

China After Mao  
Is There A Chinese Strategy of Development?

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## Preface

These two papers were both written as efforts to come to grips with the events in China after the death of Mao Zedong in September 1976. The first paper was written July 1977, and the second in August 1979, benefitting from a short trip to Beijing November 1978. They are both parts of a project aiming at understanding the Chinese revolution better by comparing the Mao and post-Mao phases, exploring to what extent they might be seen as parts of a greater design.

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For once there was something to conventional Western analysis: the death of Mao brought important events in its wake as opposed to, for instance, the death of Ho Chi-minh. We say "for once": Western commentators are usually the prisoners of their person-oriented, elitist perspective and will tend to identify politics with what happens to elite persons and their relations with each other, neglecting the role of structure and culture, and the long-term processes working on either. Mao died, and to many it looks as if maoism dies with him. Commenting on it has turned into a new industry, and the glee felt in either superpower is obvious. It may look as if China is losing some of her peculiarity, that she is becoming more "normal". To the United States that means that she is just another poor country showing more signs of willingness to be partly incorporated into sectors of world capitalism (particularly linked to heavy technology), to the Soviet Union that means that she is just another socialist country, way behind the others in the aftermath of a stalinist phase. To either it means that their Western models retain their theoretical usefulness and political meaning as legitimizers of the power of the superpowers.

Any analysts along such lines of thinking will probably quite soon be disappointed, or as much taken by surprise as the Western "maoists" who had been extolling the virtues of the Cultural Revolution as expressed by such leaders as Chiang Ching and Wang Hung-wen and suddenly had to change over night to be in step with the new powers in Peking. To portray it as a total change would be as wrong as to see what happens as merely a struggle in order to continue on what is basically the same line. The former mainly betray their lack of sense of diversity in human history, believing in the universality of the Western experience, and the latter do China a bad favor in accepting willy-nilly the

production of new ideology, some of which seems to have a counter-revolutionary tinge. And they both lack one quality: a respect for the human bewilderment that must have struck upon the death of the Great Helmsman, certainly not dissimilar to the loneliness the early Christians must have felt upon His death.

However, we shall pursue the idea that the events following the death of the chairman are essentially a counter-revolution, but not against the gains made by the Chinese people in 1949, but against the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. If this is a fruitful perspective one would expect those unseated at that time from positions of power to spearhead such attempts, and those who gained from it to stand up and fight for their gains. This perspective is fruitful, as will be shown, but it has to be accompanied by another perspective: that the ideas of the cultural revolution had lost some of their carrying power, at least for the time being - both in the sense that weak points, cracks, had appeared - and in the sense that other ideas had appeared on the scene, more promising in terms of the objective problems facing the continent that goes under the single name of "China".

What will be attempted now is a simple structural analysis precisely in terms of who lost/who gained. But before that one important question: why this extremely strong form of personal attack, why this focus on the si ren ban (the "gang of four"), villifying them beyond recognition? Of course, already in 1973 it was very clear that Chiang Ching was not a person enjoying popularity: her name was met with a derisive laughter, lips curling into sly smiles, knowingly - "we know what type she is". But Wang Hung-wen was such a darling of the revolution of 1966-69, a person packing worker-engineer/Shanghai/youth into one (good-looking) body, symbolising the New Man, the revolt of the periphery, the anti-gerontocratic moves of the Red Guards. And then the point is, of course, that these may be exactly the reasons he had to fall. About Chiang Ching one might speculate along other lines, less socio-analytical, more psychoanalytical: if Mao Tse-tung was the father of the country some jealousy, in fact a well-developed Oedipus-complex directed against her having, presumably, a monopoly on at least a substantial part of His love, would only be natural. It should be remembered that other great charismatic leaders of this century in somewhat similar roles were

not models of bourgeois matrimony: Gandhi (who vowed chastity at an early stage of his life but remained married to Kasturbai), Castro, Che Guevara and - for that matter - Hitler (on the other hand there is Lenin). Jesus Christ is also an example: an early marriage to Maria Magdalena might have proved catastrophic, for Christianity, for Maria Magdalena or for both. The rays emanating from the charismatic leader should not be filtered through a capsule of those that stand closest- at least they have to understand that they are like the moon, only capable of shining as long as they reflect the strong light from a burning sun. When the sun ceases to shine, so does the moon and even more so - for the sun will be remembered, not the bleak, vicarious moonlight.

However, these are not the kinds of reasons that will be given to the question just asked: why this personification of the conflict, well into the ridiculous, where the impression is built up that 900 million people were able, heroically, to overcome the machinations of as many as 4 - four - persons (even given that they had "agents" - not friends or followers - and that some of their power, derived from the proximity to the chairman). Answer: because China does not at the moment possess a good theory for the understanding of their own social formation. The imported, Western marxist element has been well embedded in the dialectical thought form (to which Western Marxism itself owes some of its form, via the Chinese philosophers-Marco-Polo-Leibniz -Hegel-Marx chain if we are to believe Joseph Needham). But it has not yet blended to the point of yielding rich analyses of their own social formation. Basic contradictions are seen in terms of socialism vs. capitalism rather than in terms of contradictions between different negations of capitalism. The negation of capitalism is still, probably, seen in relatively unitary terms: there is one socialist line (at least for China), it may be twisting, but it is not forking. He or she who deviates from "the correct line" is not only of another opinion but, subjectively and/or objectively, one way or the other, a capitalist roader, whether it is by being ultra-right or ultra-left.

On the other hand, it would be difficult to portray the four as genuine capitalist roaders since what they stood for was so different from any reasonable conception of steps towards capitalism. What remains is the villification of the four as

people with capitalist habits. But this is a relatively broad field of personal characterization as any kind of self-serving behavior, found in any system, is also found under capitalism. Actually, several of the steps the four had taken on the broad path, as opposed to the narrow lane that leads to socialism, are more reminiscent of feudal social formations - closing off a garden, posting guards everywhere to ensure privacy - whereas the idea of putting one's bridge companions on a special railroad car that travels where the top politicians travel (an accusation leveled against the twice rehabilitated Teng) brings to mind stories from early gambling habits on US railroads going west. At any rate, this kind of approach seems to block rather than facilitate social analysis even though the trend has also been to expose the policies of the "gang of four". Even so, however, the difficulty is that wrong policies are explained in terms of wrong, even bad people, rather than as expressions of social forces at work in the yin-yang play social reality always was, is and will be - including in China.

