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A dissertation entitled

AN ABORTIVE CHINESE ENLIGHTENMENT
- THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION AND CLASS THEORY

submitted to the Graduate School of the
University of Wisconsin-Madison
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of Doctor of Philosophy

by

WEIRAN LIN

Degree to be awarded: December 19 96 May 19___ August 19___

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An Abortive Chinese Enlightenment

The Cultural Revolution and Class Theory

by

Weiran Lin

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

(History)

at the

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

1996

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To the rebel generation of the Chinese Cultural Revolution to which I belong

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ABBREVIATIONS

DXKW Dalu dixia kanwu huibian (A Collection of Underground Publications Circulated on Chinese Mainland)

RGP Red Guard Publications

RGPS Red Guard Publications Supplement

WANSUI Mao Zedong sixiang wansui (Long Live Mao Zedong Thought)

WGZL "Wenhua dageming" yanjiu ziliao (A Collection of the Materials for the Study of the Cultural Revolution

WJHB Zhounggong wenhuadageming zhongyao wenjian huibian (Important CCP Documents of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution)

Acknowledgments

The writing of this thesis was an ordeal for me. I could never have imagined that I would spend so many years completing this writing. In this long and lonely journey any concern and help, great or small was dearly appreciated.

My gratitude should first go to my adviser Maurice Meisner. His recruitment of me to be his student provided me a place to engage in Chinese study which made this writing possible. I especially enjoy the freedom he granted to develop my ideas. My gratitude should also go to my teachers Francis Prucha, Thomas Hachey and Barrett McComick at Marquette University, and Yu-sheng Lin, Catherine Lynch, David McDonald at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

The scholarship from Marquette University opened the door for my study in the United States. The Vilas Fellowship of the University of Wisconsin and the travel grant of the Department of History helped me to make a trip to China in the summer of 1992. Travel grants from the

Center for East Asian Studies, University of Chicago and the Center for Chinese Studies, University of Michigan helped me to visit their libraries. The research grant from the Pacific Cultural foundation provided me partial financial support for 1992-93. My thanks should also go back to Lam Sheto and Meiwun Cheng whose help made my dream of study abroad finally become reality.

During my crisis in 1995-96 many people came to my aid. Dreux Montgomery assumed the heavy burden of editing my manuscript when I was absent from the school. I owe him a great deal for his generous support. To Drew I have to extend my thanks for his help in reading many my many papers since I came to Madison. I also give thanks to Laura Amundson, Stephen Brook as well as Lisa Brennan, Tina Chen, Tom and Abby Lutze who all gave their help in editing this manuscript.

Many people have shown their concern and offered their helps in different ways which was a great support to me. I should especially thank Marie Carter, Diane Johnes, Shu-chin Wu, the Bronner family, the Farley family, and the association of Chinese Student at UW-Madison. Back in China I should thank many my old friends and classmates,

especially Yeung Sin Fai, Bifen He, Ye fanglan, and Fu Yuling. My parents and my siblings and their families, as usually, did everything they could to help me.

My wife Yuhua Li nas showed what heroic undertaking a Chinese woman can commit to help her husband. She has worked through these years to support the family and pay my tuition. For quite a long time she had to take two full time jobs and sometimes worked two shifts straight. I only hope that hardship did not destroy her spirit. My daughter Lin Li has been a Ph.D. student's daughter for far too long. I appreciate her company and the joy she brought home every day.

The thesis is dedicated to the rebel generation of the Cultural Revolution to which I belong. The experiences, passion and ideals I once shared with them are the endless sources of this study. I truly believe that ideal is more real than reality.

Ideal is more real than reality

Preface

The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution in China (1966-69) has been a source of much confusion and controversy for students of the history of the People's Republic of China. Of the many issues that have emerged in the years since the conclusion of the revolution, three are perhaps of paramount interest. The first can be dated from the moment the movement erupted in 1966. Mao Zedong, chairman and supreme leader of the Chinese Communist Party, called upon students and others to attack Party officials and organizations at different levels. The bizarre spectacle of widespread - and frequently violent — attacks on the mechanisms of state and party power, instigated by the leadership of those very institutions, was extremely baffling to outside observers. Indeed, one eminent scholar of Chinese politics was led to wonder "whether China was not committing political suicide for some obscure reason."[1] Moreover, Mao was able to launch this massive movement at a time when he

[1] Franz Schurmann, "The Attack of the Cultural Revolution on Ideology and Organization," in Ping-ti Ho and Tang Tsou, eds., *China in Crisis*, 2 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), 2: 526.

and his closest associates were quite isolated within the Chinese Communist Party structure. Taken together, these facts have long puzzled scholars: how, in the face of such organizational strength, were Mao and his followers able to set off a mass movement so large and so violent? More importantly, why did their calls for rebellion generate such an enormous popular response?

The second issue concerns the aftermath of Mao's death in 1976. The Cultural Revolution, officially declared to be over, became almost immediately the subject of stringent criticism from both the Party leadership and the people at large and was condemned as "ten years of catastrophe."[2] What accounts for this apparently unified resentment toward the Cultural Revolution when the movement had generated such enthusiasm only ten years before?

The third issue has emerged in recent years. During the past decade or so China has shocked the world — not only with its stunning economic growth — but also with achievements in other fields, including the winning of Olympic medals and film awards, and even with its democratic movements. The

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[2] "Resolution on Certain Questions in the History of Our Party Since the Founding of the People's Republic of China," *Beijing Review*, 27 (July 6, 1981): 30.

question here is how can the recent rapid developments in China be understood in their historical context? Just before this period of explosive growth were those "ten years of catastrophe," which had, according to the media, drawn the nation to "the brink of . . . total collapse."[3] How did this happen? How could a nation's catastrophe turn into prosperity?

Answering these questions requires asking a more fundamental question about the Cultural Revolution, namely, what was the nature of that movement? This issue has, as yet, received no definitive resolution. In this study I argue that the Cultural Revolution was an unsuccessful ideological revolution — an abortive Chinese enlightenment. As an ideological revolution the Cultural Revolution fundamentally transformed the mentality of the Chinese people, laying the foundation for the reforms implemented in China since the late 1970s. As an abortive ideological revolution, however, it brought great confusion to the Chinese people. A key indication of this confusion is found in the perception of the Cultural Revolution itself. Most Chinese today believe that all Chinese are unified in opposing the Cultural

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[3] Ibid.

Revolution. But if we look closely at their criticisms of those turbulent years, we find that what many people condemned was not the Cultural Revolution as such but rather its failures. Behind the seemingly unanimous condemnation of the Cultural Revolution are actually two different sentiments representing two different political demands — condemning the revolution for not going far enough, and opposing its avowed goals (and the methods employed to reach them), and thus considering the whole experience an unmitigated disaster.

In this dissertation I have chosen class theory as the focus of discussion to explore the role of ideology in Communist China and to identify the real nature of the Cultural Revolution. In Mao's China, especially in the heyday of the Cultural Revolution, class theory was undoubtedly the key concept of the dominant ideology. Mao's call for class theory to be discussed "every year, every month and every day" approximated the reality of the Cultural Revolution. Under the banner of class theory, millions of Chinese threw themselves into the movement.

However, through the eventful course of the Cultural Revolution the meanings and implications of class theory underwent fundamental change. Two major trends emerged. One continued to emphasize the propertied classes such as

landlords and remnant bourgeoisie from the old society as the major target of class struggle. The other began to stress the new exploiting elements arising within socialist society as the major target of class struggle. I call the second trend the "new class theory," referring both to its emphasis on the new elements in the formation of class and to its later historical development. I call the first trend the "old class theory," referring both to its emphasis on old class divisions and to its development during an earlier period.

In the main, this thesis is devoted to the documentation of the changes class theory underwent during the Cultural Revolution. The theory is examined mainly through the perspective of the masses rather than through that of the elite. The focus of discussion is therefore on interpretations of theory rather than its origins, on its application rather than theory itself, and on the historical impact of class theory rather than intellectual contributions to the study of class.

Chapter One first reviews briefly the study of the Cultural Revolution and points out that a serious problem in this study is downplaying the role of ideology. It then discusses the dual nature of ideology in China. Last it

introduces key terms, materials, and methods used in this thesis.

Chapter Two discusses the old class theory dominant before the Cultural Revolution. During this period class theory was used mainly by the state to continue the social transformation begun in 1949. In this sense I argue that the indoctrination of the old class theory was, in fact, an emancipation for many. As a result, a new society was created. This new society then imposed its demands on the state for its restructuring, which was conducted mainly through the development of the new class theory.

Chapters Three and Four document the rise of the new class theory during the Cultural Revolution. Chapter Three analyzes the ideological reorientation under the aegis of Mao in the early stages of the Cultural Revolution. Trying to use class theory to restructure the state, Maoists altered many basic principles of the old class theory, leading to the emergence and development of the new class theory. Chapter Four documents the writings of the Cultural Revolution on the injustice in the Cultural Revolution and inequality in socialist China. The public exposure of social iniquities provided a new basis for the application of the class theory. This chapter then discusses the works of the new class

theory. The gist of this theory was the existence of a privileged stratum or class in socialist China. The recognition of this new class fundamentally changed the Chinese people's perception of China's society and their understanding of the revolution in socialist societies. Some people thus redefined the mission of the Cultural Revolution and asked for a more thorough change, as seen in their calls for "smashing the old state machine" and "continuing the revolution."

Chapter Five reviews class theory shortly after the Cultural Revolution. The new class theory, I argue, with its emphasis on the inequalities and corruption of socialist China, served as the ideological basis of the democracy movements in the 1970s and early 1980s.

Chapter Six concludes that the Cultural Revolution was essentially an ideological revolution, which is evident in the primary motivation, main content, basic features, and lasting impact of the movement. The meaning of this ideological revolution, however, was not limited to the modification of ideas. The ideological revolution, in the minds of hundreds of millions of people, meant the beginning of a fundamental change in politics, economics, culture, and society. Without these changes, the reforms that have

transformed China since the late 1970s are unimaginable. The Cultural Revolution was not a successful revolution, however. The movement ended before it was half finished, and as a result, produced few, if any, positive achievements. The tragedy of the Cultural Revolution was the result of the dilemma of modern China. The dilemma was: on the one hand, society relied on the state to be transformed. On the other hand, the state also need society to reform itself. The abortive nature of the Cultural Revolution constituted a great danger to China's future.

I speculate on the theoretical significance of this empirical study in the last section of Chapter Six. In this thesis the paradigm of state and society is used as both a theoretical guide and a conceptual foil. This discussion demonstrates both the usefulness and limitations of these paired concepts. As such, my study poses a direct challenge to the theory of totalitarianism and the theory of civil society, both of which presuppose a conventional paradigm of state and society. To seek an alternative, I highlight the special role and dual nature of ideology in Communist China. Ideology was the public sphere and ideological transformation was the leading force for change in modern China.

Chapter One

Introduction: The Special Role of Ideology in Communist China

The important role of ideology in Communist China was deeply rooted in the special structure of state and society that had been formed in China's long history. Failing to fully understand this crucial feature of Chinese history, students of the Cultural Revolution tend to downplay the role of ideology in their explanations of the movement. In this chapter I first discuss briefly the problems of studying the Cultural Revolution. Next, I discuss the dual nature of ideology in China. Last, I introduce the research methods applied in this thesis.

Some Problems in Studying the Cultural Revolution

The Cultural Revolution has spawned perhaps more books and articles in the Western world than the history of any other period in modern China. It is not surprising, therefore, that a variety of interpretations of the events

have been formed. Among them, three schools are most prominent.

First, an early popular thesis has treated the event as a Chinese version of the Soviet "great purge." A struggle for power thus becomes both the origin and essence of the movement for the proponents of this interpretation.[4] An obvious problem with this explanation is that it focuses on the motivations of a few top Party officials, while skirting the question of why so many Chinese people threw themselves into the movement with such enormous enthusiasm. As such it ignores a major difference between the Chinese Cultural Revolution and the Soviet "great purge," namely, that the latter was basically the job of the secret police, while the former was a popular movement. It is worth noting here that in the current official Party account of the Cultural Revolution, the movement is treated as the result of mistakes made by Mao and a few of his close associates. This

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[4]For example, Franz Michael, "The Struggle for Power," *Problems of Communism*, 16: 3 (May-June 1967), 12-21; Roderick MacFarquhar, *The Origins of the Cultural Revolution*, Vol. 1, *Contradictions Among the People, 1956-1957*; Vol. 2, *The Great Leap Forward, 1958-1960* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974, 1983); Andrew Hall Wedeman, *The East Wind Subsides: Chinese Foreign Policy and the Origins of the Cultural Revolution* (Washington, D. C.: Washington Institute Press, 1987).

explanation thus essentially continues the same error of the theory of power struggle.

A second early prevailing school has stressed revolutionary ideals. Following closely the Party's official version of events at that time, this interpretation sees the Cultural Revolution mainly as an effort to fulfill the goals of the socialist revolution.[5] This explanation gives weight to the motivations of both leaders and masses and thus resonates with the rhetoric and the deeds of the movement. However, this theory neglects or only superficially explains another important feature of the Cultural Revolution — factional conflict among the masses. This interpretation cannot adequately explain why the masses fought with each other so bitterly if, indeed, they were struggling for a common revolutionary goal. The explanation that these conflicts were due to the manipulations of a few Party officials, the "capitalist roaders," does not account for the depth and bitterness of the disputes that set neighbors, colleagues, and even family members against one another. In

[5]For example, Richard Pfeffer, "The Pursuit of Purity: Mao's Cultural Revolution," *Problems of Communism* 18:6 (November-December 1969); William Hinton, *Turning Point in China: An Essay on the Cultural Revolution* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1972); Jean Daubier, *A History of the Chinese Cultural Revolution*, tran. Richard Seaver (New York: Random House, 1974); K. S. Karol, *The Second Chinese Revolution*, tran. M. Jones (New York: Hill and Wang, 1974).

most cases the allegation is simply not true. Because the revolutionary ideals argument fails to provide a satisfactory account of this important feature of the movement, its interpretation is inadequate at best.

The third (and to me the most important) school in the study of the Cultural Revolution stresses social conflict in Communist China. This approach developed comparatively late and its writings are typically the products of long and systematic research. This interpretation pays great attention to the factionalism of the masses during the Cultural Revolution and traces its causes to the social tensions that existed before the Cultural Revolution. This approach not only gives insight into the nature of the events but also decisively turns the focus of study from the elite to the masses. This is an important advance in the study of the Cultural Revolution, which I further discuss here.

The first important work of this approach and, to date, the most richly documented and insightfully analytical book on the Cultural Revolution is Hong Yung Lee's *The Politics of the Chinese Cultural Revolution.*[6] Lee fully realized the importance of divisions among the masses. Indeed, for him

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[6] Hong Yung Lee, The Politics of the Chinese Cultural Revolution (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978).

"factional struggle affected the course of the Cultural Revolution more than any other factor."[7] To explain this phenomenon, he set forth the hypothesis that the radicals were composed of social groups who held grievances against the establishment, whereas the conservatives represented social groups with high social and political status prior to the Cultural Revolution. In other words, the former were interested in a radical restructuring of the Chinese political system, and the latter in maintaining the status quo. Social division before the Cultural Revolution thus becomes a key to understanding the factionalism of the masses in the movement.

Lee's approach has been supported by many others. Stanley Rosen, in Red *Guard Factionalism and the Cultural Revolution in Guangzhou,* has shown how family background, facilitated by the educational system prior to the Cultural Revolution, played a decisive role in dividing middle school students into two antagonistic factions.[8] Anita Chan, in *Mao's Children,* and Jonathan Unger, in *Education Under Mao,*

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[7] Ibid. 2.

[8] Stanley Rosen, *Red Guard Factionalism and the Cultural Revolution in* Guangzhou Canton) (Boulder,Colo.: Westview, 1982).

have greatly enriched this viewpoint.[9] This interpretation was put into a Marxist discourse by Richard Kraus in *Class Conflict in Chinese Socialism*.[10] Shaoguang Wang's dissertation "Failure of Charisma: The Cultural Revolution in Wuhan" has related the story of an important industrial city.[11] His thesis has lent great weight to the idea that the Cultural Revolution was above all a dispute fired by perceived social differences.

Lynn T. White's *Policies of Chaos: The Organizational Causes of Violence in China's Cultural Revolution* (based on a study of Shanghai factories), has provided a further explanation of why social tensions turned so violent in the Cultural Revolution.[12] He found that Party policies contributed greatly to the upheaval. A similar approach, but with a focus on educational policies, is provided by Jing Lin's *The Red Guards' Path to Violence*.

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[9] Anita Chan, *Children of Mao: Personality Development and Political Activism in the Red Guard Generation* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1985).

[10] Richard Curt Kraus, *Class Conflict in Chinese Socialism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981).

[11] Shaoguang Wang, "Failure of Charisma: The Cultural Revolution in Wuhan," Dissertation, Cornell University, 1990.

[12] Lynn T. White III, *Policies of Chaos: The Organizational Cause of Violence in China's Cultural Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989).

A Cultural Revolution veteran has come independently to a similar conclusion. Liu Guokai, in his essay "A Brief Analysis of the Cultural Revolution" also emphasized social conflict in pre-Cultural Revolution China.[13] His interpretation is best seen as the continuation of the theory developed by some rebels during the Cultural Revolution, which applied class analysis to socialist China.

Although varied in research and argument, all these works have looked to social conflict prior to the Cultural Revolution as the major cause of the divisions among the masses in the Cultural Revolution. This interpretation, which I call the "social conflict theory," has become the dominant school in the study of the Cultural Revolution.[14]

---

[13] *Renmin zisheng*, Special issue (December 1980), in *DXKW*, 17: 91-244. Due to numerous citations from Chinese magazines and newspapers in this thesis I provide only simple footnotes but provide their locations in large collections when available. For an English version of Liu's essay, see Anita Chan, ed., A Brief Analysis of the Cultural Revolution (New York: M. E. Sharpe, 1987).

[14] This term and the school with which it is associated are discussed in essays by Yang Xiguang and Anita Chan. See Yang Xiguang, "Ping 'Zhongguo wenge shinian shi,'" ("Critique of 'Ten Years of the Chinese Cultural Revolution'" *Zhengming* (August 1990): 68-75; Chen Peihua, "Dui Wenge 'shehui chongtulun' de yijian,'" ("Opinion on 'the Social Conflict Theory' of the Cultural Revolution,"), *Zhengming* (October 1990): 59-62; Anita Chan, "Dispelling Misconceptions about the Red Guard Movement: The Necessity to Re-examine Cultural Revolution Factionalism and Periodization," *The Journal of Contemporary China* 1:1 (September 1992): 61-85.

The social conflict theory has been modified or challenged, directly or indirectly, consciously or unconsciously, by other scholars, however. Some have tried to de-emphasize the class nature of pre-Cultural Revolution China and have stressed instead various features that tended to lessen the importance of social tension. For example, Susan Shirk has documented the importance of friendship and the role it played in forming an "informal society" among middle school students. Richard Madsen has focused on the importance of morality in the countryside, and Andrew Walder has discovered strong personal ties among industrial workers.[15]

Still other scholars have looked to other non-social factors to explain factional conflict among the masses during the Cultural Revolution. For example, Keith Forster has openly criticized the social conflict theory for being "decidedly thin and ambiguous."[16] On the basis of his study of rebellion and factionalism in Zhejiang Province, Forster

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[15] Susan L. Shirk, *Competitive Comrades: Career Incentives and Student Strategies in China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982; Richard Madsen, *Morality and Power in a Chinese Village* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984); Andrew G. Walder, *Communist Neo-Traditionalism: Work and Authority in Chinese Industry* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986).

[16] Keith Forster, *Rebellion and Factionalism in a Chinese Province: Zhejiang, 1966-1976* (New York: M. E. Sharpe, 1990), 7.

argued that "[c]lass background may not have been as important in determining allegiances as more pragmatic considerations."[17] He found that in Zhejiang what in essence divided the two organizations was their assessment of the revolutionary credentials of leading cadres. He commented:

> In the view of some readers, the claim that callow youth and hard-boiled workers beat, tortured and killed each other over an issue as seemingly remote from their daily terms of reference as the loyalty of political leaders to an ill-defined "revolutionary line" of Chairman Mao may detach political action from its social basis. Nevertheless it seemed to be true of the behavior of the rebels of both sides in Zhejiang.[18]

In a thoughtful essay on Mao and class theory in socialist society, Graham Young directly connected the divisions of the masses during the Cultural Revolution with the confusion over the guiding theory of the revolution.[19] As pointed out long ago by scholars such as Stuart Schram, John Starr, Gordon White, Joseph Esherick, and Richard Kraus, Mao had not one but two or three class theories.[20] Young believes

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[17] Ibid.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Graham Young, "Mao Zedong and the class struggle in socialist society," *The Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs* 16 (July 1986): 41-80.

[20] Stuart Schram, "Classes, Old and New, in Mao Zedong's Thought, 1949-1976," in James L. Watson, ed. *Class and Social Stratification in Post-Revolution China* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 29-55, and *The Thought of Mao Tse-Tung* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); John Starr, "Conceptual Foundations of Mao

that this theoretical ambiguity has much to do with the political confusion of the Cultural Revolution. According to him,

> Thus, in terms of the integration of theory and practice, the Cultural Revolution could not be one coherent movement, but had to become the combination or competition of several different movements with different theoretical bases and different consequent political actions.
>
> This was sometimes more than a case of confusion, but related to major political conflicts in the Cultural Revolution, particularly in the matter of who should be the major targets and who the major actors in the movement.[21]

The clearest case, Young suggested, was perhaps the conflict that arose, especially among student Red Guards, concerning class designations. There were broadly two different orientations. One group argued that those of "good" class backgrounds should become the major actors in the Cultural Revolution and those of "bad" origins should be subjected to criticism and struggle. The other argued that the most important criteria were behavioral and ideological

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Tse-tung's Theory of Continuous Revolution," *Asian Survey* (June 1971), *Continuing the Revolution: The Political Thought of Mao* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979); Gordon White, *The Politics of Class and Class Origin: The Case of the Cultural Revolution* (Canberra: Contemporary China Center, Australian National university, 1976); Joseph Esherick, "On the 'Restoration of Capitalism:' Mao and Marxist Theory," *Modern China* 5:1 (January 1979): 41-77.

[21] Young, 63.

and emphasized the "newness" of problems in socialist society. "Thus, the use of different theoretical perspectives was linked to totally different notions of the direction of the Cultural Revolution."[22] The factional chaos during the Cultural Revolution, therefore, can be attributed, at least in part, to the underdevelopment of Mao's theory of revolution.

Taken individually or as a whole, these important works modify or suggest an alternative to the social conflict theory, which is not without serious flaws. One flaw concerns misinterpretation of data. Many statistics have been collected by scholars of social conflict theory to prove how social class (however it is defined) before the Cultural Revolution was directly connected to the divisions among the masses during the revolution. But the scholarly interpretations of these statistics have been problematic. For the data cited by these scholars suggest not only different alliances among different social groups, but also deep splits within single social groups. Unfortunately, most social conflict scholars have chosen simply to ignore this second point.

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[22] Ibid., 64.

For example, Hong Yung Lee has cited a table on the ratio of conservative to radical workers in ten big industries in Guangdong from a newspaper published by the rebel faction in Guangzhou during the Cultural Revolution.[23] In this table the highest ratio between conservative and rebel workers was four to one. The lowest ratio was about one to one, and the average was roughly three to one. Lee used these data to suggest that workers from large state-owned factories were likely to become conservatives. The same data, however, can be read in another way – they can be used to demonstrate how deeply the workers were split, even in the same types of factories.

An example given by Lynn White also confirm this point. In the early 1960s, the Shanghai Glass Machines Plant employed about 200 workers in the press shop and 300 in the molding shop. These people performed hard, physically demanding tasks for which they received low pay. In contrast, the 30 workers in the electric shop performed relatively easy jobs for higher salaries. Due to this "diverse, highly stratified and divided" arrangement of workers, according to White, the plant became one of the most famous sites of

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[23] Lee, 135.

struggle in Shanghai's Cultural Revolution.[24] "Not surprisingly, political factions in the plant followed the divisions between shops," White concluded.

However, the figures supplied by White suggest more than the split between shops, but also the division within the same shop. According to White, during the Cultural Revolution three-quarters of the technicians allied with the conservative "Scarlet Guards" and three-fifths of those in the molding shop entered the opposing group, along with three-quarters of the workers in the casting shop.[25] As seen here, the masses split not only along the lines of different social groups, but also within those groups.

A more detailed survey concerning the relationship between factional alliances of middle school students and their family backgrounds can be found in the work of Stanley Rosen, but his data interpretations suffer from the same problems that make White's conclusions problematic.[26] Rosen argued that students with "good" family backgrounds were likely to be conservatives, whereas students with "bad" family backgrounds were most often rebels. As an example of

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[24] White, 187.

[25] Ibid., 187-88.

[26] Rosen, 148-53.

this pattern he pointed out that of students who were children of low-ranking PLA officers only 6 percent joined rebel factions, whereas 86 percent joined conservative organizations. In contrast, of those students who came from the families of KMT officials, 58 percent stood with the rebels and only 4 percent allied themselves with the conservatives.[27]

Even in these extreme cases (because very few students came from either the PLA officer families or KMT official families) splits existed within the same groups, and this fact should not be simply ignored. One factor for the preponderance of students of "good" backgrounds (and the corresponding dearth of those with "bad" origins) in conservative organizations is that these groups generally did not allow (or at least did not welcome) students from "non-red" family backgrounds to join. This is why the percentage of students from KMT official families in the conservative camp was so low. But if we turn to those students who were more free to choose sides – for example, students from worker or poor peasant family backgrounds – the deep divisions among them is revealing. According to Rosen's survey, among the students from worker families, 36 percent sided with the

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[27] Ibid.

rebels, whereas 41 percent joined the conservatives. Among the students from poor peasant families, 23 percent sided with the rebels, and 36 percent joined the conservatives.[28] Although the survey suggest certain tendencies of alliance among different social groups, it manifests more convincingly the deep divisions among the masses.

The sharp divisions among the masses, I would suggest, is one of the most important features of the Cultural Revolution. As such it may be taken as a reliable index to measure the extent of the movement in different areas at different times. In areas where the levels of participation were high, factional conflicts were to be found in virtually every social group. They were often found also within the same family or even the same person because many people changed their stances (sometimes more than once) during the zigzag course of the movement. By misreading these data, scholars of the social conflict school have failed to see the real picture of the factionalism in the Cultural Revolution, and their analysis is therefore problematic.

A second flaw in the social conflict theory concerns the dissonance between the assumption of the social conflict theory and the historical evidence left by the Cultural

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[28] Ibid.

Revolution. First, the revolution was not caused directly by social tension as the social conflict theory implies. For it is a plain fact that the movement was, as I will further document in Chapter Three, initiated directly by Mao and his close associates. In this sense it was an "official revolution," as Brantly Womack has called it.[29]

In retrospect, one may find that 1966 was, in fact, one of the best years for the Chinese Communist government. After more than a decade and a half of consolidation and construction, and with the nation more or less recovered from the "three difficult years" of 1959-62 the Party was at the apex of its victory and Mao's popularity was at an all-time high. This situation was especially true among young people, who were to be the main force of the coming movement. This did not mean, of course, that no social tensions existed among the people at that time. But social conflict theorists have failed to provide a historical account of why social tensions became so strong that they erupted into open conflict in 1966.

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[29] Brantly Womack, "In Search of Democracy," in Brantly Womack ed., *Contemporary Chinese Politics in Historical Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 76.

Second, the revolution was not presented as a contest between "underprivileged" people and "privileged" people as the social conflict theory suggests. The hypothesis that the rebels were social underdogs, while the conservatives were more socially advantaged is correct only in a limited sense. This simplistic formula becomes absurd if put into the larger context of Chinese society before the Cultural Revolution because, for example, in pre-Cultural Revolution China the peasants as a whole were at the bottom of society while the students, especially college students, were at the top. However, during the Cultural Revolution the peasants formed the largest conservative camp while the students constituted the hard core of the rebel force. This plain fact was in opposite to the hypothesis of the social conflict theory.

Finally, the splits among the masses during the Cultural Revolution occurred not only along lines of relative social advantage, but also along many other lines that divided people into opposing rebel and conservative camps. First, great geographic variations were apparent in the rebel/conservative division. The rebel forces were much stronger in major metropolitan areas such as Beijing, Shanghai or Tianjin, and the conservative forces were stronger in peripheral areas such as Qinghai, Xinjiang, and

Guangxi. Further, within single regions rebel forces were stronger in urban areas whereas conservative forces were stronger in the countryside. The conservative call for the application of a strategy of "surrounding the cities from the countryside" at the end of the Cultural Revolution reflects this political situation.

Second, clear educational distinctions is observed in the rebel/conservative division. The influence of the rebel forces increased among people with more education. Thus, students in general, and college students in particular, made up the hard core of the rebels, whereas peasants, whose educational levels were the lowest, formed the largest conservative camp.

Third, a visible age difference may be noted in the rebel/conservative division. Younger people more readily became rebels, whereas older people tended to be conservatives. This difference could be seen in many family situation: conservative parents with rebel children were quite common, whereas the reverse was rare.

Fourth, a discernible personality dissimilarity in the rebel/conservative division is found. People of an idealistic bent were more likely to become radicals, whereas those who were more pragmatic tended to side with the conservatives.

This distinction can be partially seen in Anita Chan's analysis of four Red Guards with different personalities.[30] Liu Guokai has also related how several persons in his working unit chose to side with the conservatives, in part, because of their pragmatism.[31]

Fifth, a gap in experiences with the Cultural Revolution is evident in the rebel/conservative division. People who were more exposed to the Cultural Revolution were more likely to become rebels. For example, students returning from "revolutionary exchange" trips around the country often found those who had stayed home too conservative. As a matter of fact, all radical organizations developed in accordance with the rhythms of the revolution. Their forces were strengthened and their political stances became more radical as the movement progressed.

All these observations are correct, of course, only in a comparative sense because virtually every individual belonged simultaneously to different categories. Together, these observations provide a new picture of the factionalism in the Cultural Revolution and thus pose a challenge to the social conflict theory. In this new picture, the alliances of the

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[30] Chan, *Children of Mao*.

[31] *Renminzhisheng*, December 1980, in DXKW, 17: 91-244.

masses were no longer homogeneous entities but bodies of diverse components. The splits among the masses were not static divisions, but rather processes that underwent constant change. Again, the social conflict theory does not adequately explain this important feature of the Cultural Revolution.

Yet, to this author, the most serious flaw in the social conflict theory concerns the bias that most of the practitioners of the social conflict theory have brought to their studies of the Cultural Revolution. That is, the proponents of this school of thought have tended to give little weight to the importance of ideology and, accordingly, have spent relatively little time analyzing its role during the Cultural Revolution. This criticism leads to the major theme of this study, namely, the special role of ideology in Communist China.

Most proponents of the social conflict theory do not claim that social conflict was the only cause or essence of the Cultural Revolution. Many of them also acknowledge other factors. For example, Hong Yung Lee has tried to balance the roles of different actors in the Cultural Revolution, and Shaoguang Wang has attempted to reconcile the dissonance between what he calls "true believers" and "rational

actors."[32] Neither, however, has considered ideology to be of great important. Lee, for example, asserted that

> the mass organizations were almost exclusively concerned with narrow group interest, particularly power interests. To them, ideological and policy considerations were mere means to advance their political interests. The mass organizations upheld the official ideology and policy of a given moment only if these coincided with their power interests, and they rejected them if not.[33]

This point is echoed in Wang's observation that "calculations of cost and benefit were essential on all sides of the CR from beginning to end."[34] To him, ideology was but an empty vessel: "The interpretations of the message's recipients are more important, for sociological analysis, than the ideology itself."[35] White simply stated that "ideology throws practically no light on who moved to violence at the local level, and why."[36] He repeated this point many times:

> Personal and material, not just collective and ideal, motives were essential on all sides of the Cultural Revolution.[37]

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[32] Lee, 1-15, Wang, 873-904.

[33] Lee, 5.

[34] Wang, 31.

[35] Ibid., 885.

[36] White, 41-2.

[37] Ibid., 15.

> These reports look at the ideals of the Cultural Revolution, which were important, but not at the material bases essential to its occurrence.[38]
>
> Revolutions take a while to mature, because they are made of resources, not just ideals.[39]

By downplaying the role of ideology, social conflict theorists have, in fact, portrayed the Cultural Revolution as essentially a battle of different social groups fighting for their own interests. This, I would argue, distorts the whole picture of the Cultural Revolution because it conceals the most important aspects of the movement, namely, the ideological conflicts and transformations that underlay the kaleidoscope-like shifts occurring over the course of the struggle.

Our examination of the different lines existed in the factional divisions has revealed the failings of the social conflict interpretation. A closer look reveals a dividing line running through those series of contrasts between the rebel and conservative alliances. This dividing line is the ideological differences. In those comparisons, the influence of the rebels was stronger among those who were young,

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[38] Ibid., 42.

[39] Ibid., 19.

idealistic, lived in the major metropolitan areas, better educated and more experienced in the Cultural Revolution. These were the people most affected by the dominant ideology of the time. In contrast, the influence of the conservatives was stronger among those who were older, more pragmatic, living in peripheral areas, less educated and less experienced in the Cultural Revolution. These were the people least affected by the dominant ideology of the time. The factional divisions during the Cultural Revolution were, therefore, first and foremost ideological conflicts. Here I will use Rosen's data again to test this proposition.

In Rosen's survey, students were categorized not only by their family backgrounds but also by the schools they attended, of which there were four types: poor, ordinary, good, and true elite.[40] As Rosen correctly concluded, an obvious connection existed between students' family backgrounds and their factional alliances during the Cultural Revolution. Students with "red" family backgrounds were more likely to become conservatives. However, if we look at the data in another way, an additional connection is found. The percentage of students from the same family background who

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[40] Rosen, 148-51.

sided with the rebels increases from poor schools to better schools.

For example, the percentages of students from worker families who became rebels were, 29, 35, 40 and 32 percent for poor, ordinary, good, and true elite schools, respectively. For students from non-intellectual middle class families were 40, 29, 51 and 57 percent; for students with intellectual middle class family backgrounds, they were 51, 58, 68 and 60 percent; and for students with bad class family backgrounds they were 26, 30, 47 and 48 percent. These figures confirm the proposition that people with better education (defined here as attending better schools) were more likely to become rebels.[41]

An obvious exception in this survey were those students whose parents were "revolutionary cadres." Their rates were 33, 19, 14 and 16 percent for poor, ordinary, good, and true elite schools, respectively.[42] Personal factors were obviously involved here. For example, many cadres' children were not happy with the rebels' attack against their parents. But even in this case, our suggestion is still applicable if we look at it more carefully.

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[41] Ibid.

[42] Ibid.

According to Rosen, among the cadres' children, the percentage of rebels was 10 percent for those whose fathers were high-level army officers but only 6 percent for those whose fathers were low-level army officers. For students whose fathers were high and mid-level civilian cadres, the proportion of rebels was 30 percent and 32 percent respectively. Of those students whose fathers had been local civil war guerrillas (and who at this time were, for the most part, rural leaders), only 11 percent were rebels. It is difficult to explain this phenomenon with the social conflict theory because it was the better-off students(children of higher level cadres)showed a stronger tendency to become rebels than did students from comparatively less favorable circumstances (children of low -level cadres). This phenomenon becomes comprehensible, however, if we assume that the children of high-level cadres were more sensitive to the dominant ideology due to the fact that they had more opportunity to access internal Party documents than were their counterparts from comparatively less favorable circumstances.

After arguing all these, however, the class label(social status or family backgrounds) remains, as indicated in the data cited earlier, a clear line in the rebel/conservative

division. How does our proposition explain this? The answer to this question leads to the major argument in this thesis that the dominant ideology underwent radical change over the course of the Cultural Revolution. This change brought serious conflict among the people. People who were deeply influenced by the dominant ideology prevailed before the Cultural Revolution which greatly emphasized the class label were reluctant to follow the new changes and became the conservatives. People who were more sensitive to the new ideological reorientation which stressed inequality under socialism formed the rebels. As such, the class line found in the rebel/conservative division can also be seen as the result of different ideological preferences. The factional conflict among the masses during the Cultural Revolution manifested, therefore, not social conflict but ideological conflict. But ideological conflict meant more than an ideational friction as such. For a fuller understanding of this point it is necessary to discuss the special role that ideology has played in Chinese history.

The Dual Nature of the Dominant Ideology in China

It is a cliché — and it is wrong — to say that China after 1949 was but traditional China with Mao as its new emperor. This does not mean, however, that certain continuities between ancient and modern China do not exist. An important form of continuity is found in the special role played by dominant ideologies in both ancient and modern China. Undoubtedly, Confucianism is fundamentally different from Mao Zedong Thought, but the prominent roles they have played in state and society are similar. To a great extent, premodern China was ruled according to Confucian ideology, in Communist China a similar role was played by Mao Zedong Thought.

This feature of Communist China was noted by Franz Schurmann in his monumental work *Ideology and Organization in Communist China*.[43] In retrospect, this book is both remarkably sensitive and yet quite mistaken. It is sensitive because Schurmann grasped the two most important features of Communist China—ideology and organization—as the book title suggests. It is mistaken because he failed to fully understand the nature of ideology in Communist China.

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[43] Franz Schurmann, *Ideology and Organization in Communist China*, 2nd ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968).

The first serious challenge to Schurmann's work was the advent of the Cultural Revolution itself, when organizations came under ideological attack. Schurmann was at a loss to explain this phenomenon because in his theoretical system ideology was inseparable from organization, which he defined as "a manner of thinking characteristic of an organization."[44] Because he could not see the possibility of any essential internal conflict between ideology and organization, Schurmann had to look for external factors to explain the cause of the Cultural Revolution.[45] He thus found the Vietnam War to be the chief cause of the Cultural Revolution, a conclusion few today find persuasive. This misjudgment reveals how far afield he had been led by his conceptual error.

Schurmann's neglect of the potential conflict between ideology and organization in Communist China has been noted by the historian Tang Tsou, who observed:

> Schurmann completed his work just before the Cultural Revolution. He naturally did not see that Mao Zedong Thought could be used as a means of attacking the organization. For intellectual historians, with whom I partially identify myself, ideas have their own force, and the thinking of a man and an organization may change in different directions. The conflict between ideology

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[44] Ibid., 18.

[45] Ibid., viii.

> as developed or reinterpreted by a leader and by the organization that he leads is an always present possibility.[46]

To me, the problem with Schurmann's argument goes beyond this. His study of ideology and organization has as its theoretical framework the well-known paradigm of state and society.[47] According to him, revolutions destroy the old states and societies and replace them with organizations. Unlike social systems, organizations need conscious effort to survive, and ideology provides the moral cement for organization.[48] This is why ideology and organization were so important in Communist China.

In this treatment, ideology, in the final analysis, is of secondary importance because it is but an accessory of organization. More important, ideology is considered to be only a part of the state apparatus and is monopolized by the state. This is a fatal conceptual mistake in understanding the role of the dominant ideology in Communist China in particular, and in Chinese history in general.

Many people are aware of the importance of the dominant ideology in the state's effort to control society in China

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[46] Tsou, xxix.

[47] Schurmann, 4, footnote.

[48] Ibid., xlviii.

and there is no need to further discuss this here. Suffice it to say that the most important feature of Chinese politics is perhaps the state's use of ideology to govern the country. Seldom, if ever, has a school of thought played so crucial a role in supporting a state as did Confucianism in traditional times, and Mao Zedong Thought in post-1949 China.

Few people realize, however, that the dominant ideology in China was also crucial to society because it was the most important means society had to impose its will on the state. This is to say, the dominant ideology belonged not only to the state, but also to society. The recognition of the dual nature of the dominant idea or ideology in China not only helps us understand the role of ideology in China but also helps us resolve many fundamental issues in Chinese history. Among them is the internal relations of state and society.

When Western scholars first began to study Chinese history and culture in earnest, they were struck by the extraordinary power of the state and the lack of formal restrictions on the use of this power. It is therefore not surprising to find in their works the concepts of "oriental despotism," for the pre-modern Chinese state and "totalitarianism," for its modern form, referring to the

unrestrained state power.[49] In recent years, however, this oversimplified and one-sided image of the Chinese state has been challenged. Some scholars find that the power of the Chinese state, although certainly enormous, was not unlimited. As the French historian Jacques Gernet has observed:

> The state in China had virtually complete control over the population, the armies, the economy, as well as over religious communities and worship. All these were things over which the monarchies of the *ancient regime* in Europe had by no means achieved mastery. And yet, with all the very considerable means at his disposal because of the political centralization and the immensity of his empire, Kangxi (the emperor of the Qing Dynasty) was finally less free to do as he pleased than Louis XIV, who was, on the contrary, often short of cash and could not make himself obeyed everywhere.[50]

The reason for this is that "the emperor was obliged to respect the norms and the forms imposed on him," and "attachment to the traditions and rites constitutes a potent

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[49] For a critical discussion of the literature on this subject, see Vivienne Shue, *The Reach of the State: Sketches of the Chinese Body Politic* (Stanford, Ca.: Stanford University Press, 1988). See also Victor Nee and David Mozingo, ed., *State and Society in Contemporary China* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1983); Stuart R. Schram, ed., *The Scope of State Power in China* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985); Stuart R. Schram, ed., *Foundations and Limits of State Power in China* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1987).

[50] Jacques Gernet, "Introduction," in Stuart Schram, ed., *Foundation and Limits of State Power in China* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1987), xxii.

moderating force, more effective, no doubt, than constitutional provisions."[51]

Echoing this point, the German scholar of Chinese law Karl Burgen stated:

> [T]he Chinese emperor had no "right" to rule, but a "Heavenly Mandate", i.e., a duty to fulfill. The guidelines for this order had to correspond to a cosmic order which was believed to include moral principles. They were written down in traditional texts commonly called books of rights (*li*). Their norms and principle were considered by the emperors as exemplary and binding. They limited his freewill and his right (capacity) to make political decisions.[52]

The American political scientist Brantly Womack has thus pointed out that "the state [in China] was not externally limited, nor was there an incipient, autonomous civil society." It was limited by internal discipline:

> A Westerner would expect such a society to have been arbitrary and autocratic, because it did not have the institutions that in the West limited the abuse of prerogative. Of course, abuses occurred (as they did in the West), but the discipline of the system was different from that of the West. Instead of the discipline of external delimitation, in which the subjects possessed their bounded rights and the sovereigns possessed their bounded power, the Chinese emperor and his official were bound by ideology, ritual, and tradition. Confucianism, especially, provided a well developed ethic of rule, and mastery of that ethic was a major requirement of bureaucratic recruitment. It was an

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[51] Ibid.

[52] Karl Bunger, "Concluding Remarks on Two Aspects of the Chinese Unitary State as Compared with the European State System," in Stuart Schram, ed., *Foundation and Limits of State Power in China* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1987), 316-7.

> orthodoxy not of revealed truth but of ritual and ethical standards—the soul of a civilized pyramid of virtue. The responsibility of the emperor, as well as the official, was to act according to the ideal, moral obligations of office. So the hard lines of power in the imperial system were encumbered by a soft but strong web of ethical expectations.[53]

All these are insightful observations. These scholars have noticed not only the limitations of the state in China but also the internal restrictions imposed on it. What I want to further point out is that behind those internal restrictions stood a society that exercised the power of these restrictions. Failing to recognize this, these scholars have struggled to find evidence of some institutional restrictions on state power. Thus, Gernet argued that the emperor was obliged to respect the norms and the forms imposed on him because these were "vigilantly watched over by an administration whose support was indispensable to him."[54] Bunger asserted:

> The guidelines restricting the actions of the Chinese emperor were not only written down in the historical texts; they were also institutionalized in the political structure of the state. Thus we find special advisers with the title of "tutors" to the emperor and the institution of "remonstrators". The latter belonged ordinarily to the Board of Censors. It was their duty to

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[53] Brantly Womack, "In Search of Democracy," in Brantly Womack, ed., *Contemporary Chinese Politics in Historical Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 57-8.

[54] Gernet, xxii.

admonish the emperor whenever he transgressed the traditional norms.[55]

Obviously, the institutional means mentioned here were limited within the state apparatus in its strict sense. In the final analysis this was only the self-discipline of the state, and as such it was extremely weak. This is exactly where Womack believes the Chinese political system differed from Western political systems and what made the Chinese system fail in its efforts to keep state power within reasonable bounds; these internal restrictions were not guaranteed by institutional means, and they did not invite popular participation. As a result, these scholars, in fact, have denied the effect of those internal restrictions. This goes against not only their own observations but also the historical reality in China because what had been repeatedly overthrown were the dynasties and what had been firmly upheld were those norms and forms as seen in the supreme position of Confucianism.

However, if we look at these restrictions as the will of society, the secret of their power is revealed. The contents of these restrictions - the heavenly mandate, norms and forms, traditions and rites, moral principles, ethics, virtue

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[55] Bunger, 317.

and ideology - were all basic elements of society. By their very nature these restrictions belonged to society and were extremely powerful because they were imposed on the state by society. That these internal restrictions could also become external constraints is shown by peasant uprisings when the former were violently broken. This is why the state had to obey them.

What is confusing here is that these restrictions were not only accepted but even championed by the state. This became especially true when all the contents of these restrictions were embodied in a single ideology supported by the state. The real nature of this ideology was therefore concealed. The truth was that the dominant ideology in China belonged to both state and society. The state relied on it to control society and society relied on it to resist the state – this was the secret of its vitality and momentum.

The dual nature of the dominant ideology in China was deeply rooted in its long historical course. The traditional Chinese world was a highly integrated and all-embracing order, "at once cosmic, social, political, moral and religious."[56] There was no clear distinction between state

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[56] Gernet, xxvii.

and society. The state was but the direct extension of the family. Family relationships were the image of the state. Social norms and forms constituted the basic principles of the state. This historical reality was evident in the all-encompassing nature of the dominant ideology. As seen in Confucianism, it was at once philosophy, religion, history, ethics, morality, and social norms and forms.

The dual nature of the dominant ideology had its social embodiment in the gentry class (*shengshi*) in traditional China. As noted by many scholars, this class had "strong linkages to both state and society."[57] On the one hand, the gentry class was not only the major supplier of state officials but actually the representative of the state in villages. On the other hand, this class was also the source of the major critics of the state. It was seen as the conscience of society. The members of this class were not only the people who directly imposed the internal restrictions on the state, but also often the actual leaders of peasant rebellions against the state. By further analysis, we can see that the dual nature of the gentry class was directly connected with the dual nature of the dominant

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[57] Schurmann, xliv.

ideology. This class belonged to both the state and society because the ideology it upheld belonged to both of them. As seen in Confucianism, it was not only the ideological pillar of the state but also the main ideological resource for critics of and rebels against the state.

The dominant ideology was the vital part, the soul, of the Chinese world. Not only did the state make its laws and regulations according to the dominant ideology, which in turn were interpreted and practiced by officials acting in accordance with their understanding of that ideology, but society also judged the state and reacted to these laws and regulations according to the dominant ideology. Because the Chinese world was a highly integrated and all-embracing order, the ideology behind it was not an ideational system as such, but was highly fused with the political, economic, social, and cultural systems.

This is why the dominant ideology occupied such a prominent place in Chinese history. At no time and no place else in premodern history had a school of secular thought played so active role, for so long a time, and in so many aspects of the life of a people as Confucianism did in traditional China. Similarly, never in modern history has an ideology changed so dramatically so many people's lives

within such a short time as Mao Zedong Thought did in post-1949 China. This is hardly a historical accident. Behind these facts lies the special role of ideology in China: ideology has been the key link in China's highly integrated and all-embracing order.

A Note on Research Methods

In this study, I define ideology as an influential and systematic set of ideas that constitute a social-political program and a moral discourse. By this definition, I emphasize broad coverage, theoretical integrity, and popular acceptance of ideas. An ideology differs from most other theories by its comprehensive agenda that can fit general needs. An ideology differs from random thought and fragmentary opinion through its greater internal integration. An ideology is also different from private thoughts and official propaganda through its greater influence. A private thought, no matter how systematic, is not an ideology until accepted by a substantial part of the people. Official propaganda is nothing more than a string of dead words if not

accepted by a substantial part of a nations' people, as the case of contemporary China amply demonstrates. In emphasizing this meaning, the term "dominant ideology" is used, referring to the ideology upheld by both the ruling regime and the majority of people. It conveys the sense of the hegemonic position of that set of thoughts.

In this paper I date the Cultural Revolution from mid-1966 to early 1969. This is the original periodization and was accepted as accurate by most Chinese people at the time. The crucial point behind this periodization is that the Cultural Revolution was then essentially a mass movement.[58] The main sources of this study are official documents and periodicals, and unofficial posters, handbills, and periodicals published during the Cultural Revolution and shortly after. These are the materials available to the public at that time. The greatest advantage of using these materials is their authenticity and reliability because they cannot be forged or altered. This is particularly important to the study of the Cultural Revolution because the Chinese

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[58] For the political implications of different periodization, see Anita Chen (Chen Peihua), "Dui Wenge 'shehui chongtulun' de yijian," ("Opinion on 'the Social Conflict Theory' of the Cultural Revolution"), Zhengming (October 1990): 59-62; "Dispelling Misconceptions about the Red Guard Movement: The Necessity of Re-examine Cultural Revolution Factionalism and Periodization," The Journal of Contemporary China 1:1 (September 1992): 61-85.

have gone through so many fundamental changes in the three decades since the beginning of the Cultural Revolution, including a change in mentality. As a result, not only the interviews of exiled Red Guards conducted abroad by Western scholars are often problematic, but also even the recollections and memoirs of participants of the movement are not without problems. By using these popular materials I want also to expose the prejudice of the current scholarship in the study of Communist China, which either ignores these materials or distorts their meanings.

The goal of this thesis is to present a new perspective on the Cultural Revolution, not a comprehensive and balanced history of that confusing, turbulent time. The intention of this study is to provide a provocative new interpretation of the movement. Its aim is to capture the spirit of the movement, not to record its actual course. Its account is both chronological and thematic. To avoid superficiality and repetitiousness, its coverage is highly selective. Only those issues crucial to the main theme are discussed. To avoid distraction, some general terms are used without further modification.

The fundamental approach of this study is historical. Class theory and the Cultural Revolution are critically

examined and evaluated from the historical context of the Chinese revolution. I stress the historical approach because its omission is the major defect and the largest lacuna in the study of the Cultural Revolution as a whole. To date, most western literature on this subject has been written by scholars of political science, sociology, or psychology. Their analyses are mainly horizontal, not historical, therefore, their judgments are often shortsighted or fragmentary. The situation in China is even worse. As K. S. Karol once complained, "never before has a revolution been followed by such a silence from the people who made it."[59] Few, if any, articles or books about the Cultural revolution from China can be considered to be scholarly work. The study of the Cultural Revolution has been a "forbidden area" of research in both the Mao and Deng eras.[60] The reason for this is not only that the Chinese governments have worried that such research might spark heresies, but also because they simply could not provide a consistent account of the events themselves with the study of history being so closely interwoven with contemporary political issues.

