

# Excerpts

## TWO FACTIONS

The "revisionists" or the Moscow-oriented faction seems to have adopted the parliamentary form of struggle, using infiltration and every legal means, including participation in elections and the manipulation of front organizations and media, to achieve its ends.

The Maoist faction, on the other hand, although it is not inexpert in the use of media and front organizations, lays great emphasis on violence, and now terrorism.

These two factions are divided in their approaches to the capture of state power. They are irreconcilable. But both are dedicated to the establishment of a totalitarian political order.

These factions, as I have noted, are expert in the use, or manipulation, of media. Their vocabulary has been adopted even by people who know next to nothing about either communism or revolution. In some reformist enclaves, it has even become fashionable to consort with these revolutionaries. "Revolutionary," in fact, is now an "in" word.

## REVOLUTION FROM THE CENTER

An intellectual attachment to old political categories will find in the idea of a government-initiated revolution a contradiction in term. A government, according to the old wisdom, cannot make revolution

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because it cannot revolt against itself. The common axiom derived from this semantic proposition is that there can never be "revolution from above."

It is idle talk in this context of the threat of revolution; what must be considered rather is its challenges. The revolution is not about to come; it is here. It is not a potential but an actual problem. The meaningful question, however, is: Revolution for what?

Many of us do not see the actuality of revolution because they wait for the classical sign: the nationwide clash of arms. But the violence of revolution is there, in the language, emotions and marches of the rebellious groups, except that these do not fall within the common definition of revolution.

## DEMOCRATIC REVOLUTION

Jacobin revolutions liquidate an entire ruling class and its governing machinery, resulting in the destruction of an existing social order and its replacement by a new one. Most modern revolutions are Jacobin because of the illegitimacy and the oppressiveness of the governments against which they were made.

Liberal revolutions, which are rare, democratize or radicalize an existing social order, and while they may not be completely devoid of violence, they achieve their ends by constitutional and legal means. A case in point was the Bloodless English Revolution, which transformed English society with the enfranchisement of the emerging classes. As Jacobin revolutions destroy closed societies, liberal revolutions democratize open societies.

The dominant characteristic of our society which demands radical change is the economic gap between the rich and the poor. We find here a wide consensus that includes the rich themselves. This gap is the constant theme of political oratory and social criticism. There is a general agreement that this gap must be narrowed down if only for the sake of social stability.

The permeation of oligarchic "values" is also managed through the control of the means of mass communication. It is no longer a secret that the displeasure of the oligarchs is communicated through radio and television commentaries and newspaper columns. The media have become the weapon of a special class rather than serve as a public forum. The so-called "editorial prerogative" has been used to justify what is best described as "selective journalism."

The freedom of the press is sanctimoniously invoked whenever the work of media is criticized. But is its hospitality to the most spurious statements and the most outrageous allegations a fair step in, say, improving the quality of political debate, or keeping the people well-informed? Do media not promote decadence of the masses by reducing the discussion of national issues to the level of entertainment? The usual excuse is the "low taste" of the masses, but pandering to, exploiting it, assuming the judgment to be true, cannot deserve the abused name of "public service."

It is quite revealing that the very radicals whom the media pretend to sympathize with allude to it as the "reactionary press." The sweeping accusation is that the press will lengthily and noisily commit itself to the peripheral issues of our society but not to the fundamental ones: for example, private property.

We tend to ask only one question, "Why is the President impatient with this person?" Let us ask occasionally, "Why is this person apoplectic about the President?" The President has no time to quarrel, but anyone, any organized group, has all the time to quarrel with him. The reason is simple: some of his decisions fall under the zero-sum principle: the gain of one group is the loss of another. Many other decisions, especially those which are the results of compromise and accommodation (and this is what democratic leadership often is), although beneficial on the whole, are unsatisfactory to the competing parties. Finally, the fruits of policy, especially when it involves the national interest, take time to be discernible. When they are harmful, the denunciation is loud; when they are beneficial, there is, if at all, but faint praise.

I believe that in our precarious democracy, which tends towards an oligarchy because of the power of the wealthy few over the impoverished many, there remains a bright hope for a radical and sweeping change without the risk of violence. I do not believe that violent revolution is either necessary or effective in an existing democracy.

I believe that our realization of the common peril, our complete understanding of our national condition, will unite us in a democratic revolution that will strengthen our democratic institutions and offer, finally, our citizens the opportunity of making the most and the best of themselves.

I believe that democracy is the revolution, that it is today's revolution.

This is my fighting faith.