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THE POLITICAL-PHILOSOPHIC LETTERS OF IRINA AYEVSKAYA

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Letter #8

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POST-MAO CHINA: WHO IS HUA KUO-FENG? WHAT IS MAO'S LEGACY?  
ARE THERE ANY CHANGES IN GLOBAL RELATIONS COMING OUT OF  
THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA?

Dear Friends,

In a world beset by myriad crises and irreconcilable contradictions, one, I suppose, should not be surprised at the appearance of such absolute opposites as vultures acting like love-birds over the corpse of Mao Tse-tung, and every country in the world, from the U.S. to Russia, from Chile to Japan, and from South Africa to Albania shouting out a unanimous chorus of praise, indeed glorification, of him who had ruled one-fourth of all of mankind-- 850 million Chinese.

The hypocrisy of this total outpouring was in no way pierced by the one-day unanimity among Mao's "closest comrades-in-arms"--the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China--as those fighting heirs for Mao's Mantle mounted the platform over Tien An Men Square, where a million had gathered for organized mourning. What did get everyone scurrying was the speed with which victory came to one Hua Kuo-feng over Chiang Ching, Mao's widow and leader of the so-called radicals--in one short month. It becomes necessary not only to examine closely the two opposing "last wills" that surfaced, but also the "Thought of Mao Tse-tung" against the objective situations in the world as they developed since Mao gained state power, especially the last decade he had designated as "The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution."

I.

The rapid victory of Hua Kuo-feng over the major known tendency--Chiang

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Ching, Wang Hung-wen, Chang Chun-chiao and Yao Wen-yuan--makes his version of Mao's "Will," if any such exists, the one that pours out of all mass media. It is, however, first necessary to look at what Chiang Ching claimed to be the "Will," not because that is necessarily any truer than Hua's version, but because one of these was circulated while Mao was still alive, whether or not he knew about it. Moreover, the circulation came directly after Mao's last hurrah, with his victory over Teng and choice of Hua Kuo-feng as his replacement.<sup>(1)</sup> It was supposed to have been written in the form of a poem which, far from manifesting estrangement between Mao and Chiang, exuded warm feelings for her: "You have been wronged. Today we are separating in two worlds. May each keep his peace. These few words may be my last message to you."<sup>(2)</sup>

Far from accusing Chiang of "wild ambitions," Mao had allegedly pointed a warning and a way to continue the fight: "Human life is limited... In the struggle of the past ten years, I have tried to reach the peak of revolution, but I was not successful. But you could reach the top...If you fail, you will plunge into a fathomless abyss. Your body will shatter. Your bones will break...It will be necessary to wage partisan warfare once again." The final warning was against "foreigners." Just as the collapse of Chiang Kai-shek's Kuomintang was due to the belief in "foreigners," so she must beware of both the U.S. and Russia--"The bird and the northern star are equally to be distrusted."

Let us for the moment disregard that that seems to fly in the face of the fact that Mao was the one who rolled out the red carpet for Nixon (and that after ridding himself of Lin Piao who evidently opposed that move); that Mao was the one who also invited Schlesinger to China the moment Ford fired him for resisting detente with Russia; and that, in that respect at least, Hua surely carried through Mao's "Will" and now has the U.S. government's promise to sell China the Cyber computer which can easily be used for military purposes.

The will which Hua Kuo-feng refers to as "forged" refers not at all to the "Will" which was circulated back during the summer, at the very time

when Teng was removed and Hua was designated as Teng's replacement. Instead, the accusation of forgery against Chiang Ching is based on the fact that she is supposed to have been "arrested while they were forging Mao's will on the transfer of political power. The group of conspirators were surrounded by security forces which, according to another reliable source, were composed of the personal bodyguards of Hua."<sup>(3)</sup> Another dispatch said that Chiang brought the "forged" document to the session of the Central Committee on Oct. 6, and was arrested Oct. 7 with the whole Committee voting for Hua as Chairman.

