

Mao Zedong Thought and Our Revolutionary Work

A speech by a representative of the Alive Production Collective on the occasion of the 3rd Anniversary of Mao Zedong's death, September 9, 1979.

(At this APC function there was a problem with an electrical circuit breaker in the room which resulted in the lights going out three times during the meeting. The speaker began with references to this.)

It is somewhat appropriate that the lights kept going out when the Non-Aligned Conference is going on in Havana. At a previous Non-Aligned Conference in Algeria there was a similar problem when the President of Cuba got up to speak. (Laughter) Mr. Castro got up to speak and all the lights and microphones in the meeting hall went out. Apparently, it took them about one half hour to repair the electrical fault and to get things under way again. So, Castro opened his speech by saying, "There must be some imperialist agents in the hall." (Laughter) At the Non-Aligned Conference, Castro is calling people "imperialist agents", right? (Laughter) So, the President of Algeria stood up to say, "There are no imperialist agents in Algeria!" He must have forgotten Castro was visiting. (Laughter)

In our last few speeches, we have covered a couple of important tenets in our political outlook. Tonight we have to cover the most important tenet in our political outlook — Mao Zedong Thought. We have discussed the United Front theory. We have discussed exactly what we can do in a place like Guelph, what we try to do with Alive magazine and so on. All those things are based on Mao Zedong Thought. Our support for the United Front, any work we do in Guelph, any work we do with Alive magazine and so on is all based on Mao Zedong Thought.

Mao Zedong died three years ago. He died on September 9, 1976. It was an event of significance when he died. Perhaps some people here weren't too aware of it at the time and so don't remember it now, but in 1976, the Central Committee of the Chinese Party suggested that Chairman Mao be given his memorial meetings on September 18, 1976. On this commemoration day, all over the world people paused to formally mark the passing of Mao Zedong. There was quite a phenomenal thing that happened in China on this commemoration day in answer to the Chinese Party's call that all the people in the country, except those involved in absolutely essential services, should pause for three minutes to mark the passing of Mao Zedong. So, all over China at three o'clock on the afternoon of September 18, 1976, the nine hundred million people paused for three minutes to mark the passing of this man. All factories, all agriculture, all enterprise, all traffic, all military and political affairs stopped — there was an unprecedented silence in all human affairs amongst this massive population to take formal note that Chairman Mao had passed away. If you saw film clips of the various locales in China at that time you will remember the almost eerie effect of no human noise, only natural sound throughout China for those three minutes.

All over the world, at the same time, other people were marking his passing in the same way. We marked his passing in the same way here in Guelph. Other people elsewhere in this country, other people in other countries, held huge meetings here and there to commemorate Chairman Mao. This is very significant. Rarely does such a man come into life, pass through life, having an effect like Mao Zedong had and have it recognized in his lifetime to such an extent that his passing away is marked in this way.

At that time, the Chinese people issued and took up the slogan: Turn Grief Into Strength! This great grief that existed was to be turned into an immense strength if it was successfully channelled that way — a fine, living memorial to Mao Zedong.

In China, they quite readily took this up — a month later they overthrew these corrupt leaders known as the Gang of Four. They turned their grief into strength to rid themselves of grief. People did the same thing all over the world. People took up new revolutionary programs. Various revolutionary organizations

launched new aspects of their program as a concrete means of turning grief into strength. We, the Alive Production Collective, now put out a weekly magazine. It used to be a monthly magazine. It was on a monthly schedule when Mao Zedong died. We had been talking about changing to a weekly schedule, which is quite a change involving a lot of extra work. When we heard the slogan "Turn grief into strength", we decided what we would do to implement this idea was to go straight onto our weekly schedule. So, the very fact that the magazine we put out is on a weekly schedule is an expression of our on-going commemoration of Mao Zedong. There are a lot of parallels all over the world — groups which have programs now which were established when Mao Zedong died in a kind of commemoration move.

When the news came out of Mao Zedong's death, there was huge emotion all over the world to quite an amazing extent. In China, people burst into tears spontaneously on the street when they heard Chairman Mao had passed away. Perhaps we might expect these things to happen. However, the emotion was also felt here. We felt the emotion in a big way. On September 9, 1976 first thing in the morning various members of our Collective woke up because their phones were ringing. People started phoning the Alive Production Collective to tell us the newscasts were reporting that Chairman Mao had died. These weren't just local friends from around Guelph who were phoning us, people were phoning us long distance. This is the way we woke up on September 9, 1976.

There was real emotion at the time. We felt it must be true. It was being reported in such a way that we knew it must be true. They were quoting from Xinhua News Agency and so on. We had our doubts because the bourgeois media had announced that Chairman Mao had died a number of times before he actually died. (Laughter) In 1972, there was a big banner headline in the Toronto Star, "Mao Zedong Dies". He didn't die, though. So, because of these previous hoaxes we were a little bit dubious but we knew it must be true, just by the way it was being announced.

