Mao: 'violence is justified'

By Storm Eastman

In the "Chinese Society and Internal Politics" seminar last Saturday, Professors Thomas Bernstein of Yale and Ezra Vogel of Harvard concentrated on the role peasants play in the Cultural Revolution, the reorganization of government systems after the periodic shakeups.

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Bernstein of Yale and Ezra Saturday, 'Professors Thomas Mao: 'violence is justified'.

Bernstein has studied the Chinese system of sending a large number of urban secondary school students to the country to work as peasants, possibly for life. A haphazard program until 1964, the Cultural Revolution, it is now applicable to all of the upper echelons as well as the peasant political leadership, and is encouraged to sever elitist expectations from education.

There are probably several reasons for this action. With a low level of concentration and specialization, there is undoubt-edly a shortage of urban jobs. Philosophically, this reduces the capacity of the current adult elite from passing on opportunities and privileges to their children. There is a slight possibility that the Chinese leadership also wishes to develop the backward areas.

Such a developmental plan is highly unlikely, as the students are the ones who must adapt to their circumstances. Although used to working hard in school oriented jobs, they find the peasant life stunningly tough and rigorous. Though the political elite is subject to this also, it is usually the children of the old intellectual and upper classes that are singled out. Some fail to adapt and flee to Hong Kong, where Prof. Bernstein has interviewed many. They feel bitter, as if it was the end of their future; they don't believe that if they had worked well they might have been allowed to return to the city.

Some do go on and, when they have adapted, may be sent back to school to learn skills that will enable them to take higher positions in the village. Rarely are they allowed to leave - those that do advance or move to the city are almost inevitably of the working class. Although the refugees may have valid grievances, it must be remembered that they are the ones who failed to fit in - the misfits.

The peasants, of course, look at it from the other side. As the state quotas - the amount of produce which the collective must sell to the state at state prices - is not reduced (on the basis that the added mouths of the students are more than compensated for by their added labor), the peasants only consider whether the student does hard work.

This system may waste some talent, but the Chinese are always on the watch for the exceptional students. As a rule, the worker's son has a much better chance of being allowed to continue his studies, but in a country the size of China there are more than enough lower class people to supply a good number of intellectuals.

Vogel looked at the results of Chinese political agitation and some of its organization. Every two or three years, in what the Chinese refer to as a wave, there is a dramatic effort to make a major breakthrough to prevent rigidification and a lapse back into elitism.

Mao himself stated that violence is sometimes justified, and Chou admitted that there were at least one hundred thousand casualties in the Cultural Revolution. It is believed that the purge of 1954 against the counterrevolutionaries left some eight hundred thousand dead.

These purifications programs follow a basic pattern. First there is a major publicity (or propaganda, if you prefer) campaign to get the people stirred up. Then a mass mobilization is organized to criticize the wrongs of the old society. The smear campaign becomes more and more specific until individuals and several major targets are singled out. A direct overt purge follows in which people are accused and then paraded. To control and define those who aren't following, the workers are encouraged to look for any who can be identified for having one of the unacceptable traits and to bring them to the attention of all.

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