Along with these dispatches from London and New York came one from Peking by the Le Monde correspondent, Alain Jacob. It quoted the People's Daily, Red Star, and Liberation Daily, all of which published a common editorial on Oct. 25, to the effect that Mao sent a note to Hua, April 30, in his own handwriting. It read: "It's you who'll be running the show so my mind's at rest." Further, it is claimed Mao "made certain arrangements to settle this problem," that is to say, the question of the "gang of four." Moreover, it is first now reported that, as far back as 1974, Mao appealed to the "small group of four persons" not to set up a "faction." Even more seriously, Mao is supposed to have warned others that "Chiang Ching has crazy ambitions... She wants Wang Hung-wen to be Chairman of the People's National Congress Standing Committees, and she herself wants to be Chairman of the Party Central Committee."

What is a fact is the disagreement on the Chou-Teng way of carrying out a Five Year Plan, and a long-range 20-year Plan to make China a global economic power. The campaign against Teng was really an attack on Chou En-lai. The Chinese masses evidently had felt all along that Chou En-lai had escaped an unnatural death by dying a natural death. Thus, the April 1976 demonstration was the first spontaneous one since the Cultural Revolution and it was in opposition to the new rulers. Chiang Ching topped that list. But Hua Kuo-feng, as top cop, differed not at all with Chiang in putting down that demonstration. The arrests were followed by the removal of Teng. All, all-- Mao himself and Chiang Ching and Hua Kuo-feng--vote as one when it comes to hitting out against the Chinese masses.

One provable fact about her "wild ambitions" is that Chiang sat mum at the last National People's Congress, in 1975, and while she was not removed from the Central Committee, neither she, nor her colleagues, had gotten government posts. But then it is also the Congress Mao himself had not attended. At the same time, he made himself visible--and it was not by opposing "foreigners," but the very opposite. Far from keeping equidistance from the U.S. and Russia, he was entertaining no less a reactionary than Franz Joseph Strauss, and arranging for a Boeing 707 to fly to California for the purpose of bringing Nixon to China.

No doubt Chiang had been viewing herself as leadership ever since the Cultural Revolution started and Mao had chosen her to head the Arts. With Chen Po-ta and Chang, she had become overseer of the Cultural Revolution, though all had to work under the slogan: "Learn from the Army." The fact that she had no historic past, other than being the wife of Mao, could not have diminished her view of herself, since no one else was asked to have had a past for this new venture into this type of revolution, which was not a social revolution, and which both the proletariat and the peasantry were asked to keep away from. It was their duty to keep production going.

Indeed, the fourth member of that overseer group--Wang--who is played up as "worker," and whom Mao and Lin Biao had raised to Central Committee status to prove just how "proletarian" the leadership had become as a result of the Cultural Revolution, was in that Shanghai cotton mill, not as worker but as member of the police force there. He was appointed to trade-union leadership by the "radical Shanghai group," i.e., Chang, Yao and Chiang, because he was so ruthless in breaking strikes by rank-and-file workers demanding pay increases and better conditions of labor, for which he promptly dubbed them "economists." After all, Yao, the press tsar for Mao, had declared the correct treatment for every critic of Mao's Thought as "beat the wild dog to death."

Whether or not the Army thought Chiang had anything to contribute--and that is very doubtful indeed--surely Mao gave her such illusions. In any case, she thought herself so important and, like Mao, so distrustful of anyone else, that without telling either Mao or the Central Committee,

she chose a Western historian, Roxanne Witke, (4) to pour her heart out to. It was the beginning of the end for her. I believe it was so, not because the present ruling clique is using it against her and concocting a story of "betrayal of state secrets," but because Mao, judging by all he did to more worthy successors like Liu and Lin, would have resented any Ego parading him or herself as the new type of person to emerge out of China.

There is no point in waiting for the juicy story Roxanne Witke is readying for publication. The point is that the mild flurry of posters against Chiang back in 1973-74, when it became known she told her life's story to a Western historian, had not proceeded further, unless that was the reason behind her not being given a state post in 1975. What has happened since 1974, when Mao first warned Chiang against building factions? None have explained that, or what happened during the whole period between April 30 when Mao wrote Hua, choosing him as successor and warning him of Chiang's "wild ambitions," and Mao's death, Sept. 8, 1976.

