

THE SCENT OF ANTI-CHICOM REVOLUTION IN THE AIR

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The huge protests engulfing China right now against lockdowns have left a lot of people wondering if these are just protests. The size, scope, vehemence, and fearlessness of the Chinese public against their very oppressive communist masters has made them appear to be a mass movement.

This photo report from the Sunday Mail (11/27) is quite extraordinary. Protests have engulfed at least seven major Chinese cities — Nanjing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Urumqi, Zhengzhou, and others, all against COVID lockdowns, with the big one going on in Shanghai, where the locals are openly demanding the ouster of China's supreme leader, Xi Jinping.

Chinese Police Clash With Thousands Protesting Draconian COVID Lockdowns As Unprecedented Civil Unrest Grips Country

When a billion-strong nation rises up on a cause that has unified them such as this, there's clearly the scent of revolution in the air.

It shows two things: The COVID restrictions, which are beyond draconian, are not to contain the spread of disease, which they created, but to control the people. The Chicoms running their communist hellhole are who they are, and leopards do not change their spots.

Second, it shows that this is a regime in trouble. It's said that hated dictatorships usually expire after about 75 years, and based on recent history — e.g. Soviet Union, PRI Mexico — that's about right. China, established as communist in 1948, is hopping up right around year 75, in 2023.

The scale of mass protests across China and the incredible effort to repress the people signals something is very wrong in Communist China. One wrong move and the house of cards may go down. That would explain the repressiveness seen — even as it fuels more and more discontent.

How do we explain this, how do we judge it, and is this just another round of protests that ends up leaving the status quo, such as we continuously see in places run by other dictatorships beset by protests, such as Iran, Russia, Venezuela, and Cuba?

There's an argument that it isn't.

Lockdowns bring tremendous financial hardship. They turn former middle classes into the poor, dependent on government handouts, if they can get them, which, in China, can be pretty meager, if that.

China, unlike many of those other places, has in the recent past seen a significant surge in economic prosperity brought on by trade with the West, with GDP typically hitting about 9% growth a year. A lot of people moved from the countryside to the cities for this prosperity, seeking jobs in sweatshops, uprooted from their traditional villages and families, but doing better financially than they had in the past.

Now that prosperity is gone.

China's GDP growth has been sliding in the last few years until it's around 3% a year now (if that as you can't trust its government statistics). Combine that with the hard blow of COVID lockdowns, which means 0% GDP for many individuals, as well as the knowledge that the rest of the world has rejected lockdowns and learned to live with COVID, and the whole picture amounts to a match and gasoline.

Who are the participants? A colleague observes they appear to be the newly impoverished.

Eric Hoffer (1902-1983), the great observer of social movements, had some thoughts about who joins mass movements with the most intensity, and one such category were people he called "the new poor."

In his 1951 classic, *"The True Believer"* (downloadable at [academia.edu](https://www.academia.edu)), he wrote:

"Not all who are poor are frustrated. Some of the poor stagnating in the slums of the cities are smug in their decay. They shudder at the thought of life outside their familiar cesspool. Even the respectable poor, when their poverty is of long standing, remain inert.

They are awed by the immutability of the order of things. It takes a cataclysm — an invasion, a plague or some other communal disaster — to open their eyes to the transitoriness of the 'eternal order.'

It is usually those whose poverty is relatively recent, the 'new poor,' who throb with the ferment of frustration. The memory of better things is as fire in their veins. They are the disinherited and dispossessed who respond to every rising mass movement.

This class has a vivid memory of affluence and dominion and is not likely to reconcile itself to straitened conditions and political impotence."

Sound like this dynamic may be playing in China? One notices that the people aren't particularly afraid of the oppressors in China these days.

Wikipedia has a good summary of the central thesis of Hoffer's argument, that mass movements are similar, whether their cause is good or bad, the way plants such as deadly nightshades and tomatoes have botanical similarities but very different results if they are eaten.

The True Believer has been in print for decades with generations of people each discovering something valuable in its concise, tight observations about human nature and society. Hoffer's observations about who joins these mass movements is especially valuable now for its insights that seem clearly applicable to China.

The old gray men ruling China from their palace in Beijing may look solid and in control around this point, but

they now lead a nation of the “new poor” made even poorer by their draconian COVID lockdowns, hoping the repressive measures beats them into submission.

Will it work in a nation of one billion? Can the whole nation be made into a lockdown prison to maintain party control? We know they have controlled a lot, and we know that dictators cling for long times. But with Hoffer’s observations, maybe the answer isn’t a 100% “yes” at this point.

Not anymore. Not with that intoxicating aroma the Chinese people are smelling in the air now.

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