

ON NEW DEMOCRACY

According to the established Communist (Stalinist) view, China was following in the main the path of other societies from feudalism through a bourgeois-democratic revolution to a socialist revolution led by the proletariat. During the earlier period of the Nationalist-Communist collaboration, the latter acknowledged the “bourgeois” Nationalists as the main force of the so-called democratic revolution. In 1940, however, Mao was unwilling to grant such leadership to the Nationalists, even though he conceded that the “democratic” revolution had not yet been completed and the socialist revolution still waited upon it. His *On New Democracy* — based on Leninist and Stalinist doctrines concerning the nature of the bourgeois-democratic revolution in colonial and semi-colonial countries, and its relation to the anti-imperialist struggle led by the Soviet Union — was Mao’s way of ensuring Communist (“proletarian”) leadership for a new type of democratic revolution.

Politically the New Democracy bore little resemblance to Western democracy but conformed rather to Leninist “democratic centralism,” which ensured Communist domination of a multi-class coalition. Economically it involved a moderate program of land reform and nationalization of key industries. It was this moderate program that led some Western observers to think of the Communists as simply “agrarian reformers.” Yet Mao’s writings make it abundantly clear that the Communists had no intention of sharing real power and every intention of pushing on to full socialism.

The Chinese Revolution Is Part of the World Revolution

The historical feature of the Chinese revolution consists in the two steps to be taken, democracy and socialism, and the first step is now no longer democracy

in a general sense, but democracy of the Chinese type, a new and special type — New Democracy. How, then, is this historical feature formed? Has it been in existence for the past hundred years, or is it only of recent birth?

If we make only a brief study of the historical development of China and of the world, we shall understand that this historical feature did not emerge as a consequence of the Opium War but began to take shape only after the first imperialist world war and the Russian October Revolution. [pp. 109–110]

After these events, the Chinese bourgeois-democratic revolution changes its character and belongs to the category of the new bourgeois-democratic revolution and, so far as the revolutionary front is concerned, forms part of the proletarian-socialist world revolution. [pp. 110–111]

This “world revolution” refers no longer to the old world revolution — for the old bourgeois world revolution has long become a thing of the past — but to a new world revolution, the socialist world revolution. Similarly, to form “part” of the world revolution means to form no longer a part of the old bourgeois revolution but of the new socialist revolution. This is an exceedingly great change unparalleled in the history of China and of the world.

This correct thesis propounded by the Chinese Communists is based on Stalin’s theory.

As early as 1918, Stalin wrote in an article commemorating the first anniversary of the October Revolution:

The great worldwide significance of the October Revolution chiefly consists in the fact that:

1. It has widened the scope of the national question and converted it from the particular question of combating national oppression in Europe into the general question of emancipating the oppressed peoples, colonies, and semi-colonies from imperialism.
2. It has opened up wide possibilities for their emancipation and the right path toward it, has thereby greatly facilitated the cause of the emancipation of the oppressed peoples of the West and the East, and has drawn them into the common current of the victorious struggle against imperialism.
3. It has thereby erected a bridge between the socialist West and the enslaved East, having created a new front of revolutions against world imperialism, extending from the proletarians of the West, through the Russian revolution to the oppressed peoples of the East.⁵

Since writing this article, Stalin has again and again expounded the theoretical proposition that revolutions in colonies and semi-colonies have already

5. J. V. Stalin, *Works*, English ed. (Moscow, 1953), 4:169–170.

departed from the old category and become part of the proletarian-socialist revolution. [pp. 112–13]

The first step in, or the stage of, this revolution is certainly not, and cannot be, the establishment of a capitalist society under the dictatorship of the Chinese bourgeoisie; on the contrary, the first stage is to end with the establishment of a new-democratic society under the joint dictatorship of all Chinese revolutionary classes headed by the Chinese proletariat. Then the revolution will develop into the second stage so that a socialist society can be established in China. [p. 115]

New-Democratic Politics

As to the question of “political structure” [in the New Democracy], it is the question of the form of structure of political power, the form adopted by certain social classes in establishing their organs of political power to oppose their enemy and protect themselves. Without an adequate form of political power there would be nothing to represent the state. . . . But a system of really universal and equal suffrage, irrespective of sex, creed, property, or education, must be put into practice so that the organs of government elected can properly represent each revolutionary class according to its status in the state, express the people’s will and direct revolutionary struggles, and embody the spirit of New Democracy. Such a system is democratic centralism.⁶ Only a government of democratic centralism can fully express the will of all the revolutionary people and most powerfully fight the enemies of the revolution.

The state system — joint dictatorship of all revolutionary classes. The political structure — democratic centralism. This is new-democratic government; this is a republic of New Democracy, the republic of the anti-Japanese united front, the republic of the new Three People’s Principles with the three cardinal policies, and the Republic of China true to its name. [p. 121]

New-Democratic Economy

We must establish in China a republic that is politically new-democratic as well as economically new-democratic.

6. According to an earlier definition of Mao’s, in his report “The Role of the Chinese Communist Party in the National War,” democratic centralism in the party consists in the following principles: (1) that individuals must subordinate themselves to the organization; (2) that the minority must subordinate itself to the majority; (3) that the lower level must subordinate itself to the higher level; and (4) that the entire membership must subordinate itself to the Central Committee. “Whether in the army or in the local organizations, democracy within the party is meant to strengthen discipline and raise fighting capacity, not to weaken them” (*Selected Works* 2:254–255). [Ed.]