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[59] K. S. Karol, The Second Chinese Revolution, 5.

[60] An extreme case is seen in a chronicle of Anhui Province from 1949 to 1985 published in 1987. In this book there is simply no single entry from 1966 to 1971. See Su Hua, ed., Dangdai anhui dashiji: 1949-1985 (Major events in contemporary Anhui, 1949-1985)(Hefei: Anhui renmin cubanshe, 1987), 105.

Upholding the ideals and deeds of the movement, Maoists had difficulty reconciling the sharp contrast between their radical rhetoric and the measures they adopted to mobilize the people to overthrow the old order at the beginning of the movement, and the ways they chose to suppress the people to restore that order at the end of the movement. Behind this difficulty actually lies the tragedy of the movement as a failed revolution, which Maoists could not accept.

Abandoning the ideals and deeds of the Cultural Revolution, Deng and his followers have been compelled to admit that "mistakes" were made by Mao and his associates. Once they did so, however, the question of how to prevent top Party leaders from making similar mistakes was raised. Dengists cannot answer this question unless they wish to invite the fundamental political reforms initially demanded by Cultural Revolution rebels. Behind this dilemma lies, in fact, the potential blessings the Cultural Revolution may yet bestow on China. For facing a future without a vision for its betterment, the Chinese are now desperate for an alternative. The ideals and passions of the past revolution are therefore extremely precious. It is my strong belief, or hope, that the Cultural Revolution is an incomplete revolution. Its final stage is yet to come. The first important step to complete

this revolution is to reevaluate its past history. As a participant of the Cultural Revolution, now training to be a historian, I hope this work can contribute to this goal.

Chapter Two

Indoctrination as Emancipation: Class Theory Prior to the Cultural Revolution

The theory of class which prevailed in China prior to the beginning of the Cultural Revolution was one which emphasized a person's socioeconomic background prior to the Communist victory in 1949. As I discussed in chapter one, I call this understanding of class the "old class theory," to distinguish it from the "new class theory" which gained prominence as the Cultural Revolution progressed.[61] The old class theory, which by the mid-50s had receded somewhat from public discourse, reappeared with a vengeance in the latter half of 1957 with the beginning of the anti-rightist campaign which had followed the brief period from 1956 to June of 1957 in which Chinese were permitted relative freedom of speech. After 1962, this understanding of class became dominant, and it reached the height of its influence during the Cultural Revolution.

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[61] The "new class theory" concentrated on inequality under socialism, and placed less emphasis on family background.

In this chapter I will discuss how class theory was propagated and, more importantly, what role this propagation played in Chinese society from 1957 to 1965. I will argue that the impact of the indoctrination of class theory on the consciousness of the Chinese people was of paramount importance in shaping their political behavior, and as such represented a grand attempt to reshape Chinese society; and that it achieved its extraordinary level of influence through a combination of political sanction and moral endorsement. At the same time it was also a special form of ideological emancipation for the Chinese people. The indoctrination of class theory created a gap between revolutionary ideals and social reality which provided momentum for the coming Cultural Revolution.

In this discussion I have chosen *Zhongguo Qingnian*(China Youth) from 1956 to 1966 as my major source to examine the propagation of class theory before the Cultural Revolution. Crucial to this discussion is how to evaluate the chosen material. For *Zhongguo Qingnian* was not only the most influential youth magazine of the time, but it was also an official journal run directly by the Central Committee of the Communist Youth League. In 1967 James Townsend published his

study of the contents of this magazine.[62] Seeing it as "a mouthpiece of the CCP's propaganda network," Townsend concluded that this periodical hewed fairly closely to the Party line. He therefore made no claim that the contents of Zhongguo qingnian represented accurately the aspirations of young Chinese. Indeed, he made a clear distinction between what the Party taught and how Chinese youth responded to these teachings, though these were not necessarily mutually exclusive. In the end, he cautiously limited his speculations to the thought that "the message may have had a significant influence on the values and behavior of many Chinese young people."[63]

Townsend's caution seems to have proven farsighted. The gap between what the Party taught and how the Chinese people responded to those teachings has been well documented by the works of such scholars as Susan Shirk, Andrew Walder, Lynn White and others.[64] These scholars have found that within

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[62] James R. Townsend, The Revolutionization of Chinese Youth: A Study of Chung-Kuo Ch'ing-nien (Berkeley, CA: University of California, 1967).

[63] Ibid., 58.

[64] Susan L. Shirk, *Competitive Comrades: Career Incentives and Student Strategies in China* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1982); Andrew G. Walder, *Communist Neo-Traditionalism: Work and Authority in Chinese Industry* (Berkeley: University of Californian Press, 1986); Lynn T White III, *Policies of Chaos: The Organizational Causes of Violence in China's*

China there existed an informal society at odds with the images presented in the official media. On the basis of this judgment, what can be found in *Zhongguo qingnian* is above all propaganda. Its contents in the main served the needs of official ideology and the accuracy of its reporting is therefore questionable at best.

This evaluation is not entirely wrong. A gap between what the Party taught and how young people responded to it did indeed exist. And it is not too difficult to prove that there were also great differences among different people in their responses to Party teachings. In this sense, we may agree that there was indeed both a formal and an informal society in China at that time.

Having said this, however, I will defend the essential validity of the information in the magazine as according with our basic understanding of that period. For a major feature of pre-Cultural Revolution China is that conformity rather than defiance was characteristic of the political attitudes of the Chinese people in general, and of Chinese youth in particular. Young Chinese looked to the Party's teachings and directives as guides for behavior and did their best to

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Cultural Revolution (Princeton, NJ.: Princeton University Press, 1989).

follow them. The gap between Party teachings and youth response was thus one of degree, not of kind. It would be misleading, therefore, to allow the above-mentioned arguments which maintain the unreliability of *Zhongguo qingnian* to negate our basic understanding of pre-Cultural Revolution China. And it would be a distortion if these arguments were to lead us to deny the great impact of official ideology at that time. It would also be deceptive to use them to totally discredit the information in the official media.

Much evidence suggests that the Party's message during this period was positively received by the Chinese people. The strongest evidence can be found, perhaps surprisingly, in the Cultural Revolution itself. What was witnessed in the Cultural Revolution, when people were first released from the direct control of the Party, as I will show in the next chapter, was not a demand to change earlier Party policies, but rather to push them to extremes. This suggests how deeply Chinese society was influenced by official ideology prior to the Cultural Revolution.

For example, during the course of the Cultural Revolution there arose widespread criticism of the so-called "slave mentality," referring to the uncritical attitude taken towards Party teachings by most people in the years after

1949. Awakened by the unprecedented political storm which swept across China in the mid-60s, many rebels expressed remorse for having "lack[ed] independent thought" in the past. This regret for their previously unquestioning attitudes, by some of the most independent-minded people in China, clearly demonstrates how official ideology was at least passively accepted by many before the Cultural Revolution.

But a more revealing fact about the profound impact of official ideology is that despite the almost total chaos of the Cultural Revolution, when most government offices closed, and normal production was interrupted, and armed violence was rampant, many basic principles of pre-Cultural Revolution official ideology remained intact. It was not until the later stages of the Cultural Revolution that a substantial number of rebels began to develop their own political theories. But some key concepts of the official ideology before the Cultural Revolution continued to be upheld even until the Democracy Movement of the late 1970s, a point I will return to in Chapter Six. This persistence of official ideology reveals how deeply it had permeated into Chinese society before the Cultural Revolution.

This judgment is further confirmed by many recent memoirs of Cultural Revolution veterans. In these works many people, most having already abandoned their beliefs in Communism in general, and the ideals of the Cultural Revolution in particular, nonetheless recall how sincerely (and thus how stupidly in retrospect), they upheld Party ideology before and during the Cultural Revolution.[65]

These examples not only indicate how deeply official ideology affected the Chinese people before the Cultural Revolution, but, more importantly, they also suggest that it was a positive response to the Party's ideology, not a negative reaction to it, which led people to participate in the Cultural Revolution. We need to keep in mind that the Cultural Revolution was not a battle between a formal and informal society. Nor were the warring factions divided into pro- and anti-Mao groups. After all, all the participants in the Cultural Revolution were self-proclaimed disciples of Mao's thought. They differed only in their interpretations of his ideas.

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[65] See for example Gao Yuan, Born Red (Standford: Stanford University Press, 1987); Chang Jung, *Wild Swans: Three Daughters of China* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1991).

In this chapter I will focus my discussion on the positive impact of the indoctrination of the old class theory before the Cultural Revolution because it is both the leading feature of the ideology of the time and the most relevant to the formation of the Cultural Revolution. This discussion is, therefore, not a comprehensive survey of the impact of the indoctrination. Many other aspects of that indoctrination could be explored. My main purpose here is to identify the role played by ideological indoctrination in pre-Cultural Revolution China in shaping the consciousness of those people who were to be the most active participants in the movement.

For this concern *Zhongguo qingnian* is an ideal source because of its numerous reports and discussions concerning how young Chinese responded to official indoctrination. Although the degree of the intensity of enthusiasm that young people displayed as presented in the magazine was no doubt frequently exaggerated, their basic attitudes toward the Party's teachings as depicted by its editors and writers were more or less accurate. Some of the extreme cases cited approvingly in its pages were undoubtedly very rare (or even fabrications), but the problems confronting young Chinese when attempting to apply class theory in their daily lives were common. Therefore, there is no reason to discredit this

source from the start unless one can prove that disobedience was a common political attitude of young people at that time. In fact, as I will show in the following pages, much valuable information can be discerned in the contents of *Zhongguo qingnian* by a careful and analytical reading.

More importantly, these reports and discussions became models and guides which were consulted and emulated by young Chinese before the Cultural Revolution. They were accepted as correct practice for understanding and implementing class theory. As such the meaning of these reports and discussions goes beyond their original scope. They are, in fact, original sources to be used to identify the role of official indoctrination because they set patterns that were sincerely and enthusiastically imitated by young Chinese. It is precisely because *Zhongguo qingnian* was a mouthpiece for the Party propaganda network that its contents can be identified as within the mainstream of official media. I therefore believe that my findings in this study to be representative of Party teachings, and popular response to them, and that much more evidence supporting my conclusions could be found in other places. My study here is thus somewhat like a hole drilled in geological prospecting. The purpose is to find samples, not to excavate an entire mine.

In the following pages I will discuss the important role played by class theory in strengthening the leadership of the Party in society, in continuing the social transformation then under way, in accelerating economic development, and in launching an ideological revolution.

Strengthening the Leadership of the Party

In the public mind as well as in scholarly circles the revival of class theory is closely connected with Mao and his celebrated speech "On the Correct Handling of Contradictions among the People." This generally correct impression is, however, historically inaccurate. For Mao had been among the first Party leaders to argue that the Party's main task should be changed from class struggle to economic development and scientific research. "On the Correct Handling of Contradictions among the People" was therefore received by the public as a theoretical guide for the time when "mass-scale class struggle in the revolutionary period her[d] ended." [66] In short, a revival of class theory was not the

[66] See, for examples, Zhongguo qingnian 206 (May 1, 1957): 25-30; 207 (May 16, 1957): 30-32.

necessary, logical conclusion of Mao's ideological system, but arose rather in response to unexpected circumstances.

In fact, the declaration of the end of class struggle during the Party's Eighth National Congress in 1956 had been long expected. For almost from the first day when Marx's class theory was introduced into China, the ideal of a future classless society was deeply imbedded in Chinese understandings of class theory. The end of class struggle in China was hailed at the time as one of the greatest achievements of the Party. It was only when a serious challenge to Party leadership appeared that class theory was revived to a prominent position.

It is also worth noting here that the challenge to the Party leadership was in fact posed before Mao's celebrated speech and the Party's call for rectification in early 1957. The political maelstrom that broke in the first half of 1957 was already foreshadowed in 1956, and could be seen in the changed tone of *Zhongguo qingnian*. As Townsend noted, the 1956 editions of the magazine are "more interesting and provocative" than those of any other year that he studied, and also "the most diffuse and difficult to summarize."[67] By

[67] Townsend, 41.

further analysis we can see that this change was closely connected with notions of the end of class and class struggle in China.

The changing political atmosphere was signaled by a reader's letter in *Zhongguo qingnian*'s first issue of 1956. The letter was sent by Li Nanfeng from Henan Province. Li argued that young people could be excused for being discontented with rural work due to the unfavorable conditions in the countryside. Li claimed that to pursue happiness was the right of every one and that the issues under discussion were "historical facts," "biological phenomena," "heaven-given human nature" and "objective existence," and thus had nothing to do with political "standpoints" or "philosophy of life."[68]

Li's letter touched upon a very sensitive question. By stressing the "objectiveness" of the issues he explicitly rejected the political approach. By emphasizing "historical facts" he implicitly opposed the principle of revolution. By stressing "biological phenomenon" he in fact championed the so-called "scientific" approach. And in his belief in a "heaven-given human nature" he was apparently abandoning

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[68] Zhongguo qingnian 176 (January 1, 1956): 16-18.

class analysis. All these together implicitly called into question the Party's role as the dominant institution in society. If the "main tasks" confronting the country now were no longer political in nature, and if the fundamental principle in determining state affairs was no longer the revolutionary principle, where was the place for the Party? On what grounds could the Party claim its superior position in state and society?

These questions were never, of course, raised so sharply and explicitly in *Zhongguo qingnian*. In fact the general tone of the subsequent discussion in its pages was negative to Li's point of view. But the significance here was that the question was openly raised no matter in what vague and reserved terms. More important, the new trend signaled in this letter was evident in many other issues in that year's *Zhongguo qingnian*. This was seen most obviously in a flood of complaints of abuses by Party officials which appeared virtually in every issue. As a result the prominent status of the Party faced a serious challenge.

Perhaps the most serious complaint was the problem of the separation of married couples. One reader said that he and his wife were separated by three hundred miles for four years soon after they got married. Three holidays each year

were their only chances to meet. However, even in those rare occasions his wife was often assigned to work. He could only stand outside the hospital where she worked or exchange a few words before returning.[69]

"Having no sense of humanity" was the phrase used by a reader criticizing a leader who not only paid no attention to his need to take care of his wife and a new-born baby but even purposely blocked his efforts to do so.[70] In another letter, a mother complained that ever since she was assigned to a new office she had no time to spend with her children. She was furious when she was not allowed to have a day off during the New Year holiday, even though there was no need for her to work. After her complaint she was subjected to criticism for her "individualism," for "putting private interests first" and so on.[71] More than six hundred letters were sent to the editor within three months to join the discussion.[72]

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[69] Ibid., 184 (May 1, 1956): 39-40.

[70] Ibid., 190 (August 1, 1956): 38-39.

[71] Ibid., 190 (August 1, 1956): 8-9.

[72] Ibid., 191 (August 16, 1956): 40.

Job assignments were another common complaint found in *Zhongguo qingnian*. An excellent student with a major in music had to spend a great deal of time learning how to use an abacus after she was assigned to be an accountant.[73] This was by no means a rare case. A conference on education reported that "an electrical engineering major was assigned to the job of mechanical engineering, a mechanical engineering major was assigned to run a warehouse, a physics major to that of chemistry, a veterinarian to teach physical training, and a landscaping major found no job and was asked to learn tea production."[74]

A revealing case were the fates of a history major and a Chinese major. They were both assigned to the same city. But the history major was asked to teach Chinese while the Chinese major was required to teach history. And they were both assigned the jobs by the same Education Bureau of the province! To their further dismay, their request to change jobs was not accepted.[75]

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[73] Ibid., 190 (August 1, 1956): 8.

[74] Ibid., 9.

[75] Ibid., 9.

If the problems of residence arrangements and job assignments were often caused by real demands and could therefore be (if somewhat grudgingly) accepted as part of the ongoing effort to build a new China, the pettiness of much of the Party's other interferences in people's daily lives was intolerable to many. One young woman, for example, complained that she was criticized for "lacking a proper life style" because she was found joking with other youths by the Party secretary. She was also criticized for her "bourgeois ideology" because she curled her hair, occasionally slept late, and liked to wear high quality clothes.[76] Or there was the case where two students were criticized for giving a doll to a classmate who was a mother because the present "lacked ideological meaning."[77]

Many people resented particularly being forced to participate in collective activities. A husband complained that his student wife had no time to stay with her family because she was required to join a lot of "after school activities."[78] This practice was so common that one reader

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[76] Ibid., 186 (June 1, 1956): 39-40.

[77] Ibid., 8-9.

[78] Ibid., 185 (May 16, 1956): 5-6.

asked whether it was permissible to have personal hobbies. He was a quiet person who liked to spend his free time reading, but for this he was repeatedly criticized for "separating [himself] from the masses," and "lacking collective spirit."[79] Another reader told of how a spring holiday was totally ruined by an overemphasis on "collective action."[80]

Many of these irksome practices were actually common Party policies of long standing, which had been first worked out in social conditions that many of the letter writers felt no longer existed in China. In other words, behind their complaints was a recognition of the pastness of the old era. As Li Nanfeng's letter pointed out, "the present is different from the past," and "it is [not] right to compare today with the revolutionary period." In short, for Li and the others cited, the passage of time had made many of the Party's old methods unnecessary. This was a dangerous realization, for it opened the way for a questioning of the legitimacy of the Party's self-proclaimed role as the leading institution in society.

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[79] Ibid., 39.

[80] Ibid., 187 (June 15, 1956): 30.

This possible threat to the dominance of the Party in society was (unwittingly) strengthened by the Party itself in its campaign to publicize its belief that China now faced a new set of "main tasks," which the Chinese must complete on their road to socialism. This campaign culminated in the so-called "March of Science" of the mid 1950s. As Townsend has pointed out, the campaign had a major impact on the contents of the 1956 *Zhongguo qingnian*. "Articles praising science and the pursuit of knowledge appeared in almost every issue," and much of the material devoted to "study," which in other periods normally meant political study and self-cultivation, "took on more academic overtones."[81] This shift of the main tasks towards technical and scientific expertise, as opposed to political and ideological correctness, could, if followed to its logical conclusions, make the Party's leadership not only irrelevant but even a burden as the Chinese strove to create a modern, industrialized nation. The old skills developed in the long struggle to establish a Communist state were no longer relevant for the problems that China faced. Thus we find in an article, published just after the "March of Science" began, a recognition that this "March" was going

[81] Townsend, 43.

to require expertise significantly different from the military skills perfected by the Communists during China's protracted civil war. "It won't do any good to apply such tactics as 'a sudden attack by the calvary' or 'a lightning war,'" one contributor to *Zhongguo qingnian* commented, because the tasks ahead were now of a very different order.[82] This warning was remarkable for its unmistakable reference to the veteran Party officials who mostly had military backgrounds. Some Party cadres, accepting this judgment, voluntarily stepped down during the "March." Others, including a number of Youth League officials, declined involvement in the campaign because they felt unqualified to contribute.[83]

At the same time, young people were exhorted to study hard and sincerely in order to inherit the "achievements accumulated by human labor and wisdom over the ages."[84] Articles by well known scientists such as the mathematician Hua Luogeng, the physicist Qian Weichang, and the educator

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[82] Ibid., 188 (July 1, 1956): 14.

[83] Ibid., 180 (March 1, 1956): 22-23.

[84] Ibid., 177 (January 16, 1956): 5.

Zhou Peiyuan appeared in the magazine.[85] Chinese youths were also exhorted to "learn humbly from senior professors," including even those in the social sciences and humanities.[86] Those intellectuals who had received their education before the Communist victory in 1949 were no longer automatically to be considered the detritus of the old, corrupt society, but as possibly valuable resources for the new China. It was in this political climate that the majority of intellectuals were finally declared to be "a part of the working class."[87]

The rising status of the intellectuals that followed the "March of Science" came at the expense of the Party's prestige. Now young people were said to be "growing up under the concern of the senior professors," not that of the Party.[88] The profiles of famous scholars in ancient China and in the West took the place of the stories of revolutionary heroes.[89] More seriously, in many cases the Party even became an obstacle in the "March."

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[85] Ibid., 177 (January 16, 1956): 6-7, 8-10; 179 (February 16, 1956): 17-19.

[86] Ibid., 179 (February 16, 1956): 21-22.

[87] Ibid., 178 (February 1, 1956): 5.

[88] Ibid., 179 (February 16, 1956): 19-22.

[89] Ibid., 189 (July 16, 1956): 26-29; 190 (August 1, 1956): 21-23; 192 (September 1, 1956): 34-36; 193 (Sept 16, 1956): 34-36; 194

There were many complaints about how Party organizations interfered with students' studies. Serious, hardworking students, intent on doing well in their academic pursuits, frequently came under attack by various Party functionaries for such crimes as "individualism," of possessing "impure motivation," or of "dissatisfaction with their present jobs." An indication of how these practices were perceived by many young people can be found in cartoons printed in *Zhongguo qingnian* at the time. One, for example, shows a young man studying at his desk while being pulled in conflicting directions by a group of officials all commanding him to join "collective activities."[90] In another there was the following dialogue: "Are you writing your dissertation?" "No, I am writing a self-criticism on 'writing a dissertation is [a form of] individualism.'"[91]

Another reader complained that his friend was criticized for being "concerned only with personal achievement" for spending half a Sunday in the library.[92] A nurse preparing

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(October 1, 1956): 22-24; 196 (November 1, 1956): 19-22; 197 (December 16, 1956): 20-23.

[90] Ibid., 178 (February 1, 1956): 27.

[91] Ibid., 16.

[92] Ibid., 187 (June 15, 1956): 31.

herself to be a doctor was charged by her leaders with the "incorrect ideas" of "looking to climb up" and "individualism."[93] A university student majoring in physics was not accepted by the Youth League because he wanted to be a "scientist" and study "theoretical physics."[94] In an extreme case several Youth League members in China's Science Academy were condemned as an "anti-Party clique" because of their desire to do their own research.[95]

The above complaints and arguments were not only the result of a recognition that the old era had passed and the main tasks of the nation had shifted, but they also represented a very different mentality. In emphasizing the pastness of the "revolutionary period," these people were implicitly advocating individual happiness and material enjoyment. In championing the study of science they were actually pursuing the spirit of rationalism and pragmatism. This was the essential change behind the "provocative" and "diffuse" contents of the 1956 editions of *Zhongguo qingnian*.

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[93] Ibid., 186 (June 1, 1956): 40.

[94] Ibid., 12.

[95] Ibid., 188 (July 1, 1956): 2-5.

This new spirit did not emerge in a vacuum, but in specific political circumstances, and it was this context that gave it an explosive potency. In short, the new demands for less emphasis on politics and more on technical proficiency that we find in the pages of *Zhongguo qingnian* of 1956, arose in opposition to common past Party practices. They represented a fundamental departure from the basic principles of the Chinese Communist Party. Further evidence for this departure can be found in the proliferation of new themes in *Zhongguo qingnian*.

One of these new themes concerned the common nature that is shared by all human beings. This concern received extensive treatment in an article entitled "Humans Should Treat Humans as Humans!" This article boldly exposed many cases in which people in authority, such as teachers and cadres, illegally set up private courts to interrogate suspects. However, the most striking feature of this article was its humanist tone. In condemning the abuses and crimes that he had exposed, the author openly praised the humanism of sixteenth and seventeenth century European thinkers. Throughout the piece one finds such terms as "the awakening of humanity," "the discovery of humanity," "the dignity of humanity," "the respect of personalities," "the respect of

human rights" and so on. What was strikingly absent here was the concept of class.

This new theme, though in less spectacular fashion, can be discerned in many other issues of that year. For example, personality was now to be assessed "from the perspective of psychology."[96] The biological characteristics of youth were now to be emphasized[97] as well as physical health.[98] Sexual matters were discussed in purely medical terms.[99] Traditional Chinese painting was appreciated for its natural beauty and special techniques.[100] The value of the classic literature of ancient China and foreign countries was acknowledged.[101] Even the traditional moral principles of "filial piety" were

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[96] Ibid., 190 (August 1, 1956): 5-6.

[97] Ibid., 193 (September 16, 1956): 3-5.

[98] Ibid., 185 (May 1, 1956): 16-19.

[99] Ibid., 188 (July 1, 1956): 27-28.

[100] Ibid., 188 (July 1, 1956): 21-22; 190 (August 1, 1956): 15-16; 197 (November 16, 1956): 36-38.

[101] Ibid., 191 (August 16, 1956): 13-14.

strongly defended.[102] The need for personal friendship as well as revolutionary comradeship was also recognized.[103]

Another new theme in the issues of *Zhongguo qingnian* in 1956 was an emphasis on democracy and the necessity of a legal system to curb abuses. Free discussion was encouraged.[104] A change in *The People's Daily*, the most authoritative newspaper in China, which now allowed different opinions to appear, was hailed.[105] There was also a suggestion for "free wall-journals," where citizens could freely express their ideas.[106] At the same time, many undemocratic practices were criticized. These included the lack of freedom of speech,[107] the undemocratic methods used to select Youth League candidates for elections, and many more in the same vein.[108]

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[102] Ibid., 196 (November 1, 1956): 5-7; 197 (November 16, 1956): 23-24; 198 (December 1, 1956): 29-33; 199 (December 1, 1956): 13-19.

[103] Ibid., 192 (September 1, 1956): 37; 194 (October 1, 1956): 35-36; 196 (November 1, 1956): 36-37; 198 (January 1, 1957): 15-17; 199 (January 16, 1957): 26-27.

[104] Ibid., 182 (April 1, 1956): 19; 197 (November 16, 1956): 34-35.

[105] Ibid., 193 (September 16, 1956): 20-21.

[106] Ibid., 196 (November 1, 1956): 39.

[107] Ibid., 188 (July 1, 1956): 15.

[108] Ibid., 192 (September 1, 1956): 14.

More remarkably, the crimes and abuses committed by Party officials were now challenged on legal grounds. In the article mentioned above which exposed illegal trials, the author charged that this kind of practice "has trampled on human rights and broken state laws and the Party regulations. It displays an open contempt for, and defiance of, the constitution promoted by our people's state."[109] On the basis of the constitution many practices of Party organizations were criticized. For example, the practice of monitoring ordinary people's private correspondence was condemned as a "violation of the constitution and human rights."[110] On the same grounds it was also declared that "the authority for granting marriage belongs to the government, not the Party or Youth League."[111]

All these complaints and arguments, whatever their intent, and despite their unsystematic nature, posed a serious challenge to Party leadership. For what lay behind this outpouring of discontent was a belief in the pastness of the revolutionary period, and that the priority for

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[109] Ibid., 191 (August 16, 1956): 4.

[110] Ibid., 190 (August 1, 1956): 13.

[111] Ibid., 189 (July 16, 1956): 5.

national development had shifted, which made the old practices and methods of the Party irrelevant. This was but a short step from proclaiming the irrelevance of the Party leadership as a whole. If what should count was rational arrangement and scientific calculation, what function, then, did the Party have to perform?

It is only through this perspective that we can now more fully comprehend the seriousness of the implications of Li Nanfeng's demand that the "political standpoint" and "philosophy of life" viewpoints be rejected. By removing these issues from the political discourse he was actually denying the Party its fundamental role in society. For him, Party leaders had in fact been "left behind by their subordinates in work and study." It is here, despite its apparent remoteness from these concerns, that we can find the crucial role of class theory. For the essence of the matter is that if class struggle was no longer to be a central concern, then state affairs would become apolitical in nature, and the Party's role as a political tool would lose its meaning. It would inevitably become an obstacle to the development of the nation.

This sentiment was most clearly manifested in the deep hatred that many felt for the Party's ideological education.

In the pages of *Zhongguo qingnian* we find numerous depiction of this kind of education as both unnecessary and extremely boring. In one cartoon a Youth League cadre, drawn to look like an old gentleman, was shown giving a long lecture on the proper moral attitude required to play games.[112] In a satirical piece, a whole delegation was made late to a meeting due to the long, superfluous talk given by the Youth League secretary before their departure.[113] Nefarious use of the ideological power that Party officials possessed, used either to gain political or personal favor, or to defend themselves from attack, also received extensive criticism at this time. Thus, we find an article detailing how a Party official forced a woman to marry him by telling her that this would prove she had abandoned "little bourgeois ideas";[114] and a cartoon which depicts a cadre casting many political "hats" on a person who sent a critique of that official to the newspapers.[115]

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[112] Ibid., 187 (May 16, 1956): 7.

[113] Ibid., 39-40.

[114] Ibid., 184 (May 1, 1956): 11-12.

[115] Ibid., 193 (September 16, 1956): 27.

The feeling that the Party's role was fading was vividly presented in a Soviet novel which aroused great interest in the pages of *Zhongguo qingnian*. This novel detailed the travails of a young agronomist fighting old Party bureaucrats on behalf of the people. The contrasts in the novel were symbolic: young vs. old, science vs. customs, intellectuals vs. Party officials.

The challenge to the Party leadership became an open attack during the Hundred Flowers Campaign which lasted from February to June of 1957. What I wanted to demonstrate above is that this attack on the Party did not appear out of nowhere, but had been preceded by growing discontent. Further, the challenge to Party leadership that this discontent represented was closely connected to the belief that classes and class struggle were a thing of the past. Support for this conclusion can be found in the state's reaction to the Hundred Flowers—a prominent feature of the anti-rightist campaign was class theory, and it played a crucial role in strengthening Party leadership.

Class theory was immediately revived in the beginning of the anti-rightist campaign. In fact, even before the anti-rightist campaign had begun, class theory had made an

appearance in a few articles defending Party leadership.[116] With the launching of the campaign this issue gained instant prominence. In the first issue of *Zhongguo qingnian* published after the campaign had begun, there appeared an article defending the application of the concept of class to Chinese society. Due to the continued existence of class, the essay said, the withering away of the Party was not a matter of the near future.[117] Another essay in the following issue reiterated that classes and class struggle still existed in China, but in different guises. "[Class struggle] will change form with the changing situation," which now "mainly manifests itself on the ideological front."[118] The strongest evidence for this was, of course, the recent attack on the Party by "rightists," now seen as a "serious class struggle."[119]

The revived class theory provided a fundamental theoretical basis for the justification of Party leadership. The continuation of class and class struggle made Party

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[116] Ibid., 200 (February 1, 1957): 2-4.

[117] Ibid., 209 (June 16, 1957): 33.

[118] Ibid., 210 (July 1, 1957): 4.

[119] Ibid., 211 (July 16, 1957): 2.

leadership absolutely necessary, and political standards regained primary importance. "Without the leadership of the Party, there will be no way to practice any revolutionary means, or to fulfill any revolutionary goals."[120] The experience of class struggle was once again recognized as important. Since class struggle would continue for a long time, there was no reason to ask those senior Party cadres who had "rich experience in class struggle" to resign.[121] For the same reason political criteria should be fundamental in selecting government officials.[122] This political "privilege" of the Party and Youth League members was therefore openly defended.[123]

The revived class theory also provided the Party strong grounds on which to counter the charges leveled against it by the "rightists." Speaking of democracy, the Party was now more than happy to admit that there were indeed undemocratic aspects in the current political system because "our state must exercise dictatorship over reactionary classes,

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[120] Ibid., 215 (September 16, 1957): 2.

[121] Ibid., 214 (September 1, 1957): 31.

[122] Ibid., 215 (September 16, 1957): 19.

[123] Ibid., 211 (July 16, 1957): 15-16.

counterrevolutionaries and all anti-socialist elements."[124] "No freedom and democracy should be granted to these enemies. No one should be lenient towards enemies such as the rightists."[125] This claim was further justified on the grounds that there is no such thing as abstract humanity. "The Party's spirit was the noblest spirit of humankind." It was the "agglomeration of the class spirit of the proletariat," the most advanced social group.[126] There was therefore no reason to promote any moral principles different from those of the Party. As such, the call for moral encouragement and integrity was wrong and those calling for an independent and rebellious spirit were "diehard reactionaries."[127]

Moreover, Party officials used the revived class theory to absolve the Party of responsibility for the many injustices and inequities of Chinese society, which had been the subject of much bitter complaint both before and during the Hundred Flowers Campaign. For example, the origins of the evils of "bureaucratism", "factionalism", and "subjectivism",

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[124] Ibid., 211 (July 1, 1957): 9-11.

[125] Ibid., 212 (August 1, 1957): 2-3.

[126] Ibid., 213 (August 16, 1957): 2-6.

[127] Ibid., 211 (July 16, 1957): 12.

which had received the most serious attacks during the Hundred Flowers, were not to be found in the current socialist system, but rather in the system of private ownership that had prevailed in China for thousands of years.[128] It was because of the incomplete elimination of the old system that those three "isms" could survive. In contrast, because the current socialist system was one of public ownership, it was incompatible with a system of private property and therefore had nothing to do with those three "isms." It was also impossible for a socialist society to produce a "privileged stratum" as charged by some "rightists" because those privileges were not guaranteed by the system itself.

The revived class theory thus greatly strengthened the Party's power. During the anti-rightist campaign it was made very clear that the role of the Party as society's leading institution was the most important issue at hand.[129] As such one's attitude toward Party leadership became the fundamental political criterion, and those who opposed the Party's preeminent position in Chinese society were automatically

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[128] Ibid., 210 (July 1, 1957): 2; 7-9.

[129] Ibid., 215 (September 16, 1957): 2-5.

regarded as reactionaries. Moreover, it was argued, Party leadership should be established in every field since its ideology—Marxism—was the science of the development of nature and society.[130] In short, what was required was not a reduction of the Party's role in Chinese society as some "rightists" had had the temerity to suggest. Rather, it should be strengthened, to as great a degree as possible. And its scope should include not only political leadership but also organizational control. The efforts to strengthen Party leadership were so extreme that to oppose a Party official even at the grass-roots level over some trivial matter was considered to be an "anti-Party action."[131]

Stigmatization of other social groups also helped strengthen the sacred position of the Party. Intellectuals, so recently deemed to be part of the working class, were once again classified as bourgeois. Young students were found to be "coming mostly from exploiting families and professional families,"[132] who therefore required ideological transformation.[133] Even "the broad masses of laboring people"

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[130] Ibid., 210 (July 1, 1957): 5.

[131] Ibid., 217 (October 16, 1957): 6.

[132] Ibid., 212 (August 1, 1957): 8.

[133] Ibid., 214 (September 1, 1957): 9-11.

were said to be under the influence of bourgeois ideas.[134] According to one essay of the time,

> The domestic exploiting classes have yet be eliminated. Bourgeois ideas and customs continue to have influence on many people. People still have different notions and attitudes toward socialism. This situation gives the Party a clear task: It must be an absolute leader for the whole people to struggle for the complete success of socialism.[135]

This argument elevated the Party to a position high above society. As "the absolute leader" the Party now openly claimed its right to administrate everything. As one contributor to *Zhongguo qingnian* proudly declared, "never before in human history has there been a state which controls as many things as completely as our state."[136]

A few observations on the preceding discussion might be in order. First, a revival of class theory was not what Mao and the Party had originally intended to do. After all, at the Eighth Party Congress of 1956 the Party, under the leadership of Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping, had declared class and class struggle to be at an end in China, and therefore encouraged the new ideological trend de-emphasizing

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[134] Ibid., 211 (July 16, 1957): 10.

[135] Ibid., 212 (August 1, 1957): 14.

[136] Ibid., 216 (October 1, 1957): 8-9.

these concepts, a trend we have observed in the pages of *Zhongguo qingnian* of that year. Mao's celebrated speech was accepted at the time as the mark of this great historical change. It was only when faced with a serious challenge, especially the fervent attacks from "rightists," that the Party sought refuge in class theory. It is worth noting that the militant tone of class theory in the latter part of 1957 was almost totally dropped in 1958. This suggests how unprepared and reluctant the Party had been in reviving class theory. The discussion of class theory slowly reappeared in 1959 and only then was Mao's celebrated speech reinterpreted as emphasizing the continuation of class and class struggle in China.[137] However, it was not until 1962 that class theory was fully promoted. But even then, it was not until the Cultural Revolution that the resolution of the Eighth Congress in 1956 proclaiming the end of class and class struggle was officially repudiated.

Second, the class theory that was revived in 1957 is what I call the old class theory. In the discussions of class theory in *Zhongguo qingnian* at that time attention was almost exclusively given to the old propertied classes and their

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[137] Ibid., 267 (October 1, 1959): 35-6; 275 (February 1, 1960): 7-9.

ideological influence. In all the real and fictitious stories found in *Zhongguo qingnian* during this period, class enemies either came from former propertied classes or were old counterrevolutionaries. The reason for the continuation of class and class struggle in socialist society was mainly due to the remnants of the old society. It was the incompleteness of the socialist revolution, not the socialist system, which caused the problems that China confronted. It is worth noting that the existence of so-called "bourgeois rights" under socialism was also mainly understood in this manner.

Third, and more importantly, the revived class theory not only provided a vital tool to legitimize Party leadership but it also greatly strengthened its political power. For it was a well known fact that the Party's power increased tremendously after the anti-rightist campaign. Evidence for this increase is provided in the accusations and complaints made against Party officials for arbitrary and tyrannical behavior during the Cultural Revolution. These bitter charges exposed just how much control Party officials had exercised over the everyday life of ordinary people in the period following the Hundred Flowers campaign.

Fourth, and no less important than the above point, the increase in the Party's political power was realized mainly

through the indoctrination of class theory. The fact is that the Party's greatly increased power after 1957 was not accompanied by any substantial constitutional or institutional change. Yet there can be no doubt that ideological indoctrination was backed by real political power. But this increase in political power was achieved mainly by persuading people to support the Party. The sincere submission of the people to the Party was the most important source of its great power.

Ideological indoctrination thus assumed a position of extraordinary importance as both the Party and the people it ruled strove to follow the official ideology. In this context, ideological discussion became a political act, while political acts were evaluated according to an ideological perspective. The lines between ideology and Party policy, and between morality and the constitution, were blurred. The indoctrination of class theory prior to the Cultural Revolution represented a comprehensive attempt to reshape Chinese society according to the official ideology.

In the remainder of this chapter will I discuss the role of this indoctrination in the effort to transform society, in economic development, and, most importantly, in the ideological revolution which took place in the years between

the Anti-Rightist campaign of 1957 and the beginning of the Cultural Revolution in 1966. This discussion should make clear that the Party was moving in a very different direction from the one found in *Zhongguo qingnian* in 1956.

Continuing the Social Transformation

The most distinct role the indoctrination of class theory played prior to the Cultural Revolution was in the continuing transformation of Chinese society in a non-revolutionary setting. This was first found in the promotion of the social status of the former working class and the poor and lower middle peasants. In this sense the indoctrination of class theory may be seen as the continuation of social transformation began during the Land Reform campaign of 1950-52.

Under the guidelines of class theory at this time there was a "class line" whose key idea was that the Party should "firmly rely" on the working class and the poor and lower middle peasants. There were also "class policies" to serve this class line. For example, the class policy concerning the political evaluation of a youth included three points: (1)

pay attention to family background; (2) do not, however, pay exclusive attention to it; and, (3) give more weight to political behavior than to family heritage.

Needless to say, the class line and its associated policies did not carry the same ideas of equality as found in concepts of Western liberalism. Rather, society was divided into different social groups, each receiving different treatment. It was, however, as suggested by Gordon White, "a concept of revolutionary egalitarianism," designed to redistribute social, economic and political opportunities in favor of the historically disadvantaged and their offspring. Simultaneously, the privileges that had been enjoyed by the former elite classes were now restricted or removed altogether. In terms of policy, this meant that preference was now given to those who came form the historically poor and weak classes in a wide range of areas: in political recruitment, military conscription, educational opportunity and job placement.[138] For example, priority was given to the workers and peasants and their children in school

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[138] Gordon White, The Politics of Class and Class Origin: The Case of the Cultural Revolution (Australia: The Australian National University, 1976), 9.

recruitment.[139] A Youth League branch was criticized because it did not give priority to young people with poor and lower middle peasant family backgrounds in its recruitment plan.[140] A reader's letter to *Zhongguo qingnian* stated that the class line must also be applied in choosing Youth League cadres. This point was supported by the editor.[141]

The indoctrination of class theory and the employment of the class line and its related policies did not, of course, create an ideal world for the former lower classes. For the majority of the population, life did not change much since the country as a whole was still very poor. It did create a new social milieu, nevertheless. The social status of the former lower classes was further raised. People were now as proud of their poor family backgrounds as elites had previously been of noble origins. On the other hand, people with rich family backgrounds felt great social pressure to bear a sense of guilt.

This tendency was epitomized by the so-called "class education," which became fashionable in 1963. Workers and

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[139] Ibid., 262 (July 16, 1959): 5-7.

[140] Ibid., (September 16, 1964): 30.

[141] Zhongguo qingnian (December 1, 1964): 15.

poor and lower middle peasants were invited to speak out on their sufferings before the Communist victory. The more miserable their lives had been, according to the logic of the class theory at the time, the more revolutionary they were now, at least potentially. Being poor thus became glorious. This new social trend represented a radical departure from traditional ways.

In fact, indoctrination in class theory greatly undermined traditional culture and customs. Under class theory the old culture and customs were identified not only with the past but specifically with the old "exploiting classes." This identification not only fatally discredited the old culture and customs but also gave cultural problems a political aspect. Political momentum came from the promotion of poor people and the attack against the rich was channeled into an assault on the old culture. This assault derived great power from class theory. Although its most militant aspects did not emerge until the Cultural Revolution, its powerful effects could already be felt in the early 1960s.

Two cases illustrate well the particular force of class theory in discrediting old culture and customs. One concerns the issue of building on a site believed for generations to

be sacred.[142] Many people were strongly opposed to altering this sacred land. Their opponents, citing class theory, viewed the desire to leave the land untouched as a conspiracy of "landlords and rich peasants" using "feudalist superstition" against "socialist construction." The Party branch then "united" with the poor and lower middle peasants to persuade those "confused class brothers." The opposition to construction collapsed almost immediately.

In another case, a youth reported that he and several comrades had applied night soil to crops on days when such activities were forbidden by local tradition, and as a result were criticized by some members of their village. The editor of *Zhongguo qingnian* gave them firm support:

> You did a very right thing. In our countryside, although the means of production are socialist in nature, the ideas of feudalist superstition held by the reactionary classes have not yet been eliminated and their influence is profound. Especially at the present time, all reactionary classes, landlords, rich peasants, reactionaries, bad elements, monsters and demons are engaged in a conspiracy in which they desperately try to

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[142] Ibid., (January 1, 1965): 9.

> spread different superstitious ideas in order to fool some backward masses and to prepare for their restoration. This is a serious class struggle.[143]

In the attack on old culture and customs class theory could be a double-edged sword, dangerous to all, no matter what one's lineage. For people with "bad" family backgrounds, whose status in the new society was already precarious, the risks posed by participation in, say, religious activities, were quite obvious—they could be faced with serious political charges.

On the other hand, class theory also put great political pressure on those with "good" family backgrounds to conform with the prevailing ideas of proper social behavior. As the class education movement made clear, if it were determined that a person from a traditionally poor class had not demonstrated adequate acknowledgment of the debt he or she owed the Party for making his or her present "happy life" possible, then that person was in danger of being considered "ungrateful," a potentially serious charge. And one of the most common ways to open oneself to such a charge was to adhere to old beliefs and customs. Thus, for example, even

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[143] Ibid., (August 1, 1957): 32.

for those with "good" family backgrounds, seeking good luck through such "superstitious" activities as praying at a temple was a sign of "lacking class consciousness."

The traditional Chinese concept of family—the core of traditional Chinese culture—bore perhaps the strongest assaults in the general attack on traditional culture engendered by the indoctrination of class theory. Under class theory, political and economic relations among people, not blood ties, were the relationships that mattered. "Class love," rather than clan ties or hometown connections, was celebrated. Thus, readers of *Zhongguo qingnian* were told a touching story of how people from different areas and different professions cooperated to save the lives of sixty-one ordinary laborers who had suffered food poisoning because these laborers were their "class brothers."

On the other hand, youths from "bad" family backgrounds were taught to cut off virtually all connections with their relatives. Thus, for example, a soldier did not come to see his "bad element" uncle during his hometown visit.[144] One young man refused to have dinner with his rich peasant

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[144] Ibid., (August 1, 1966): 32.

uncle.[145] Another would not perform the mourning rites for his landlord grandfather.[146] Similarly, one youth was criticized for having mournful feelings upon the death of his landlord and capitalist father.[147] Filial rites and clan relationships were condemned as "feudalist or bourgeois morals," used by class enemies to "blur class lines and cheat the people and cover their counterrevolutionary sinful schemes."[148]

The "class fraternalism" promoted in the class education movement was, of course, not universal love. But it was definitely a great step away from the more narrow concerns of the traditional family. More important, the indoctrination of the class theory greatly undermined the hierarchical relationship of the traditional family. For now it was correct ideas, not seniority, that should count. As seen in *Zhongguo qingnian*, young Chinese were encouraged to criticize their elder family members and to help to raise the "political consciousness" of their parents.[149]

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[145] Ibid., (January 1, 1965): 21.

[146] Ibid., (January 1, 1965): 21.

[147] Ibid., (January 1, 1965): 21.

[148] Ibid., (August 1, 19): 32.

[149] Ibid., (August 1, 1965): 23; (October 16, 1965): 22-23; (February 16, 1966): 26; (April 16, 1966): 26.

As seen in the above discussion, the attack on old culture and customs, sanctioned by class theory, received strong political support. A good example of this can be seen in the transformation of status of women. Women's liberation was perceived as a "revolutionary action." As such it was directly backed by political power. For example, one young woman insisted on joining a cultural club and working together with the male members while ignoring the scandal that this caused because she believed she was acting upon the "Party's call."[150] Another young woman in a remote area not only broke the local custom which forbade females to sing in public but also openly competed with local professional folk song singers. By singing "revolutionary songs" she defeated those male singers whose songs were said to be full of "feudalist ideas."[151] Under class theory, gender concepts were to be replaced by class concepts, and women should be treated as equals of men. Women now not only participated in general labor, but they also ploughed fields,[152] took care of

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[150] Ibid., (April 16, 19): 27.

[151] Ibid., (December 16, 1965): 3-5.

[152] Ibid., (March 16, 1965): 7.

livestock,[153] and even joined mine prospecting teams.[154] In short, the status of women underwent a fundamental change.

Because the fight against tradition was seen now as a serious class struggle and in such a struggle there was nothing unimportant, the attack on old culture and tradition was extremely thorough and comprehensive. We thus find in *Zhongguo qingnian* very wide ranging discussions on a plethora of topics—from arranged marriages,[155] to wedding ceremonies,[156] to the proper behavior of newly-weds,[157] to attitudes toward public opinion,[158] to funeral rites.[159] Taken together, they constituted an all-out offensive against traditional norms of behavior.

Accompanying the attack on old culture and customs was a great effort to promote popular education. The particular

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[153] Ibid., (February 16, 1965): 10-12.

[154] Ibid., (May 16, 19): 25.

[155] Ibid., (February 1, 1966): 27.

[156] Ibid., (February 1, 1964): 9-12; (January 1, 1966): 28-29; (January 16, 1966): 24-25.

[157] Ibid., (October 16, 1965): 23.

[158] Ibid., (February 16, 1964): 18-19; (July 1, 1965): 27.

[159] Ibid., (January 1, 1964): 18.

role of the class theory here was its emphasis on serving the poor and lower middle peasants, the majority of the population, whose education levels were normally the lowest. Here the class line actually became the fundamental principle to guarantee the popular nature of education. High praise was therefore given to those who volunteered to work in the most poverty stricken areas.

One model educator of this kind was a youth named Wang Guangming. Wang himself had only completed elementary school, and he was, moreover, disabled, being paralyzed in both legs. He nonetheless volunteered to work in a remote mountain area populated by one of China's minority ethnic groups, the Miao.

The Miao in this area, like many other minority groups in China, had historically been among the poorest people in the country and had received little of the benefits of traditional Chinese civilization. Many, for example, lacked family names. More importantly they lived in extreme poverty, and were largely illiterate. As part of the nationwide campaign to rebuild the country after their victory in 1949, the communists had established an agricultural co-op in the area. But the Miao residents, having no knowledge of bookkeeping, used kernels of corn to count work points, a

system which proved disastrous when some hens ate a large portion of their records.

It was in this atmosphere of backwardness and poverty that Wang opened the first school in the area, teaching the Miao how to uses abacuses and basic writing skills. After eleven years his students could be found in nearly every family in the region's forty-four tribes, and enough of his pupils had mastered the abacus that the old method of relying on kernels of corn to count was abandoned.[160]

Another youth was praised for volunteering to work in a small village where only thirteen poor peasant families lived.[161] For the same reason, one young woman was praised for running a school in a small railroad station.[162]

A great effort was given to recruit all school-age children. A female rural teacher named Guo was a good example.[163] Guo went door to door to visit potential students and tried to help them overcome their difficulties in attending school. In order to lessen students' financial

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[160] Ibid., (January 1, 1965): 12-14.

[161] Ibid., (January 1, 1965): 12-14.

[162] Ibid., (May 1, 1964): 34-35.

[163] Ibid., (October 16, 1965): 4-9.

burdens Guo not only organized students to participate in labor but personally led students to pick up recyclable materials from garbage heaps to earn money. She even copied books by hand for those students who could not afford text books. In order to recruit every child, Guo adopted used a variety of methods to help students with special needs. For example, she gave home education to a retarded nine-year old boy who was left at home to do housework and to take care of his siblings after his mother died. The boy was not only intellectually retarded but also physically underdeveloped. His pants were often wet with urine and fecal matter. Guo helped him to clean himself and to do the house work. Observing the boy singing lullabies to his siblings, Guo wrote the text into limericks to teach him and he learned some forty-odd characters within a month. In order to help a paralyzed girl study, Guo gave her massages while she taught her lessons. In order to attract a girl into school Guo led a group of students to play a game outside her house. She also followed a tough boy into the woods to persuade him to join the school. She even managed to learn a dialect in order to help a transfer student. By all these efforts Guo succeeded in mobilizing all the school-age children in her area to

attend school. And of these students "94.4% [were] children of poor and lower-middle peasants."[164]

The class line decided the popular nature of education, which in turn decided the forms of education. In order to fit the needs of popular education, various forms of schools, teaching methods and flexible schedules were used. Thus work-study schools, spare-time schools, community schools and cultural centers were all promoted. A variety of ways of teaching were also publicized. In the example related above, for instance, Guo not only offered formal teaching in school, but also taught in the fields while students took breaks from farm work. She arranged special classes so students could bring their siblings to school. She also offered home education. Similar methods were detailed in many articles in *Zhongguo qingnian*. One example is that of a teacher who hung large cards with new words to be learned on mills, pond banks, walls, public toilets, and trees growing next to sidewalks.[165]

From the above discussion one may notice that popular education under class theory had meanings that went beyond

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[164] Ibid., 9.

