The Reign of Virtue: Some Broad Perspectives on Leader and Party in the Cultural Revolution

By BENJAMIN I. SCHWARTZ

> 'When societies first come to birth' says Montesquieu 'it is the leader who produces the institutions. Later it is the institutions which produce the leaders.'
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> Whoever would undertake to give institutions to a people must work with full consciousness that he has set himself to change, as it were, the very stuff of human nature, to transform each individual who, in isolation, is a complete but solitary whole, into a part of something greater than himself, from which, in a sense, he derives his life and his being, to substitute a communal and moral existence for a purely physical and independent life with which we are all of us endowed by nature.
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> J. J. Rousseau *The Social Contract* Book II, Chapter VII.

ONE of the most arresting aspects of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution has been the confrontation between Mao Tse-tung (or the Maoist group) and the Chinese Communist Party. There is, to be sure, an area of vagueness and uncertainty concerning this whole matter. Have the Maoists attacked the party as such? What indeed is the party as such? The party may be conceived of as the sum total of its actual members—of its human composition. It may be conceived of in terms of its organisational structure—its "constitution," rules and established mechanisms. To any genuine Marxist-Leninist, it is, of course, more than its cells and anatomy. It is a metaphysical organism which is more than the sum of its parts. The "soul" of this collective entity incarnates all those intellectual and moral capacities which Marx had attributed to the industrial proletariat.

Now there can be no doubt whatsoever that the Maoists have carried out a frontal assault on the human apparatus on the highest, middle and perhaps even on the basic levels of party organisation, at least in urban areas. There is also considerable evidence that party structures and mechanisms are in a shambles and that even where they survive, as in the rump Central Committee and army party branches, they have ceased to be an important vehicle of decision making. The whole discussion of "party building" which was a prominent theme

at the end of 1967 and the early part of 1968 indicates the degree of party wrecking which has been going on. The area of uncertainty is the third miasmic area of the party as an ontological category—as a whole which may persist whatever the fate of its parts. In this area, it does not appear likely that the Maoist group is prepared to jettison the sacred label.

It is interesting to note that in another sector of what is still vaguely called the Communist world, the possibility of eliminating the role of the party as such has emerged. In Regis Debray's book *Revolution in the Revolution?*, which is now regarded as a textbook of Castro ideology, we find the following striking assertions:

> "Fidel says simply that there is no revolution without a vanguard but that this vanguard is not necessarily the Marxist-Leninist Party." [1] "The effective leadership of an armed revolutionary struggle requires a new style of leadership, a new method or organization." [2] "Parties are never anything but instruments of class struggle. Where the instrument no longer serves its purpose should the class struggle come to a halt or should new instruments be forged?" [3] Debray suggests that "an end be put to the plethora of commissions, secretariats, congresses, conferences, plenary sessions, meetings and assemblies at all levels—provincial, regional and local. Faced with a state of emergency and a militarily organized enemy such a mechanism is paralyzed at best, catastrophic at worst." [4] "There is no exclusive ownership of the revolution." [5] "Eventually the future People's Army will beget the party of which it is to be theoretically the instrument. Essentially the party is the army." [6]

Debray, to be sure, is discussing the period of revolutionary struggle and his doctrine is not incompatible with the view that after the victory a party of the Communist type may be established. In some ways however, M. Debray's assertions seem most applicable to China's Cultural Revolution. The Maoists insist that China is in a permanent state of revolutionary class struggle and that the party both in terms of its human composition and as a structure has gone radically astray. Is it not possible that the Maoists are also ready to eliminate the party's role in history as an instrument which "no longer serves its purpose?"

As against this possibility however, one must note the fact that the concept of the Communist Party is now part of Chinese Communist sacred history, and that in pressing their own canonised revolutionary experience as the exclusive model for the Third World, the Chinese must inevitably stress the role of the party in the revolutionary struggle.

1 Regis Debray, *Revolution in the Revolution?* (Grove Press), p. 78.
2 *Ibid.* p. 101.
3 *Ibid.* p. 104.
4 *Ibid.* p. 102.
5 *Ibid.* p. 125.
6 *Ibid.* p. 105.

In Latin America indeed, this brings them into direct collision with the Castro-Debray line which tends to express a studied contempt for the "pro-Chinese" groups in Latin America. The Maoists are constrained by their own history to reject Debray's elimination of the party in the revolutionary struggle.

There is also the need to refute the current Soviet line on events in China. The Soviets have flatly asserted in their polemics that the "Maoist group" is bent on the destruction of the Chinese Communist Party.[7] The Chinese party has, to be sure, always been defective, we are told, given its woefully weak proletarian base, but it was, after all, born under the inspiration of the October Revolution and for many years was guided by the directives of the Comintern. Even after 1949 it received much sound guidance from Moscow. Unfortunately the petty bourgeois Maoist group was able to establish its ascendancy and is now bent on destroying it. One may still hope, however, that the bulk of party leaders now in opposition will ultimately be able to restore the party to its legitimate role and also, hopefully, recognise Moscow's spiritual hegemony. In their discussion of the Cultural Revolution they have also dwelt at great length on the Maoist violation of party constitutionality.

