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糖衣炮弹

Sugarcoated Bullets

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The political debates of the period 1945–49, although spanning a variety of subjects, were underpinned by the question of how to comprehend the imminent realisation of power by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) within the larger historical frame of the Chinese Revolution. By 1949, the victory of the Communists was no longer in doubt, and yet Mao and other leaders showed themselves curiously resistant to any premature triumphalism. They were, rather, concerned about how the Party might maintain the élan and heroic commitment of the war period after the beginning of socialist construction.

It was against this historical and theoretical backdrop that Mao developed the concept of ‘sugarcoated bullets’ (*tangyi guozhe de paodan*) a formulation that first appeared in his ‘Report to the Second Plenary Session of the Seventh Central Committee of the CCP,’ issued in March 1949. In the conclusion of this speech, in which he argued against an immediate transition to socialism and warned against policies that would endanger the careful coalition and reform strategy that the Party had developed under the name of New Democracy (*xin minzhuzhuyi*) (see Blecher’s essay in the present volume), Mao alluded to the impending change through a series of theatrical metaphors. The revolutionary process up to the present, Mao said, had only been ‘a brief prologue to a long drama,’ of which the climax—the realisation of socialism—lies yet in the future, and would require many years of arduous work. In this frame, Mao warned revolutionaries of the challenges and temptations following the initial seizure of power, that is, the possibility that the Party might succumb to ‘love of pleasure and distaste for continued hard living.’ The bourgeoisie, having failed to defeat the revolution, might resort to flattery and temptation as the means by which to undermine revolutionary morale. They might, in other words, make use of ‘sugarcoated bullets’ in order to destroy the system of revolutionary morality that had been developed through the struggle of the preceding decades.

Mao's insistence on the continuation of arduous struggle after the formal seizure of power amounted to a new conception of revolutionary temporality. For Mao, the end of the war against the Nationalists marked the culmination of a process of revolutionary war and state construction in which the Communists had been engaged since the 1920s. Therefore, for him, the task of unifying mainland China under the leadership of a revolutionary government could not be understood solely within the Leninist or Bolshevik temporal framework. For Lenin, cleaving to a pre-Maoist revolutionary temporality, revolution was a concentrated moment, the hour at which history strikes, or that singular moment which must be grasped lest the opportunity for transformation slip.¹ For Mao, revolution is a moment of rupture within continuity and continuity amidst rupture—a transformation of the strategic terrain in which the nature of both the possibilities and the dangers undergo a marked change from one state to another, but where the conquest of power by no means marks the end of the revolutionary process.

Shifting Terrains of Revolution

Closely tied to this epochal change was a shift in the geographical terrain of revolution. Over the course of the Chinese Revolution, Mao juxtaposed the urban and the rural as two contending zones of political struggle, noting that the period of 'the city leading the village' (*you chengshi lingdao xiangcun*) had begun. It was in the cities that the problem of sugarcoated bullets first presented itself, as cities were the locations in which the rhythms of commodity production and consumption had most radically established themselves during the preliberation period. The problem of the city did not refer uniformly to all urban centres across China, but more specifically Shanghai, with which the concept of sugarcoated bullets was always most closely associated. Immediately after Mao's address, the *People's Daily* borrowed directly from his formulation of the Party entering the cities in order to lay out a vision of 'transforming cities of consumption into cities of production.'² The cities of the past, the authors argued, were cities of consumption because of the unequal and exploitative relationships they enjoyed with the rural periphery, whereby the countryside provided both goods and a supply of cheap labour in order to meet urban needs. As such, socialism would involve the development of heavy industry in Shanghai and elsewhere, so that these cities would cease to play the role of exploitative centres of parasitic consumption or sites where the bourgeoisie would target sugarcoated bullets against the revolution.

Hence, the political history of sugarcoated bullets from the moment of liberation onwards reveals a process of expansion, with Shanghai at the centre of this political imaginary. It began with a set of specific concerns directed against cadres who were entering the city for the first time, coming into contact with forms of consumerist pleasure that had so far been unknown to them in their rural locales. The formulation was also employed in the context of the Three Antis Campaign of 1951, which sought to eliminate problems of corruption amongst cadres. With the progression of the first decade of socialist construction, the formulation of sugarcoated bullets entered into the language of an influential propaganda drive launched in 1959 during the Great Leap Forward, namely the Campaign to Emulate the Good Eighth Company of Nanjing Road, in reference to a People's Liberation Army detachment that had been stationed on

the main shopping boulevard of Shanghai at the moment of liberation. This company, in the language of the campaign, had succeeded in overcoming the sugarcoated bullets of metropolitan Shanghai by refusing to bow to the temptations offered by the city. The dissemination of the campaign crucially took the form of a series of plays, later adapted into one of the socialist period's most enjoyable films, *Sentinels Under Neon Lights* (1964).