[165] Ibid., (January 16, 1965): 6.

the familiar goals of helping students master useful and interesting information. Education was, in fact, treated as an "important political task." Its ultimate goal was to eliminate the differences between mental and manual labor, thereby helping transform China into a truly communist society. The most striking feature of this effort was its popularity. In the name of serving the poor and lower-middle peasants popular education in this period tried to reach everyone and everywhere in China. As such it became a special kind of social mobilization. In fact, all the different aspects of the state's efforts to reorganize Chinese society along new (and avowedly socialist) lines that we discussed above can also be seen in this way. And it was in social mobilization that the social transformation of this period found its most striking feature and class theory played an important role in it.

The social mobilization of this period was unprecedented in Chinese history in terms of its comprehensiveness and thoroughness. Under the impact of class theory social mobilization was far from voluntary. By claiming that these activities were a continuation of "class struggle" the Party put the whole society under its surveillance. The application of the class theory summoned politics into every aspect of

social life. There was great political pressure on the people to comply with the Party's demands. In many cases Party officials simply forced people to respond. The compulsive aspect of social mobilization in Mao's China was well-known to the public at the time (and is equally well-known today) and thus needs no further discussion here.

Few people recognize, however, that the effort to mobilize society under class theory was also very attentive to individual needs. Still fewer recognize that this was directly attributable to class theory. For class theory at this time had two basic points crucial to social mobilization. First, the main target for social mobilization was clearly defined as the "working class and the poor and lower-middle peasants." They were the people the revolution had struggled for and relied on. Second, the working class and the poor and lower-middle peasants, were (potentially, if not, in fact, already) the most revolutionary elements in society.

These two basic points posed a serious challenge to social mobilization during this period. On the one hand, they required social mobilization to be comprehensive since the working class and the poor and lower-middle peasants made up the majority of the population. Moreover, as the historically

most oppressed and disadvantaged groups, they were the natural targets for mobilization. And none could be left out since all were potential revolutionaries. On the other hand, compulsory measures should be used only as a last resort since these people were not only "class brothers and sisters" but also the real backbone of the revolution. The only solution to this dilemma was patient, careful and painstaking work. *Zhongguo qingnian* was full of reports on this.

An article entitled "A Lesson I Learned from Mobilizing a Poor Peasant Woman Commune Member" is typical.[166] The author, a female cadre named Wang, was responsible for organizing and administering the work done by the women in her commune. After moving into a village Wang met a widow named Guizheng, who was raising five children. Guizheng worked hard and kept her personal integrity. But she showed little enthusiasm for public affairs. Since Guizheng belonged to the poor peasant class, Wang felt an obligation to try and convince her to participate in collective activities.

Guizhen, however, met Wang's advances with indifference. Undeterred, Wang kept trying and began to help Guizhen to do housework. Finally Guizhen agreed to let Wang to move in with

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[166] Ibid., (January 16, 1965): 18-19.

her and help her with her daily tasks. But Guizheng kept silent even though they lived together. Wang reports that she would have given up had she not been committed to the belief that Guizheng was a poor peasant and as such must have the desire to participate in revolutionary work. With this commitment Wang tried harder to help Guizheng. She insisted on working with her in both the fields and in the house. Slowly, Guizheng began to speak her mind. It turned out that she had been gripped by a feeling of fatalism ever since her husband's death. Wang did not directly confront her fatalism. Instead, she suggested that Guizhen think about why and how her luck had changed so dramatically after the arrival of the Communist Party in 1949. Wang also brought her to a few study sessions. After that Guizhen began to show initiative in public affairs.

Things did not go smoothly, however. One day Guizhen suddenly became passive again. It was only after many talks that Guizheng finally confessed that she had been insulted and bullied by some men in the village after she became a widow. Wang then gave her moral support and helped her to fight her harassers. After that Guizheng totally changed into another person, becoming an enthusiastic activist in village work. So, also, under her influence, did her two young sons.

From this story we can see the important role played by class theory. It was class theory that led Wang to approach Guizhen. Class theory helped Wang to find Guizhen's potential qualities as a political activist. It was also class theory that imposed the obligation which compelled Wang to overcome the obstacles between her and Guizhen.

Another article entitled "How I mobilized Two" tells a similar story.[167] Poor peasant Zhang seldom showed concern for public affairs and recently even did not work. His wife was known in the village as a "foolish wife." She had been raped by a landlord and had lived with a couple of men before she lived with Zhang. Suffering from the past and ashamed of her history she had stayed home for two decades and never worked. Totally isolated from the outside world, this woman knew nothing about the changes since the communist victory and developed into a "foolish wife." So it was seen as something of a miracle in the village when she joined in collective labor. Her husband also became a good commune member. Behind this miracle were the author's heroic efforts, including daily housework and an untold number of conversations with the couple explaining the goals of collective work. The

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[167] Ibid., (December 1, 1964): 6-8.

author believed that "class passion" was the key to mobilizing this couple.

As the above stories demonstrate, in the Communist Party's efforts to mobilize the populace, great emphasis was placed on showing sincere concern for the people. Cadres and members of the Youth League were required to "show concern for other young people, approach them, find out their views and needs, and become their bosom friends."[168] As one university student noted when summarizing her experience, loving people was the first and the most important step to gaining access to them. For this reason she insisted on sleeping with an old widow despite the presence of lice in her bed.[169] She claimed she would "always be a good daughter of the poor and lower-middle peasants," which was the title of her article.

A sincere concern for the people required that they be helped in their daily lives. Small things such as a peasant's need of a belt for carrying a baby or urgent situations such as serious disease were all legitimate causes for concern and attention. In the picture drawn by *Zhongguoqingnian*'s

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[168] Ibid., (July 16, 1964): 17.

[169] Ibid., (November 16, 1964): 7-9.

reports, for Youth League members it was considered almost a routine duty to take care of widows, the elderly, and the sick and disabled.[170] Further, the Youth League made clear that all its cadres should "take all-round care of the growth of youth."[171]

Zhang Hongchi from Daqing was cited in *Zhongguo qingnian* as a model of the kind of selfless idealism that the Youth League encouraged its members to cultivate.[172] Zhang had been assigned to work in a kitchen where the cooks, for a variety of reasons, performed their tasks poorly. Zhang was able to arouse political enthusiasm among these workers by helping them resolve their individual problems. For example, he gave his rubber shoes to an old cook who had no proper shoes so his feet always got wet. Zhang also gave his blanket to another co-worker whose blanket had been burned in a fire. After discovering that a worker who was on sick leave lacked money for a haircut Zhang immediately purchased a set of tools and went to the worker's house and gave his whole family free haircuts. Zhang also bought a radio and put it in

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[170] Ibid., (March 2, 1964): 13; (January 1, 1965): 28-29.

[171] Ibid., (July 16, 1964): 17.

[172] Ibid., (November 1, 19): 18-22.

the kitchen for public entertainment. The cooks were all moved by his sincere concern and changed their attitudes to their work. For instance, the worker on sick leave returned to work the day after Zhang visited his home.

Concomitant with the emphasis on "sincere concern" was a need for cadres to develop a self-sacrificing spirit; and it was this spirit which was the moving force in the mobilization of society in the ongoing effort to transform China's social relations. In the above instance Zhang had to sleep in the kitchen to stay warm after he had given away his own blanket. In order to buy the radio he not only spent all his savings but also had to borrow from others. In another, quite extraordinary case, a young doctor donated his own skin for a transplant that he performed on a Tibetan woman who was suffering a serious infection. The woman's husband was so moved by this act of altruism that he helped guide the People's Liberation Army when it moved to suppress the later Tibetan riots against Chinese rule. For his efforts he was murdered by his Tibetan fellows but his wife became an "activist in our motherland's socialist construction."[173]

[173] Ibid., 274 (January 16, 1960): 25-30.

Another theme emphasized in social mobilization was the adoption of different methods to fit different goals and situations. For example, one young man displayed no interest in collective activities, spending his time instead engrossed in ancient stories of heroes, whose prowess in legendary martial arts he dreamed of emulating. Neither the Youth League's criticisms nor his father's beatings changed his ways. Deciding to take a different tack, one Youth League cadre, aware of the young man's fondness for books, began giving him revolutionary literature to read. Influenced by these books, the young man began to change, and to participate in collective activities.[174]

In another case, one Youth League branch used six different methods to help six "backward" youths.[175] The most popular method to reach young people at that time was called "individual talk" (*tanxin*) which emphasized one-to-one communication. A cadre or an "advanced" person was supposed to help "backward people" by talking with them frequently on an individual basis.[176]

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[174] Ibid., (May 1, 1966): 14.

[175] Ibid., (September 16, 1965): 8-9.

[176] Ibid., (March 2, 1964): 13.

The goal of all these efforts was the full mobilization of all China's young people. The Youth League Central Committee stated that its goal was "to organize the advanced sections of the youth, and through them, to unite and educate the middle and backward sections of the youth," in order to have "united and organized the youth to the fullest possible extent."[177] To fulfill this goal special arrangements were made and special attention was paid to special needs. For example, in order to mobilize married women to participate in collective labor and other activities, Youth League branches often organized youths to do housework for these women while assigning them suitable jobs. Moreover, certain outstanding women were selected to serve as "model wives" to encourage others. For the convenience of the women they were trying to reach, branch offices would often hold meetings in the model wives' houses or, failing that, send members to the women's homes to discuss and explain the meaning of Party directives. When a newly-wed woman moved into a village, the local branch would immediately contact her. They would also try to keep in touch with the women who moved out after marriage.[178] In

[177] Ibid., (July 16, 1964): 17.

[178] Ibid., (September 16, 1964): 31.

Zhongguo qingnian there were discussions on giving special attention to women after they had given birth,[179] to females with little or no education,[180] to "backward" youths,[181] and to "naughty" youths.[182]

However, the most special attention was given to discussions on how to "unite with" youths with "bad" family backgrounds. For example, in the 1965 issues of *Zhongguo qingnian* there were at least thirteen essays and reports devoted to this topic. It was pointed out that while a person could not choose his or her family background, he or she could choose his or her future, a belief reflected in the oft-repeated assertions that Party policy placed the greatest emphasis on political behavior when evaluating a person.[183] Young people with "bad" family backgrounds could therefore have a bright future.[184] Special models were selected to

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[179] Ibid., (May 16, 1965): 19.

[180] Ibid., (June 16, 1965): 10; (July 1, 1965): 2.

[181] Ibid., (February 16, 1965): 15.

[182] Ibid., (July 16, 1965): 26-27.

[183] For example, Ibid., (September 16, 1965): 2-5.

[184] Ibid., (September 1, 1964): 18-21.

encourage these youths.[185] Model Youth League branches were also created.[186] Discussions included such topics as how to draw class lines for those who lived with their exploiting-class families,[187] and whether it was all right to marry a youth with a "bad" family background.[188]

Through a combination of political power and devoted work, the mobilization of society, in pursuit of goals of explicity authorized by class theory, reached a new level. If we say that under Communist rule state power first entered the villages, then we may say that through the indoctrination of the class theory the state moved into every household and even every individual. People were now not only organized from outside but also touched from inside. This was further manifested in the advocating of a new work ethic and the simultaneous ideological revolution which swept across the land.

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[185] For example, Ibid., (November 1, 1964): 24-26, 27; (August 16, 1965): 18, 19-21.

[196] Ibid., (May 16, 1965): 9-10.

[187] Ibid., (October 16, 19): 18-19.

[188] Ibid., (May 1, 1965): 26.

Accelerating economic development

The important role class theory played in accelerating economic development was that it maximized human resources while it minimized material costs. This was mainly realized through the championing of a new work ethic. Class theory also played an important role in supporting the policy of an independent economy and consolidating the collective economy. It contributed also to the mass movement of scientific experimentation.

The new work ethic was crucial to China's economic development at that time. Due to many political and historical factors, China in the 1950s and 1960s lacked both natural resources and foreign capital. The richest resource available was, as many economists agree, human labor power. Chinese leaders recognized that if China was to industrialize, it was crucial that this resource be fully exploited. China was very successful in this respect. After 1958 China possessed possibly the most fully utilized work force of any nation in the world. Prior to the Cultural Revolution there were virtually no idle persons in China except the elderly and sick. Work had become the conventional lifestyle for every adult. The mood of the time

was well reflected in a popular motto: "to work is glorious and not to work is shame."

However, it was precisely because the full mobilization of labor that made a new work ethic even more crucial. For a full labor mobilization also meant the exhaustion of the major available resource. China had no substantial potential labor to be mobilized. That is, the normal methods of labor mobilization had reached their limits. To accelerate its economic development China needed new inputs. To maximize its richest resource China needed more than just labor mobilization. That is, it needed more than just the recruitment of more workers—China needed the laborers to work better. This was the economic factor behind the call for a new work ethic.

This demand appeared repeatedly in *Zhongguo qingnian*. China needed to "maximize man's initiative and potential,"[189] according to Hu Yaobang, then the general secretary of the Youth League, "to bravely struggle to the continue the [economic] leap of the motherland is the most important sign of Communist consciousness." He continued:

> Once the youth are armed with Communist ideas and do not care about personal material interests they can maximize their initiative and creativity. Communist ideas thus

[189] Ibid., 269 (November 1, 1959): 2-4.

> become a tremendous material force encouraging youth to fulfill and surpass the production plan and push our country's productive forces to develop with amazing speed.[190]

As we can see, "Communist ideas" were directly related to the new work ethic. What needs to be pointed out is that the new work ethic was mainly justified on the grounds that classes and class struggle were ongoing. The arguments in favor of the pursuit of individual happiness and the enjoyment of material goods were completely discredited after 1957 with the revival of class theory. This was further seen in *Zhongguo qingnian* when the escalation of the promotion of the new work ethic paralleled an intensification of class theory. Under the guidelines of class theory the work ethic was considered to be not a simple moral problem but one with a class nature. Different attitudes towards labor was seen as a dividing point between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. The reemphasis on class struggle thus simultaneously became a strong call for a new work ethic.

The gist of the new work ethic was to love hard work, which was defined as the basic virtue of the proletariat. There were numerous reports promoting a hard working spirit in *Zhongguo qingnian*. An article detailing the activities of

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[190] Ibid., 280 (April 16, 1960): 13.

a "youth reclamation team" serves as a good example.[191] This team was made up of urban youths who volunteered to work in a remote mountain area where the material conditions were extremely poor. At the beginning the youths had to live in cowshed, and even had to subsist on wild vegetables after supplies were cut off by a flood. Many of them were allergic to the lacquer produced by the trees grown there. Despite all these unfavorable factors the youths maintained a high level of enthusiasm. They worked extremely long hours, sometimes late into the night. They also insisted on working during the winter season, and many worked when sick or injured. In order to overcome their allergy some members of the teams even purposely touched lacquer trees in an effort to build up a resistance to the substance.

While people were asked to work harder, they were also asked to expect and receive less for their efforts. A hardworking spirit was advocated together with a spirit of self-sacrifice. These two aspects of the new work ethic thus maximized labor resources while minimizing costs. *Zhongguo qingnian* put great emphasis on helping to lessen the state's financial burden. Responses to such calls received much

[191] Ibid., (March 16, 1965): 4-7.

attention in the pages of the magazine. For example, immediately after the beginning of the anti-rightist movement there was a discussion concerning cutting state employees' benefits.[192] A Shanghai worker was found to have changed his time card in order to get less pay![193] The doctor mentioned above, who had used his own skin for a skin graft operation, also used his own blood to inoculate his patients against typhoid.[194] In an extreme case, a peasant even asked his wife to nurse a baby lamb belonging to the commune at the expense of her own son's needs!

The new work ethic brought excellent work and service. The model worker Zhang mentioned above is a good example.[195] As a cook he paid close attention to special needs. After discovering a worker who did not eat pork, he would prepare fried beancurd for her whenever pork was served. He tried many different dishes for two pregnant women until they were satisfied.

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[192] Ibid., 219 (November 16, 19): 11-13.

[193] Ibid., 215 (April 1, 1959): 35-39.

[194] Ibid., 274 (January 16, 19): 30.

[195] Ibid., (November 1, 1964): 22.

A mailman in a mountain area is another example.[196] In addition to delivering mail, in two years he had helped illiterate people to read and write 1180 odd letters, delivered some 300 parcels and 14,400 *yuan* to the home of people who had difficulty going to the post office. He even organized newspaper reading groups in all 106 productive teams in his work area. A cook on a farm not only prepared good food but also did a lot of extra work. He raised pigs and chicken for the kitchen, washed and sewed clothes for others, cleaned house and took care of the ill.[197] A store saleswoman not only taught customers how to cook but even delivered food to the elderly, the sick, families with infants, and people who lived far from the store.[198]

A particular role played by class theory was that it made the work ethic, originally essentially a moral matter, political. How one worked, therefore, now carried with it serious political consequences. One could be sanctioned—as well as rewarded—for how hard (or not) one worked. Class theory then brought the issue back as a moral problem, but

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[196] Ibid., (October 16, 1965): 10-13.

[197] Ibid., (February 1, 1965): 31-32.

[198] Ibid., (January 16, 1965): 12-13.

with much greater intensity. Under class theory, the ultimate goal of the new work ethic was not only to do a good job as such. Instead, doing a good job was now treated as an important means for training one's revolutionary will. As a moral issue the new work ethic pursued purity. This made it extremely radical because what counted now were not material goods but revolutionary principles. Acting under these principles, a female worker named Xiang Xiuni risked, and lost, her life in a desperate attempt to put out a factory fire.[199] Similarly, an eleven-year old boy named Liu Wenxue was killed when he confronted a landlord who was stealing vegetables from his Commune.[200]

In the discussion of how to learn from these heroes, it was claimed that in the interests of the Party and the people self-sacrifice must be "unconditional."[201] Only on these moral grounds could the above heroic behavior be properly evaluated. Otherwise, as one essay argued, Xiang Xiuni's sacrifice should not be praised because she could have produced more than what she had saved in terms of material

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[199] Ibid., 214 (March 16, 1959): 16-20.

[200] Ibid., 277 (March 1, 1960): 22-29.

[201] Ibid., 259 (June 1, 1959): 20.

wealth had she not died.[202] Similarly, by this reasoning the actions of a cadre who had drowned in a flood trying to save a boat should be criticized, not extolled.[203] But such reasoning missed the point. What should count here, so the argument went, were not material goods, as an article pointed out on defending Liu's action.[204] What the little boy killed by the landlord was protecting were not a few green peppers but the "people's commune" and the "happy life of the working people." This was a "serious class struggle" and no compromise could be allowed.[205] This is why he could not let the landlord go and report the thief to the authorities later as some people suggested. To compromise, even temporarily, with class enemies meant tc surrender to them. And this was unacceptable to a revolutionary.

Cases such as these were, of course, extreme and rare. Their impact was, nevertheless, felt in every day life. As a popular saying of the time put it: "If heroes can sacrifice their lives, what can't we sacrifice?" Under this principle

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[202] Ibid.

[203] Ibid.

[204] Ibid., 282 (May 16, 1960): 33-35.

[205] Ibid., 33.

there was no room for individual interests. Young people were asked to do whatever the Party wanted and to go wherever the Party pointed. In so doing, they believed they would fulfill their goal of "serving the people completely and thoroughly."

A former Red Guard's memoir vividly describes how this kind of moral pursuit was directly connected to and greatly intensified by the indoctrination of the class theory. At the time daily life was perceived as a battleground of class war. If a student found and corrected a mistake in his or her homework, he or she was considered to be finding and killing a class enemy. To pull a weed meant to kill an enemy. In like fashion, to hurt a seedling was the equivalent of injuring a comrade-in-arms. The author wrote,

> I remember clearly one time when we went to the countryside to help peasants. A near-sighted female classmate cut a few of the seedlings. Students thus had a meeting to criticize her. Trying to explain she murmured: "I did not mean to do it. I just lost track of what I was doing for a while....." The students were all furious and hurled such charges as "Why didn't you pay attention? You have killed a platoon of comrades-in-arms!" Or "You have committed a crime! Your hoe is full of the blood of comrades-in-arms!" and so on. She could not eat for two days, holding those withered seedlings and tearfully crying: "I did not mean to. Please forgive me. I did not mean to. Please forgive me..."[206]

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[206] Liang Xiaosheng, *Yige hongweibing de zhishu* (A Red Guard's Confession) (Chengdu, Shichuan wenxue chubanshe, 1988), 12.

This story was not fictional. In fact, the enlargement and absolulization of class struggle was later condemned as the major mistake of the Party at that time.[207] Production was then called "production struggle." It, plus class struggle and plus scientific experimentation, were called "the three great revolutionary activities." As a result, the intensification of class theory became simultaneously a great push to develop production. This was also true for the promotion of scientific experimentation.

The indoctrination of class theory fatally demolished any opposition to the introduction of new methods and technology. Any such opponent was faced with serious political charges as opposing "revolutionary activities." The reemphasis on class struggle also heightened the urgency and importance of gaining a mastery of modern science and technology. It was pointed out that for a long time the bourgeoisie monopolized the field of science and technology.[208] Controlling science and technology was therefore a war between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie.

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[207] "On Questions of Party History - Resolution on Certain Questions in the History of Our Party Since the Founding of the People's Republic of China," (Adopted by the Sixth Plenary Session of the 11th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on June 27, 1981.) Beijing Review 27 (July 6, 1981): 10-39.

[208] Zhongguo qingnian 279 (April 1, 1960): 18.

Conducting scientific experiments became a required task for the revolutionary youth. In 1965 the Central Committee of the Youth League passed a resolution asking every Youth League branch to organize a scientific experiment team.[209] The emphasis placed on class struggle thus also gave birth to a mass movement of scientific experimentation, as indicated by the numerous reports on these experiments published in *Zhongguo qingnian*.[210]

The role of class theory in strengthening the collective economy and supporting an independent economic policy is quite obvious and need not be discussed in detail here. Under class theory the collective economy was inseparable from socialism and Party leadership. Any perceived attack on, or threat to, the collective economy was to be treated as opposition to socialism and to the Party.[211] The policy of self-reliance, which, if it were to succeed, the efficient mobilization of labor was crucial, was defended on the basis of the world revolution, of which the Chinese were held to be

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[209] Ibid., (January 1, 1966): 9.

[210] For examples, in 1965 issues, see (January 1, 1965): 4-7; (March 1, 1965): 11, 14-16; (April 1, 1965): 20-21; (August 1, 1965): 4-6, 6-7; (December 1, 1965): 19-22.

[211] Ibid., 213 (March 1, 1959): 13.

the leaders. Ringed on one side by "revisionists" (the Soviet Union and its followers), and "imperialists" (the Western capitalist nations) on the other, China took pride in its isolated "revolutionary stance."

The economic achievements of the Mao period were quite remarkable. Between 1950 and 1977 industrial output grew at an average annual rate of 13.5 percent, the highest rate of all developing or developed major nations of the world during that period and a more rapid pace than achieved by any country during any comparable period of rapid industrialization in modern world history.[212]

More remarkable however, as Maurice Meisner points out, these extraordinary economic achievements were accomplished by the Chinese people themselves, with little outside assistance or support.[213] What should be noted here is the importance of the indoctrination of class theory in making these achievements possible. China's economic system under Mao is usually characterized as a "planned economy."

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[212] Ma Hong and Sun Shangqing eds., *Studies in the Problems of China's Economic Structure* (Beijing, 1981) 1: 25-26; Nicholas R. Lardy, *Agriculture in China's Modern Economic Development* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 3, Cited in M. Meisner, *Mao's China and After* (New York: Free Press, 1986), 436.

[213] Maurice Meisner, *Mao's China and After* , 439.

Centralized decision making at the macroeconomic level was, of course, the most obvious characteristic of this economic order. But the internal dynamic of this economy was not a plan but the incentives provided by revolutionary ideas and ideals. What was greatly emphasized during this period was not the fulfillment of a rigid plan but the encouragement of the initiative of the masses. In this sense we may call this kind of economy a "spirit-incentive" economy. And as the above discussion has demonstrated, the indoctrination of class theory played a vital role in its success.

Launching an Ideological Revolution

To this point I have identified the role of the indoctrination of class theory in strengthening Party leadership, in continuing the social transformation of the nation and in accelerating economic development. What I have repeatedly emphasized is that all of these were realized mainly through ideological persuasion. The last point I want to discuss in this chapter is that the most profound impact of the indoctrination of class theory lay in the role it

played in the transformation of the Chinese people's ideological consciousness.

The problem of ideology owed its prominent place in public discourse to the influence of class theory. For, according to class theory, the "political and ideological fronts" were the major battlefields between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie in a socialist society. In practice, however, attention was given almost exclusively to ideological concerns since the outcome of the political battle was assumed to be secure. After all, was not the Party now in firm control of the state, having only recently scored a signal victory over the "rightists"? And was it not led by a "senior generation of proletarian revolutionaries," whose political credentials were beyond question? No, for the moment, at any rate, class struggle was not now to be waged on the "political front." Rather, it would be fought over the minds of the people, especially for those of the young.

The aim of the Party's ideological activity during this period was to fundamentally change the basic mentality of the whole nation. The greatest effort in this concern was to change people's attitudes towards life, or the so-called "philosophy of life." A question directly related to this was the so-called "criterion of happiness" which became the most

frequently discussed topic in *Zhongguo qingnian*. Behind the discussion was actually a search for the meaning of life. The discussion thus touched the most basic questions in human life.

A typical method used to discuss this kind of issue in *Zhongguo qingnian* was to invite comment by readers on a question selected by the editor. Once the initial contributions had been printed, the magazine would then publish a selected response to those essays, and then, in subsequent issues, the response to the response. In this way an ongoing discussion would be fostered. There were many discussions of this kind in the magazine. Over time, the tone of argument in these discussions became ever more radical. The force behind this dramatic change had much to do with the intensification of the indoctrination of class theory.

In 1959 the question discussed in *Zhongguo qingnian* was: What is the happiest thing in life? The question was raised in the discussion of the heroic deeds of Xiang Xiuni mentioned above. During this discussion it was said that the meaning of life lay in serving the people. The "happiest thing in life," therefore, was to be found in acts which made other people happy.

A reader named Wang disagreed with this point of view. He argued that a person had to experience discomfort if he wanted to help others. This was not an enjoyable thing but a sacrifice. He also doubted whether it was worth it to sacrifice one's life to save others' lives, and still less their property, since life belonged to a person only once.[214]

Wang's point of view obviously reflected a common sentiment in many people's minds. What lay behind Wang's argument was an attempt to find a place for individual interests and material enjoyment. These were perhaps the most fundamental attitudes towards life in the popular mind. It was in opposition to these two basic principles that the effort to change the consciousness of the Chinese people reached its zenith in the heyday of the Cultural Revolution. But the key arguments had already been brought up by class theory before the Cultural Revolution.

More than six thousand letters were sent to the editor within two months of the publication of Wang's letter.[215] Most of the responses that appeared in *Zhongguo qingnian* disagreed with Wang's point of view. Many nationally known heroes

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[214] Ibid., 217 (May 1, 1959): 39.

[215] Ibid., 261 (July 1, 1959): 27.

joined the discussion and told their stories of how they had devoted their lives to the collective interest. A bank teller named Xu Xuehui lost her hand when she fought with robbers.[216] A munitions factory worker lost his hand, leg and eye in making bombs badly needed by the Red Army.[217] During World War II, five solders, refusing to surrender to the Japanese army, had jumped from a cliff.[218] In the interest of the party and the people, it was claimed, self sacrifice should be "unconditional."[219]

Despite the militant rhetoric of much of the correspondence, a careful reading suggests that the dominant argument was actually the principle of mutual benefit. For the central concern in the discussion was about the relationship between individuals and collective interests and collective interests were defended on the grounds of individual interests: "[T]he collective interest best represents the individual interest,"[220] and, "[T]o be

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[216] Ibid., 260 (June 16, 1959): 35-36.

[217] Ibid., 261 (July 1, 1959): 27-28.

[218] Ibid., 28-29.

[219] Ibid., 259 (June 1, 1959): 20.

[220] Ibid., 260 (June 16, 1959): 9.

concerned about others means to be concerned about yourself,"[221] are but two of many examples stressing this theme. In other words, working for collective interests would benefit individual interests in the long run.[222] For example, if one helped others when they were sick, then when the helper himself became ill, he would receive aid from others.[223] In this way, the principles of individual interest and material enjoyment were not abandoned.

Although the principle of mutual benefit never totally disappeared, the tone of subsequent correspondence changed slightly. Two questions were discussed in the 1960 issues of *Zhongguo qingnian*. One, concerning the nature of an ideal life, was raised by a female cadre who expressed her wish for a peaceful family life.[224] The other was the question of why the spirit of hard work was still needed. A reader thought that this spirit should be abandoned since the socialist construction had won a great success and the people were entitled to enjoy the "advantages of the socialist system."[225]

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[221] Ibid.

[222] Ibid., 37.

[223] Ibid., 9.

[224] Ibid., 277 (March 1, 1960): 36-37.

[225] Ibid., 290 (September 16, 19): 29-30.

These points of view received, as expected, extensive criticism from readers. But the point of departure for their critiques was somewhat altered. More weight was now given to the needs of the noble revolutionary cause rather than to the maximization of individual interests in the name of the collective interests. Although the change was far from clear-cut since the revolutionary cause was ultimately defended on the basis of majority interests which, in the final analysis, also included individual interests, the alteration was nonetheless significant. For the principle of mutual interest was being quietly displaced by the principle of revolution.

What should be further noted is that this change was closely related to the revival of class theory. The question was now approached not from the perspective of the relationship between individual and collective interests as such. The issue was perceived as a life and death struggle between two classes. If a person pursued his or her self-interest, this meant not simply that that person was taking advantage of others, but it also signaled that he or she was opposing the Communist road.[226] To act in such a manner was "a reflection of bourgeois ideas."[227] To abandon the spirit of

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[226] Ibid., 278 (March 16, 1960): 37.

[227] Ibid., 39.

hard work and simple living would lead to the loss of the hard-won achievements of the revolution.[228] By promoting the principle of revolution class theory fundamentally changed the nature of the whole issue.

This change was further developed in 1963 when the question of the criterion of happiness was again discussed in the "Learn from Lei Feng"[229] movement, which generated a great deal of interest. [230] The discussion was directly focused on the question of whether "eating well, dressing well and living well," meant happiness. The crucial point to be resolved in this question was: Who was the subject of the "three wells"? If it was the individual, then such an understanding would have to be considered "a bourgeois philosophy of life."[231] If, on the other hand, the subject of the "three wells" was the majority of the people, then that would reflect a socialist understanding of what happiness

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[228] Ibid., 295 (December 1, 1960): 23.

[229] Lei Feng was a (perhaps fictitious) PLA soldier whose selfless deeds were upheld as a model for all to emulate. He was revived in a new "Learn From Lei Feng" movement in 1989 in the aftermath of the Tiananmen Massacre. The context, and purpose, of this movement were quite different from the original movement and it was met by widespread public indifference.

[230] This particular topic generated more than ten thousand letters from readers. Ibid., (July 28, 1963): 24.

[231] Ibid., (April 16, 1963): 14.

meant. "Our happiness belongs to the thousands and tens of thousands of the people," as one contributor to *Zhongguo qingnian* put it.[232] The point of this discussion is that individual interests were not maximized by pursuing collective goals, but were, in fact, replaced by the interests of others. In short, the principle of individual interests was removed.

At the same time, another new principle emerged. This was the pursuit of moral purity, or "revolutionary will." Under this principle self-sacrifice was justified not only on the grounds that it could bring material enjoyment to other people, but also for its own sake, for the training of one's revolutionary will, a crucial task if the revolution begun by the senior generation of revolutionaries was to be continued and deepened.

Here once again we can see the important role of class theory in ideological transformation. For it was class theory which pushed the ideological problem into the frontline of national affairs. The paramount importance of ideology then changed the nature of the issue. Moral principles should be pursued not for the benefits that would accrue therefrom, but

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[232] Ibid., (June 16, 1963): 14-15.

for the sake of morality itself. This shift in emphasis radically changed the whole argument. The criterion of happiness was now defined as struggle itself.[233] It was struggle, not only the achievements which flowed from it, that became the source of happiness. "Suffering for revolution," a popular slogan of the time, sums up this feeling well. What was abandoned with this claim was the principle of material enjoyment.

This new trend was furthered manifested in the pages the 1964 issues of *Zhongguo qingnian*, when the question was raised as to how to evaluate a youth's ideals and contributions.[234] In the course of this discussion young people were exhorted to surrender virtually all individual interests, wishes and even specialties, to the needs of the revolution. The cause of revolution became the sole criterion on which to evaluate a person's actions and character. Every action should be connected with furthering the revolution. Why, and how, this should be so became a topic of discussion in the 1965 issues of *Zhongguo qingnian*.

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[233] Ibid., (May 1, 1963): 20.

[234] Ibid., (March 2, 1964): 16-17; (April 1, 1964): 27-29; (May 1, 1964): 39-41; (May 16, 1964): 19-21; (June 1, 1964): 22-24; (June 16, 1964): 26-28; (July 1, 1964): 28-29.

Two readers raised an objection to the centrality of revolution by observing that it did not make any difference if a person worked to earn a living, or for revolution, since in either case he or she would be doing the same job and receiving the same pay. To this came the reply that there was indeed a difference and that only by working for revolutionary ends could a person really perform well. More important, the meaning of doing a good job went beyond the material goods or service that that job provided. No matter how routine or minor one's work was, if performed correctly, it was part of the revolution. Moreover, it was connected not only with "the whole production team, the whole commune, and all of China,"[235] but also with "the two-thirds of the people around the world who were still suffering."[236] This was reflected in a slogan "to produce one more grain means to produce one more bullet in the fight with the US imperialism."[237] The principle of revolution achieved paramount importance. This could be seen in that the whole series of discussions subsumed under the headline "work for the revolution and work with a revolutionary spirit."

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[235] Ibid., (November 1, 1965): 3.

[236] Ibid., 4.

[237] Ibid., 3.

The significance of this discussions is that it represented a brave effort to break with the most basic attitudes towards life which had prevailed in human society for centuries. Although the impact of this effort may have been limited (and I am sure it was), the question it addressed was fundamental. Although many of the arguments in those discussions may sound strange and far-fetched, their challenge to traditional ideas was real. The effort may not have essentially transformed people's minds, but it certainly stimulated people to think of things beyond their daily lives. The principle of revolution may not have revolutionized their mentalities, but it undoubtedly widened their horizons. The discussions may not have provided satisfactory answers as to the meaning of life, but they clearly launched a new search for such answers. The historical significance here is that as a grand endeavor sponsored by the government which received positive response from ordinary people, the effort to change people's basic attitudes towards life gave the first push to shake the minds of millions of people, especially the most active among them. It was in the search itself, not in the answers it looked for, that the revolutionary meaning was to be found. For the fact is that for many people this was the first time they

thought about these kinds of fundamental questions. A giant step was thus accomplished in this move.

This effort was accompanied and pushed further by a special call for mastering the "dialectic method." This was another great effort in ideological transformation during this period. The goal of this effort was to change people's basic ways of thinking. Behind the call was actually a demand for a rational approach to problems.

The call for "mastering dialectics" had long been an important aspect of a more general call for the study of theory and especially of Mao's works. It obtained primary importance in the campaign criticizing the so-called "two combines into one" debate in 1964. The opposite point, the so-called "one divides into two" concept was then considered to be the key idea of "revolutionary dialectics." This idea gained national attention in 1965 with the publication of a new directive from Mao concerning the importance of summarizing one's experience,[238] and with a highly publicized talk given by a famous Ping-Pong player named Xu Rensheng.[239] In *Zhongguo qingnian* this topic received extensive coverage

[238] Ibid., (February 1, 1965): 2-3.

[239] Ibid., 4-9.

in a series of articles which appeared under the rubric of "mastering dialectics."

The arguments concerning dialectics in those issues of *Zhongguo qingnian* were very simple and the examples given of its applications were close to childish. The key concept was that "one divides into two," a shorthand (and extremely simplistic) way of referring to the Hegelian concept of the law of the unity of opposites. From this basic idea several points were derived.

First, things and events are complicated. This is so because everything can be divided into its constituent parts, each of which can in turn be divided and so on. There is no end to this division of things into their parts, and failure to take into account this characteristic of things was viewed as a serious error.

One army commissar, for example, gave praise to a veteran soldier, while slighting a new recruit. His basis for doing so was their respective skills at shooting. The commissar did not, however, take into account the political motivations of the soldiers, and for this omission was criticized. Thus, although the veteran received the highest score in marksmanship, his motivations were considered to be problematic. In contrast, the new soldier did poorly in

shooting, but it was found that he possessed "correct ideas" and that he was making progress.[240] In praising the veteran and not the raw recruit, the army commissar had made a mistake of "one sidedness."

Second, things and events are all connected since they all are ultimately divisions of other phenomena. Thorough and comprehensive observations of problems were therefore emphasized. For example, in a department store an excellent saleswoman once received a complaint from a customer. Her colleagues were stymied as to why anyone would be unhappy with her service. It was only after long observation that a cadre finally identified the problem. The woman would become impatient and somewhat short with her customers when she had many of them waiting in line because she was anxious not to spend too much time on one customer at the expense of the others.[241] In another case, a hygiene worker applied his newly acquired understanding of the interconnectedness of things and events, and hit upon a method of combining hygiene work and agricultural production, winning great success in both.[242]

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[240] Ibid., (September 16, 1965): 11.

[241] Ibid., (April 1, 1965): 10-11.

[242] Ibid., 9-10.

Third, things and events are in a constant process of change and development. This was the main point of Mao's directive about summarizing experiences. Mao claimed that both human beings and non-human nature were always in a process of development, but that they would never stop at the same level. Therefore men and women must always summarize their experiences, strive to make discoveries and inventions and to make progress.[243]

Fourth, since things and events are complicated, connected, and in the process of development, one must learn to look at problems from a variety of perspectives, and to be aware that just as bad things have their positive sides, so do good things have their negative aspects. Thus, on the one hand, one Youth League county committee successfully did its job even though they had fewer, and less experienced, cadres than normal.[244] On the other hand, another Youth League branch, which had received great acclaim for its work and was held to be a model for the nation, was nonetheless able to spot potential problems before they arose.[245] Both attributed their success to their understanding of "dialectics".

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[243] Ibid., (February 1, 1965): 2.

[244] Ibid., (August 16, 1965): 6-9.

[245] Ibid., (November 1, 1965): 11-13.

Fifth, while there are many factors involved in even a simple problem, it is extremely important to find the decisive factor, the "principle contradiction" in order to solve that problem. This was considered to be a basic work method. One highly efficient train service team claimed that its success was due to the application of this idea. [246]

Last, a great emphasis was placed on how to maximize human initiative. To apply the method of dialectics meant to accelerate the transformation of things and events by the means of revolutionary struggle.[247] This was the ultimate goal of mastering dialectics. Such activities could take many forms, as was reported in *Zhongguo qingnian*. For example, the people in a village in Henan province tried many different ways to rescue their crops from destruction from bad weather, and claimed that their efforts and ultimate success were due to their use of the dialectic method.

As in the effort to change people's basic attitudes toward life, the significance of the call to gain a command of dialectics lies not in the intelligence of their methods or the sophistication of their theories. Clearly, the methods

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[246] Ibid., 282 (May 16, 1960): 19-21.

[247] Ibid., (February 16, 1965): 10.

introduced were simple and their application next to naive. However, the revolutionary change to be found here is that by applying "the method of dialectics" to their own lives, many people strove to think critically before acting. This meant that they no longer simply followed the same ways observed by their ancestors or the patterns available at the time. They wanted to examine them first with a new system, and this desire represented a significant change in the way people thought and acted. For now millions of people strove to use "reason," and not just rely on habit or tradition, before deciding on a course of action. Whether the "reasoning" encouraged by the Party, and as practiced by ordinary people, was an improvement of old ways, or the tenuousness of its connection to "dialectics" as the term is understood by philosophers, are of secondary importance here. In the name of "mastering dialectics" ordinary Chinese began to try to live their lives according to "rational" principles. The significance of this movement was nothing less than revolutionary.

In light of this we may finally find the real meaning of the mass movement to study Mao's works and the historical role of Mao's cult. As we know, the indoctrination of class theory was accompanied by a movement to study Mao's works.

Mao's sacred status was extremely important here because to change the masses' basic attitudes towards life and move them away from conventional patterns of thinking (or nonthinking), an extra force was needed. And a god-like or an emperor-like Mao fulfilled this need. The indoctrination of class theory was greatly intensified by the movement to study Mao's works and it reached its zenith at the same time as the climax of the cult of Mao. Here the indoctrination of class theory and the cult of Mao reinforced one another. The indoctrination of class theory created a desperate need for spiritual support and the deification of Mao provided powerful momentum to support it.

Two major points greatly emphasized in the mass movement of studying Mao's works immensely strengthened the effect of Mao's cult. One is the proclaimed "class nature" of the texts themselves. It was claimed that Mao's works were written for and served the "enslaved and oppressed classes," the majority of the population. Moreover, as these people belonged to the revolutionary classes, they represented the most advanced social forces. The emphasis on the class nature of Mao's writings thus gave great honor to these people. Their special status was continuingly raised with the further deification of Mao to a point that they achieved a position of being

something akin to a "chosen people" destined for a communist paradise.

This sense of being a chosen people provided an important spiritual source for millions of people who had been on the bottom of society. It stimulated their self-esteem and collective ambition. They were special not only because of their economic status, but also because Chairman Mao said so. Mao's cult therefore was directly related to their social prestige and their self-esteem. Their worship of Mao was in fact another form of strengthening their own confidence.

But the sense of being a chosen people did not only offer honor. It also imposed expectations and requirements. As members of "revolutionary classes" these people were expected to become actual revolutionaries. If they did not do so, they were thought to be unworthy of their status. As Mao's works were believed to be written for them, they thus had the obligation to study them. Since Mao's teachings represented their best interests, they were also bound to follow them. This became the basic requirement for anyone who wanted to become a revolutionary. This point was ubiquitous in the pages of *Zhongguo qingnian* of this period.

The other point greatly emphasized in the mass movement to study Mao's works was the practical nature of those works. In other words, Mao's writings were held to be of more than mere academic interest. Indeed, their greatest significance lay in how they were applied in the "real world." This emphasis had two important implications. First, by turning theory into practice it opened the doors of study to everyone regardless of his or her educational level. Because what was important here was direct action, not sophisticated argument, and anyone could participate. Further, most models for the study of Mao's works were ordinary people, not intellectuals. Some of them were even illiterate. Many different methods were adopted to encourage and help these people to get involved.

Second, by emphasizing the ultimate goal of practice the mass movement to study Mao's works became simultaneously a broad revolutionary movement. This was because study must, in the end, be evaluated through action. It must be seen in political, social, economic and ideological transformations. In short, the mass movement to study Mao's works represented the culmination of the grand project to revolutionize the Chinese society through the indoctrination of class theory.

The study of Mao's thought also greatly strengthened Party leadership. Nothing could be more powerful for supporting Party leadership than Mao's sacred status because the infallibility of Party leadership was now guaranteed by the divinity of Mao's thought. The deification of Mao thus became also the deification the Party. It was logical and in fact the Party became untouchable during the climax of the study of Mao's works.

The promotion of Mao Zedong Thought also immensely contributed to the transformation of society. Mao's divinity was a sure and powerful force to cite in opposition to old religions, old culture and old customs. Popular education received a further push in the name of studying of Mao's works.[248] It was reported that in 1960 there were more than thirty five million youths who involved in the movement to study Mao's works.[249] In one village, except for one unfortunate who was both deaf and dumb, all 155 young people were organized into study groups.[250] These numbers revealed also the further development of social mobilization. A new

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[248] Ibid., 281 (May 1, 1960): 13.

[249] Ibid., 283 (June 1, 1960): 2.

[250] Ibid., (June 1, 1965): 6.

slogan in this effort was called the "Four firsts." (?) The gist of these "four firsts" was to conduct social mobilization on an individual basis.

The mass movement of studying of Mao's works provided new momentum to economic development. The movement was undoubtedly a great support for the new work ethic. As one young woman remarked, one studied Mao's works neither to seek an official post nor to get rich. The sole goal was to better build socialism.[251] For example, after studying Mao's works the youth of a Youth League branch broke with convention by working during the cold of winter. They succeeded in making soil bricks and collected 2.1 million *ji* of fertilizer.[252] The movement was surely also a great encouragement for the masses' creative spirits. For instance, despite the fact that they lacked both materials and blueprints, some young workers in a factory nevertheless succeeded in constructing a tractor in eight days.[253]

The mass movement to study Mao's works pushed the ideological transformation of society to its peak. The

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[251] Ibid., (February 16, 1964): 8-9.

[252] Ibid., (April 16, 1965): 4-5.

[253] Ibid., (April 1, 1965): 6-7.

pursuit of moral purity obtained a quasi-religious character with the rise of the cult of Mao. The best example of this was the emphasis placed on confessing one's errors and misconceptions. To sincerely confess one's mistakes and misguided beliefs was considered the first important step toward achieving a real ideological revolution in one's own mind. People were encouraged to confess their hidden thoughts to the public. Only by exposing one's "bad ideas," it was believed, could one get rid of them. People were exhorted not only to confess their conscious thoughts but also their subconscious feelings, their so-called "swift thoughts." The goal was "to have a revolution in one's very soul," as it was said during the Cultural Revolution.

In the West, there has been no more common or serious condemnation of the Chinese state under Mao than the charge of "brainwashing." If the word "brainwashing" refers to the intervention of government and the compulsory aspects involved in the attempt to transform the nation through ideological indoctrination, then I have no objection. The indoctrination of class theory was definitely not a free intellectual venture. As matter of fact, this is one of my two basic arguments in this chapter. As I have repeatedly pointed out, a special function that class theory played is

that it summoned political forces into ideological indoctrination. This was an important factor which made the indoctrination extremely effective. The other basic argument I have upheld throughout this chapter is that political power itself was greatly increased through the indoctrination. Ideological persuasion was an vital component of political power in Mao's China.

However, coercion and deceit (as is also believed by many) were only methods or means of indoctrination, not its essence. Methods or means should not be the primary criterion in judging a historical event. For no one would condemn a dentist for using force or anaesthetic to remove a rotten tooth from a child against her will. The final judgment on indoctrination, as that of all other historical events, must be its impact on history. The primary concern here should be what kind of thoughts people strove to rid themselves of, and toward what direction their mentalities were moving. It is from this perspective that I argue that the indoctrination of class theory was an ideological emancipation for tens of millions or hundreds of millions of the Chinese people because it freed them from the bonds of tradition. It helped them eliminate many bad habits and customs, while pushing them to think in new ways. As I have argued above, to many

people, the course of the indoctrination was often a jump from nonthinking to thinking, from superstition to reason or simply from illiteracy to literacy. This is, of course, represented a great liberation of their consciousness.

At this point it becomes also obvious that the indoctrination of class theory meant emancipation only to certain people. It was liberating especially to those people who were once on the bottom of society, the people who lived under the shadow of the past, and the people with little or no education. It meant oppression to those with individual souls, independent spirits or sophisticated minds. As was seen in the discussions of *Zhongguo qingnian* these people and their opinions were subjected to serious criticism and persecution. This is seen clearest, perhaps, in the anti-rightist movement in which numerous honest and upright people, mostly intellectuals, were ruthlessly suppressed.

But it was also true that to tens or hundreds of millions of people the indoctrination was a great spiritual blessing. For these people no longer felt ashamed of their humble backgrounds. Instead they could take pride being part of the "most advanced social forces." Many believed they were the masters of the state. They even possessed a sense of mission with the claim that China had become the center of

the world revolution and the Chinese people therefore had the sacred duty to save "two thirds of humankind in the world."

All of this, of course, had little bearing on reality. There was little solid foundation for the members of these classes to claim to be the "most advanced social forces;" they were certainly not the "masters of the state;" and their role as missionaries of world-wide revolution was little more than rhetoric. What remained true, however, were the beliefs themselves. For their beliefs and sentiments were sincere. It is precisely this disparity between belief and reality which created such strong momentum for the coming Cultural Revolution. As would be seen, the impact of the indoctrination of class theory during this period was extraordinarily profound. So great was its impact that, even after the Cultural Revolution when much of what had been championed during that chaotic period was the subject of widespread revulsion, many aspects of the indoctrination of class theory continued to persist as important parts of Chinese political culture.

Nevertheless, it is obvious that the existing forms of indoctrination were incompatible with their proclaimed function of emancipation. It is not only that there was no free discussion but also that Mao's words became the end in

the search for truth. People were subject to strict control by Party organizations at different levels, making their putative emancipators in fact their oppressors. All of these would become targets for change in the coming Cultural Revolution.

Chapter Three

The Ideological Reorientation of Class Theory in the Early Stages of the Cultural Revolution

To most Chinese people, the class theory that prevailed before the Cultural Revolution was a Manichean doctrine which drew a clear line between good and bad, virtue and evil. On one side were senior Party officials, "the old generation of proletarian revolutionaries," headed by Mao, the Party and Youth League members, people of "good" origins, political activists who closely followed the Party line, and people who worked hard for the state without asking for rewards. These people supported socialism, which was believed mainly to consist of public ownership and a planned economy. They upheld official ideology, especially Mao Zedong Thought, which greatly emphasized class and class struggle. On the other side were remnants of the old propertied classes, people who revealed heretical political thought, and people who put their self-interest first. These people were believed to support capitalism, whose primary

components were thought to be a system of private ownership and a market economy. They were also believed to oppose official ideology, especially class theory. In the popular mind, therefore, the concept of class was related to a constellation of concrete attributes.

The most important criterion among these attributes was the Party, which was perceived as the most advanced element in society and the political incarnation of ethics and truth. Thus, the simplest and most reliable practical guide to proper thought and behavior was to follow the instruction of Party officials. A popular slogan exhorted people "to do whatever the Party asks and go anywhere the Party directs." Moral self-cultivation was, therefore, greatly emphasized because it would help people transcend their selfishness and become more humble before the Party as a whole and Party officials at different levels.

Under this circumstance it was apparent that it was impossible to have any genuinely self-generated mass movement, let alone a mass movement attacking Party officials on a large scale, such as that of the Cultural Revolution. The only way to break this deadlock was a call right from the authority the people obeyed, asking the people to rebel against that authority. Ironically or not, this was what had happened in the first stages of the

Cultural Revolution. During that period, it was the Party Central Committee which asked the people to criticize Party organizations and Party officials at different levels. It was the paramount leader of the Party, Mao, who asked the people to "bomb the headquarter." It was the most authoritative official ideology, Mao Zedong Thought, which asked the people to think independently. In doing this, Mao and his close associates, the Maoists, disassembled the old class theory piece by piece. In doing this, they initiated an ideological reorientation of class theory.

In this chapter I will discuss the process of ideological reorientation in the first stages of the Cultural Revolution. I will document how an academic discussion changed to a political debate once the Maoists brought class theory into the discussion; how the movement brought revolutionary upheavals after the official media championed the differentiation between the authority of Mao and his thought, and that of the Party's leadership at different levels; how the revolution achieved a democratic tenor when the old mass line was redefined in the new Party documents; and how the Party decision to extend the revolution from cultural circles to other sectors of society opened the door to a popular involvement. The ideological

reorientation brought the old class theory simultaneously to both its zenith and its disintegration.

