *Complete Records of the History of the Sung Dynasty.*

<sup>7</sup> "Brief Study."

prized," and denounced the Legalist School as "the school of punishments." On the other he bellowed that "state power is the power of suppression." And at the same time he was laying his secret plans for a counter-revolutionary coup d'etat.

The diehards of the landlord class, claiming to be defenders of Confucius, charged that Wang An-shih's new doctrine upheld the teachings of the Legalists and therefore consisted of heresies against the orthodox Confucian School. This argument presented the truth from the reverse side. Wang An-shih indeed tended to respect the Legalist School and oppose Confucianism. During his reform he "nullified all the interpretations and annotations of the classics made by previous Confucian scholars, and banned all books written in the Spring and Autumn Period."<sup>8</sup> In their stead, he published works of his own, including *New Interpretations of the Three Classics* and *Word Study* to serve as the theoretical basis for his reform. The diehards accused him of being another Shang Yang. He met them head-on with the reply, "Shang Yang should not be deprecated; he was able to ensure enforcement of government decrees."<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> *History of the Sung Dynasty.*

<sup>9</sup> Wang An-shih's poem "Shang Yang."

Wang An-shih ridiculed the scholasticism of the Han Dynasty Confucians as "useless stuff"<sup>10</sup> harmful to others and serving only to patch up what was already full of holes. Of those Confucian scholars who "clung to the classics, refusing to move an inch from the old rut," he said with withering contempt, "The so-called Confucian scholars of later times are mostly philistines."<sup>11</sup>

Particularly to be noted was Wang An-shih's observation, "Natural changes need not be feared, ancestral ways need not be followed, and others' slanders need not be heeded."<sup>12</sup> These three phrases were in direct opposition to the tenets of Confucius, "The superior man stands in awe of the ordinances of Heaven, of great men and of the words of sages."<sup>13</sup> Wang An-shih's comment stirred a storm in the stagnant ideological waters of the time. It was desperately opposed by the diehards of the big landlord class, who clung to the reactionary legacy of the Confucian School. Szuma Kuang, their leader, insisted that "Heaven changes not, likewise the Way changes not," and that "the laws decreed by the ancestors must not be changed."<sup>14</sup>

<sup>10</sup> "Brief Study."

<sup>11</sup> *History of the Sung Dynasty.*

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> *Analects*, "Chi Shih."

<sup>14</sup> *History of the Sung Dynasty.*

Wen Yen-po (1006-1097) echoed him, "The laws already established by the ancestors must not be altered."<sup>15</sup> Wang An-shih, standing on the side of the small and medium landlords, again met them head-on with the statement, "The laws decreed by the ancestors are not worth observing. From ancient times, they never have been observed."<sup>16</sup> In his poem entitled "Chien Pin" (meaning "Annexation" and denouncing the seizures of land by the big landlords), he wrote passionately, "Ignorant scholars reject change, but find nothing wrong with annexation."<sup>17</sup>

Thus unsparingly did Wang An-shih expose the true face of the obstinate and conservative philistine scholars who were lackeys of the big landlord annexationists, the deadly enemies of the reform.

Struggle between two lines in the ideological sphere has always reflected two-line struggle in the political sphere. The fight between the Confucian and the Legalist schools over Wang An-shih's reforms in fact reflected a struggle between the small and medium landlords on the one hand and the big landlords on the other, *i.e.*, between annexation and opposition to annexation. During the Sung Dynasty, before Wang An-shih launched his re-

<sup>15</sup> Li Tao, *The Extension of the Mirror of History.*

<sup>16</sup> "Brief Study."

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

forms, a handful of big landlords had seized more than seven-tenths of the land in all China, while the peasants were being steadily impoverished. Large numbers of owner-peasants and small and medium landlords were ruined. This led to the "proliferation of rich men's properties throughout the country, and the dire misery of the poor who were left to perish in the gutters."<sup>18</sup> In this situation class contradictions became more acute, sources of government revenue kept decreasing and the feudal state was plunged into financial crisis.