The mass media had remained in that faction's hands. Tantalizing is the fact that just before the removal of Teng (but when the campaign against him was already in full swing), there was such total concentration against "capitalist roaders" that Mao once again (March 10, 1976) pinpointed the struggle as one within the Communist Party: "A socialist revolution is being conducted without knowing where the bourgeoisie are. They are in the Communist Party."

Now, however, foreign policy is brought into the campaign against "the gang of four": "At the international level, it was planning to jettison the principle of proletarian internationalism and capitulate to imperialism." Whether Hua Kuo-feng and his cohorts meant to include "social imperialism," meaning Russia, was not clear. But when Brezhnev tried to interpret the Chinese telegram on the anniversary of the Russian Revolution as a "softening" of relations between Russia and China, Hua Kuo-feng promptly called Brezhnev "a liar."

There has always been no small amount of ambivalence on the question thrown in, most deliberately, throughout Mao's campaign of "Russia is

Enemy No. 1." That was so during periods when all of the actual activity and relations seemed to favor the U.S. The fact that they want to have it both ways is pure Big Power politicking. We must instead see what flows logically from Mao's legacy. The fact that one can interpret the "Will" (no matter which Will one chooses) any way one pleases, testifies to one thing and one thing only, and it is not just a question of what the interpreter says. Rather it is the many gaping lacunae in Mao's heritage.

II.

What is of the essence is not that he has not designated any one, single or collectively, as the "inheritors." It is that he has stripped all--and not only those he physically eliminated--of any actual roots in the Chinese Revolution, or its philosophy. Thus, it is not only those that he had first designated as "closest comrade-in-arms"--first Liu Shao-chi, as Party, then Lin Piao as Army--and then called traitors. It is that all history has been so rewritten that none exists with a historic past. Since the elimination was achieved, not via an open struggle of "two lines" that had equal access, if not to the mass media, at least to the "cadres" of the Party, or the Army, or the State, but via declaring them to be "capitalist roaders," and to have "always" been that, there is no history other than that of Mao and Mao alone.

In a word, there is no history of the Chinese masses except as an abstraction. The history of the Chinese Revolution is the history of Mao; the thought of that revolution is the Thought of Mao. None who now fight for his mantle have roots in either. What, then, is that legacy?

From the start of Mao's achieving undisputed leadership after the Long March, he embarked on "Rectification"--the remoulding of thought, not just of the Party, but of Marxism itself; the establishment of the primacy of the superstructure.

The fact that this flies in the face of the Marxism of Marx; the fact that the very word "superstructure" is the absolute opposite of what

Marx had spent his life analyzing, did not step Mao. In place of riveting his attention to the exploitative structure, the economic base of capitalist production--and its opposite, the gravediggers of capitalism, the proletariat; in place of this exploiters' ground which was likewise the base of their ideology, that is to say, false consciousness--Mao concentrated his thought on the superstructure. But even he, as Stalin before him and those revisionists who kept mouthing Marxist phrases, had to keep acknowledging the economic base, and not the superstructure, as the essence of Marx's Historical Materialism, even as the revolutionary role of the proletariat, instead of a peasant army "encircling the cities," had to be acknowledged as primary for socialist revolution.

Nevertheless, Mao kept working out the absolutely opposite concept. It was, once again, through a flanking action that he embarked upon his revision of Marxism. He said that, though Marx's analysis of production relations remains true "in general," specifically, in China, (indeed, wherever there is desire to revolt), that which is primary "in the final analysis"--the economic base as decisive--and what is secondary--the superstructure--could change places "under certain circumstances."

This philosophy of contradiction, and what is its "primary aspect" and what the "secondary," was, however, not stated concretely. On the contrary, what was enunciated as the philosophy--On Contradiction, On Practice--was stated most abstractly, while, in actual practice, came the 180-degree turn toward a new alignment with Chiang Kai-shek in the Sino-Japanese War. That was by no means the end of it. "Rectification" continued for a long stretch of five years. In remoulding the thought of his Party, raising the Army to equal primacy with it, while lowering the role of the proletariat, not just by raising the revolutionary role of the peasantry, but the peasant Army, "encircling the cities" became the road to state power.