The response was a fantastic phenomenon. We issued a statement at that time, saying, "The whole world pauses at the passing of Mao Zedong and we join with the vast majority in mourning the loss of this great leader and teacher." It was literally true that the whole world paused. People who loved Chairman Mao stopped to mark his passing but people who didn't even respect Chairman Mao had to stop to mark his passing, too. Rarely is such seen for a revolutionary leader. They would like to make a bigger fuss about people like Diefenbaker dying or John F. Kennedy dying and so on, than for any revolutionary. However, Mao Zedong's significance in the world was so great that they had to note his passing.

We hold this meeting here, three years later and only a few people come. Only a few came to our 1976 memorial meeting. When they held a memorial meeting for Chairman Mao on September 18, 1976 in Tian An Men square in Beijing, one million people gathered. One million people all standing in the same place with the same purpose — to mark Mao's passing. That night we saw the film clips of that meeting that they showed on the newscasts. It was just a phenomenal sea of people. It is hard to conceive of one million people. There were people everywhere. They had to enlarge this square in the centre of Beijing in order to accommodate this crowd coming to commemorate Mao Zedong. They had to widen all the access streets coming to Tian An Men square. That's how large a crowd of one million is.

This phenomenon that arose in the world three years ago has been continued since. Every year people hold meetings like this. Across Canada, in the U.S., in Europe, in Japan, in Australia, in Africa, in South America and in China memorial activities are held. The passing of Mao Zedong was so significant that nobody could

ignore it. People stood up and took notice.

We stood up and took notice. We had this emotional response. Why did we have this response? If Mao Zedong was a man we had never met, someone whose significance to us was not at all in terms of a direct influence but an indirect influence, someone who created a whole revolutionary upsurge in his country which we never directly witnessed, someone who led the creation of a new society in China which we've never seen, — we've never laid eyes on him or his work but still we know the significance of this man — why did he mean something to us?

This phrase that we use, "We uphold Mao Zedong Thought," is not at all an abstract phrase. We were trained as revolutionaries on the basis of Mao Zedong Thought. We trained ourselves as revolutionaries on the basis of Mao Zedong Thought. You can say we were weaned on Mao Zedong Thought. Before we really understood politics, we knew we were in favour of Mao Zedong Thought. We cut our teeth as revolutionaries on Mao Zedong Thought. Without being here Mao Zedong guided us in our Alive work, in our local community work and so on. This is precisely where the emotion comes from.

We know about revolution *per se* because of Chairman Mao Zedong. Other people know in other ways. We talk to older people who have been sympathetic to revolution for a long time and they have the same feeling for Stalin as we have for Mao, they have the same feeling for Lenin. We talk to people who are quite aged now — they say they can remember when Lenin was alive. They can remember what a significant thing it was when Lenin passed away. When Lenin passed away the same kind of things happened in the world as when Mao Zedong passed away. When Stalin passed away the same kind of things happened. Again, even the bourgeois press had these big banner headlines that Stalin had died. Again, people spontaneously cried in the streets.

The 1970's, you could say, is Chairman Mao Zedong's decade. We feel it is, anyway. We're sure there are people who won't concur, there are people who don't believe that but this is how we look at the 1970's. The 1970's have been vastly influenced by Mao Zedong. He has profoundly influenced these years. This influence has built up over a long period of time. It has built through the 1960's here in North America, specifically. The fact that Mao Zedong lived concretely means there is more talk about revolution in Canada now than there has been for thirty years. There is more talk about revolutionary politics than there has been for thirty years.

Thirty years ago, there was a different situation in the world and for a period of time after a point thirty years ago there arose the whole cold war mentality, McCarthyism. There was a huge upsurge of anti-communism. To speak about communism was not normal, to support revolution was not normal. When, in this cold war period, everybody was looking around — asking: where is the beacon, from what focal point can we take our bearings? — it was Chairman Mao who appeared as the beacon. It was Mao Zedong who concretely gave the guidance. He was more than just somebody to latch onto because you were looking for a beacon anyway. Mao was someone who came as the beacon before one even realized fully consciously that he was there. A lot of people have this same feeling: you can't remember when Mao Zedong entered your consciousness, just one day you realized you already knew about Mao Zedong. One realizes the significance of socialist China and then acknowledges that one has already known about China and about Mao as a person even without realizing the significance. This is the kind of pervasive influence Mao Zedong had in the world.

Now, to talk about revolution is normal. We can hold meetings like this and say we are in favour of revolution and it doesn't strike people in the same way as it struck people in the McCarthy era, in the years after Stalin died. Through the 1960's, the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution had a profound effect on world consciousness. Everybody talked about People's China, "Red China", "Mainland China", whatever they called it. "The Yellow River is running red with blood." That wasn't exactly what

we'd call a positive or friendly image but the least we can say is they were talking about it. The Cultural Revolution had everyone talking.

