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| CHINA'S GREAT PROLETARIAN REVOLUTION

The relevance of the theme of the Cultural Revolution in China lies in the fact that knowledge of the problem can help avoid such tragedy in the future. Humanity must remember the events of the past in order to avoid past mistakes. The object of the research paper is China during the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. The aim of the paper is to study the cultural development of China in 1965-1976. To achieve this goal, it is important to consider the background of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution in China, study the socio-economic and political essence of the revolution, and analyze its consequences. There are both negative and positive consequences of the Great Proletarian Revolution, but it was certainly a period of great turmoil with a number of conflicting groups. Thus, despite negative sides of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, it had also positive effects on the development of the country.

Essence of Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution

The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution that commenced in 1966 was



initiated and led by Mao Zedong (Chong 11). Until the end of his life, Mao Zedong considered it one of his main achievements. The aim of the revolution was to preserve his personal power through the elimination of the old party and government cadres, prevent the restoration of capitalism, finally destroy traditionalism and create a conflict of generations. As a result, the Cultural Revolution should have created new socialist man. Taking into consideration Mao Zedong's idea that the national question is a question of class meant a declaration of war on diversity of national traditions. In fact, it was the policy toward assimilation of Han minorities, who also had to change.

The first call for the beginning of the Proletarian Cultural Revolution occurred on 18 April 1966 on the pages of the main army newspaper (Chong 208). By this time, apparently, the main objectives of Mao Zedong were set. Chinese "people believed that his acts were motivated for the good of China, the revolution, and socialism" (Kraus 31). However, the immediate task of the revolution was the fight against sedition that was apparent in the medium of art, teaching, and the scientific intelligentsia. Furthermore, his more ambitious aim was to eliminate resistance to the imposed political course.

Mao Zedong had to find power that could be used in the fight against those in the party who were in active opposition. Thereafter, the youth, especially students and secondary school pupils, became this force. It was an accurate political calculation to use inexperienced and impatient young people who felt the hopelessness of the situation to a certain extent. Moreover, one cannot exclude some romantic motifs owing to the fact that young people were not burdened with posts and pragmatic

considerations and could be a force that would be able to follow revolutionary utopian ideas.

As a consequence, the first Red Guards appeared in higher and secondary schools of the capital in the early summer of 1966 (Chong 69). It may seem that it was a spontaneous youth movement that was directed against the leadership of party committees, professors and lecturers. In fact, the Red Guard movement was inspired by those at the top who were members of the closest entourage of Mao Zedong. The criticism to which educational institutions were exposed has spread to regional party leadership. Thus, there was a mass change of leaders of the provincial press. To strengthen the positions, additional military units were introduced.

As a result, the revolution has reached a grand scale. In schools, there were arranged mass debates, during which party workers and well-known professors were not only criticized, forcing to confess to crimes, but also humiliated. Importantly, there were also the first victims. From the outset, the Red Guard movement was given the nature of the organized military structure. Army took direct part in its development, creating special items that were intended for the Red Guards, communication centers which were equipped with vehicles, printing equipment, and finances. A soldier, whose goal was to teach military discipline and control, was attached to each group. In December 1966, rebel troops were created in urban areas (Kraus 48). They included young workers who were given the task to distribute the Cultural Revolution beyond schools to businesses and organizations, thereby covering all public bodies.



Results of Cultural Revolution

In general, the impact of the Cultural Revolution in its active phase on the life of the country was devastating. Li emphasizes that the Cultural Revolution prevented China from developing (138). The negative influence of the revolution included the collapse of social stability and disruption of social standards. Moreover, it caused “economic stagnation, unnecessary deaths due to violence and persecution, physical and emotional suffering throughout certain segments of the Chinese population, and lost life opportunities for a whole generation of youth who grew up during the period” (Xie, Jiang and Greenman 687). What is more, there was a decline in industrial production. The revolution caused huge damage to the cultural life and education. Higher and secondary schools in those years were not working, thereby leading to the increased number of illiterates. Furthermore, not less damage was caused to foreign policy since the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was defeated. Thus, the provocations against foreign diplomats and embassies were taken.

The advantage of the revolution was the destruction of old apparatus. Mao Zedong succeeded in eliminating highest figures in party leadership, which provoked stiff opposition. He was able to eliminate the old and establish the new political mechanism in the country. In fact, it was more associated with his ideas about the essence of the Chinese model of communism. However, Mao Zedong faced new challenges, especially in terms of maintaining the regime of his personal despotic power. The most serious difficulty was a clear rise in the military's role in political life of the country.



Despite a number of deaths, the Cultural Revolution has positively influenced the development of Chinese society. From the outset, the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution was accompanied by a contradiction that could not be resolved. The reason is that Mao Zedong wanted to be simultaneously revolutionary by eradicating old hierarchy and at the same time, retain full control. When this conflict led to a violent struggle between factions, Mao employed the military to restore order. In fact, the dream of a new man was buried. However, Mao reached positive results in certain areas. Thus, the introduction of the health care system (though immature) and reform of school education for workers and peasants could be perceived as positive effects of the Cultural Revolution. Thereafter, the reforms that were made in health care, education and other spheres gave peasants and workers opportunities to enjoy the social welfare of the society. In educational sphere, children from a peasant and worker background were accepted to higher learning institutions. In regard to health care, mobile health teams were organized in the countryside. The doctors were trained to supplement common medical services. The barefoot doctors assured the population, especially peasantry, health services. As a result, this system contributed to the popularization of medicine.

Moreover, talking about positive effects, there were millions of young Chinese people who went to the countryside and started working with residents. In fact, students helped reconnect rural and urban China. Steady economic growth is another positive side of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. Though manufacturing was hindered during the revolution, the overall damage was negligible in comparison to the size of the movement. It is worth noting that the speed of production recovery



was rapid and continued to increase. Evidently, this was a great achievement for a poor country.

China has long abandoned Mao's ideas of permanent revolution. Today, the party has a strict hierarchy and a monopoly on power in the country and is characterized by social stability. Thus, the Cultural Revolution established the essential truths about socialism superiority, while leaving long-lasting signs on the society. As a result, Chinese people learned that it was permissible to contest the authorities.

Conclusion

The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution is one of the worst tragedies in the history of the last century, being comparable only with the genocide of the Jews in Nazi Germany and the Stalinist purges. Unleashing the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, Mao Zedong pursued the aim to eliminate all those who disagreed with his policies from the governing bodies. In order to handle his potential opponents, he used politically immature youth which formed the assault troops of Red Guards. The role of young people in deciding the fate of others led to the most negative consequences. However, there are positive effects of the Proletarian Cultural Revolution in China. Owing to the destruction of old apparatus and reconnection of rural and urban China, health care system and school education were improved as a result of the revolution. The fail of Mao Zedong's intentions became a valuable lesson to Chinese people and the authorities. This lesson should be taken into account in order to avoid similar mistakes in the future.