From an Academic Discussion to a Political Debate

In most official, as well as unofficial, accounts, the Cultural Revolution began with the publication of the article "On the New Historical Play *Hai Rui Dismissed from Office*," by Yao Wenyuan, a Shanghai critic of art and literature, in November 1965.[254] Whatever its role in launching the Cultural Revolution, Yao's article did mark a turning point in the course of the Cultural Revolution. It marked also a new interpretation of class theory.

As I discussed in the last chapter, before the Cultural Revolution the primary focus of class struggle was ideology and the great need for so-called "class education" among the Chinese youth. It was assumed that the revolutionary cause was very much safeguarded when the state was led by the first generation of the revolution. The danger would come from the later generations who may be poisoned by the bad influences of the vestiges of the old society, by

[254] Wenhuibao, November 10, 1965.

imperialists, and by contemporary "revisionists." It was important, therefore, to conduct a class struggle on the ideological front in order to eliminate all such influences and to train the Chinese youth to become the "successors of the revolution."

On one hand, Yao's article was a continuation of this effort. Prior to the Cultural Revolution there had been a series of discussions concerning broad areas of history, philosophy, ethics, economics, literature and the arts.[255] A general theme of these discussions was the question of how to apply Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought, especially their conceptions of class theory, to different academic disciplines. This discussion was actually called, at the time, "cultural revolution." Its goal was to alter the old ideas left over from the past. The focus was therefore on theories themselves. It was in this sense that the discussions were considered to be academic. Yao's article was a part of this academic discourse. A large part of his article was devoted to criticizing Wu Han's "theory of class reconciliation," a theme that had been hotly debated since 1962.

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[255] See Merle Goldman, "The Unique 'Blooming and Contending' of 1961-62," in John Wilson Lewis, ed., *Party Leadership and Revolutionary Power in China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 268-303; also, Merle Goldman, "The Chinese Communist Party's 'Cultural Revolution' of 1962-64" in Chalmers Johnson, ed., *Ideology and Politics in Contemporary China* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1973), 219-254.

On the other hand, however, Yao's article opened a new dimension in this discourse. A crucial question the article raised concerned the "realistic implications" of the play. By raising this question, the author introduced real politics into an academic discussion. The historical story in the play was thus perceived to be an account of current events, dramatic personae representing actual people in the contemporary world. This changed fundamentally the nature of the entire debate. The author stated:

> As we know, 1961 was the year when our country had economic difficulty due to three years of natural disasters. Imperialism, reactionaries in different countries, and modern revisionism repeatedly launched anti-China campaigns. Under these circumstances monsters and freaks responded with demands for an "individual economy" and for "reversing the verdict." They advocated the "merit" of "individual economy," asking to restore the private economy, demanding "to return the land" with the intention of overthrowing the people's communes and restoring the evil rule of landlords and rich peasants. Those imperialists and landlords, rich peasants, reactionaries, bad elements, and rightists who had made numerous wrong judgments of the laboring people in the old society felt they were innocent after losing their privilege to make such wrong judgments. They thus asked for "reversing the verdict." They wanted a representative of their interests to fight with the dictatorship of the proletariat, to speak for themselves, to reverse their verdicts and to help them come to power. "To return the land" and "to reverse the verdict" were the focus of the bourgeois struggle against the dictatorship of the proletariat and the socialist revolution.... The play *Hai Rui Dismissed from Office* is a reflection of this kind of class struggle.[256]

[256] Wenhuibao, November 10, 1965.

In this argument, class struggle existed not only on the ideological front, but also on the political front. More precisely, the serious problem of class struggle on the ideological front lay not only in its ideological influence as such, but also, and more importantly, in its direct political involvement. The academic discussion thus became political.

The new dimension opened by Yao's article was widely noted and discussed,[257] but it received perhaps its greatest development in two important articles published in early April of 1966—Qi Benyu's "The Reactionary Nature of 'Hai Rui Reviled the Emperor' and *Hai Rui Dismissed from Office*,"[258] and "'Hai Rui Reviled the Emperor' and *Hai Rui Dismissed*

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[257] Just a perusal of some of the titles of articles dealing with this issue, published in early 1966 in different periodicals, is suggestive of the new turn that the debate was taking. E.g.:
"For Whom Does *Hai Rui Dismissed from Office* Sing?" (*Beijingribao*, January 18)
"For Whom Does Comrade Wu Han Speak?" (Liaoning Ribao, March 10)
"What Does 'Hai Rui Dismissed from Office' Really Promote?" (*Yunnan Ribao*, February 22)
"Why Praise 'Hai Rui Reviled the Emperor?'" (*Beijing Ribao*, January 14)
"For What Purpose Did Comrade Wu 'Break the Door and Come Out'?" (*Guangming Ribao*, January 19)
"[We] Do Not Allow [Wu] to Escape Political Charges by His Self-criticism." (*Guangming Ribao*, January 13)
"The Reactionary Political Motivation Could Not Be Concealed" (*Fujian Ribao*, February 27)
"'Hai Rui' Is a Political Tool Used by Comrade Wu Han to Oppose the Party and Socialism" (*Guangming Ribao*, January 29) "*Hai Rui Dismissed From Office* Spreads Anti-Socialist Poison." (*Gongren Ribao*, March 18)
"Making up Historical Myths to Oppose the Current Trend." (*Wenyibao* (No. 1, 1966)
"Is This Only an Academic Issue?" (*Wenhuibao*, March 1)

[258] *Renmin ribao*, April 2, 1966.

from Office Are Two Huge Poisonous Anti-Socialist and Anti-Party Weeds," by Guan Feng and Lin Jie.[259] These articles strongly denied that the current discussions were merely academic. As Qi Benyu queried:

> Is it an academic issue that the essay "Hai Rui Scolded Emperor" is full of only scolding, scolding and scolding? How can it be treated as an academic issue when a political essay is full of exaggeration, imagination and even fabrication against the Party and socialism?
>
> Is it an academic issue that the Beijing opera *Hai Rui Dismissed from Office* employs the techniques of "attacking the present through the past" and "pointing at the mulberry while reviling the ash?" How can we treat as an academic issue this big piece of poisonous weed in which there is so little historical reality that even the stage scripts and characters were created according to the physical characteristics and personality of a handful of right wing opportunists?
>
> How can one still talk about academic issues when [Wu and his associates] have already "broken the door and come out," and have taken off their scholarly masks and come to the frontline?"[260]

Qi identified "dismissal" as the key point of Wu's play, raising, therefore, a primarily political issue. This point was also strongly emphasized by Guan Feng and Lin Jie in their article.[261] They charged that to turn the political issue into an academic one was a way to conceal the essence

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[259] Ibid., April 5, 1966.

[260] Ibid., April 2, 1966.

[261] Guan Feng and Lin Jie, "*Hairui ma huangdi he hairui baguan shi fandang fanshehuizhuyi de liangzhu daduchao,*" (Hairui Reviled the Emperor' and *Hai Rui Dismissed from Office* Are Two Huge Poisonous Anti-Socialist and Anti-Party Weeds) *Hongqi* (Red Flag) (April 15, 1966), 2-10.

of the current discussion. Rather than focusing on the wrong historical theories manifested in his drama, the authors argued, Wu, in fact, was not writing a history. He wrote about current politics. Guan and Lin charged:

> Comrade Wu Han never forgot to "make the past serve the present" and never engaged in "separating from politics." The problem is that his politics is bourgeois politics. His "present" is bourgeois. On the eve of the Lushan Conference comrade Wu Han wrote "Hai Rui Reviled Emperor." After the conference, our Party dismissed the right opportunists from their offices, and Comrade Wu Han once again "stood up," writing *Hai Rui Dismissed from Office*. All these represented the restoration trend of the bourgeoisie. They actually played a supporting role for the anti-Party, anti-socialist activities of right opportunists. The crucial point of the problems of comrade Wu Han lies here.[262]

That politics had moved to the forefront of the furor surrounding Wu Han's work was driven home when a series of commentaries and critiques on these issues were published in the *Renmin ribao* under the headline "What Is the Political Purpose of Comrade Wu Han's *Hai Rui Dismissed from Office*?"[263]

Approximately a month later a major Beijing newspaper, *Beijing ribao*, was accused of trying to conceal the political nature of the current discussion in its recent criticism of Wu and his associates, the so-called "three-family-village." The newspaper was accused of applying the

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[262] *Renmin ribao*, April 5, 1966.

[263] Ibid., April 8, 1966.

technique of "criticism in name, protection in essence,"[264] and "trying to shift the debate in the wrong direction."[265] Under the title, "Never Forget the Class Struggle," an editorial in *Jiefangjunbao* stated clearly that, "[t]he current debate on the cultural front is not only about a few articles, dramas and movies, or only about academic issues. It is a serious class struggle."[266]

The accusation against the *Beijing Ribao* and the exposure of the "three-family-village" were a great shock to the public because the people attacked were not "bourgeois intellectuals" as such. Instead, they were high ranking Party officials in charge of ideological work. In this new attack Wu Han was said to be but a subordinate. The boss of the anti-Party clique was Deng To, the former chief editor of *Renmin ribao* and currently the secretary of the secretariat of the Beijing Party Committee. Another individual, Liao Mosha, was in charge of cultural work on the same Party Committee. Previously, these people had represented the Party in the struggle against "bourgeois academic authorities." They were the leftists against the

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[264] *Jiefangjunbao*, May 8, 1966.

[265] *Guangming Ribao*, May 8, 1966.

[266] *Jiefangjunbao*, May 4, 1966.

rightists; but now they themselves had become the targets of struggle.

More importantly, about a month later this kind of practice was written into the Party document in which the new dimension opened by Yao's article was confirmed as the direction of the ongoing cultural revolution.[267] The document, entitled the "May 16 Circular," singled out Peng Zheng, the Party secretary and mayor of Beijing, as an example of those who were distorting the political nature of class struggle, and invalidated his so-called "February Outline." It charged that the Outline "violates the basic Marxist thesis that all class struggles are political struggles" and tried to confine the discussion to "various academic and theoretical questions."[268] It called upon the entire Party to criticize the "bourgeois academic authorities" and seize leadership in the cultural sphere. In order to do this, said the "May 16 Circular," the entire Party must

> at the same time criticize and repudiate those representatives of the bourgeoisie who have sneaked into the Party, the government, the army, and all

[267] *Renmin ribao*, May 17, 1967, in *WGZL*, 1:1-4.

[268] According to the newspapers published by the mass organizations during the Cultural Revolution, in January 1966 Peng Zheng allegedly said that in the next two months it would not discuss any political issue in the current debate. See *Xinwen zhanxian*, June 10, 1967, in *RGP*, Vol. 6, 1451. The first Party secretary in Guangzhou was also charged of saying that the event of *Beijing ribao* was not a "political problem." *Hongqibao*, October 24, 1967, in *RGP*, 6: 1711.

> spheres of culture, to clear them out or transfer some of them to other positions. Above all, we must not entrust these people with the work of leading the Cultural Revolution. In fact many of them...are still doing such work, and this is extremely dangerous.[269]

The "May 16 Circular" was later identified as the "programmatic document of the Cultural Revolution." Its main contribution was to introduce a political dimension into academic discussion, thus fundamentally changing the entire direction of the movement. Although the document was published a year later, its spirit was revealed in the June 1 editorial of *Renmin ribao*, entitled "Sweeping Away All Monsters and Ghosts."[270] The "cultural" revolution thus developed into a political campaign against those "representatives of the bourgeoisie inside the Party." The previous theoretical interest, characterized by Merle Goldman as having "little . . .personal vindictiveness,"[271] was replaced by political indictment. Academic discussion was supplanted by personal attack. For example, Wu Han was then criticized not only for his "Hai Rui" play, but also for his essays. He was found to be a counterrevolutionary before the foundation of the People's Republic.[272] His entire

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[269] Ibid.

[270] *Renmin ribao*, June 1, 1966.

[271] Goldman, (1973), 229.

[272] Renminribao, April 17, May 3, 1966; Guangmingribao, April 18, 1966.

family was denounced as counterrevolutionaries:[273] his grandfather was said to be a persecutor of the Taiping rebels of the nineteenth century, his father a reactionary police officer, and his mother a landlord wife who hated the Communist Party.[274]

The shift of attention in the class struggle from the ideological front to the political front was the first important step in the formation of the Cultural Revolution. People no longer considered class struggle to be primarily moral self-cultivation, as they had under the old class theory. People instead were asked to think of class struggle in terms of real politics. Class struggle in people's minds therefore moved from an abstract arena to a concrete setting, from the past or future to the present, from invisible to visible. This change greatly intensified the political atmosphere of the time, arousing people's attention to the political changes inside the Party.

While the academic nature of the discussions was somewhat to be denied, the new political charges immediately brought to a conclusion all the theoretical debates of the past. For example, faced with a serious political charge, Wu

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[273] *Zhejiangribao*, May 18, 1966.

[274] *Beijingribao*, April 16, 1966; *Jiefangjunbao*, May 8, 1966; *Guangmingribao*, May 8, 1966.

Han instantly acknowledged the mistake in his understanding of class theory through such concepts as "the theory of moral heritage" or "the theory of 'honest officials.'"[275] Guo Moruo, chairman of the national science academy, called for all his works to be burned since he had not armed himself with Mao's thought and his "class point of view is sometimes very vague."[276] Mao's wife, Jiang Qing, at once declared the death sentence for the so-called six "black theories" - "the theory of writing reality," "the theory of the broad road of realism," "the theory of deepening realism," "the theory of anti-subject determination," "the theory of anti-radicalism," and "the theory of the combination of spirits of eras." She even used this chance to advance her point of view about a debate that took place in the 1930s about two slogans, "literature for national defense" and "revolutionary literature."[277]

The ideological direction that developed at this time was to be criticized after Mao's death as a "simplification" and an "absolutization" of class theory. This criticism was proper in the sense that the arguments developed during this

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[275] *Renminribao*, December 30, 1965.

[276] Ibid., May 5, 1966.

[277] editorial, *Jiefangjunbao*, April 18, 1966. This is obviously a reflection of Jiang Qing's famous speech "Summary of a Forum on Literature and Arts."

period simplified the complicated problem of applying class theory to practice and tended to approach all social phenomena exclusively from the perspective of class struggle. It is worth noting, however, that what was "simplified" and "absolutized" was the old class theory. The new arguments reinforced and pushed to an extreme a Manichean interpretation of class struggle as a clear-cut contest between good and bad, black and white. This would prove crucial to the later development of the Cultural Revolution by providing an orthodox guide for the application of class theory. The theory was extremely powerful, since it had been nurtured long before the Cultural Revolution, was deeply involved in real politics and was broadly disseminated among the Chinese populace, as documented in Chapter Two. The old class theory was interpreted at this time in such an extreme form that few Party officials, let alone ordinary intellectuals, could escape the charge of "opposing Chairman Mao's class theory." The absolutization and simplification of class theory thus served as an ideological weapon that would soon be used by students to attack virtually any target they wanted.

An immediate consequence of this development was that a door was opened for ordinary people to join the academic discussion. With a simplified, absolutized class theory, the

division between right and wrong was clear. To participate in the discussion one needed not a sophisticated mind but a strong political stand. Argument was replaced by condemnation, reason by enthusiasm, and theory by slogan. As seen in the media, the masses of "workers, peasants and soldiers" became more and more involved in the discourse.[278] When the main attention of class theory turned from the ideological front to the political front, the somewhat academic discussion became a full-fledged political campaign. It marked a comprehensive victory of the old class theory; but at the same time, it also brought the first break with that theory by bringing class struggle into the Party itself.

The Separation of the Party Organization from Mao's Thought

Despite its spectacular scale, the campaign at this stage remained basically an "official" movement in the sense that it was tightly controlled by Party officials at different levels. After the denouncement of the "three-

[278] For example, *Renminribao*, April 14, 16; May 3, 4, 6, 8, 9, 12, 13, 15, 17, 19, 27, 1966.

family village" in Beijing, many Party officials in charge of ideological work in other places were also singled out for criticism. Many movies, plays, books and articles were condemned as "poisonous weeds."[279] The open denouncement of so many Party officials and literary works no doubt greatly intensified the already charged political atmosphere. The movement was, nevertheless, remote from most people, since the objects of struggle were selected by Party committees at different levels.[280] What the masses could and were expected to do, as in the previous political campaigns, was to show their enthusiasm in supporting Party decisions, whatever they might be. The most important feature of this kind of politics was that the movement was driven from the center of power to the grassroots through a hierarchical Party system, or "from top to bottom" as described by the people later.

This political pattern was soon broken with a dramatic action made by the Maoists. This was the broadcast of the

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[279] For example, in Guangdong province, public criticism was leveled at two writers, Qi Mu and Ouyang Shan, two scholars, Rong Geng and Liu Jie, two movies, "A Thousand Mile Travel Against Head Wind," and "King Qi Searches For a General," a book, "Three Family Lane," paintings by Ni Hongcai, the problem of park construction, and so on. See Hai Feng *Guangzhoudiqu wenge licheng shulue* (An Account of the Cultural Revolution in the Canton Area) (Hong Kong: youlian chubanshe, 1971), 1-42.

[280] For example, in Guangdong province there was a so-called "April Plan" in which the provincial Party committee selected targets of criticism. The decision to publicly denounce the director of the propaganda department at the South China bureau was made at the beginning of the Cultural Revolution. See Hai Feng, 35-7.

big character poster written by Nie Yuanzi and six others from Beida (Beijing University) on the evening of June 1, 1966. In this poster, Nie, a lecturer in philosophy at the university, with some of her colleagues and students, openly attacked the president and Party secretary of the university and two other officials in charge of education in the Beijing Party Committee. These three people were removed from their offices three days after the broadcast.[281] The Beida poster set a precedent for the masses to initiate a grassroots attack against Party organizations and officials at different levels. It thus broke the long political pattern that had prevailed in Communist China until that time. Its significance was so well recognized by many people that it soon became a common criterion that a true mass movement must be initiated "from the bottom to the top." Otherwise it was not a mass movement, but a "movement manipulating the masses."

The Maoists showed their support to the Beida poster not only by broadcasting the poster. More remarkably, they justified the poster on the basis of a fundamental political principle that every revolutionary must observe. To champion the new principle, they openly challenged the old political

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[281] *Renmin ribao*, June 4, 1966.

pattern. Hailing the Beida poster, a commentator's essay in *Renmin ribao* said,

> In so far as proletarian revolutionaries are concerned, it is the discipline of the Chinese Communist Party that we obey and it is the leadership of the Party's Central Committee with Chairman Mao at the head that we accept without reserve. Mao Zedong's thought is the supreme guide for all our work. We must firmly adhere to Chairman Mao's teachings on classes and class struggle in socialist society and his instructions on carrying out the great proletarian cultural revolution in the ideological sphere to foster proletarian ideas and liquidate bourgeois ideas. The people of the whole country will rise up, oppose and knock down all those who oppose Chairman Mao and the Party's Central Committee, no matter what banner they hoist and how highly they may be placed and how great their seniority may be, for in point of fact they represent the interests of the overthrown exploiting classes, the whole nation will smash their sinister gang, their sinister organization and their sinister discipline to pieces.[282]

This was a bold statement. It not only broke the Party's organizational principle, but it also shook the image of a united and sacred Party. The above statement differentiated, albeit cautiously, individual Party organizations and members from the Party, Party branches from the Party Central Committee, and even, implicitly, an existing Party Central Committee from that "with Chairman Mao at the head." These differentiation fragmented a united Party into separate organizations. In so doing this statement deprived the Party organizations at different

[282] Ibid., June 2, 1966.

levels from the protection of a united and sacred Party. The Party was now seen to be composed of different members who were not immune to class struggle. Some class enemies had formed a "sinister gang" and "sinister organizations." These people and their organizations hence should (and could) be subjected to suspicion, criticism, and even attack by the masses.

This implication was amplified when the Renmin ribao's commentator's essay was reprinted two months later in Hongqi, with a crucial word and an entire sentence added to the original text. The new version read as follows (the newly added word and sentence are underlined):

> In so far as proletarian revolutionaries are concerned, it is the discipline of the Chinese Communist Party that we obey and it is the *correct* leadership of the Party's Central Committee with Chairman Mao at the head that we accept without reserve. *All erroneous leadership that endangers the revolution should not be accepted without qualification; it should be firmly resisted.* Mao Zedong's thought is the supreme guide for all our work.[283]

By adding the adjective "correct" to "the leadership of the Party's Central Committee," the new version of the comment hinted that the leadership could also be wrong. Moreover, the added sentence sent a much stronger message to the people to resist "all erroneous leadership." This was

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[283] *Renminribao pinglunyuan, "Huanfu beida de yizhang dazhibao* (Hail a poster of Beida), Hongqi (September 1966), 1.

exactly the message some rebel students received from this unusual change. For example, only a few days after the publication of the new version of the comments, a group at the Beijing Aviation Institute wrote an influential poster to highlight the significance of the alterations. It immediately concluded from these alterations that there were serious conflicts inside the Party, from the local Party branches to the central committee. The poster said,

> We believe, the above meaningful alterations tell us, the struggles of two lines and two leaderships existed not only in Beijing, in Beijing university, in the Aviation Institute, but has also existed...[in] the local branches [and] the central committee for a long time. (Please refer to the editorial of *Hongqi*, No. 11, 1966)[284]

The quick and sensitive response of the rebel students at the Aviation Institute was, of course, extraordinary. The authors belonged to the Red Flag Combat Team, which was to become one of the nation's best known rebel organizations. This response suggests, nevertheless, how carefully the students read the Party message and how closely they tried to follow its suggestions at that time.

In opposition to the Party's old organization principle, the essay of *Renmin ribao*'s commentator championed the supremacy of Mao's thought. It emphasized

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[284] Beijinghanghongsueyuan hongqi zhandoudui, "*Tan liangtiaolluxiandedouzheng,*"(On the two line struggle) in *RGPS*, 7: 3263. On October 6, Kang Sheng praised the article. WGZL, 5912.

that "Mao Zedong thought is the supreme guide for all our work." The comparative word "supreme" was noticeable here. Mao's thought was elevated not only over the theories of different schools, but also over the state constitution and law, government regulations and policies, and above all, Party discipline in particular and even the Party's decisions in general. Thus, this statement separated the Party organizations at different levels from Mao's thought.

This was a very revolutionary principle, for the supremacy of Mao's thought was justified at the expense of the Party's authority. By claiming the supremacy of Mao's thought, this principle not only actually liberated the people from the direct control of Party officials and organizations, but also, to a certain extent, gave them permission to do whatever they believed right. What was crucial here was not Mao's thought itself, but the judgment of the masses. It was now up to the masses to decide what was right and what was wrong according to their understanding of Mao's teachings. In this course the masses not only followed Mao's thought, but also redefined his ideas according to their own political experiences and social observations, which we will discuss later.

The revolutionary meaning of the Beida poster could, therefore, be upheld despite the fact that the Beida poster

was, as we now know, not initiated by the masses to the extent that had been previously believed. The writing of the poster was, in fact, directly arranged by Kang Sheng, a member of the Party polibureau and Mao's close associate at the time, through his wife Chao Yiou. The fate of Beijing's Party chiefs was decided before the publication of the Beida poster. However, the general message the people received from this event was that they should take the initiative and act according to "Chairman Mao's teachings." Previously this had meant only that the people should obey Party officials' instructions. Now, the "supreme guide" of Mao's thought was to be used to check everything in the state and society, including Party officials and organizations.

This message was well received by many people at that time. For example, in Beijing, within two days after the appearance of the Beida poster, more than 700 posters aimed at the Beijing Commerce Institute's Party Committee appeared on its campus.[285] Similar events occurred at the Beijing Water Conservancy and Electricity Institute.[286] In Wuhan, a slogan was disseminated widely at the Central China Institute of Technology: "There's something fishy in Beijing University; there is something fishy in our school too." A

[285] *Hongfanjun*, May 20, 1967, in *RGP* 7: 1781.

[286] *Shuidian hongweibing*, June 1, 1967, in *RGP*, 11: 3617.

poster criticizing the Party committees appeared at the Wuhan Institute of Topography on June 2. On June 9, at the No.2 Middle School of the city, there appeared a poster with the appalling title "Bombard the Party Branch [of the school]."[287] In Haerbing, students openly claimed that "we indeed cannot trust the leadership [of the school]... We only follow the instructions of Chairman Mao and the Party Central Committee."[288] In Guangzhou there was a so-called "Beijing Letter Incident." On June 24, a student named Gao Xiang at the South China Engineering Institute posted a letter he had received from Beijing and his own "Letter to All Party Students of the Institution," which claimed that except for Chairman Mao and the Party Central Committee, all Party organizations could be subject to suspicion.[289] In fact, after June 1, the normal order at many schools, especially those in the big cities, was disrupted. The authorities in charge of schools complained that students were out of control.[290] Mao later proudly claimed that the

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[287] Wang Shaoguang, 190-194.

[288] *Hongyi zhanbao*, November 28, 1966, in *RGP*, 7: 1815.

[289] *Hongqi bao*, June 24, 1967, in *RGP*, 6: 1705-7. Also see Hai Feng, *An Account of the Cultural Revolution in the Canton Area* (Hong Kong: Union Research Institute, 1971), 30-33.

[290] *Renmin ribao*, June 4, 1966; Gao Gao and Yan Jiaqi, *Wenge shinianshi*, 22.

broadcast of the Beida poster "stirred up the whole country."[291]

It is because of these events that the appearance of the Beida poster has been considered by many to be the "real" beginning of the Cultural Revolution. It was "real" because these students and teachers felt they were acting on their own initiative and that the development of the movement depended on them. Now they had to evaluate the political situations in their schools and choose the targets of struggle. Most frequently, they had to decide which side they should support when opinions differed among students and teachers. The debates were now no longer remote and abstract: the issues involved people and events in their immediate environment. The arguments were usually squarely antagonistic and most political charges were alarming. Many people felt for the first time that they had to make real political decisions. Class struggle had thus become tangible for many.

The separation of the Party organization from Mao Zedong Thought fundamentally changed the role of the latter. Mao Zedong Thought shifted from being a means for the Party to transform the society to a means for the people to supervise and reconstruct the state. The meaning of class

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[291] ***WANSUI***, 658.

struggle under the banner of Mao's thought thus changed from that of a social transformation mobilized by the Party to a political revolution in which the masses were in control in the reconstruction of the state.

Mao Zedong Thought, then, became the strongest spiritual resource available for those who wished to participate actively in the movement. There are numerous accounts from this time detailing how people, inspired by Mao's thought, dared to stand up to their superiors.[292] What is significant here is not the application of Mao's thought as such, but the fact that in the name of his ideas ordinary people were encouraged to criticize the entire existing system and to struggle for justice and right. A new spirit emerged. It did not take long for some people to start openly promoting the slogan, "suspect everything."[293] The slogan, "be an obedient tool of the Party," which had prevailed before the Cultural Revolution, was now abandoned.[294] People voiced a strong demand to "break the spiritual shackles" and to "bury slavish mentality." This new spirit became a basic dynamic of the Cultural

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[292] For example, see *Jinggangshan*, July 4, 1967, in *RGP*, 3: 0560.

[293] See for example, two essays supporting this slogan written by a group from Qinghua University in September, 1966; in *RGP*, 16: 5105-8.

[294] See for example, *Honggi*, April 18, 27, 1967, in *RGP*, 6: 1581, 1587; *Zhaofan youli*, April 30, 1967, in *RGP*, 12: 3977.

Revolution. Mao's thought thus served as the strongest spiritual prop leading the Chinese people to a new ideological emancipation.

After students eliminated their school authorities' direct control and thus liberated themselves from Party discipline, however, what the "real" Cultural Revolution first witnessed was a full-blown development of the old class theory. This is perhaps the most important factor in understanding the essence of the Cultural Revolution at this stage. It is also the most important way in which the Cultural Revolution differed from the Hundred Flower movement in 1957, a point still missed by most observers.

Although the Hundred Flower movement and the Cultural Revolution looked quite similar in that both movements began with a large scale criticism of Party organizations and officials at different levels, they differed in the nature of their criticism. Unlike the "rightists" of 1957, who had asked the Party to step down and loosen its political control, students at the beginning of the Cultural Revolution attacked Party officials and organizations for not strengthening the Party leadership enough. Thus, if the rightists in 1957 asked the Party to turn "right," the students in 1966 demanded that it turn "left." A central theme in their attacks concerned the application of the

class line and policies in schools. Students accused school leaders of not following the Party's class lines and policies to their full extent.

A common charge in this regard was of discrimination against students from worker and poor and lower-middle peasant families, as well as those from the families of "revolutionary martyrs, cadres, and officers." The forms of discrimination included emphasizing academic performance in school enrollment, giving special treatment to students of "bad" origins, and even persecuting students of "good" origins. The following is a typical allegation of the time:

> The bourgeois sirs in "authority" boast of their children as "fine porcelain" which looks pretty even without any flowery design on it. They viciously curse the children of workers and peasants as "coarse chinaware" which simply cannot be made pretty by any painting... Those agents of the bourgeoisie who have sneaked into our party have tried to use the invisible sword of the entrance exams to mercilessly cut off the path leading the children of laboring people to the pinnacles of science and culture... They have...done their best to discriminate against and obstruct the children of workers, poor and lower-middle peasants, revolutionary cadres and revolutionary soldiers.[295]

The students' rebellion at this time was thus meant to push the old class theory to its extreme. This was the main ideological thrust in the celebrated three essays written by students from the Middle and High School attached to Qinghua

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[295] Gordon White, *The Politics of Class and Class Origin*, 25.

University.[296] It was through these essays that the most popular slogan of the Cultural Revolution—"to rebel is justified"—first gained prominence. They simultaneously gave the aims and purposes of the "Red Guards" who had penned them their first nation-wide exposure. What made these essays so famous was Mao's personal endorsement of their contents, which was tantamount to a blessing from God. Millions of students found inspiration in these essays and the Red Guard movement spread across the entire nation with remarkable speed.

Despite their militant rhetoric, however, the basic content of the essays was nothing new, but was rather a radical expression of the dominant trend at the time. What the essay asked to rebel against was not the direction of the dominant ideology, but how it should be enforced. The authors of the essays were not satisfied with the "soft" aspect of the government regulations and Party policies. They promoted a radical approach to champion the official ideology. This was the essential point of the three essays. What they fashionably and repeatedly emphasized was the importance of attacking cautious and careful attitudes. The first essay stated:

> Since we want rebellion, the matter has been taken out of your hands! We are going to make the air thick with

[296] *Hongqi* 11 (September 1966),26-7, in *WGZL* 1: 63-5.

> the pungent smell of explosives. Toss them over, grenades and stick bombs together, and start a big fight. "Sympathy," "all-sidedness," out of the way!
> You say we are too one-sided? What then is your all-sidedness? Your all-sidedness looks like "two combining one," eclecticism.
> You say we are too high and mighty? We are "high and mighty."...
> You say we are too rude? We should be rude. How can we be soft and clinging towards revisionism or go in for moderation in a big way? To be moderate towards the enemy is to be cruel to the revolution!
> You say we are going too far? To put it bluntly, your "avoiding going too far" is reformism; it is "peaceful transition." You are day-dreaming! We are going to strike you down to the dust and keep you there![297]

By assailing the "soft" approach, the rebellion at this time demanded a much more aggressive and militant enforcement of the official ideology than had prevailed before the Cultural Revolution. This is why the attack on Party officials and organizations and the collapse of school authority later brought not the liberation of those "bourgeois intellectuals" and "rightist students," but rather a very arbitrary and cruel persecution of them.

When this trend flowed from campus to society, it became the infamous anti-four olds campaign that shocked the whole world. Names of streets and places were changed. Houses were ransacked. Temples and churches were destroyed. Books were burned, and people were beaten. Behind this seemingly lawless behavior, however, was a straightforward

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[297] Ibid.

ideological trend. As a matter of fact, the Red Guards demonstrated extraordinary high morality.[298] A closer look reveals that the anti-four olds campaign was nothing but an extreme form of the old class theory. The spearhead of the campaign was directed against the influence of the old society and the remnants of the old propertied classes. It was a direct but militant continuation of the Party policies before the Cultural Revolution.

This was seen most clearly in the prevalence of the so-called "blood theory," expressed in a couplet which ran as follows:

> If the father is a hero, the son is a good chap;
> If the father is a reactionary, the son is a bad egg.
> (Stanza:) This is absolutely (or basically) so.

An extreme application of this theory was seen in an "Urgent Order" delivered by the people at the Beijing Blood Transfusion Station. The order prohibited people of "black" origins not only from receiving blood but also from giving blood to people of "red" origins, for this exchange was considered to be "against the Party class line."[299]

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[298] It surprised many victims of the anti-four old campaign when their properties were returned to them intact after the Cultural Revolution. This suggests how strictly Red Guards disciplined themselves, for it would have been too easy for them to seize these properties for themselves in that chaotic situation.

[299] Handbill, "*Jinji tonggao,*" *(Urgent notice)* in *RGP*, 19: 6091.

Yet this was an extreme case. What must be noted here is that the "blood" theory was actually not a pedigree theory as such, because its decisive factor was not biological connections but political labels. Or, more precisely, biological connections were highly politicized, and emphasizing them greatly strengthened political labels. In any case, what stood behind the "blood theory" was obviously the old class theory. The anti-four olds campaign was simultaneously a movement against the old culture and customs and a large-scale prosecution of people with bad political labels according to the old class theory. The prosecution soon escalated from criticism and struggle to the ransacking of houses and exile, the victims of which were forced to move from cities to the countryside. Finally, the prosecution led to physical torture and even systematic massacre. A renowned case was that of Daxing County in the suburb of Beijing where, within six days, 325 people were killed, including an 80-year old individual and a 38-day-old infant.[300]

The political tendency of the "blood theory" was further revealed when its promoters used it to protect the Party officials, an obviously anticlimactic development, given the spirit of the campaign. A notorious example was

[300] Wang Nianyi, 69-70.

the so-called "Tan Lifu Speech." In this speech, Tan, a son of a high Party official, openly defended not only the Party officials in general, but also the Party officials under attack in particular. He argued that the mistakes these officials made were nothing but that "the veteran revolutionaries meet with new problems." On this basis, he questioned the rebel students, "why are you happy when the Party officials make mistakes?" He then accused the students of "rightist rebellion."[301] Following the same line, the newly established Red Guard Pickets of the Beijing Western district issued a general order to "protect the safety of senior revolutionary cadres." It prohibited "ransacking the houses of the officials in charge of state affairs," "especially stopping and checking the cars of those officials."[302] Their protection of the high Party officials was so detailed that an order prohibiting drinking and smoking specifically pointed out that it was acceptable for "the revered revolutionaries of the elder generation" to smoke. "No one is allowed to use this to tarnish" them, the order warned in advance.[303]

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[301] Ibid., 82-83.

[302] Ibid., 76.

[303] Handbill, *"Jieyan jiejiu ling," (Order to ban smoke and alcohol)* in *RGP*, 19: 6389.

The prevalence of the "blood theory" and the militant anti-four olds campaign suggests how profound the influence of the old class theory was. When people were free from the direct control of the Party, and to a certain extent allowed to do what they wanted, they did not raise new political principles or demand to abandon the old official ideology. Instead, they spontaneously followed the old class theory that had prevailed before the Cultural Revolution and pushed it to an extreme. This was what they believed was right and was what they wanted. The old class theory had been deeply embedded in their minds.

The Authority of the Masses vs. the Party Leadership

If the situation described above had continued, the Cultural Revolution would have been only another anti-rightist movement conducted with much cruelty and horror. At this crucial moment, however, Mao and his close associates once again directly intervened in the movement. This time the Maoists raised a much more radical principle. To challenge the Party leadership, they championed the authority of the masses. By doing this they provided some vital elements of democracy to the movement. The meaning of

class struggle was thus fundamentally changed: the revolution became a primitive democratic movement.

The authority of the masses was promoted in the name of the so-called "mass line." Although the mass line was said by some scholars to have been poorly defined even by Mao himself, it was clear that the meaning of the mass line before the Cultural Revolution was substantially different from that of democracy as it was generally understood in the West.[304] A major difference is that the latter is used to control political power whereas the former is used to serve political power. The mass line before the Cultural Revolution was essentially a working method, or style of the Party. It encouraged Party officials to have contact with the people more frequently and closely. It was in this sense that the mass line was also called a democratic method, or democratic style. But it was never seen as a means of controlling political power, let alone as a source of political legitimacy. The key to understanding the mass line is the Party's position within it. For the mass line was created by the Party to better carry out Party's policies. The mass line was characterized by Mao as being "from the mass to the mass." What is missing here is the subject,

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[304] Edward Hammond, "Marxism and the Mass Line," *Modern China* 4:1 (January 1978), 4.

which is no doubt the Party. The Party was to collect information "from the masses," to make decisions, and to carry these decisions "to the masses." This was the basic principle of the mass line before the Cultural Revolution.

This basic principle was altered, however, in another dramatic action made by the Maoists. This was the recalling of work teams from schools in late July after Mao returned to Beijing on July 18, 1966. The work teams were sent to the schools when the Party authorities were shaken in many places after the broadcast of the Beida poster. The withdrawal of the work teams thus meant the suspension of direct Party control at the school. When this unusual action was explained in terms of the mass line, the meaning of that line was fundamentally changed.

What was new in Mao's criticism was his focus on not whether the work teams followed the mass line, but on the sending of the work teams itself. Sending work team was the most common practice of the Party to impose its leadership in difficult situations. By condemning this practice as contrary to the mass line, Mao set it in opposition to the Party leadership. The mass line was therefore changed from a Party instrument to something independent from the Party. It became another source of authority. It became a political principle promoting the authority of the masses.

To defend this new principle, Mao radically reversed the relationship between the mass and the Party in a series of talks criticizing the work teams.[305] In his talks the Party, and especially its high officials, were no longer the leading force in society. They were criticized for having no ability to do anything,[306] for "being scared to death" by the student movement,[307] for "having no perceptive knowledge," for being "bureaucratic" and for "standing on the side of the bourgeoisie."[308] Mao warned these cadres to prepare to become the subjects of the revolution; otherwise, they would be set aside.[309] Speaking about many veteran revolutionaries, he said that "having conducted the revolution for decades only made them more and more stupid."[310] On the other hand, Mao praised the Beida poster as "the declaration of the Paris Commune in China in the 1960s," and said that "we cannot write this kind of poster." He stated that "youth are the great army of the Cultural Revolution!"[311] Mao concluded

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[305] *WANSUI*, 643-53.

[306] Ibid., 644-646.

[307] Ibid., 646-7.

[308] Ibid., 647.

[309] Ibid., 649-650.

[310] Ibid., 645.

[311] Ibid., 649.

that "in the past, it was the mother teaching the son. Now it is the son teaching the mother."[312]

Although Mao had held a similar opinion of the relationship between the Party and the masses for a long time, he had reserved the leading position for the Party. The Party was able to be the "teacher" of the masses if they would follow the mass line and be the "students" of the masses first. But now Mao virtually denied this possibility as he challenged the Party officials:

> You do not understand the situation [in schools]. You won't do so for two months if you go there. You won't do so for half year, or even for a year. For example, Jian Bozhan[313] has written so many books. Can you read [all of them]? Can you criticize them?... Can you argue with him? I can't. All provincial committees can't.[314]

By ordering the withdrawal of the work teams, Mao in fact removed the Party leadership in the movement. Furthermore, Mao accused the work teams of "suppressing the student movement." As Mao charged,

> Who suppressed the student movement? Only the Beiyang Warlord did! That a Communist Party was afraid of the student movement is anti-Marxist. Some people claimed to follow the mass line and serve the people every day,

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[312] Ibid., 655.

[313] Jian was a famous historian. He was under attack at that time as a "bourgeois authority."

[314] *WANSUI*, 644.

but in fact they followed the bourgeois line and served the bourgeoisie.[315]

By this condemnation Mao changed the meaning of the mass line from a work method or style which served the Party into a political criterion for judging the Party leadership. Following this line, Mao claimed that the new Beijing Party Committee could be opposed, since it suppressed the student movement. In his own poster, Mao even denounced "some Party officials from the Central Committee to local committees" for practicing "the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie" by "suppressing the proletarian revolutionaries." The authority of the mass thus stood in opposition to the Party leadership. It is this direct juxtaposition which made Mao's comment at this time extremely radical.

The authority of the masses was soon written into a Party document, the so-called "Sixteen Articles," which was treated as the "manual of the Cultural Revolution."[316] The gist of this document was to remove the restrictions on the masses and encourage them to participate in the movement on their own initiative. In so doing, the document introduced some primitive democratic ideas and a series of democratic methods. For example, the Sixteen Articles asked Party

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[315] Ibid., 649.

[316] *Renminribao*, August 9, 1966, in *WGZL*, 1: 72-77.

organizations at different levels to "boldly arouse the masses" and "let the masses educate themselves," and claimed that "it is the masses who must liberate themselves." It urged that "every revolutionary must be good at independent thinking, promoting the communist spirit of daring to think, speak, and act." It confirmed the right of the masses to express their opinions:

> In some schools, some units and some work teams, responsible members have organized a counterattack against the masses who posted big-character wall newspapers against them. They even intimated that to oppose the leaders of their own units or work teams was to oppose the Party Central committee, the party, and socialism, and that any slogan shouted in this regard was a counterrevolutionary slogan. By so doing they will necessarily attack some real revolutionary activists. This is a wrong direction to take and a wrong line to follow. It is impermissible to do so.[317]

To encourage the people, the document argued that "sometimes truth is in the hands of the minority." Therefore, "the minority of people who hold different opinions... must be protected." To guarantee this, the document differentiated political dissidents from civil criminals and gave the former certain protection:

> Problems among students of universities, specialized colleges, middle schools and primary schools should not lead to their being purged. In order to prevent the shifting of the main target of struggle, it is impermissible to use any excuse to instigate the masses to struggle against the masses and students to struggle against students. Even in the case of real rightists,

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[317] Ibid.

> they should be dealt with in the light of prevailing circumstance at a later period in the movement.[318]

The masses of students and teachers were then given the right to "full use" of such means as "big character posters and large-scale debate." Free elections were also promoted. After declaring the new organizations, such as cultural revolutionary groups and cultural revolutionary committees, as "power organs of the Proletarian Cultural Revolution," the Sixteen Articles said:

> Members of the cultural revolution groups and cultural revolutionary committees and delegates to the cultural revolutionary congresses must be fully elected as in the Paris Commune. The list of the candidates must be drawn up and submitted by the revolutionary masses, and, after repeated discussions by the masses, elections may then be held.[319]

The measures promoted in the Sixteen Articles were later called "a broad democracy under the dictatorship of the proletariat." The students and teachers even enjoyed freedom of organization after August 18; on that day Mao wore a Red Guard's band and had his first of eight receptions for students and teachers. An unprecedented mass movement arose.

The authority of the masses was not only written into official documents, but also, more importantly, it was soon

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[318] Ibid.

[319] Ibid.

put into practice. This was accomplished mainly through the campaign of "criticism of the bourgeois reactionary line." The campaign advanced the concept of the so-called "two line struggle" which soon prevailed in the entire country. To many people the class struggle was then replaced by the line struggle. Or, more precisely, the class struggle in socialist society was believed to be concentrated on, and mainly evident in, the line struggle.

The concept of line struggle was extremely important to the ideological reorientation of class theory in the early stages of the Cultural Revolution. Although line struggle was considered but another form of class struggle, the new concept conveyed very exclusive meaning. While class struggle could be seen in many different forms and could take place in many different places, line struggle denoted almost exclusively the conflict inside the Party. While there were many different criteria in conducting class struggle according to different situations, the crucial point to line struggle was the newly defined mass line.

According to Wang Li's memoirs, Mao proposed a criticism of the wrong line in September, and finalized the term, "bourgeois reactionary line," on October 1.[320] The

[320] Wang Li, *Xianchang Lishi* (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1993), 66-67. According to Wang, in September Mao summoned some people to a meeting, criticizing that "in a comparatively long time, that is, from August 3 to September, the main trend of the movement was forward. But many problems have not been resolved, especially the problem of firmness and thoroughness in the

continuation of "the struggle between the proletarian revolutionary line represented by Chairman Mao and the bourgeois anti-revolutionary line" was first formally mentioned by Lin Biao in his National Day speech.[321] The editorial in *Hongqi*, number 13, then gave further explanation.[322] It pointed out that the Sixteen Articles was the result of the two line struggle, whose publication moved the movement to "a new high tide." However, the editorial said,

> The two line struggle has not ended yet. In some places, in some working units the two line struggle was still very serious and complicated. A handful of people adopted a new way to deceive the masses to contend with the Sixteen Articles. They insisted on the bourgeois reactionary line, applying the method of manipulating the masses to struggle against the masses to fulfill their purpose.[323]

The editorial then asked for thorough criticism of the bourgeois reactionary line. It pointed out,

> The criticism of the bourgeois reactionary line was the key to following the Sixteen Articles and to correctly and broadly carry out the task of struggle, criticism and reform. No compromise was allowed here. During the

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criticism of the wrong line." He repeated his request for criticizing the "wrong line" and decided that the point should be raised in Lin Biao's National Day speech and in the editorial in Hongqi.

[321] *Renminribao*, October 2, 1966, *WGZL*, Vol. 1, 127-29. According to Wang Li, the speech was written by Chen Boda, Wang Rengzhong and Zhang Chunqiao.

[322] *Renminribao*, October 1, 1966, *Hongqi*, 13 (October 1, 1966), in *WGZL*, 129-31. According to Wang Li, the editorial was written by Chen Boda, Wang Li and Guan Feng.

[323] Ibid.

> Cultural Revolution the two line struggle was the reflection of the class struggle inside the Party.[324]

Through the official media and numerous speeches by the Maoists at the time, it was made clear that the point of departure between the "proletarian revolutionary line" and the "bourgeois reactionary line" was the attitude toward the masses. The major crime of the reactionary line was to suppress the masses.[325] By emphasizing this criterion, the campaign brought a series of radical actions into the movement.

This criterion finally removed all protection from virtually all Party officials under attack. Faced with the assault from the masses, these Party officials either accepted the charge or rejected it. In the former case, they were then the convicted offenders. In the latter case they were accused of "suppressing the masses."

This was why the campaign of criticism of the bourgeois reactionary line marked the end of many debates about evaluation of the work teams or Party committees in different places. Before the campaign there was still the need to provide concrete analysis of individual cases. Now there was no longer such a need, since the Party officials

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[324] Ibid.

[325] *Zhongyang shouzhang jianghua huibian* 1-4; in *RGP*, 19: 5895-6030.

under attack were, by the logic of the campaign, doomed. It was soon made clear that even the good cadres could become counter-revolutionaries if they resisted the criticism of the masses.[326] Citing a worker's words, Chen Boda stated that a revolutionary Party committee needed no protection; only a counter-revolutionary Party needed protection.[327] Lin Biao then claimed that "the mass movement was right by nature."[328] Even cautious people such as Zhou Enlai hurried to follow the trend and suggested that local Party officials' fear of attack was sufficient to justify the attack.[329] Zhou then declared not only that over 95 percent of the work teams made the "line mistake," but also that those Party committees who did not send out work teams did so.[330] The campaign thus followed a new surge of attack against the senior Party officials. The slogan "kicking off the Party committee to make revolution," was then broadly disseminated. The Party organizations in major cities and provinces were generally paralyzed or semi-paralyzed.[331]

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[326] *Zhongyang shouzhang jianghua huibian* 3, in *RGP*, 19: 5971.

[327] WGZL, 1: 135.

[328] WJHB, 376.

[329] Zhongyang shouzhang jianghua 2, in *RGP*, 19: 5931.

[330] Zhongyang shouzhang jianghua huibian 1, in *RGP*, 19: 5900.

[331] For example, from October 30 to January 25 the Party office of Jilin province was turned into an "underground" and had moved to

The targets of the campaign, however, were not limited to Party officials only. The attack on the work teams and the Party Committees in schools soon expanded to almost any power establishment, including the new Cultural Revolution Committees or Temporary Organization Committees.[332] They were charged with continuing "a work team line without work teams."[333] The criticism of the work teams was followed by a criticism of the people who had closely followed and firmly supported the work teams earlier. Unlike the first stage of the movement, during which people who stood up against the Party officials and organizations were attacked, now it was the people who stood to protect the Party officials and organizations who were subjected to criticism and labeled "Royalists." These people were often former political activists, such as Party or Youth League members. That is, they were the "good" people in pre-Cultural Revolution China. The campaign thus marked the beginning of large-scale conflict among the masses. Chen Boda allegedly said that there were "revisionist Red Guards."[334] Tao Lujia, a high

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seven different times until it was finally taken over by the rebels in late January. See Wang Nianyi, 120.

[332] Zhongyang shouzhang jianghua huibian 1, in *RGP*, 19: 5910.

[333] Ibid., 19: 5913.

[334] Ibid., in *RGP*, 19: 5957.

ranking Party official, even stated that "our Party and Youth League members were imbued with conservative and backward ideas. . . we have made mistakes by relying on them."[335] The problem of cadre children was brought into the open for the first time. Chen Boda suggested that children of highly ranked officials had better not occupy positions in charge of the movement. He contended, "why must they be in power because they were children of high ranked cadres? Isn't that because they had noble blood lineage?"[336] Zhou Enlai charged that in this case, these children would be "feudalist princes,"[337] and he agreed that the present time was a period of "great division and great regrouping."[338]

The most radical action brought about by the campaign was the "rehabilitation" of the honor of victims of the bourgeois reactionary line. In an urgent instruction issued by the Party Military Committee and approved by the Party Central Committee, it was ordered that those who had been branded "counterrevolutionaries," "Anti-Party elements," and "rightists" by Party committees or work teams must have their good names redeemed; in addition, the materials

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[335] Ibid., in *RGP*, 19: 5915.

[336] WGZL, 1: 135.

[337] Zhongyang shouzhang jianghua huibian 2, in *RGP*, 19: 5933.

[338] Ibid., in *RGP*, 19: 5951.

detrimental to their honor must be destroyed in public.[339] These included work teams' reports, publications, and meeting minutes, confessions of students and teachers, and even the diaries of work team members.[340] These were called "black materials." The Party officials were asked to make confessions to the public and apologize to the victims. This was unthinkable to most people. Yet a still more dramatic action was found in the Mao's center's acquiescence to, if not encouragement of, people's seizure of these "black materials."[341] The search for these materials led students to ransack Party offices, from those in schools to those at the municipal and provincial level and even those at the central government level. For example, in Jiling Province, students broke into the Provincial Party office building, opened the archive office, and seized 278 top-secret documents. In Beijing 600 students broke through two battalions of soldiers and forced their way into the office building of the National Defense Ministry.[342]

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[339] WGZL, 1: 132-3.

[340] Zhongyang shouzhang jianghua huibian 4, in *RGP*, 19: 5990.

[341] For example, Zhou Enlai was cited as saying that "more or less, every work team has the black materials. It is not surprising that the suppressed minority will seize them by force if you do not release them." *Zhongyang shouzhang jianghua* 4, in *RGP*, 19: 5990.