Sometimes we hear that in the 1960's there was "a spontaneous upsurge of youth and students" in North America, in Europe, in Japan and elsewhere. Was this actually a *spontaneous* upsurge? Why all of a sudden was there a huge upsurge of revolutionary consciousness amongst young people? There was a bigger upsurge in the 1960's than there has been in the 1970's. The 1970's have been a lower profile period. Was the big upsurge in the 1960's just an abstract, random phenomenon?

At the beginning of the 1960's a very significant event in world politics happened. Politics which had been proclaimed as communist politics were actually conservative politics, politics of conciliation, politics of bending to the cold war policies, politics of getting down on the knees to McCarthyism. All of a sudden all this went out the window. At the call of Mao Zedong all this was cast aside. Under the leadership of Chairman Mao the Great Polemic against modern revisionism was waged. At the beginning of the sixties this Great Polemic took place. Mao Zedong stood up and proclaimed on the world scale: "It is normal to speak of revolution, to support revolution. Revolution should happen. We should oppose U.S. imperialism. We should oppose the growing revisionism in the USSR. We should oppose this new conservatism, this new Rightist elite in the Soviet Union."

Mao Zedong dared to stand up. People dared to follow him. He dared to issue the call. People dared to follow his call.

This is why there was a big upsurge in the 1960's because all of a sudden it became normal to scorn these people who supposedly had a *monopoly* on radicalism, a monopoly on revolution, who were trying to keep the revolution in their pocket as though it was for themselves alone. All of a sudden it became normal to say to them: "Revolution is not your personal property. Revolution is no individual's private domain, no clique's property. Either you take it out of your pocket and put it on the table or *we* are going to put it on the table."

Revolution is on the agenda again in the 1960's and the 1970's in all these countries. This is the profound effect of the Great Polemic. The effect touches even those who were not participant in, not even conscious of, the polemics when they were going on. When the Great Polemic was going on, most of us who are here were, quite literally, still kids playing on the streets. We saw the profound effect manifested later. In 1968 the students in Paris took over the Rue St. Michel. In 1968 the big anti-war upsurge came to the fore in the U.S. In 1969-70, there was an upsurge in the anti-war movement in Canada. The anti-Viet Nam war movement and support for Mao Zedong Thought went hand in hand. Support for North Viet Nam, for the Viet Cong in the south, for Ho Chi Minh and for People's China went hand in hand.

This is the significance of Mao Zedong. When we say that Mao Zedong had a profound effect on our own era, this is what we mean. All these phenomenon are things we are all aware of and they can be tied to Mao Zedong. They can be tied to Mao Zedong Thought, particularly. Chairman Mao was not like a very, very quick puppeteer who could orchestrate all these things here and there all over the world. This isn't the kind of effect he had. This isn't the effect he needed to have — Mao Zedong wasn't the kind of leader who had to have his finger right in the pie in order to lead. He was capable of leading simply by the profound nature of his thought. This is what we saw in the 1960's.

We have seen the youth encouraged to stand up against modern revisionism, encouraged to stand up in places like Canada or the U.S. and say: "We're for revolution but we're not for the Communist Party." A statement which was heretical before. The statement which was unheard of before, all of a sudden was being proclaimed all around the world. Mao Zedong had come forward as the beacon.

In Canada, it is actually more than thirty years ago, it is probably safer to say forty to forty-five years ago, that revisionism took hold

in the Communist Party. Thus, it was even more profound when people began to stand up in Canada during the 1960's, the revolutionary fervour hadn't been seen for a long time. The Communist Party of Canada degenerated into revisionism between 1935 and 1940. It was a long wait that was ended when people took up Mao Zedong Thought!

Mao Zedong gave a new hope for revolution. If you talk to people who supported revolution during the cold war era, they will tell you that during the McCarthy years to say you supported revolution and to speak of hope were two contradictory things. People who supported the revolution had little cause for hope in those times. The cold war trials were going on in the U.S. The Rosenbergs were executed for doing nothing but having revolutionary political beliefs. Such things had a deep effect on people.

People felt there was no real hope of making revolution. That is something we can all relate to — from time to time those of us who believe in revolution in Canada have this feeling, sometimes we falter because it's hard to believe when you call a meeting like this and only a tiny group comes together. "What's the hope for revolution?"

In the 1950's, that kind of faltering happened. However, it wasn't only that kind of hope that was lacking. Hope for one's children, hope for one's children to be allowed to go to school, hope for oneself to be able to continue in a job, hope for oneself to be able to continue *living* — Julius and Ethel Rosenberg weren't allowed — this was the hope that couldn't be found in cold war politics. McCarthyism had a profound effect on revolutionary people.

They had a lot of that then. We have a little of it now still. We don't expect anything else though. Neither did they in the 1950's. We get what we expect from the class enemy and we don't whine. However, added to all this — the worst blow — was that the revolutionary leadership wasn't there. The supposed leaders were the first to bend. Even that hope was gone. Who could look to Khrushchev as they had looked to Stalin?