When Wang An-shih became prime minister, he immediately proposed measures to halt the big landlords' annexation of the land of the small and medium landlords, and tried hard to readjust the proportion of income from land rent between the two groups. He repeatedly pointed out that "finance is the urgent problem today,"<sup>19</sup> and that "half of the book *The Rites of the Chou Dynasty* was devoted to finance."<sup>20</sup> His proposals were based on the thesis that "finance unites the people, and laws serve to regulate finance."<sup>21</sup> He laid particular stress on the economic policy of the Legalists as vigorously enforced by their famous representative during the

<sup>18</sup> *Collected Works of Wang An-shih.*

<sup>19</sup> *The Extension of the Mirror of History.*

<sup>20</sup> *Collected Works of Wang An-shih.*

<sup>21</sup> "Brief Study."

Han Dynasty, Sang Hung-yang, who insisted on "developing agriculture as the base, and curbing trade, which is of minor importance," and "putting a stop to annexations."<sup>22</sup> Wang An-shih held that "annexation should be halted, land should be equally distributed to relieve the poor, and wealth should be circulated throughout the country," and that "over the past centuries, only Sang Hung-yang and Liu Yen (715-780) had some understanding of these principles."<sup>23</sup>

Wang An-shih's policy envisaged readjustments in state power and property ownership in accordance with Legalist economic thought. His first major measure was to set up a legal department to "discuss revision of the old laws so as to make full use of the country's wealth."<sup>24</sup> Wang An-shih's reform did certain damage to the political and economic interests of the big landlords. So the diehards among them, headed by Szuma Kuang, made frenzied attempts to sabotage it. They repeatedly attacked Wang An-shih, declaring that he was "using the humble people to bully the aristocrats, and unruliness to impair propriety,"<sup>25</sup> "seizing

<sup>22</sup> *Discourses on the State Control of Salt and Iron.*

<sup>23</sup> *Complete Records of the History of the Sung Dynasty.*

<sup>24</sup> *History of the Sung Dynasty.*

<sup>25</sup> *The Extension of the Mirror of History.*

the wealth of the rich,"<sup>26</sup> and demanding that "rich households" should "pay out money every year without end."<sup>27</sup> Szuma Kuang, then living at Lo-yang, clandestinely took upon himself the role of "real prime minister," personally directed the disruptive activities of the diehards and vowed to topple the new institutions. The Su brothers, Su Shih (1037-1101) and Su Cheh (1039-1112), were typical of the opportunists of that time, who knew how to adapt themselves to changing situations with double-face tactics. They started out as pious followers of Confucius and Mencius and then, when public opinion veered towards reform, loudly proclaimed that they had "often feared that the laws would remain unchanged."<sup>28</sup> When the tide turned in the other direction, however, they quickly switched their stand and joined the attack on Wang An-shih, who had already fallen from power. "Wang An-shih made the people go after material benefits without regard to righteousness," they intoned, "and caused them to know only penalties and not heed morality."<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Su Cheh, *Five Common Deficiencies in Poetry*.

<sup>27</sup> Szuma Kuang, "Memorial Advocating Restoration of Corvée in Place of Labour Tax."

<sup>28</sup> Chen Liang, "Qualifications of Candidacy for Officials."

<sup>29</sup> Su Shih, "Memorial of Ten Thousand Words to Emperor Shen Tsung."

The social base of the reformist school headed by Wang An-shih was rather narrow. Their advocacy of a ban on annexations of land was aimed at allaying the contradictions within the landlord class and stabilizing the social positions of the small and medium landlords. This could not possibly improve the position of the exploited and oppressed poor peasantry, and hence failed to win broad mass support. The reformists themselves were motivated by a variety of aims. Some were downright opportunists; only a tiny minority were firm. A man named Teng Wan, for instance, went along with the reform for the explicit purpose of enjoying the sweets of office. When others scoffed, he replied, "You may ridicule or scold me as you like. I'll still go on enjoying my official post."<sup>30</sup>

The social crisis of the Sung Dynasty stemmed from the feudal system itself. Wang An-shih, acting within the historical limitations of the landlord class, imagined that by taking the path of reform he could patch up the feudal system without touching its foundations. He was travelling down a blind alley. Even his Legalist thinking was not thorough, so he could not fully shake off the bonds of Confucianism. Moreover, his reforms were weaker in practice than they were in theory, pushed

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<sup>30</sup> *History of the Sung Dynasty*.

forward at some times and halting at others, applied strictly at some times and slackly at others. In fact, they were never seriously enforced. Subsequently, when the diehard Szuma Kuang came to power in 1085, he rescinded all the reform measures and did everything in his power to propagate the reactionary doctrines of the Confucian School. Thus he hastened the Sung Dynasty's fall.