So, which are these social forces? The cultural revolution was a giant effort to create more horizontal structures in all fields in China, so the counter-forces would, predictably, be those who lost positions they had occupied - partly even for millennia. Among them are:

- bureaucrats- who had to see their power diminish under countless schemes of decentralization, perhaps particularly with the power given to the revolutionary committees in the People's Communes because of their high level of autonomy. Initial enthusiasm in many quarters for the May 7 schools for the "remolding of the personality" may also, possibly, have dwindled somewhat, particularly after the n'th visit to a school of that type. This would also apply to the "state capitalist", the managers.
- party people, even "partocrats" - who have become increasingly restive about the idea of seeing much of the power of the mighty party in fact trickle downwards through the process of institutionalizing the revolutionary committees of which there was a very high number. Particularly vexing must have been the lack of coordination among the committees, no doubt often passing contradictory resolutions simply because they reflect the local situation and power line-up, unacceptable in the eyes of the systematically oriented minds on the top of the system, with millennia of bureaucratic tradition.

- top military people - who might have developed second thoughts about the wisdom of decentralized security, among other reasons because it cannot become effective unless the enemy is already in the country. This is good logic for a guerilla that starts on territory occupied by national and/or class enemies; but contrary to basic canons of faith for the military man everywhere: enemies are to be chased back behind their own borders. In addition, the more decentralized the machinery for security, the more powerful the local unit, and the less power to the military command center.
  
- professionals. Professionals of any kind were demoted, at least if their assumption was that they should govern their sector of society alone. The engineer, the physician, the researcher had to see themselves as one source of insight and innovation; the other being the people with their suggestions for improved machinery, their capacity of healing themselves and others with traditional means such as herbs and acupuncture, and in general as a reservoir of innovation, untapped in so many countries. As a consequence schools were asked to turn out great numbers of people without specialization in the traditional sense, and to prevent, through shortened university courses, the formation of a "theory class".

rs. So, imagine that bureaucrats, partocrats, top military people and professionals all gang up together - to use the Chinese way of expressing it - trying to set the structure right again, according to their view of the situation. It is quite clear what the result would be, at least tangentially: a society with a very strong central administration, controlled by the top of the party, with a "modern" army and bent on participation in the "scientific and technological revolution" with a view to spurring economic growth, particularly in the sense of industrial growth. In short, a heavily Peking-centered society - as it used to be. The pendulum would be back, so to speak, to normal, after an aberration of some years into strange territory.

Some comments on this vision:

First, it should be noted that it is sufficient to explain what took place and is taking place. Four groups of people

have been singled out for attention, not four persons. In a country the size of China the number of people in these categories must run into millions. Still, that would not be sufficient in a real trial of strength. In addition would come the support, one would surmise, of much of the population of the traditional center, Peking - which would be important since that is where the battle to a large extent would have to be fought. (Thus, one would expect less "trouble" in Peking, and considerable "trouble" in the "provinces"). But then, as the chairman himself would have pointed out: there is some power coming out of the barrel of a gun (and heavy power from heavy guns), and it stands to reason that top military have more of a command over major barrels, and hence are able to control the population, at least after some major battles. In pure power terms this would work out to their advantage.

Second, it might also work out ideologically, given the poverty of post-capitalist theoretical thinking in the People's Republic. At no stage will there be any idea of resurrecting or recreating capitalist or feudal power elites. The battle is, in simple terms, between the state'ist and the commune'ist approaches to socialism - or to the problem of how to negate capitalism, to put it in more open-ended terms. It is then a question of who control the major means of communication, for he who does so can put the onus of being a capitalist roader on the other. With the emphasis on wall posters as a way of communicating, there is considerable more freedom of expression in China than in, say, the Soviet Union - yet it matters who control the central means of mass communication, newspapers and radio, and the big character posters. To repeat: in the absence of a clear idea of class struggle as a succession of struggles, against different types of dominant classes, under different guises, it becomes too easy for anything that is not capitalist to stand up and present itself as a socialist solution.

Third: there is the obvious, although unpleasant hypothesis that the leftists did not put up much fight simply because they felt that the rightists were, at least partly, right. Nothing succeeds like success and there were not enough successes. One reason for this is probably as follows: The ideology of the Cultural Revolution is beautiful: a more horizontal division of labor between the city and the countryside, man and woman, professionals and others, industry and agriculture, educated and



less educated. But there is an intervening factor that too often is lost out of sight: techniques. It is not enough to proclaim a structure of horizontality between, say, patient and physician: there also has to be a technique that combines with this horizontal structure into a technology. One technique existed or was put to use, in amended forms: acupuncture. But what would have been the fate of the Cultural Revolution if there had been no techniques of this kind available? Through the technique of acupuncture the Chinese could communicate their ideas materially, in a very concrete form. It was not merely a question of wanting both a more horizontal social structure and to heal sick people - they did it, not 100% and dogmatically, but the trend was in that direction, moving on the usual two legs, in complex combinations.

Not so in all other fields. One might easily imagine that after an initial outburst of mass creativity this source of new energy petered out. Thus, in the field of education: how many times can older people tell of the horrors of pre-1949 life for people in general before the stories become stale? How much of the technical innovation was mainly due to the circumstance that much of the machinery was run down, badly in need of repair and some imaginative piecing together? Actually, the accounts of Chinese technical development are not repleted with techniques that are qualitatively different. The social structure is new, but techniques also induce structures, and unless the structures rule the game, the technique will easily be in command - as the Chinese themselves were aware of. But again the point is that there is little guidance in the local political theory. Techniques used as means of production under the control of "the people" - meaning commune or state - are compatible with socialism in the sense of not being capitalism as long as too big gaps in living standard and decision-making (over the surplus) do not emerge. It is only under the Cultural Revolution that the call was for a giant step forward: the techniques themselves, at the micro level, should not drive wedges between people, separating intellectuals from the manual workers and fragmenting individual workers away from each other in their work operations. So - what if such techniques are not forthcoming? Impatience accumulates, people living in a political culture of rising expectations and entitlement do not live on ideology alone. What do you prefer in the

longer run, a beautiful structure producing goods that are insufficient in quality and quantity, or those glittering goods foreigners talk about, and your leaders say are needed given the world we live in, even if the structure becomes more ordinary, more like in capitalist societies?