In the midst of all this negative activity and resulting despair, Mao Zedong stood up and asked: Why do we have revolutionaries all over the world being influenced by Senator Joseph McCarthy in the USA, by Khrushchev in the USSR? He explained that objectively these two were working together to turn revolutionary politics into conservatism and to take the hope out of revolutionary people. He said revolutionary people should stand up again with hope. There is hope for revolution. Mao Zedong said look to Asia, look to Africa, look to South America. These were stirring calls he made. People stood up and took note of these calls. Previously, people were saying unless revolution happens in Europe, unless revolution happens in the United States, there can be no hope of revolution. Chairman Mao said these places are not the storm centres for revolution: the storm centres for revolution are in the Third World, in Asia, Africa and South America. This was profound because when people looked to Europe or the U.S. as the storm centres they had to say, "How can we have hope for revolution? Look at the U.S. — everybody who has even only half-way progressive politics, Liberal social-democrats are being black-listed from their jobs. If revolutionaries can't organize to keep themselves in bread and water, how can we have hope they will organize revolution?"

When one looked to the Third World countries, this is where one saw the seeds of revolution. This is where the uprisings were. This is where there were armed liberation upsurges. This is why Viet Nam, Kampuchea, Laos, all these countries came into people's consciousness. This is why the revolutionary movements in Africa began to seep into people's consciousness in a big way. This is why people started paying so much more attention to South Africa. You here tonight know that now when people say there is no hope for revolution, it is places like South Africa they point to. "Can you ever overthrow the white racist regime in South Africa?" they ask now. This isn't what they used to say in the 1950's. Then, people who were trying to make you pessimistic about revolution used to say "Can you ever overthrow the government in the U.S.?" or "... in

Germany?" or "... in Switzerland?" This was actually the focus of attention for both the people who were in favour of revolution and those who were opposed to revolution. So profound was the influence of Mao Zedong Thought that the whole consciousness of the focus of revolution was shifted to the Third World. Mao Zedong applied with great emphasis Lenin's dictums on the national question, on the colonial question in much more of a sense of every day consciousness.

Mao Zedong gave a new hope for revolution internationally. On a world scale, rather than *revolution and despair*, *hope and revolution* once again became the synonyms.

The whole time we, the Alive Production Collective, have been talking about revolution Mao Zedong has been there giving us guidance. In 1976, when Mao Zedong died we felt, quite literally, like we had just been robbed by death of our own leadership. Although we had never had the direct contact, the direct advice, had never met Mao Zedong and so on, we fell into despair. For a short time after we heard the announcements of his death we were saying: Mao Zedong died, our profound teacher is gone. People in our organization cried spontaneously because Mao Zedong had died. Then, we heard: Turn grief into strength. To us, this was a very valuable slogan. We are not ones to cater to despair. We don't particularly like to grieve. We don't uphold tears rolling down the face. The slogan fit. Our practical feeling was grief and what we wanted was strength in making revolution. That's what we had wanted all along, and still want: strength in our revolutionary work. We took up the slogan quite readily.

In China, the slogan was ever more fitting. The Chinese people had lost their great leader in an even more literal sense. We felt like we had lost our leadership. It was a feeling. The feeling came with the loss of the effect of Mao Zedong. Of course, we came to realize that Mao Zedong is dead but Mao Zedong Thought continues to guide us. This was an encouraging realization. In China, they literally lost their liberator. In this song *The East Is Red*, they say Mao Zedong is our liberator. They literally lost their liberator. In China Mao Zedong's influence didn't develop only through the late 50's, the 60's and 70's as it did internationally. In the 1940's, it was rare if you lived anywhere but in China and you had heard of Mao Zedong. In the 1920's and early 1930's if you heard of Mao Zedong you were probably an intelligence agent (*Laughter*) or you were in the People's Liberation Army.

In China, Mao Zedong's influence developed through the 20's, the 30's, the 40's, the 50's, the 60's and the 70's. When he died, it had that more deep going effect. He was our beacon. He was their beacon, too. He was their teacher. He was their leader. He was the person who actually solved the concrete problem of making revolution in their country, liberating their country from foreign imperialism. We do not have the solution that answers the problem of liberating our country. We do not have the formula that concretely meets the conditions of liberating Canada from U.S. imperialism, from Mao Zedong or from ourselves. However, Chairman Mao gave them that solution, they have the formula for China's liberation and they have implemented it under his leadership. The grief was all the more striking to the Chinese people because in 1976 they lost two other great leaders. They lost Zhou Enlai in January, which caused massive grief throughout the country, and in July they lost Zhu De, who was the commander of the People's Army all during the fight for liberation. Three leaders of the Chinese people died in this one year.