The reactionary adherents of the School of Principles later attempted to put the blame for the downfall of the Northern Sung Dynasty on Wang An-shih's reform, asserting speciously that "the fall of the Chin Dynasty (221-207 B.C.) was brought about by Shang Yang, and that of the Sung Dynasty, by Wang An-shih."<sup>31</sup> But in fact, as pointed out by Tsai Shang-hsiang's "Brief Study," the fall of Northern Sung was entirely due to "lack of enterprising spirit." In other words, it was brought about precisely by the reactionary conservative line of the big landlord diehards represented by Szuma Kuang and the School of Principles. Lu Hsun has rightly said, "The scholars of the Sung Dynasty, without exception, harped on the School of Principles, holding Confucius in high esteem. Although there were a few reformers, such as Wang An-shih, who tried to enforce reforms for a time, they failed

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<sup>31</sup> "Brief Study."

for lack of support. Consequently, everybody continued to sing the old tune, which has nothing to do with social realities, until the end of the Sung Dynasty."<sup>32</sup>

Lin Piao parroted the landlord diehards of the Sung Dynasty, and viciously abused Wang An-shih as "the obstinate prime minister." In reality, he was railing at China's proletarian dictatorship and the socialist system, at Chairman Mao's revolutionary line and the broad masses of the Chinese people who adhere to it. It was a self-exposure of the essence of Lin Piao's line — national betrayal. Eventually, Lin Piao tried to abscond to the Soviet revisionists and dashed himself to pieces. He turned out to be a renegade and traitor, one of the dregs of mankind. But our socialist motherland, firmly continuing the revolution under the proletarian dictatorship amid struggles to crush the schemes of enemies at home and abroad, is flourishing and going on from strength to strength.

## II

To correctly understand the ideological roots of Wang An-shih's reform, and the significance of

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<sup>32</sup> "Old Tunes Have All Been Sung," written in 1927, *Collected Works of Lu Hsun*, Vol. VII.



Tsai Shang-hsiang's defence of Wang An-shih in the "Brief Study," it is necessary to examine further the whole course of debate between the Confucian and Legalist schools in China's feudal society.

In the dynasties that followed Chin, the rule of the landlord class was founded upon its dictatorship over the peasants and other working people. This ruling class adopted a centralized monarchy as the form of dictatorship of the landlord class, which was in conformity with one aspect of Legalist thought. But this landlord class, after it rose to ruling position, came to bitterly hate the other aspect of Legalism, its advocacy of reform. For this reason, the contention between the Confucian and Legalist schools continued throughout China's feudal period, with Confucianism becoming increasingly dominant and Legalism being more and more discriminated against and maligned.

Chin Shih Huang, the first emperor of the Chin Dynasty, had been an open advocate of the Legalist doctrines. His order to "burn books and bury Confucian scholars" in 213-212 B.C. was a decisive revolutionary act, a conclusion summing up the struggle between the two schools up to that time. However, during the subsequent Han Dynasty, Emperor Wu Ti took Tung Chung-shu's advice and decreed Confucianism to be the orthodox doctrine.