In his own reporting on the campaign in his capacity as a cultural journalist in Shanghai, Zhang Chunqiao, who would later emerge as a member of the Gang of Four in the Cultural Revolution, extended Mao's language to emphasise the problem of sugarcoated bullets as one of visibility and exposure. Whereas 'enemies with guns' can 'be seen at a moment's glance,' he argued, the 'fragrant breezes' of sugarcoated bullets require a wariness that goes beyond that of the violent battlefield.³ Significantly, for Zhang, the heroism of the Eighth Company under peacetime conditions was demonstrated through everyday forms of asceticism and attention to the self rather than singular acts of heroic bravery. He says that 'we must not neglect such "small affairs" as handing over a lost penny, using a wash basin for eight years, and wearing clothes that have been patched up thirty-eight times.' Through these everyday acts, the Campaign sought to impart revolutionary élan among the younger generation as a defence against sugarcoated bullets. The everyday itself emerged as the site at which the revolution was fought through the demand to produce new modes of behaviour, above all amongst the young.

Here too, there was a temporal consciousness, but of a different kind from that posed in Mao's speech. While Mao had directed his warning against seasoned cadres about to enter the city, the problem of sugarcoated bullets in the late 1950s was bound up with the problem of revolutionary succession, which was articulated in terms of the problem of 'revolutionary successors' who would maintain the spirit of the pre-1949 period as the first generation born under the People's Republic (PRC). The problem of how to mould those who had not personally experienced the Civil War into revolutionaries became one of the enduring problems of the Chinese Revolution in ways that resonated with the larger problem of the cultivation of the 'new person' (*xin ren*) as the appropriate mould of the human for a socialist society. The Maoist envisioning of the new person was in many ways modelled on those virtues that Mao had associated with seasoned revolutionaries prior to the seizure of power—a resistance to material corruption, heroism, and a sense of responsibility to the Party and the collective. The Maoist envisioning of the new person in these terms informed the emergent critique of the Soviet model of socialism from the late 1950s onwards, whereby radical intellectuals, Zhang Chunqiao among them, called into question the Soviet reliance on the technical division of labour, the continued role of commodity production under socialism, and above all the use of material rather than spiritual incentives to regulate labour and productivity. In the 1960s and 1970s, this aspiration to maintain revolutionary succession and resist sugarcoated bullets provided the rationale for the Cultural Revolution, which carried injunctions to avoid material corruption to a yet higher level, as the whole of Chinese society was enjoined to conduct a revolution to the depths of their soul (see Thornton's essay in the present volume). Significantly, the Cultural Revolution would also borrow from Zhang's language of visibility and exposure by emphasising the enemy as he who is not visible to the naked eye or at

a moment's glance, but must be exposed through a violent moment of revelation in order to overcome the threat of sugarcoated bullets. In much the same terms, the remaking of the self also invokes a language of depth, whereby revolution demands a transformation of the innermost depths of subjectivity. The revolutionary, therefore, is called upon not only to remake their own subjectivity but also to pierce beyond visible surfaces in order to identify failures of revolutionary discipline wherever they may present themselves.

Pleasure and Play under Socialism

The problem of sugarcoated bullets recurs across this entire period as a way of marking the deleterious effects of material consumption on revolutionary morale. It highlighted the danger of a counterrevolutionary reversal not by armed defeat but by the gradual corruption of revolutionary vigour. As Mao's formulation marked the continuing threats to revolutionary morale after the seizure of power, it seems to leave little room for the utopian optimism normally associated with a revolutionary process. It might be read together with Mao's more philosophical notion of 'contradiction' (*maodun*) as the ontological status of all being, and the failure of the dialectic to ever truly resolve itself into a stable synthesis, in order to argue that no revolutionary victory is ever truly definitive, and that history always encompasses the possibility of reversals (see the essays by Pang and Rojas in the present volume).

Already in his 1937 essay 'On Contradiction,' Mao had declared that 'without contradiction, there is no world.' Perhaps this sense of tragedy is necessary, particularly in a postsocialist era such as our own. At the same time, however, Mao's critique of the corrupting influence of the bourgeoisie contains a hidden utopian imperative that may yet prove useful in future revolutionary projects, which is the demand that socialism also produce new modes of pleasure and happiness, ones which can assist in the process of forming new human beings who are no longer bound to the seductions of the commodity form (see Dai's essay in the present volume). If there is a dimension of Mao's injunction that might be made meaningful in our present context, therefore, it is that a socialist alternative be grasped not only as an amelioration of the pressing crises of gross inequality and environmental catastrophe, but also as a society that will invent modes of enjoyment and pleasure that exceed the banalities of the capitalist present. Taking socialist pleasure seriously also compels us to attend to the liberatory aspects of the history of the PRC that have otherwise been obscured by prevailing discourses of vulgar anti-communism, in which all socialist experiments are characterised as a monotone of grey.