Long before he gained state power, Mao was changing not just the path of liberation to power, but to what comes after. Thus, "The New Democracy," that is to say, "a bloc of four classes," did not exclude a "coalition

government" as well, but the dialectics of revolution compelled the final break with Chiang Kai-shek, striking out on full civil war, in face of both class enemies in China and Stalin's advice not to go for total power.

At the same time, however, again long before he gained power, Mao aimed not just for Sinification of Marxism, but Sinification, period. Nationalism, not internationalism; national revolution, not world revolution. Thus, in 1942, when Mao acknowledged Russia as the model, as the only "socialist land," and the Stalinism as the only Comintern, he had rejected Stalin's request as to how to dispose of his troops in order to stop any possible move by the Japanese Army against Russia.<sup>(5)</sup> In a word, long, very long before the world was shocked, in 1960, by the Sino-Soviet orbit becoming the Sino-Soviet conflict, that conflict was long in brewing.

With Mao, the point was always the superstructure.<sup>(6)</sup> After all, the workers were to continue producing while the Army encircled the cities on the way to power; and after the conquest of power, the peasants were to keep producing so heftily with collectivization that the "Great Leap Forward" was to achieve "20 years in one day"; and both proletariat and peasantry were to work hard and harder, as the superstructure was shattered to pieces by the "Red Guard" youth, backed up by the Army, sent against the Party headquarters.

When Mao's China openly acknowledged itself as state-capitalist, it assured the masses that they need not worry that capitalism still exists because once the vantage points--political power that had come out of the barrel of a gun--was in the hands of the Communist Party, the existence of capitalistic relations would not become predominant. Moreover, this held true not only in the first period of power, 1950-53, but also when Mao's China again struck out on an original path of the Great Leap Forward, and then decided to call itself "socialist."

What didn't change was once again Mao's anti-Marxist concept of contradiction, which this time was extended to "How To Handle Contradictions Among the People." The one thing that all the spets who do acknowledge



the "newness" of this concept have not the slightest comprehension of it that this "newness" was neither a separation from the Russian counter-revolution, nor was it only an "anti-rightist" struggle, much less a leap over reality, but directly against the Left, the revolutionary Left that came to the historic stage in the Hungarian Revolution which Mao helped Khrushchev to put down.

Thus the sudden statement, that the "class struggle" continues after the conquest of power, within the "dictatorship of the proletariat," far from being a deepening of the revolution which Mao was being credited for, was a turning away from any struggle of the Chinese masses to better their conditions of labor or life. It was at that time that the struggle against "economism" was transformed from what it was in Lenin's day, a struggle against those who wished to limit the proletariat's activity to trade union matters rather than embracing political struggles, to one that forbade the proletariat to fight for economic gains.

When it comes to the real core of the counter-revolutionary result of this whole transformation of material base and superstructure, it is that it did not stop at Russia as Enemy No. 1, but proceeded to refuse to consider the Vietnamese revolution as primary, and refused any and all united fronts to come to the aid of the Vietnamese life-and-death struggle with U.S. imperialism.

Along with the glorification of superstructure was the deification of Mao Thought, sans historic period, sans any other relationship, internal or external, and any other thought. As you may remember, I did not wait for the Lin Piao "betrayal" to ask, at the very start of the Cultural Revolution and its deification of Mao: such deification could be questioned as to whether it wasn't instead a mummification. (7) My statement, however, was not so much a questioning of Lin Piao's purpose, as a questioning of Mao Tse-tung, who was exceeding even Stalin in the glorification of his individual "contribution to Marxism."

That is to say, if one reduces philosophy to hardly more than "popular" psychology; if one further embellishes this "Thought" of One Man who cannot

be questioned, and whose Thought gets reduced to memorable single quotes, what can possibly be the heritage of that man for the next generation which is supposed to live by his Thought? Once thought has been so drained of methodology, historic vision, and concrete dialectics, what can the inheritors, no matter how loyal, work out for their generation?