Obviously there is no answer, at least no final answer. The question opens for what is possibly the most important socio-political dialectical process of our age: the relationship between equity and efficiency. Of course there is no stable trade-off point in this relation. The people of the Cultural Revolution may have thought they had found one such point, or rather a path, a course between the Scylla of super-efficient exploitation and the Charybdis of an equitable society producing little or nothing. In the present confrontation their antagonists have, predictably argued that the result actually was neither equity, nor production - and in return promise too much: equity will be maintained/restored and production will shoot up. In all probability the production of non-basic, durable goods will increase (for the technology imported and developed points in that direction), but with the old groups back in power it is inconceivable that there will not be a price to pay in terms of a decrease in equity. People in top positions will start talking more like their counterparts in either superpower, more about how many things were produced, and less about human beings and social structure.

And in so doing they have, of course, a point: China is (probably) over the major first threshold - the period of mass misery and insecurity due to blatant exploitation, and the hazards of nature belongs to the past. A new goal-setting is needed after the basic needs have been met at a minimum level, and the message coming in from all over the world, well emulated by the new people in power is loud and clear: the next in line is large-scale industrial production of both consumer and capital goods. But that kind of production is only compatible with the horizontal structure the framers of the Cultural Revolution dreamt about provided new techniques are invented - and they have not been invented in any country so far. Nobody knows how to produce cars in a way that makes everybody participate as if it were a farm harvest, producing no gap between such groups as

engineers, workers and customers. Consequently, there will be a fall-back on conventional technology transfer.

The same line of reasoning actually applies to culture. The arguments against being dominated by Chinese feudal culture while trying to construct a new, socialist society weigh heavily: that culture reflects feudal values, it is actually for, by and about the feudal upper classes - with all others in secondary roles, unable to create, hardly able to consume the most "refined" parts, and portrayed in marginal, sometimes derisive manners. It also makes very good sense to project the structure of a socialist culture with more general participation in creating it, with everybody participating and enjoying it, reflecting directly the life of everybody.

But where is that culture?

"We know what to do, but not how to do it" was the typical answer given, "give us time!" But how much time? The problem is that people want art, they want their own reality reflected through particularly perceptive minds; they want their minds lifted, even if lifted by others, such as the Beethovens of this world. To argue against Beethoven because he served feudal lords, because he is one individual, not a collective composer, and (more subtly) because his music in its organization reflects Western perspectives on time (with a coda, and Endzustand, rather than an endless dialectic from eternity to eternity) makes sense - but then there has to be some alternative a tistic experience available that is more compatible with socialist society. No doubt the Cultural Revolution was better at condemning the artistic expressions of other social formations than at creating their own. Of course, there is one exception to that: the resurrection of popular art, giving it status and prestige on par with, and even above "bourgeois" culture. But even this can go stale, if for no other reason simply because it does not sufficiently reflect a dynamic society. If there is anything Eastern Europe teaches us in this field, then it is that socialist culture has to be created anew, fresh, all the time - - and serve as a stage on which social drama can unfold itself, both reflecting, and a part of, the social dialectic. Chiang Shing failed in this. No doubt people are now relieved, being permitted

to enjoy classical and foreign art without bad conscience.

The conclusion from all this can only be that China is now entering a new phase, as little "the final phase" as any other. Nor do Chinese expect this to be the case; they are more sophisticated. What an outsider might expect would be that after some years there is a new confrontation, and even if the "gang of four" is not rehabilitated, and Teng is not sent into his third internal exile, ideas and guiding principles may. After all, the People's Republic has been through major changes in 1949, 1958, 1966-69 and now recently in 1976; there are intervals of 8-9 years which may be the time it takes for a social dialectic to unfold itself, and for new forces to be strong enough and the old forces to be weakened through the terrible weight of problems that remain unsolved under their guidance (sometimes even remaining unstated).

There are two clear conditions, however, for the leftist forces to return: they have to do their homework where technology is concerned, and they have to have a solid look at the power equation, including the power that comes out of the barrel of a gun. Next time they will not enjoy the protection and inspiration of a Mao, and the other side - the four groups mentioned above - may not tolerate that much freedom of expression, particularly because they know what to expect. As a conclusion it may well be that the next class struggle - for these are class struggles all of them, one way or the other - will be more violent than all the preceding ones after 1949. Besides, next time it will be more like people against resourceful elites than this time.

In the meantime China will probably go through strange experiences internationally. Power is a many-sided phenomenon, and China will have to experience that the more she develops along conventional lines with heavy technology, including the military field, and the more she is capable of military postures (including ICBM testing etc.), the less effective power will she enjoy. For China's power has been of a special kind, mainly based on ideas, on being different. To the extent she plays the same game as the others, she will be judged as them and will look like a shoddy copy, precisely like that poor Asian distant relative she did not want to be. And is not either, one might add - for

which reason this phase may be short.

In short, our thesis would be, very simply, that this is a phase in the dialectics of Chinese history. In general terms it was probably not only unavoidable, but will turn out to be to the good. Something of that kind would have to happen; when, how is another matter. The specifics of the recent course of events, particularly the personal drama, should not prevent us from seeing the more general movements. One may conclude that this particular counter-revolution came from the quarters left untouched by the Cultural Revolution, from the forbidden city, the citadels of ultimate power in Peking. And one may also conclude, perhaps, that the moving force was not so much the internal dynamics of economic forces as the foreign policy play China became more and more deeply enmeshed in, before new cadres and new courses in foreign policy attuned to the ideas of the Cultural Revolution, had developed. The old center of society was deeply entrenched, but from the fact that the "shanghai-clique" was both anti-US and anti-Soviet it does not follow that the "Peking-center" is pro-US and/or pro-Soviet. They could share scepticism and even hatred of superpowers, yet differ on so many other matters.

But all these implications for elites and foreign affairs are less significant. What matters most is what is happening to the Chinese people. So many of them were great some years ago, and they had been so small for ages. A sense of deep culture shone through very clearly, in spite of (or is it because of) scanty schooling. They might recite politics in chorus, but so do people under Western Christendom; it does not follow that they are fools, and a closer discussion always brought out something from which to learn. There might be less to learn now, for some years to come - in direct terms. But indirectly maybe even this phase can serve as a source of inspiration: no message is so good that it cannot be improved upon, incessantly, to stand up against reality; no people are so perfect that they cannot be brought down by human frailty, and no elites will see their power and privilege reduced without trying to hit back, sooner or later.

