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DEPARTMENT OF STATE
AIRGRAM

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TO : ALL AMERICAN DIPLOMATIC AND CONSULAR POSTS

DATE: JUN 5 2 07 PM '67

FROM : DEPARTMENT OF STATE

SUBJECT : Communist China's Cultural Revolution

REF : A. CA 5108 of January 12, 1967
B. State's 144624 of February 27, 1967
C. CA 5240 of January 17, 1967

1. There is attached a memorandum updating the Cultural Revolution in Communist China since February.
2. The memorandum can be drawn upon for discussions on developments in Communist China. The guidelines on public statements regarding internal developments in China in Reference C still obtain.

Enclosure RUSK
Memorandum

CONSULATE OF THE UNITED STATES
OF AMERICA
JUN 22 1967
PORTO ALEGRE, BRAZIL

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 In Out

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THE COURSE OF THE CULTURAL REVOLUTIONIntroduction

1. During the last four months the Cultural Revolution has continued its tortured course in Mainland China, and the final outcome seems even more distant and uncertain than it did at the beginning of February. Contributing to this impression is the clearer picture which has emerged of the ultimate objectives in Mao's mind when he instituted the Cultural Revolution--the establishment of an Utopian communism based on the broadest democracy held together more by the commonly shared and implicitly accepted code of ideology and ethics known as Maoism than by rigid control and organizational forms. At the same time the outstanding development since the peak of chaos in January has been the constantly increasing military involvement in the politics and administration of Communist China. Mao seemingly remains bent on having his extensive democracy, even if he must impose it and maintain it through martial law.

Mao's Utopia

2. The course of the Cultural Revolution at the end of 1966 and early 1967 has been marked by experimentation with various new forms of government. The most radical of these was the January dallying with the creation of Communes explicitly based on the Paris Commune pattern. The present prototype of Cultural Revolution Government is the provisional "three way alliance" of revolutionary mass organizations, revolutionary cadres, and the People's Liberation Army. The "three way alliance" represents a retreat from the commune ideal but in theory preserves a degree of "extensive democracy." The purpose of the three way alliance is to establish organs of power that are "revolutionary, representative and endowed with proletarian authority." This experimentation of the last few months lends credence to the belief that Maoist philosophy is intended to set forth objectives to be put into practice rather than merely esoteric ideals. A so-far insoluble problem is the discovery of bureaucratic forms that will achieve, not defeat, these ends.

3. Basically, Mao emphasizes the "masses" as the base of authority and the source of all creativity--creativity in Mao's mind being synonymous with his own views on policy. Organized in some manner along the lines of the Paris Commune, the glue to hold society together will be provided by acceptance of Mao's thoughts as the new ethic

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replacing Confucianism which in much the same way filled the same function in the old China. The masses, too, will be transformed. Mao seems to think in terms of the creation of a new society in which every man is a "Yenan man"--concurrently a farmer, a factory worker, and a soldier, frugal and free from lust for material incentives.

4. The increasing apotheosis of Mao and his thoughts, the elevation of Mao to be "the greatest Marxist-Leninist of our era," and of his thought as "a completely new stage in the development of Marxism-Leninism," and many other aspects of the Cultural Revolution appear to support this thesis, as does the "unprecedented opposition" which the Cultural Revolution has faced, and the failure of the Revolution to attain consolidation.

The Role of the PLA

5. The chaos brought about in January by the high tide of revolution, the breakdown in law and order, the battered state of the normal administrative and control apparatus provided by the Party and Government, the deteriorating condition of the economy, and above all the need for direction and purpose to carry out spring planting, all contributed to Mao's ordering the PLA into the Cultural Revolution in late January and to the PLA's subsequent actions.

6. The first result of the PLA's active role, as opposed to the passive role it had played before, was to call a halt to the growing anarchy of the times. Initially the Army acted only to prevent physical combat between struggling groups, between revolutionary groups and so-called reactionaries or counterrevolutionaries, or between competing revolutionary factions. The Army, then, tended to act in terms of restoring order. This had the general effect of favoring the status quo for at least the lower level of established authority and suppression of the Maoist revolutionary rebel groups.

