

Do Away with the Ideology of Bourgeois Right

By Zhang Chunqiao,

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Translator's Note: *At the time he wrote this, Zhang Chunqiao had been a member of the city committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC) in Shanghai, publisher of the Shanghai newspaper Liberation, and a leader in attacking Rightist cultural figures in Shanghai. The article reflects the enthusiasm for a rapid transition to communism that came out of the People's Commune movement in 1958. Although the egalitarian "supply system" had been officially abolished in 1955, Zhang argues that it should be brought back and extended to the whole society. Mao considered this idea in 1958, and this article was only reprinted in Beijing's People's Daily at Mao's insistence and with an (unsigned) introductory note that Mao wrote. Zhang later played a significant role in the Cultural Revolution, and was prosecuted by the CPC's victors as a member of the "Gang of Four." Condemned to death, his sentence was later commuted to life in prison. He was released for medical reasons in 1998, and died in 2005.*

Editor's note: This essay of Comrade Zhang Chunqiao appeared in the Shanghai "Liberation" semi-monthly, number six, [1958], and is now reprinted here for discussion by comrades. This question needs discussion, because of the important issues now facing us. We think that Zhang's essay is basically correct, but somewhat one-sided, precisely because what is said about the historical process may not be the complete explanation. The author put forward this issue clearly, however, and attracts attention. The essay is also quite understandable, and very good to read.

All those people who are somewhat aware of the history of the Communist Party of China and of China's revolution are aware that under the leadership of the Party, in the Chinese people's armed forces and inside the revolutionary base areas, from the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army up to the later Eight Route Army, the New Fourth Route Army, and the People's Liberation Army, from the Jinggang Mountains base area up to the later vast liberation areas, there it was always equality of the army and the people, of officers and men, and equality of high and low, which was regarded as a basic principle for handling mutual relations among the people. This principle was founded in the earliest revolutionary base area in the Jinggang Mountains, under comrade Mao Zedong's direct leadership.

In "the Jinggang Mountains struggle" report to the central committee of the Communist Party of China, comrade Mao Zedong described the principle:

"The greater part of the Red Army rank-and-file come from hired troops, but when they enter the Red Army, their character promptly changes. First, the Red Army has abolished hired

work, which makes the rank-and-file not feel that they are fighting for someone else, but for themselves and the people. In the Red Army up to now there is nothing like regular salaried work, only distribution of grain, oil, salt, firewood, vegetable funds and a little pocket money.... The Hunan Provincial Party Committee wanted us to pay attention to the material livelihood of the rank-and-file, and wanted at least quite a few to be near ordinary workers' and peasants' livelihoods.

"Now the standard is different, the grain is eliminated, and every day for every person only 5 silver coins' worth of oil, salt, firewood, vegetables are allotted, and it is still hard to keep up.... Now that it is cold, many rank-and-file soldiers still wear two-layer unlined clothes. This is accepted only because of bitter experience. But when people have the same bitterness, from army commander to mess cook, except for grain, everyone eats meals of five *fen* coins....

"The Red Army's material livelihood is poor like this, and it often fights this way, but still cannot avoid being shabby, but the Party's actions precisely depend on practical democracy [that is, equality] among the troops. Officers and chiefs don't hit the rank-and-file, officers and men are treated equally, rank-and-file have freedom of speech in meetings, elaborate ceremonies are abolished, the economy is public.

"Rank-and-file troops manage meals, and still can have oil, salt, firewood, and vegetable funds, and from the daily five allotment of *fen*, there is a little surplus to use for pocket money, called "food supplement," which amounts to about 60-70 *wen* per person per day. By these means, the rank-and-file is quite satisfied. Newly captured troops particularly feel that the Guomindang and our armed forces are two different worlds. Although they feel that the Red Army men's material livelihood is not as good as the white army, their spirit has been liberated.

"The soldiers are the same, but yesterday in the enemy forces they were not brave, and today in the Red Army they are very brave, which is precisely the influence of democratization. The Red Army is like a stove, a captured soldier comes over and immediately melts.