In the face of these Soviet efforts to identify themselves with the "legitimate" CCP heritage, the Maoists must deny Moscow's claims. In a statement attributed to a "Stalin group"—a revolutionary organisation in the Soviet Union[8]—we find a condemnation of "Soviet revisionist calumnies that China's Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution is 'directed against the Chinese Communist Party.' . . . The fact that the broadest masses of the people are taking part in the cultural revolution together with the party does not in the least impair the prestige of the CCP."

What is more, unlike Castro and Debray, the Maoist group (including such people as Ch'en Po-ta and Kang Sheng) cannot but be profoundly conscious of the weight of the concept of the "Communist Party" in the history of Marxism-Leninism since 1917. Far from being a dispensable element, it lies at the very heart of Leninism. It was Lenin who insisted after 1917 that only Marxist-Leninist parties could act as the vanguard of the proletariat. It was Lenin who insisted that the party structure be imposed on all "vanguards" abroad. It was Lenin who insisted that no revolution could be called socialist unless led by Communist parties and it was during Lenin's lifetime that the ultimate authority of the international Communist movement became

[7] See for instance "Gel'bras o stanovlenii voenno-burokrazticeskoi diktatury v Kitae" ("On the establishment of a Military Bureaucratic Dictatorship in China"), *Narody Asii i Afriki* No. 1, 1968.

[8] NCNA Service in English, 14 May, FBIS No. 95, Vol. 1.

lodged in one centre on the basis of a logic inherent in Communist party organisation. The Maoist group in China is still bent on capturing for itself this transnational Marxist-Leninist authority and it is most difficult to see how it can do so if it abandons the very concept of the Marxist-Leninist party.

And yet, the uncertainty of the Maoist attitude toward party organisation in China can be most graphically illustrated by the uncertainty of Peking's relations to its own Maoist followers in Belgium and France. In Belgium, the so-called "Rittenberg case" has thrown a glaring light on some of the issues involved. Sidney Rittenberg, an American Maoist of long standing residing in Peking, in the summer of 1967 wrote a pamphlet excoriating Jacques Grippa, the recognised leader of the Belgian Maoists, for his defence of Liu Shao-ch'i's "How to be a Good Communist." Grippa has, in turn, vehemently attacked Rittenberg and whoever may stand behind him, for attacking the Leninist principles of party organisation in the name of a "cult or idolatry with regard to a leader."[9] Grippa (a former Stalinist) is committed to the party not only as a moral entity but as a Leninist structure. He is able to cull many telling citations from Lenin stressing the importance which Lenin attached to organisational principles and party rules. The essence of those quotations is that the forms of party organisation are part of the very essence of what the party is. One would gather that Grippa's standing in Peking is now very much under a cloud.

In France there are at least three "Maoist" groups, only one of which has constituted itself as a Marxist-Leninist party of the conventional type, while at least one of the other groups has refused to acknowledge that the older party structure is any longer valid. It is apparently unclear whether any of these groups has as yet obtained Peking's official sanction. In all this, however, the issue is not necessarily whether the term "party" is to remain in use but whether the old structure is to survive or indeed whether structure as such is to play a central role in a Maoist political universe.

When we turn our attention to recent developments in China itself as they are refracted through the murky media of the Cultural Revolution, one notes that at the end of 1967 and at the beginning of 1968 there are many references in the literature to "party building." It is significant that even this literature hints that the party will somehow be restructured. We also note, however, some discussion of the convening of the Ninth Party Congress, an act which would presumably once again place the seal of party "legality" on whatever state of affairs would prevail at the time of its meeting. Chou En-lai is alleged to have asked a delegation of proletarian revolutionaries from Canton on 11

[9] See *Joint Publications Research Service* (JPRS) 44, 204, 31 January 1968, *passim*.

November: "Haven't you discussed the subject of the Ninth Party Congress set for next year?" [10] This question would indicate, as one might suspect, that Chou at least is strongly committed to a return to as much organisational normalcy as possible under the prevailing conditions.

It is entirely possible that the Maoist group itself is interested in rebuilding the party in some form or other [11] but by no means interested as others in restoring power to the bulk of the former membership or in rebuilding the entire former machinery or even in restoring its position of centrality in the polity. The question would thus not be one of whether the party should be rebuilt but how it should be rebuilt.

