Ghost of Confucius' Shop and Actual Class Struggle

by Chi Fan-hsiu

CONFUCIUS lived more than 2,000 years ago and represented the reactionary political and cultural ideology of the declining slave-owner class and the feudal landlord class. During the May 4th Movement which marked the passage of the Chinese bourgeois democratic revolution to the stage of the new-democratic revolution, both Confucius and the ideology represented by him were dealt a severe blow, but the ghost of the Confucius Shop* never vanished during the past 50 years. During these five decades all the exploiting classes first did their utmost to protect the Confucius Shop. Later they sang elegies for it, striving to bring about its resurrection. A review of the struggle around this question, attempts to revive it and counter-attacks to such attempts, may help us get a deep understanding of the actual class struggle and the protracted, complex nature of the class struggle in the ideological field.

The Departed Spirit of Confucius' Shop Lingers On

Confucius, a native of Chufu in Shantung Province, lived from 551 B.C. to 479 B.C. during the last years of China's Spring and Autumn Period. He was born in a declining aristocratic family of slave-owners. At first he performed rites at funeral services for the aristocrats, probably as a musician. Later, he became a petty official in the State of Lu in charge of provisions and cattle, sheep and livestock-breeding, and then a high official responsible for the administering of criminal law. An ardent champion of China's ancient slave system and faithful spokesman of the slave-owner class, he was not reconciled to the decline of the slave system and deeply yearned for the Shang and Chou Dynasties, the prime period of the slave system. Both his philosophical and political thinking were reactionary, supporting the slave system. After his death, his successor Mencius further developed the reactionary Confucian thinking which has become known as the "doctrine of Confucius and Mencius." In the protracted development of the Chinese feudal society, this doctrine gradually became the ruling ideology of the landlord class, an ideology that defended the feudal exploiting system. Feudal emperors and kings of all the past dynasties, without exception, extolled Confucius as the "sage," praised his works as the supreme "classics" and used the "doctrine of Confucius and Mencius" as the spiritual yoke to enslave the labouring people.

The May 4th Movement in 1919 raised the slogan "Down with Confucius' Shop,"** powerfully exposed and criticized the reactionary ideology of Confucius, thereby shattering the 2,000-year-old fetish of Confucius. This marked a leap forward in the history of Chinese thought. From then on, in the decades starting from China's new-democratic revolution down to the period of socialist revolution, the revolutionary people under the leadership of the proletariat have arrayed themselves in battle, continuously and heroically attacking both imperialist and feudal cultures. They have persisted in the struggle to "overthrow the Confucius Shop." But all the exploiting classes and their representatives have never ceased unleashing wild counter-attacks. They stubbornly defended the Confucius Shop and tried hard to summon its departed spirit.

On the eve of the May 4th Movement, when the tide of "overthrowing the Confucius Shop" was sweeping the whole country and its fate was in grave danger, the Protect-the-Emperor Party and feudal remnants, represented by Kang Yu-wei and Lin Chin-nan, emerged and howled far and wide, slanderously attacking the new cultural movement and advocating "worship of the emperor" and "worship of Confucius." Kang Yu-wei, an advocate of the reform movement in 1898 and later a chieftain of the counter-revolutionary faction of royalists, openly appealed to the then Northern Warlords government to incorporate in the "constitution" a provision designating Confucianism as the "state religion," in an attempt to make the Confucius Shop a dead weight on the Chinese people for ever.

During the May 4th Movement, Hu Shih, a representative of the Right wing of the bourgeois intellectuals, at first dared not utter a word of opposition when the revolutionary masses were pounding the

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* The Confucius Shop is a term used to describe Confucius and the reactionary political and cultural ideology he represented.

** "Down with Confucius' Shop" means breaking down the worship of Confucius and criticizing Confucius and the reactionary ideology he represented.

Confucius Shop. However, as the revolutionary movement developed in depth, his reactionary stand of hostility to the workers and peasants and defence of the imperialist and feudal cultures was increasingly laid bare. Soon he betrayed the slogan "Down with Confucius' Shop" which he once supported and re-raised its tattered banner. He projected the ruse "Study more problems; talk less about *ism.*" Under the guise of "studying problems," he tried to thwart the spread of Marxism in China. He also put forward the reactionary slogan "Study and compile China's classics," calling upon the people to pore into the classics of feudal culture and prostrate themselves before the ghost of Confucius.