Big banks and big industrial and commercial enterprises shall be owned by this republic.

Enterprises, whether Chinese-owned or foreign-owned, that are monopolistic in character or that are on too large a scale for private management, such as banks, railways, and airlines, shall be operated by the state so that private capital cannot dominate the livelihood of the people. This is the main principle of the control of capital.

This was also a solemn statement contained in the Manifesto of the First National Congress of the Nationalists during the period of the Nationalist-Communist cooperation; this is the correct objective for the economic structure of the new-democratic republic under the leadership of the proletariat. The state-operated industries are socialist in character and constitute the leading force in the national economy as a whole; but this republic does not take over other forms of capitalist private property or forbid the development of capitalist production that “cannot dominate the livelihood of the people,” for China’s economy is still very backward.

This republic will adopt certain necessary measures to confiscate the land of landlords and distribute it to those peasants having no land or only a little land, carry out Dr. Sun Yat-sen’s slogan of “land to the tillers,” abolish the feudal relations in the rural areas, and turn the land into the private property of the peasants. In the rural areas, rich peasant economic activities will be tolerated. This is the line of “equalization of land ownership.” The correct slogan for this line is “land to the tillers.” In this stage, socialist agriculture is in general not yet to be established, though the various types of cooperative enterprises developed on the basis of “land to the tillers” will contain elements of socialism. [p. 122]

New-Democratic Culture

A given culture is the ideological reflection of the politics and economy of a given society. There is in China an imperialist culture, which is a reflection of the control of imperialism over China politically and economically. This part of culture is advocated not only by the cultural organizations run directly by the imperialists in China but also by a number of shameless Chinese. All culture that contains a slave ideology belongs to this category. There is also in China a semi-feudal culture, which is a reflection of semi-feudal politics and economy and has as its representatives all those who, while opposing the new culture and new ideologies, advocate the worship of Confucius, the study of the Confucian canon, the old ethical code, and the old ideologies. Imperialist culture and semi-feudal culture are affectionate brothers, who have formed a reactionary cultural alliance to oppose China’s new culture. This reactionary culture serves the imperialists and the feudal class and must be swept away. [p. 141]

Some Errors on the Question of the Nature of Culture

So far as national culture is concerned, the guiding role is fulfilled by Communist ideology, and efforts should be made to disseminate socialism and communism among the working class and to educate, properly and methodically, the peasantry and other sections of the masses in socialism. [p. 152]

A National, Scientific, and Mass Culture

New-democratic culture is national. It opposes imperialist oppression and upholds the dignity and independence of the Chinese nation. . . . China should absorb on a large scale the progressive cultures of foreign countries as an ingredient for her own culture; in the past we did not do enough work of this kind. We must absorb whatever we today find useful, not only from the present socialist or new-democratic cultures of other nations, but also from the older cultures of foreign countries, such as those of the various capitalist countries in the age of enlightenment. However, we must treat these foreign materials as we do our food, which should be chewed in the mouth, submitted to the working of the stomach and intestines, mixed with saliva, gastric juice, and intestinal secretions, and then separated into essence to be absorbed and waste matter to be discarded — only thus can food benefit our body; we should never swallow anything raw or absorb it uncritically. So-called wholesale Westernization⁷ is a mistaken viewpoint. China has suffered a great deal in the past from the formalist absorption of foreign things. Likewise, in applying Marxism to China, Chinese Communists must fully and properly unite the universal truth of Marxism with the specific practice of the Chinese revolution; that is to say, the truth of Marxism must be integrated with the characteristics of the nation and given a definite national form before it can be useful; it must not be applied subjectively as a mere formula. . . .

Communists may form an anti-imperialist and anti-feudal united front for political action with certain idealists and even with religious followers, but we can never approve of their idealism or religious doctrines. A splendid ancient culture was created during the long period of China's feudal society. To clarify the process of development of this ancient culture, to throw away its feudal dross, and to absorb its democratic essence is a necessary condition for the development of our new national culture and for the increase of our national

7. A view advanced by a number of the Chinese bourgeois scholars completely enslaved by antiquated individualist bourgeois Western culture. They recommend so-called wholesale Westernization, which means "imitating the capitalist countries of Europe and America in everything."

self-confidence; but we should never absorb anything and everything uncritically. . . . [pp. 153–155]

[Mao, *Selected Works*, 3:109–155]

The Twofold Task of the Chinese Revolution and the Chinese Communist Party

To complete China's bourgeois-democratic revolution (the new-democratic revolution) and to prepare to transform it into a socialist revolution when all the necessary conditions are present — that is the sum total of the great and glorious revolutionary task of the Communist Party of China. All members of the party should strive for its accomplishment and should never give up halfway. Some immature Communists think that we have only the task of the democratic revolution at the present stage but not that of the socialist revolution at the future stage; or that the present revolution or the agrarian revolution is in fact the socialist revolution. It must be emphatically pointed out that both views are erroneous. Every Communist must know that the whole Chinese revolutionary movement led by the Chinese Communist Party is a complete revolutionary movement embracing the two revolutionary stages, democratic and socialist, which are two revolutionary processes differing in character, and that the socialist stage can be reached only after the democratic stage is completed. The democratic revolution is the necessary preparation for the socialist revolution, and the socialist revolution is the inevitable trend of the democratic revolution. And the ultimate aim of all Communists is to strive for the final building of socialist society and communist society.

[Mao, *Selected Works*, 3:100–101]