One may, of course, assume that the question of how the party should be built was by no means entirely theoretical. Undoubtedly it was intertwined with the most ferocious power struggle. One would assume that former cadres would be most insistent on "party legality" and the sacred character of party structure and that the Maoists would be infinitely less committed to the "institutional charisma" of the party. The very *Red Flag* editorial of 9 July 1967 [12] which attempts to refute the charge that the Maoists do not "desire the leadership of the party" makes it crystal clear that whatever charisma the party may possess derives solely from the person and thought of Mao Tse-tung. It is made painfully clear that the party derives its legitimacy from Mao Tse-tung and not vice versa. Any notion that Mao Tse-tung must legitimise his cultural revolution through established party procedures is, in my view, not based on a correct reading of cultural revolutionary doctrine. Mao himself is the source of legitimacy and so long as his group remains more or less at the helm, he can legitimise any structure.

In recent months the discussion of party building has again receded and one tends to feel that there has been no resolution of the conflicts surrounding the whole issue. Instead of discussions of party building there has been a resurgence of attacks on the "right"—on those nefariously attempting to "reverse verdicts." The "revolutionary committees" formerly treated as a provisional device seem to be emerging more and more (whatever they may be in actuality) as Mao's chosen vehicle of "proletarian dictatorship." If present trends continue they may themselves become the constituent units of any rebuilt party Concretely this would mean that the People's Liberation Army (PLA) and

[10] Cited in the Hong Kong Consulate publication *Current Scene*, Vol. VI, No. 4, "The CCP—Orphan of Mao's Storm."

[11] One may speculate that some of the "ultra-leftists" actually may have conceived of the possibility of doing away with the party entirely.

[12] *Hung Ch'i* (*Red Flag*), No. 11, 9 July, 1967.

proven non-party "proletarian revolutionaries" would play a dominant role at the heart of any reconstituted party.

In discussing these matters we find ourselves *in media res* and it would be futile to predict the future. The crux of the matter is not whether the party survives in some form but whether it can ever recover its central sacred character. The whole thrust of the Cultural Revolution has been to devalue and diminish its significance. The phrase "dictatorship of the proletariat" has never been used more obsessively and yet it is made crystal clear that the "dictatorship of the proletariat" and the Communist Party are by no means interchangeable terms. Just as the phrase "dictatorship of the proletariat" has long since been sundered from any actual reference to industrial workers, the cultural revolution has now demonstrated that the particular "general will" which it represents is quite detachable from the particular organisation known as the Communist Party. For almost two years now we have been told that the dictatorship of the proletariat has been borne by the "Red Guards," by the PLA (the "main pillar of the dictatorship") and a whole assortment of non-party "proletarian revolutionaries." We have even been told that the battle between the "dictatorship of the proletariat" and the "dictatorship of the bourgeoisie" takes place within the arena of each individual soul. Far from possessing those self-purgative and self-regenerative powers which had always been attributed to it in the past, we find that the party must be "reproletarianised" from without—by Mao Tse-tung standing above it and by the "revolutionary masses" standing below.

The fact that the PLA has become the "main pillar" of the "dictatorship of the proletariat" can, of course, be explained in quite mundane terms. In turning on the party Mao and his supporters have been forced to fall back on the army. However, as we are all aware, it is by no means clear that the army as a whole is as solid a pillar as Mao would like it to be nor as thoroughly imbued with proletarian virtue. Assertions about the proletarian virtue of the army like many statements of this type reflect not so much the complex actuality as the normative reality—the way things ought to be and will in good time become. Whatever its actual power role, however, the faith in the army as the bearer of proletarian virtue certainly antedates the cultural revolution. We have the recent effort of the early sixties to turn the army into a model of Maoist behaviour and behind that one has the central role of the army in the whole history of the party since the early thirties. From the vantage point of the present, one is tempted to observe that Mao may have always implicitly regarded the PLA as much of a bearer of proletarian virtue as the party itself. The isolated guerrilla fighter sacrificing his very life for the people has always been much the epitome of higher virtue as the hard-working cadre.

It is, of course, entirely possible that with the demise of Mao or a reversal in the fortunes of the Maoist group, there will be an effort to restore the party to its central position in Chinese life and to re-establish all its sanctified organisational forms. As already indicated, men such as Chou En-lai are probably deeply conscious of the role of the party in Marxist-Leninist Communism. The fact remains that the cultural revolution has unmasked many truths which will not be easily forgotten, particularly by the young who have participated in recent events. The party may not have engaged in all the heinous bureaucratic crimes attributed to it in Red Guard newspapers but its profane nature as simply another bureaucratic organisation devoid of any inbuilt proletarian grace or powers of self-redemption now stands revealed. The institutional charisma will not easily be restored.