All the political representatives of the big landlords, the big compradors and the big bourgeoisie spared no efforts to revive the Confucius Shop which they took as their tool to mould public opinion in favour of the consolidation of their reactionary rule. Chiang Kai-shek, the arch enemy of the people, engaged in a series of counter-revolutionary activities to revive the Confucius Shop to consolidate his fascist rule. Imitating an act of the past feudal rulers, he went on a "pilgrimage" to Chufu and frantically shouted: "Protection of the Confucian Temple is fundamental in uprooting communism!" Later he advocated the alleged traditional morality of the Chinese nation such as "propriety, righteousness, modesty and a sense of shame," and actively pushed the so-called "New Life Movement." He also made great efforts to introduce a system of education which would lead the people back to the ancients, including the "worship of Confucius" and the "study of the Confucian canon." Chiang Kai-shek and his gang also flared such statements as "the success of the great cause of national construction rests upon reviving Confucianism." They extolled the Confucius Shop to the heavens.

Nor was the renegade, hidden traitor and scab Liu Shao-chi an exception. Having betrayed the revolution, he was able to crawl out of a warlord prison in 1925. Grasping *The Four Books*, the epitome of the doctrine of Confucius and Mencius, which had been bestowed on him by a reactionary warlord, he later began his shameless life of hawking the trash of the Confucius Shop to create public opinion for a counter-revolutionary come-back. Not only did he ceaselessly publicize this doctrine, but he too copied the trick of the arch enemy of the people, Chiang Kai-shek, and made a "pilgrimage" to Chufu in 1951. Intoning as did the feudal emperors, kings, warlords and bureaucrats, he declared that "Confucius is the sage."

Using Yesterday's Base Acts to Defend Today's Base Acts

Confucius died more than 2,000 years ago. Why were the representatives of all the exploiting classes so enthusiastic in praising and reviving the Confucius Shop in the past 50 years? Why could this mummy attract a batch of flies humming around it?

The reactionary "back to the ancients" ideology of the fallen slave-owner class represented by Confucius meets the needs of all reactionary classes. The supreme goal for which Confucius worked all his life was the restoration of the rule and system of hierarchy which flourished at the heyday of slavery. He did his utmost to defend the old order and oppose any kind of social reform. The arch traitor Yuan Shih-kai usurped the fruit of victory of China's Revolution of 1911 in the very year and dreamt of restoring the days when all power was vested in the emperor under a feudal monarchy. He restaged the farce of going on a "pilgrimage" to Chufu in order to seek justification from Confucius for his "back to the ancients" ambition — to ascend the emperor's throne. Chiang Kai-shek also sought the help of the reactionary "back to the ancients" ideology of Confucius to establish his reactionary rule of fascist dictatorship. He used the Confucian thinking of "great unification" to serve his actual counter-revolutionary "great unification" in the "great cause of national construction." The feudal theories of "great unification" and "the ruler is endowed with power from heaven," were taken as the reactionary theoretical basis for his actual fascist dictatorship. At the same time, by reviving the ancient "doctrine of Confucius and Mencius," he plotted to counter and weaken the tremendous influence of communist ideology in China and establish his fascist type of thought control. Liu Shao-chi, the long-standing counter-revolutionary hidden in our Party, scraped some trash from the reactionary Confucian dump of "back to the ancients" and blended it in his sinister book *Self-Cultivation*. His vicious design was to induce our Party to abandon the proletarian revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat so that the reactionary rule of the big landlords and big bourgeoisie could be restored.

The class nature of these political representatives of the modern decadent and reactionary classes and that of the decadent slave-owners represented by Confucius is identical. They utilized the threadbare "doctrine of Confucius and Mencius" as their weapon to defend reactionary rule and restore their lost "paradise." As Marx pointed out, they **used yesterday's base acts to defend today's base acts and "anxiously conjure up the spirits of the past to their service and borrow from them names, battle cries and costumes in order to present the new scene of world history in this time-honoured disguise and this borrowed language."**