[342] Wang Nianyi, 118-9.

Scholars have traced Mao's populist tendency, which was at odds with Leninist principles, to the earliest days in his revolutionary career. However, no one expected that his unorthodox tendency could bring such dramatic actions as those during the Cultural Revolution.

His populist tendency led him to advance the authority of the masses at the expense of the Party leadership. The old mass line thus turned into a theoretical premise promoting a series of democratic methods. Although the "grand democracy" during the Cultural Revolution was far from mature and thus "primitive," it was very revolutionary. A crucial reason for this was that it existed in conjunction with the class theory. Democratic methods were to serve the revolution by which "one class would overthrow the other." The mass movement thus became a comprehensive attack on the state structure. This became more true when the Maoists expanded the movement from the cultural and educational sectors to others in society.

From "Cultural Revolution" to "All-around Class Struggle"

From the beginning of the Cultural Revolution, the attention of the class struggle was focused on the cultural

sphere. Even after the movement became more and more political in nature, it remained largely within the cultural sphere. When conflicts between students who wanted to attack the local Party organizations and workers and peasants who wanted to protect them occurred in many places, the central government simply asked the workers and peasants not to interfere with the students' movement,[343] and students not to interfere with the order in factories and in the countryside.[344] Workers and peasants were asked to stay "firmly at their working posts," to "grasp revolution and promote production."[345] Spontaneous rebellious actions by workers and peasants were ignored.[346] As late as November 10, 1966, the *Renmin ribao* editorial still drew a clear line between conducting the Cultural Revolution in the cultural sphere and in other sectors in society.[347] It stated clearly that to conduct the Cultural Revolution workers and peasants

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[343] Renminribao, August 23, 1966.

[344] Ibid., September, 7; September 15, 1966.

[345] Ibid., September 7, 15, 19; November 10, 1966.

[346] There were quite a few of these actions in different places. See, for example, *Shoudu hongweibing*, November 13, 1966; in *RGP*, 11: 3474; January 31, 1967, in *RGP*, 11: 3504. *Hongshe zhigong*, March 2, 1967, in *RGP*, 7: 1876, *Caimao jianbing*, March 18, 1967; in *RGP*, 12, 3936; *Jinjun bao*, May 31, 1967, in *RGP*, 2, 0325; *Jinggangshan*, July 26, 1967, in *RGP*, 3: 0450; *Guangyin hongqi*, November 23, 1967, in *RGP*, 9: 2745.

[347] Renminribao, November 10, 1966.

"could not use working hours or leave their working posts." They "should not leave their town to exchange revolutionary experience."[348] The Cultural Revolution remained, to a great extent, in the cultural circle.

This line was broken at the end of the year. Like the broadcast of the Beida poster and the support of the Red Guards, the decision to extend the movement from the cultural and educational sectors to the whole country was made in response to developing events.

A watershed event was the Anting incident. On November 10, the same day the above *Renmin ribao* editorial was published, more than 2,000 Shanghai workers took a train bound for Beijing in order to report to Chairman Mao and the Party Central Committee "the towering crime of the Shanghai Party Committee."[349] After they were stopped in a small station at Anting, these workers blocked the railroad for three days and presented five demands to the Shanghai Party Committee as the condition for their return to Shanghai.

The incident alarmed Beijing. Chen Boda sent a telegram asking the workers to return to Shanghai immediately. His telegram read,

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[348] Ibid.

[349] For a contemporary account of the event, see *Gongren zhaofan bao*, May 19, 1967; in the special collection of Stanford Library.

> It is right for them to join in the Cultural Revolution. But they must also follow the instructions of Chairman Mao and the Central Committee. There are two principles involved here, and the minor one must be subordinated to the major one. As workers, their main duty is to work. Joining in the Revolution is only secondary. They must therefore go back to work. They can take part in the Revolution outside working hours. They should go back immediately. It is a serious matter to disobey Party instructions.[350]

At the same time, Chen also sent Zhang Chunqiao to handle the event on the spot. Unexpectedly, after talking with the worker rebels for 16 hours, Zhang changed his original stand and promised to meet their demands. After returning to Shanghai on November 13, Zhang formally signed the five demands in the rally in the Cultural Square in downtown Shanghai. Two days later, Wang Li phoned the Shanghai Party Committee to inform it that Zhang's action was supported by the Central Cultural Revolution Committee. The next day, Mao gave Zhang's action his personal blessing. Mao said that "[for a dispatched general,] it is all right to act first and report later; because fact always comes first and is then followed by the concept."[351]

It seems that the Anting incident left a deep impression on Mao and turned his attention from students to

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[350] Cited from Neale Hunter, *Shanghai Journal: An Eyewitness Account of the Cultural Revolution* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger), 140.

[351] Gongren zhaofanbao, May 19, 1967.

workers.[352] Mao soon made up his mind to lift the restrictions on workers' and peasants' participation in the movement. On December 9 the Center issued the ten regulations, formally declaring the launching of the Cultural Revolution in factories and enterprises.[353] According to these regulations, except for being required to fulfill their work responsibilities, workers were given virtually all freedom that students were enjoying thus far. Workers could select their Cultural Revolution groups, Cultural Revolution committees, or Cultural Revolution Congresses to lead the movement. Workers could also send their delegates to visit the upper-level Party committees, including the central committee in Beijing. Workers who had been branded as "counterrevolutionaries" would be rehabilitated. Most importantly, the ninth article stated that "according to the constitution of the People's Republic of China, the masses of workers had the right to form their revolutionary organizations during the Cultural Revolution." Less than a week later, regulations on the Cultural Revolution in the countryside were also issued.[354] The movement soon swept all walks of life in China.

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[352] WANSUI, 667-8.

[353] WGZL, 1: 182-3.

[354] WGZL, 1: 189-90.

Mao's radical decision was put into the phrase of having "an all-around class struggle in the entire country," which was the main theme of the new year's editorial of *Renmin ribao* and *Hongqi* in 1967.[355] The Cultural Revolution then imitated almost all forms of a real revolution, which was beyond anyone's boldest imagination. Three decisions made by Mao's center were most radical.

The first radical change was the call for seizure of power. Once again, the decision to call upon the masses to seize power was made on the basis of the development of the movement. On January 4, a mass organization of a Shanghai newspaper, *Wenhuibao*, took over the journal and issued a letter to the Shanghai people. This action was followed by one at another Shanghai newspaper, *Jiefangribao*, on the next day. The event was praised by *Renmin ribao* as "a great revolution. This will have a great impact on the development of the Cultural Revolution in all of east China and in other provinces and cities of the whole country."[356] On January 9, 32 Shanghai mass organizations issued an urgent notice to

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[355] According to Wang Li, on his 73 birthday on December 26, Mao invited Chen Boda, Zhang Chunqiao, Wang Li, Guan Feng, Qi Benyu, and Yao Wenyuan to have dinner at his home. Before the supper he gave a long talk. The central theme was to have an "all-around class struggle" in the coming year which was the toast on the table. Wang Li, 100-8. These words were then written into the New Year Day's editorial of *Renminribao* and *Hongqi*. *Renminribao*, January 1, 1967, in *WGZL*, 1: 196-203.

[356] *Renminribao*, January 9, 1967, in *WGZL*, 1:239. These were actually Mao's words. See *WANSUI*, 662.

stop the so-called "rampant economism" and restore the normal production order. Two days later this urgent notice was applauded in a telegraph sent by the Party Central Committee, State Council, The Central Military Committee and the Central Cultural Revolution Group. The telegraph read:

> You have formed a great union of the proletarian revolutionary organizations and become the core uniting all revolutionary forces. You have grasped in your hands the fate of the dictatorship of the proletariat, the fate of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, and the fate of the socialist economy.
> A series of your revolutionary actions have set up a great model for the working class, laboring people and all revolutionary people of the whole country.[357]

The events of Shanghai were soon to be called the "January Revolution."[358] The practice was immediately followed by many mass organizations in different places. To seize power thus became the major concern of the movement.

The power seizure was at first defined as seizing the power from "the power holders who are on the capitalist road," and the primary concern was to assume the power for the current movement. This principle was soon abandoned. It was clearly pointed out that power seizure was not limited to those places controlled by capitalist roaders. "This will affect the power seizure," as Zhou Enlai said.[359] Power

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[357] Renminribao, January 12, 1967, in *WGZL*, 1: 244-45.

[358] Hongqi 3 (February 3, 1967).

[359] Hongweibing bao, February 6, 1967, in *RGP*, 8: 2327.

seizure thus became a universal form by which the masses would take over the leadership in their working units. It was then pointed out that the class struggle in socialist society was essentially a struggle to seize power.[360] The power seizure thus became a movement of reconstruction of political power. The new power organs were called "revolutionary committees." Mao's center then listed some basic principles for power seizure. The first principle was called "grand union," that is, the mass organizations must be united in order to successfully assume power. The second principle was later called "three-in-one," that is, the new revolutionary committee must be composed of the representatives of mass organization, the Party officials and the army officers. The third, and most radical, principle was that the power seizure should "not be a simple dismissal [of some officials] and reorganization [of some offices], but a mass movement from bottom to top called upon and supported by Mao personally."[361] This was the Marxist principle of smashing the state machinery. The model for this was the Paris Commune of 1871. The basic principle of the Paris Commune was that all officials must be elected.[362]

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[360] Renminribao, February 2, 1967.

[361] Hongqi 3 (February 3, 1967), in *WGZL*, 1: 270.

[362] Jiefangribao, February 7, 1967, in *WGZL*, 1: 275.

The second radical decision was the summoning of army involvement. On January 23, the Party Central Committee, the State Council, the Central Military Committee, and the Central Cultural Revolution group issued a document asking the army to "support the left."[363] The document said,

> Recently Chairman Mao pointed out that the People's Liberation Army must support the broad masses of the left. From now on if the real revolutionary factions ask the army for support the army should do so. The so-called "non-involvement" was phony. . . [the army] has been involved already. The issue was not whether to be involved or not, but on which side to stand. It was the issue of supporting the revolutionaries or supporting the conservatives or even rightists. The People's Liberation Army should actively support the revolutionary left. . . This instruction should be read word-for-word to every Liberation Army soldier.[364]

The summoning of the army not only made the revolution much more real but was also, in fact, as some rebels pointed out at that time, a special way to launch the Cultural Revolution in the army. On January 10, Jiang Qing, Wang Li and Qi Benyu advanced the slogan, "Ferreting out a handful [capitalist roaders] inside the army." Lin Biao raised the question of the so-called "Liu (Shaoqi) and Deng (Xiaoping) line carried out by guns."[365] The attacks on army commanders and local Army headquarters came almost

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[363] WGZL, 1: 258-9.

[364] WGZL, 1: 258.

[365] Jiefangjunbao, February 26, 1979, in WGZL, 1: 306; see also, Dongfanghong April 20, 1967, in RGP, 13: 4124.

simultaneously with the involvement of the army in the movement.[366] The attacks on the army reached a new high point in the Wuhan "July 20 Incident," in which a member of the Central Cultural Revolution Group was kidnapped by the local army. The event was seen as a military coup led by Chen Zaidao, the commander of Wuhan Military District.[367] The rebels swore to fight with "Liu (Shaoqi) and Deng (Xiaoping) with guns" and claimed that "to ferret out a handful [of bad guys] inside the army is the best way to support of the army."[368]

Mao went even further. Several months after summoning the army to support the rebels, Mao concluded that 75 percent of army officers supported conservatives.[369] To deal with this situation, Mao raised the idea of arming the rebels and the so-called "mass dictatorship."[370] According to Wang Li, on July 18, Mao asked, "Why couldn't [we] arm

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[366] For example, see *Xinghuoliaoyuan*, January 18, February 2, 9, 1967, in *RGP*, 6: 1470-5.

[367] Wuhan gangshasi, August 22, September 8, 1967, in *RGP*, 14: 4679-86; Wuhan xinhuagong, September 16, 1967, in *RGP*, 6: 4675-8.

[368] Dongfanghong bao, August 1, 1967; in RGP, 13: 4302; Hongshebaodong, August 1, 5, 1967, in RGP, 7: 1934-6; Jingangshan, August 3, 1967, in RGP, Vol., 3, 0455; Xiang Beijing, February 10, 1967, in RGP, 5: 1060.

[369] Wang Li, 53.

[370] Ibid.

workers and students? I think we should arm them."[371] Mao even praised the Wuhan rebels for having built good military facilities and said he wanted to inspect them. In some places the army began to distribute weapons to the people in order to build "a second armed force."[372] Following Mao's lead, Jiang Qing raised the slogan, "attack by argument, defend with weapons."[373] Armed conflict then went wild. The idea of "mass dictatorship" legitimized trials and prosecutions to be carried out by mass organizations. This brought another large-scale massacre nationwide.[374] Class struggle developed from political struggle to a real war.

The third radical decision was to launch campaigns against the so-called "restoration." The first campaign was launched in late March of 1967 to oppose the so-called "February Adverse Current." The second campaign was launched about a year later to oppose the "rightist wind intending to reverse the verdict of the 'February Adverse Current.'" The essence of the campaign was to defend the Cultural Revolution. As Jiang Qing said, "the February Adverse

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[371] Ibid., 54.

[372] Ibid.

[373] Bayi zhanbao, September 25, 1967, in RGP, 10: 3059.

[374] See, for example, Guangxi wenge dashi nianbiao bianxiezhu, Guangxi wenge dashi nianbiao(The major Events of the Cultural Revolution in Guangxi Province)(Guangxi renmin chubanshe: 1990).

Current is to oppose the Cultural Revolution, to overthrow the proletarian headquarter of Chairman Mao and vice Chairman Lin."[375] Ye Qun, Lin Biao's wife, said, "The February Adverse Current is to conduct restoration, to overthrow the Central Cultural Revolution Group, to overthrow the proletarian headquarter."[376]

The significance of these campaigns was that they directed the spearhead of struggle exclusively toward senior cadres and local army commanders who were actually in charge of local affairs after Mao's summoning of the army into the movement. With the launching of the first campaign, the polibureau stopped working. Except for a few of Mao's close associates, almost all senior cadres were disgraced. Local army commanders were either under attack or forced to make public apology to the rebels for their wrongdoing.

At the same time, Mao's center showed its strong support for the rebels. A *Renmin ribao* editorial entitled, "Adopt a Correct Attitude Toward the Little Revolutionary Generals," pointed out,

> To adopt what kind of attitude toward the revolutionary little generals (refers here to the rebel students) is the problem of how to evaluate the two line struggle in the past months and the mass movement in the proletarian cultural revolution. . . to deny [the contribution of] the revolutionary little generals

[375] Zhuyin dongfanghong April 1968, in RGP, 4: 0671.

[376] Ibid.

> means to negate the Cultural Revolution. To attack the revolutionary little generals means to attack the Cultural Revolution.

At the height of the campaigns, through a series of speeches and decisions on the situation in different provinces, the Maoists declared some organizations to be rebels and some to be conservatives and showed their strong support for the rebels. This rescued many rebel organizations which had been either outlawed or weakened under the "February Adverse Current." It also dealt a serious blow to the conservative camp.

Furthermore, in order to defend the current Cultural Revolution, the Maoists extended their criticism of "bourgeois dictatorship" during the Cultural Revolution to that of before the Cultural Revolution. Jiang Qing's celebrated November 12 speech asked for an extension of the criticism from the "50 days" during the Cultural Revolution to the seventeen years before it.[377] The slogan, "to smash the "police, procuratorial organ and court," directly shifted the spearhead of struggle toward the core of the dictatorship before the Cultural Revolution. In schools, the slogan "to totally negate the seventeen years" became the catchword.

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[377] Xiju zhanbao, November 16, 1967, in RGP, 5:1048; Wenyi hongqi, January 10, 1968, in RGP, 14:4549.

It is true that the Maoists were very cautious in their criticism of the past seventeen years as a whole and they changed their stand later. The slogan, "to comprehensively improve the proletarian dictatorship," which was championed by some rebels, was then denounced. However, the significance here is that the Maoists opened the door to that direction. Some rebels thus openly asked to "reevaluate the 17 years."[378] We should note that the restoration the campaign opposed was not a return to the pre-1949 society, but a restoration of the pre-Cultural Revolution system. To many rebels restoring the pre-Cultural Revolution system meant opposing the Cultural Revolution. To complete the Cultural Revolution thus meant to fundamentally change the pre-Cultural Revolution order. A new concept of the Cultural Revolution emerged.

This is why the campaign against the restoration was the final and lasting dividing line between rebels and conservatives. In the next two years, from the beginning of the campaign against the February Adverse Current to the end of the Cultural Revolution, the essential issue between rebels and conservatives was that the latter wanted to restore the pre-Cultural Revolution order, while the former wanted to fundamentally change it.

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[378] Dongfanghong bao, August 22, 1967, in RGP, 13: 4237.

Mao's call for an "all-around class struggle" had invited Chinese people from all trades and professions and different social status to participate in the movement. As such a broad mass movement, it had stimulated debate on a wide range of issues. Although the revolution may not necessarily have been a "real" revolution, the movement did, as Mao pointed out, mobilize large numbers of people "to openly, comprehensively, from bottom to top, expose our dark side."[379] The movement thus served as a popular and large-scale critique of socialist society in China.

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The ideological reorientation in the early stages of the Cultural Revolution was crucial to the launching of the movement. Without the radical ideological reorientation and strong political support from Mao's center, it would have been impossible to develop a comparatively independent mass movement.

The ideological reorientation at this time posed a serious challenge to the old class theory. In order to direct the struggle at Party officials and organizations at

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[379] WANSUI, 664.

different levels, Mao and his close associates had abandoned many common practices associated with the old class theory and altered many basic concepts associated with it. All this was done in the name of conducting class struggle. This greatly stimulated the people to rethink class theory. The need for a new class theory for the current movement was more than obvious, and Mao did feel that need. On the hot day of "the January Storm" in early 1967, he asked the Central Cultural Revolution group to write articles on the subject of "the revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat." He emphasized that "this is a very important theoretical problem."[380] However, Mao and his close associates failed to fulfill this task. While they emphasized the importance of class theory to its extreme, they were in fact evasive in applying class analysis to answer many questions stemming from the current movement. For example, what was the class nature of the capitalist roaders? Were they only a few individuals who sneaked into the revolutionary ranks or did they form a special social group? Were they simply the representative of the old exploiting classes or did they stand for their own interest? What was the real class relationship in pre-Cultural Revolution China? Who exploited whom and in what form? And

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[380] WANSUI, 668.

what should be done in the Cultural Revolution as a revolution? Since Mao stated clearly that revolution meant one class overthrowing another, which class should overthrow which? To all these crucial questions the Maoists never gave a clear answer. As a matter of fact, they dared not face these questions directly. As a result, they simply could not provide a reasonably consistent class theory to meet the urgent needs of the movement. The Maoists' emphasis on the importance of class analysis on the one hand, and their reluctance to directly apply the method into the current movement o the other, created a theoretical gap which was sensed by many rebels who had faithfully followed the hints provided by Mao's center. These people began to develop a different class analysis on socialist China. The Cultural Revolution then moved into a new period.

Chapter Four

Attempts to Reinterpret Class Theory in the Later Stages of the Cultural Revolution

Despite the many great contrasts between the class theories that existed before and during the early stages of the Cultural Revolution, discussed in the last chapter, the class theories of these two periods shared one important feature: both were defined by the official propaganda. During these two periods most Chinese understood class theory mainly through the prism of official ideology. The "real" class struggle in their minds was by and large derived from creations of the official media. A typical such creation would tell how a former landlord or capitalist corrupted a party official or a person of red origin and then the corrupted official or person would act on behalf of the interest of the old exploiting class. Even after most people were personally involved in the movement and took a stand of "independent thinking," what they really did was scrutinize ever more carefully official documents for any hints to help them "find" class struggle in society. In other words, most people never looked at social reality through their own eyes. Their approach to class theory was

therefore characterized by an ideological, not a practical, hue.

The full-fledged ideological reorientation led directly by Mao and his associates gave rise to another approach to class theory, however. When the Cultural Revolution developed from what had initially been academic discussions to an "all-around class struggle," including such radical actions as seizure of power and armed conflict, class struggle became more and more real to many people. Many of these people began to understand class struggle from their own experiences. They saw class struggle not only in abstract theory, but also in concrete events; they saw it not only in politics, but also in economics, not just in ideas, but also in interests. In a word, they began to understand class struggle as it occurred within social reality. The primary concern of class theory thus moved from ideological problems to social problems. I will call this way of thinking a realistic approach to class theory, as opposed to the ideological approach discussed earlier.

The realistic approach to class theory presented a new picture of social reality in socialist China. Based on this new picture of social reality some rebels began to develop their own class theories and to redefine the nature of the current movement. They soon concluded that a "privileged

stratum" or "privileged class" had formed in China. This recognition constituted the core of the new class theory and became the common ideological basis for the rebels. These rebels thus sought to fundamentally change the existing system and championed such slogans as "smashing the old state machine" and "continuing the revolution."

The Realistic approach to class theory

The new approach to class theory was presented in the name of the so-called "great criticism"(*Dapipan)* called for by Mao as one of three basic tasks (i.e., "struggle, criticism, transformation"(dou, pi, gai)) of the Cultural Revolution. Although most writings produced pursuant to this effort were no more than duplications of official propaganda, a substantial number of them were written by ordinary people with the aim of applying the radical ideas that had emerged during the early stages of the Cultural Revolution to the study of Chinese society. These criticisms, which began as condemnations of the injustices of the Cultural Revolution, soon expanded to include scathing critiques of social inequality in China before the Cultural Revolution. In the process, many of the secrets of China's politics were exposed, and the sufferings of

ordinary individuals received extensive public discussion. As a result, these criticisms helped lead the way to a comprehensive reassessment of Chinese social conditions, thus providing a new basis for the formation of a new class theory.

Injustice During the Cultural Revolution

In name, and in many practical aspects, the condemnation of the injustices committed during the Cultural Revolution following 1967 was a continuation of the 1966 criticism of the bourgeois reactionary line which we have discussed in the last chapter. But there were also some substantial differences between these criticisms. Whereas the early criticism focused on charges against power holders, later condemnations also brought out cries on behalf of innocent people. Whereas the early criticism tried to absolve those following the "wrong line" from guilt, the later critiques also sought to expose some of the worst excesses committed thus far, especially those committed by Red Guards who were children of high ranking cadres. Whereas the early criticism attacked mainly past errors, the later critiques also contested current crimes. Whereas the early

criticism focused on the wrong political line, the later critiques openly challenged the state machine: the police and the army. To many rebels, the injustice that occurred during the Cultural Revolution was a new form of class struggle which was substantially different from that described by the old class theory prior to the Cultural Revolution.

Dirty Politics

The condemnation of the injustices committed in the Cultural Revolution began with the denouncement of "the fifty days," a term quoted from Mao's famous poster which symbolically referred to the early stages of the Cultural Revolution under the rule of former school authorities or work teams.[381] The "fifty days" period was condemned as one of "white terror." At first, the activities which took place at that time were criticized by Mao and his associates as being too restrictive on the mass movement. With renewed criticism of the bourgeois reactionary line in 1967, however, the emphasis in the official media shifted to a condemnation of the practice of "hitting at many in order to

[381] "Fifty days" refers to June and early July when Mao was absent from Beijing and Liu Shaoqi was in charge of the movement.

protect a few." Following Mao's call many students investigated this matter and produced a large number of reports. These reports astonished many students and ordinary people by revealing the truth behind the scene. They told how Party officials manipulated the movement and how innocent people, including many cadres themselves, became victims of the movement.

One of these reports is an account of the Fifty-Fifth Middle School in Beijing.[382] According to the report, investigation, a work team came to the school at three a. m. on June 10, 1966 and proceeded, with the help of the school Party secretary to divide all faculty and staff into three categories within 20 days. Of 122 people, 14 (12 percent), were in the first category; which consisted of those whom the work team felt could rely; 31(25 percent), were in the second category consisting of those with whom the work team could unite; and 77(63 percent), were in the third category of those targeted for isolation and struggle. The seemingly mass movement was in fact fully controlled by the work team and the school party secretary who developed the categories in the first place. For example, the work team and the school Party secretary praised certain "excellent" posters

[382] *Zhongxue Zhanxian*, July 12, 1967, in *RGP*, 4: 0759-61.

as ones for the students to follow and organized meetings to attack the targets they selected. In what was later condemned as the "August Third/August Fourth Counter Revolutionary Event," the work team and the school Party secretary organized a rally to struggle against two teachers who had criticized the work team as the numbers one and two "demons and freaks" of the school, and arranged for a student to single out ten more teachers for criticism. Instigated by this, other students began to hurl horrifying accusations and abuse at still more teachers, who by this time were thoroughly cowed. As shouts of "More [demons and freaks] in the math group!" "More in the Chinese group!" "More in the history and geography group!" filled the air, "it was," according to the author of the article describing the scene, "just as if suddenly 'a thunderstorm swept down on a town house which was about to fall.'" In short, "The entire Fifty-Fifth Middle School felt the white terror."[383]

Another investigation examined the experience of the Sixty-Seventh Middle School in Beijing.[384] Unlike the Fifty-Fifth Middle School, the visiting work team did not coordinate its efforts with school Party officials. Instead, soon after its arrival at the school on June 8, its leaders

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[383] Ibid.

[384] Zhongxue hongweibing, May 20, 1967, in RGP, 4: 0776.

declared that "the work team is taking over all the powers of the former Party branch of the Sixty-Seventh Middle School." The work team claimed that all the cadres and teachers at the school were "rotten" and that the school as a whole was a "garbage heap." The work team therefore directed that almost all of the school's teachers and cadres be placed in a labor camp where conditions were quite harsh. Forced to rise at four a. m., the inmates engaged in physical labor for several hours. They were then either forced to criticize each other or were sent to the school yard to receive criticism from students until late at night. Some members of the work team even encouraged students to use violence against their teachers. After the withdrawal of the work team, the situation grew even worse. Some students became more violent. Within half a month, four members of the staff were seriously wounded and five had had their heads shaved. The labor camp was reorganized and the treatment became even more cruel.

A large-scale investigation was conducted by a group of students from eleven schools in Beijing, who visited more than fifty middle schools in the western district of the city and collected data on the situation at thirty six schools.[385] According to the students' report, "almost a

[385] Xin Shizhong, May 17, 1967, in RGP, 6: 1433

hundred percent" of the 265 officials (school principals, Party secretaries, school directors, vice directors, vice secretaries, personnel officials, and secretaries of the Communist Youth League) at these schools were removed from power after work teams came to the schools.

> Among these 265 cadres, 170 were ferreted out (they were "struggled against" in a big rally, accused of being anti-Party elements, of being members of a "black gang," rightists who escaped classification in the previous movements and "adopted sons of black gang members"...), constituting 64 percent of the total. 140 suffered corporal punishment (they were kicked, hit with belts and wooden guns, lynched, subjected to private interrogations and prolonged kneeling, had bricks hung around their necks, were made to stand for hours in strong sunshine, forced to wear iron buckets on their heads, had dirty water poured down their throats, forced to consume rotten vegetables), constituting 53 percent. 184 were sent to labor camp, constituting 69 percent. Among them, all the cadres of Ande Road Middle School stayed in the labor camp until the beginning of the military training program in March this year.
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> Eighty of these were principals and Party secretaries (the numbers one and two persons in power) from those 36 schools. Among these leading cadres, 59 people were "struggled against," constituting 74 percent, 55 people experienced violent struggle meetings, corporal punishment and violent interrogations, constituting 69 percent, 66 people were put into labor camp, constituting 83 percent.[386]

The situation was similar at colleges and universities. At People's University in Beijing, the work team not only condemned the school's Communist Party organization as "a revisionist party," but it also announced that "more than 90 percent of the faculty have [political] problems. They are

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[386] Ibid.

all bourgeois intellectuals." The work team further declared that all the party cadres in the Department of Finance and Commerce were members of a "black gang." Meanwhile, student cadres and even ordinary students were also subjected to "struggle sessions." For example, more than 50 students out of a total of some 300 in the Philosophy Department became the targets of struggle.[387] The work team at the Beijing Institute of Applied Art claimed that "All party members are loyalists." Except one Party member who was on sick leave, all other 11 Party members in the institute were subjected to struggle, constituting 92 percent of all Party officials.[388] These events were closely paralleled by events at the Beijing Railroad Institute.[389]

Such practices were not limited to schools. Cases were reported in factories as well. In the Shanghai No. 15 Cotton Mill, a work team declared that "[m]ore than ninety percent of the cadres have problems. Six hundred workers are monsters and demons," and 83.3 percent of the factory's cadres actually removed from their offices.[390] In a factory

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[387] Xinrenda, April 27, 1967, in RGP, 5: 1163.

[388] Gongren zhanbao, May 5, 1967, in RGP, 9: 2783.

[389] Tiedao hongqi, May 21, 1967, in RGP, 12: 3817-8.

[390] Fangzhi zhanxun, May 5, 1967, in RGP, 4: 0949.

in Tianjin, Party officials mobilized police and Red Guards to suppress the rebel workers there.[391]

While coercion was the order of the day for most work teams, they were not above offering inducements to collect information.[392] At the Beijing Oil Institute, work team members supplemented their strong-arm tactics with offers of candy to children for information on their elders.[393] The work team at a research institute in Beijing simply required all institute employees to turn over any notes they may have made during the movement, and even forced some people to turn in private letters and diaries.[394] Similarly, on a farm in Hunan, a work team collected all personal diaries so as to expose and confront all "deviants."[395]

Those unfortunates who were subjected to these frequently irrational attacks often suffered cruelly at the hands of their tormentors. Physical and psychological pressure were routinely used to extract "confessions," the relating of which could in itself be a form of torture. Forced to write and re-write endlessly accounts of their

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[391]Jinggangshan, Mar. 22, 1967, in RGP, 3: 0585-7.

[392]Dongfanghong, May 12, 1967, in RGP, 13: 4160.

[393]Daqing gongshe, April 15, 1967, in RGP, 11: 3627.

[394]Keji zhanbao, May 9, 1967, in RGP, 9: 2561.

[395]32111 zhanbao, Oct. 30, 1967, in RGP, 11: 3394.

"crimes," while simultaneously undergoing endless abuse, prisoners sometimes produced confessions of hundreds of thousands of words.[396] Physical punishment was generally applied.[397] At the Beijing Aviation Institute it was openly declared that "The treatment of cadres must be cruel and brutal. The more cruel and brutal, the better."[398] Moreover, there were deliberate attempts to humiliate those who were accused. At the Xian Transportation University, for example, one student was put into a room as an "animal exhibition," visited by thousands.[399] And throughout China there were many cases of suicide by those who were attacked.[400]

Some reports focused especially on the practice of powerful people abusing their positions to suppress whoever opposed them. At the Beijing Athletic Institute, the work team spent 40 days of its 50 days there on "anti-disturbance" activities against those who had stood up to criticize Party officials and organizations.[401] This

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[396]Jinggangshan, April 8, 1967, in RGP, 3: 0400.

[397]See, for example, Zhongxue luntan, April 6, 1967, in RGP, 4, 0803.

[398]Honggi, April 6, 1967, in RGP, 6: 1570.

[399]Renmin jiaoda, Nov. 12, 1966, in RGP, 8: 2411.

[400]See, for example, Renmin jiaoda, November 12, 1966, in RGP, 8: 2411; Jinggangshan, April 11, 1967, in RGP, 3: 0509; Jianzhu honglian, January 9, 1968, in RGP, 2: 0212-7.

[401]Tiyu zhanxian, April 29, May 6, 1967, in RGP, 12: 3721, 3725.

experience was echoed at the Beijing Normal University.[402] And at the Tangshan Railroad Institute, the Party Committee, in cooperation with the Municipal Committee, placed a close watch on anyone who put up posters which criticized Party officials and organizations, arranging to "ferret out" these "monsters and demons."[403] One such case involved the then number two man in China, Liu Shaoqi. According to detailed testimony by Liu's daughter, Liu and his wife Wang Guangmei manipulated the movement at Qinghua University through their daughter to attack students who were against the work team sent by Liu and headed by Wang.[404]

But in most cases, Party officials simply followed whatever the trend of the movement was, a course which frequently harmed innocent people. Take, for example, the case of the Middle School attached to Beijing Normal University. Less than ten hours after the work team assigned to this school arrived, it issued a statement declaring the school's Communist Party organization a "black branch [of] the Party."[405] The abruptness of such a pronouncement, which carried very real and frightening consequences for those

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[402]Jinggangshan, April 11, 1967, in RGP, 3: 0509.

[403]Hongqi, April 20, 1967, in RGP, 6: 1662.

[404]Jinggangshan, December 31, 1966, in RGP, 3: 0347-8.

[405]Bingtuan zhanbao, April 10, 1967, in RGP, 11: 3343.

accused of misdeeds (and who were virtually defenseless in the face of such attacks), is characteristic of the unfairness of such activities.

These accounts, and numerous others like them, give a general idea of the criticisms that the abuses and injustices of the Cultural Revolution engendered at the time. If we put these student reports together, we find that they are somewhat contradictory. For example, the school authorities were sometimes attacked for not allowing students to struggle against teachers and sometimes attacked for allowing students to do so. Work teams were accused both of supporting the school authorities and of opposing all the school cadres. In most reports school leaders were accused of "hitting at the many" but in some they themselves became the victims of those "many."

The significance of these reports lies therefore not in their theoretical analysis, but in the facts they provided about what happened in schools and other places during the Cultural Revolution. What ordinary people learned from these stories was how Party officials and organizations manipulated the movement. They found that the seemingly spontaneous mass movement was actually tightly controlled by the power holders. The ordinary people were shocked not only by the double-faced behavior of the party officials, but

also by their carelessness in making political decisions, which often had dire consequences for innocent people. They learned that their leaders had concerns of their own; they either were following the orders of their superiors, acting to attack objects of their personal displeasure, or some combination thereof. For many Chinese, especially young students, this new knowledge was little less than revelatory—for the first time they began to understand what "politics" meant. This discovery, however, was difficult to reconcile with the old understanding of class theory. Politics behind the scene was more like a personal game, rather than a serious battle between two antagonistic classes as the old class theory suggested. Class struggle was not as simple as it had been portrayed—there were not, in fact, two clear-cut camps. What they found was how those officials struggled, not for the interest of the proletariat or that of the bourgeoisie, but for their own best interest. A line found in these political games was not so much connected with class origins as such but more as a division between people who had power and those who had no power, between people who deceived and people who were deceived, between people who manipulated the game and people who were manipulated. The exposure of the dirty politics played by Party officials during the Cultural Revolution thus

stimulated people to look at class struggle in different ways.

Red Guard Brutality

The exposure of the dirty politics practiced by Party officials was accompanied by a condemnation of their accomplices in crime. The chief targets in schools were those Red Guards who had actively participated in the persecution of innocent people. Unlike similar criticisms of the previous year, which had been led by Mao's center, the critiques of 1967 were far more popular, enjoying great, spontaneous support from ordinary people. The focus and implication of the criticisms differed as well. Whereas the earlier criticisms had been largely theoretical and political, the criticisms of 1967 focused instead on detailing the extraordinary brutality of some Red Guards. Whereas the earlier criticisms often tried to treat those Red Guards' wrongdoing as minor mistakes, the later criticisms condemned them as unforgivable crimes. The stories of Red Guard crimes were extremely sensational and emotionally disturbing because of the atrocious nature of the crimes.

The most sensational stories related the horrifying conditions of some secret Red Guard jails. The "Labor Camp" in the Sixth Middle School in Beijing is a good example. A lengthy report detailing its activities was written by the "Red Rebel Corps of the Sixth Middle School," and published in January, 1967 under the title "A Grim Story —The Bloody Fact of the Bourgeois Reactionary Line."[406]

According to this report, a "labor camp" was set up in a remote corner of the campus. This labor camp came with all the accouterments of a high security prison. It had high walls, watchtowers with searchlights, sniper posts, spy holes and alarms. Guards were on duty 24 hours a day, and all doors and windows to the area were sealed. That this area was meant to intimidate and terrify its victims is clearly revealed by the slogan "Long Live the Red Horror!", posted just inside one of the entrances. Indeed, any person inside this "camp" was completely deprived of personal freedom. As the authors of the report state:

> These circumstances may remind us of the concentration camps of the Bai House and the Dregs Cave [two notorious jails of the KMT] in the novel *Red Rocks*. It is in this Bai House of the Sixth Middle School that a handful of the Red Guards of the Six Middle School behaved like ruffians and committed fascist atrocities of inhumanity and unparalleled savagery. They employed

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[406]Hongqi Bao, January 22, 1967, in RGP, 6,:1699-14.

> many different methods to kill and torture many of the revolutionary masses.[407]

The report then detailed how these Red Guards tortured people. Two students, Wan and Cheng, were accused of being "reactionary students" due to their "black" family backgrounds, of traveling without the permission of these Red Guards and of having independent opinions on the school matter. On the day of their return from traveling, Wan and Cheng were thrown into the prison-like camp. These Red Guards first forced Wan and Cheng to kneel on the ground. Then a whole group of people came up and used sticks to hit them on their heads, backs and bellies. This kind of torture was repeated many times and each time Wan and Cheng were left in pools of their own blood. Once they used kitchen knives to cut and hit Wan and Cheng's faces. After their teeth were knocked out and the cuts on their faces began to fester, their tormentors rubbed astringent oil into their wounds. When the oil was wiped off, it left disfiguring scars.

In addition, these particular Red Guards amused themselves by experimenting with different methods of torture. Experiments included such activities as mock hangings and forced sessions of kowtowing in which the

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[407]Ibid.

victims' heads were violently knocked into the floor if their performance was found lacking. The Red Guards who ran this prison would also toss prisoners high into the air and then allow them to fall to the ground, slice their buttocks with knives, set prisoners' hair afire, and force them to quote extensive passages from Mao's works for hours on end, punishing them whenever they made a minor mistake. Once they even attempted to "operate" on Wan by slicing open his stomach. The report also accuses the Red Guard torturers of extorting money and property from their victims.

Two of their victims actually died from these exactions. One was a 76 year old retired school janitor named Xu Peitian. After retiring he had remained on the school grounds. Then, in September of 1966, he was forced off the property on the charge that he was an "old vampire." Xu, homeless, was forced to live on the streets for several days. Soon, however, the police brought him back to the school where he was compelled to accuse himself of being an "old bad egg." Whenever the Red Guards in charge of the "labor camp" were displeased with him they would throw him into a manure pit. One day they brought him into a bathroom. The Red Guards first drenched him in icy water causing Xu to cry out, "Cold! Cold!" They then poured near boiling water over him. Although he again screamed in agony, his

tormentors did not stop. They continued to pour hot water over him until his body turned red and his skin began to peel.

Xu's trials did not end there. The Red Guards in charge of the labor camp also forced him to sing and dance for their entertainment. They made him eat excrement and drink urine. Finally the student-guards got bored and used an old rifle butt and a rope to strangle Xu to death.

Their other victim was a 19 year old student name Wang Guanghua. According to the report, he came from a bourgeois family. He became active at the beginning of the Cultural Revolution and joined the "grand revolutionary exchange experience," traveling around the country. But he had gone on his travels without permission from the Red Guards and when he returned to Beijing they immediately seized him and beat him to death.[408]

Another account details a jail in the First Middle School in Beijing.[409] This article is entitled "The Bloody Product of the Bourgeois Reactionary Line—A Record of the Jail in "The First Middle School of Beijing," and its author, like the writer of the account related above, compares the school prison with those of the KMT by calling

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[408]Ibid.

[409]Hongjun Zhanbao, March 8, 1967, in RGP, 7:1767-70.

it "the Dregs Cave of the 1960s."[410] The jail, converted from a dormitory and an air-raid shelter served a dual function as both an underground jail and a mortuary. More than a hundred students were crowded into the main room of this jail. Most prisoners were members of the so-called "student black gang." New prisoners, prior to their incarceration, would first suffer beatings in the yard. Once inside, prisoners were tortured on a Ping-Pong table.

A special entertainment for the guards of the jail was to force the prisoners to fight each other. The object was to make the prisoners hit each other with force. Any suspicion of faking or unwillingness to comply resulted in savage beatings by the Guards. These terrible crimes are recounted with deep emotion:

> [I]n this room a wooden gun smashed a youth's head with a single stroke! The broken wooden gun and the corpse lay together on the blood and brain- splattered floor. Also in this room was practiced a torture in which a spring from a door was used to [inflict pain on its victims]...[T]he door spring would whistle, wheel, and rise in the air like a poisonous serpent. The spring would clamp on the victim's flesh once it touched the body...a guard would then pull with his or her full strength, ripping off skin and flesh... This new cruel torture of the twentieth century seriously damaged a female student from another school for the hook of the spring took out her eyeball...[411]

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[410]The "Dregs Cave" was a notorious prison set up by the secret police of the KMT in Chongqing, Sichuan.

[411]Ibid.

A third account, written by teachers who had been put into a labor camp, is entitled, "An Accusation with Blood and Tears Against the Bourgeois Reactionary Line—The Towering Crimes of the Liu-Deng Reactionary Line in the Girls' Third Middle School of Beijing."[412] Compared with the above two accounts, the sufferings of these teachers were much less serious, and their condemnation is far milder. Although they spoke out about their suffering, they did not name their persecutors. According to this account, these ordinary teachers stayed in the labor camp for four months. They were deprived of almost all personal freedoms, including the power to decide when to drink water or go to the bathroom. Besides the heavy labor they were forced to perform eleven to twelve hours a day, these teachers were also routinely tortured. More than forty different kinds of corporal punishment were visited upon the prisoners, including prolonged bouts of bending over and kneeling. In the first instance, victims had to bend themselves into an uncomfortable position for as long as 6 or 7 hours; any movement to ease the discomfort was punished by blows from guns and belts. In the second, victims were forced to kneel on bricks or washboards causing their knees to swell and bleed. The torturers also forced prisoners to beat each

[412]Hongjun zhanbao, Mar. 8, 1967, in RGP, 7: 767-70.

other. On one occasion they were even forced to slap the face of a corpse.[413]

Many other accounts of the brutal deeds committed by some Red Guards and others appeared at the time. One article, for example, details how, in a primary school in Beijing, an employee and his wife were forced to slap each other, to cut each other's hair, and to call each other vile names.[414] Also in Beijing, in a kindergarten, one girl was forced to beat her mother.[415] A worker who wrote a poster criticizing a Party official was seriously beaten by some Red Guards and workers in his work unit.[416] Six peasants who had rebelled against authority suffered more than 30 different kinds of torture, including forced walks, naked, down the street on days of extreme cold. Their relatives also suffered. One old peasant's 80 year-old mother was tortured and his daughter was raped.[417] At an oil refinery under the leadership of the oil ministry, rebel workers suffered more than eighty different forms of torture.[418]

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[413]Ibid.

[414]Shoudu hongqi, February 7, 1967, in RGP, 1: 3469.

[415]Hongshe zhigong, January 29, 1967, in RGP, 7: 1874.

[416]Hongshe zhaofanbao, January 12, 1967, in RGP, 7: 1994.

[417]Shoudu hongweibing, Feb. 6, 1967, in RGP, 1: 3506.

[418]Daqing gongshe, May 19, 1967, in RGP, 1: 3639.

These descriptions portray these Red Guards and other persecutors as worse than beasts. After visiting one of these labor camps the high official Chen Boda was quoted as saying that "These kinds of activities are very cruel. It is not permissible for these things to happen to anyone no matter what kind of person he or she might be."[419] Yan Changgui, another high-ranking official was also quoted as saying that "Are they [members of the United Actions Committee who had committed acts of great cruelty] students? How can they be so wild? They are far beyond the limit! They are no different from bandits!"[420] These kinds of deeds not only openly violated the repeated orders from the Party Central Committee but went beyond the limits that most ordinary people could tolerate. These exposures fatally damaged the reputation of these Red Guards. They were no longer prized as "revolutionary little generals," but were now regarded as ruffians and thugs. What many people felt from these horrible stories was that these Red Guards were another kind of people. These youths seemed to grow in a different world and to have a very different character from ordinary people. How to classify these youths in terms of class analysis was an obvious question in many people's

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[419] Hongqibao, January 21, 1967, in RGP, 6: 1699.

[420] Zhidian jiangshan, Mar. 9, 1967, in RGP, 2: 0265.

minds. Though most people had yet reached a conclusion. They were well aware of what made these kids different from themselves - these Red Guards, especially those most notorious, were children of high ranking Party officials. The question of the class nature of these Red Guards thus became the question of class nature of Party officials.

Wrong Verdicts and Armed Conflicts

In early 1967, local army units began to get directly involved in the movement and new revolutionary committees were set up to try to control the various, often warring organizations which had sprung up around the whole country. One of the tactics employed to regain control of the runaway activities of mass organizations was to simply outlaw the offending organizations and order them to disband. This brought serious conflicts between local authorities and the rebels. The rebels demanded these decisions, which they termed "wrong verdicts," be overturned. By doing this, they openly challenged the police bureaus, local military authorities, and even the new revolutionary committees, which were generally supported by conservative mass organizations. This greatly intensified the conflict between

the rebel and conservative camps. From the summer of 1967 on, ideological conflicts among the masses developed into armed conflicts. In many people's minds, class struggle had turned into real war. Accompanying this situation were sensational reports of massacres and militant posters calling for revenge. The two conflicting camps used all means to accuse each other and sought sympathy from the public. The war in propaganda was no less serious than the war on the battleground.

Demands for reversing the "wrong verdicts" were extremely militant. Unlike earlier criticisms which attacked crimes committed in the past, the demands for reversing wrong verdicts condemned the then current system of law and order. Unlike earlier criticisms which attacked officials who were already out of power, these new critiques attacked people in power. Most significantly, the new demands, unlike earlier criticisms which targeted school officials, work team members or teenage students, targeted military commanders and police bureaus, previously considered the hard core of the "dictatorship of the proletariat." These criticisms were therefore extremely sensitive.

A good example is the reversal of the verdict against the "August 1 Combat Corps" in Guangdong province.[421] The

[421] Hai Feng, 102-8, 184-92.

August 1 Combat Corps belonged to the rebel camp and had been formally declared a counterrevolutionary organization by the Guangzhou Military District on March 1, 1967. To demand to reverse this verdict was considered by many as an intentional attack on the Guangzhou Military District and therefore an open challenge to the "dictatorship of the proletariat." As a conservative newspaper pointed out:

> It is well known that the "August 1 Combat Corps" is a counterrevolutionary organization which had been dissolved by the Guangdong Military District with the consent of the Central Cultural Revolution Group. This organization was controlled by counterrevolutionary officers, ex-criminals, traitors, illegal merchants, targets of struggle in previous campaigns, and landlords, rich peasants, counterrevolutionaries, bad elements, rightists and their children who insisted reactionary stand...
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> The demand for the reversal of the "August 1 Combat Corps" is evidence of the current of counterrevolutionary restoration. The key of this trend is to weak and overthrow the dictatorship of the proletariat.[422]

The rebels, too, recognized this, but they pledged that "for the liberation of more than 100,000 members of the August 1 Combat Corps, we would take any risk"[423] and that they would fight "for the reversal of the verdict against the August 1 Combat Corps even at the expense of our own lives."[424] Accordingly, in their demand for the reversal of

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[422] Nanfang zhanbao, July 9, 1967, in RGP, 10: 3021.

[423] Ibid.

[424] Honggi pinlun and Gangbayi zhanqi, January 1968, in RGP, 6: 1723.

the verdict, the rebels not only defended the August 1 Combat Corps as a genuinely revolutionary organization but directly accused the police and the army of illegal action. A later investigation reported that at 4 a.m. on March 1, 1967, the police of the entire Guangzhou city were fully mobilized for large-scale searches and arrests. There were no warrants for the arrests they made. When questioned about their actions, the police asserted that "there was no need for warrants during this special period. The badge on the cap, the armband and the pistol are warrants."[425] The police handcuffed and tied with string all the people they arrested, including handicapped veterans. It was found that some people were arrested who were not on the list published by the police bureau. More than two thousand people were put into jail, and more than sixteen thousand people were forced to register as members of counterrevolutionary organizations, thereby becoming prospective subjects of "struggle sessions."[426]

The report also documented the sufferings of the victims of this abuse of police power. In jail the arrested

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[425] Gangbayi, Oct. 15, 1967, in RGP, 8: 2458.

[426] Ibid.

were forced to confess under duress. They were brutally tortured. They did not receive medical care when sick.[427]

Condemnation of the injustices extended to accuse society as a whole. The report complained that those victims' houses were ransacked; they and their relatives were discriminated against; some were fired from their jobs; others were transferred, suffered salary cuts, or lost benefits; some people had to sell blood to make ends meet, frequently the children of those who had been arrested found themselves living on the streets; two people even went insane after being humiliated in public rallies.[428]

Similar demands and condemnations occurred around the country. In many places the rebels raised more radical charges against the military authorities. In Xinjiang the rebels directly attacked the military chief by name.[429] In Tibet, the rebels labeled the local military authority a "local despot."[430] In Sichuan province, the rebels even directed their spearhead of accusation towards members of the Central Military Committee, the highest military

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[427] Ibid.

[428] Ibid.

[429] Jinggangshan, August 4, 1967, in RGP, 3: 0574.

[430] Hongshe zhaofanbao, June 8, July 5, July 8,1967 in RGP, 7: 2032-4, 2039, 2041-7.

authority in China, who sent a telegram to support the military authority in Sichuan. The police and army then swept the whole provincial capital and arrested so many people that "temples, parks and schools were all used as temporary prisons."[431] The local rebels thus openly condemned that "telegram from the Central Military Committee" as "a bloody piece of paper."[432]

Class struggle became very serious in many people's minds after they personally experienced or witnessed the abuses committed by the army and police. But it became even more serious when they actually engaged in real battles with the conservatives. Compared with the violence used by the Red Guards in the earlier period, the armed conflicts after the summer of 1967 were much crueler and much larger in scope.

An early armed conflict took place in Xinjiang in northwest China. In a new city, Shihezi, from January 17 to 27 there were a total of seven "rebel corps" which attacked the army department. The worst armed conflict occurred on January 26. 24 people were killed and 74 wounded. Both sides seized members of the other side and tortured them. One side

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[431] Jinggangshan, May 11, 1967, in RGP, 3: 0422.

[432] Bingtuan zhanbao, May 30, 1967, in RGP, 1: 3362.

even put the naked corpse of a young female out for display as a warning.[433]

In Henan, more than 100 captives had their legs broken by torture. Some, while still alive, were cremated. From May to June of 1967 more than 2,900 people were killed or wounded. Many people were forced into exile.[434]

In Chengdu, the capital of Sichuan Province, reports came of captured rebels being buried alive. During the fighting, lime powder was sprayed, strong acid thrown and even poisoned glass used. These were in addition to the pistols, machine guns, submachine guns, gas bombs, tear bombs and grenades that were used in the fighting.[435]

In Changsha, the capital of Hunan Province, in the so-called "June 6 massacre," there were reports of people using lime powder, pesticides and even poisonous snakes to attack their opponents, in addition to more mundane weapons like iron bars and swords. Eight people died on the spot. One was cut by seventeen strikes. Finally, three trucks were driven into the crowd, killing four people.[436]

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[433] Wang Nianyi, 202.