Some Historic Perspectives—Western and Chinese

Instead of attempting to discern an unpredictable future, what I shall attempt in the balance of this article is an effort to see whether the notions which lie behind the Maoist attack on the CCP and behind the Cultural Revolution in general can be related to certain larger perspectives and contexts of ideas. If we are dealing with what many take to be a kind of madness, is this madness unique to Mao or does it relate in any way to a larger history of ideas—Western or Chinese? Is it indeed Western or Chinese or may it be said to feed on both cultural traditions?

In focusing on ideas and their genealogy there is no intention of implying that the Cultural Revolution or the conflict between the party and the leader is solely a result of ideas in the head of Mao or to deny the role of power struggles, psychological motives or "objective factors." Mao's retreat to the "second line" of power during the years since 1959 may have been voluntary or involuntary or partially voluntary. Even if it was essentially voluntary (and I lean to the view that it was), the fact that the "first line" leaders of the party were moving in a direction which the leader regarded as radically mistaken was, of course, not only an offence to his own vision of China's future but also to an enormous swollen sense of self-esteem which had become indissolubly tied up with this vision. The vision may be only one ingredient in the total complex. It is however, an essential ingredient and it is on this ingredient that we shall concentrate our attention.

Mao Tse-tung has found that the CCP, both in its human composition and as an organisational structure, has failed at least for a time to embody the qualities of the "dictatorship of the proletariat" The latter phrase presumably designates the "social bearer" of certain social virtues and capacities but in current Maoist usage it often seems

to refer to the assemblage of the virtues themselves—selflessness in the "service of the people," lack of self-interest, austerity, singularity of purpose, implacable hostility to the forces of evil however defined, etc. The question of who the actual bearers of this "general will" are has indeed become a crucial problem of the Cultural Revolution.

In seeking out the provenance of these notions I shall concentrate attention in the first instance on the possible Western origins precisely because of the tendency among Western "pragmatic" academics to see something peculiarly Chinese in Mao's highly moralistic rhetoric. Furthermore, in dealing with Western sources, it will no longer suffice to confine our attention to the specificities of Marxist-Leninist ideology. As the Marxist-Leninist ideology moves into a period of advanced disintegration one becomes more and more conscious of some of the more general notions which lie behind Marxism-Leninism, notions which have become embodied in specific ways within the Marxist-Leninist complex (as well as in other ideologies) but whose origins go back at least as far as the enlightenment. These general notions have indeed proved more enduring than the specific ideologies within which they have found a lodging. Our particular quest here indeed leads us back as far as Jean-Jacques Rousseau and the Jacobin effort to apply the doctrine of that fruitful but ambiguous thinker.

It is not at all a question of whether Mao Tse-tung was ever a profound student of Rousseau or Jacobinism. There can be little doubt that in his youth he read about both but one need not argue any intimate contact. The significance of Rousseau here is that he gives a highly vivid expression to more general tendencies which can make their way without any intimate contact with the great thinker himself. In the case of Mao, one can indeed maintain that Marxism-Leninism itself has been a bearer of the strains of thinking with which we are concerned.

Turning back to Rousseau we find that, as Burke states, "Rousseau is nothing if not a moralist." As opposed to many of his contemporaries such as Turgot, Dalembert, Voltaire and Diderot who were overwhelmingly concerned with the progress of the "arts and sciences" and who regarded moral progress as a by-product of the accumulation of human knowledge, he was overwhelmingly concerned, in the first instance, with the question of how to make society virtuous and just. Amid the sophisticated and hedonistic libertines of the enlightened aristocracy and the new intelligentsia, he felt himself to represent the essential innocence of a man of the people and the sturdy virtues of a citizen of Geneva. The others were social engineers concerned with how arts and sciences could be mobilised to render society felicitous. He was overwhelmingly concerned with society's moral progress; he had actually found in his

"Discourses in the Arts and Sciences" and "Discourses on the Origins of Human Inequality" that the arts and sciences (technico-economic progress) as they had developed until his time had actually run counter to moral progress and contributed to all the corruptions of society. His own "civic morality" was not a "new morality" but a morality based on a kind of Plutarchian exaltation of ancient Roman and Spartan virtues. His good society would be peopled by men who would abnegate their private interests for the public good, men constantly inspired by a sense of duty to the fatherland, men who would sacrifice themselves without stint, and men who would live simple and austere lives. It is interesting to note that as the spiritual father of modern nationalism (although again, the "antique" example is here of overwhelming importance) Rousseau exalts the martial virtues and even praises hatred of the national enemy as a unifying cement of the sovereign people's will.