# IS THERE A CHINESE STRATEGY OF DEVELOPMENT? \*

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## 1. Introduction

Nobody should have a right to complain that China is highly capable of surprising us from the West - conservative or radical, liberal or marxist or both or neither. China always had this capacity because of our penchant to try to understand China on our terms. Whether dubbed "inscrutable" or "mischievous", dominated by "oriental despotism" or the "Asiatic mode of production" she still usually refuses to make sense. Sometimes she seems so scrutable and obvious, and then suddenly the veil is drawn - not necessarily over China, but over our Western eyes. The present author certainly does not claim to be an exception: the Western veil is probably there regardless of many efforts at least to become aware of its structure as a cognitive filter. So the following should be read as one person's effort to scrutinize the inscrutable.<sup>(1)</sup>

From a cultural revolution delighting the Western left both because of its egalitarian rhetoric and because of its many important social experiments China now seems to be embarking on a capitalist road not very different from that which was so violently denounced during the Cultural Revolution. The step from a distribution-oriented system - distribution both of power and of material goods for consumption - to a growth-oriented system - for the production of material goods and services - seemed to be a very quick one indeed. How come? From the Western left: when they were so clearly on the correct path, how could they so suddenly make the great leap backward (Bettelheim), embarking on the wrong path?<sup>(2)</sup> From the right: how could a society so hopelessly lost in rigid "dogmatism" suddenly become so beautifully "pragmatic"? Possible answer: perhaps because the Chinese have a different concept of what constitutes a "path", and for that reason an entirely different concept of what constitutes a development strategy. Why should their underlying concept be similar to ours -

clear-cut and contradiction-free? This is the idea to be pursued.

2. The distribution-growth oscillation hypothesis.

The basic theses of this paper are three in number, and they can be presented as follows:

- (1) Chinese history, from the victory of the revolution October 1949, can be seen as a progressive oscillation between distribution and growth oriented strategies;
- (2) This oscillation will continue in the foreseeable future; just as the policies initiated by the Cultural Revolution came to an end, the present policies will come to an end;
- (3) This should not be seen merely as the result of trial-and-error politics, but as the outcome of a Chinese view of development, consistent with sinic civilization as a whole.

The paper, then, is devoted to these three hypotheses. Although some similar points may be made about pre-1949 history I shall not attempt to explore that, among many reasons because the marxist component with its emphasis both on distribution and on the Western idea of progress, was not yet incorporated into sinic civilization (as I now assume it to be). And my immodesty in trying to make some predictions about China into the 1980s, perhaps also the 1990s, will at least be tempered by a refusal to go any further: by the year 2000 so many other things will have happened in the world as a whole, and China in particular, that this mode of analysis for sure will be much less relevant.

Today, however, the whole world, including China, is talking and has been talking for some time of growth and of distribution -- sometimes also, fallaciously, of redistribution as if there had been distribution before. Often the rhetoric is about growth with distribution, or distribution with growth. But what is the meaning of that crucial little connecting particle, the word "with"? It has to be defined in social space, in geographical space and in time. Thus, does it mean that a little elite will continue growing and the rest of society will distribute what is left among themselves? Does it mean that a part of the world, e.g. the part that refers to itself as the "first", will continue growing and the rest, e.g. the "third" will distribute what is left to it - possibly by making use of the social space method just mentioned by having Third World elites grow and Third World masses distribute

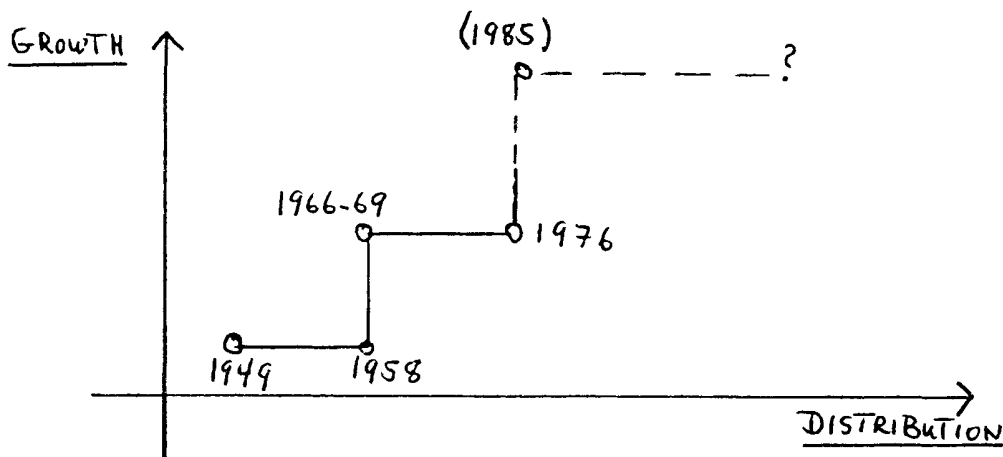
the (very) little that is left when the first world in cooperation with third world elites have grown? And what about time: do the processes of growth and distribution take place at the same time, hand in hand, or one after the other, sequentially? Is there a synchrony or a diachrony in this, and in case of the latter: what comes first, growth or distribution?

It takes little empirical and/or theoretical insight to see that the slogan "growth with distribution" will take on a very different color dependent on the precise answer to these queries about the little world "with". But this is not the place to spell out that.<sup>(2)</sup> Rather, it will be assumed that when the Chinese talk about social space in this connection they mean all of China; when they talk about geographical space they are rather uninterested in the rest of the world and again mean all of China; and when they talk about time they mean sequentially, starting with distribution, then growth, and then distribution again, and then growth again.

3. A view of Chinese post-revolution history.

In short, the idea is that they think and act in terms of a mental image something like this:

Figure 1. The distribution-growth oscillation hypothesis.



Concrete years from the thirty years of history of the present Chinese Dynasty, the communist one (first ruler: Mao Zedong, second: Deng Xiaoping or Hua Guofeng) have been given for the crucial turning points in the twisting, oscillating developmental course. It should be pointed out immediately that the "curve" is not correctly drawn: I would assume both that when there is growth there is a loss in distribution gained in preceding phases (a typical



leftist hypothesis), and that when there is distribution there may be some loss in the growth or accumulation level obtained in preceding phases, at least the way that is usually measured (an equally typical rightist hypothesis). For these reasons the vertical lines should tilt towards the left and the horizontal lines should tilt downwards, but this does not affect the central point in the reasoning.

