

CORRECTLY UNDERSTAND AND PRACTICE EXTENSIVE DEMOCRACY
UNDER THE DICTATORSHIP OF THE PROLETARIAT

Following is a translation of an article by Hung Hsiao-pin
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In his epoch-making work "On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People," Chairman Mao trenchantly explains the class nature of democracy, proletarian democratic centralism and the Marxist-Leninist theory of the relationship between democracy and dictatorship, between democracy and centralization, and between freedom and discipline. This is particularly significant for our correct understanding and practice of extensive democracy under the dictatorship of the proletariat in the current great proletarian cultural revolution, for grasping firmly the general orientation of struggle, for criticizing and repudiating the handful of top party people in authority taking the capitalist road, for bringing about and consolidating the grand revolutionary alliance and revolutionary "three-way combination," and for victoriously fulfilling the tasks of struggle, criticism and reform.

Chairman Mao has pointed out: "Freedom and democracy do not exist in the abstract, only in the concrete. In a society rent by class struggle, if there is freedom for the exploiting classes to exploit the working people, there is no freedom for the working people not to be exploited, and if there is democracy for the bourgeoisie, there is no democracy for the proletariat and other working people."

Throughout the whole historical period of proletarian dictatorship, there exist classes, class contradictions and class struggle. Of course, democracy bears a class character. There is either proletarian democracy or bourgeois democracy. Above-class and abstract democracy simply does not exist.

Our democracy is proletarian democracy. That is to say, our democracy operates within the ranks of the proletariat and all the people who agree with, support and join the cause of socialist revolution and socialist construction. As for our class enemies who oppose socialist revolution and who are hostile to and sabotage socialist construction, we do not allow them democracy, we exercise dictatorship over them. However, the bourgeois representatives who have sneaked into the organs of the dictatorship of the proletariat, the handful of party in authority taking the capitalist road, do exactly the opposite. In the areas and departments in which they entrench themselves, they turn proletarian democracy into bourgeois democracy. They give democracy and freedom to the landlords and the bourgeoisie. They let loose the ghosts and monsters. They allow the poisonous weeds against the party, socialism, and the thought of Mao Tse-tung to spread unchecked. But they exercise bourgeois dictatorship over the people.

The great proletarian cultural revolution which we are now carrying is for the purpose of arousing the masses boldly to expose and overthrow the handful of party people in authority taking the capitalist road by applying extensive democracy under the dictatorship of the proletariat. We will smash their bourgeois democracy and their schemes for a capitalist comeback, and consolidate and strengthen proletarian democratic centralism and the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Chairman Mao teaches us: "Those who demand freedom and democracy in the abstract regard democracy as an end and not a means. Democracy sometimes seems to be an end, but it is in fact only a means. Marxism teaches us that democracy is part of the superstructure and belongs to the category of politics. That is to say, in the last analysis, it serves the economic base." We must firmly remember this teaching, for it is a guide to us in correctly understanding and applying extensive democracy under proletarian dictatorship in the course of the great proletarian cultural revolution.

What kind of a means is extensive democracy under the dictatorship of the proletariat. What is it for? Against whom is it directed? What end does it seek to achieve? Extensive democracy under the dictatorship of the proletariat is the means for carrying out revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat. It is used for dealing with the handful of party persons in authority taking the capitalist road and for achieving the aims of smashing these class enemies, consolidating and strengthening the dictatorship of the proletariat, defending and developing the economic base of socialism and preventing capitalist restoration. If we depart from these aims, we still depart from proletarian democracy and go astray down the path of bourgeois democracy.

We must pay constant attention to the fact that application of extensive democracy under proletarian dictatorship is for strengthening proletarian dictatorship and not for weakening and undermining it, for consolidating and developing the economic base of socialism and not for weakening and undermining it.

In the midst of the great proletarian cultural revolution, whether a mass organization correctly practices extensive democracy under proletarian dictatorship is to be judged by whether it, when applying extensive democracy, turns the spearhead of struggle against the handful of party people in authority taking the capitalist road, whether it does so for the purpose of consolidating proletarian dictatorship and defending the economic base of socialism. This is the most basic criterion. If we depart from this criterion and fail to see the orientation and aim of struggle, we shall not be able to distinguish between big right and big wrong.

Within the ranks of the people, extensive democracy under the dictatorship of the proletariat is also a means. It is precisely through the methods of extensive democracy, airing one's views, contending and debating to the fullest extent and publicizing one's views in big-character posters, that right is distinguished from wrong and contradictions among the people are correctly solved. Through these methods we are also able to expand and develop the Leftist forces, gradually unite with over 95 percent of the masses and over 95 percent of the cadres, realize a grand alliance of proletarian revolutionaries, and isolate to the greatest extent and strike at the handful of party power holders taking the capitalist road.

