

The intellectuals and Vietnam

WASHINGTON:

The war in Vietnam has brought to the surface again a mysterious phenomenon. This is the peculiar fatuousness which the profoundly anti-intellectual Communist system seems to inspire in a good many American intellectuals and would-be intellectuals.

At least until 1948, it was fashionable among many intellectuals to admire, or find excuses for, the system presided over by that ferocious enemy of the free intellect, Joseph Stalin. This fatuousness of an older generation of intellectuals provided useful ammunition for the home-grown anti-intellectual yahoos, like Sen. Joseph McCarthy. Nowadays it is becoming fashionable to proclaim that Mao Tse-tung's version of Communism is the wave of the future in Asia, and to castigate the American Government for its blind refusal to permit the future's wave to roll over South Vietnam.

From Berkeley to Harvard, the chic thing for the "politically aware" professor to do is to conduct "teach-ins" on the iniquities of "American imperialism" in Vietnam, or to march in protest demonstrations, or, for the less dashing, to sign "open letters" to the President, like the remarkably silly open letter of protest recently signed by 149 Yale professors.

Surely this is a mysterious business. Logically, liberal-minded intellectual persons should hate and fear Mao's Communism as instinctively as they hated and feared Hitler's Nazism. For as an idea-killer, an enemy of the free mind, Mao outdoes Hitler and Stalin combined.

The anti-intellectual campaign in Communist China, which began in earnest in 1963, is now reaching a peak of intensity. Chinese intellectuals have been bluntly warned that they are suspect, not only individually, but as a class. Some months ago Hu Yao-pang, secretary of the Communist Youth League, announced that "intellectuals always belong to certain social classes and serve the interests of these classes."

Warnings to intellectuals are now constantly reiterated in the Communist press. In January of this year, for example, *Red Flag*, the Chinese Communist theoretical journal, thundered against "intellectuals who refuse thought reform, refuse to integrate with the masses, and become spiritual aristocrats perched proudly high above the toiling masses."

According to a leading Government expert

on Communist China, the idea that Mao wants above all to kill is "the concept of 'humanism'—i.e., the fraternity of peoples, human dignity, happiness, and individualism." Humanism has become a respectable concept among Soviet intellectuals since the post-Stalin thaw. Therefore Mao Tse-tung is determined to "wall off Chinese intellectuals from any contact with currents of relative moderation in the Soviet bloc," and the whole concept of humanism is now denounced in China as a bourgeois distortion of Marxism-Leninism.

The attack on humanism has its superficially amusing aspects. For example, Professor Ma Yen-sheng, of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, recently published a long letter of abject "self-criticism." Professor Ma wrote that he had found himself of late increasingly "filled with bourgeois sentiments." He began to have strange notions about "the idea of universal love," and even to dream of a world "filled with friendly love," and forever at peace. Thus was his mind increasingly infected with "bourgeois sentiments."

And how did the infection start? Largely as a result of listening to the degenerate, Western, bourgeois work, Beethoven's Ninth Symphony.

A fondness for "bourgeois" music is deeply suspect, and instantly marks an intellectual as a candidate for a "Mental-Reform-Through-Labor Camp." Debussy, against whose music Mao is said to have conceived a particularly violent prejudice, is even more dangerous than Beethoven. The periodical *Peoples' Music* recently announced that the music of the Chinese patriotic oratorio, *The Long March*, had been completely rewritten because in its original form it recalled Debussy's degenerate bourgeois style.

Writers must be especially wary of the taint of bourgeois influence and humanism. *The Chinese Journal of Literature and Art* has warned writers that the "writing of middle-character stories" is proof of such taint. A "middle character" is someone "not perfect and not totally bad." In Chinese Communist literature, middle characters (i.e., human beings) no longer exist. All characters must be either perfect "toilers and peasants," or wholly evil "class enemies."

In last October's issue of *China Youth Daily*,

the following sharp warning to a leading Communist Chinese philosopher appeared: "The kind of life advocated by Comrade Feng Ting, which would provide good things to eat and wear, good places to live in, and cordial relations between husband and wife and between parents and children does not accord with the Communist ideal."

On the contrary, the "Communist ideal" demands that the youth of China make a "class analysis" of their parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles and other relations. Deviationist ideas are to be reported immediately to the local block officer or farm party secretary. Even jokes may smack of deviation—a Peking newspaper warns that some jokes "savor strongly of feudalism and capitalism."

Nor are the dead immune. *China Youth* tells its readers that "we should make a class analysis of those who have died." Such a class analysis seems likely to lead to the removal of the famous and beautiful tombs of Hangchow. For these tombs "are the graves of poets, scholars and courtesans, and are therefore . . . serving merely the purpose of spreading the foul odor of the reactionary ruling classes . . . and must be removed."

How is one to avoid being sent to a "Mental-Reform-Through-Labor Camp" as a result of a negative class analysis? Very simple:

"[We must] use the Thought of Mao Tse-tung to analyze . . . events. If they correspond with the Thought of Mao Tse-tung, they are right. We must support, believe, praise them. If not, they are wrong . . . we must expose and attack them." George Orwell's Big Brother asked for no more total an abdication of man's right to think for himself.

Perhaps the "Thought of Mao Tse-tung" is indeed the wave of the future in Asia, and the American effort to contain Asian Communism is therefore futile, as such intellectuals as Dr. Hans Morgenthau preach. But it does seem mysterious that so many American intellectuals look forward with complacency—even positive relish—to the Communist victory in Asia, which they regard as inevitable. For they are looking forward, of course, to the rapid spread of a system which means the murder of the free mind.

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SEP 15/68