COMBAT
LIBERALISM

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The present English translation of Mao Tse-tung's Combat Liberalism has been made from the Chinese text given in the second edition of the Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung, Volume II, published by the People's Publishing House, Peking, in August 1952.
WE advocate an active ideological struggle, because it is the weapon for achieving solidarity within the Party and the revolutionary organisations and making them fit to fight. Every Communist and revolutionary should take up this weapon.

But liberalism negates ideological struggle and advocates unprincipled peace, with the result that a decadent, philistine style in work has appeared and certain units and individuals in the Party and the revolutionary organisations have begun to degenerate politically.

Liberalism manifests itself in various ways.

Although the person concerned is clearly known to be in the wrong, yet because he is an old acquaintance, a fellow townsman, a schoolmate, a bosom friend, a beloved one, an old colleague or a former subordinate, one does not argue with him on the basis of principles but lets things slide in order to maintain
peace and friendship. Or to touch lightly upon the matter without finding a thorough solution in order to maintain harmony all around. As a result, harm is done to the organisation as well as to the individual concerned. This is the first type.

To indulge in irresponsible criticisms in private without making positive suggestions to the organisation. To say nothing to people's faces, but to gossip behind their backs; or to say nothing at a meeting, but gossip after it. Not to care for the principle of collective life but only for unrestrained self-indulgence. This is the second type.

Things of no personal concern are put on the shelf; the less said the better about things that are clearly known to be wrong; to be cautious in order to save one's own skin, and anxious only to avoid reprimands. This is the third type.

To disobey orders and place personal opinions above everything. To demand special dispensation from the organisation but to reject its discipline. This is the fourth type.

To engage in struggles and disputes against incorrect views not for the sake of solidarity, progress or improvement in work, but for the sake of making
personal attacks, letting off steam, venting personal grievance or seeking revenge. This is the fifth type.

Not to dispute incorrect opinions on hearing them, and even not to report counter-revolutionary opinions on hearing them, but to bear with them calmly as if nothing had happened. This is the sixth type.

Not to engage in propaganda and agitation, make speeches or carry on investigations and inquiries among the masses, but to leave the masses alone, without any concern about their weal and woe; to forget that one is a Communist and to behave as if a Communist were just an ordinary person. This is the seventh type.

Not to feel indignant at actions detrimental to the interests of the masses, not to dissuade or to stop the person responsible for them or explain to him, but to allow him to continue. This is the eighth type.

To work half-heartedly without any definite plan or direction; to work perfunctorily and let things drift; “so long as I remain a bonze, I go on tolling the bell.” This is the ninth type.

To regard oneself as having performed meritorious service in the revolution and to put on the airs of a veteran; to be incapable of doing great things,
yet to disdain minor tasks; to be careless in work and slack in study. This is the tenth type.

To be aware of one’s own mistakes yet to make no attempt to rectify them and adopt a liberal attitude towards oneself. This is the eleventh type.

We can name some more. But these eleven are the principal ones.

All these are manifestations of liberalism.

In revolutionary organisations liberalism is extremely harmful. It is a corrosive which disrupts unity, undermines solidarity, induces inactivity and creates dissension. It deprives the revolutionary ranks of compact organisation and strict discipline, prevents the policies from being thoroughly carried out and divorces the organisations of the Party from the masses under their leadership. It is an extremely bad tendency.

Liberalism stems from the selfishness of the petty bourgeoisie which puts personal interests foremost and the interests of the revolution in the second place, thus giving rise to ideological, political and organisational liberalism.

Liberals look upon the principles of Marxism as abstract dogmas. They approve of Marxism but are
not prepared to practise it or to practise it in full; they are not prepared to replace their own liberalism with Marxism. Such people have got Marxism, but they have also got liberalism: they talk Marxism but practise liberalism; they apply Marxism to others but liberalism to themselves. Both kinds of goods are in stock and either has its particular use. That is the way in which the mind of certain people works.

Liberalism is a manifestation of opportunism and fundamentally conflicts with Marxism. It is passive in character and objectively produces the effect of helping the enemy; thus the enemy welcomes its preservation in our midst. Such being its nature, there should be no place for it in the revolutionary ranks.

We must use the active spirit of Marxism to overcome the liberalism with its passivity. A Communist should be frank, faithful and active, looking upon the interests of the revolution as his very life and subordinating his personal interests to those of the revolution; he should, always and everywhere, adhere to correct principles and wage a tireless struggle against all incorrect ideas and actions, so as to consolidate the collective life of the Party and strengthen the ties between the Party and the masses; and he
should be more concerned about the Party and the masses than about the individual and more concerned about others than about himself. Only thus can he be considered a Communist.

All loyal, honest, active and staunch Communists must unite to oppose the liberal tendencies shown by certain people among us, and turn them in the right direction. This is one of the tasks on our ideological front.

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