In those kind of times, we began to feel an unnecessary despair and we wondered: "What will China do now? Who will lead China now?" Of course, people will probably remember that when it was announced in the press that a certain leader would replace the late Zhou as Premier and then, later, the same person was made the new Party Chairman, the bourgeoisie suggested that Hua Guofeng was an unknown — as though they picked up some backwoods kid and made him Chairman. We investigated and found out that Hua had been around for awhile, despite the fact that we hadn't been too conscious of him. They didn't announce who the new

Chairman was for a little while and before they announced it, there was a real push put on this question, "Who is going to fill Chairman Mao's shoes? Can anybody do it?" In response to this we began to remember things that had been said years before Mao Zedong died. We remembered something once said by Zhou Enlai to a reporter from the West, who had asked this *deeply worrisome* question: "What will China do when Chairman Mao dies? Who will replace Chairman Mao?" The question implied that most of the people in China would just have to roll over and go to sleep because they wouldn't be able to do anything without Mao Zedong. This was a consciousness in the Western world. Nobody in China thought they would go into a state of suspended animation the day Mao Zedong died. Zhou Enlai astounded the poor, unsuspecting reporter by responding, "Well, there must be two or three hundred people in China who could replace Chairman Mao, perhaps as many as five hundred." (Laughter)

In remembering this good spirit after Mao Zedong died we realized that the Chinese people's revolution was going to be continued, it was still going to be a beacon for revolutionary people. Mao Zedong Thought was going to continue. Mao Zedong Thought was not going to be encased in crystal in a mausoleum on Tian An Men square along with his bodily remains.

For us in Guelph, the grief was great. For the people in China, the grief was great. For people throughout the world, the grief was great. All people took note when Chairman Mao died, all people paused. Everybody knew when Mao Zedong died. The bourgeoisie with its huge propaganda machines creates a certain consciousness when certain people die. They have their popular myths, like: everybody remembers where they were when they heard John F. Kennedy was shot. Well, everybody remembers where they were when they heard Mao Zedong died, *despite* the fact that the bourgeoisie did not put its propaganda machines into action to build that conscious memory.

On September 9, 1976, we knew some young kids around 13 or 14 years old — we still do know some young kids around 13 or 14 years old (Laughter) — to whom we said, "Guess your teacher at school was probably talking about Mao Zedong dying today." This is how naive we were, right? (Laughter) The kids answered, "What? No way!" So, we told the kids we had figured the teachers just couldn't ignore it. We were right, too — they couldn't but they tried. These kids knew anyway. They knew when they went into school that morning. It was coming out that Mao Zedong had died. It came out more and more what a significant person he was. When one million people gather in one place, whether it's on the other side of the world or on this side of the world, people have to take note. We have to admit that it is a lot of people, that it is something significant.

We support Mao Zedong Thought. What does that mean? Aside from the weight given that statement by all the emotion and significance of this man, Mao Zedong, which has been gone over, this statement is quite weighty. To say, "We support Mao Zedong Thought", gets away from the individual and gets into the realm of the ideology. It is a weighty statement in the realm of the ideology. By saying we support Mao Zedong Thought, we are saying we support Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought. We are saying we find our bearings by applying Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought. Inherent in this statement is the significant idea that there are five great teachers of Marxism-Leninism. There are people in the world today who say there are not five great teachers. There are people in the world who say there are only four; there are people who say there are only three great teachers of Marxism-Leninism. The Trotskyites, they go one (indicates Marx's portrait at the front of the hall), two (indicates Engels), three (indicates Lenin) and that's it. These two guys here (indicates Stalin and Mao Zedong), they just leave them out. There are people who support the Albanian Party's line in the current world polemic, who say there are only four great teachers — Mao Zedong doesn't belong there. So, at the front of their meetings you have portraits of Stalin, Lenin, Engels and Marx displayed.

We say there are five great teachers and simply by saying we support Mao Zedong Thought we make this ideological statement of ours. With that we say we demarcate from those Trotskyites and those modern revisionists who hate Mao Zedong and Stalin, we demarcate from the left-adventurist "super-revolutionaries" who support the new, "pure" revisionist line from Albania. Just to say, "We uphold Mao Zedong Thought", we demarcate from all these rotten trends.

We go further, too, and this really gets to rankle those we've demarcated from. On the question: who were the *greatest* of the five teachers? Some parts of the answer are obvious. We all say Marxist-Leninist. We don't say Marxist-Engelist-Leninist. (Laughter) Also, we don't approve of the term Stalinist, which people will have heard, because when it is applied to us it is being used by Trotskyites. However, when you ask, "Who were the most profound of these five thinkers?" most who agree on five teachers, say Marx, Lenin and Mao Zedong, because these people actually advanced Marxism. Engels and Stalin are described as continuers of Marxism and Marxism-Leninism, whereas, Lenin is described as a continuer and a developer of Marxism and Mao Zedong as a continuer and a developer of Marxism-Leninism. So, we go further. This is where we really get under the "four guys" or "three guys" believers' skin. We say that Mao Zedong is the greatest Marxist-Leninist of our era, he is the greatest Marxist that has ever lived.