"In China not only the people need democratization, but the armed forces also need democratization. The democratized system inside the army is an important weapon for the destruction of the feudal system of mercenary troops."¹

As everyone knows, in the people's armed forces this kind of Marxist-Leninist, communist relationships established the model for the relationships inside revolutionary base areas. In the relationships of the army and the people, in

¹ "The Struggle in the Jinggang Mountains," November 25, 1928, *Mao Zedong Selected Works* (Chinese Edition), Vol. 1, pp. 67-68.—trans.

the relationships of the government and the people, in army and government relationships, relations between cadres, relations between high and low, left and right, all abided by this kind of comradely style of equal relationships.

People did not depend on having authority or guns, they didn't depend on bureaucratic airs, or on power or prestige, but they relied on serving the people, and depended on persuasion and on the truth to deal with their relationships. The popular masses of the revolutionary base areas also learned the model of the People's Liberation Army for dealing with the relationships between this section of the people and that section of the people. When foreigners set foot on these liberated lands, they immediately found: In the whole revolutionary base area, because of correct handling of internal relations, everyone's life was good, although very difficult, but "good only because of bitter experience, when people have the same bitterness," with everyone undergoing the communist character of the supply system, although because of the needs of work, the standards of living had small differences, but didn't differ very much. At the same time everywhere people discussed politics and discussed the mass line, hence workers, peasants and soldiers studied and consulted, uniting without differences, like relatives in a family, struggling hard and bravely fighting the enemy. Doesn't everyone still remember the sight of the large military operations of the liberation war period?

In order to support the People's Liberation Army, thousands and tens of thousands of militiamen followed the army's main forces south, and like the army, they equally underwent the military communist lifestyle, not to be promoted, not to get rich, and not even thinking of wanting to get paid, not thinking of practicing "piece work wages," they carried their food on their own backs to fight the revolution wholeheartedly, only to overthrow the three big enemies and liberate the whole country. In the whole revolutionary base area, men and women, old and young, front and rear, hearts linked to hearts, formed the fighting collective. Precisely this kind of military communist life symbolizing the Marxist-Leninist style of thinking, Mao Zedong's style of thinking, which hundreds of millions of people have already penetrated to the root, opened the bloom, and bore

the fruit. But this kind of use of communist ideological weapons arose and took part in the battle to temper the army and the people, and is invincible! Doesn't the whole history of the Chinese revolution prove this?

After the liberation of the whole country, this kind of use of the "supply system," which served as the distinguishing feature of a military communist life, was still very popular. Referring to the "supply system" is like speaking about the old revolution, the same as speaking about the difficult struggles that people consider glorious. When some young revolutionaries now take part in work, they expect a "supply system," to indicate their similarity to the old comrades, and that they genuinely and sincerely come to the revolution. When comrades used to live under the supply system they did not envy wage labor, and people liked this kind of expression of a living institution of relations of equality.

Before long, however, this kind of system was attacked by the ideology of bourgeois right. The core of the ideology of bourgeois right is the wage system. Adhering to this kind of ideology, it appears to people that there is nothing desirable in the supply system. They say scornfully that it is a "village style" and a "bad guerrilla habit." This kind of comment came from the bourgeoisie, a strange origin. But before long, among our party's cadre, there were many people who accepted this kind of ideological influence. Among us, the discussion of the shortcomings of the supply system gradually increased, and discussion of the merits of the supply system gradually got the upper hand. Afterwards the supply system got a bad name.

[Under the supply system], some people did not work energetically, "whether you work or not, you still eat!" This needs to be born in mind in the account of the supply system. Some people misused the public trust, "there is no difference between public and private in the supply system style of work!" This should also be recalled in evaluating the supply system. Factories and shops that did not have good management paid cash, but had "supply system thinking." This also should be recalled in evaluating the supply system. In short, the communist supply system, the supply system that guaranteed the success of the Chinese revolution, that was attacked by some people

as if it had committed a big crime, must not be wrongly sentenced to death [for these shortcomings].