In the great proletarian cultural revolution, it is normal that among mass organizations and within a mass organization there should be differences of opinion and contradictions of one kind or another. These opinions and contradictions involve problems of ideology and understanding. They are contradictions among the people and should be resolved according to the formula of "unity -- criticism -- unity" and by democratic methods, that is, criticism and self-criticism as well as reasoning on the basis of facts. Chairman Mao has pointed out: "The only way to settle questions of an ideological nature or controversial issues among the people is by the democratic method, the method of discussion, of criticism, of persuasion and education, and not by the method of coercion or repression." This is the only correct way for us to handle the contradictions among the people. A mass organization and the responsible persons of a mass organization, in dealing with those mass organizations which differ from them in opinion and the masses who have been cheated into joining the conservative organizations, must proceed from the desire for unity and solve the contradictions through criticism or struggle; on no account must they overcome these masses with sheer physical force. Under no circumstances must they treat the masses who have been cheated into joining the conservative organizations as enemies and direct the spearhead of struggle at them.

As responsible members of revolutionary mass organizations, and when our position has changed from that of being suppressed to that of being in power, we should pay all the more attention to the correct practice of extensive democracy under the dictatorship of the proletariat. In the past we have mobilized the broad masses to apply the extensive democracy under proletarian dictatorship to expose the handful of party people in authority taking the capitalist road and seizing their power. Today, we still have to

apply extensive democracy under proletarian dictatorship to thoroughly repudiate and totally discredit the handful of top party persons in authority taking the capitalist road politically, ideologically and theoretically, and to fulfill the tasks of "struggle -- criticism -- transformation" in our own units. At the same time, we should learn to practice extensive democracy in order to handle correctly contradictions among the people and controversies and differences of opinion among them. In particular, we should dare to accept criticism from the revolutionary masses, overcome our shortcomings and correct our mistakes, and make a really good job of holding and exercising power for the proletariat.

Within the ranks of the people, extensive democracy under proletarian dictatorship is relative to a high degree of centralization of the proletariat. Democracy and centralization are two aspects of the unity of opposites. Without extensive democracy of the proletariat, there will be no high degree of centralization of the proletariat, or vice versa.

Chairman Mao says: "Within the ranks of the people, democracy is correlative with centralism and freedom with discipline. They are the two opposites of a single entity, contradictory as well as united, and we should not one-sidedly emphasize one to the denial of the other. Within the ranks of the people, we cannot do without freedom, nor can we do without discipline; we cannot do without democracy, nor can we do without centralism. This unity of democracy and centralism, of freedom and discipline, constitutes our democratic centralism. Under this system, the people enjoy extensive democracy and freedom, but at the same time they have to keep within the bounds of socialist discipline."

Chairman Mao has also said: "This democracy is democracy under centralized guidance, not anarchy. Anarchy does not accord with the interests or wishes of the people."

Extensive democracy under the dictatorship of the proletariat is under the command of Mao Tse-tung's thought and of his proletarian revolutionary line. When we employ extensive democracy as a means we should devote attention to defending and strengthening the proletarian centralization and must not weaken it, and we should use Mao Tse-tung's thought to guide all our actions and use his proletarian revolutionary line to guide our practical struggle. Only in this way can we ensure that extensive democracy under the dictatorship of the proletariat is carried out smoothly. It will be anarchism if we regard extensive democracy as an end in itself and oppose proletarian centralism. Anarchism, in essence, is bourgeois democracy and bourgeois liberalization. We must overcome this erroneous tendency before it goes too far.

Extensive democracy under the dictatorship of the proletariat must be combined with consciousness adherence to proletarian revolutionary discipline. During the great proletarian cultural revolution, we should employ extensive democracy under the dictatorship of the proletariat as a means of overthrowing

the slavishness peddled by the handful of top party persons in authority taking the capitalist road and smash the bourgeois reactionary discipline which they used to suppress the people. It is precisely because we want to strengthen the proletarian revolutionary discipline that we do this. That is why, when applying extensive democracy under proletarian dictatorship, we must firmly defend and earnestly abide by proletarian revolutionary discipline. As taught by Chairman Mao, we should "enjoy broad democracy and freedom" and "at the same time keep ourselves within the bounds of socialist discipline."

The fundamental method for recognizing and practicing extensive democracy under proletarian dictatorship is to make an earnest and creative study and application of Chairman Mao's works and his "On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People," and use the thought of Mao Tse-tung to remold our world outlook, eliminate self-interest and foster utter devotion to the collective interest and promote the revolutionizing of our ideology. Only in this way can we keep firm hold of the general orientation of the struggle, bring about the revolutionary great alliance and revolutionary three-way alliance," overthrow completely the handful of party persons in authority taking the capitalist road and carry the great proletarian cultural revolution through to the end.

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