No, it is no accident (even if it is not what Mao had in mind, either when he designated Hua as the replacement of Teng, or when he talked out of both sides of his mouth in relationship to Chiang) that Hua has, for now, become the head of China's ruling Communist Party, State, Army and the Ministry of Public Security. By no accident, I mean that though Hua has not had any roots in the Revolution in China, it was also no accident that when he first came to some national prominence, it was because he was against the "ultra-leftists" in Hunan who had accepted, at face value, Mao's dictum that "It is right to rebel," and fought to transform the "Cultural Revolution" into a proletarian revolution. It is true no "specialist," be he "scholar" or politico, paid attention to Hua then, but the genuine Left did, singling him out as the one who symbolized the movement backward to genuine capitalism--"the Red capitalist class."<sup>(8)</sup>

It is just such a revolutionary nonentity who deserves to replace Mao, who once was a revolutionary but had retrogressed for 10, these many years in power. Indeed, it is not from revolution to revolution to revolution that Mao travelled, but from superstructure to superstructure to superstructure, that is to say, nothingness in Marxist philosophy of proletarian revolution and reconstruction of society on totally new, human foundations. Instead, there is the capitulation to the objective pull of state-capitalism as the "next" stage of human development, with the quintessential difference, from Russia's acceptance of the same fact, that it be China, not Russia, that will head the next stage.

III.

There was no necessity to wait for Mao's death to see what objective world developments compelled the latest phase of "Russia is Enemy No. 1." As we said when Hua was first chosen to replace Teng:<sup>(1)</sup>

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In choosing Hua at the end of life, it did not necessarily mean that

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Hua became the anointed one. What never left Mao, however--and that was the Great Delusion--was that all was well once what prevailed was "Mao Tse-tung Thought." Production is not, however, a matter of "Thought" or "superstructure," with the primary and secondary "aspects" of the contradictions changing places on command with "rectification" being the judge.

After all is said and done, what sent Mao into another spin was not the "subjective" situation, but the very real objective world developments during the period since he had initiated his own detente with U.S. imperialism. U.S. imperialism had its own reasons for not giving up detente with Russia, when it was not China, but Russia, that had been scoring "victories." It was the possibility of a global realignment that once again led to Mao's revisionist philosophical concept of the primacy of superstructure, this time applying it not only within China, but in the straight capitalistic world, now dubbed the "Second World."

Thus, after China's entry into the UN, with Teng as spokesman (and Mao's Thought dominant), China espoused a new division of the world, designating Western European and Japanese capitalism as "Second World," with which "socialism" could collaborate. NATO seemed to listen--until an actual Portuguese revolution occurred and threatened totally to undermine NATO. Thereupon NATO found and preferred the Second International helping the Portuguese Socialist Party to keep Portugal in line with "the West."

As for the Communist Parties in each country, both the Italian Communist Party and the French, who certainly are departing from the Russian monolith, do so not in order to go with China, but because they themselves, nationalistically, strive for class collaborationism, "sharing power." A state-capitalist world, Balkanized, is in no way ready to move China up to the center of the world.

Thus, in Africa, where Mao's China certainly seemed to make great headway, both with the Tan-Zam railway and concepts of guerrilla warfare, the Angolan revolution was helped so substantially by Russia and Cuba, that Mao could not hope to recapture the momentum of being considered the "most revolutionary," much less of greatest assistance to national revolutionary

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movements. Indeed, the attempts to work with one of the puppets, even where that was helped by apartheid South Africa, boomeranged; Mao had (so he claimed) withdrawn all aid there.

Thus, what good was it for him to show the Chinese leadership that he, Mao, had been right all along, not to go all out for North Vietnam, when now, right on the doorstep of China, the whole of Vietnam was with Russia. Russia was everywhere "surrounding China," in Southeast Asia, in West Europe, on the southern flank of NATO, in Africa. And in the Arab Middle East, where they had always played up that, whereas Russia had recognized Israel, China never had (never mind that Mao's China did not exist then!), China this time had to tell the PLO in the UN Security Council that Russia was "even worse" than Israel!

All these objective events internationally came at the very time when inside the land, the Chou-Teng new Constitution, though constantly "quoting" Mao Tse-tung Thought, had announced the right to strike, the right to small plots of land. And small as they might have been, it was certainly "revisionism" to rely on "material incentives" and to sharpen the division between worker and intellectual, as could be evidenced by having that "capitalist roader," Nieh Jung-chon, heading Science and Technology.