[434] Erqi zhanbao, June 1, 1967, in RGP, 4: 0899.

[435] Dongfanghong bao, May 13, 1967, in RGP, 13: 4273.

[436] Fan wudo zhanbao, June 12, 1967, RGP 4: 0931.

The most sensational massacres were reported in Guangxi, in the southeastern part of China where the rebels issued an urgent notice appealing to the people of the country.[437] They accused the local military chief Wei Guoqing of masterminding the violence.[438] There, it was reported, the conservative forces had adopted all means available to systematically kill members of the rebel organizations. According to rebel reports, conservatives set up "The Supreme Court of the Poor and Low Middle Peasants" to lead the massacre.[439] They conducted house by house searches for rebels, [440] and invoked the famous communist civil war strategy of "Surround the city from the countryside." They also borrowed from the Japanese invaders of the Second World War with their policy of "burn all, kill all and loot all." They mobilized militia, cooperated with the army and police, to attack rebel strongholds. From December, 1967 to April, 1968, 56 counties, out of a total of 86 in Guangxi, were conquered by force by the conservatives. In the city of

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[437] For these reports, see Sancheng liehuo, March 1, 1968, in RGP, 11: 3426-9, Xijiang lutao, June 1968, in RGP, 5: 1030-7, Dajunbao, July, 1968, in RGP, 1: 3640-3.

[438] Xijiang lutao, June 1968, in RGP, 5: 1032.v

[439] Dajunbao, July, 1968, in RGP, 1:, 3643.

[440] Xijiang lutao, June 1968, in RGP, 5: 1030.

Wuzhou, the fire started by the fighting lasted 15 days. More than 3,000 houses in 13 streets, constituting half of the downtown, were burned. Prisoners were not only terribly tortured, but collectively executed in public. It was reported that more than 50,000 people were killed and many more went into exile.[441]

In the struggle against wrong verdicts and in the armed conflicts, the rebels were directly fighting with either the main instruments of the "dictatorship of the proletariat," - the army, police and militia - or with the "social pillars" of that dictatorship - Party and Youth League members, political activists before the Cultural Revolution, and people of "red" origin. This new experience was contradictory to the teachings of the old class theory. With this new awakening, rebels gained very different perspectives on pre-Cultural Revolution China. Condemnation of injustices during the Cultural Revolution thus led to criticisms of inequality in socialist China before the Cultural Revolution.

Inequality in socialist China

[441] Ibid.

Before the Cultural Revolution, Chinese society was eulogized in the official propaganda as a heaven on earth. If dissatisfaction remained, it must be a consequence of the old society and absolutely not the fault of the new socialist system. Due to government's strict control of the media, few Chinese knew anything beyond the official information. The criticism of inequality in socialist China prior to the Cultural Revolution provided a rare chance for the exposure of secrets behind the scene. Many formerly unknown stories were told. Numerous complaints were heard. Scandals were reported. Unofficial information was spread. The image of socialist China as a perfect society was broken. The criticism touched virtually every aspect of society. As such it became a comprehensive survey of Chinese society before the Cultural Revolution. When this information was put into the framework of class theory, the rebels found a very different class relationship in China from that presented to them by the official propaganda before the Cultural Revolution.

Social Discrimination - Youth of "Black" Origins

One of the most influential articles during the Cultural Revolution was no doubt the long essay "Origin Theory," written by Yu Luoke, a young worker in Beijing, under the pseudonym of "The Beijing Research Group on the Problem of Family Origins."[442] Even before it was formally published in January of 1967 it had already circulated around the country, including in such major cities as Tianjin, Wuhan and Guangzhou.[443] A few Beijing middle school students admired the article so much that they ran a newspaper, *Zhongxue Wenge Bao*, initially to publish this article. The first issue came out on January 18, 1967. It was immediately reprinted the next month to meet the strong demand and later issues were exclusively devoted to discussion of the arguments raised in "Origin Theory." This soon caused a nationwide debate.[444] Opponents claimed that the author was telling "a big lie," and "bombarding the proletarian headquarters."[445] It was said that the essay had "an evil smell." It "vented personal grievances" and

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[442] Zhongxue wengabao, January 18, February, 1967, in RGP, 4:0805-6.

[443] Zhongxue wengebao, February, 1967, in RGP, 4: 0810-1.

[444] For example, it was reported that in Hunan Province there was a "Hunan Research Group on the Problem of Family Origin" and there were debates in Beijing, Changsha, Xiangtan. The same organization was also found in Fuxin City. Zhongxue wengebao, January 18; February 21, 1967, in RGP, 4: 0805-9.

[445] Dongfenbao, March 11, 1967, in RGP, 13: 4354.

"incited hatred feeling against the new society." It was "to negate the [past] seventeen years [of progress]" and "to prepare public opinion for the restoration of landlords, rich peasants, reactionaries, bad elements and rightists."[446] It "represents a reactionary ideological trend in society, and reveals the desires that some people had held during the past couple or even ten odd years." "The main characteristic of this reactionary trend was to cast suspicion on the socialist system and to foster suspicion of the necessity of the dictatorship of the proletariat."[447] On the other hand, its supporters hailed it as an "awakening thunder."[448] "No other essay [in the campaign] of criticism could be compared with "Origin Theory." It was said that the essay aroused a great debate, "without which the Cultural Revolution would not be completed."[449]

Much evidence suggests the profound impact of this article. Even more than ten years later during the "Democracy Movement" from 1978 to 1979, a leading unofficial

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[446] Jiaogo zhanbao, March 11, 1967, RGP, 2: 0156.

[447] Dahandajiao, March 17, 1967, in RGP, 11: 3654.

[448] Zhongxue wenge bao, February 21, 1967, in RGP, 4: 0807-9.

[449] Ibid.

journal published a special issue in which "Origin Theory" was reprinted.[450]

What made "Origin Theory" so influential? In retrospect, Yu's article was a breakthrough on two crucial points. First, "Origin Theory" fully extended the condemnation of political injustice in the early stages of the Cultural Revolution to the condemnation of social inequality before the Cultural Revolution. Second, "Origin Theory" shattered an official myth by pointing out that before the Cultural Revolution it was not the people of "good" origins who were discriminated against, but rather it was those with "bad" family backgrounds who were subjected to the most discrimination.

"The problem of family origins is a serious social problem of long standing," begins the article. It then pointed that it was the youth of black origins, not those of red origins who were subjected to discrimination before and during the Cultural Revolution due to the wrong class policy:

> Because of the influence of a reactionary line which is "left" in form but right in essence, they(youth of black origins) have often been unable to enjoy equal political treatment, particularly those youths from the so-called "seven black" origins, those "sons of bitches" who have already become objects of dictatorship. They are seen as "criminals" by birth. Under the influence of this line, family origins are used to decide nearly everything. Youths whose origins

[450] *Siwuluntan*, April 1, 1979, in DXKW, 7: 1-48.

> are not good are one cut below everybody, even to the point of being deprived of their rights to repudiate their families, to defend the Party center and Chairman Mao and to join the Red Guards. At this time, there are many innocent youths who are dying premature deaths, drowning in the deep waves of the "only origin theory." [That is, it overemphasizes family origin] In the face of this kind of serious problem, anyone who cares about the nation's fate cannot but confront and investigate the issue. Those view points which appear dispassionate and universally flexible are really callous and hypocritical. We must use the methods of unmasking and criticism to protect Chairman Mao's revolutionary line.[451]

However, at the beginning of the Cultural Revolution it was often argued that people of red origins were subjected to discrimination. "Origin Theory" directly confronted this artificial myth. It recalled:

> Remember the first stage of this movement. The problem of victimization was raised by some trendy individuals. . . everybody was saying that they'd suffered at the hands of the revisionist clique. The revisionist clique was so reactionary that one could hardly count as a revolutionary if one had not only not been victimized but on the contrary had been received favors from them. Thus even Tan Lifu said he'd been victimized. Economic victimization? During the period of hardship, he feasted on Dutch condensed milk. Political victimization? With a mind as reactionary as his, he still got into the Party.[452]

The plain fact on the matter was, "Origin Theory" reminded its readers,

> If we think back to the period when the revisionist clique was in power, when university student enrollment was completed each year, the former Ministry of Higher Education always used to make a public announcement:

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[451] Zhongxue Wenge bao, January 18, 1967, in RGP, 4: 0805-6.

[452] Ibid.

> "This year we are enrolling a large number of worker-peasant and revolutionary cadres' children preferentially." Quite a number of universities almost completely excluded children of the five blacks. As for the important departments within the university, there was no possibility of entering them. Schools thus took pride in establishing "worker-peasant-revolutionary cadre classes." Was this "throwing school doors wide open to exploiting classes children?" The students of good origins got special treatment after they'd enrolled. A lot of universities set up organizations similar to "poor and lower-middle peasant associations" alongside the Youth League. Ever since this movement started people have prevented children of the "seven black family backgrounds" from going on journeys of exchanging revolutionary experience, and they have used family origins to incite one section of the masses against others. Nobody finds this surprising. It is clear that the victimization of youths from bad origins is a common event.[453]

This discrimination was not limited to schools only, "Origin Theory" further exposed. For example, in factories almost all the administrative cadres promoted over the previous three or four years had been from "good" origins. On the list of candidates for advanced worker positions, there was a column dealing with origins. Some factories had regulation forbidding master workers of "bad" origins to take on apprentices or to handle secret machine tools. At the beginning of the Cultural Revolution it was also laid down that "workers from bad origins have the right to vote but cannot be candidates."[454]

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[453] Ibid.

[454] Ibid.

There were more examples in the countryside. If one's origin was not good, then he or she could not get all sorts of administrative, financial or managerial jobs and could not move outside the village. The situation was similar in other sectors of society. In elections for residents' committees in Beijing during 1966 and 1967, origin had been a major qualification for candidacy. There was even a section for origin on the employment registration form for unemployed youth printed by the street office.[455]

"Origins oppress people to death!" the author of "Origin Theory" shouted. Yu asked, "If things continue to develop like this, how will they differ from the caste system of the blacks in the United states, the untouchables in India and the mean people in Japan?" The essay concluded that the problem of origins had created "an absolutely intolerable phenomenon in our social system and alongside our Party. A new privileged stratum was created and, along with that, a new stratum suffering discrimination." In "Origin Theory" Yu declared his resolution to fight back. He stated that "We do not recognize any right that cannot be attained through individual effort." The essay ended with the call, "All revolutionary youths who have suffered oppression, rise up and battle on courageously!"

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[455] Ibid.

The essay sparked further exposure of social discrimination in China. For example, one subsequent essay argued that the pedigree blood theory had existed before the Cultural Revolution. A main promoter of this idea was the Central Committee of the Youth League which disseminated its view through *Zhongguo qingnian*(China youth).[456] Another essay reported that in one mine in recent years most workers with bad origins had been removed from engineering and electrical jobs and had been deprived of any opportunity for salary increases. The Party secretary at the mine went so far as to openly state that "Party and Youth League members should not marry the children of landlords and rich peasants. Those who have married [such people] should be given more [political] education. Those who have not [married people with bad background] should not." [457] A rural youth from a landlord family said in the village he (or she) lived, not a single person of bad origins was a Youth League member or a cadre. And not one could get pay as a strong laborer. The cadres there also openly discouraged youth of good origins to have any contact with those with undesirable backgrounds.[458]

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[456] Zhongxue wenge bao, April 1, 1967, in RGP 4: 0812-3.

[457] Ibid.

[458] Zhongxue wengebao, February 21, 1967, in RGP, 4: 0807-9.

"Origin Theory" had great impact not only because it presented a different picture of social reality, but also because the author showed great courage in telling the truth. The truth the author told did not come from what he heard or read, but from his own observations and judgment. This was crucial to the rise of a realistic approach to class theory and is why Yu Luoke was later praised by many veteran rebels as the pioneer of enlightenment in China.[459]

The cry of social underdogs - sent-down youth

The debate on family origins was hot but limited to a great extent to middle schools and urban areas. Even there the main victims, children of black origins, hesitated to speak out openly. They had long been discriminated against so that most of them had lost the courage to fight back. The debate was mainly carried out by other students, especially those of both "non-red" and "non-black" origins, such as children of intellectuals, small merchants, or clerks.

In the countryside, the situation was even worse. The former landlords, rich peasants and their relatives had been treated as second-rate citizens at the best. But one special

[459] *Siwuluntan*, April, 1, 1979, in DXKW, 5: 48.

group did speak out and become very active in the Cultural Revolution: the group of youths who had been sent to the countryside. Many of them came from "black" family backgrounds. The open discrimination plus the hard labor and poor living conditions in the countryside made many of them extremely militant. Encouraged by the information they received from the cities, these young people struggled desperately to changed their luck. They came back to the cities and appealed to the public for support. The suffering they experienced added to the many horrible stories of the dark side of socialist China.

One representative article describing their plight is entitled "Three Years of Blood and Tears" written by an organization called "Opposing persecution."[460] The title of this article and the name of this organization suggest the deep hatred and resentment of its authors. The article enumerated many different kinds of mistreatment they suffered. In order to fulfill quotas and receive rewards, Party officials used many methods, both coercive and deceitful, to send young people to the countryside. Not only did they refuse to assign jobs to those young people who refused to go, but they would even threaten their parents' livelihoods if they did not cooperate. One school principal

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[460] Zinong Honggi, January, 1968, in RGP, 2: 0250-1.

stated that those who did not want to go to the countryside were counterrevolutionaries. Meanwhile, these cadres sold the countryside as a wonderful place and youths would be required to stay only two to three years there.[461] Youth as young as 13 years old and even disable were found among send down youths.

Many youths' health was seriously damaged because their young and weak bodies could not stand the heavy labor required of them. Among 33 sent-down youths on a farm near Fushan, two developed arthritis, four stomach trouble, three anemia, three hepatitis, one dropsy, and two appendicitis.[462] One fifteen year old disabled boy from Jiujiang Commune even died from overwork.[463]

In the countryside, sent-down youths suffered both political persecution and economic deprivation. They were often deprived of basic rights as citizens, especially the right to participate in the Cultural Revolution. In the suburbs of Jiangmen in Guangdong Province, sent-down youth were put to work with the "four black elements." In a state farm there was even a labor camp for sent-down youth. At a village meeting in Lichun, Guangdong, organized to select

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[461] Ibid.

[462] Zinong Hongqi, January, 1968, in RGP, 2: 0250-1.

[463] Ibid.

the Cultural Revolution committee, urban youngsters were forced to leave. Some female students were raped and others committed suicide.[464]

Similar accounts were reported elsewhere. One report for a farm in Hunan province lists the work records and incomes of five sent-down youth in December, 1966 and reveals the terrible financial situation of the sent-down youths.[465] For example, a male student worked 30 days that month, and received only 2.5 *yuan*. Yet, after deducting 7 *yuan* for his board expenses, he actually owed the farm 4.49 *Yuan*. A female student who worked eighteen days received a total of sixty cents, thus owing the farm 6.40 *Yuan for board*. The essay complains, "If it is headline news that Tao Zhu (the Party secretary of South China Bureau) spent 10,000 *yuan* a year only for ginseng and Mei Lanfang(a famous actor) earned 2,000 *yuan* for one show, this income list may strike you dumb with alarm." Under the double pressure of financial hardship and political mistreatment eight youths committed suicide.[466]

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[464] Ibid.

[465] Geming qingnian, November 10, 1967, in RGP, 9: 2489.

[466] Ibid.

In a farm in Hunan, two directors raped and assailed 81 female youths.[467] One article describes the horrible suicide of a female sent-down youth who threw herself under a running train:

> A young female youth was laying in blood. She had been cut by train into three parts. Her left arm was broken. The brains were running out. She was only a cold body left on the track.... The young person was wearing a student suit. To the side of her body was a straw hat with four characters - "It is glorious to join in agriculture."[468]

One newspaper citing a public note posted in Ningyuan county, Hunan Province tells of the political mistreatment of urban youth in the countryside:

Notice (February 7, 1967)

> During the Spring festival all [former] landlords, rich peasants, counter-revolutionaries and bad elements, and also send down educated youth who want to go out must get permission. The length of the outing will not be more than half a day. Anyone who is late in returning will be turned over to the poor and low middle peasants to be struggled against.

Red Rock Rebel Corps[469]

Another newspaper printed excerpts of a (perhaps fictional) diary.[470] One entry runs as follows:

December 30

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[467] Geming qingnian, Nov. 10, 1967, in RGP, 9: 2487.

[468] Zinong Hongqi, January 6, 1968, in RGP, 2: 0245.

[469] Geming qingnian, November 10, 1967, in RGP, 9: 2489.

[470] 32111 Zhanbao, Oct. 30, 1967, in RGP, 11: 3394.

> Today I met a peasant I knew when I went to the post office in Taochuan Town.
> She asked what I was doing and I told her I was sending a letter.
> "To whom?" She asked with surprise.
> "To my family!" I didn't understand why she asked in that way.
> "You have family too?" She became even more surprised.
> I found her question funny. I laughed and said, "How can't I have a family! I have not dropped from heaven."
> She shook her head and said, "No, no, all people said that you youth do not have families. You are hooligans and sent to the countryside for the labor camps."
> I hesitated with surprise, "This..."
> "No," I explained to her, "We all have families. Upon graduating we responded to the call of the Party to come here to build a new socialist countryside."
> She shook her head with doubt, "But we were told this by the Commune cadres in a meeting."
>
> I was struck as if by a bolt from sky. Tears filled my eyes. A feeling of injustice and humiliation overwhelmed me.

An article records how the peasants in a commune in Guangdong province collectively beat the sent-down youths, leaving one dead and several seriously injured.[471] This was done because there had been "a few days' delay in the arrival of living expenses sent from their families," so some youths cut two rows of bananas belonging to the production brigade to sell them in the market to get money to buy food.[472]

The Party officials also used all means to prevent sent-down youths from revealing their situation and their

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[471] Zinong Hongqi, November 1, 1967, in RGP, 2: 0241.

[472] Ibid.

suffering to the public. A mother exposed that after her daughter was murdered, the officials tried to cover the case and block the investigation.[473] During the Cultural Revolution the sent-down youth often became the target of struggle. There was even open execution and large-scale massacre.[474] Sent-down youth claimed that "We were the sacrifices of the Liu-Deng-Tao black line, the victims who suffered the most."[475] They complained that "the countryside is a hell, a bitter sea."[476] Believing that they lived at the bottom of society and led an inhuman life, these youth raised the slogans "Oppose Persecution," and "Demand Human Rights."[477] In Guangzhou, some sent-down youth even threatened to make trouble at an international fair there.[478]

Although the protests of sent-down youth did not win general support from the public, their sad stories did leave an unerasable mark on the heaven-like image of socialist China.

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[473] Zhinong hongqi, January 6, 1968, in RGP, 2: 0246.

[474] See, for example, Geming qingnian, November 10, 1967, in RGP, 9: 2487, Bixuehuangpo, July 1968, in RGP, 11: 3275-8.

[475] Zhinong hongqi, Nov. 1, 1967, in RGP, 2: 0242.

[476] Zhinong hongqi, Nov. 1, 1967, in RGP, 2: 0243.

[477] Zhinong hongqi, November 1, 1967, in RGP, 2: 0243.

[478] Ibid.

Economic exploitation - contract and temporary workers

Another social group which felt especially mistreated and had the courage to fight were contract and temporary workers. Their grievances were a great irony to the official ideology because these people belonged to the working classes which were presumed to be the leading class and the masters of the state. How to explain their mistreatment in term of class relationship was obviously not a small matter.

An article entitled "The Current Contract Worker System Is a Big Poisoned Weed Against Mao Zedong Thought" provided an important argument at the time.[479] It pointed out that this "employment system" was learned from "Soviet revisionists." Under this system, "party A" (factories and enterprises) was supposed to hire "party B" (temporary workers, contract workers) by signing an "agreement" achieved through "negotiation" between both parties. In practice, however, the "contract" was one in which party A listed requirements and employees (party B) had little choice but to sign it. Such contracts stipulated that "party A can fire party B who cannot raise any issues or demands."

[479] Laogong zhanbao, February 3, 1968, in RGP, 10: 2919.

This stipulation, the article argued, "fundamentally deprives the rights of the workers." It says:

> Such a naked employment labor system in which "party A" pays money and "party B" sells labor is the most convenient and the cheapest labor system. It opens the door for a "free labor market" and for the restoration of capitalism. The contract worker system is typical revisionist stuff.[480]

The author goes on to note that the socialist system had made workers the masters of enterprises. But this system of contract labor tried to "put workers back into an oppressed and exploited status." Contracts "adopted the same terms used by capitalists in capitalist societies." They provided "the cheapest and most flexible labor" for enterprises to pursue a "profit first" policy. This system divided the working class into two parts. Contract workers could not consider enterprises as their homes, but had to "live by selling their labor" and thus found "nowhere to be home."

In addition to unequal political treatment, contract laborers also suffered serious economic mistreatment. For example, length of employment was a decisive factor in determining such benefits as retirement pensions and sick leave. But contract workers had no records of the lengths of

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[480] Ibid.

their employment. They were therefore deprived of the rights that the state was supposed to guarantee.

The contract system also violated the Constitution. Article 19 of the constitution, according to the report, states that "There are rights of material assistance for the laborers of the People's Republic of China when they become older, weaker, sick or lose their ability to work." Yet, as the author of the report pointed out, "contract workers are fired forcefully even when they are well. And they definitely have to 'scram' when they are sick. How can they enjoy any labor protection under this system?"

"In terms of fringe benefits," the author complained, "unequal phenomena are too many to count." An investigative report in the same newspaper does provide some individual cases of unfair treatment.[481] In an oil refinery there were about four hundred workers, whose average age was 24. Every year the factory hired, fired and expelled a large number of workers. "Is it because there are too many workers? But hiring continues every year. Is it because of too few workers? Firing and expelling continues every year too," the author muses. The author pointed out that in 1965 contract workers at the refinery had not been provided any facilities to protect them while working. These laborers worked

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[481] Ibid.

outdoors, and had to walk on a coarse mountain road, yet they had no shoes. And, as they had no rain coats, they got soaking wet when it rained. On their identification papers the seal used to confirm their status as workers included the Chinese ideograph that had been "used in the old society when one sold oneself into indenture." When these contract workers were fired, they were forced to "leave the refinery within six hours."[482]

The protests of temporary and contract laborers swept the whole country from late 1966 to early 1967.[483] They were elated when they received support from leading Maoists such as Chen Boda, Jiang Qing and Kang Sheng. These workers set up the first powerful nationwide organization, the General Rebel Corps of National Red Laborers, which, reportedly, once mobilized a couple of million workers to march in Beijing.[484]

The Corps was soon banned by Mao's center and the movement of these workers was interrupted, but quite a leaders did not give up. They became even more open in their attack on the system which brought their suffering. At a

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[482] Ibid.

[483] According to their reports, in 1958 the number of contract workers had counted 12 millions, constituted 26.5 percent of the total employment in China. Special issue, RGP, 16: 5353.

[484] Zhidianjiangshan, March 9, 1967, in RGP, 2: 0265.

conference to which foreign visitors were invited, a ring leader from the Corps stated that "For three years (referring to 1960-1962) I never once tasted soy sauce. Sometimes I did not even have cornflower. I was starving. I dug cabbage roots and rotten cabbage to eat... Our family members separated for survival..." The leaders of the Corps also reported that "now in Xinjiang, Nei Meng and other places many contract and temporary workers have been fired causing a large number of suicides, hangings, family break ups, and desertions..." They thus complained that "all crows are black and everywhere [they] are slaves; the past and the present are the same...," referring to the unchanged plight of temporary and contract workers. Their attacks of current regime and system were quite sharp. They even raised the slogan "down with all power holders." [485] And the leader of the Corps admitted that they really wanted to "expose the dark side of socialism."[486] After hearing their sad stories, a guest from South Africa commented that he felt as if he were back in his hometown, hearing his neighbor telling of the suppression there."[487]

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[485] Jinggangshan, March 8, 1967, in RGP, 3: 0382.

[486] Ibid.

[487] Ibid.

Besides the mistreatment of contract and temporary workers, mistreatment of other workers were also exposed. Workers at Qinghua University complained that while Party officials spent hundreds of thousand *yuan* to build villas for their own enjoyment, some ten workers had to live in a house of ten--odd square meters.[488] They complained that the head of the University Laboratory Factory never spoke to workers there. While a worker with four family members lived in a house of 8 square meters, this official with two family members lived in a house of 50 square meters.[489] In the Pearriver Film Studio in Guangzhou, a worker with five family members lived in a dangerous house of less than 10 square meters. Many workers with three generations had to live in a single room. A worker had to live in the hallway with his wife who came to visit him for two months.[490]

Sick workers often did not receive adequate medical care.[491] A worker at Beijing University was overexposed to radiation because the house he worked and lived in had been polluted by uranium radiation, but this was kept secret from

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[488] Jinggangshan, May 16, 1967, in RGP, 3: 0428.

[489] Jinggangshan, November 24, 1967, in RGP, 3: 0466.

[490] Xinzhuyin, February 1968, in RGP, 5: 1109.

[491] Ibid.

him.[492] In the mines in suburban Beijing, the officials there even kept secret the fact that workers had contracted dust tuberculosis, and let them continue to work.[493] Persecuted by Party officials, some workers had to commit suicide.[494]

The mistreatment of peasants was also exposed. The horrible consequences of the so-called "three bitter years" was heard by many Chinese for the first time. It was said that in some places whole villages were starved to death. People were outraged when some reports pointed out that a partial cause of this was that Party officials forced peasants to report higher production numbers than true in order to hand more grain over to the state.[495] When peasants protested, police were sent to deal with them.[496]

All these reports pointed to an important fact that exploitation did exist in Socialist China. What remained to be answered was who exploited whom. This question became much clearer with the exposure of the luxurious and corrupt lives of some party officials.

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[492] Xinbeida, Dec. 6, 1967, in RGP, 5: 1403.

[493] Huanqiuchi, June 27, 1967, in RGP, 6: 1497.

[494] Dongsheng fengbao, November 23, 1967, in RGP, 13: 4020; Xinbeida, November 29, 1967, in RGP, 5: 1400.

[495] Fanxiu zhanbao, July 8, 1967, in RGP, 4: 0915, Hongshe zhaofanzhe, Dosipixiu, January 4, 1968, in RGP, 7: 1985.

[496] Honggi pinxiazhongnong, October 7, 1967, in RGP, 6: 1720.

Luxury and Corruption - the life of Party officials

With the downfall of so many leaders, the private lives of Party officials became known to the public for the first time. Exposure was quite thorough and sometimes exaggerated. Sources on the private lives of Party officials included their own confessions, denouncements of their colleagues, subordinates, attendants, and relatives, investigations made by mass organizations, and even material evidence captured from the ransacking of their houses. These kinds of reports often aroused great interest among ordinary people.

At first, people were astonished by the material goods enjoyed by these officials. A former Red Guard vividly described his impression when he helped ransack the house of Ye Fei, the Party secretary in Fujian:

> the common feeling we have [after the ransacking] is that "No one knows it without seeing it, once see it, all will be shocked." We never knew Party officials who looked so honest and who always claimed selflessness would be so corrupt.[497]

An article describing of the house of Zheng Sheng, the mayor of Guangzhou noted that in Zheng's grand house there

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[497] Ling geng, Tianchou: yige zhongguo qingnian de zishu (The revenge of Heaven: Journal of a Young Chinese) (Hong Kong: Xinjing chuanbo gongsi, 1972), 87.

were four wardrobes, each worth about 800 *yuan*, three beds with mattress, each worth about 600 *yuan*, a desk of about 800 *yuan*, a sofa of a couple hundred *yuan*, and two carpets each worth about 3,000 *yuan*. There were six electric fans, a refrigerator, and an electric stove. There were also two cameras, nine transistor radios, an electric gramophone and a tape recorder.[498] The report also revealed that Zheng reserved an entire floor of the best hotel in Guangzhou as a separate dwelling and that he held numerous sumptuous banquets at government expense.[499] The Party chief in Guangdong province Zhao Ziyang was said to have his private sports field.[500] The Party chief in south China Tao Zhu was accused of having built a luxury house for his own enjoyment.[501]

Such examples as these, however, could not compare with the special club reserved for high-level officials, including vice ministers, generals and above and their relatives.[502] The club was built in Beihai Park in 1958, and had undergone periodic enlargements since 1959. The

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[498] 1.25 zhanbao, April 3, 1967, in RGP, 8: 2375.

[499] Ibid.

[500] Tiyu zhanbao, October 30, 1967, in RGP, 12: 3754.

[501] Fenglei, December 1967 in RGP, 4: 0992.

[502] Special issue, in RGP, 17: 5441.

standards for the new building were ultramodern and luxurious. A million *yuan* had been spent, and after six years, the main building had not yet been completed. Inside were swimming pools, tennis courts, a billiard room, badminton courts, a chess room, an electronic game room, a shooting gallery, dining rooms and dancing halls. First rate servants, cooks, barbers, and even masters of foot care were recruited from the ten best hotels in Beijing to work there:

> You could eat whatever you wanted in this specially-supplied place. Even in the three difficult years there was nothing lacking. All things were free on holidays. Some "high officials" even took the food home after eating. Everyone here could drink *longjin* tea and smoke *Panda* cigarettes.[503] When Deng Xiaoping came here to play cards, he would have refreshments costing four *yuan*. But he paid only one *yuan*. The other three *yuan* would be by paid by the government through other channels. He was not satisfied with sitting on the finest sofa but insisted on adding a cushion. See how "revisionist" he was! Counterrevolutionary revisionists Feng Jipin, Xing Xiangsheng and others from the city police bureau were tired of good foods and wanted to eat dog meat. They sent people to Yianqi to find dogs. But the peasants there did not want to have their dogs taken away as food. The government agents tricked the peasants by saying hospitals needed dogs for experiments. Even more intolerable was that some "high officials" played to one or two a.m. They would lie on beds as soon as they felt tired. The attendants had to take off their clothes and socks so they could take shower. There were two dancing parties every week. The dancing partners for Deng and others were the so-called "beauties" specially selected from cultural troupes and big hospitals. The movies showed here always came from the West and Hong Kong.[504]

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[503] *Longjing* is considered the best tea in China and *Panda* the best cigarettes.

[504] Special issue, RGP, 17: 5441.

It was exposed, too, that in the Beijing Department Store, a special section was set up to supply rare commodities especially for the top state officials.[505]

The life styles and even the personalities of Party officials were also exposed. Liu Shaoqi was portrayed as a hypocrite who would "sacrifice a few [material goods in order to get more benefit."[506] It said that he and his wife spent 6,952 *yuan* within 5 days when they were in Hainan Island. That amount of money, the report pointed out, "could support 174 people for a year." But they paid only 15 *yuan*.[507] Deng Xiaoping was said to be a card fiend. He played cards every Wednesday, Saturday evening and Sunday afternoon and evening. He even used a special airplane to send people from Beijing to Haerbin to play cards with him when he was on a trip there.[508] He often brought his whole family to travel. When he visited Guizhou province 72 people served him with 14 to 15 dishes for each meal.[509] Beijing Party chief Peng Zhen required three doctors to accompany him.[510]

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[505] Jingji pipan, April 28, 1967, in RGP, 3: 0328.

[506] Zhaofan, January 11, 1967, in WGZL, 1: 265.

[507] Dongcheng fengbao, December 7, 1967, in RGP, 13: 4020.

[508] Hongweibingbao, February 8, 1967. WGZL, 1: 491.

[509] Special issue, in RGP, 15: 4893.

[510] Chengjian jianbao, June 27, 1967, in RGP, 2: 0125.

Foreign minister Chen Yi was said to care for only good food and entertainment.[511] He Nong liked to read martial art fiction. These books were put on his bed, in his office and even in his toilet. He often stayed inside the toilet for one or two hours reading these books.[512]

There were also many stories about how Party officials pretended to work and live with poor peasants and workers. Among them, the story of Wang Guangmei, Liu Shaoqi's wife was well known. It was said that when Wang stayed in a village, she had good food in her own house but would go out to a peasant's home to symbolically eat there. Even then, she would bring her own dishes and had them specially cleaned. She dressed poorly in outfit but luxuriously inside. When she joined in labor, several people would help her.[513] When Tao Zhu went to work in a factory, he immediately announced that he would not eat any meat in order to show off his simple life style. But the fact is that, an article exposed, he spent more than 10,000 *yuan* on ginseng. The money could "buy 10,000 jin of pork."[514] Similar

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[511] Hongweibao, May 10, 1967, in RGP, 8: 2251.

[512] Special issue, November 1967, in RGP, 17: 5488.

[513] There are similar reports. See, for example, Zhaofanyouli bao, March 10, 1967, in RGP, 12: 3999.

[514] Doutao zhanbao, April 13, 1967, in RGP, 1: 3923.

stories were told about Guangzhou deputy mayor Zhao Linyi and Agriculture minister Tan Zhenglin.[515]

The most sensational accusation leveled against Party officials concerned their abuse of women. It was exposed that "after the liberation many high-ranking cadres formed a new family." They questioned, "High-ranking cadres have the duty to lead the revolution of the whole country. What would happen if they were bewildered by these 'beauties?'"[516] Liu Shaoqi was said to have married six times. At the age of 43 he married a sixteen-year old girl only to divorce her soon. He then married a young college student Wang Guangmei who came from a bourgeois family. He Nong allegedly tried to rape a young female servant in 1956.[517] The Guangzhou mayor Zheng enjoyed western pornographic movies. He had raped four women shortly before the Cultural Revolution. Among them were a teenager, a married woman and the spouse of a military man. He had memorized all of these women's phone numbers and after banquets he would usually visit them. Chen Zhaidao, the military chief of Wuhan district, was accused of raping many women after being dismissed from his office.

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[515] Guangzhou ribao hongqi, July 11, 1967, in RGP, 9: 2639, Tiedao hongqi, May 10, 1967, in RGP, 12: 3816.

[516] Hongshe gongjiao, April 14, 1967, in RGP, 7: 1911.

[517] Dadao henong, November 1967, in RGP, 17: 5489.

The denouncing of these officials by the people close to them was also frequently quite moving. Liu Shaoqi's daughter told how Liu abused her mother. She detailed how Liu forced her mother to devote herself to taking care of him and would not allow her to study or work. After their divorce he did not allow her to see their daughter.[518] A similar story was also told by He Nong's daughter, who, deeply depressed, once attempted suicide.[519]

An old worker recalled his life as an attendant for a "senior official:"

> He was like a landlord and a capitalist. I had been his slave for fourteen years. For fourteen years there was no day, no night. I could sleep only four to five hours a day. I mopped the floor, bought food, prepared hot water... I had to run all the errands in his house. I had to clean even the dirty containers of vomit produced by his pregnant wife, and their urine, and their excrement... One time I was driven so mad that I nearly committed suicide.[520]

A speech denouncing Luo Ruiqing, the minister of Police Department, by one of his attendants provided a similar story:

> I was only 15 when I came to Luo's house. But anti-Party elements Luo Ruiqing and Hao Zhiping (Luo's wife) treated me like their horse and slave. They assigned me so much work that I could hardly breathe or straighten my back. I could sleep only four to five hours. However, no matter how late I went to bed, I had to get

[518] Zhaofan, January 11, 1967, WGZL, 1: 266-7.

[519] Tiyuzhanbao, October 11, 1967, in RGP, 12: 3752.

[520] Hongyi zhanbao, April 28, 1967, in RGP, 7: 1840.

> to work at seven. When anti-Party element Luo woke up, I had to say "good morning" to him. I would be scolded if I forgot to do so. I had to apply medicine to his feet. I had to prepare water for him to clean his face and buttocks. I even had to put toothpaste on his toothbrush for him. In the evening anti-Party element Luo Ruiqing often went out to dance, or attend the theater, or play *majiang* or do other dirty things. He usually got home at midnight or one a.m. After he got home I had to prepare water for his bath and to warm his feet. I had also to apply oil to his feet. Even one degree difference was not allowed for the temperature of the bath water. After his bath I had to apply cream on his body. I could leave for sleep only after I turned off the light for him after he went to bed. He rang the bell a couple times per night. Upon hearing the bell I had immediately to get up, report the time to him, give him medicine and empty the urine container. He would ring me to empty the container every time he urinated. He tortured me this way almost every night.[521]

In a article entitled "I want to say! I want to speak! I want to expose!" a nurse revealed the news that former Beijing mayor Peng Zhen had enjoyed a massage service. Nurses in several Beijing hospitals were selected to serve Peng. Previously they were not allowed to reveal this as a Party secret. And now she wanted to speak out:

> He (Peng) acted like a tyrant all day long. Every time when we came to give him a massage, he would either play cards or play Ping Pong. If he played Ping Pong, we had to pick up the ball for him. We could begin the massage only after he played enough and had had his refreshment. The massage lasted at least one hour, sometimes two to three hours. When the massage nurse was sweating and exhausted, the devil Peng and his wife Zhang Jieqing would then fall asleep. We had to follow the rhythm of his breath to leave the room.[522]

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[521] Zhanbao, January 19, 1967, in RGP, 2: 0016.

[522] Zhanbao, January 19, 1967, in RGP, 2: 0016.

The exposure of the luxury and corruption of Party officials stimulated people to rethink the real social relationships in socialist society. The question of who was the real master was raised. The connection between political power and privilege in daily life was also to be observed. This rethinking was reinforced by the criticism of the educational privileges enjoyed by the children of these Party officials.

Educational favoritism - cadres' children

A particular type of inequality before the Cultural Revolution was found in the elite schools. It was soon known to the public that special schools were set up, including kindergartens, elementary schools and middle schools, which served mostly the children of Party officials. Criticism thus focused on these schools. A special exhibition called "Thoroughly Demolish Revisionist Cadres' Children Schools in the Capital" was held in Beijing in early 1967 to expose these schools to the public.[523]

According to a 1955 document issued by the Party group of the Education Ministry and revealed by a Red Guard newspaper, in 1952 there were 42 schools for cadres'

[523] Shoudu hongweibing, May 24, 1967, in RGP, 11: 3570.

children with 2935 teachers and staff serving 13,034 students.[524] Overtime, the numbers of such schools grew. For example, in Beijing there were ten institutions in the early 1950s and more than 30 by the mid-1960s.[525]

In these schools the criterion for admission was, as a student newspaper condemned, "selection by official title," not "selection by superiority [in academic performance]."[526] For example, the admission for the Beijing Beihai kindergarten was directly controlled by the Party Municipal Committee.[527] For a while only children of the cadre ranks thirteen and above could get in. It was openly claimed that this special school was "to serve high-ranking cadres." "Liu Shaoqi's children and grandchildren, Deng Xiaoping's children and the children of Peng Zhen and other black gang members were the "honored guests" here."[528] The Yuying Elementary School was specially set up for cadres' children in 1948 in a former liberated area. It moved to Beijing after liberation and remained tightly controlled by the Party Central Committee. It was claimed that "all here are

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[524] Guangya basanyi, Early March, 1968, in RGP, 9: 2727.

[525] Chunlei, May 24, 1967, in RGP, 4: 0748.

[526] Bayi fengbao, March 1968, in RGP, 10: 3071.

[527] Chunlei, July 1967, in RGP, 4: 0752.

[528] Ibid.

children of the Party Central Committee members and generals."

An article from Guangya Middle School in Guangzhou described the situation during admission season:

> Parents of some cadres' children would send their secretaries or come personally to the school to demand that their children be allowed to enroll... The Party Bureau of South-central China, the Party Provincial Committee, and the Party Municipal Committee would give lists of cadres' children for the school to accept. Such examples were countless, taking the form of telephone instructions and written orders.[529]

The article charges that before the Cultural Revolution, schools in Guangzhou were divided into four ratings. Guangya was ranked as the top of the highest rating. But some cadres' children got in despite the fact that their scores did not meet the requirements of even the lowest ranked schools. For example, one cadre's child entered Guangya with a zero score on his math exam. In 1964 the school admitted 240 new students, among them some 75 percent or 170 were cadres' children.[530]

Schools for cadres' children enjoyed very special treatment. According to the 1955 document cited above, students in these schools had better clothes, food, living conditions and transportation facilities than students in

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[529] Tiaozhan, Mid-March, 1968, in RGP, 12: 3789.

[530] Ibid.

other schools. Many cadres sent their kids to school by car. According to a survey of six cadres' children's schools, on one day in December, 1954, 359 cars, most special cars of high-ranking cadres, were counted, bringing children to school. The ratio of students to teachers/staff was 6 to 1 in these schools, compared to 20 to 1 in most schools in big cities and 33 to 1 in the countryside nationwide.[531] And the budgets in these schools were much higher than ordinary schools.

Students from the Beijing "August First" Middle School described the life they once lived:

> School facilities were luxurious and extravagant. There was a zoo, a garden, a milk farm, a swimming pool, an orchard, a fish pond, and so on. It really had everything we needed, just like a palace for princes and nobles. All people in the whole country had to have a quota for food. But our school was supplied by the Beijing Military District, so students could eat as much as they wanted. It was so even during the three years of natural disaster.[532]

In this school everything was well taken care of by more than 500 teachers and staff members. Services covered even included toe and nail care. Teachers and staff would be scolded by school leaders and students' parents for any incident which displeased them.[533] Similar news were reported

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[531] Guangya basanyi, Early March, 1968, in RGP, 9: 2727.

[532] Shoudu hongweibing, February 16, 1967, in RGP, 11: 3512.

[533] Ibid.

about the "August First" Middle School in Guangzhou which basically followed the Beijing model.[534]

In order to guarantee the safety of these "revolutionary descendants," in the Beijing Yuying Elementary School all buildings were connected by corridors. Students would take large buses for their spring trips because these buses were believed to be safer. The traffic had to be checked in advance. When students were climbing mountains, the staff stood in a line to protect them! The school facilities were so excellent that it was said that even the visiting Soviet experts remarked that it was "better than our navy school."[535] In the kindergarten affiliated with the August First Middle School there was a clinic with 18 medical staff.[536] The Beihai Kindergarten even hired Russian and Japanese doctors and nurses.[537]

Even with these facilities some cadres were not satisfied, and made further demands. A sixth grade student's mother asked her teacher to phone her every morning to report whether or not her daughter had wet her bed. A parent asked a teacher to give his children massages. Another

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[534] Bayi fengbao, January, March, 1968, in RGP, 10: 3067, 3071.

[535] Chunlei, June 10, 1967, in RGP, 4: 0750.

[536] Bayi fengbao, March 1968, in RGP, 10: 3071.

[537] Chunlei, July 1967, in RGP, 4: 0752.

parent sent his servant to bring milk and apples to school every day. Some asked to arrange a smaller dormitory for their children.[538] While most ordinary people were starving during the "three difficult years," the son of an army general Yang You was said to receive treatment for weight loss.

The criticism of educational favorism at this time became almost a crusade against cadre's children. This was exactly opposite to the dominant trend at the beginning of the Cultural Revolution. At that time it was charged that children of workers and peasants were excluded from elite schools in favor of children of former propertied classes and intellectuals. But now it was exposed that children of workers and peasants were excluded because the place was taken by cadres' children. For example, an article revealed that the First Beijing Elementary School, specially for cadres' children, was built the second day after the establishment of the People's Republic. Then there was the Second Beijing Elementary School. It occupied a scenic place where a school for peasants' children had been located. The students there were forced to leave.[539] In 1964 an elite elementary school admitted only one student from a worker

[538] Chunlei, June 10, 1967, in RGP, 4: 0750.

[539] Chunlei, May 16, 1967, in RGP, 4: 0746.

family. "All others are children of high-ranking cadres, leaders of democratic parties, intellectuals in high position, and ordinary cadres."[540] Through this criticism, the meaning of inequality in socialist China was fundamentally altered.

Deceiving - Official Propaganda

False news controlled by Party officials before the Cultural was also exposed. Many critiques showed how the Party officials set up false models for people to follow. For example, an article entitled "The True Face of Dong Jiageng" detailed how the Party officials fabricated many stories to make Dong a role model for all sent-down youth.[541] The Red Guards from the capital of Hubei Province ran a special issue of their newspaper exposing six false models set up by the Hebei Party Committee.[542] The rebels accused these party officials of cheating the people for their own benefit and pointed out that those model heroes had become "members of a privileged status and a workers' nobility that

[540] Jiaoyu geming, May 10, 1967, in RGP, 2: 0181.

[541] Zhinong hongqi, January 1968, in RGP, 2: 0251.

[542] Hongshe Zhaofanbao, February, 1967, in RGP, 7: 2094-6.

suppressed labors."[543] An article listed the kinds of special treatments Chen Guoji, another national model for sent down youths, received and showed that of his six years on the farm, less than half a year was spent doing actual work.[544]

Along with these critiques were also reports on some important events covered by the official propaganda. For example, the "Eastern Station Event" of June 1, 1964 when more than 10,000 people went to the railway station wanting to take the train to Hong Kong was reported.[545] Even the mistake made in the Tibet Riot in 1959 was also revealed.[546] Through these reports many Chinese people became much more aware of the social and political realities of China.

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After Mao's death and following arrest of the "Gang of Four" in 1976 some Chinese began to recount the "untold stories" of the Cultural Revolution and their lives before it. Those who went to the West and published their memoirs were often praised by the Western media as heroes who dared

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[543] Xinzhanbao, July 19, 1967, in RGP, 5: 1103.

[544] Zhujiang Fenglei, March 21, 1968, in RGP, 4: 0658.

[545] 1.25 zhanbao, June 9, 1967, in RGP, 8: 2377.

[546] Shengzhi honggi, January 1968, in RGP, 11: 3461.

to speak out. But in truth such stories were told during the Cultural Revolution, as we have documented in this chapter. It was the rebels and others who had spoken out were truly courageous.

The "Great Criticism" during the Cultural Revolution was no doubt the greatest critique of existing socialist society in the world. It was perhaps the most comprehensive social exposure in human history. It touched almost all aspects of society, from personal matters to state affairs, from small thefts to adultery, from faction conflicts to conspiracies for power. It was no doubt an eye-opening event for many Chinese people. More importantly, the critique was directly conducted by hundreds of millions of ordinary people. It was therefore never empty talk. It came from a political movement and served that movement. First and foremost, it got numerous ordinary people involved in politics. It greatly revolutionized the Chinese people as a whole. Its impact was profound.

A crucial factor contributing to the profound impact of the "great criticism" during the Cultural Revolution is the class analysis. It was class theory which led many of the participants to become truly radicalized. Because class analysis did not allow one to treat individual suffering as a personal matter, it taught people to look at corrupted

officials as a social group. It put criticism into a political framework. The information that came from the "great criticism" was thus woven into a new picture of social reality in socialist China. As such, class analysis was no longer a political label but both a realistic and revolutionary understanding of China's current system. Guided by this approach many rebels began to recognize that a new type of class relationship and a new form of class struggle had emerged in China. They began to discuss how to deal with this new class relationship and how to conduct the current Cultural Revolution according to the new form of class struggle. These discussions became the main content of the new class theory that fully developed at the end of the Cultural Revolution.

The Works of the New Class Theory

From the beginning to the end of the Cultural Revolution Mao and his associates always emphasized the importance of the study of theory in general and the study of class theory in particular. This emphasis was highlighted on the day of the so-called "January Storm" in early 1967 when Mao explicitly asked the Central Cultural Revolution

Group to write articles on the subject of "the revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat" and stated that "this is a very important theoretical problem."[547] However, it was not until close to his deathbed in 1976 that Mao clarified what his intention was on this subject. But his call the study of theory turned out to be crucial to the formation of the new class theory. On the one hand, his call was a great inspiration to many people who were eager to respond to their beloved leader's call at the time. On the other hand, the lack of specified official instruction on the subject provided room for people to develop their own interpretation. Once the rebels formed their own class theories, however, they immediately raised their own political programs for the current movement and they acted according to their programs. As such, they became a political force independent, consciously or unconsciously, from Mao's center.

"Privileged Stratum"

The core of the new class theory was the assumption that a "privileged stratum" or "privileged class" had formed

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[547] WANSUI, 668.

in China. Most Chinese became familiar with the terms "privileged stratum" or "privileged class" through the hot debate shortly before the beginning of the Cultural Revolution between the Chinese Communist Party and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. The Chinese Communist Party charged that a privileged stratum had formed in the Soviet Union since Khrushchev had taken over power, and it deemed the privileged stratum "the major component of the bourgeoisie in the Soviet Union" thus making this group the most serious threat to the socialist system. [548][549]

It was obviously a question in many people's minds when more and more Party officials were ferreted out as "capitalist roaders" with the unfolding of the Cultural Revolution whether the concept of "privileged stratum" or "privileged class" could be applied to China as well. A crucial question related to this terminology is how the nature of the corrupted officials should be understood. Should the corrupt officials, "the capitalist roaders," be considered a special interest group of its own, or should the corrupt officials be seen as the "representatives of the bourgeoisie inside the Party"? The latter formulation made the corrupt officials simply "the spokesmen" of other

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[548] Renmin Ribao, July 14, 1964.

[549] Ibid.

classes in society. They represented the interests of the overthrown propertied classes whose ultimate goal was to overthrow the current socialist system and replace it with private ownership, that is, "to restore capitalism." The corrupt officials did not, therefore, form a special social stratum or class. This was the stand of the Maoists before and during the Cultural Revolution.[550] This is why, in all official media throughout the course of the Cultural Revolution, the Maoists never formally used the terms "privileged stratum" or "privileged class" to refer to the class relationship in China. From this perspective, one may find that although the radical orientation demonstrated by the Maoists during the Cultural Revolution moved away from the old class theory in many aspects, it remained fundamentally within the same framework of the old class theory in other aspects.

If corrupt officials were viewed as a special interest group of its own, however, the matter would be very different. Since officials would struggle to maintain their privileges, they would not necessarily work to overthrow public ownership. Instead, they had to protect the state and collective economy, because their privileges rested on this

[550] It seems that there was a changed tone on this matter in 1976 shortly before Mao's death and the arrest of the "Gang of Four."

system. Rather than cooperating with the old propertied classes as their representatives, they needed to suppress and exploit them as well as other laborers in order to ensure the continuation of their own privileged status in socialist China.

It took more than ten years for the Cultural Revolution rebels to fully develop this idea which we will discuss in the next chapter. But its basic elements began to emerge during the Cultural Revolution. As with many other radical ideas, this idea was also first touched upon by the Maoists. Their discussion on the subject became more and more explicit when they sought to push the movement forward. But they dropped the subject and eventually suppressed those who championed this idea, when they wanted to end the movement.