What makes Rousseau's ethic modern and revolutionary is, however, his lack of belief in the power of the individual to realise his potentiality for virtue through his own individual efforts and his consequent tendency to link ethics indissolubly to politics. In his own individual life he had discerned how impossible it is for a good man to realise his moral potentialities within a bad society. "I saw," he stated in his *Confessions*, "that everything depended basically on political science, and that no matter how one views the problem every people is just what its government makes it. What form of government is most suited to produce a nation which is virtuous, enlightened and wise—in short, in the highest sense of the word, as perfect as possible?" [13] The individual can realise his moral potential only by submerging himself in that larger "moral entity," the people. The people as a collectivity is not only the source of all sovereignty but also of all virtue. It is only when the individual will somehow become fused with the "general will" that the individual's own moral potential can be realised. The question of how—in concrete political terms—the "general will" comes to be internalised in the individual is, of course, one of the central enigmas of Rousseau's political thought and has been the subject of a vast literature. While related to the modern sociological view that the individual derives his "values" from "society" it is, of course, much more activist and political. What it asserts is that in some fashion the state is or should be the moralising agency of human society. Its meaning is relatively clear when applied to an idealised ancient Rome and Sparta where citizens presumably expressed their "general will" in face-to-face primary assemblies and where

[13] Cited in Cassirer's *Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, Beacon Press Paperback, p. 154.

the decisions of majorities were, in Rousseau's view, actually inspired by virtue. Even here he was forced to introduce a transcendent element in the form of that eighteenth-century device, the all-wise "legislator." It was Lycurgus who created an all-wise constitution and system of law which shaped the Spartans to virtue. "Of itself," we are told, "the people wishes the good; of itself it does not always see it."[14] Many enigmas emerge, of course, when this notion is applied to the modern nation-state. The question of how the virtue of the people is achieved in these vast societies is dealt with most cursorily by Rousseau and indeed he often expresses doubt whether social virtue is attainable in societies of this size.

In spite of its imprecision, the concept of a society in which the organised people would be able to crush all selfish individual group and factional interests and infuse its individual members with public virtue was to prove most powerful. The attempt to realise this ideal within the framework of the modern nation-state was, of course, to fall to Robespierre, St. Just and Babeuf who found that the mere elimination of established vested interests and privileges as embodied in the old order did not automatically actualise the general will. Furthermore, as legislators of the general will they soon found that Rousseau's sharp distinction between the legislator who creates the general laws of the good state but who does not attempt to implement them and the "executive power" which applies them was to prove completely inapplicable in practice. Before one could even begin to create good laws, it was necessary to eliminate the manifestation of individual, group and factional egotism as well as the cynical sophistries of vain intellectuals which interfered with the establishment of good laws.

What happens here in essence is that Robespierre, not by any intent, himself becomes the embodiment of the general will not only as a "legislator" but also as a "magistrate." It is Robespierre himself who plays this role and not the Jacobin society which itself turns out to be susceptible to selfish factionalism. It is, after all, no accident that the transcendental factor in Rousseau's "Social Contract" is not an institution but an individual—the "legislator" who by dint of his god-like "great soul" is able to embody the indivisible public spirit. Institutions, made up as they are of many individuals, are hardly indivisible and may easily become the embodiment of "partial interests." Rousseau was not yet attuned to the notion of the dynamics of history which endow institutions with a kind of dynamic historic life of their own. He must accept Montesquieu's view that "leaders produce

[14] "The Social Contract," Book II, Chap. 3, *Locke, Hume and Rousseau*, Oxford University Press, p. 274.

institutions." The Jacobin clubs were never to develop the distinctive personality later to be attributed to the Communist Party and Robespierre continually stressed that his Committee of Public Safety enjoyed its authority because of the purity and incorruptibility of its members rather than as an organisational entity.

The reign of virtue, as we know, was not established by the French Revolution and the question of why it was not established was to agitate a whole new generation of young thinkers including both the young Hegel and the young Marx. Both Hegel and Marx concluded that the "people" as a collective entity did not, in fact, embody the indivisible general virtue which Rousseau had attributed to it. It had turned out to be an agglomeration of all kinds of egoistic individual and group interests. Hegel was, of course, ultimately to find the realisation of man's higher social virtue in the modern state while Marx was to find the social bearer of general virtue to be a particular segment of modern society, the industrial proletariat. It was, in the first instance, the economic origins of the proletariat which were to turn Marx's attention to the whole historic economic process which lay behind the rise of this redemptive class. However, Marx's growing interest in technico-economic progress during the forties was not wholly due to the necessity to explain the preconditions of the existence of the proletariat. His ideal of good society was no longer simply Rousseau's ideal of civic virtue. He had developed a genuine appreciation of the values of material progress which in his good society would be a precondition of cultural richness. His new man would be socially virtuous but would also live in material comfort and appreciate his Shakespeare and Homer. The proletariat was not only the heir of Rousseau's public virtue but as a stratum deeply immersed in technical life, it would also fulfil the role of Saint Simon's industrial-scientific elite. Thus Marx's concept of the mode of production fuses together, as it were, in an unstable complex the concepts of technico-economic and moral progress.