All reactionary classes invariably do their utmost to negate or cover up the ever sharpening class contradictions. Like Confucius, his followers spare no efforts to advocate such shibboleths as "loyalty to superiors and consideration for others," "return good for evil," and "do not do to others what you do not want others to do to you." Their aim is to make the oppressed classes endure oppression and enslavement by

the exploiting classes, and not to struggle or resist. This slavish philosophy undisguisedly propagates the "rationality" of class domination and class exploitation. To safeguard his reactionary rule and stifle the struggle of the revolutionary people, Chiang Kai-shek directed his pawns to go to all lengths to promote the "revival of the Confucian school of thought" in his futile attempt to use the "doctrine of Confucius and Mencius" to deaden the revolutionary will of the revolutionary people. The sinister book *Self-Cultivation* dished out by Liu Shao-chi in 1939 conglomerated practically all the "essence" of the "doctrine of Confucius and Mencius." It made no mention whatever of defeating Japanese imperialism, the way to fight the Kuomintang reactionaries, or the seizure of political power by armed force. In republishing his sinister book in 1962, Liu Shao-chi sidestepped altogether the question of the dictatorship of the proletariat, the struggle between the bourgeoisie which is trying vainly to restore capitalism and the proletariat which is fighting against such restoration, and the struggle against imperialism, revisionism and all reaction. Instead, he wildly peddled such trash as "loyalty to superiors and consideration for others," "do not do to others what you do not want others to do to you," "return good for evil," "compromise for expedient purposes," and "endure humiliations and bear heavy burdens." His aim was to dupe the people, compromise with class enemies at home and abroad, bring about class conciliation and class capitulation and push his opportunist line of betraying the Party and the state. What Liu Shao-chi intended was that the revolutionary people should forget the class struggle and the dictatorship of the proletariat so that he and his gang could have a free hand in bringing about a peaceful evolution and turning the dictatorship of the proletariat into the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie.

Confucius was an idealist. The sinister book *Self-Cultivation*, based on the reactionary philosophy of Confucius, was highly treasured by all exploiting classes which used it to poison and dope the people. Further developing his reactionary ideology, Confucius' disciples and followers put forward what they called "watchfulness over oneself when alone," "be sincere in thought, rectify the mind, cultivate the person, regulate the family," and so on and so forth. These were downright idealistic rantings of "self-cultivation," and were all intended to cultivate men into faithful lackeys of the reactionary ruling classes, into muckworms seeking personal fame and gain. The Northern Warlords government, which took over the mantle of Yuan Shih-kai, compelled the students to study the Confucian canon because it wanted to "cultivate" the young people into young "antiques" which would be of use to themselves. Chiang Kai-shek shouted himself hoarse in advertising the "New Life Movement" which advocated "propriety, righteousness, modesty and a sense of shame." His aim was to use such idealism to poison and fool the people, thereby safeguarding and strengthening his reactionary rule. As for Liu Shao-chi, he did his level best to spread Confucius' and Mencius' way of "self-cultivation" because he wanted others to depart from the reality of class struggle and go in for idealistic "self-cultivation," "cultivating" themselves into hypocrites, "docile tools" and lackeys of the imperialists, revisionists and reactionaries.

The "doctrine of Confucius and Mencius" is also a delusive and hypocritical mask used by all the reactionary rulers in history, who adorned the ideas of the exploiting classes specially to deceive the people. What they mouthed was completely different from what they did. When Confucius talked about "love of the people," he had in mind only the ruling classes. He had no "love" for the classes that were ruled; he only wanted to suppress them. Such was the hypocritical and ruthless double-talk of Confucius. The apologists for feudalism, who spoke profusely of "benevolence, righteousness and justice," were actually out-and-out scoundrels. The traitor and butcher Tseng Kuo-fan, who suppressed the Revolutionary Movement of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom in mid-19th century, trumpeted a great deal about "sincerity." But others gave him the lie by substituting the word "hypocrisy" for "sincerity." That **"most brutal and treacherous fellow"** Chiang Kai-shek far outdid his "master" Tseng Kuo-fan in employing counter-revolutionary dual tactics. While ruthlessly slaughtering the revolutionary people, he insidiously set in motion the evil wind of worshipping Confucius and studying the Confucian canon, and touted "propriety, righteousness, modesty and a sense of shame." As for Liu Shao-chi, he was clearly a counter-revolutionary of long standing, and a renegade whose hands were stained with the blood of revolutionary martyrs, but he went out of his way to pose as a pious "man of complete virtue" and decked himself out as a "leader of the working class movement" when actually he was an arch scab. A great conspirator and a man of wild ambitions, Liu Shao-chi inherited the mantle of counter-revolutionary double-dealers of the past.

A Few Inferences for Today's Class Struggle

The counter-revolutionary plots to revive Confucius' Shop by the traitor Yuan Shih-kai, by the arch enemy of the people Chiang Kai-shek and by the renegade, hidden traitor and scab Liu Shao-chi were all crushed by the advancing wheels of history. But Chair-

man Mao has taught us: **"Historical experience merits attention."** From the counter-revolutionary adverse current that over the last 50 years has been trying to revive Confucius' Shop, we can deduce some useful inferences.