The most basic argument that people use against the supply system is precisely that the supply system cannot stimulate productive activity. According to their theory it is precisely the Economists [that is, reformists] who stress the "principle of material incentive." They say that because the remains of the division of labor, the differences between mental labor and physical labor, between worker labor and peasant labor, between skilled labor and simple labor are still preserved under the socialist system, and therefore "the principle that workers are concerned with the results of work and the development of production because of material interest" is spoken of as something miraculous. The "wage grade system" and the "piece wages system" allegedly can stimulate workers so they "show maximum concern with the results of their own work," and allegedly can stimulate "the development of socialist emulation, because when the work production rate is high, wages are also high." This kind of system is allegedly "the most important lever of development for the whole national economy," the top principle. However, what this really says, like the old saying that is popular with some people, is: "money can open the mind." As long as wages are used as a "stimulus," something socialism and communism can immediately buy and put into one's hands, this is like spending money to buy candy.

What can we say about such a theory? Under a "supply system" situation, while millions of people carried out many decades of military struggle, climbed up snowy mountains, crossed grasslands, and marched 25,000 *li* on the Long March, did anyone pay wages? Did victories in the war of resistance against Japan, the war of liberation, and the war to resist U.S. aggression and aid Korea depend on stimulation by wages? To hear this kind of comment, where the communist ideological consciousness of every individual person is removed and is felt as a kind of insult, what can be said? That is to say that in building facilities, it is not other people, but is precisely those workers that Economists consider the most concerned with the relative height of their own wages, who have announced a thoroughly opposite view to those same Economists.

Shanghai's workers, as a result of free airing of their views, incisively pointed out this kind of theory, which means "money in command," but not politics in command.

This truly hits the mark with a single comment! Could this statement have been any clearer? We cannot deny that in the elementary stage of communist society approaching socialist society, as Marx in "Critique of the Gotha Program" which correctly pointed out, "on all sides, in the aspects of economics, morals and thought, the new society still bears the marks of past society from which it was born," and unequal "bourgeois right" still cannot immediately be abolished. It can only "let each person do his best, and get his reward according to labor," and still cannot "let each person do his best, and each take what he needs." But this passage of Marx, does it or does it not tell us that bourgeois right, the bourgeois system of unequal ranks, basically cannot be destroyed, or does it say, on the contrary, that there should be institutional change, systematic change, and further forward development? Should there only be a one-sided stress on the "material incentive" principle, but should not management involve politics, ideology, and ethics to strengthen communist education, in order to carry out a struggle to thoroughly do away with bourgeois right?

It is not other people but Marx himself who answered these questions. In "The Civil War in France" he summarized the experience of the Paris Commune, and he particularly stressed praise for the heroes of the Paris Commune who adopted the this kind of measure: "Commune members established that from top to bottom, all public servants should only receive a salary equivalent to worker's wages. The nation's high officials who have all privileges, including paying their work expenses, disappear along with these officials' disappearance."

Look at the Paris Commune--the world's first commune, which adopted revolutionary measures, did it not thorough destroy the bourgeois rank system, and not at all stress any material incentive principle? Didn't Marx and later Engels and Lenin over and over again stress this experience, and did they not remember, furthermore, bourgeois right, etc. It seems that Marx, Engels, and Lenin together did not have the outlook of "seeing things but not people", "seeing money, not people," and

"money can open the mind" that are favored by the Economists. Contrary to these statements, Lenin in "State and Revolution" indignantly criticized: "It is precisely about this particularly clear point [of officials serving for workers wages], perhaps the most important as far as the problem of the state is concerned, that Marx's lesson is forgotten completely!" But many people in referring to the experience of this period [of the Commune], summarize it as "already outmoded 'childish conduct'." Don't those people who attack the supply system and advocate money in command also say that the supply system is "guerilla work style," a "bad village habit," "already out of date?" Don't they also "forget" "Marx's lesson completely?"

The practice of the last several years has proved that the attack on the "supply system," the "rural work style," "bad guerilla habits," is in fact the bourgeoisie's attempt to protect the bourgeois right of inequality, to attack the proletarian revolutionary tradition, and to attack the communist principles for the correct handling of the relations among working people.