7. The second result of the PLA's involvement was the sudden turning off of those manifestations of the Cultural Revolution which had been most disruptive. Overnight the Paris-type Communes being set up with so much fanfare were disbanded and the "three way alliance" proclaimed as the new model--an alliance in which it rapidly became clear that in practice the PLA role was the dominant one. Emphasis again concentrated on production and stability, rather than on revolution. The foot was definitely off the Cultural Revolution accelerator, and more and more responsibility in broader and increasingly non-military and security areas, devolved on the PLA.

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8. The PLA, through default by the battered Party control mechanism or through intention, has assumed a key role in Peking and throughout all China. It has the control position in those few provinces and municipalities where the three-way alliance has been established, a position of leadership compounded by the inability of the masses to remain united and by the cadres' disorganization and demoralization. In all areas the PLA is carrying out, in addition to military and public security responsibilities, a broad range of administrative and economic tasks. Along with these responsibilities the PLA has been granted (or has taken) more and more authority.

9. Inevitably, first the Cultural Revolution, then the Army's involvement in it, and finally the Army's conduct of its new responsibilities has caused strains in its relationship with the civilian leaders and violence to the cohesion of the PLA's own top leadership. Factionalism and purges have resulted, affecting important military figures. Nevertheless, the PLA has generally responded to Peking directives and authorities, although the extent to which it shapes these directives is not known. Certainly its potential to set policy, if it so desires, has been increased.

10. There is no evidence that the Cultural Revolution has affected China's advanced weapons program, and no specific evidence that there has been any effect on the PLA's military preparedness. However, if the trend of assuming more and more non-combat responsibilities is maintained, and this seems inevitable, the PLA may become over-committed and its combat effectiveness must suffer.

Areas of Turbulence

11. There appear to be two distinct areas of turbulence which the PLA's involvement has not been able to control. The first of these is in Peking's relations with the far-flung marches of China. Following the PLA's entry into the strife, some sort of at least temporary arrangement was reached with the regional satraps of Sinkiang and Tibet, arrangements which appeared to be on their terms rather than on Peking's and which provided for only lip service to the Cultural Revolution. These arrangements appear to satisfy the central leadership so far. Peking, however, has so far been unable to cope in the same way with the situation in the southwest, particularly in Szechwan. Li Ching-Ch'uan's position of opposition to the Cultural Revolution through January seemed to coincide with that of other powerful military-party leaders in Sinkiang and Tibet. Despite the compromises reached elsewhere, Peking announced in April the removal of Li, and his

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out in Szechwan.

and there is still no evidence that Peking's edicts have been carried out in Szechwan. Reports of serious and bloody civil strife. These reports, although probably exaggerated to discredit and explain the firing of Li, continue, and there is still no evidence that Peking's edicts have been carried out in Szechwan.

12. The second area of turbulence is in the Cultural Revolution itself. Despite the efforts of the PLA to unify the masses in order to provide the revolutionary rebel ingredient of the three-way alliance, Peking has been unable to establish the alliance in more than four provinces and the two municipalities of Peking and Shanghai because of the lack of this unity. Even where the alliance has been established, unity has not been maintained and there have been reports of rioting and fighting between rival pro-Maoist revolutionary rebel and red guard groups. Constant regime appeals for unity and reference to anarchy give evidence of the seriousness of the situation in the areas attested to be the most advanced towards the realization of Mao's Utopia.

13. In addition to the areas of turbulence which the Army has not been able to control, the involvement of the PLA in the Cultural Revolution and in agricultural and industrial production has created tension between the PLA and the masses that has given the regime cause for concern. Exhortations through the editorial columns of the press have increasingly urged the masses to accept and support the PLA in pursuit of its mission and have warned the PLA to distinguish between correct and incorrect exercise of its functions.

14. In terms of all China, however, the PLA's involvement has generally halted the rapid degeneration of law, order, and stability resulting from the licensing of workers and peasants to attack authority. But action to restore order has persistently run counter to the aims and objectives of the small coterie of Mao's followers dedicated to the maintenance of the revolutionary momentum. The "three way alliance" itself, in which the PLA has the controlling position, the cadres contribute their expertise, and the revolutionary rebels are subordinated, already represents a serious compromise with the objectives of the revolution. Thus, besides the struggle between what may be described as the Maoists and the anti-Maoists, there is within the Maoist camp itself a conflict between those who want to push the revolution and those who want to maintain stability.

15. Meanwhile the inertia of China remains, an inertia which probably supplies the vast preponderance of opposition which Mao and his plans are encountering. Life goes on much as always for most of the inhabitants, and a central government continues in being that seems to speak and negotiate for all of China.

