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NOT FOR PUBLICATION

Five Anti Campaign III: Position of the Bourgeoisie  
INSTITUTE OF CURRENT WORLD AFFAIRS

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Hong Kong  
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Dear Mr. Rogers:

The Five Anti Campaign against the bourgeoisie, staged by the Chinese Communists during the first half of this year, has fundamentally altered the position in national life of an entire class. Despite protestations to the contrary, the Chinese Communists in effect have labelled the bourgeoisie as a class enemy of the regime, allowed to exist only on sufferance. This fact puts a new light upon the "coalition of four classes" which the Communists assert is the basis of "New Democracy" in China.

The Chinese Communists' program is based upon the conception of revolution by stages, in which Communism can only be achieved after several distinct preliminary stages. According to this theory, the destruction of "semi-feudalism and semi-colonialism" in China must be followed by a period of "New Democracy" before the final moves toward Socialism and Communism. During the period of "New Democracy", the regime is supposed to be built upon the foundation of a class coalition of workers, peasants, petty bourgeoisie, and national bourgeoisie.

The preamble of the Common Program, a general statement of national policy adopted by the People's Political Consultative Conference on September 29, 1949, reads as follows: "The Chinese People's Democratic Dictatorship is the state power of the people's democratic united front composed of the Chinese working class, peasantry, petty bourgeoisie, national bourgeoisie and other patriotic democratic elements, based on the alliance of workers and peasants and led by the working class."

There has never been any question that as an "exploiting class" the bourgeoisie would eventually be eliminated, but the Chinese Communists have maintained that during the period of "New Democracy" - which they have vaguely described as being a fairly long period - the bourgeoisie have an essential contribution to make and therefore must be included in the class coalition of the regime.

All of this is not quite so theoretical as it might appear on the surface. What it means is that the Chinese Communists have conceded that they are dependent upon the skills of China's industrialists and businessmen during the period of economic development and industrialization which must precede future socialization. They have recognized that the country's economic skills are concentrated in the hands of the bourgeoisie and that for this reason the bourgeoisie would be difficult to dispense with, at least until the bureaucracy of the "people's democratic dictatorship" is capable of taking over their functions.

At the time of their assumption of power, therefore, the Chinese Communists made many reassuring statements to dispel the anxieties of China's industrial and business leaders and to obtain their acquiescence and cooperation. On July 1, 1949, for example, Mao Tse-tung in On People's Democratic Dictatorship asserted: "The national bourgeoisie is of great importance during the present stage....We must unite the national bourgeoisie into the common struggle. Our current policy is to control capitalism, not to eliminate it." He added, however: "But the national bourgeoisie cannot serve as a leader of the revolution and should not occupy a major position in the state administration. This is because the social and economic status of the national bourgeoisie has determined its weak character, its lack of foresight and of sufficient courage."

At the same time, while recognizing the need for obtaining the cooperation of China's industrial and commercial classes, top Communist leaders were worried about the possible influence of these classes upon the revolution as it transferred its center from rural China to the cities, and Mao himself, in March, 1949, warned the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party to beware of an attack from the "sugar-coated bullets" of the bourgeoisie.

The conciliatory statements and initially mild policies of the Chinese Communists had a reassuring effect upon many Chinese businessmen, however, and the majority of China's bourgeoisie attempted to make an adjustment to the new regime after it came to power.

At the beginning of this year these people received a rude shock. They had been prepared for it somewhat by the fact that the Communists had steadily become tougher in their treatment of the bourgeoisie, but the abrupt change in the tone of Communist statements came as a shock. In January the Chinese Communists began a direct propaganda attack on the bourgeoisie. The attack started in connection with the Three Anti Campaign, which was designed to purify the ranks of the bureaucracy, and it concentrated at first on combatting the "corrosion" of the bourgeoisie. This soon developed into the Five Anti Campaign, however, which on the ideological front was characterized by direct and bitter denunciations of the bourgeoisie as a class.

One can only speculate about the real motives for this open ideological warfare against the bourgeoisie, since it isn't possible to talk things over with Mao and his colleagues these days. Probably there was genuine concern about increasing corruption and slackening discipline in the regime's bureaucracy, attributed to the corrupting influence of "bourgeois thought". There is no doubt that the ideological attack on the bourgeoisie has had the effect of ostracising members of the bourgeois class, discrediting their ideas, discouraging friendly relations between them and party or government personnel, and reducing the influence of "bourgeois thought" upon the regime. It is also possible that Chinese Communist leaders decided that it was time to check any possible growth of political power or influence on the part of the bourgeoisie. Of the groups or classes which under the old regime had exercised significant political influence, the bourgeoisie was the only one which prior to 1952 had escaped direct attack by the Communists. And although there was every indication that the bourgeoisie was passive and submissive under the Chinese Communist regime, it was nevertheless true that they maintained a certain amount of economic power and did not really

accept the new state ideology which aimed at their ultimate liquidation at some future date. Consequently, their very existence has presented the theoretical possibility of political opposition to the regime. The Five Anti Campaign has now weakened the economic basis of their influence and at the same time, in ideological terms, has labelled their ideas as dangerous and subversive, thereby greatly reducing the possibility of any future political opposition being inspired or led by them.