There is, of course, implicit in Marx's class conception something like the Rousseauist conception of a class "general will." He was not, however, inclined to go into the question of how the proletarian general will would find its realisation. Unlike Rousseau, he was able to invoke a new dynamic principle, the impersonal forces of history. The unfolding mechanisms of the capitalist mode of production would themselves lead the proletariat to fulfil its historic role, to actualise both its moral and technico-economic tasks. It is in this way that the later Marx avoids the problem of class organisation, the problem of politics itself.

With Lenin, however, who devoutly accepted Marx's conception

of the historic mission of the proletariat, the problem of politics comes back to the very centre of the stage. The problem of how the general will of the proletariat is to be actualised becomes an immediate problem of political action. In Lenin's view, the virtues and capacities of the proletariat both in Russia and abroad had proven potential rather than actual and the impersonal forces of history had proven extraordinarily sluggish in carrying the proletariat along its destined path. The proletariat also required its "legislator" or its legislative vanguard to lead it on its destined path. Lenin probably never regarded himself as the living incarnation of the proletarian will. Indeed, he was quite sincere in his effort to create an organisation which would play this role. Unlike the Jacobin clubs, the Bolshevik Party[15] was to be a highly articulated organisation with a distinct corporate life of its own. Grippa is quite right. To Lenin, the secret of his party lay not only in the virtues of its members but also in the efficacy of its organisation. When one now scrutinises the writings of Lenin on party organisation, one is struck by his vehement defence of the importance of organisational forms and well-formulated rules against all detractors of "formalism."[16] One is further struck by the fact that while Lenin's "professional revolutionaries" certainly should embody all the proletarian virtues, Lenin dwells not so much on their virtues as on their professionalism, their organisational expertise. First in the science of revolution, and then after the revolution as the technico-administrative elite of the post-revolutionary society. Lenin has shifted from "spontaneity" to "consciousness" but, as in the case of Marx, Rousseau and Saint-Simon are both present in his outlook.

Yet while Lenin was most intent on creating a party institution with its own institutional charisma, the fact remains that during his lifetime it was Lenin rather than the party who embodied the proletarian general will. Again and again he turned on his own party and found it wanting. The institution had hardly replaced the leader.

When we turn to Stalin we find that he rises to power through a manipulation of the party administrative apparatus. He thus seems to provide an instance of the "institution producing the leader." Yet the fact remains that the relationship between the leader and the Party remains as problematic as ever. In the case of Stalin with his jealous greed for power one is tempted to see here simply a particular instance of the universal struggle between the despot and his own bureaucracy. Yet within the Marxist-Leninist context, however, this also involved

[15] To Robespierre the word "party" was a bad word. There ought to be no "parties" within the sovereign people. The Marxist conception of class struggle, however, when added to the notion that parties represented classes, provided a much firmer foundation for the concept of a party.

[16] See particularly *One Step Forward, Two Steps Backward.*

an extreme reluctance to share with any individual or any group the enormous, indivisible and total moral and intellectual claims attributed to the party.

In retrospect, one is tempted to add that Stalin's *de facto* downgrading of the party organisation was due not only to his own power greed and mistrust, but also to the fact that the party was unable to fulfil the tasks which Stalin felt that the times required. The "building of socialism" with its enormous emphasis on technocratic capacities naturally led Stalin to emphasise the "social engineering" aspect of the party function rather than its moral virtues. In fact, the party bureaucracy proved incompetent to perform in this capacity. If Mao was to find the party insufficiently red, Stalin found it insufficiently expert.

Nevertheless, while Stalin diminished the actual role of the party, while he formed it into a personal machine, on the conceptual level he never veered in the slightest from the Leninist conception of the centrality of the party. He claimed to the end to derive his legitimacy from the party constitution however much he may have flouted it in practice. What is more, he left the formal lines of party organisation intact. Like Lenin, he insisted that it was the institution rather than the leader which embodied the proletarian general will. Unlike Rousseau's legislator who provides a static body of good laws for all eternity, Lenin's party is required to act within the stream of history, to provide ever fresh yet infallible guidance through all the shoals and eddies of a changing world. To admit that the party's transcendental capacities are totally dependent on the haphazard emergence of great leaders is to render its claims precarious indeed. This was appreciated by Stalin just as much as by Lenin.

Turning finally to the Mao Tse-tung of the Cultural Revolution period we find first that the problem of leader and institution assumes entirely new proportions, and second that the Rousseauist ethical emphasis again achieves a clear ascendancy.