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16. The most profound effects of the Cultural Revolution, however, remain to be felt. The sanctity and authority of the Party and the leadership have been seared. The disenchantment of the people for the recurring burdens and demands of communism must have increased, while their respect for and fear of the control mechanisms must have suffered. There is already some evidence that in listing the sins with which Mao's opponents have been charged, the Maoists themselves are awakening the masses to the fact that their own aspirations conform more with those of the anti-Maoists. For instance, the peasants are now learning that Liu, not Mao, was responsible for the private plots they have been allowed. The structural disorganization and the confusion of mind brought on by the Cultural Revolution have made it clear that any new leader who emerges after Mao or his Cultural Revolution have run its course will have difficulty restoring unity and discipline, and certainly the expectation of a reasonably orderly transition of power after Mao's death cannot now be seriously considered a likelihood.

Effects on the Economy

17. The Cultural Revolution was imposed on an economy which had performed well in 1966. The spirit of confidence and well-being which should have pervaded through the spring of 1967 was destroyed, however, by events in the latter part of 1966 and the extreme actions of January resulted in actual disruptions and breakdowns. The costs of these disruptions, of the paralyzed or incompetent new management, and of the general loss in authority and coordination are impossible to quantify, but must have been significant. Moreover, the military, now charged with wide economic responsibilities, are unlikely to discover particular ability in the management of the economy.

18. Foreign trade has tended to level off, and has not been increasing at the rate which it experienced in 1966, which might well have been expected to continue had the Cultural Revolution not interfered with normal developments. The effects of the crisis in Hong Kong, responsibility for the development of which must rest with the Cultural Revolution, on trade and foreign exchange earnings, are not yet clear.

The Dangers of Irrationality

19. The current crisis in Hong Kong and Peking's response offer us some insight into the effects of the Cultural Revolution on policy and decision making in Peking. In this instance it would appear that a policy of long standing--i.e. to do nothing to disturb the economic confidence or well-being of Hong Kong because of the economic benefits

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derived by China--was called into question when the Hong Kong labor disputes gave rise to leftwing rioting. The Foreign Ministry statement of May 15 which supported the rioters and levied demands against the British was the result of this reconsideration. We do not know how far-reaching the decision was with regard to pushing the British, but at a minimum the weight of pragmatic economic arguments for the first time did not carry the day against the ideological arguments for supporting the Hong Kong communists and humiliating the colonial British.

20. Certainly the Cultural Revolution, with its accompanying confusion, tension and suspicion, is neither conducive to rational, considered decisions nor to the presentation or taking into account of pragmatic arguments. Additionally, the press of internal events and the concentration on the internal struggle has limited initiatives and probably forced a great deal of extemporizing.

21. There have been other, although less important, aberrations in foreign policy behaviour recently--claims of shoot-downs of U.S. planes where none in fact occurred, the puzzle of the Simon Malley interviews, major preparations in Peking in late May for demonstrations against the Soviet Embassy, demonstrations which never took place. Taken together, they raise the question whether the irrationality in internal behavior which has marked the Cultural Revolution is not beginning to carry over into China's foreign affairs.

Prospects

22. From the zenith of revolutionary activity in January, the immediate targets of the Cultural Revolution have been narrowed until now they are confined to a very small handful of "those in power pursuing the capitalist course," and May Day provided a rostrum on which many previously under severe attack were displayed as a token of unity. Intriguing reports are received from time to time indicating that "the small handful" have not been totally dispossessed. Liu Shao-ch'i and Teng Hsiao-p'ing are reported to appear at Party meetings and argue their case. Aside from constitutional niceties, presumably Mao either fears the consequences or does not wish them destroyed but prefers them to remain in a continuing state of obloquy for his Cultural Revolution purposes; the PLA, while possibly resisting their total destruction, finds the attacks on them useful in providing one unifying factor for the squabbling and anarchic revolutionary masses.

23. Periodic efforts to restore the momentum of the Cultural Revolution testify to the dedication of Mao and his small coterie.

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These efforts also testify to the difficulty encountered by those who have assumed operational control, articulated by Chou En-lai, to pursue an even course while continuing to prop up Mao and pay at least lip-service to his cultural revolution. The prospects are for continuing swings of the pendulum, for continuing confusion.

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