Our detractors say, "You're making him a greater Marxist than Marx himself." We reply, "Yes. Exactly. He is a greater Marxist than Marx himself." Then, they get upset and mumble, "Ah, I thought Marx was the greatest of all time." Marx was certainly a profound thinker. There is no doubt about that. However, Marx lacked one advantage that Mao Zedong definitely had. That is: Marx had lived before Mao Zedong did and, of course, Marx had not lived before Marx did. Mao Zedong had the benefit of Marx's thought as a starting basis. Marx didn't have the benefit of his own decades of thought when he started. Lenin, too, had the benefit of Marx's thought. Stalin had the benefit of Marx's and Engels' and Lenin's thought.

So, Mao Zedong as a continuer, as someone who upheld Marx, upheld Engels, upheld Lenin, upheld Stalin, had a better starting basis than those four had. He had what they developed as a starting basis. More though, he developed those Marxist ideas in the context of the contemporary era. Often one hears people say, "I find reading Lenin heavy going. I find reading Marx really heavy going. But I find I can read Mao Zedong very easily." There is a reason for that. Marx speaks in the language of one hundred and fifty years ago. He speaks in the language of England, which was a second language to him — he was born German. There are reasons why Marx gets a little heavy on the grammatical structure every now and again. Similar things can be said of Lenin. Mao Zedong lived in our era. He is somebody who died only three years ago. He knew the contemporary idioms, expressions, ways of talking. He knew our ways of thinking. Mao Zedong had been on a jet airplane, Marx couldn't conceive of one. Mao knew about houses with electricity, about telephones, telecommunications, computers, all the kind of things that we take for granted. This is what makes him easy to read where Marx is harder and Lenin is hard. In 1917, when the Bolsheviks came to power they had to introduce electricity to the whole country. A new thing to Lenin at that time was the electricity which we just take for granted, and Lenin was only alive for a couple of years beyond that. Mao Zedong lived in our era, that's why he can speak to us, the people who live in this era.

However, what does the statement specifically mean? Is it just an abstract turn of phrase? Are we just talking off the top of our heads to show some difference between us and other groups when we say, "the greatest Marxist-Leninist of our era"? Basically it means that in both practice and theory, Mao Zedong was an outstanding person. He was not an outstanding theorist but an outstanding person in the realm of practice and in the realm of theory. This is very important. It is another reason that Mao Zedong is so easy to relate to as a profound Marxist thinker. If you meet some of the "profound Marxist thinkers" up at the university

you'll realize they're not often easy to relate to. (Laughter) Mao was different from them in that he had revolutionary practice under his belt.

When we began to be conscious of Mao Zedong, we young people, there was *already* a construction of socialism underway in China. Mao Zedong had *already* led the liberation of the country. He had already participated as a leader in the twenty-eight years long liberation struggle. Twenty-eight years of concrete practice in fighting for the revolution, not simply defending the revolution as China must do today when it already exists but fighting just to establish people's power for twenty-eight years. All through these years Mao Zedong did not just sit in an office and pontificate. He actually led. He led in the struggles inside the Communist Party, the rectification campaigns, the two line struggles, etc.

What was a rectification campaign? They were simply a matter of looking at the comrades in the organization and saying, "We need to toughen up our internal unity if we are going to have success in this external program we have set for ourselves." External meant outside the tasks in the Party's own structure but it also meant the Party's greatest concern — liberating the whole country. "How can we lead the people to liberation unless we have strong internal unity?" That strong harmony of outlook and unity comes through criticism and self-criticism. People sometimes ask "What do you mean when you say apply Mao Zedong Thought to your day to day revolutionary work?" Concretely, this striving for internal unity is one of the things we do. In our political organization, we know that without that internal unity we can't have any strength externally. This is something that we directly apply. Sometimes we are accused of making a direct transfer from China to Canada — so, the way the Chinese liberated themselves from foreign imperialism is precisely the formula we will try to use to liberate ourselves from U.S. imperialism — as though one day we will say, "Okay the Long March starts tomorrow. Everybody better get their pack on, we're walking to Vancouver." (Laughter) What's the use in that? There are planes. There are trucks. A friend of ours has a car and can take five or six people. (Laughter)

We do not make that kind of direct transfer but we do take some things up directly. The stress on internal unity as the basis for external work is one of the ideas we translate directly — we take what Mao Zedong did to build unity inside his organization, the points for attention, the formulas for struggle and we do so-called "mechanically" apply these to our own organization.

Mao Zedong's proposal for the correct handling of contradictions among the people is something we apply in the same direct way. Mao Zedong developed a very profound thesis on this question and taught how to distinguish contradictions among the people from contradictions between ourselves, the people, and the enemy. We apply this thesis very painstakingly.