All exploiting classes and oppressing classes protect a strict rank system. They do not hesitate to fabricate every kind of mythology, claiming that they are "Sons of Heaven," the inborn masters of the world. Chiang Kai-Shek is this kind of hideous type, in "China's Destiny", shamelessly claimed to be a blood relative to King Wen. His biography claims more specifically that he is King Wen's son--a descendant of Zhou Gong. From this kind of fairy tale, although it only comes from "Wide Joke Notes," can be seen: they are very anxious to use their disguises to become China's inborn "highest." Shanghai's comprador bourgeoisie was also the "highest Chinese." Merely because Ah Q² said that he "joined Zhao Taiye as a member of the same clan," he was ruthlessly slapped down by Zhao Taiye: "How can you be called a Zhao! How could you deserve the name Zhao!" In the old days, for the whole society, deserving or not deserving the family name Zhao, even in wearing clothes, eating, lodging, walking, speed of walking, smoking cigarettes, what didn't involve paying attention to status and rank? What didn't involve "etiquette?" Corresponding or not corresponding

² Ah Q a character in Leftist writer Lu Xun's story "The True Story of Ah Q"

to lofty manners was nearly the same as being legal or illegal, and fully corresponding to bourgeois right. Attacking the supply system as unable stimulate people's productive activity, in fact precisely means using the etiquette and laws of the bourgeois rank system to substitute for the system of proletarian equality.

They say this can stimulate productive activity. Is this really true or not? To pursue their result, our party's cadre, whose original standards of living did not differ very much, changed their situation. People who some time ago lived a simple difficult life and constantly exercised restraint, quickly learned the gentlemen's style, the higher ethnic Han style, the Zhao highest father style. Some cadre saw the right side of the issue, didn't praise anything "senior," and weren't comfortable with more. This really had a stimulating effect. However, this stimulation did not at all raise productive activity, but stimulated the rise in disputes, which were well-know at the time, disputes beneficial for market activity, which stimulated a rise in extravagant waste, which was not considered to be disgraceful, but on the contrary was considered flourishing activity.

Some of the least firm elements [among the cadres] degenerated into bourgeois Rightist elements and corrupt degenerated elements. Originally some people said that the supply system could make people lazier. Today, precisely the opposite proves to be true, and on the contrary it is the wage system that increases people's laziness. Some cadres, when they do more hours of work, wanted overtime pay. But under supply system conditions, where people are dedicating everything, including their lives to revolutionary war, did they get overtime pay?

More seriously, when this kind of [lazy] atmosphere grew, the relations between cadres and working people changed, and leading cadres' tendencies to "the three winds" [bureaucracy, sectarianism, subjectivism] and "the five airs" [bureaucratic airs, luxury, apathy, arrogance, and squeamishness] were developed. With politics in command and equality of people, the only possible approach to the

masses was using persuasion and not force, uniting with the masses, but some people had completely forgotten this. Even after the Party's central committee issued instructions about the correct handling of the contradictions among the people, it encountered their steady resistance. Haven't we personally experienced the fact of this disastrous path?

Thinking back a little while over this period, it has deep educational significance for each one of us. In the course of this process, every one of us agreed with some things and opposed some things although in different circumstances, and the influences received were also different, but everyone could find indispensable lessons among them.

Because of the Party's Marxist-Leninist traditions, because our Party's cadres and popular masses get to the root, when the Party suffers any kind of destruction, it recovers and stands up even to the greatest difficulties. Now, under the appeal of the party center and comrade Mao Zedong, we are undergoing a great rectification movement, and will also be renewed by it. Nevertheless, we still cannot say that we have already done so completely.

The ideology of bourgeois right and the bureaucratic airs of the Guomindang still influence us. The policy of correct handling of the contradictions among the people is still resisted by some people. Our leading side still has a long repeated struggle to undergo. Still, now that the Great Leap Forward situation urgently demands our adjustment of the mutual relations of aspects to make a leap and to leap further, all comrades who are true to the communist cause certainly can stand at the front of the movement, grasp this honorable tradition of our Party under new conditions, thoroughly resume and develop it, thoroughly eradicate the ideology of bourgeois right, and together with the masses set up and work out relations of equality, where high and low, left and right completely become one, everyone lives in common, works in common, builds in common, struggling unanimously for socialism and communism, what doubt can there be about this?

"Do Away with the Ideology of Bourgeois Right," translated by Thomas Weston.

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