Actually, Mao's last hurrah was itself weak-voiced. He had not unfolded a new banner, or "unified" the classes, and the slogan, "Dig trenches deep," came to the U.S. via the disgraced has-been Nixon. The crisis is world wide, not just in Russia, or in China. The whole world is in deep recession with endless nuclear build-up to end civilization. And whom could Mao inspire with Maoisms such as "the end of mankind is something that will produce something more advanced than mankind"?

It is precisely the totality of the crisis of the existing world, state-capitalist calling itself Communist as well as private capitalism calling itself welfare, that has produced not only recessions but revolts. The disgust along with the misery will not be done away with by "the West" or "the East" daring to think the unthinkable as "possible" by adding the little adjective, "limited," to nuclear warfare, as if that did not signify the end of civilization as we have known it!

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Mao, too, could not "negate" the truth--the masses are not just poor, they are rebellious. He could not forget that calling those rebellious masses "ultra-lefts" and having Lin Piao put them down had not extinguished such manifestoes as Whither China? by the Sheng Wu-lien. All it did was drive them underground. The fact that Hua has survived both the "ultra-left" and the "radicals" in no way assures him long life. It only heightens the contradictions within China as its foreign policy has but one principle--Russia is Enemy No. 1--thus allowing China to play with U.S. imperialism.

The latest from the Central Committee is the interpretation of how to "combine" Marxism with nuclear tests, under the title "China Successfully Conducts Another Underground Nuclear Test"<sup>(9)</sup>,

"The success of the test (Oct. 17) was a new victory won by the Chinese workers, People's Liberation Army commanders and fighters, scientists and technicians and revolutionary cadres engaging in the research, manufacture and tests of nuclear weapons who, tremendously inspired by two important decisions...are rallying most closely around the Party Central Committee headed by Comrade Hua Kuo-feng, carrying out Chairman Mao's behests, conscientiously...persevering in the three basic principles "Practice Marxism, and not revisionism; unite, and don't split; be open and above-board, and don't intrigue and conspire..."

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- (1) See Political-Philosophic Letter #2, "Mao's Last Hurrah."
- (2) The most complete quotes in English from what Chiang Ching circulated appear in Victor Zorza's "Mao's Last Will and Testament" (Manchester Guardian, 11-7-76).
- (3) The New York Times reports (9-30-76, 10-14-76) are from Hong Kong, the Toronto Globe and Mail does date from Peking, but I found the most thorough of the official press to be the one in the Le Monde section of the Manchester Guardian (10-31-76). See also the article by Morle Goldman (Christian Science Monitor, 10-21-76), and "The Coming Power Struggle" by Tiziano Terzani (La Repubblica, Rome), excerpted in Atlas Report, November 1976.

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- (4) Presently Roxanne Witke, whose "biography" of Chiang Ching, or whatever she will call the book when it is finally published, has been appearing on the "talk shows," stressing how secret all her meetings were.
- (5) A Canadian reporter, Mark Gayn, who had been in Yenan, has written that 1942, the year of the first "Rectification" campaign, was the period when Stalin wanted Mao to attack Japan from a direction which would stop any possible attack on Russia. Mao refused, wanting to husband all his forces for the final victory in China. (Toronto Star, 9-1-76)
- (6) As if Mao's revisions weren't enough to make him feel at home with this view of superstructure as "Marxist," the French Communist philosopher, Althusser, with the help of Freudian jargon, helped by his distinctive French arrogance, glorified this concept as "overdetermination" and read that back into the success of Russia, November, 1917.
- (7) "The discerning reader cannot help but wonder whether Mao is being deified--or mummified. Is Lin living in the reflected glory of Mao, as the press holds, or is Mao being allowed to live out his remaining years as a deity only because he transferred total authority to Lin, head of the Army?" ("China's Self-Created Turmoil," News & Letters, October, 1966)
- (8) See the Sheng Wu-lien document, Whither China?, reproduced in Philosophy and Revolution, p.278.
- (9) Peking Review (10-22-76).

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