Mao Zedong had practice beyond these kinds of things. He had practice that we can't project ourselves into. He had practice as a great military strategist. He had practice of actually going to the battlefield and actually directing the warfare on the scene, directing this battle and that battle. Mao Zedong developed some brilliant military stratagems. These are known in military academies the world over — bourgeois academies, not just revolutionary academies, all study Mao Zedong's military stratagems, amongst other things, of course. When the U.S. imperialists were waging war on the Vietnamese people, everybody heard of this counter-insurgency outfit, which was known as the Green Berets — which John Wayne wasn't really a member of. (Laughter) Required reading in the training for the real Green Berets was Mao Zedong's writings on military warfare because these writings contained the theory of the guerrilla war they were going to be facing when they went into the jungles. They had to try to understand guerrilla warfare in order to better fight it. One of the problems the Green Berets had was how could they understand guerrilla warfare; a basic tenet of guerrilla warfare is that you are fighting in your own territory, as soon as they flew to Viet Nam, that was the rug pulled out from under them. (Laughter)

However, the Green Berets did have to study Mao Zedong. If you talk to somebody who is up on military affairs about Mao Zedong's stratagem of "lose Yanan to take Yanan" the person will know what you are talking about.

All through the armed struggle Mao was not an abstract leader. Certain revolutionary leaders — we won't comment particularly on whether it's good or bad — do direct the armed struggle from abroad. When the people are actually fighting, they're sitting in some safe haven. There were a number of leaders in the Chinese Party who, when the liberation war was going on in China, were sitting in a safe haven in Moscow, getting primed solely on ideology, on theory, and there were other leaders who were fighting, people like Zhu De, Zhou Enlai and Mao Zedong. This latter group were actually there, actually fighting, actually with guns in their own hands. Some people don't find this so interesting. We find it quite profound.

A couple of these five guys (*indicates hanging portraits*), you can be guaranteed, never killed any representative of the enemy in their lives but Mao Zedong is quite likely to have killed someone on the battlefield. He used to be there. He almost got killed himself a number of times. On one occasion, he was taken prisoner by the Kuomintang and he was being escorted to jail to be interrogated, then executed. They didn't know what an important leader he was, although at the time he was a key party secretary. The Kuomintang unit was ambushed on the route. Mao Zedong ran away, hid in some tall grass and bided his time while the enemy searched for him after the skirmish. They kept searching for many hours, sometimes passing only a few feet away from him but eventually gave up the search and he got away. That's how close he used to come to death. When we say he had a lot of practice under his belt we are talking of something significant and profound.

We talked about the United Front theory here on July 2. Well, Mao Zedong led an actual United Front. When we talk about the United Front, people say, "Nice theory but when you call a meeting, only a handful of people come out. Some United Front!" Mao Zedong built a United Front of the type we described in our earlier speech, of all the classes, of all the strata, of all the patriotic people. Mao Zedong led the building of a Communist Party that has thirty million members today. There are more members of the Communist Party of China than we have people in Canada.

We talked in our other speech about how there is a difficulty in enacting the United Front because you have a basic abhorrence for some of the people you have to unite with but you have to unite nonetheless. Mao Zedong was applying similar principles when Nixon came to China to sign the Shanghai Accord. Chairman Mao had to meet with Nixon. So, every ultra-Leftist and petty-bourgeois revolutionist all over the world said, "Look at Mao. He's selling out the people. He dares to shake hands with Nixon." Everybody's heard this. You can still hear it today — if you go downtown sometime when Shotgun Bob is displaying newspapers, he'll give you a current rendition. (Laughter) These people say, "The Vietnamese war was going on, carpet bombings of Kampuchea had been ordered, and so on, how could Mao Zedong do it?" The funny thing about it is: he couldn't do it. Mao was supposed to have a fifteen minute interview with Nixon. He went to meet him. He shook his hand. After five minutes he said he was feeling ill. He got up and he left! (Laughter) Zhou Enlai, who they call the great diplomat, stayed to finish the last ten minutes of the interview. So, if people ask you, "How could he stomach talking to Nixon?" you should say, "He couldn't." (Laughter)

Yet, Mao did approve the Shanghai accords. Yet, Mao did put forward the Three Worlds Theory, the extension of the United Front policy to the international sphere. Mao Zedong was a human being. He did have human feelings, a human outlook and so on.

People read Mao Zedong's works for the first time and are often surprised at how down to earth he is, coming from the practical association he had with the people. His wife — you know, the one they're always referring to when they say, "Oh they overthrew Chairman Mao's widow", Jiang Qing — once made a speech that was supposed to be a presentation on a traditional novel called

Water Margin. The book was causing controversy because they weren't sure what perspective to see it in. The whole Right-Left debate centered around this novel at one time. The Rightists wanted to put it in a certain perspective. The Leftists wanted to put it in another perspective. So, Jiang Qing went and made a speech on *Water Margin*. Then, she insisted that the Central Committee's Propaganda Department circulate her speech for reading by the public. Such a move had to be approved by a higher body. In the course of that, Mao Zedong read the speech. He passed comment on it by saying, "Shit!" (Laughter) "Don't distribute it." His comment was just these four words. This is the kind of down to earth guy he was.

When you read Mao Zedong's works you find this down to earth approach frequently. At one point when the Great Polemics were about to begin and Mao was trying to educate the people in his Party that they shouldn't blindly rely on the Soviet Union, he said we have people in our organization who think even a fart that comes from the Soviet Union is fragrant. (Laughter) Volume Five of Mao Zedong's Selected Works is quite earthy!