The institution of the Marxist-Leninist Party (as a world movement) has been in existence well over half a century. Yet in China it is now reiterated *ad nauseam* that the Chinese Communist Party is wholly dependent for whatever proletarian charisma it may have on the leader and his thought. (What is more, the qualities of the proletarian dictatorship which find their fountainhead in Mao Tse-tung may be shared by groups, institutions and individuals which lie outside the party.) Indeed the party as such when considered apart from Mao Tse-tung and his thought, may wholly degenerate and become another "partial interest" in the Rousseauist sense. The future of Communism is not guaranteed by the existence of the party but by the "Thought

of Mao Tse-tung." It is the internalisation of his thought which will realise general virtue and not the existence of the party.

When we turn to Mao Tse-tung's thought itself (in its cultural revolutionary interpretation) we are struck, as stated above, by the overwhelming predominance of the social-ethical. When viewed in a Western perspective, one must say that the Rousseauist element has pushed the Saint-Simonian technocratic element well into the background. The aged Mao is bent on achieving the reign of virtue as he understands virtue and remains unprepared to accept any progress of the "arts and sciences" which is not based on virtue. This does not mean, it must be stressed again, that Mao is against modernisation. On the contrary, during the Great Leap Forward he fervently hoped that the energy of organised virtue would itself spur economic development. Maoist virtue, one might say, was to play the role of a kind of collectivistic Protestant Ethic. There is, however, no reason to believe that this ethic was regarded either then or now as nothing but a means to modernisation any more than Weber's Calvinists regarded their own ethic as simply a means to economic ends.

Yet, however prominent the Rousseauist-Jacobin component in latter-day Maoism, key elements of the language remain Marxist-Leninist. "Proletariat," "bourgeoisie," "class struggle" and "dictatorship of the proletariat" are terms which occur in maddening iteration. The Maoist virtue remains "proletarian" and does not stem simply from the people or the masses. However capable the masses may be of proletarianisation, however necessary it is for "proletarian revolutionaries" to be in contact with the masses, the source of proletarian virtue lies somehow outside, above and beyond the masses just as the word "bourgeoisie" refers to forces of egotism on a world scale. The word "proletariat" still refers to some ill-defined trans-national, transcendental historic force and it is as the embodiment of this force that Mao confronts both his own people and the world. The Maoist dream of reconstituting a new world Communist movement centred in Peking remains indissolubly tied to this vocabulary.

We have spoken of Maoism within a Western perspective. It may well be suggested at this point that many of the dominant notions of the Cultural Revolution seem to suggest the greater cogency of a Chinese cultural perspective (in spite of the explicitly anti-traditional stance of the Maoist group). If we choose to personify ideas, may not Mencius be more relevant than Rousseau?

It is interesting to note that in early Meiji Japan as well as in early twentieth-century China affinities were often noted between Mencius and Rousseau. Is it possible, in fact, to make meaningful comparisons between the eighteenth-century political philosopher and the ancient

Chinese sage? Much of the prevailing historicist and social scientific dogma would reject this possibility. Yet it seems to me that comparison (which involves both difference and similarity) is, in fact, possible. To inquire why such comparison may be possible would carry us very far afield. It might simply be noted, in passing, that for some reason the ancient Chou thinkers and the eighteenth-century philosopher do, oddly enough, confront the human situation from a similar perspective, the perspective of vicarious statesmen who have prescriptions for "society" as a whole.

One is immediately struck by certain similarities in the relationship of ethics to the political realm. As in the case of Rousseau, the majority of men in Mencius are potentially good (they possess the roots [*tuan*] of goodness) but seem incapable of realising their goodness through their own efforts. In both cases the unfavourable social environment negates the possibility of such realisation. In both cases the people's ethical potentialities can be realised only through political mediation. Yet Mencius manages to avoid many of the enigmas surrounding Rousseau's abstract conception of the general will of the people. The moralising agency of his society is clearly an ethical élite and the superiority of this élite resides in the moral superiority of its individual members who are somehow able to actualise through individual self-effort their own potential virtue and wisdom.[17] Unlike the mass of mankind, these "chün-tze" are able to realise their own potentialities by "following that part of themselves which is great."[18] They are able to transcend their environment and are thus also able to transform the people below them through the power of example, education and proper policy. Thus Mencius accepts the principle of hierarchy gladly and without hesitation.

Rousseau, on the other hand, sets out from a rejection of hierarchy. His ideal society is one in which all citizens fully participate as "free" and equal citizens on the idealised ancient Roman model. The attainment of the ideal is immediately cast into doubt, however, by all sorts of tragic dilemmas. There is not only the dilemma raised in the question, "How can the multitude which often does not know what it wants because only rarely does it know what is for its own good undertake an enterprise so extensive and so difficult as the formulation of a system of laws?"[19] Mencius himself might have recognised this dilemma. There is also, however, Rousseau's clear realisation that

[17] In the ideal society of the past, the ethical initiative had been taken by single individuals, the sage-rulers Yao, Shun and Yü.