The opening shot of the attack against the bourgeoisie was fired by Premier Chou En-lai in a speech made on January 5 of this year to the Standing Committee of the People's Political Consultative Conference. It was mild in comparison to the barrage which followed, but it started things off. The official New China News Agency reported: "Chou stated that the national bourgeoisie has its active progressive side, that is, having been oppressed by imperialism, feudalism and bureaucratic capitalism, part of them participated in and sympathized with the people's liberation struggle during a certain period, and to a certain extent, after liberation, gradually participated in the construction of people's China and played a certain active role under state leadership, but the national bourgeoisie of China also has its dark and decadent side, that is, having many ties with the imperialist, feudal, bureaucratic and compradore economy and at the same time, like the bourgeoisie of all countries in the world, having the nature of seeking only profit, benefitting at the expense of others and speculating, a number of them after liberation....often stole state assets, endangered people's interests and attempted to corrupt public functionaries through the practice of bribery, were guilty of swindling, profiteering, smuggling and tax evasion, in pursuit of the private interests of a few individuals."

Po Yi-p'ao, North China party chief, made the point more clearly in a speech five days later. "The campaign against corruption, waste, and bureaucracy", he said, "is....a struggle against the decadent thoughts of the bourgeoisie and also a determined counter-offensive against the attack of the bourgeois class against the working class and the Communist Party for the past three years."

These statements were followed by a huge volume of similar ones and a flood of propaganda against the bourgeoisie, and as the Five Anti Campaign developed the tone became increasingly denunciatory. Ch'en Yi in Shanghai said: "This is a fight against the enemy, a fierce counter-attack against the trap of corruption prepared by the enemy." Yeh Chien-ying in South China said: "After thirty years hard struggle we defeated our enemy, but one more enemy still remains and that is bourgeois class thought."

Among the bitterest statements were those in the periodical Study (Hsueh Hsi), leading high-level theoretical magazine in China. An article in the February 10 issue spoke of the "fierce attack on the Chinese working class and the Chinese Communist Party" and "the reactionary, dark, and deteriorated phases of operation of the bourgeois class". It concluded by stating that although bourgeois thought is "not restrained by law" at present, it "is not permitted to be spread about freely or to undermine or weaken the leadership of the working class ideology". The March 1 issue of the same magazine contained an article which said: "The lust for gold has led them (the members of the bourgeoisie) to sink to such depths that

they are more poisonous than snakes, more ferocious than tigers and wolves." Their only salvation, the magazine maintained, was to "confess their guilt in time....Especially should they denounce others so as to prove that they themselves have returned to the people's standpoint."

The peak was reached in the March 16 issue of Study, in an article by Ai Ssu-ch'i, best-known Chinese Communist writer of popularized Marxist philosophy, who some months previously had written an article maintaining that the bourgeoisie had a progressive as well as a reactionary side, a thesis he now completely repudiated. "The movement against corruption, against waste, and against bureaucratism", he wrote, "is a determined counter-offensive against the ferocious attack of the bourgeois class, a fierce battle between the ideology of the working class and the ideology of the bourgeois class. This struggle has fully bared the true face of the ideology of the bourgeois class and has enabled us to understand clearly the extent of the reactionary, rotten and ugly nature of the ideology of the bourgeois class. It does not possess any progressive and active elements, and it definitely cannot constitute a force for the promotion of the development of the revolutionary enterprise of the Chinese people. On the other hand, it actually produces the serious effect of erosion and disintegration of the revolutionary forces." He went on to say: "The bourgeois class is an exploiting class. The exploitation of the toiling masses on the basis of the system of private ownership under capitalism, and the making of profits, constitute the material living condition on which the bourgeois class exists. The bourgeois class must undermine the material interests of the working class and other toiling masses for its own existence and development. The class status of the bourgeois class is antithetical to the interests of the toiling masses."

Toward the end of the Five Anti Campaign these attacks moderated in tone, and Communist leaders began making assurances to the bourgeoisie that the campaign was not designed to wipe them out and calling upon them to cooperate "under the leadership of the state". They said that the Communist Party would be "magnanimous" for the present, but they also warned that in the future, even though during the period of "New Democracy" the "bourgeois class is allowed a rational existence", there would be less tolerance of corrosive influences. Finally, they asserted that despite all the denunciations, the bourgeoisie still belonged to the class coalition of the regime.

The Communists claim, therefore, that nothing has been changed, that the bourgeoisie can still exist, and that the revolution will march forward under the banner of a class coalition which still includes them. In actual fact, however, a cloud of distrust and suspicion now hangs over the bourgeoisie, and this has already influenced the treatment which the bureaucracy of the regime metes out to them as well as their attitudes toward the regime.

It is quite certain that the business class and others lumped under the classification of bourgeoisie in China will never again be given the same latitude, or be treated with the same degree of relative mildness, as they were prior to the Five Anti Campaign.

The members of the bourgeoisie themselves now realize that they are on parole, for as long as the Chinese Communists consider them to be useful in an economic sense and harmless in a political sense. The overwhelming evidence presented by people now coming to Hong Kong from the mainland indicates that the Five Anti Campaign destroyed the remaining hopes and illusions of businessmen, and that for the first time the majority of them are completely cowed and passively hostile to the Communist regime. They have the feeling that they are living on borrowed time.

This means that the bourgeois class in China can be expected to drag its feet in the future even more than it has in the past. The Chinese Communists can force them to work for the regime, but performance under duress is likely to be less efficient than when there was some reason for hope and initiative.

Sincerely yours,

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