Mao had great developments in theory which people are probably more aware of but we like to emphasize the very practical side of Mao Zedong. Mao came to Marxism through practice. He came to Marxism by realizing revolution was needed and then seeking a way to make revolution. We have a lot of people in Canada who find Mao Zedong before they find the need for revolution. Before they actually feel the need for revolution, the need for change, they're enamoured with Mao Zedong Thought and they don't know what to do with it. We see these people all the time. A group of them just founded another Communist Party the other week. (Laughter) This group called the League has changed its name. It's now a "Party". The name has changed from the Canadian Communist League (Marxist-Leninist) to the Workers' Communist Party (Marxist-Leninist). We still don't have the much needed Communist Party in Canada but we do have another group calling itself a "Communist Party".



Some people become enamoured with Mao Zedong before they become enamoured with the idea of changing society. They come to the idea of changing society secondarily. Mao Zedong himself came to it primarily. He came to feel that need for a change in Chinese society, he came to feel the hatred for the foreign imperialists before he came to Marxism, before he came to appreciate Lenin and Stalin, before he participated in founding the Communist Party, before he led the building of the Red Army. This is very significant to us because we came to revolutionary ideology through the back door in the same way that Mao did. We came to appreciate theory through practice. We felt the need to change things and didn't have a clue how to do it. Then, somebody told us to look at Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought. We picked up the books and a lot of what they said was what we were thinking anyway. These books

said the kind of things we already had on our minds. We didn't have to adopt that part of the thinking. It was already there. All we had to do was adopt the policies that came from the need for change we felt. That was what we were lacking.

This is why we say we apply Mao Zedong Thought to our work because it fits our work. It fits the felt needs we have. We feel those needs anyway, separate from the theoretical works.

We could look at Mao Zedong's great theoretical contributions, and they are very great. We could give a four hour speech on the profound idea that in dealing with contradictions among the people you should use methods of persuasion, not coercion. Mao criticized Stalin for using coercion rather than persuasion, for jailing people who didn't need to be jailed, for killing people who didn't need to be killed and so on.

The Cultural Revolution itself is a great theoretical contribution. It is an enrichment of the treasure house of Marxism. In popular terms it's known as the Cultural Revolution but in strict terms it's called the theory of continuing the revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat. Quite a profound idea! This is what stumped those waging the socialist revolution in the Soviet Union in Stalin's time but it didn't stump those building socialism in China and it doesn't stump anyone making socialist revolution from now on. We have the formula. We have the solution to that question. It was a difficult problem. Think: when you have people's power and you rebel against something in authority, you are seeming to do what the counter-revolutionaries do. How do you rebel without being reactionary? "The only people who rebel at all as long as revolutionary authority exists are reactionaries." This was the thought until Mao Zedong formulated the theory of continuing the positive rebellious trend, continuing the trend for the new against the old, under the dictatorship of the proletariat. A very important theory!

Mao Zedong made a lot of important new contributions to the treasure house of Marxism but what we like to emphasize is his practical side. We like to emphasize the practical effect he had on the world, the profound practical effect he had on the world. This is why we look to Mao Zedong. We don't look to Mao Zedong first and foremost because he's a brilliant thinker, rather we accept that he is a brilliant thinker because we can see what he has done in practice, because we can see the deep effect his thinking has had. We look to his great practical worth first and foremost. This is the way of coming to see that Mao Zedong Thought is brilliant theory. This is the way we think Mao Zedong Thought should be approached.

Mao Zedong Thought should be approached not as some sort of a dogma. We shouldn't pick up "Quotations From Chairman Mao", *the Little Red Book*, like a Bible, which is what everybody figures we do. We shouldn't pick up any of Mao Zedong's works like a Bible. When selections are read out at meetings like this they shouldn't be treated religiously. People have said to us, "Sometimes I get the feeling your meetings are like religious services. The speeches are the sermon and the readings are like the gospel." That's not the way it should be. It should be lively. It should be something that applies. It should be something that can be applied. That's how we look on Mao Zedong Thought.

Mao Zedong Thought is not just an hypothesis, not just something that has been put out and is yet to be proved, not something that we have yet to see work, not something that we should wait and see about because it has to be tested in practice. It has been tested in practice repeatedly and it works.

If we apply Mao Zedong Thought properly to our situation in Canada, these slogans that we have put forward at the end of our speeches at our other recent meetings will become quite concrete. When we say, "Unity!" Mao Zedong Thought is the key to unity. When we say, "Unity of the proletariat!" Mao Zedong Thought is the key to unity of the proletariat. When we say, "Unity amongst Leftists! Unity of anti-imperialists!" Mao Zedong Thought is the key to that unity. When we say, "Revolution is possible in Canada!" you can always put the qualifier on when you hear it from us, from the Alive Production Collective, that Mao Zedong Thought is the key to making revolution in Canada! (Applause)