But, the actual state of affairs can be seen from the formulation by Emperor Hsuan Ti (73-48 B.C.) who said, "The House of Han has its own system which mixes power and benevolence."<sup>33</sup>

From this we can see that the supremacy of Confucianism in the ideological field was established through a process which corresponded to the process in which the landlord class gradually turned reactionary politically. Long after Emperor Wu Ti's reign, Confucius was still not universally accepted as the supreme authority. Through several dynasties, he was repeatedly criticized by name. For example, Sang Hung-yang once denounced Confucius as a reactionary politician, bluntly calling him and his pupils "scholars who did not do farm work and continuously created trouble."<sup>34</sup> Huan Tan (around 23 B.C.-A.D. 50) in the Eastern Han Dynasty "defied the sages and refused to submit to law,"<sup>35</sup> treating Confucius with scant courtesy. Wang Chung (27-97) wrote the essay "Questioning Confucius," in which he pointed out that Confucius' preachments "contained many inconsistencies and contradictions," and asked point-blank, "What's wrong with flouting the Confucian doc-

<sup>33</sup> *History of the Han Dynasty.*

<sup>34</sup> *Discourses on the State Control of Salt and Iron.*

<sup>35</sup> *History of the Later Han Dynasty.*

trines?"<sup>36</sup> Chi Kang (223-262) of the Western Tsin Dynasty (265-316) lost his head for "disapproving of Kings Tang and Wu, and casting aspersions on Duke Chou and Confucius."<sup>37</sup> By that time, it had become clear that any offence against Confucius the "sage" was no longer to be brooked. Later, in the Tang Dynasty (618-907), Confucius was given the title "Wen Hsuan Wang" ("King of Culture"). The romantic Emperor Hsuan Tsung (712-756) of this dynasty even sang of Confucius in a poem:

What aim did you pursue, Master,  
Bustling indefatigably?<sup>38</sup>

But even then, there were still quite a number of people who ridiculed Confucius by name. The poet Li Po (701-762) once wrote in rude language to deride the "sage,"

From Chu I come, defiant against the order of the day,  
I sing the "Phoenix Song" to mock Confucius.

Confucius came to be regarded as an inviolable idol only late in the Tang Dynasty, when Han Yu (768-824) wrote profusely on the "traditions" of Confucius and Mencius, declaring that he would not

<sup>36</sup> *Lun Heng (Discourses Weighed in the Balance).*

<sup>37</sup> Chi Kang, "Letter to Shan Chu-yuan Declaring Severance of Friendship."

<sup>38</sup> "Homage to Confucius."

"dare to question what has passed through the hands of the sages."<sup>39</sup> But even this pigheaded worshipper of Confucius could not help gibing at him sometimes. In a ballad entitled "Shih Ku Ko" ("Song of the Stone Drum") Han Yu wrote, "In his travel in the west Confucius did not reach the land of Chin; he seemed to rely only on the stars, not the sun and moon." Here Han Yu was deriding Confucius for having pursued trifles while missing what was most important.

From the Sung Dynasty onward, feudal society passed into its late period and the situation changed drastically. The turning point was the failure of Wang An-shih's reform. Li Tzu-ming of the Ching Dynasty wrote, "Wang An-shih's reform in the Sung Dynasty ended up in chaos. This was a profound lesson to later generations. Anyone who attempted even a mild reform would meet a hail of opposition and would be labelled 'another Wang An-shih.' So everybody remained mute and subservient, afraid to utter any opinion."<sup>40</sup> Li Tzu-ming, although a reactionary scholar, was correct in perceiving that after the failure of Wang An-shih's reform, feudal society became increasingly stagnant.

<sup>39</sup> Han Yu's poem, "Recommendation of Scholars."

<sup>40</sup> "Notes on Reading."

This, too, was pointed out by Tsai Shang-hsiang in his "Brief Study." The more the landlord class declined along with the deterioration of feudal society, the more the feudal rulers boosted the status of Confucius. Meanwhile, the reactionary School of Principles, represented by the Cheng brothers and Chu Hsi, inherited and developed the reactionary doctrines of the Confucian School. With the support of the big landlord class, it became the reactionary ruling ideology of the late period of Chinese feudalism.

In order to uphold the doctrines of Confucius and Mencius, these adherents of the School of Principles spread lies everywhere, recklessly attacked Wang An-shih and distorted his new doctrine. "All kinds of iniquitous schemes were used," as pointed out in the "Brief Study," in which is also revealed that the essay "On Knowing a Man of Great Evil," shot through with fabrications against Wang An-shih, was written by an adherent of the School of Principles of the Southern Sung Dynasty named Shao Po-wen (1057-1134) but under the pseudonym of Su Hsun. Proceeding from the nonsensical rigmarole, "Seeing the minute, knowing the manifest; a haloed moon presages wind; moisture on cornerstone foreshadows rainfall,"<sup>41</sup> he slandered Wang

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<sup>41</sup> "Brief Study."