As early as October 1966, Chen Boda challenged the claim that high-ranking cadre's children should take power. In his influential speech on the two line struggle during the Cultural Revolution, Chen asked "should this be so because they have a noble pedigree?" In the same speech Chen also offered a new explanation for the behavior of some Party officials during the Cultural Revolution. He charged that the reason why some senior cadres followed the wrong line was because they wanted to protect themselves. These cadres, "posing as 'veteran revolutionaries,' gave the air

of officials and nobles." They had "bureaucratic, elderly, arrogant, and elevated" attributes.[551] Significantly, Chen's criticism targeted the officials based on their office more so than their "bourgeois stand" frequently used in the media before. He argued that official positions corrupt these cadres. These cadres began to suppress the masses during the Cultural Revolution when they wanted to protect their positions. These officials were struggling for their own interests. In this critique, Chen Boda in fact, albeit implicitly, treated these cadres as an independent interest group.

The 1967 New Year Day editorial of *Renmin ribao* and *Hongqi* further supplemented this interpretation of class relationships in China. While maintaining that the main social basis of the bourgeois reactionary line was the bourgeois class, plus unmended landlords, rich peasants, counterrevolutionaries, bad elements and rightists, the editorial pointed out that "the bourgeois reactionary line also has a market inside the Party. These are the people whose outlooks have not been transformed or have not been well transformed yet." The editorial stated that these individuals were not concerned with the revolutionary cause

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[551] WGZL, 1: 135.

but with their own "official posts." In order to protect their positions they manipulated the masses against the masses. They claimed they were the embodiment of the Party. Moreover, they hoodwinked some students, including "some cadre's children who have not been well educated" by supporting the couplet "if father is a hero, son is a good fellow, if father is a reactionary, son is a bad egg." They threatened the people with the hat of rightism. In order to fight with them the revolutionary people must oppose "blind obedience" and "slavism."

The importance of this criticism is that it conveyed a vague message that certain officials not only pursued their own special interest but also developed new theories and methods to protect it. The Maoists almost broke the taboo in applying the concept of privileged stratum in China when they predicted that the Cultural Revolution would bring a great change in class relationships in China, moving the current Cultural Revolution from a political revolution to a social revolution.[552] This implication proved to be the most radical idea reached by the Maoists during the Cultural Revolution. In their informal speeches some Maoists even used the terms of "privilege" and "privileged status" to

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[552] Ibid.

criticize some Party officials and their children.[553] However, Maoists never fully expanded upon this idea. Later on they simply avoided discussing the subject at all. Their reticence and vagueness in this important matter left a giant theoretical gap which was sensed most strongly by their faithful followers. But people who felt obliged to develop this idea only found later that they faced the criticism of those who suggested the idea in the first place.

The emergence of the idea that a privileged stratum or class had been formed or was being formed in China marked the first and the most important theoretical demarcation between Mao's center and the radical rebels. This theoretical division between Mao's center and the radical rebels was extremely important in the course of the Cultural Revolution. It signaled a reversal of the relationship between the Maoist center and the masses. Up to this point, the Maoist center had led the movement, generally demonstrating a more radical orientation than that of the masses. The rebels at this time, therefore, were those who closely followed the center and its political programs. The rebels' adoption of the concept of a privileged stratum reversed this situation, however. For the first time, some

[553] Special issue, in RGP, 19: 5995.

rebels could assume a more radical stance than the Maoist center. As such they felt they had to form new theories and raise political demands based on these theories. With this move, the criterion of a rebel was fundamentally changed. For those radical rebels, a true rebel was no longer the person who step by step followed the instruction of the central government, but one who dared to uphold the new class theory and act accordingly. These rebels thus became true rebels in the sense that they had formed an independent political force which played a crucial role in shaping the new course of the Cultural Revolution. The Cultural Revolution thus decisively moved from an official political movement to a genuine mass movement.

The term of a privileged stratum was first applied to criticize the high-ranking cadres' children at the height of the criticism of the bourgeois reactionary line. This notion was obviously due to the prominent role of high level cadre's children at the early stage of the movement and their quick downfall during the campaign of criticism of the bourgeois reactionary line. Their arrogant attitude and brutal behavior aroused great resentment and hatred among ordinary students and teachers. As early as the end of 1966 an article in a student newspaper demanded to "immediately

abolish the [Beijing] Western and Eastern District Picket Teams." It said,

> During the Cultural Revolution, the representatives of the bourgeois reactionary line treated the masses as babies and assumed themselves wisemen. They adopted the Guomindang [the National Party] method of "admonitory politics," organized a group of people into "picket teams" to deceive and suppress the masses, to "discipline" Red Guards, to play the role of "firemen team" of the Cultural Revolution. These people behave as the superior and the tyrant. They are the privileged stratum of Red Guards.
> The Western and Eastern District Picket Teams are such representatives.[554]

The criticism of these high level cadre's children focused first of all on their claim that they had special rights in society, "the belief in privilege," as its critics called it.

A article "Down with the Belief in Privilege," written by a group from the Third Middle School in Beijing, pointed out that "the belief in privilege was still popular among the high-ranking cadres' children who had not been well educated."[555] It then mentioned that in the past stages of the movement the "old" Red Guards and the people in charge in the Cultural Revolution committee were almost exclusively the children of cadres in high positions. They followed the bourgeois reactionary line to suppress the masses and form

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[554] Dongfanghong, December 17, 1966, in RGP, 13: 4031.

[555] Shoudu hongweibing, Jan. 31, 1967, in RGP, 11: 3595.

their own clique. This phenomenon was found in almost all middle schools.[556]

The article then pointed out the reason that the notorious couplet of son and father was so welcome by some cadres' children was due to the belief in privilege in their minds. These children treated the couplet as special treasure and tried to sell it anywhere, because, according to the logic of this couplet, they would definitely be placed on the highest rank among students.[557]

The truth about the Red Guard Pickets, the article exposed, was that its members were almost all children of high placed cadres. Furthermore, the leaders of these organizations exclusively came from this group of children. Since these organizations stood above other Red Guard organizations, they looked down upon other mass organizations and the Central Cultural Revolution Small Group. They claimed for themselves the right to "check all schools, all Party and government departments, all working units and all organizations." From this, the article concluded that these organizations "became a privileged

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[556] Ibid.

[557] Ibid.

organization and that their members belonged to a privileged stratum."[558]

The article also discussed the consequences and the origins of the "belief in privilege." It pointed out that "the belief in privilege was also the hotbed of revisionism. The social foundation of Soviet revisionism is the privileged stratum and the stratum of high salary in the Soviet Union." The origins of the "belief in privilege" was mainly the work of the capitalist roaders. It was also due to the impact of feudalist customs from a couple of thousands of years in ancient China.[559]

The critique of the "belief in privilege" continued until the end of the Cultural Revolution. An article entitled "A Struggle for Successors: A Critique of Belief in Privilege," published in 1968, argued that cadres' children were more vulnerable to the tricks of the capitalist roaders than other students.[560] Because cadres' children were given many privileges and were nurtured and educated to be " 'the spiritual aristocrats' above the laboring people." The fact that the cadres and their children constituted an

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[558] Ibid.

[559] Ibid.

[560] Tiaozhan, Mid-March, 1968, in RGP, 12: 3790.

"aristocratic" class became a new characteristic of class struggle under the changing circumstances in China.[561]

The article then listed the privileges enjoyed by cadres' children to show how these special rights helped them to develop the "belief in privilege." First, cadres' children enjoyed privileges in education. Cadres' children gained admission to the best schools and received special attention at these schools. However, the article pointed out, in a disgusted tone, that at the beginning of the Cultural Revolution these "powerful and noble clans" claimed, that they were oppressed. By making this claim, what they really wanted, the article argued, was to have more privileges for themselves.

Second, cadre's children enjoyed privileges in politics. Not only did they have access to Party secret documents as well as high-ranking cadres, more importantly, the article emphasized, they were educated to believe that they were politically superior to other people. For example, schools often held special meetings for cadres' children at which ideas were spread such as "cadres' children are the biological successors of the proletarian revolutionary cause;" "You are the reliable successors. Who would succeed [means taking power] if you do not?" "Who would occupy the

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[561] Ibid.

scientific and cultural front if you do not?" Under the guideline of these ideas the school recruited many cadres' children into the Youth League. For example, concerned that a son of Zhao Ziyang (the Party secretary of Guangdong province before the Cultural Revolution and premier and Party general secretary in the 1980s) had not yet been admitted into the Youth League, a school principal questioned the school Youth League committee, "why did you not recruit Secretary Zhao's son?" The principal even spoke directly with the secretary of the Youth League branch of the class in which Zhao's son belonged, saying "You should consider the admission of Zhao x x. Is it that even secretary Zhao's son is not reliable?" The pressure to admit cadres' children to the Youth League was not particular to this case or Zhao's son. Some parents frequently called school administrators inquiring about their children's admission to the Youth League. They assumed "who should get in [the Youth League] if our children do not?"[562]

The article "A Struggle for Successors" pointed out "all of this practice seriously poisoned the souls of some cadres' children." The cadres' children, as a result of their privileges and position in schools and the Youth

[562] Ibid.

League, looked down on all children from non-cadre backgrounds:

> They are ashamed of being close to workers and peasants. They do not think it is necessary to do concrete work. They are highly concerned with "taking power," and being officials and nobles. Their only consideration is how to consolidate their privileged positions. At the beginning of the Cultural Revolution the belief in privilege in some cadres' children's minds greatly surged. Based on the principles of self-interest and privilege, they thought they could take advantage of the "chaos" of revolution to ascend to the golden chair of privileged figures...[563]

The extent of belief in the inherent superiority of those born to the revolutionary vanguard can be seen in statements such as the claim by some "born superior men and women" in the "Committee of Revolutionary Cadre's Children" that "we will definitely take over power. I will be the Party secretary." Moreover, a member of the United Action Committee asserted he would be the premier twenty years later. As the Cultural Revolution turned the spearhead of criticism against the belief in privilege, the article pointed out, these cadres' children increasingly opposed the movement because it encroached upon their privileges. This phenomenon was by no means accidental. As an article argued, "It is the consequence of a long history that these people enjoyed special political status."[564]

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[563] Ibid.

[564] Ibid.

In addition to the privileges enjoyed by cadres' children in education and politics, they also enjoyed privileges in daily life, the article continued. When sight seeing and vacations were still foreign to ordinary Chinese, some cadres' children joined their parents on trips or regularly took advantage of their parents' power to go on vacation. For example, one student went to Hainan Island and Vietnam for Chinese New Year, another took a warship to the open sea for fun. Besides opportunities for travel, cadres' children also had the privilege of watching internally-circulated movies not available to the masses.[565]

During the "three difficult years," many cadres' children brought their own food to school. The daughter of the mayor of Guangzhou brought so much food to school that her suitcase was often bitten by rats. In another incident, a deputy mayor sent food to school so frequently that the delivery people had their own key to enter the dormitory. As a result the cadres' children could eat whatever and however much they wanted.

Not only did cadres' children enjoy privileges at school, but they lived a totally aristocratic lifestyle, expecting others to take care of them at home. Some even demanded the nanny to prepare water for washing their face.

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[565] Ibid.

Used to this kind of life, "how could they not become 'revisionists?" the article "A Struggle for Successors" asked.[566]

As discussed above, the criticism of the "belief in privileges" was essentially a criticism of cadres' children. However, it soon led to criticism of cadres themselves. Some rebel students began to look at Party officials as a "privileged stratum." The recognition of cadres as a privileged stratum in turn moved the criticism of cadres' children to a new stage. Until this time cadres' children were still treated as coming from "red" family backgrounds with some defects which might lead them away from the revolutionary camp. When Party officials were attacked as forming a "privileged stratum," however, the basic judgment of them was altered. They were considered to be coming from "black" family backgrounds. The only hope for them to became revolutionaries was to betray the social group they belonged to. An article entitled "Why Did Many Cadres' Children Stand on the Side of the Bourgeois Reactionary Line in the Fierce Line Struggle?" published in early 1967, connected the problems associated with the privileges enjoyed by cadres' children to the social status of cadres themselves.[567] The

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[566] Ibid.

[567] Zhiba chunlaibao, February 26, March 12, 1967, in RGP, 2: 0253, 0255.

article applied class theory to China from a new perspective and provided a quite comprehensive analysis of the above phenomenon.

The article first presented evidence to prove the fact that many children of cadres stood on the side of the bourgeois reactionary line in the fierce line struggle during the first six months of the Cultural Revolution. Some cadres' children helped the work teams to suppress rebel students and teachers. They organized conservative Red Guards and Pickets acting as the military police against the mass movement. They supported the son-father couplet and attacked the Central Cultural Revolutionary Group. "Is this an accidental phenomenon?" the article asked. It answered this question by stating:

> This is by no means an accidental phenomenon. There are deep class and historical causes behind it. The phenomenon manifests the grand change of class relations during the Cultural Revolution. It manifests the serious struggle of two classes and two lines inside the Party and society.[568]

Following this the article cited a paragraph from a joint editorial of *Renmin ribao* and *Hongqi* for evidence of the existence of a social basis for the bourgeois reactionary line. As the standard statement in the past, the editorial said that the bourgeois reactionary line was in

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[568] Ibid.

the main composed of the bourgeoisie and a group of landlords, rich peasants, counter-revolutionaries, bad elements, and rightists. In addition to this, however, the editorial pointed out, "there was also a market for the reactionary line inside the Party. It is mainly those cadres whose outlook has not been transformed or has not been well transformed." [569] The article aimed to address the last part of the above statement. by applying class analysis to the problem of the children of cadres. It recalled that during the heated debate on the son-father couplet many children of cadres had cited Mao's well known words, "in class society every one lives in a certain class status and different ideas have a class stamp." "But they totally distorted this 'highest instruction,'" the article charged, because in their understanding of class status they substituted political label for economic relationship. It then cited Marx's statement that "It is not people's consciousness that decides their existence, instead, it is people's existence that decides their consciousness." Therefore, the article said, we must understand Mao's teachings to meant that the "economic status" of the children of the cadres determined their attitude toward the revolution.

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[569] Ibid.

In order to clarify the economic status of cadres' children the political and economic status of cadres needed to be clarified first. The article claimed that since the Communist Party took power in 1949 the political and economic status of cadres underwent a fundamental change. It then stated:

> Politically, cadres enjoy high prestige among the masses. They also have great power. This status lets some cadres gradually become divorced from the masses. They become accustomed to the bureaucratic way of doing things. Some of them begin to become corrupt politically. Economically, the existence of bourgeois rights, the existence of three great differences and the influence of revisionism gives cadres at different levels a very high standard of living. Their standard of living is much above that of ordinary workers and peasants. They also enjoy bourgeois rights and different kinds of privileges derived from old customs. The life of many of them has already undergone bourgeoisification.
> Ideologically, old ideas, old cultures, old customs and old habit of the exploiting classes, revisionist trend of thought, domestic and foreign, inside and outside the Party, all these constantly corrupted our cadres.[570]

The conclusion of the article is clear: these cadres no longer were the representatives of the proletariat. They were new bourgeois elements. Under the leadership of Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping they had formed a privileged stratum. As such this privileged stratum and became the social basis for the bourgeois reactionary line.

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[570] Ibid.

Since these cadres constituted a new bourgeoisie, their children could be considered "new bourgeois offspring." The article mentioned that these cadres' children lived in first class mansions, were brought up by nannies, and attended special kindergartens and schools. Furthermore, their careers and political futures were guaranteed. They took advantage of their parents' power to pursue their own interests. All these privileges meant that they squandered resources at the expense of the ordinary people's labor.

The article argued that although most of the children of cadres supported chairman Mao, dared to fight with old class enemies, and some even fought with individual black gang members, many were pulled toward the bourgeois reactionary line because of the privileges accompanying their positions. They thus proved unwilling to fight new revisionists and the system which served their interests.[571]

The article continued to expose how capitalist roaders used the children of cadres to carry out the bourgeois reactionary line. It further charged that children of capitalist roaders were actually not children of revolutionary cadres but those of revisionist cadres. As such, cadres' children were not only not inherently

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[571] Ibid.

revolutionary but also potentially counterrevolutionary. As seen in the Cultural Revolution, they often opposed the revolutionary masses to struggle with the old established cadres. That cadres' children sometimes went ahead of the movement proved nothing other than that they could get information in advance from their parents. In such cases, they demonstrated a bourgeois bureaucratic attitude toward the revolutionary masses, believing they were superior.

A group from the Middle School Attached to the Qinghua University directly attacked *Liandong*, the Chinese abbreviation of the United Action Committee, a notorious organization composed exclusively of children of high ranking cadres the "defenders of the privilege stratum."[572] The article was divided into three parts. The first part claimed, "it is undeniable that in our country there are elements of privileged stratum and a Chinese privileged stratum has been in the process of formation."

Part two analyzed the class nature of the United Action Committee, noting that according to Mao's teaching there are two aspects of class analysis - one the economic status, the other political attitude. The former is decisive. As a result, the article stressed that the United Action Committed was composed of cadres' children who enjoyed

[572] Chunlei, July, 1967, in RGP, 4: 0752.

special political and economic treatment. According to the article, these people had "crawled up and stood on the head of the working people and became the intellectual aristocrats." It stated that

> These people are the future revisionists. They are the successors of the privileged stratum. Certain classes say certain words and they act according to their class standing. The "United Action Committee" constitutes the palace guards of the Liu-Deng "black" headquarters. Liu Shaoqi treats them as a beloved daughter, the hope of China. All the "United Action Committee" does is to defend the interest of the privileged stratum. The "United Action Committee" is the product of the privileged stratum.[573]

Part three of the article discussed how the "United Action Committee" defended the privileged stratum by suppressing the masses and by protecting the capitalist roaders. With regard to the first type of behavior, the United Action Committee vilified other students as "sons of bitches," and they attacked the headquarters of the proletariat, especially the Central Cultural Revolution Group. With regard to the second, under the banner of "protecting veteran cadres." the United Action Committee complained that "there were only a few members of the Party Central Committee who remained in their positions due to the elimination led by the Central Cultural Revolution Group," and charged that the "Cultural Revolution is the [repetition

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[573] Ibid.

of the mistake] of the enlargement of 'great purge' in the Soviet Union [in the 1930s]."[574]

The attack against the *Liandong* Committee became the symbol of attack against the cadres' children. Rebel students wrote numerous articles to criticize this group. They pointed out that the majority of *Liandong* members were cadres' children, that Their position was decided by the rank of their parents, and that this group was connected with the privileged stratum in the Soviet Union.[575] They pointed out that "*Liandong* is a part of the Liu-Deng reactionary privileged stratum," that there was "class contradiction between a few members of this stratum and the majority of laboring people," and that this group was the product of privileges which it struggled to protect.[576] *Liandong*'s members were the vanguard to protect "the senior revolutionaries,"[577] the group was thus "a faction protecting moms and dads."[578] The rebel students described *Liandong*'s members as beasts.[579] They acted like hoodlums, robbing,

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[574] Ibid.

[575] Jinggang hongqi, May 22, 1967, in RGP, 3: 0339.

[576] Zhongxue fengbao, May 27, 1967, in RGP, 4: 0765; Zhougxue hongweibing, Jinggang hongqi, June 4, 1967, in RGP, 4: 0799.

[577] Shoudu hongweibing, January 14, 1967, in RGP, 11: 3593, Dongfengbao, January 26, 1967, in RGP, 13: 4352.

[578] Bingtuan zhanbao, March 2, 1967, in RGP, 11: 3331.

beating and killing workers, cadres, students and ordinary people.[580] The group was a political gangster.[581]

The discussion of the "privileged stratum" at this stage still mainly centered on the problem of cadres' children. It was not until the second part of 1967 that the focus of the discussion increasingly turned to the problem of cadres themselves. The significance of the criticism of cadres' children is that by singling out cadre's children as a special social group it also singled out the cadres as a special social group. The criticism of cadres' children as a "privileged stratum" thus simultaneously became a critique of the Party officials as a "privileged stratum." More importantly, criticism of cadres' children opened up new ways to interpret and apply class theory. An editor's comments on the article "Why Did Many Cadres' Children Stand on the Side of the Bourgeois Reactionary Line in the Fierce Line Struggle?" cited above demonstrates this:

> How wonderful this article is!
> The authors apply the principle of Mao's class analysis. It is neither random labels, nor academic textual discussion. It does not appeal to mysterious "emotional power," or abstract "equality." It derives its conclusion from the class interest of the

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[579] Zhougxue hongweibing, Jinggang hongqi, June 4, 1967, in RGP, 4: 0799.

[580] Tiyu zhanxian, January 20, 1967, in RGP, 12: 3680, Chongshang jingangshan, June 9, 1967, in RGP, 4: 0887.

[581] Hongweibing zhange, July 17, 1967, in RGP, 8: 2309.

> proletariat and from objective class relations. It firmly points out: The political and economic status of a family has a great impact on its children. Lack of recognition of this means failing to grasp the new characteristics of class struggle at the present time. This article has deeply discussed some noticeable questions brought up by the Cultural Revolution, exposed the most dangerous factor of capitalist restoration, and broadened our narrow interpretation of such concepts as "class" and "restoration."[582]

"Our narrow interpretation of such concepts as 'class' and 'restoration'" here obviously referred to the old class theory that prevailed before the Cultural Revolution - the class theory that applied "random labels" and "Academic textual discussion." To this editor, as well as to many rebels at the time, the old class theory was obsolete. They wanted to identify "the new characteristics of class struggle at the present time," and concluded that a "privileged stratum" or "privileged class" existed in China. This conclusion became the basic theoretical premise of these rebels, upon which some rebels began to develop their own political theories, soon known as the "new trend of thought."

"Smashing the Old State Machine"

[582] Zhiba chunlaibao, February 26, 1967, in RGP, 2: 0253.

An extremely important development from the summer of 1967 on was the emergence of theory study groups and the subsequent emergence of different theories. For example, there were the "Study Group of Communism" in Beijing, the "October Revolution Group" in Shandong,[583] the "East Study Society" in Shanghai, the "Plough Study Society" in Wuhan,[584] and the "August 5 Commune" in Guangzhou.[585] These study groups formed partially as a direct response to Mao's call for study of the theory of continuing revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat and his "great strategic plan," which became the main theme of the official media after September, 1967.[586] More importantly, however, after more than a year of dramatic changes brought about by the Cultural Revolution, people in general and the rebels in particular felt a strong need for an adequate and consistent theory to explain and to guide the current movement. Since the Maoist center was reluctant to provide this, as discussed earlier, study groups organized to address this need.

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[583] Zhengming 9 (September, 1986).

[584] Shaoguang Wang, 592.

[585] Hai Feng, 329-32.

[586] Renmin ribao, September 3, 1967, Jiefang junbao, September 7, 1967.

Compared with the armed conflict at the time, the formation of these study groups was much less spectacular. But once their works circulated, they awakened many people who had been puzzled by the zigzag course of the current movement and were desperately seeking for guidance. Moreover, these radical writings alarmed Mao's center.

The theories that came from these study groups were collectively called "the new trend of thought." The name indicated two important facts. First, it indicated that these theories represented a different approach from the dominant official ideology. Second, it indicated that there was a common ground among these new theories despite their obviously varied perspectives and emphases. Upon a closer look, it is clear that this common ground was the core of the new class theory, that is, the assumption that a privileged stratum or class had been formed in China. Denying or accepting this assumption was the final theoretical division between the dominant official ideology and the "new trend of thought." While the latter interpreted class struggle in socialist society almost exclusively as a struggle against a privileged stratum or class of Party officials, the former tried to understand this new interpretation of class theory within the old class theory. The emergence of "the new trend of thought" thus marked the

formal rise of an independent political force from the Cultural Revolution. Its works embodied the highest theoretical achievement of the Cultural Revolution rebels and its thus worthy of our special attention.

The discussion below focuses on the *Shengwulian* - the Chinese abbreviation for the "Hunan Provincial Proletarian Revolutionary Great Alliance Committee." Thanks to Maoists' criticisms of *Shengwulian*, the group's writings were widely disseminated. Four major documents from this organization are examined here: "Our program,"[587] "Resolutions"[588] "Wither China"[589] and "The Cultural Revolution and Our missions" (thereafter, "Our Mission).[590]

The main arguments made by *Shengwulian* were representative of the new theoretical trends. Their basic theoretical premise was that a "privileged stratum" or "privileged class" existed. Compared with the early discussion on this subject, in *Shengwulian*'s writings the term "class" almost totally replaced the term "stratum" to

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[587] Guangyi hongqi, March 1968, in RGP, 9: 2755; for English translation, see Mehnert, 74-7.

[588] The document was translated into English in Union Research Service, 51: 5/6 (April 19, 1968), 72-8. It was cited in Klaus Mehnert, Peking and the New Left: At Home and Abroad (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1969), 79-81.

[589] Guangyi hongqi, March 1968, in RGP, 9: 2755-8; for an English translation, see Mehnert, 82-100.

[590] Wenyizhanbao, March 9, 1968, in Red Guard Publications 5:2.

refer to a new exploiting social group. Alternately labeled "privileged class," "bureaucratic class," or "'red' bourgeois class," this new terminology indicated a recognition that the problem of class division was much more serious. As a class rather than merely a stratum, this new social group itself was the main enemy of the people and therefore must be the primary target of the revolution.

Shengwulian's writings can therefore best be seen as a discussion on how to understand and deal with this new privileged class. This discussion centered around three topics: reevaluating the past seventeen years' history of the People's Republic of China, offering a basic judgment of the first year of the Cultural Revolution, and clarifying or redefining the task and nature of the Cultural Revolution.

Speaking of the past seventeen (or eighteen) years before the Cultural Revolution, *Shengwulian* concluded that the People's Republic was not a socialist but a capitalist or semi-capitalist state. A document entitled "Our Program" offered the following general observations:

> In the 18 years since the founding of the state, the majority of the cadres have embarked on or passed through the capitalist road, a very few of them consciously but most of them unknowingly...
> A quotation from Lenin is very applicable to our state organs. "Our machinery of state... is very largely a survival of the past, and has least of all undergone serious change. It has only been slightly touched up on the surface, but in all other respects it is a most typical relic of the old state machines." As concerns the army, prisons, courts and police, all important

> components of the state machinery, with the exception of the army (which since 1960 has been led by Vice Commander Lin and is basically in the hands of the proletariat), the systems of public security, procuracy, and courts have long been occupied by Lo Ruiqing and have become totally rotten. The emergence of the privileged class indicates that some relations of production have degenerated. Though the economic foundation looks to be generally socialist, yet the whole of the huge superstructure can only be basically capitalist. The relations of production seriously impede the development of productive forces, and the superstructure is an impediment to the development of the economic base. As a result, the socialist transformation of the economic base which has been undertaken in China has been carried out by peaceful means and the transformation has not been thorough. The superstructure has been affected to a still smaller degree. [591]

This evaluation basically denied that any fundamental change had ever taken place since the founding of the People's Republic. As the document claimed, the new state machinery was "a most typical relic of the old state machines." Because the past socialist transformation had not been "thorough," the superstructure was "basically capitalist." The system of public security, procuracy, and courts had become "totally rotten." A key factor indicating the capitalist nature of the state was the existence of a privileged class. As the document pointed out, "the majority of cadres have embarked on or passed through the capitalist road." "Our Program" then concluded, "the emergence of the

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[591] Guangyi hongqi, March 1968, in RGP, 9: 2755; for English translation, see Mehnert, 74-7.

privileged class indicates that some relations of production have degenerated."[592]

Another document, "Our Mission," further explained how and why the privileged class formed.[593] First, it pointed out that the victory of 1949 was that of a bourgeois revolution. After 1949 capitalist relations of production continued to exist, creating a new class split and new exploiting classes. Only in 1956-1957 with the industrial and commercial transformation and the collectivization of the countryside did relations of production change from capitalist to socialist. But the struggle continued. People opposing and resisting the socialist road emerged from cadres' ranks. The restoration of 1962 marked the formation of the bureaucratic class. This bureaucratic class introduced many revisionist and capitalist methods into China, which caused the changes in the relationship of production. "Our Mission" lists three aspects of China's relations of production which indicate they had shifted away from socialist to capitalist.

First, since a state factory's director had a full control of the factory, he could break the state production plan in order to pursue higher profit for his own benefit.

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[592] Ibid.

[593] Wenyizhanbao, March 9, 1968, in Red Guard Publications 5:2.

In this case, the means of production would no longer belong to the proletariat but "in fact became the private property of the bureaucratic class." This kind of phenomena was even more serious in the countryside, the document complained, where "the educated youths in many places became in fact a new kind of serf."

Second, "the socialist equal relations among people had become the new relations of oppressors and oppressed, exploiters and exploited." Workers no longer had a right to resist inequality. Whoever did so was charged with the crime of "anti-Party activities." The document lamented, "the bureaucratic class totally controlled the fate of workers according to their will."

Third, the distribution of products "had been changed from a socialist principle of according to work to the bureaucratic class' exploitation of the proletariat." High salaries, high payment for writings and bonuses and so on institutionalized this new exploitation.

The document concluded that the formation of the bureaucratic class caused new class contradictions. "The privileges and high salary enjoyed by the bureaucratic class and the system of contract workers, temporary workers and workers paid by piece work [who were badly treated] has created new class polarization, the polarization between

rich and poor." The inequality in law had aroused workers' hatred. The bureaucratic class in the countryside also aroused the peasants' hatred. The document then noted that, in the famous "23 Articles," a Party document made for the "four cleans" movement in 1964, Mao sharply identified for the first time that the main target of the [four cleans] movement was the power holders who went on the capitalist road inside the Party." "Our Mission" thus claimed, "the publication of the '23 Articles' marked that China has completed a transformation to a new class relationship. The new born bourgeoisie - the bureaucratic class - has become the chief enemy of the revolution."[594]

Moreover, "Our Mission" went so far as to argue the "inevitability of the emergence of the bureaucratic class" in China, given the "inevitable split" among the cadres under the new circumstance. While some cadres had joined the revolution for socialism, other did so for capitalism. The persistence of ideologies of petty bourgeoisie, the inequality of socialist relations of production in practice, and corrupting influence of the bourgeoisie, all contributed to the emergence of the new bureaucratic class.[595]

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[594] Ibid.

[595] Ibid.

After identifying the privileged class as the chief enemy of the people, *Shengwulian* could easily deny any significant achievement in the past stages of the Cultural Revolution. During the past year and more, "the class root" of the reactionary line "has barely been touched," and the revolution was "regarded as the dismissal of individuals from their offices, and not as the overthrowing of the privileged stratum and the smashing of the old state machinery." [596] The majority of *Shengwulian*'s writings dealt with this subject. "Our Program" summarized their basic points as follows:

> The grand Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution only begins from the present moment. During the past one year and more, the Great Cultural Revolution has made its greatest success in mobilizing the masses and establishing the prestige of Chairman Mao and the Thought of Mao Zedong. However, because the privileged stratum of the bourgeoisie made use of the power still in their hands to fool the masses and interfere with the dissemination of the Thought of Mao Zedong, especially with the propagation of Chairman Mao's theory on the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, and because of the persisting influence of reactionary social habits, a large part of the masses still do not understand the objective of the Great Cultural Revolution. Their resistance against the privileged stratum remains at the stage of trying to relieve their oppression.
> Despite the criticism and repudiation of the bourgeois reactionary line which was commenced last year, such criticism and repudiation was limited to the exposure of the crimes of individuals. Moreover, the class root which gave birth to the reactionary line and to the

[596] Guangyi hongqi, March 1968, in RGP, 9: 2755; for English translation, see Mehnert, 74-7.

> bureaucratic structure which served the reactionary line has barely been touched.
> Although the January Storm this year raised the curtain of the struggle to seize power from the bourgeois headquarters, the seizure of power was regarded as the dismissal of individuals from their offices, and not as the overthrowing of the privileged stratum and the smashing of the old state machinery. In addition, the proletarian revolutionaries were childish. As a result, political power is still in the hands of the bureaucrats, and the seizure of power is only a change in appearance. Therefore, the Cultural Revolution in the past year and more has only helped the people to have a perceptual knowledge of the movement. Generally speaking, the movement is still at the spontaneous stage. The historical mission of the Cultural Revolution is still far from being accomplished. In our long march, only the first step has been taken.[597]

In light of this one may find that the celebrated essay "Wither China" was actually an extensive explanation of the above points. "Wither China" argued that because people's knowledge of this revolution was very "shallow," - "not only did they fail consciously to understand the necessity of completely smashing the old state machinery and overhauling some of the social system, they also did not even recognize the fact that their enemy formed a class." As a result, "the fruit of the revolution was taken away by the capitalist class." It thus openly charged the new revolutionary committee with "helping the reinstatement of the bureaucrats" and constituting "a type of regime for the [red] bourgeoisie to usurp power, in which the army and

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[597] Guangyi hongqi, March 1968, in RGP, 9: 2755; for English translation, see Mehnert, 74-7.

local bureaucrats will play a leading role." It looked at the "February Adverse Current" an revenge of the red bourgeoisie headed by Zhou Enlai against the revolutionary people. As such it praised the armed conflict as "local civil revolutionary war" against the red bourgeoisie. It lamented the suppression of the rebels since September 1967 which was carried out nationwide. In a word, the revolution was far from completed.[598]

The purpose for *Shengwulian* to deny both the socialist nature of the past seventeen years' socialist revolution and the proletariat nature of the past year's Cultural Revolution was to redefine the basic task for the current Cultural Revolution. Thus, *Shengwulian* greatly emphasized that the current stage of the movement was only at its beginning because they wanted a more fundamental change to come. This can be seen in "Our Program:"

> the present social revolution - the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution - is in essence the true beginning of a socialist revolution in China...
> The "November 12" instruction [given by Jiang Qing] predicts a greater storm of political revolution...
> The latest instruction [given by Lin Biao] to Hunan is a change from reform to thoroughgoing revolution...
> To carry out its revolution completely, Hunan must persist in the principle of thoroughly smashing the old state machinery...
> The importance of intensifying theoretical study is shown more clearly at the critical moment of change.[599]

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[598] Ibid.

[599] Guangyi hongqi, March 1968, in RGP, 9: 2755; for English translation, see Mehnert, 74-7.

Using phrases such as "a greater storm of political revolution," "thoroughgoing revolution," "thoroughly smashing the old state machinery," *Shengwulian* expressed its desire for a fundamental change of the existing system. It thus raised a series of radical political demands, aimed, ultimately, at overthrowing the bureaucrats as a class. This is clear in "Whither China."

Again, citing Lenin's words, "Wither China" argued that any true revolution must be, in the final analysis, a change of class. It claimed that "the greatest fact of the January Revolution was that 90 percent of the senior cadres were made to stand," and interpreted this fact as "the true content of the class changes in the January Revolution." It then stated:

> The January Revolutionary Storm was a great attempt by the revolutionary people, under the leadership of Chairman Mao, to topple the old world and build a new world. The program of the first great proletarian political revolution was formulated at that great moment. Chairman Mao stated: "This is one class overthrowing another. This is a great revolution." This shows that the Cultural Revolution is not a revolution of dismissing officials or a movement of dragging out people, nor a purely cultural revolution, but is "a revolution in which one class overthrows another." With relation to the facts of the January Revolutionary Storm, the overthrown class is none other than the class of "bureaucratism" formed in China in the last 17 years.[600]

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[600] Guangyi hongqi, March 1968, in RGP, 9: 2755-8; for an English translation, see Mehnert, 82-100.

As "a revolution in which one class overthrows another," "Whither China" argued, the "minimum program" of the current Cultural Revolution must be "the overthrow of the rule of the bureaucratic bourgeoisie and narrowing of the three major differences." In this sense it called for "thoroughly smashing the old state machinery." It wanted "a complete redistribution of property and power." In more concrete terms, it demanded that

> 90 per cent of the senior cadres should stand aside; and that at best they can only be subjects for education and uniting. This is because they have already come to form a decaying class with its own particular interests.

Seeing the current movement as a totally new revolution, "Whither China" opened the banner of "ultra-left." It greatly emphasized the importance of the study of theory. It called for "a new class analysis of China's society" and "reorganizing the class ranks" since "a new situation has arisen as a result of great class changes." In order to do this, "Whither China" openly supported the demand that the "Ultra-Left should have its own political party" to "actuate the people to overthrow the new bourgeoisie, and to fulfill the task of the first Cultural Revolution." As "a revolution in which one class overthrows another," "Whither China" further claimed the Cultural Revolution "naturally involved the army." It argued that "a

revolutionary war in the country is necessary before the revolutionary people can overcome the armed "red" capitalist class."[601] In the end, "Whither China" proudly declared that the direct goal of the current Cultural Revolution must be the "People's Commune of China."[602]

Shengwulian's writings marked the formation of the new class theory in China. These writings not only clearly singled out the Party officials as the major target of class struggle, but also developed a series of political programs to deal with this problem. No matter how naive or how immature these writings seem from today's perspective, they constituted an ideological innovation which shook the beliefs of many Chinese people at that time. Even though most people were not ready to accept, or simply could not comprehend their radical ideas, the gist of their arguments resonated with many people because they shared similar experiences to those of *Shengwulian's* members before and during the Cultural Revolution. The extent to which *Shengwulian*'s ideas were shared by other people can be seen in the demand for "continuing the revolution" at the end of the Cultural Revolution.

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[601] Ibid.

[602] Ibid.

"Continuing the Revolution"

Shengwulian was openly denounced by Maoists in January 1968. Its leading members immediately were put into jail. By denouncing *Shengwulian* the Maoist center sent a clear message to the nation that it firmly opposed the "new trend of thought." What it asked for now was not independent thinking but "following closely the grand strategy of Chairman Mao." Order rather than chaos, unity rather than division, obeyance rather than rebellion, ending the movement rather than continuing the revolution, became the guideline the Maoist center wanted the nation to follow.[603]

The intention of the Maoist center to end the movement was soon followed by a series of strong, sometimes violent, measures against the rebels. Army officers dominated the new revolutionary committees. Old cadres joined them in large numbers. As a result the rebels almost lost any influence in the new institutions. Within a month in the summer of 1968 the Maoist center issued two strongly worded orders, "the July 3rd Order" and "the July 24th Order," calling for an end to armed conflicts and the restoration of order.[604] These

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[603] Renmin ribao, August 13, 1968, in WGZL, 2: 158.

[604] WGZL, 2: 138; 152.

two orders proved to be a green light allowing the army to suppress the rebels, resulting in horrible massacres in many places. On July 27 under Mao's order, thousands of workers marched into Qinghua University, a stronghold of the rebels in Beijing. The rebels opened fire and left five workers killed and 731 wounded.[605] Early the next day, Mao, Lin Biao and leading members of the Central Cultural Revolution Committee summoned five student leaders in Beijing area, seriously criticizing them and demanding their immediate surrender.[606]

Following this incident, the so-called "worker propaganda teams" and "army propaganda teams" entered campuses and many other cultural and educational units around the country.[607] The working class, not the rebels, was now assigned by the Maoist center to "take charge of everything."[608] The Maoist center soon declared that the Cultural Revolution "has achieved a comprehensive victory."[609] Mass organizations were thus dismissed. Students were sent to work in the countryside. The Party's Ninth

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[605] Wang Nianyi, 301-2.

[606] WGZL, 2: 153.

[607] WGZL, 2: 161.

[608] Hongqi, August 15, 1968, in WGZL, 2: 162-5.

[609] Renmin ribao, September 7, 1968, in WGZL, 2: 200-201.

Congress opened on April 1, 1969. New leadership of the Party was selected and the Cultural Revolution was finally ended.

To the rebels who wanted the Cultural Revolution to bring a fundamental change,- political, economic and social,- ending the Cultural Revolution in this manner was a great disappointment. They felt that such an end not only abandoned the very goal of the Cultural Revolution but also betrayed the basic principle of the class theory.

However, faced with increasing pressure from the Maoist center and the newly established revolutionary committees from late 1967 on, most rebels retreated from a more radical, and often offensive, stance to a more moderate and somewhat defensive position. Rather than raising further demands and pursuing ambitious revolutionary goals as those of *Shengwulian*, they sought to preserve what they had achieved during the revolution. They limited their struggle from pushing the revolution to the "ultra-left" to opposing the "right restoration." They became more concerned with defending themselves than attacking others. Or more precisely, they attacked others in order to protect themselves. Their attention was focused more on direct political bargains than theoretical speculation. Many of their points of view would therefore be considered, from

Shengwulian's perspective, representative of "reformism," "opportunism," or "capitulationism."

Nevertheless, upon closer inspection, the writings of the rebels during the last stages of the Cultural Revolution can still be identified with the ideological thrust of *Shengwulian*. After the Maoist center suppressed the ultra-left these writings became the only works which upheld the spirit of the "new trend of thought." In this sense, rather than being a deviation from the "new trend of thought, they were, in fact, their continuation. In the final analysis, these writings and those of *Shengwulian* were derived from the same theoretical framework, namely, the new class theory.

Given our special concern with the role of new class theory in the latter part of the Cultural Revolution, the following discussion focuses on the similarities rather than on the differences among these writings. What I want to identify is the ideas behind these writings which were connected directly or indirectly with the basic ideas of the "new trends of thought." The sources used in this discussion are largely drawn from Guangdong (Canton).

Most writings of the rebel groups in Guangdong at the time were presented under the headline "Counterattack the 'Rightist Restoration.'" This headline highlighted the

rebels' basic attitude toward the situation by the end of the Cultural Revolution. Whereas the official media celebrated a comprehensive victory around the country, these rebels continued to accuse the "rightist restoration" in different places. Whereas the government wanted to end the movement, the rebels asked for "continuing the revolution." Whereas the official media ordered to root out the "mountain-stronghold"(*shantou*, referring to mass organizations), the rebels openly defended these factions. To defend their stance, the rebels sought help, not surprisingly, from what they called "the class analysis." The class analysis they applied was, of course, not the old class theory but the new one.

Most discussions were centered around so-called "factionalism." At the time, the Maoist center and local governments launched a big campaign against factionalism and called all people to form a "great alliance," disregarding their conflicts from the past. This aroused strong protest from the rebels. In order to defend their organizational activities and autonomy, the rebels strongly called for the application of class analysis to the discussion of "factionalism." Factions, they argued, were the instrument of class struggle. A faction was but a special part of class. Different factions represented the interests of

different classes.[610] As such different factions could not be treated as detrimental to the revolutionary cause. Revolutionary and conservative factions both existed, meaning that their confrontation needed to be considered part of class struggle. The two kinds of factions should therefore not be treated the same. As an essay argued,

> The confrontation between the proletarian revolutionaries and conservative forces manipulated by a few capitalist roaders was due to the fact that one group wanted a revolutionary change while the other wanted to maintain the status quo. This antagonism is the class antagonism between the proletariat and the bourgeois representatives inside the Party. When it was manifested among the people, it became the two line struggle among the people.[611]

The key here is "the two line struggle among the people." By extending the line struggle from that between the revolutionary and the capitalist roaders to that among the people, the rebels could then argue that the past struggle between the two major factions was not simply a conflict between factions as such but a "manifestation of line struggle." [612] As a line struggle, faction conflict should be seen, therefore, as a form of class struggle. "Class origins lay behind the formation, existence and struggle of the two major factions," these rebels thus

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[610] Hongshe zhaofanzhe, Late May, 1968, in RGP, 7: 1977.

[611] Yiyue fengbao January 1968, in RGP, 8: 2385.

[612] Honggi pinlun, January 1968, in RGP, 6: 1723.

suggested.[613] They then pointed out that "the conservative force was the social basis of capitalist roaders inside the Party. The bourgeois reactionary line was the ideological basis of the conservative organizations."[614] As seen in the past history of the Cultural Revolution, some radical rebels testified, favorites of local Party committees, work teams, pseudo-Cultural Revolution committees, composed the core members of the "General Faction." In the past stages of the Cultural Revolution these people always stood on the side of the bourgeois reactionary line, and their organizations were pro-conservative leagues. By contrast, the core members of the Red Flag faction emerged out of the struggle with the bourgeois reactionary line. They always stood on Mao's revolutionary line. The essence of the struggle between these two factions was the line struggle.[615]

Since the conflict between two factions was essentially a class struggle and the rebels represented the proletariat, the rebels argued, the great alliance called by the Maoist center should not be interpreted simply as the unification of all organizations together. The great alliance had to be established around the rebels as its leading force.

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[613] Guangzhou gongren, January 13, 1968, in RGP, 9: 2642.

[614] Ibid.

[615] Hongqi pinlun, January 1968, in RGP, 6: 1723.

Furthermore, the rebels argued, the great alliance could be achieved only through struggle, not through compromise. The great alliance meant that "one ate one," meaning that the rebel faction should annex the conservatives. The rebels should "form the hard core of the great alliance" and "teach the conservatives and help them to come back to Mao's line.[616] Some even raised slogans such as "the factionalism of the Red Flag (the rebel organization in Guangdong area) is the highest spirit of the Party," or "the factionalism of the Red Flag must flare up."[617]

However, the rebels complained, in the campaign against factionalism many people intentionally ignored the class content of the issue and turned the criticism of factionalism into a campaign against the rebels. Many rebels exposed how the rebels were attacked in the name of "criticizing factionalism." For example, an investigative report of an incident involving a college student's activities in his hometown provided a concrete case of the issue.[618] Lai Guangming, a student of the South China Institute of Technology, was also a member of the Red Flag faction. On May 22 the Revolutionary Committee of Zijing

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[616] Ibid.

[617] Cited in Gongren pinlun, early June 1968, in RGP, 9: 2797.

[618] Honghuagong July 12, 1968, in RGP, 7: 1791.

Country issued a notice to the whole county to "urge Lai Guangming and all outside students to come back to their schools." On 23rd of the same month, the Revolutionary Committee of the Institute received a telegram from that county's Revolutionary Committee, saying that Lai conducted serious counterrevolutionary activities and asking the Institute to recall him back to school. The institute's Revolutionary Committee, with the permission of the province's Revolutionary Committee, sent a special team to investigate the incident. The report was the result of an eleven day investigation of that team.

According to this report, Lai visited his hometown at the beginning of the Cultural Revolution and mobilized the students there to rebel. His contribution to the Cultural Revolution there had been acknowledged before by both factions. But since the beginning of the campaign against factionalism, Lai's younger brother was struggled against. Lai thus came home to visit his family whereupon he found that the problem of right restoration was very serious. As a result Lai stood up and participated in the struggle against right restoration.

The report then went on to describe the extent of right restoration. Interpreting "leveling the mountain stronghold" to mean complete demobilization of mass organization, the

Zijing Revolutionary Committee began to dismantle such organizations in January. The leaders of the Committee claimed that the decision "whether or not to dismiss the organizations was divided between the revolutionaries and the conservatives, between those who followed Chairman Mao closely and those who did not." The report criticized the alliance for being voluntary only on the surface. Many people handed in their teams' flags and armbands with tears in their eyes. This kind of alliance, the report charged, "was only good for the class enemies who wanted to reverse the verdict and to establish [right] restoration." Lai's support for the reorganization was, therefore, judged acceptable because, as the report argued, "otherwise the Cultural Revolution in Zijing would have come to a premature end."[619]

As a result of this wrong interpretation of the criticism of factionalism the rebels who insisted on revolutionary principles became the major target of struggle. For example, in the study sections, the rebel leaders were forced to make self-criticisms. If they criticized their own groups as very bad and without any merit, they were praised as good people. If they spoke their opinions, they were scolded for having "strong factionalism"

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[619] Ibid.

and were not allowed to serve on the Revolutionary Committees. The report said:

> They [the leaders of the Country Revolutionary Committee] did not apply any class analysis to factionalism. They labeled all talks and activities of the rebels "factionalism." They threatened the rebels with the hat of "factionalism" whenever they wished. The wall posters written by the rebels were condemned as the "fit of factionalism," "black poster." If a few rebels met together, they would be charged as "having a conspiracy meeting" or "conducting factional activities." The strongholds of the rebel forces were called the places where factionalism was a serious problem. All twelve middle schools in the county were thus considered to be places with "serious factionalism."[620]

The report then argued, "in a class society there is not a person who has no factionalism. Everyone belongs to either this faction or that faction." "Those who always threatened people with the hat of "factionalism" were not immune from factionalism. Rather these people had very strong bourgeois and right conservative factionalism."[621]

Summing up this experience, the rebels pointed out that to attack the rebels was in fact the new feature of class struggle at that time. The class enemies [the capitalist roaders and their followers] took the rebels as the main enemies because the rebels were the "most energetic, most active, and most determined revolutionary force in today's

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[620] Ibid.

[621] Ibid.

society."[622] The rebels thus proudly claimed that they were "the social basis of Chairman Mao's revolutionary line."[623]

Some rebels thus opposed the demobilization of mass organizations. They argued that the demobilization of mass organizations could be accomplished only when the rebels dominated the movement. Allowing the unification of all factions before this condition was realized, meant abandoning the revolutionary principle and the goals of the Cultural Revolution. At this point, however, these rebels argued, the rebel organizations still needed time to consolidate themselves and to develop their leadership potential. The continued existence of their organizations was therefore very important.[624] Some radical rebels thus accused the demobilization of mass organizations of being a new form of class struggle, "a peaceful way for the conservative forces to attack the rebels." To contend this, the rebels claimed that their organization represented "the power," "the power of the proletariat," "the power of Chairman Mao's revolutionary line." As such, "no one has the right to turn over his or her [power]" Therefore, rather than dismissing their organizations, the rebels should

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[622] Guangzhou gongren, July 10, 1968, in RGP, 9: 2656.

[623] Bawu February 1968, in RGP, 10: 3138.

[624] Bayi zhanbao, January 1968, in RGP, 10: 3063.

firmly defend themselves, a stance promoted by the *Shengwulian*.[625]

Another strong protest that came from the rebels concerned the large-scale return to power of the old cadres. This point was emphasized by *Shengwulian*. The rebels clearly realized that the problem of cadres would be the major issue in the establishment of a new Revolutionary Committee.[626] Many reports dealt with this issue.

One report written by the "United Accusing Corps to Guangzhou from the Shantou 'February Seventh' Red Flag Revolutionary Rebels" complained that "the old teams of the capitalist roaders of the counties, cities, and districts returned to their office intact."[627] The Military Supervisory Committee which was temporarily in charge of the local affairs accomplished this in the name of following the "directives" from the Provincial Revolutionary Committee. In order to put these cadres into power, the Military Supervisory Committee even sent troop to Jieyang County to rescue them from the capture of rebel organizations and protect them.[628]

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[625] Bawu, February 1968, in RGP, 10: 3138.

[626] Bayi zhanbao, January 1968, in RGP, 10: 3063.

[627] Dongfanghong, June 1968, in RGP, 13: 4185.

[628] Ibid.

The rebels were outraged that while the cadres who supported the conservative were protected by the new revolutionary committees, the cadres who supported the rebels were persecuted. A report published an investigation on the serious situation in some factories in Guangzhou.[629] It reported how the rebel cadres were under terrible attack. It listed several cases in which these cadres were subjected to criticism, attack, kidnapping, or beatings.