Briefly stated, the view of Chinese post-1949 history implied by this figure is as follows. The immediate task after the revolution was distribution, primarily in the countryside as the landowner-peasant relation was seen as the basic internal contradiction in the system - to be handled once the external contradictions (relative to Japanese and other forms of imperialism, and relative to their helpers such as Chiang) had been done away with. This contradiction was of the antagonistic variety and could only be resolved through recourse to violence. As a result there was distribution of land or rather "access to land as means of production", a rather basic form of distribution, leading to a process that went through many phases of ever higher levels of collectivization (through the three forms of cooperatives, for instance). It is doubtful whether there was much "growth" in this period, but hardly any doubt that the level of material consumption for the masses went up because human and other resources were not sifted off in wrong directions, including that of being wasted, underutilized, not used at all. Above all, a structure emerged whereby control over (most of) the surplus produced was in the rural area.

Nineteen hundred and fifty-eight is then seen as a turning point, the "Great Leap Forward", a call for growth, albeit also in a decentralized fashion (backyard iron furnaces, and the People's Communes, established August 1958). At this point relations to the Russians had started cooling considerably, but the technology imparted by them, including the social structure needed to handle that technology, had started becoming operational. Together with what was left of pre-war, pre-devastation technology there was certainly a

basis for a leap, even for a big one in this phase, then, there was not only little distribution but a significant decrease of it as new types of class contradictions started emerging, becoming more and more clearly felt. Maybe it should be pointed out that by "distribution" I do not have a narrow economic concept in mind such as "income distribution" (distribution of means of consumption). I am thinking of a concept that would include this, but also power and privilege in general - including the power over means of production.

The response to that situation was the Cultural Revolution of 1966-69. It seems relatively clear what it was all about. Thus, it was not really cultural. It was above all a structural revolution; culturally speaking it might even have been counter-revolutionary. Structurally it was concerned with five parallel contradictions between the people in general and old and new elites, and with the effort to overcome the contradictions by setting up five alternative structures to those administered by, and to some extent for, those elites:

Figure 2. Five parallel contradictions in the Chinese social formation.

| <u>Bureaucrats</u>   | <u>State Capitalists</u>  | <u>Intelligentsia Professionals</u>  | <u>Top Military</u>                             | <u>Top Party</u>  |
|--|---|--|---|---|
| (particularly in Beijing)  | (heavy industry)  | (universities, artists)  |   | (gerontocratic)   |
|  |   |  |   |   |
| <u>Local self-reliance</u>   | <u>Small factories</u>  | <u>Non-formal education</u>  | <u>People's Liberation Army</u>                 | <u>Revolutionary Committees</u>   |
| ( <u>tzu li keng sheng</u> )<br>People's Communes, size average about 10,000 | (better 10,000 with 30 workers than 30 with 10,000 workers)<br>job relations of new kinds | new patterns of recruitment; 3 years of study, 18 months theoretical much practice, no exams | decentralized, tunnels, guerrilla style defense | all over; not proportionately representative, but made to articulate contradictions clearly |

Certainly much more can be said about the content of the Cultural Revolution, but this is sufficient for the present purpose. There was a heavy rhetoric directed against the five elites, particularly the first three. How many were persecuted, haunted, villified and humiliated: how many were treated worse than that (thrown into prison, re-schooling camps, even tortured and killed) we do not know - my own hunch would be that the first number is very

high, the second not so high. The basic strategy seems to have been not to throw them all out putting others (with a different social background and/or ideology, the famous "correct line, the mass line") in their place, but to build an alternative structure that existed side by side with the old one in a very uneasy balance, here in favour of the new, there in favour of the old (what was shown to visiting foreigners like the present author was the new - how representative that was we had no way of knowing). This co-existence is in itself an interesting phenomenon, no doubt many of the cultural revolutionaries would have gone much further and eliminated the old (if they had been able to do so) had they known what would come after the death of Mao.

That this was a major distribution is beyond doubt, bringing totally new groups into power at least at the local level; possibly creating something approaching a power vacuum at the top. There was also a very classical aspect of class struggle in this: the five old elites tended to be veterans of the Long March, people who must have felt they deserved a reward for their struggle, life-long, for the revolution. But they were also the descendants of the old Ch'ing dynasty, Manchu upper classes - taller than the ordinary Chinese, with a different physiognomy - somewhat like the Castilian relative to the Andalusian.<sup>(3)</sup> Zhou Enlai is the major example that these two categories are not mutually exclusive. Those contesting them, were younger, there were women/girls among them, they were not veterans (with the rather important exception of Mao himself), they were from other parts of China - rivalling Shanghai being particularly important; they often had less education.<sup>(4)</sup>

What they were protesting against is very clear: they did not want Chinese society to close itself again, serving a small elite, the new mandarins most of whom would be recruited from the elite university in Beijing, Beita (like the Japanese corresponding elites from Tokyo university, Todai). Thus, much of their struggle was the Chinese version of what in those years went around the world, called the "student revolt" by its participants and sympathisers, "student unrest" by its detractors.

In passing it should be noted that the ideology of the Cultural Revolution avoided the two important fallacies of the liberal-economistic and the Marxist-

revolutionary West: that of identifying distribution with distribution in consumption (including the means to consume in a monetized economy, money), or with distribution in access to means of production only. The five contradictions in the scheme above should be seen as encompassing this, but going far beyond. The struggle against "the three mountains" and against the classical class enemies, latifundistas and capitalists, was over. In the rhetoric the Cultural Revolution was often presented as if they were on their way back into power. But in discussions such stands were quickly given up in favour of a more structural analysis: a new structure was seen as coming up that could pave the way for the re-emergence of private landownership and private capitalism; however, it was also bad in itself. Why? Because it gave challenging tasks to the few and degrading routine jobs to the many --- So, "politics came into command", not economics in the narrow sense; "never forget the class struggle" became another key slogan.

We note in passing that in this kind of reasoning, this capacity to see contradictions in many places, there is both daoism and marxism: daoism in taking it for granted that there will be contradictions, marxism in seeing their class character. Of liberalism there was little, and that was at the root of the problem. This lack of liberalism was among the factors ultimately leading to the decline and fall of the Cultural Revolution. Freedom was restricted and not only for the old elites:

- little freedom to move, except for shorter travels; enforced settlement
- little freedom to choose one's own occupation; mass meeting decisions
- little or no freedom to enjoy Chinese classical culture

Freedom was, presumably, traded for equality, and classical Chinese culture was depicted as reactionary, both in content and style. Political-civil human rights in the Western sense were threatened or non-existent.