The history of pleasure and play across the socialist period marked an attempt to wrest pleasure away from the atomised limitations of commodity consumption through the formation of new cultural practices that would produce new modes of human collectivity and aesthetic experience. This took place above all in the cultural sphere. Less often appreciated is the fact that these cultural practices were radically popular because they opened the possibility of aesthetic enjoyment to those who had previously been denied a recognised cultural universe, and because they also sought to orientate the aesthetic tastes and spiritual sensitivities of their participants towards a radical vision of a new human being. The cultural activities of the revolution were

developed over the long process of revolutionary mobilisation from the People's War of the 1930s through the postliberation period.⁴ Over the course of the People's War, when the Party's primary locus was in the countryside, this meant the Party working through existing cultural forms and seeking to meld them with new radical content, most clearly actualised in the traditional peasant dances known as 'rice sprout songs' (*yangge*). From 1949 onwards, as its cultural activities turned towards the cities, and as the problem of sugarcoated bullets became a key part of the Party's political project, socialist pleasure was prioritised through an emergent infrastructure of factory recreation and a new film system (see also Lam's essay in the present volume). Whereas once workers would have been marginalised within the commodity system of an urban metropolis such as Shanghai, socialism sought to open up a new world of pleasure that would offer a definitive break from the atomised consumerism of the colonial past.

A recovery of the Maoist conception of pleasure and play may draw not only on the institutional history of workplace recreation or the details of these socialist cultural texts themselves, but also in the ways that the question of pleasure became a site of explicit theoretical articulation at some of the most pressing moments of the revolution. The use of 'theory' here should be understood with its full range of connotations and as a recognition of how the Chinese Revolution threw existing categories into contestation and produced its own modes of self-reflexion, rather than being a mechanical repetition of prior socialist experiments. The development of socialist pleasure received explicit theoretical articulation in 1964 through a discussion series held in the *Southern Daily* titled 'How Should One Live in Order to Be Happy,' subsequently published as an edited collection.⁵ This discussion serves as an appropriate bookend to the early socialist period and the present discussion because it recapitulates the positions and experiments of the preceding phase of experimentation, but did so in terms that anticipated the Cultural Revolution.

The editors of the collection argued in their conclusion that the divergent classes of bourgeoisie and proletariat possessed their own distinct 'conceptions of pleasure' (*xingfuguan*), with the proletariat being endowed with a conception of pleasure that is 'collective' (*jiti*) and 'spiritual' (*jingshen*) rather than individualist and material.⁶ This experience of pleasure is explicitly counterpoised to the atomised form embodied in sugarcoated bullets. For these editors, the foremost experience of happiness in a socialist society consisted of nothing less than the practice of 'arduous struggle' (*jianku fendou*) itself, understood as the transformation of the world through labour and the ongoing overturning of oppressive social relationships. In this conception, revolutionary praxis itself becomes pleasurable, engaged in an ongoing battle against the bourgeois notion of pleasure as material consumption, and envisioning a society in which labour itself would become life's first form of pleasure. It is, perhaps, in the very struggle against sugarcoated bullets as the bourgeois mode of pleasure that socialism also discovers and engenders its own experience of collective pleasure.

Life beyond the Commodity Form

The formulation of pleasure in these terms provides suggestive connections with other dimensions of the Chinese Revolution, including the glorification of labour (see the essays by Wang Ban and Meyskens in the present volume). There is also much

that is absent in this theorisation of pleasure, above all the question of sex and sexuality, which fared poorly throughout much of the revolution due to the state reification of heterosexual reproduction. Yet most suggestive and powerful of all is the celebration of insurrection as a site at which a new conception of pleasure might also present itself, and the understanding of insurrection as continuing after the seizure of power. The revolution may not, strictly speaking, be a dinner party, but for the Maoists it can and should be pleasurable in order to befit the name of revolution at all. The pleasurable contents of insurrection, and the insurrectionary contents of pleasure, are most closely in accord with the larger grammar of Mao's thought, which, from its earlier beginnings and through the decades of high Maoism, offers an affirmation of the legitimacy of insurrection, even against the Party-state itself.

The collective euphoria experienced by the Red Guards during the early years of the Cultural Revolution, when they witnessed Mao on the rostrum of Tiananmen Square, can, in these terms, hardly be dismissed as simple evidence of a personality cult, or even as violent revolutionary fanaticism, but must be taken seriously as that collective pleasure of insurrection based on the promise of a better world born through struggle. The intensification of the struggle against sugarcoated bullets during the Cultural Revolution coexisted with a new collective experience of pleasure as insurrection.

More relevant to the present, perhaps, is how the celebration of arduous struggle and insurrection as pleasurable connects with the reappearance of an insurrectionary politics in our own time. From Tahrir Square to the varied articulations of the Occupy Movement, these moments of collective struggle and euphoria may as of yet offer glimpses of a society based on a different and more expansive notion of pleasure than the banality of the present. Just as the heady days of insurrection in revolutionary China sought to strike a blow against the dangers of sugarcoated bullets, so too, in our present moment, as we grasp for a life beyond the commodity form and its atomised forms of pleasure, may we glimpse in our own insurrections the possibility of a different way of living and playing together.

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