An-shih as a deeply evil man who was "dangerous, ruthless, and different from others in his thinking."<sup>42</sup> This Shao Po-wen invented the tale that his father, Shao Yung, had heard a cuckoo calling gloomily over a bridge in Loyang, and thereby predicted political upheaval, and that, sure enough, ten years afterwards Wang An-shih had started his reform. This, of course, was utter balderdash.

Centuries later, in the early years of the Ching Dynasty, Li Fu pointed out that the essay "On Knowing a Man of Great Evil" contained "unprovoked slanders and fabrications" and was "full of false accusations and untruths."<sup>43</sup> Tsai Shang-hsiang's "Brief Study" corroborated these statements, adding a great deal of detailed evidence.

Yet the bourgeois careerist and conspirator Lin Piao was full of admiration for the despicable smearing tactics employed by the author of "On Knowing a Man of Great Evil." Using this essay as a theoretical basis, Lin Piao made a pretence of substantiating it with some random historical phenomena, and used it to preach his "gospel" of coups d'etat. He also dredged up the old nonsense about "seeing the minute, knowing the manifest" to oppose the Marxist world outlook and serve his

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<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> "Postscript to Shao's Impressions."

vain plot to usurp Party leadership and seize state power. All this shows that Lin Piao was as hypocritical and shameless as the reactionary proponents of the School of Principles of the past, and like them could not get along without depending on idealism, rumour-mongering and conspiracy. Lin Piao's admiration for the essay "On Knowing a Man of Great Evil" also demonstrated his bitter hatred for the revolutionary Chinese people, who, led by Chairman Mao, adhere firmly to the socialist road and are criticizing revisionism and repudiating the doctrines of Confucius and Mencius. Lin Piao burned with the class hatred of the landlords, rich peasants, reactionaries, bad elements and Rightists for the proletariat and the working people. This class hatred later crystallized into his furtive plan for a counter-revolutionary coup d'etat, known as *Outline of Project "571"*.

Chu Hsi, who systematized the doctrines of the Cheng-Chu (Cheng brothers and Chu Hsi) School of Principles, was a reactionary representative of that school in the Southern Sung Dynasty. Lin Piao particularly revered him. Chu Hsi had collected all previous reactionary statements directed against Wang An-shih into a book called "Words and Deeds of Famous Ministers in the Past Three Dynasties." This book spread its poison far and wide. Tsai Shang-hsiang pointed out that it was "most respon-

sible for the unremitting vilification of Wang An-shih in later years."<sup>44</sup> After it appeared, the venomous attacks and slanders against Wang An-shih multiplied. Some people even invented a story that the King of Hell had constructed a new prison for those attempting "to change the ancient ways,"<sup>45</sup> and that the hell contained a "pilloried white-bearded man by the name of Wang An-shih."<sup>46</sup> In the times of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) Chou Teh-kung, a reactionary follower of the School of Principles, viciously dubbed Wang An-shih "the meanest man in history."<sup>47</sup> By the Ching Dynasty Chien Ta-hsin vented his deep hatred for Wang An-shih by accusing him of "crimes against the renowned doctrine" and slandering him as a "crafty, deceiving and heartless scoundrel of the first order."<sup>48</sup> All this deadly, psychotic fear of any kind of reform reflected the downgrade movement of feudal society towards final collapse.

In the centuries when the landlord class was gradually losing strength and turning from a real tiger into a paper tiger, the decline of the Legalist

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<sup>44</sup> "Brief Study."

<sup>45</sup> Hung Mai, *Record of Wonders*.

<sup>46</sup> Wu Yen, "Notes in Man Tang Study."

<sup>47</sup> "Brief Study."