But in addition to that the whole experiment was short on growth. A key factor here, definitely, was the inability to find a technology that would be both efficient and compatible with the basic tenets of the Cultural Revolution: something the people themselves could not only handle but also

maintain and repair, even invent and develop further so that they would not be dependent on the decisions made by bureaucrats, the administration and financing by the state capitalists, the research and professionalism of the intelligentsia - not to forget the role played by the top military and the top party people. This was a difficult bill to meet, and there is only one relatively unambiguous example that it was met: acupuncture. Of course, the Chinese in this phase never argued that such people's technology should rule the ground alone - their argument was always that of "walking on two legs". But both legs should be healthy, neither should be dragging, limping behind the other. Acupuncture came out of the Chinese womb, it could be people-handled and developed further; and it was efficient; like all technologies up to a certain point. But, with some important exceptions mainly in agro-technology: for the rest the main way in which people could be creative and participatory was by being on constant call to repair aging machinery falling apart, with no spare parts available, a task demanding much ingenuity. Obviously this works for some time, but after that enthusiasm will dwindle away, or the machines will break down completely, or new machines, less in need of wire-and-tape ingenuity will be put in their place. None of these is compatible with the ideals of the Cultural Revolution.

The next phase, predictably, became a phase of growth, not distribution. It could be called the counter-revolution, but I shall prefer a less high-sounding term, "the current phase". It is easily seen what the major driving force would be: the same set of five contradictions as propelled into being the cultural revolution (also a rather high-sounding term, maybe the "preceding phase" would be better?); but run backwards. Of course those elites wanted to get back into power, and of course their strategy for doing so was to point, correctly, to the shortcomings of the preceding phase (and there were many more than those that can be summarized under the headings of "lack of freedom" and "inefficiency"). The timing was also relatively obvious: right after the death of Mao Zedong who was identified with that phase as he had himself clearly been active at the very beginning - as one necessary (but hardly sufficient) condition; the other necessary condition being thousands and thousands of youths - among them that famous assistant professor in philo-

sophy at Beita.

The crucial role played by technology was quickly grasped by the new forces. As is well known - with frenetic speed - they started ordering all kinds of technology for the four modernizations, all with one characteristic in common: it would strengthen the elites because it was bureaucracy -dependent, capital-dependent, research-dependent; more than participation-, labour- and creativity- dependent. At the same time it was deemed to be efficient. And at the same time some measures were taken to increase the freedom of the Chinese people - how much and for how long a time remains to be seen. In short, the new people in quest for power were riding on two powerful waves: the five elites who wanted to come back and popular discontent with excesses and shortcomings of the cultural revolution. And they were quickly rewarded: the classical structures hardened, and the military got not only technology: they even got a war, with their socialist neighbour, Vietnam. And the party became the focus of attention, again.

What about the Gang of Four - the si ren ban - about which it is often said "and Mao makes five"? I consider this a propaganda figure, an effort to personalize a class struggle by pointing to possible excesses by some people rather than to the crucial issues, thereby mystifying the whole politics of Chinese development. It is doubly insulting, not only to those whose political intelligence is grossly underestimated by being told such stories, but also to the story-tellers themselves if the listener behaves as if he believes that the story-teller believes what he says. The whole effort to personalize and see Chinese post-1949 history as a stage where everything that happens is a result of the power play between the dramatis personae, the Chinese leaders, will lead us seriously astray -- there are much deeper forces at work. But that does not mean that some of the leaders cannot articulate some of these forces better than others and that they cannot sometimes serve as their catalyst: after all, that is what politics at the level of the leaders is about. But the basic contradictions are not among them; they are located much deeper, in the social formations themselves.

Having said this it should be noted that there seems to have been some division of labour between the old friends Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai: the former was better, more in the forefront in the distribution phases, the latter more in the growth phases (including being invoked, post mortem, as some kind of patron saint for the current phase). Maybe this should be regarded as a display of complementarity rather than of conflict. In the case of Lin Biao it was different - he probably came too close to the Russians, the arch-enemy. And in the case of Liu Shaoshi it was also different: denounced as "China's Khrushchev", as "hidden traitor, renegade and scab" during the Cultural Revolution, he passed away. Had he not he might, like Deng, have been put into power again in the current phase. Thus, there seems also to be a pattern for Chinese leaders to oscillate - much different from Soviet leaders who have but one peak, in their power career, never two or more.

The programme of the current phase is predictable to the point of tedium. To run Figure 2 backwards, from right to left: abolition of the revolutionary committees; strong emphasis on heavy military technology ; re-introduction of a very classical university pattern with examinations and scholastic emphasis in the pattern of recruitment; a tendency towards bigger factories and heavier industrial technology with more specialization, and a return to the solid power base for the administration in Beijing with no more excursions into the communes for bureaucrats in need of "remoulding of their personalities" for some months. Possibly there is also the gradual dissolution of the autonomy of the People's communes with return to the old administrative units, and to more private land ownership and marketing - thus eroding the People's commune from above and below. No doubt this will lead to growth, no doubt it will lead to decreased equality in distribution - both of power and of material goods. The bottom may come somewhat up (although that is unlikely); the top will no doubt be able to accumulate the goods that now come into China and are produced by her. And in this we can also clearly see a third factor (in addition to inefficiency and lack of freedom) positively motivating the current phase (not negatively, like the struggle to get back into power). There a rapidly growing awareness of the international system after the

opening in 1971 - a fear of being left behind by the flow of all the glittering growth of the first, and even second, and even third world; on an island all by themselves, with lofty ideals but little more. And in all of this also the increased feeling of being in a dangerous place where tunnels and some small guerrilla bands look grossly incongruous and out of touch relative to the type of means of destruction the superpowers are sporting around the globe.

Instead of blaming one might try to understand. But in so doing - and this is the second hypothesis - we can also see clearly how this current phase may come to an end and what the next phase will look like. It will come to an end because of increasing class contradictions (the five mentioned plus some possible new ones - none of the five were resolved in the preceding phase), decreasing distribution, increasing inequality and ultimately sheer exploitation of the masses. This will take the classical form: to pay the bill incurred to the rest of the world China has to export at very competitive prices; to do that savings have to be made; to do that workers have to be paid badly - but as they have to live to produce they also have to be fed to reproduce which means that peasants have to be paid badly. Whether directly or indirectly exploited whether what is exported is (semi-) manufactured goods or outputs from agriculture, the result is the same: the peasants will have to pay. Sooner or later they will think, then say, then shout, then rally around the slogan: "-we have been through this before, haven't we-". They have, indeed.

