THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SHANGHAI APPEAL

There have been few documents published during the entire course of the cultural revolution that exceed in importance the "Message to the People of Shanghai," an article that appeared in Monday's People's Daily.¹ The "Message" is the most striking admission of the failure of the Maoist leadership to convince the Chinese working class of the necessity of the cultural revolution. In fact, it is the first official admission that China is presently torn by a growing public dissent which could eventually spread to the entire country and cause a serious challenge to the seventeen years rule of the Communist Chinese regime.

The appeal makes it clear that the Chinese working class is now determined to resist the regime's latest attempt to extend the cultural revolution to industry and agriculture. Ever since the first signs of that attempt were detected,² and since the regime began to organize Red Guard-like shock organizations among the workers last December, a sizable segment of the Chinese proletariat put up passive resistance to the movement.

Signs of active, i.e. violent, resistance to the excesses of the cultural revolution were seen as early as last fall when Red Guard units frequently clashed with workers in various parts of China. But it is only now that the rest of the world is informed about the passive resistance put up by the workers in the form of work stoppages, strikes, and mass walk-outs. The "Message", and the official press comments that appeared during

¹) The "Message" which is entitled "Grasp the Revolution, Stimulate Production and Thoroughly Smash the New Counter-attack Launched by the Bourgeois Reactionary Line" originally appeared in two Shanghai newspapers on 5 January and was reprinted by People's Daily on 9 January.

the past two days (and which will no doubt continue to appear for some time) reveal both the extent of the resistance within indi-
vidual enterprises, and its nation-wide character.

Basically, the protest reflects the workers' disillusion-
ment with the present political extremism in Communist China.
It also reveals how wide-spread the opposition to Mao is through-
out the country. The opposition is now entrenched both within
and outside the Party and its leaders have lately begun using the
economic argument to oppose the Maoist line. The Message reveals
that the opposition has been "using material benefits as a bait
to corrupt some workers ideologically." It was only the "staunch
revolutionary left" that could "resolutely stand out against the
lure of material benefits."

Moreover, the members of the opposition have been success-
ful in organizing workers' delegations which traveled to Peking
and presented claims for higher wages and better living condi-
tions. As the "Message" reveals, the opposition incited "large
numbers of members of the workers' militia detachments to under-
mine production, to sabotage transport and communications under
the pretext of going North to lodge complaints." 3

Perhaps even more important is the revelation of the
"Message" and subsequent official press material on the extent
of the strike movement with individual enterprises. According
to the "Message", it has occurred that "some or even the
majority of the members of the Red Militia detachments have sus-
pended production and deserted their post in production." In
Shanghai, workers are known to have walked out of the Shanghai Glass
Factory and the Shanghai No. 17 Textile Mill. In the latter
"a large number of workers...deserted their posts" while others
had to "shoulder the mill's production tasks."

But the same thing happened in other parts of China,
Kesinhu reports on 10 January that workers of the Chekiang
Linen Goods Factory and the No. 1 Cotton Combine (both located
in Hangchow) had to form "shock brigades" to ensure normal
production although part of the workers were "deceived" and
stopped their work. A Radio Peking broadcast of earlier today
also claimed that large numbers of workers walked off their
jobs as far north as Shenyang (Manchuria) and in five other
cities.

One major reason for the dissatisfaction of the workers
almost certainly is the consequence of extending the "cultural
revolution" to the factories with the ensuing purge of both

3) The little that is known in the West about the "Red Militia
Detachments" makes one believe that they are "production
teams" and "brigades."
party functionaries and leading personnel within the enterprises. That such a purge is taking place in the enterprises is proven for instance by the Hsinhua report on a printing house in Sian, Shensi province where the printing of Mao Tse-tung's works has been overfulfilled "after exposing the persons in authority within the party who are taking the capitalist road."

One can hardly overestimate the significance of these revelations. The Mao faction, in carrying out its extreme domestic policies, is now opposed not only by "a handful of people" on the top, but also by a wide segment of workers whose action may paralyze the nation's economic life. The negative effect of the cultural revolution, like that of the Great Leap Forward six years ago ought to lead to even greater damage to the entire economy than did the Great Leap itself.

j.o.k.