<sup>48</sup> "The Haughty Wang An-shih."

ideology in favour of the Confucian ideology was inevitable. From the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods (770-221 B.C.) to the unification of China by Chin Shih Huang in 221 B.C., the contention between the two schools had resulted in successive defeats for the Confucians and victory after victory for the Legalists. In the early Western Han Dynasty, the two schools were about equal in strength like "two crossed swords of equal sharpness."<sup>49</sup> The Conference on Salt and Iron (*i.e.*, on the state control of salt and iron), called in 81 B.C. during the reign of Emperor Chao Ti, was a test of strength between the two schools. It resulted in the defeat and murder of the Legalist Sang Hung-yang.

From then on, the Legalists were suppressed as an independent school. But many of their concepts continued to be accepted by progressive thinkers of the landlord class. In these circumstances, the contention between the two schools more and more took the form of a struggle between Legalism that was not open but cloaked itself under Confucianism and the orthodox Confucian School. Wang An-shih, although favourably inclined towards the Legalists, was already afraid openly to admit being one. He criticized the reactionary viewpoints of

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<sup>49</sup> *Lun Heng (Discourses Weighed in the Balance)*.

Confucius, but dared not do so by name. After his time, many thinkers who came out with refutations of the Cheng-Chu School of Principles were in fact critical of the doctrines of Confucius and Mencius. But they generally used Confucius as a protective shield, insistently presenting themselves as his genuine disciples.

Among such thinkers was Huang Tsung-hsi (1610-1695) who expressed opposition to the Cheng-Chu school, but not to Confucius and Mencius, and even lauded the "laws of the three ancient dynasties" (Hsia, Shang and Chou) advocated by the Confucian School in opposition to the despotic rule under "the laws of the one school" (*i.e.*, the laws of feudal autocracy). Another thinker, Tai Chen (1723-1777), sharply criticized the School of Principles in annotations to the classics which he wrote — this method had also been used by Wang An-shih. But none of these men dared to raise the Legalist banner and criticize Confucius openly.

Other thinkers, while rejecting the objective idealism of the Cheng-Chu School of Principles, fell into the subjective idealism of Wang Yang-ming (1472-1528). During the Ching Dynasty, in the reigns of the emperors Chien Lung (1736-1795) and Chia Ching (1796-1820) many scholars engaged in commentaries and textual research managed to extricate themselves from the yoke of the School

of Principles of the Sung Dynasty, only to fall back into the abyss of scholasticism promoted by earlier Confucian scholars of the Han Dynasty. Tsai Shang-hsiang, the author of the "Brief Study," was himself no exception. In his book, he approved Wang An-shih's reform, but at the same time strove to prove that Wang An-shih's thinking accorded with the "real doctrines of Confucius and Mencius."

All these facts show that, alongside the steady decay of feudal society, the ideological trend within the landlord class in favour of the Legalist School as against the Confucians declined with the passage of time.

Looking back on the history of the contention between the two schools in China's feudal society, we see clearly that the pro-Confucian and anti-Legalist ideological trend had always served the interests of the most reactionary and darkest political forces. They boosted reverence for the Confucian School in order to maintain or restore reactionary rule. They were against the Legalist School because they were opposed to any progressive class or political group. Today, the Kuomintang reactionaries in Taiwan are zealously heaping honours on Confucius. And Liu Shao-chi, Lin Piao and the Soviet revisionist social-imperialists, too, raised the sinister flag of pro-Confucianism and anti-Legalism in

their vain attempts to subvert the proletarian dictatorship and restore capitalism in China. This is why we must apply the Marxist method of class analysis to bring to light the essence of the contention between these two schools in Chinese history, and criticize the reactionary trend of veneration for Confucianism and opposition to Legalism.

We affirm the progressive character of the Legalist School and criticize the reactionary character of the Confucian School in the course of Chinese history for the purpose of **"giving it [history] its proper place as a science, respecting its dialectical development, and not eulogizing the past at the expense of the present or praising every drop of feudal poison."**<sup>50</sup> It is also our aim to expose and criticize the ways in which the political swindler Lin Piao made use of reactionary trends and reactionary schools of thought in Chinese history to attack the proletariat, so that we can fight more effectively against such swindlers.

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<sup>50</sup> Mao Tsetung, "On New Democracy," *Selected Works*, Eng. ed., FLP, Peking, 1967, Vol. II, p. 381.

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