When will this happen? Only half-facetiously let me mention "Galtung's law about the duration of post-1949 phases in Chinese development": after about 9 years --. From 1949 to 1958 there were 9 years, from 1958 to 1967 there were 9 years, from 1967 to 1976 there were 9 years -- that should give us 1985. Around that time a new turning point might come - give or take some years - growth would have petered out because of the revolts and discontents caused by the inequalities engendered by it, there would be new demonstrations in that square in Beijing, CocaCola bottles will be smashed against the MacDonald's Hamburger (Japan, Inc.) stands, now introduced so that the Chinese can have fast food and not waste too much time that could be used more



productively, the Gang of Four will be resuscitated, Mao will come up and Chou down, and so on, and so forth. Hopefully the new leaders would have done their homework and also come up with some good answers to the problems of an efficient people's technology, how to combine equality with more freedom, not less, and how to cope with the rest of the world as an economic, political, military, social and cultural challenge.

4. Why this distribution-growth oscillation?

And that brings me to the third and final point: that this is not merely a zig-zag course run by a rat in a maze receiving electric shocks when he runs too far in either direction, nor necessarily a conscious strategy concocted by some political super-mind, but a direct expression of a very Chinese way of conceiving of things. In saying so there is also an effort to explain the phenomenon. It is then assumed that since civilization can be seen in terms of components that in China come together in an eclectic or syncretic, but also synthesized, even synergistic amalgam:

Confucianism - with its emphasis on the state, the family, the golden past, non-manual work as the best, some individual mobility; examinations

Buddhism (mahayana) - with its emphasis on sharing of merits, collectivism, restraint, equality

Daoism - with its emphasis on the small, a golden future, and the contradiction in everything, dialectics

Westernism - with its emphasis on progress and goal-directedness, on "time's arrow", with two branches:  
- liberalism with competition, individualism and capitalist efficiency, accumulation, institution-building, checks and balances  
- marxism with its emphasis on contradiction between classes, solidarity, revolutions, anti-imperialism

The assumption is that China is the only place in the world where all of this can be found, in ratios that would vary over time and space and from person to person - but there would always be some kind of combination beyond co-existence of what to the Western mind would be highly contradictory, even irreconcilable elements. No element would be completely absent.

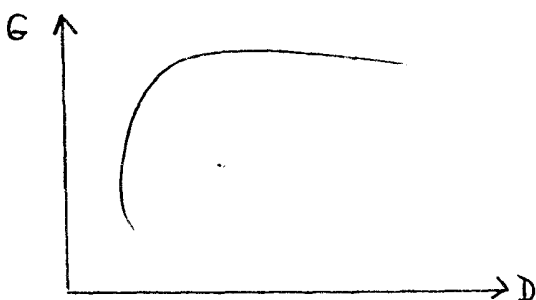
The concrete implication of this assumption, as a contribution to explaining the Chinese pattern of development, is obvious: within the context

of sinic civilization the zig-zag pattern not only receives legitimation, but looks normal, natural. The growth dimension received its legitimation both within confucianism and from Western liberalism. The distribution dimension received its legitimation both from buddhism and from Western marxism. In addition, daoism would give a high level of legitimacy to a major instrument of distribution, decentralization down to the small unit, the commune<sup>(5)</sup> - a major reason why communism looked like commune-ism in China during the period of the Cultural Revolution. And the dialectic itself, the oscillation, even in relatively rapid succession measured by social time, between emphasis on distribution, then on growth and then on distribution again, would find its basis in daoism.

It should be pointed out how different this would be - if it is a correct interpretation - from Western development thinking according to which one is either in the liberal or in the Marxist camp, thus favouring either the vertical, or the horizontal inclination - seeing the other one as wrong. To this it may be objected that there is room for distribution within liberal thinking (social democracy), and there is room for growth within Marxist thinking (the Soviet Union itself being an example with its emphasis on "catching up and overtake" from the very beginning). This is true, but it would generally lead to these two types of images of the developmental pattern: Figure 3. Two Western models of distribution/growth relationship.

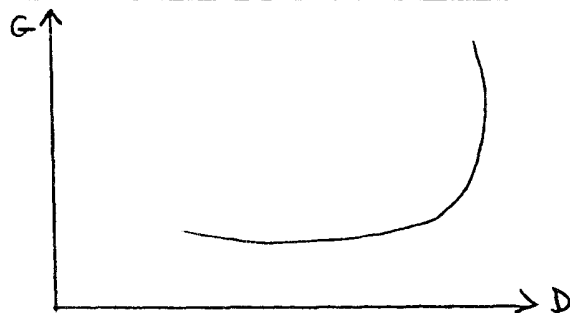
Liberal model:

Growth first, then distribution



Marxist model:

Distribution first, then growth



Obviously, these would at most represent one turning point on the Chinese curve. What the Chinese seem to do is to incorporate both models and link them together.

5. Conclusion: Ten implications

- (1) According to this picture, let me now try to draw some implications from this. Admittedly simplified and overdrawn, the Chinese strategy of development, the Chinese "model", is neither the distribution phase nor the growth phase, but the zig-zag course making use of both of them. For that reason it makes little sense to say that they have betrayed their model; they are in a different phase of it. As that phase is more similar to what happens in the West (both in its Western and Eastern part - the European socialist countries) it has been disregarded as a part of the Chinese "model" as human perception tends to be by contrast rather than by similarity. The Chinese have to be exotic! But then it may also be that they are better, more creative in the distribution than in the growth phases; and more imitative in the latter.
- (2) Absolutely crucial in the total scheme, what indeed makes it revolutionary, was a distribution phase as an initial phase. The Chinese practised the dictum "distribution first, then growth"<sup>(6)</sup>. If they had started with growth - the conventional model - any distribution attempt later would probably had been very skimpy indeed. Chiang would have done that - and China would have been a poor carbon copy of its East and Southeast Asian neighbours.
- (3) In the concrete social mechanisms leading to the dramatic (and dramatized) turning points there are things easily recognizable from other societies: distribution with little or no growth leads to shared poverty and discontent; growth with little or no distribution leads to increased inequalities and general emergence and sharpening of class contradictions - and discontent. Where the Chinese differ - and that is the basic thesis - is in the interpretation of this, in my view related to basic characteristics of sinic civilization.