Firstly, it shows us that all overthrown exploiting classes will never be reconciled to their defeat, but will always put up a last-ditch desperate struggle. One of the ways by which they attempt a come-back is to reverse the correct verdicts on the representatives of the overthrown exploiting classes in history and their reactionary ideologies. This is true of China as well as of other countries. U.S. imperialist chieftain Nixon uses the idol of Jesus Christ to carry out lying propaganda for the counter-revolutionary dual tactics of the U.S. monopoly capitalist groups, while social-imperialism uses the ghosts of its ancestors to serve its policy of aggression.

The great leader Chairman Mao has pointed out: **"It is highly probable that years after the final elimination of all exploiting classes from the face of the earth, representatives of the Chiang Kai-shek dynasty will remain active here and there."** History and present-day reality tell us that people trying to reverse the correct verdict on Confucius' Shop have always been active. Even up to recently, Wang Ming, a renegade to the Party, a traitor to the country, an enemy agent long spurned by the Chinese people and a running dog kept by modern revisionism, was trying to revive the ghost of Confucius. Reacting as if he had suffered a great personal loss, he wailed bitterly over the destruction of Confucius' Shop by the storm of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. Liu Shao-chi, the chief representative of the capitalist roaders in power within the Party, has been overthrown. Will there be anyone who, like those trying to revive the ghost of Confucius, will try to reverse the correct verdict passed on him, his bourgeois headquarters and his bourgeois reactionary line? Shortly after Liu Shao-chi was ferreted out by the revolutionary people, at the time when the revolution began to seize back that portion of power usurped by the bourgeoisie, there emerged the adverse current that lasted from the winter of 1966 to the spring of 1967, which tried to reverse the correct verdicts on the overthrown bourgeois headquarters headed by Liu Shao-chi and on the bourgeois reactionary line which had been repudiated by the hundreds of millions of revolutionary people. **"We have won great victory. But the defeated class will still struggle. These people are still around and this class still exists."** There will still be reversals in the class struggle. The struggle between restoration [of capitalism] and counter-restoration and between reversal and counter-reversal of correct verdicts will still continue.

Secondly, it tells us that full attention must be paid to the class struggle in the ideological sphere. With regard to the representatives of the reactionary classes, as pointed out in the 16-Point Decision, they are **"still trying to use the old ideas, culture, customs and habits of the exploiting classes to corrupt the masses, capture their minds and endeavour to stage a come-back."** Lenin said: **"When the old society perishes, its corpse cannot be nailed up in a coffin and lowered into the grave. It disintegrates in our midst; the corpse rots and infects us."** The reason why the reactionary classes are able to utilize the worship of Confucius and "back to the ancients" is because the reactionary influence of the "doctrine of Confucius and Mencius" is still poisoning the people, that is to say, this doctrine still has its social ideological foundation. This traditional reactionary doctrine does not disappear of itself simply because we have overthrown the feudal landlord class. In the case of reactionary bourgeois ideas, their influence is still greater and deeper than that of the "doctrine of Confucius and Mencius." In order to break completely with traditional old ideas, we must use Mao Tsetung Thought to criticize the ideas of the bourgeoisie and all other exploiting classes, and use the proletarian world outlook to defeat the bourgeois world outlook. This is a long and arduous process of **"fight self, criticize revisionism."** If we slacken our efforts in the criticism of old ideas, it is very possible that outdated things will be restored and consolidated in new forms, and things that have been criticized and overthrown will be revived to poison people and become the ideological foundation for a capitalist restoration. The proletariat must use its own ideology to defeat that of the exploiting classes, and use its new ideas, culture, customs and habits to transform the mental outlook of the whole society. This is a long struggle. **"A very long period of time is needed. . . . Several decades won't do it; success requires anywhere from one to several centuries."**

Concerning the proletariat, Marx and Engels said more than a century ago that **"its development involves the most radical rupture with traditional ideas."** We must hold high the banner of revolutionary mass criticism and use Mao Tsetung Thought — the invincible weapon — to criticize the ideology of the bourgeoisie, revisionism and all exploiting classes, and eliminate the pernicious influence of Liu Shao-chi's counter-revolutionary revisionist line in all spheres, including the sphere of culture. We must, under the leadership of the great leader Chairman Mao, take the initiative and launch offensives without stop to completely demolish the reactionary ideological citadel of all exploiting classes.