

WE ARE CRITICS OF THE OLD WORLD
(8 June 1966)

The rapid and vigorous development of China's great proletarian cultural revolution has caused a furor in the world.

Some people say: "The 700 million Chinese are all critics."

Irrespective of who says this and whether it makes them happy or unhappy, this saying reflects the fact that China's masses of workers, peasants, and soldiers and revolutionary cadres and intellectuals have started to criticize the old world, old things, and old thinking on an unprecedented scale, using as their weapon the thought of Mao Tse-tung.

We criticize the system of exploitation, the exploiting classes, imperialism, modern revisionism, all reactionaries, landlords, rich peasants, counterrevolutionaries, bad elements, and rightists.

We criticize the representatives of the bourgeoisie and bourgeois "scholars and authorities."

We criticize the bourgeois conception of history, bourgeois academic theories, bourgeois education, journalism, and theories of art and literature and all bad plays, films, and works of literature and art.

In sum, we criticize the old world, the old ideology, and culture, and old customs and habits which imperialism and all exploiting classes use to poison the minds of the working people; we criticize all nonproletarian ideology, all reactionary ideology which is antagonistic to Marxism-Leninism and to Mao Tse-tung's thought.

Why should we criticize all this:

It is absolutely necessary for the consolidation of the dictatorship of the proletariat and the building of socialism and communism, and it corresponds to the laws of historical development. Lenin held that after the overthrow of the bourgeoisie, for a long period its strength surpasses that of the proletariat, and particularly in the field of ideology; for a long time its influence is greater and remains very stubborn. And it uses this in every way to make ideological preparations and get public opinion ready for the restorations of capitalism. This is fully illustrated by the sharp and protracted struggles on the ideological and cultural front between the two classes and two roads in the 17 years since the liberation of China, and especially by the current struggle which has become very prominent between the bourgeoisie plotting a restoration and the proletariat opposing a restoration.

Chairman Mao told us long ago that everything reactionary is the same: If you don't hit it, it won't fall. It is the same with sweeping the floor: Where the broom does not reach, there the dust does not vanish by itself. Everything in the world is the same.

If we want to build the new world we must destroy the old; if we want to create the new ideology and culture of socialism and communism we must subject the old bourgeois ideology and culture, and the influence they exert, to thorough going criticism and clear them out.

The essence of Marxism-Leninism is critical and revolutionary. Its essential points are criticism, struggle, and revolution. What we practice is the militant philosophy of dialectical materialism. Struggle is life. The more we go ahead along the correct orbit of struggle, the greater our fighting power and ability to push our great cause forward.

Chairman Mao has often emphasized that "there is no construction without destruction, no flowing without damming, and no moving forward without a holding back." Destruction here means criticism, means revolution. This necessarily involves reasoning, and reasoning is construction. The formation and development of Marxism-Leninism and of Mao Tse-tung's thought has taken place in the incessant struggle to destroy the ideological system of the bourgeoisie. Chairman Mao says: "What is correct always develops in the course of struggle with what is wrong. The true, the good, and the beautiful always exist in comparison with the false, the evil, and the ugly, and grow in struggle with the latter."

On whom must the work of criticism depend? On the broadest masses of the people, on the workers, peasants, and soldiers, the revolutionary cadres and the revolutionary intellectuals. During the revolutionary war, the people used weapons to criticize the old world and seize power; since victory, they have been using criticism as their weapon against all the evils left over by imperialism and the landlord and bourgeois classes. Only when all the 700 million people take up the sharpest of all weapons, Mao Tse-tung's thought and engage in criticism can there be a cleanup on the broadest scale of the dust left hidden by the bourgeoisie in every corner and a thorough uprooting to the greatest depth of the ideology of the exploiting classes which have monopolized and ruled for the past thousands of years. Only when the broadest masses master the proletarian world outlook and criticize the bourgeois world outlook, master Marxism-Leninism and Mao Tse-tung's thought, and criticize revisionist ideas, will there be the guarantee of China's socialist revolution being carried through to the end and of its step-by-step transition from socialism to communism....

The birth, growth and deepening of any great revolutionary movement is inevitably preceded by a gigantic struggle in the ideological field and heralded by a great ideological revolution.

In the history of the proletarian revolution, every major polemical battle has been the prelude and signal for a revolutionary leap forward. In China, each of the many major polemical battles in the ideological field in the 17 years since liberation has blazed the trail for the locomotive of revolution. The cultural revolution now under way, on a scale never known before, necessarily forshadows a development of the socialist revolution by leaps and bounds and a new big leap forward in China's socialist construction.

Once the people rise, the enemy falls. In China, the masses of workers peasants, and soldiers, the revolutionary cadres, and revolutionary intellectuals have risen, and the representatives of the bourgeoisie and the bourgeois "scholars and authorities" will fall. In the movement of criticism that is developing on an unprecedentedly wide scale in the tremendous cultural revolution, a great new era is now emerging on the horizon, an era in which the world of the 700 million Chinese people are people of wisdom.

Let us welcome this great new era with open arms.