- (4) In a sense it is all already in the mother book of Chinese thought, the I Ching. First, contradictions are normal, the world is like that, nothing is perfectly perfect or imperfect. Second, contradictions will crystallize, sharpen, mature with time. Third, they will give birth to something new which in turn is contradictory, and so on, ad inf. As a consequence, correct politics is to realize this, not fight it by trying to put a lid on the cauldron of contradictions (this is what the Chinese accuse the Russians of doing), but try to lead and use these tremendous forces. As one will never escape from the yin/yang nature of reality, better work with it than against it.
- (5) More particularly, the Chinese leaders seem to make use of the turning points for energizing the population, mobilizing, dynamizing. The turning points are dramatic, but they are also dramatized, to some extent staged, denigrating the preceding phase, personalizing (in order to avoid blaming China in toto); scapegoating. No doubt mistakes can be made in wrongly assessing when the time is ripe, but a correct assessment, according to this type of thinking, will have built-in rewards because it will work with the forces of a contradiction at the point of maturation.
- (6) From this it follows that they may also build into the phases an excessive amount of imbalance to ensure that there will be sufficient contradiction raw material to draw upon.<sup>(7)</sup> This they have certainly done in the present phase, for which the prediction is that there will be a new cultural revolution, but of course different from the preceding one. This is the doctrine of the recurring revolution (not "permanent revolution", that would be a contradictio in adjecto). As is well-known, Mao had already predicted the current phase, and that his name would be used in vain after his death.
- (7) Does this mean that the Chinese have a double mind about what they do - that they are not only "inscrutable", but even "mischievous"? Leaving aside these two adjectives that relate to Western misunderstandings or rather total failure to understand, the answer may be yes and no. No in the sense that when they are in this or that phase they believe fully

what they do, yes in the sense that that faith is not for eternity, not even for their own life-time, but for that period. It is the correct line at the correct time. With the turning point comes also a turn in faith, conviction, concrete social programme. From a Western point of view where faith is for life, as a part of the personality, this looks strange and leads to accusations of acting. No doubt the two perspectives are related to the difference between buddhist rebirth, very different from Christian eternal salvation or condemnation: between shifting identities in cosmic time and one single identity frozen in eternity.<sup>(8)</sup>

- (8) Not everybody will be able to make the turns and some will do it too well. Those most identified with the preceding phase will have to wait in the corridors (often very unpleasant corridors) of history till they can be taken out of the mothballs because their phase has come. It has been pointed out that there was a possible division of labour between Mao and Zhou - but no doubt Zhou was a maoist and Mao a zhouist, and both of them fundamentally, deeply Chinese. It should be noted that to give to all a chance of a second, even third "life" these phases have to be short, given the limited human life-span.
- (9) But could there not be a "locking in" this time, with deeply entrenched elites, with modern technology to suppress revolts? It is possible, particularly if Western or Japanese imperialism come into play again - in that case the contradictions will be antagonistic and only resolvable by (much) violence, according to Mao. A new long march may be called for. But if the situation remains in Chinese control the hypothesis here is that after some years the new leadership will be weakened in their fight for their privileges by feeling deep down in their Chinese souls that "our time is up" - and give in to the next generation of emerging forces.
- (10) So, the Chinese will continue "deceiving" those friends who identify with them only in every second phase. More particularly, US, Soviet Union and Japan are in for great disappointments as they rush in to make quick economic and political profit. And the rest of us would be wise if we realize that we are not Chinese, but nevertheless have very much to

learn - perhaps particularly in terms of levels of subtlety and complexity - not only from individual Chinese, but from that remarkable depository and receptacle of insight: the sinic civilization.<sup>(9)</sup>

## NOTES

Originally presented for the Alternative Strategies and Scenarios sub-project of the Goals, Processes and Indicators of Development Project of the United Nations University at the workshop held in Geneva, May 29-30, 1979 and at the meeting of the World Order Models Project, Boston, 8 June, 1979; also given as a seminar at Universiti Sains Malaysia 8 August 1979 and at a round-table on present-day China at the Sixteenth Society for International Development World Conference, Colombo, Sri Lanka, 13 August 1979. I am indebted to discussants all places, and particularly to the other three round-table participants, in the SID discussion Sartaj Aziz, James Grant and Neville Maxwell.

1. My first effort to come to grips with China, together with my wife Fumiko Nishimura, resulted in the book Learning From the Chinese People, Oslo 1975 - published in Norwegian, in Denmark, in Swedish and in German in the Federal Republic of Germany. It reflects the cultural revolution phase although in no way pretending to reflect more than its ideology and its idealized examples, keeping the future very much open-ending, as it does, with a list of eight major contradictions in the China of the early seventies. The second effort is still on. A short trip to Beijing, November 1978, was very useful as were many discussions with Chinese intellectuals and others on "what is going on now".

2. See, for two different approaches, two of the papers presented at the workshop mentioned above, by Irma Adelman, "National and International Measures in Support of Equitable Growth in Developing Countries" and her many important articles on distribution and growth, and by Johan Galtung, "Towards a Theory of Strategies of Development" (the part referring to timing as an element of strategic thinking and action was actually presented at the first workshop of the same sub-project, also in Geneva, March 15-16 1979).

3. This class aspect is not so much spoken of in articles and discussions of China, yet seems to be extremely powerful. To the traits mentioned could be added calligraphy and other residues of Chinese upper-class style - thus, the first wall posters after the death of Mao were, reportedly, written in beautiful calligraphy.

4. The starting point, though, was a young female assistant professor of philosophy at the University of Beijing.

5. The best expression of this in daoism is probably the one found in chapter 80 of the Dao dexing.

6. This is the point emphasized equally, although for different reasons, by Galtung and Adelman in the papers referred to in footnote 2 above.

7. Thus, they would not try distribution with growth in an effort to pursue a course along the G - D line in Figures 1 and 3 feeling that this would be to strive for a balance out of touch with social reality and that one might lose the dynamizing impact of maturing contradictions.

8. This theme is developed further in Johan Galtung's "Eschatology, cosmology and the formation of visions", Proceedings of the Visions of Desirable Societies sub-project of the Goals, Processes and Indicators of Development project, at the workshop held in Mexico 25-28 May 1979, organized by the World Future Studies Federation in co-operation with the Centro de Estudios Economicos y Sociales del Tercer Mundo.

9. Interestingly enough, another country that seems to practice distribution and growth intermittently, Sri Lanka (I am indebted to James Grant for this observation) is also an amalgam of different cultures.