[18] *The Book of Mencius*, Pt. I, Chap. XVII–Vol. II, p. 419 in Legge's *Chinese Classics*.

[19] *The Social Contract*, Book II, Chap. VI, p. 289.

princes, magistrates and all those who govern (the "executive power") are made of the same clay as the people. Rousseau can solve his dilemmas only by introducing the *deus ex machina* of the transcendent legislator, that rare genius of unaccountable "greatness of soul" who is able to create a system of general laws which educates the people to virtue.[20] Rousseau is, after all, an heir to Western legalism and ultimately seems to believe in the rule of law. It is the law itself which plays a determining role in forming the general will.[21]

With the Jacobins, however, this sharp distinction between the legislative and executive breaks down and Robespierre must represent the general will as both legislator and magistrate. In Leninism it survives in the feeble guise of party constitutionality and legality. Here, however, we perceive the enormous contradiction between Rousseau's intentions and the unintended uses to which his doctrines have lent themselves.

When we turn to Mencius' account of the famous sage-rulers Yao, Shun and Yü, we find that the distinction between legislator and prince does not exist. These mythic figures are in a sense "legislators" in that they create or make manifest the sacred institutional framework of society but they are also the active rulers of society who stand high above the institutions which they have formed. The institutions are simply the channels through which they spread their spiritual-ethical influence. The Confucian tradition even in its Mencian interpretation is hardly anti-formalistic. Even to Mencius, the virtues of rulers and of the *chün-tze* must be channelled through an institutional setting and find their objective expression in the rules of propriety. Yet in Mencius (as opposed to Hsün-tze) it is not the institutions which mould the sage-rulers and the men of virtue; it is the sage-rulers and *chün-tze* who irradiate their ethical power through the institutions.

When one examines the idiom of the Cultural Revolution one somehow feels that the untroubled image of Mao as the fountainhead of all morality, standing high above all laws and institutions, may owe more to certain Chinese cultural perspectives than to any Western source of inspiration. One feels this also in the tremendous emphasis on the power of example attributed to such paragons as Lei Feng and Men Ho, who may, to be sure, be men of the people but who are nevertheless capable of heroic acts of ethical self-transcendence. Again, they are capable of these acts only because they draw inspiration from the ruler-sage himself.

One is further tempted to speculate that even the aged Mao's

[20] And even he should not rule. "When Lycurgus gave laws to his country he began by abdicating his royal power." *Ibid.* p. 293.

[21] Although here too we find ambiguities. Ernest Barker points out that in spite of his emphasis on law, Rousseau "felt in his bones that the nation made the law and not the law the nation." *Ibid.* p. XXXIX.

anti-formalism and anti-institutionalism may have their indigenous roots in the heterodox strains of the Chinese heroic (*yu-hsia*) tradition so vividly expressed in the epic novels which were his favourite childhood reading. Here we find the heroic bands of blood-brothers fighting for the right under leaders recognised by all for their natural qualities of leadership. The ties which bind here are not the institutional forms of the corrupt traditional establishment but the moral cement of shared sentiments. These literary images must blend easily in the leader's mind with the actual experience of the Hunan-Kiangsi and Yenan days.

In all of this the Chinese perspective may explain much which cannot be explained in terms of a purely Western perspective. There are, however, areas in which the particular Chinese perspectives and the particular Western perspectives, far from being mutually exclusive, prove to be mutually reinforcing. There are also areas where only the Western perspective can adequately account for a new reality. The concept of the masses as active and total participants in the whole politic process (whatever may be the actual situation) has, of course, become an essential part of the "Thought of Mao Tse-tung." As in the case of Rousseau, Mao Tse-tung's masses are the masses not necessarily as they are but as they "ought to be" and there can be no doubt of the leader's aspiration to make them what they ought to be. They are to be made public spirited and their virtue is no longer to be passive and negative, but active and dynamic. It is to be a moral energy consolidated in the service of the nation. What is more. this moral energy is to be unified in a positive aggressive struggle against all the forces of evil. Here both the nationalist motif of Rousseau and transnational image of Marxism-Leninism are united into one.

One could go on in this scrutiny of Western and Chinese perspectives. Perhaps of more significance than the question of cultural origin is the fact that we are here dealing with issues that have now assumed a transcultural significance. The fact that groups of the young in heart of the modern West profess to find in the Mao of the Cultural Revolution (by a painfully selective interpretation) answers to their own discontents points to this transcultural aspect. On the one hand they respond to the Maoist anti-institutionalism and anti-formalism. On the other, they respond to the Rousseauist emphasis on morality in reaction to the preponderantly technocratic version of the theory of progress. In responding to their version of Mao, they are thus responding to an element of their own cultural past.