The report also noted, however, that those cadres who had been attacked by the rebels became increasingly active. They either made shallow self-criticism or openly denied any wrong doing of their own. A deputy director of the Guangzhou Nitrogen Fertilizer Factory even went to Beijing, Shanghai, and other places to avenge people who had exposed him before. Some cadres openly said to the rebels, "all you did is wrong," or "I will not join the three-in-one unless you make self-criticism," or "it is O.K. not to join the three-in-one but I will never make (self)-criticism."[630]

Similar situations were found in other provinces. A Guangdong newspaper reported that in Hunan and Henan province there were "underground revolutionary committees." In Yueyang County, Huhan province, 14 out of 16 county

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[629] Guangzhou gongren, May 29, 1968, in RGP, 9: 2656.

[630] Ibid.

officials came back to office.[631] Another Guangdong newspaper reported that in Guangxi province, numerous revolutionary committees were established immediately after the rebels were suppressed.[632] In Hunan province some conservatives even openly asked to reverse the verdict of Liu Shaoqi and Peng Dehuai.[633] A report from the city of Haerbing, Heinongjiang province, told how the conservatives and old cadres dominated the new revolutionary committee.[634]

What we can see from these complaints and protests was the stance championed by the *Shengwulian* who asked the majority of cadres to stand aside. It revealed that the Guangdong rebels also believed that the basic task of the Cultural Revolution was to overthrow the old Party officials as a stratum or class. Like *Shengwulian*, the rebels of Guangdong strongly emphasized the importance of theoretical study. This was, of course, another way to express their dissatisfaction with the official ideology at the time. Also like *Shengwulian*, the rebels of Guangdong greatly emphasized class analysis. They asked to apply class analysis to factionalism, the great alliance, new revolutionary

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[631] Honghuagong, May 5, 1968, in RGP, 7: 1790.

[632] Xinguanggong, June 1968, in RGP, 5: 1216.

[633] Ibid.

[634] Haerbing fenglei, December 5, 1967, in RGP, 5: 1017.

committee, and even the instruction from the Maoist center. The implication behind this demand was extremely radical. For example, some Guangdong rebels openly suggested that "a class analysis must be applied to 'Following Closely," a slogan strongly promoted by the official media at the time, asking all people to "follow closely Mao's grand strategy." [635] When the rebels asked to apply class analysis to this call, it almost openly challenged the authority of Mao's center. By calling for class analysis the rebels raised a new principle guiding their action. Now what the revolutionaries should obey was not a Party member or Party branch. It was not the Party discipline or the Party Central Committee. It was not even "the Party's Central Committee with Chairman Mao at the head" or "Mao Zedong Thought." Now the principle for a true revolutionary to uphold was no longer an outside factor. The very criterion of the principle was laid on the revolutionaries themselves. That is, a principle was justified only if it fit the profound interest of the revolutionaries. And of course, the rebels believed they were the true revolutionaries. As such, they themselves were the criterion of the revolutionary principle. In a word, now it was the rebels who decided the nature of any principle and not any principle that decided

[635] Hongshe Zhaofanzhe, Late May 1968, in RGP, 7: 1977.

the nature of the rebels. This was of course extremely radical. It marked a fundamental ideological transformation of the rebels. Once the rebels claimed they themselves should be the criterion of the revolutionary principle, they were no longer had subject to any authority. They were no longer restricted by any principle. By this change these rebels showed that they had passed a political apprenticeship and emerged as an independent political force. Thus, by the end of the Cultural Revolution some rebels finally became true rebels.

What was behind this radical ideological transformation was the impact of the new class theory. Now these rebels believed that they, the rebels, were the true mass organization and therefore represented the interest of the people. On opposite side were the Party officials and the conservatives who were manipulated by the Party officials. This was the bottom line behind their call for class analysis. The rebels believed that the Party officials as a privileged stratum were the major target of the revolution and the rebels were the leading force of the revolution. This is why the rebels opposed the campaign against factionalism and considered the large-scale return to office of old cadres as the "rightist restoration" and a sign of the "negating of the Cultural Revolution." This is also why

the rebels opposed the slogan "Struggling Against Selfishness" promoted by the official media at the time. The rebels of Guangdong argued that a real selfless revolutionary should not be engaged in moral self-cultivation in order to appeal to the authority above. A true selfless revolutionary should be engaged, on the contrast, in real class struggle.[636] That is, a true revolutionary should rebel against the privileged stratum composed of bureaucrats. As such they should not criticize but should defend themselves. To counter the privileged stratum these rebels championed the authority of the masses. They claimed that the people should have the right to have final say on political decisions[637] They demanded that the masses "have the [political] hats in their hands" so they could dismiss any official they didn't like.[638] They thus asked for "extensive democracy," demanding the return of power from the officials to the people. These demands were obviously similar to the *Shengwulian's* programs for "smashing the old state machine" and establishing the "People's Commune of China" with a common aim against the Party officials.

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[636] Wenge pinlun, January 1968, in RGP, 14: 4600.

[637] Hongshe zhaofanzhe, late May 1968, in RGP, 7: 1977.

[638] Shanghai hongweizhanbao, December 21, 1968, in RGP, 11: 3438.

By defining the Party officials as a privileged stratum which the Cultural Revolution should overthrow, the rebels of course concluded that the Cultural Revolution was far from fulfilling its task. This was exactly the same stance of the *Shengwulian* who greatly emphasized that the current stage of the Cultural Revolution was just its beginning, in order to push the movement to a more radical direction. For the same purpose, the Guangdong rebels openly stated that the current situation was one of "rightist restoration." They claimed that the new revolutionary committee was "another form of work team" and "it should be abolished."[639] Echoing *Shengwulian*'s article "Whither China," the rebels of Guangdong asked "Whither the Cultural Revolution in Guangzhou?" and demanded, "Guangzhou should have another great disturbance"[640] Similar demands were filling most rebels' publications as the call for "continuing the revolution" became the common cry of rebels around the country by the end of the Cultural Revolution.

The main themes that underlined the writings of the rebels in the Guangdong areas were clearly identified with the ideological thrust present in *Shengwulian*'s writings. In

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[639] Xinxing hongsi, December 23, 1967, in RGP, 5: 1127.

[640] Bayi zhanbao, January 1968, in RGP, 10: 3063.

the final analysis, both groups derived their works from same theoretical premise, namely the new class theory.

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If we compare the main ideological streams present at the end of the Cultural Revolution with those present at the beginning of the Cultural Revolution, it seems that China had moved into a new era At the beginning of the Cultural Revolution, it was Party officials who most enthusiastically promoted class theory. People of "red" origins who emphasized most strongly the continuation of class struggle, and Party and Youth League members sincerely asked for the application of "a class analysis." The conservatives most strongly championed the application of the class theory.

In contrast, at the end of the Cultural Revolution, the rebels championed the class theory. It was people of the masses who stressed the existence of class and class struggle in socialist China. It was people of different origins than the favorites of the Party officials who asked for "a class analysis." People who felt oppressed demanded "continuing the revolution."

The answers to this seemingly puzzling change are in fact very simple. They lay in the major theme of this

dissertation that two different kinds of class theory existed, the class theory dominant prior to the Cultural Revolution, which I refer to as the old class theory, and the class theory championed by the rebels at the end of the Cultural Revolution which I refer to as the new class theory. The old class theory emphasized the old exploiting classes as the main target of the revolution. The new class theory stressed the new Party officials as the major enemy of the revolution. These two class theories were very different in nature and function. The old class theory was a powerful ideology used by the government to mobilize the people for social transformation. The new class theory was an inspiring
theoretical guide employed by the rebels to reform the government. The rise of the new class theory marked the birth of an independent political force in China which played a leading role in the democratic movement in the late 1970s and early 1980s and the new class theory became the leading theory in that movement which we will discuss in the next chapter.

Chapter Five

Class Struggle for Democracy: Class Theory Shortly After the Cultural Revolution

Ten years after the end of the Cultural Revolution the mass big-character posters and unofficial journals reappeared on China's streets in the so-called Democracy Movement of the late 1970s and the early 1980s. Most democratic activists in this period were former rebel students and young workers. Their writings provide a rich source for us to examine the political thought of the Cultural Revolution generation.[641]

In contrast to the writings of the Cultural Revolution, a striking feature of the unofficial publications from the Democracy Movement of this period was their diversity. During the Cultural Revolution many of the writings were merely copied from the official press. Bold printing of Mao's quotations appeared on almost every page of those writings. Most of them were short, and their arguments were very simple. More important, those writings interpreted almost all social phenomena in terms of class and class struggle.

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[641]Dalu dixia kanwu huibian zhuananxiaozhu, *Dalu dixia kanwu huibian* (Underground Publications from Mainland China) 20 vols.(Taibei, Taiwan: Zhonggong yanjiu zhazhishe, 1980-84). (Hereafter, DXKW.)

Such was no longer the case with the literature of the Democracy Movement of the late 1970s and the early 1980s. Not only were the political essays produced at this time generally longer and more complex than their predecessors from the Cultural Revolution, but they were joined by works of a more purely literary character as well. Fiction, poetry, literary critiques, and plays for stage and screen all flourished during this period.

The diversity of contents and interest in these publications was even more remarkable. Rather than focusing exclusively on politics, these writings covered an extraordinarily wide range of topics including mathematics, reports on UFOs, the collective suicide of the People's Temple Party, and the introduction of the quartz watch.[642] In political discussion, Mao's class theory was no longer the sole criterion by which politics was judged: More citations from Marx, Engels and Lenin were found. There were also extracts from Sun Yatsen, the World Declaration of Human Rights, Roden's comments on art, and even a lengthy introduction to Hobbes's political ideas.[643]

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[642] Qiushibao, January 1, February 1, March 1, 1979, in DXKW 1: 128-30, 264-6. Tansuo, January 29, 1979, in DXKW, 2: 29-32.

[643] Qiushibao, March 16, 1979, in DXKW, 2: 138-9, 210. Zhongguorenquan, March 22, 1979, in DXKW, 3: 258. Wotu, April 1979, in DXKW, 13: 59-82.

Despite this diversity, however, I will identify in the following pages some common ideological trends manifested in these publications. Four issues that were most seriously debated during this period are discussed here. They are: the demand for democracy, class theory, evaluation of the Cultural Revolution and Mao's place in history. This chapter is not, however, a comprehensive review of the literature from the Democracy Movement of this period. While examining those four major issues in the publications, I pay special attention to the role and meaning of the class theory in the minds of democratic activists. My review suggests that China experienced an ideological transformation in the years following the Cultural Revolution. The old class theory emphasizing the threat posed by the remnants of the old propertied class lost its prominent place in the public. On the other hand, the new class theory stressing that a new exploiting class was born in socialist society was continued to be upheld by many democratic activists. This theory provided the theoretical basis for the demand for democracy at that time. The Chinese democracy in the late 1970s and early 1980s was therefore a democracy against the privileged class in socialist society. However, the impact of the new class theory was very limited. This helps explain in part why the democracy movement was so isolated. It also throws a

light on the causes of the failure of the Cultural Revolution. Besides many other factors, the Cultural Revolution failed because of the underdevelopment of the new class theory.

The Demand for Democracy

The strongest cry in the Democracy Movement of the late 1970s and the early 1980s, as suggested by the name of the movement, was, of course, the demand for democracy. The first important document in this concern was no doubt the celebrated Li Yizhe poster entitled "On Socialist Democracy and the Legal System." As its title suggested, the poster directly raised the demand for democracy. All three members of the Li Yizhe group were former rebel students.[644] The poster first appeared in downtown Guangzhou in 1974 and was immediately circulated nationwide. It was later reprinted in an unofficial journal in 1979.[645] The poster thus serves admirably as a guide to the trajectory of the ideological

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[644] They are Li Zhengtian, Chen Yiyang and Wang Xizhe.

[645] Kexue minzhu he fazhi, March 5, 1979, in DXKW, 9: 313-344. For an English translation, see Anita Chan, Stanley Rosen, and Jonathan Unger, eds., On Socialist Democracy and the Chinese Legal System: The Li Yizhe Debates (New York: M. E. Sharpe, 1985).

development of former rebel students in the period between the Cultural Revolution and the Democracy Movement, and it illustrates how that trajectory led to a demand for democracy in China in the late 1970s and the early 1980s.

In comparison with the Democracy Movement literature, a salient feature of the Li Yizhe poster was its emphasis on class analysis. All its arguments were based on the assertion that a new exploiting class was formed in China, and it posed the major threat to the socialist system. This emphasis and claim was obviously a direct reaction to the new class theory which had emerged during the Cultural Revolution.

The poster began its argument with a full citation from Mao's well-known statement about the continuation of class and class struggle in socialist society which had been adopted by the Party as the basic political line since the Cultural Revolution. The reason why Li Yizhe felt compelled to quote such a celebrated statement "in its entirety," and what made this citation especially meaningful here was, of course, the exclusive interpretation of it that Li Yizhe claimed. As the poster stated,

> According to the warnings of the [Party's] basic line, for the next several hundred years, generation after generation the new bourgeoisie will inevitably emerge regardless of the will of the people. The watershed dividing proletarian revolutionaries from conservatives and the fundamental theoretical issue which leads to the affirmation or negation of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution is whether one recognizes or denies that this new bourgeois class (the representatives of

> which are the capitalist-roaders inside the Party) constitutes the chief danger leading to capitalist restoration.[646]

The poster thus firmly rejected the interpretation of Mao's statement in terms of old class divisions. It taunted those upholding the old class theory by saying that these people may uphold their belief for the next twenty or even fifty years when there were still remnant old class enemies in our society. But "what then after a hundred years?" the poster asked. If one did agree with Mao's assertion that there would still be classes and class struggle in the long historical period of socialism, "eventually your recognition [of our interpretation of Mao's statement] will have to be forthcoming."[647]

The most striking element of this argument was that the fundamental premise of the argument - the emergence of a new class in socialist society - was presented by a simple logical deduction from Mao's statement itself. And yet the argument was indisputable to Mao's disciples. By making this deduction the poster left no room for the old class theory.

Once the recognition of a new class was confirmed, the poster turned to its main objectives-- to identify the new

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[646] Chan, Rosen, and Unger, 37.

[647] Ibid.

forms of exploitation by the new class and how to deal with these new problems. It pointed out that

> The essence of the appropriation of possessions by the new bourgeois class is to "turn public into private" while still maintaining a system of public ownership of the means of production. When a leader of the state or of a state enterprise comports himself like a member of the bourgeoisie in redistributing the proletariat's property and power, he is in reality converting such properties and power into private ownership by the new bourgeois class.[648]

The old class theory obviously would not deal with this kind of exploitation because it emphasized old class enemies. The new bourgeoisie that had emerged in socialist society was not necessarily, or mainly, composed of members of the former propertied classes. To raise the level of collective ownership would not help since the new exploitation presupposed public ownership. By the same token, to encourage moral cultivation such as fighting selfishness and working harder would simply benefit the new bourgeoisie. Strengthening Party leadership would even worsen the situation since this new bourgeoisie was right inside the Party itself.

To Li Yizhe, an "extremely large contradiction" in conducting the new class struggle in socialist society was that the "centralized leadership of the Party cannot be shaken," but "the focus of the campaigns is to rectify the

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[648] Chan (1985), 35-6.

capitalist-roaders in the Party." To resolve this contradiction required a new approach that differed from the old way of class struggle. Li Yizhe thus argued that the effort of class struggle should be directed against the new privileged stratum rather than the old propertied classes. Accordingly, the state was to limit the special privileges enjoyed by the "new aristocracy" and the "new bourgeoisie" and punish "mandarins" who had committed monstrous crimes.[649]

Above all, democracy and the legal system were crucial to resolving that "extremely large contradiction" because they provided an effective means for the masses to combat the new class. The main demand of the poster thus was the guarantee of "all the democratic rights rightfully belonging to the masses" and "the masses' right of the revolutionary supervision over the Party's and country's various levels of leadership."[650]

The Li Yizhe poster heralded the demand for democracy in the Democracy Movement. Some ideological orientations of that movement were already apparent. First, the poster called for not democracy of a Western kind but for "socialist democracy," which presupposed public ownership and pursued egalitarianism. Second, the major argument of the poster

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[649] Ibid., 77-78, 81.

[650] Ibid., 77, 80.

rested on a radical interpretation of Mao's class theory which obviously came from the "new trend of thought" of the Cultural Revolution. Third, the need to conduct a new form of class struggle, - namely, to fight against the new privileged class, - directly leads to the demand for democracy. The Democracy was understood as a counterweight against the bureaucratic class. That is, the democracy Li Yizhe called for was an effective way by which "the people's rights, under the centralized leadership of the Party, be protected in the struggle against the capitalist-roader and incorrect lines in the Party itself." Democracy, to Li Yizhe, was but a new form of class struggle.

The Li Yizhe poster testifies not only to the historical link between the Cultural Revolution and the Democracy Movement but also to the ideological connection between the new class theory and the demand for democracy. Perhaps the most striking characteristic of the Chinese concept of democracy in the late 1970s and the early 1980s was its strong tie to antibureaucratic sentiment. In the unofficial publications the demand for democracy almost always went hand in hand with opposition to the bureaucratic class. Chinese democracy movement of the late 1970s and the early 1980s was, therefore, an antibureaucratic movement. It did not seek stability, and was not based on an abstract concept of

citizenship. The demand for democracy was a measure against the bureaucratic class, and its main significance must be interpreted in this light.

An argument strictly adhering to this line is an editor's essay in a leading unofficial journal, Siwu Luntan(the April Fifth Forum).[651] The essay sharply rejected the recent official announcement to the effect that class division had been eliminated in China. The essay contended that a bureaucratic class still existed and was rooted in the division of labor. The essay cited Engels to point out that the division of labor gave rise to a class that was separated from direct participation in productive labor. In China,

> the [old] bourgeois class has no longer existed. Yet the rationality or necessity of a special class which is antagonistic to other laboring classes has not disappeared. The law of social division continues to function in a new form. Thus, from among the personnel and administrators of the Party and state who directly or indirectly control all means of production, a bureaucratic orientation has emerged, and among these people the bureaucrats are being formed a stratum or a class.[652]

The essay viewed the revolt in Poland and Hungary in 1956 as a "mass movement against bureaucratic autocracy."[653] The celebrated 1968 "Prague Spring" was seen as an effort to

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[651] Siwu Luntan, December 1979, in DXKW 10: 1-17.

[652] Ibid., 6.

[653] Ibid., 8.

"break the monopolist power [of the bureaucratic class] which was close to becoming a hereditary class."[654] Similarly, the democracy movement in China was necessary because "in a tightly organized society with a serious bureaucratic disease, the main force that can fight the bureaucratic tendency is the social force which is freely organized together."[655] The conflict between the people and the bureaucratic class was so profound that Chen Erjin, a democratic activist and theorist from Yunnan Province once had "seriously considered resorting to violence to overthrow the rule of bureaucrats and new nobles."[656]

Chen Erjin mentioned here provides a particularly striking example of how the recognition of a bureaucratic class leads to the demand for democracy. Chen's essay "On Proletarian Democratic Revolution" is remarkable not only because of its extraordinary length and comparatively sophisticated argument, but also because of when it was written.[657] Like Li Yizhe poster, Chen's essay was actually completed before the Democracy Movement. Unlike Li Yizhe

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[654] Ibid., 9.

[655] Ibid., 11.

[656] Ibid., 14.

[657] Siwu Luntan, June 1979, in DXKW, 1:55-217. For an English version, see Chen Erjin, China: Crossroads Socialism, trans. Robin Munro (London: Verso Editions and NLB, 1984).

poster which emphasized "reality," Chen's essay stressed theory. Unlike Li Yizhe's poster which depended almost solely on Mao's statements, Chen's essay cited heavily the works of Marx, Engels and Lenin. It also introduced lessons learned from Western history and society. Chen's solutions were also very different from those proposed in the Li Yizhe poster. Despite all these differences, however, Chen's essay and Li Yizhe poster were identical in one fundamental point: both concentrated on the problem of a new exploiting class and both sought solutions to the problem in democracy.

Chen's analysis began with a discussion of the Soviet system. He concluded that the main characteristic of the revisionist system was the ownership of productive means by a privileged class in which bureaucrats held a monopoly. This class possessed high-level organization and politico-economic incorporation that enabled a minority to hold power as was manifested in and reinforced by such systems as official appointments, the hierarchical order, the autonomization of the state organs and the sanctification of the Party. Power, Chen pointed out, corrupted: "From the outset, this fixed monopoly began to exert an extremely corrosive influence upon the minority concerned."[658]

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[658] Chen Erjin, 98.

Up to this point, Chen's conclusions strikingly resembled those of Li Yizhe poster. As with Li Yizhe poster, Chen's essay pondered the contradiction between centralized Party leadership and the struggle against revisionists inside the Party. But while the Li Yizhe poster wanted to directly strengthen people's power, Chen's essay was innovative in that it suggested a reform of the party system.

Chen's solution was based on his analysis of the structure of political power in socialist society. He argued that the extensive concentration of the major elements of state power (military, political, financial and cultural) was located entirely within the Communist Party and placed under its monopoly. In addition, the possibility of other political organizations competing legally for power with the Party (or even existing at all) had long since been eliminated, and, therefore, the struggle against the revisionists itself also came, inevitably, to be concentrated within the governing Communist Party. A realistic solution was to provide an institutional channel for open competition inside the Party. On the basis of this analysis, he suggested a dual communist party system in which the organizational leadership of the two parties would be principally embodied in their publications. People would be free to leave one party and

join the other based on their will without facing censure or reproach.[659]

Chen argued that a two-party system would provide a rational forum for the peaceful competition of different political ideas and factions. The origins of the two-party system was found in the bourgeois democracy in which the political party, rather than being able to dictate to the bourgeoisie, could instead only serve as its instrument. The dual communist party system would play the same role for the proletariat. "The bourgeois two-party form represents the cumulative outcome of a historical process; it has the capacity to bring about an effective mobilization of the resources of the entire ruling class, it permits the operation of a mutual restriction and supervision within the ruling class itself, and thereby militates against the expansion of privilege and the bureaucratization of those in public office."[660]

Chen's solution was obviously different from that of Li Yizhe. Whereas Li Yizhe championed democracy for the people, Chen supported a democracy inside the party. Yet the thrusts of their demands were identical: both rejected the existing political system. They both asked to break the monopoly of

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[659] Ibid., 167.

[660] Ibid., 169.

the Party, and both considered democracy an effective way to combat the new privileged class.

Most discussions about democracy in the Democracy Movement were not, however, as exclusively or explicitly focused on the problem of the bureaucratic class, although it was generally taken for granted as an important reason for democracy. What is important here is not to what extent the democratic activists connected the problem of bureaucratic class with the demand for democracy but their awareness of the potential danger posed by the people in power. An important line crucial to democracy has been drawn from here.

In the unofficial publications of the Democracy Movement, terms such as "a new born bourgeoisie," "the bureaucratic class," "bureaucrats," "the privileged class," and "the privileged stratum" were vaguely used. These terms generally referred to the bad officials, but they also denoted all officials as a social group. In most cases no special effort was made to distinguish these terms. This was just the opposite of the situation prior to and during the Cultural Revolution when great efforts were made to determine which cadres were "good," "comparatively good," "with serious mistakes," and "antiparty and antisocialist rightists." What the vague post Cultural Revolution use of these terms suggests is a clear distinction between the rulers and the

ruled, between officials and the masses, between those who had power and those who did not. It is precisely the lack of differentiation between good and bad cadres that conveys the very revolutionary idea that officials, good or bad, potentially threaten the public interest. The function of democracy is to preclude that potential. The antibureaucratic demand thus led directly to the clamor for democracy by turning attention to the problems of the government, the officials and especially the system that produced the bureaucratic class. This consciousness was of fundamental importance to all democratic demands in China in the late 1970s and the early 1980s.

In fact, the call for democracy itself appeared as an apparently heretical idea that deviated from the officially championed concept of the "dictatorship of the proletariat." The major difference between these two slogans was their targets: while the latter aimed at all people who opposed socialism and the Party, including the old propertied classes, the former directed its spearhead of struggle exclusively to the problem from above, that is, the officials, and the current system, especially the Party.

This difference was clearly comprehended by many democratic activists. Democracy was considered by them as a

"law to control the official."[661] They pointed out that in China the claim of the sovereignty of the working class and the people existed only on paper. The dictatorship of the proletariat was actually the dictatorship of the party who legitimately represented the interest of the proletariat.[662] The democratic activists ridiculed the myth that in China people were the master of the state and could discuss state affairs with the state leaders. "We would be forced" an author angrily exclaimed, "by the 'dictatorship of the proletariat' to confess we were the indecent subjects of 'bad elements' or 'counterrevolutionaries' even if we simply posted a small character poster."[663]

Most of the discussion on democracy focused on the problem of party leadership. One essay suggested that a correct way to strengthen the party leadership was to guarantee the correctness of the Party, not to emphasize the obedience of the masses to the Party.[664] Another essay questioned the Party's principle of "democratic centralization." The problem, it pointed out, was that those in charge of centralization would actually have said the

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[661] Zhongguo renquan, 1 [1979], in DXKW, 2: 214-5.

[662] Siwu luntan, January 6, 1979, in DXKW, 4: 97.

[663] Kexue Minzhu Fazhi, April 25 1979, in DXKW, 14: 78.

[664] Siwu luntan, January 6, 1979, in DXKW, 4: 88.

final word.[665] Thus, the rhetoric of democracy did not make any substantial difference.

An essay entitled "Several Questions about 'Upholding the Party Leadership" quite comprehensively examined the subject.[666] It argued that the role of the Party should be leadership, not rulership. The difference here was that the former was put under the supervision of the masses but the latter was not. To guarantee the supervision of the masses over the Party, all officials must be directly elected by the people. More important, the Party leadership should be gradually weakened in the long run. The Chinese state should be turned from a state led by the Party to one that was ruled directly by the laborers. However, some Party officials selfishly insisted on the permanent existence of an "advanced stratum" of the Party members because they wanted to keep their special interests. If following this way, the essay warned, someday the "'advanced stratum' would finally become the 'bureaucrats' and a 'aristocratic stratum!'"[667]

Of particular interest in the discussions about democracy is that while the cry against bureaucracy generally led to the demand for democracy, those discussions especially

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[665] Kexue minzhu fazhi, May 10, 1979, in DXKW 15: 44.

[666] Renminzhisheng, April 1979, in DXKW 14: 201-8.

[667] Ibid., 208.

emphasizing the class nature of the bureaucracy often had a closer internal connection with the essential demands of democracy because they consciously turned the attention from the problem of individuals to that of the system as shown by the Li Yizhe poster, Chen Erjin's essay, and many other essays we discussed above. Further exemplifying this were two exceptional essays by Lu Ming in Beijingzhichun (the Beijing Spring).[668]

Lu differentiated between the bureaucrat and the bureaucratic system. Following Marx's idea of smashing the old state machinery, Lu argued that simply removing the old bureaucrats and the old army was far from fulfilling Marx's idea. To achieve Marx's goal, the revolutionary people must abolish the standard army system and the bureaucratic system. Otherwise the problems associated with those institutions would arise anew. Because of imperialism, Lu Ming admitted, the victorious proletariat could not immediately abolish the system of the standard army. Nevertheless, it was fundamentally against Marxism not to abolish the bureaucratic system. The bureaucratic system, according to Lu Ming, was supported mainly by the system of appointment to office and the ranking system. As a result, the people lost

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[668] Beijingzhichun, January 23, 1979, in DXKW, 2: 288, 3: 290. 4: 190.

their control of the cadres and the means of production since that was managed by the cadres. The solution was, as the titles of the essays suggested, to gradually abolish the bureaucratic system and establish a democratic system of the type identified with the Paris Commune.

The Paris Commune was the basic model of democracy for most democratic activists at this time. One may find here again the impact of the Cultural Revolution. But the model of the Paris Commune was more directly introduced at this time as a means to deal with the problem of bureaucracy. The three measures most celebrated by the democratic activists - electing officials, the recall system, and the equal salary for workers and officials - were obviously accepted for that purpose. This theme was discussed in many places. An article signed as a "Beijing railroad worker" was a typical one.[669]

The essay claimed that the state system of China was originally copied from the Soviet model. As such, "the state structure itself is a cause of bureaucratism and a privileged stratum." The author reminded the people of the "horrible days of the Cultural Revolution" when 900 million people were helpless in confronting the four scoundrels (the Gang of Four). The introduction of the basic principles of the Paris Commune would effectively prevent the "state and the state

[669] Kexue minzhu fazhi, February 15, 1979, in DXKW, 8: 272-87.

machinery being changed from the servant of society to its master."[670]

Antibureaucracy was, of course, not the sole reason for the demand for democracy. As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, a striking feature of Democracy Movement literature was its diversity. The discussion of democracy was not an exception. Many new ideas and new theories, such as the concepts of citizenship and human rights or the Yugoslavia experience, were introduced to champion democracy. In this concern there was perhaps no person better known than Wei Jingsheng. For Wei not only championed Western-style democracy, but also openly challenged Marxism.

A careful reading of Wei's writings reveals, however, that his use of such abstract concepts as equality, human rights and freedom held only marginal significance in his argument for democracy. The critique of bureaucracy played a much more important role than those more abstract concepts which were unfamiliar to most Chinese people at that time.

First, the problem of a bureaucratic class remained fundamental to Wei's perception of Chinese society. In his view Chinese society was composed of "nobles and servants."[671] It was clear that Wei liked to use the term 'noble' to stress

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[670] Ibid., 278.

[671] Tansuo, January 1979, in DXKW, 1: 13.

what he believed to be the feudal character of Chinese bureaucrats. He thus claimed that the question of how to maintain a democratic social order was to be "resolved by the people." "It is not the business of the 'privileged nobles.'"[672] Opposing the government's interference with mass demonstrations at that time, Wei charged that in China the constitution "belongs to a few bureaucrats only."[673] He had little hesitation to adopt the official term "new born bourgeois elements" to characterize the Gang of Four.[674] All these suggest that the concept of a bureaucratic class was no less fundamental to Wei's perception of Chinese society, and that this perception had a great deal to do with his demand for democracy.

Second, like most democratic activists, Wei treated democracy mainly as the logical result of the struggle against the bureaucrats. His position can be seen most clearly in the inaugural statement of *Tanshuo*(Exploration), of which Wei was the chief editor. The statement said,

> Our movement has developed out of the antibureaucracy movement of the Cultural Revolution and the antidictatorship movement centered around Xidan Democracy Wall. We oppose any statements and theories which support bureaucratism and fascism. As for those

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[672] Ibid. 8.

[673] Ibid., January 29, 1979, in DXKW, 2: 3.

[674] Ibid., January 1979, in DXKW, 1: 7.

> who are not prepared to allow freedom to other people, we shall deny their right to publish in our magazine.[675]

Third, for Wei, as for other democratic activists, democracy meant "having power be controlled by all laborers as a whole."[676] The essential points remained the same as those Paris Commune principles - electing officials and the recall system - plus a free press.[677]

Despite his appearance as a unique dissident, Wei's demand for democracy was, to a large degree, identified with the main stream Democracy Movement which had a strong historical and ideological connection with the critique of a bureaucratic class. Chinese democracy in the late 1970s and the early 1980s, for Wei as well as for most democratic activists, remained a democracy directed against bureaucratic rule.

The Discussion on Class Theory

Although the subject of democracy overwhelmingly dominated the literature of the Democratic Movement, there

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[675] Ibid., 1.

[676] Ibid., 7.

[677] Ibid., 29.

was significant interest in class theory. Yet, while the demand for democracy was supported by all democratic activists, class theory was not. Some people continued to apply class concepts to their arguments, but many others simply abandoned them. Here I will examine these two trends to find their differences and possible similarities.

For those upholding class theory, the first thing to note is that none supported the old class theory. This was in contrast to the situation at the beginning of the Cultural Revolution when the majority were under the influence of the old class theory. The people now supporting class theory not only drew a clear line between their stand and the old class theory, but also sharply criticized the evil purposes and horrible consequences of that theory. Chen Erjin, for example, charged that the politics associated with the older understanding of class and class struggle was "social fascist politics," and it had been used by those in power for their own interest. "[T]he class struggles of former times are highlighted in order to distract attention from those of the present."[678] An article from Beijingzhichun pointed out that "experience tells us, to exaggerate the role of remnant elements from the old society and to claim the nonexistent

[678] Siwu luntan, February 25, 1979, in DXKW 1: 85.

danger were usually the way to cover the real danger."[679] "A new noble is a hundred times worse than an old one," another article from the same journal stated.[680]

So the class theory these people upheld was the one that emphasized the emergence of a new exploiting class in socialist society-- the new class theory. We have discussed these arguments above. Of interest here is that unlike Li Yizhe, who derived their arguments simply from Mao's quotations, the people promoting the new class theory now tried to prove the existence of a new class on their own. This is a sign to show their independent tendency. An article entitled "A Preliminary Discussion on the Origins of Class and the Major Contradiction in Socialist Society" is an interesting example.[681]

The article began with the claim that class meant "step," apparently according to Chinese etymology, thereby indicating differences in social status. According to classical Marxism-Leninism, the essay pointed out, private ownership of the means of production was the sole source of class. This supposition was no longer valid in socialist society, however, since socialist society presupposed the

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[679] Beijingzhichun, June 17, 1979, in DXKW 7: 96.

[680] Ibid., 5: 133.

[681] Kexue minzhu fazhi, April 18, 1979, in DXKW, 13: 27-43.

abolishment of that kind of ownership. The primary question the article wanted to address was finding the origins of new class in socialist society.

The article then traced back to the earliest history of human society and its later development. The article concluded from this survey that the development of production gave rise to the need for management, and the need for management gave rise to the first social division between leader and the led. This social division had a dual nature. On the one hand, it was a genuine need for managing increasingly complex production. On the other hand, it provided a possibility of exploitation through exercise of leadership. This dual nature of social division did not disappear in socialist society, the essay claimed. Rather it became the dominant factor defining social relations after the elimination of the old propertied classes. This was phrased into what the article concluded as the "major contradiction in socialist society" between the socialization of public affairs and the comparative monopolization of management [by officials]."[682]

Here the author, echoing Chen Erjin's argument, actually touched on an important issue on the rational function of bureaucracy and its contradiction with the principle of

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[682] Ibid.

democracy. In fact the conscious recognition of the necessity of bureaucracy was an important development of political thought during the Democracy Movement. However, the author had no intent to form Weber's type of concept of bureaucracy. The author did not want to follow Gaetano Mosca or Robert Michels to explore the problems of the elite and modern democracy either. Obviously the author was heavily dominated by the negative meaning of the terms of bureaucracy or bureaucrats. He or she evidently approached the question with a clearly pragmatic purpose. The major concern of the author was apparently not the potential problem of the rational bureaucracy but the immediate danger of the abuse of power. The author thus suggested that officials should not be judged by their outward position in society but should be divided by their "morality, ability and working attitude."[683] The author then suggested that those cadres who fulfilled the management duty belonged to the "stratum of leaders of the labor class" while those who exploited leadership for their own advantage belonged to the "bureaucratic class."

This argument was not a typical one in the Democracy Movement literature. Many confusions and inconsistencies could be found in it. Nevertheless, even in a case like this, its thrust was unmistakable. It clearly located the possible

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[683] Ibid., 38.

exploitation within the administrative stratum and saw the solution in democracy. These two points constituted the common stand of the people upholding the class theory of this period.

The class theory these people upheld therefore was the new class theory. This theory called for democracy and firmly rejected the old class theory and practice. As the above article argued, neither "political campaigns" nor "social revolutions" applied in the past could work because the problem they faced was the contradiction between the bureaucratic class and the people. But all previous campaigns or revolutions were monopolized by the leaders. Only democracy and the legal system could impose limits on the power of the bureaucrats. In any case, the spearhead of struggle should be directed toward above, toward the leaders, not the people. This is why while the class concept was applied - there was no more asking to "sweep away all monsters and sneaks." There were no more slogans of "red terror." There were no more demands to build the "supreme court of poor and lower middle peasants." Those slogans were popular during the Cultural Revolution.

Yet a few democratic writers still used the concept of "dictatorship of the proletariat." It seems to be an antithesis to the demand for democracy. A closer examination

has unmasked the true implication of that kind of argument. It reveals that these people too asked for democracy. The best example was Wang Xizhe, one of the three authors of the Li Yizhe poster, and his long essay "Struggle for the Class Dictatorship of the Proletariat." By stressing the class nature of the dictatorship of the proletariat, Wang wanted to break the monopoly of the Party over the state and society. He convincingly showed to what great extent the Party had gotten rid of the control of the people and how much this had contributed to the bureaucratization of the Party. His championing of the class dictatorship meant rejecting the dictatorship of the Party and the autocracy of a single leader. To him this was the first step toward a genuine democracy. His suggestion was a worker self-government of the Yugoslavian type. What he proposed therefore was democracy, not dictatorship.

An essay entitled "The Concept of 'People's State' is against Marxism" was a very interesting one.[684] The essay, from its title to its contents and rhetoric, was almost a copy from the official writings during Mao's time. The central argument of the essay was to stress the class nature of state. It cited heavily from Marx, Engel and Lenin to argue that the state was the result of class struggle. It is

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[684] Qiushibao, April 11, 1979, in DXKW, 3: 171; 4: 107.

the instrument of class suppression. "No state can transcend class nature. The state will not belong to the whole people." Furthermore, the essay strongly emphasized the necessity of a revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat during the transition from capitalist to communist society. All these arguments were displayed in an unusually fine Marxist discourse.

One may be totally lost as to what the author really want to say in this essay if one had not read a subsequent essay by the same author.[685] What the author really argued was that although the state by its nature was an instrument used by one class to suppress another, the dictatorship of the proletariat was not a state in its original sense. It would not suppress the other classes. It was in this sense that Marx saw the dictatorship of the proletariat as the beginning of the withering away of the state. So what the author really sought was an extensive democracy for all people. As seen, the class theory upheld in the Democracy Movement almost always led to the demand for democracy.

If we find that the people upholding class theory were united in supporting the new class theory and democracy, then the people abandoning the class theory were quite identical in rejecting the old class theory. A basic argument from this

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[685] Ibid., August 10, 1979, in DXKW, 5: 77.

camp was that after the victory of socialist revolution the old propertied classes were eliminated and class and class struggle were no longer the basic contradiction in socialist society. As an article from Qiushibao(In Search of Truth) stated clearly, thirty years after the founding of the People's Republic, the landlord class, rich peasant class, and bourgeois class who depended on exploitation for living, as a class, no longer existed (except in Taiwan).[686] Judged by this, this argument did not abandon the class theory as such. It mainly rejected applying the class concept into socialist society.

"Some Questions about Class and State" is an interesting essay written by Xu Shuiliang.[687] According to Xu, he had been pondering the theory of class and class struggle for a long time. Not until 1976 did he reach the conclusion that socialist society was a nonclass society. Before that, he had formed the theories of "class struggle without class," and that "socialist revolution is not simply to eliminate class but to remove the cause of class." He believed that all mistakes in the past were derived from a misreading of the word "communism." People previously defined socialism as the transitional period from capitalism to communism. On that

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[686] Ibid., August 10, 1979, in DXKW, 5: 62.

[687] Luntan, December 15, 1979, in DXKW, 18: 111-136.

assumption was posited a grand theory of "continuing the revolution" stressing class struggle in socialist society. But this was wrong, Xu claimed. Communism included socialism. Since communism was a classless society, so there was no class in socialist society. The transitional period with the dictatorship of the proletariat was the period prior to socialism. Only in that period there was class and class struggle.

However, Xu did not exclude the possibility of the reemergence of a new exploiting class. As a matter of fact, he believed such was the case in the Soviet Union. The reason for that, Xu argued, was because Stalin did not recognize the disappearance of class in socialist society and thus continued to strengthen the state machinery. Consequently, a bureaucratic class was brought into being from a nonclass society.

Naive and inconsistent as Xu's argument may be, it revealed an important ideological thrust of the argument abandoning the class theory. It suggested that the main intention of this kind of argument was not to reject the new class. As we see in Xu's essay, he did not hesitate to acknowledge a new bureaucratic class was back. The argument abandoning class theory was primarily intended to reject the old class theory. In the final analysis, the two different

trends of class theory at this time were not mutually-exclusive in essence.

Moreover, the two different trends of class theory were also united in their common effort to champion democracy. While some people applied the new class theory to demand democracy, other people rejected the old class theory to defend democracy. In the above essay, Xu charged that the claim of the permanent existence of class was a theory for the preservation of privileges and autocracy. This point was illustrated and further argued in a commentary on a lawsuit.[688]

The commentary exposed how "the people with privileges" employed "the so-called 'class nature' of law" to break the law. In this case, an army officer illegally occupied a huge private house. In his defense the officer repeatedly stressed that he was a "communist," "veteran red armyman," and that his family was a "revolutionary family," a "family of veteran red armymen." On the other hand, the officer reminded, the other party was an "acting counterrevolutionary." He thus accused such a lawsuit of being "class revenge." This kind of argument must be repudiated, the commentary pointed out, to

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[688] Beijingzhichun, September 28, 1979, in DXKW, 9: 138-42.

have a real legal system "everyone must be equal in front of the law."[689]

To stress the disappearance of class and class struggle in socialist society was, for many people, simply a convenient argument for a more extensive democracy. "Is the Class Struggle to be More and More Intense or More and More Relaxed with the Development of the Socialist System?" an essay from Siwu Luntan asked. It must be more relaxed, the essay answered, otherwise how could a classless communist society come into being? The essay thus claimed that "since class struggle was to be more and more relaxed, then, the degree of democracy must be higher and higher."

Following this direction, another essay openly asked to "cancel the administrative leadership of the local Party organization in enterprise" which became the title of the essay.[690] Since the party was but the instrument of class struggle, the essay argued, with the gradually disappearing class struggle, the party should also be gradually canceled. This should be done first at the local level. The essay warned that if the Party would not step down by itself, "class struggle on a grand scale may reappear again" due to society's loss of control over the Party. Once careerists

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[689] Ibid., September 28, 1979, in DXKW, 9: 139.

[690] Beijingzhichun, January 27, 1979, in DXKW, 2: 255-59.

and bureaucrats seized state power and changed public ownership to private ownership, "a new class will be reborn."

Another suggestion was that the "Chinese Communist Party should become a party of all people" which was the title of an editorial of *Xinminzhu Langchao*(The Trend of New Democracy).[691] The essay pointed to a plain fact that the Chinese Communist Party had members from many different classes. The reason the Party once stood on behalf of the interest of workers and poor and lower middle peasants was, therefore, due to the principle the Party adopted, not to the class nature of its membership. Since the Party did not represent any real class, if it sought a class nature, it would only be a privileged class of its 30 million members. It would get rid of this kind of "class bias" if the Party would consciously change from a party of class to a party of all people. It then could avoid repeating those phony "class struggles" and concentrate on the development of production.

Our review of the discussion of the class theory thus suggests that the difference between the two trends of class theory is mainly in outward appearance only. With further analysis it seems clear that the two different trends are united in two crucial points: rejecting the old class theory and championing democracy. This point seems also to be

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[691] Xinminzhu langchao, October 12, 1980, in DXKW, 19: 80-83.

apprehended by some democratic activists themselves. A commentator of *Renminzhilu*(People's Road) expressed an understanding of why some people rejected the class theory as a whole.[692] People were terrified whenever "class struggle" was mentioned during the Cultural Revolution, the commentator recalled. "'Class struggle' has come to denote disaster."[693] After the overthrow of Lin Biao and the Gang of Four these people believed the "class struggle" would be gone forever. This wish was understandable, the commentator said, but desire could not replace reality. In reality people still felt the pressure of the bureaucratic system. "In daily life there are obvious antagonistic relations. The most serious one is that between the privilege of the bureaucrats and [the interests] of the people."[694] This understanding explained why there was no serious conflict between the two different trends of class theory at this time. All democratic activists opposed the old class theory while some of them continued to champion the new class theory.

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[692] Guonei minkan xuanji, January 1979, in DXKW, 19: 178-87.

[693] Ibid., 182.

[694] Ibid., 184.

The Reevaluation of the Cultural Revolution and Mao

A strong demand from the Democracy Movement of the late 1970s and the early 1980s was to reevaluate the Cultural Revolution. This is the third topic we want to discuss here. While all people opposed the old official version of the Cultural Revolution as a "comprehensive victory" of the proletarian revolutionaries, they differed in what specific aspects of the Cultural Revolution they opposed. It is worth noting, therefore, that although most people quite sincerely supported the call for a "total negation of the Cultural Revolution" from the official media at that time, a few did hold a strong reservation about it. These people wanted to affirm the positive meaning of some aspects of the Cultural Revolution. In light of the above discussion on the two trends of class theory, we may now find that the two apparently contradictory opinions on the Cultural Revolution may not necessarily be squarely opposite. Most people opposing the Cultural Revolution saw it as the application of the old class theory. What they asked to negate was, therefore, the old class theory. People who wanted to affirm the significance of the Cultural Revolution found a genuine mass movement in that event. What they wanted to affirm was the antibureaucratic aspects of the Cultural Revolution. They

supported therefore, consciously or unconsciously, the new class theory.

The demand for negating the Cultural Revolution found its strongest cry in the exposure of the suffering of innocent people during those tumultuous years. This theme had become dominant in the fictions that were booming in both official and unofficial publications during this period. These writings were later to be called "wound literature." The term suggested a common theme of many fictions from this period. There were stories telling how good friends or even lovers killed each other out of their sincere beliefs.[695] There were also stories expressing deep regret of some former students for what they did to their teachers and others.[696] Some horrible massacres during the Cultural Revolution were reported. For example, the massacre in Daxing county was revealed to the public for the first time.[697] The horrible massacre in Guangxi province was also reported again.[698] Most of the innocent people from these reports were obviously the victims of the old class theory. What those fictions tried to

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[695] Wotu, March 8, 1979, in DXKW, 11: 370-6; Baihua, October 1, 1979, in DXKW, 13: 351-43.

[696] Yuanshanggao, March 1, 1979, in DXKW, 13: 337-40; Wotu, June 1, 1979, in DXKW, 12: 135-43.

[697] Beijingzhichun, June 17, 1979, in DXKW, 7: 114-5.

[698] Shidai, October 1979, in DXKW, 1: 328, 331.

expose most was the absurdity of the simplistic application of that theory. The demand for negating the Cultural Revolution thus was a condemnation of the horrible consequence of the old class theory.

However, it is worth noting that the condemnation of the Cultural Revolution for the maltreatment of innocent people included also that of senior cadres. As a matter of fact, the persecution of "a large number of the proletarian revolutionaries of the older generation" was condemned as a big crime of the Cultural Revolution in both official and unofficial publications at this time. Many democratic activists actually initiated the demand to recall some "beloved leaders" who were purged during the Cultural Revolution back to office. This demand was squarely opposite to that of the rebels at the end of the Cultural Revolution as we have discussed in the last chapter. More seriously, these condemnations and demands directly led to the criticism of the so-called "left class theory," including the arguments of the new class theory. This criticism often portrayed senior Party cadres as the most innocent victims of the Cultural Revolution and the new class theory as the worst theory from the Cultural Revolution.

The key to understanding this confused phenomenon was, once again, the two different class theories. The so-called

"left class theory" referred to both old and new class theories. The left class theory was held responsible for the persecution of numerous ordinary people, many of them the members of old propertied classes or their relatives, and also those senior Party officials. The horrible consequence brought by the theory was traced back to the antirightist movement in 1957 when members of the old propertied classes were the major target of the movement, and also connected to the antiparty and antiarmy activities during the Cultural Revolution in which Party officials and army officers were attacked. Mixed up with these very different things, the so-called left class theory thus became the common target of hatred. This sentiment then served as an ideological ground for a "total negation the Cultural Revolution" which was generally accepted by the public. It is extremely important, therefore, to look at the matter more closely and find differentiate variance and discrepancy under the common demand of a "total negation of the Cultural Revolution."

First, the general acceptance of the slogan of "a total negation of the Cultural Revolution" reflects the theoretical confusion of many democratic activists. It suggests that these activists were not from the same ideological camp, and their political consciousness was on different levels. Although all asked for democracy, by this they meant very

different things. Some wanted to abolish the current political or even economic system. Some asked for the popular control of state. A few referred to the withering away of the state. Many were concerned primarily with removing bad officials from office. Still some wanted to rebuild the system before the before the Cultural Revolution. They missed those years when they could work peacefully under a good leader.

Second, it must be pointed out that many democratic activists accepted this kind of argument mainly as a convenient theory for championing democracy. By accepting this officially acknowledged fact of the maltreatment of senior cadres they obtained strong evidence to expose the serious problems in the Chinese constitution and institution. As a question frequently raised in both official and unofficial publications stated, if even the president of state, Liu Shaoqi, could not protect his constitutional rights, how could ordinary citizens protect themselves? This was a very convincing argument. The need for democratic reform thus had become conclusive. The democratic activists could hardly resist applying this convenient argument. They were also eager to break the infallibility of Mao and the Party. The official condemnation of the "left class theory"

provided them a golden opportunity and most were too elated to care about other considerations.

Third, however, a slight, but significant, different tendency can be observed by comparing official propaganda with unofficial publications. Whereas the former emphasized the persecution of senior cadres, the latter showed strong sympathy for the suffering of ordinary people. Whereas the former emphasized the wrong theory which led to the persecution of the senior cadres as a social stratum, the latter treated it as general injustice which should not be done to anyone. Whereas the former focused on criticism of the new class theory, the latter concentrated on that of the old class theory. Whereas the former attributed the cause of the disaster to a few people (typically the "Gang of Four"), the latter traced it to the political system. Whereas the former emphasized the end of the terrible past, the latter stressed the continued existence of some bad aspects of the past.

Fourth, more importantly, a few people did notice the problems of a total negation of the Cultural Revolution and sensed its political implications. One essay clearly suggested that there were two different courses in the Cultural Revolution.[699] One was the power struggle of the Mao,

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[699] Yuehai yetan, May 16, 1981, in DXKW, 15: 287-90.

Lin Biao, and the Gang of Four. The other was a mass movement against the bureaucratic class. Another essay went straight to the point. It said,

> Today the absolute majority of people are not satisfied with and are opposed to the "Cultural Revolution." But the reasons for doing so are quite different. A few people with privileges oppose the "Cultural Revolution" because the "Cultural Revolution" touched their rights and position. They recognize that autocracy is no good for the interest of the aristocracy in which political bureaucrats can safely enjoy their privileges according to their ranks so that they do not have to be scared all day long as under the autocracy. After the turmoil of the "Cultural Revolution," however, the people have recognized that the so-called never forget class struggle and the dictatorship of the proletariat will never bring about political equality and social progress. We can eliminate privilege and develop production only if we thoroughly build up socialist democracy and strengthen the legal system. People will never allow a total "restoration" of the old system before the Cultural Revolution. They will not allow to foster the sprout of privilege emerged prior to the "Cultural Revolution" privileged class with the excuse of maintaining "stability and unity."[700]

This statement clearly juxtaposed the fundamentally different political implications under the same demand for negating the Cultural Revolution. It warned that some people opposed the Cultural Revolution because they wanted to protect their privileges which were lost during the Cultural Revolution. Our people would never allow them to restore the old system before the Cultural Revolution under the pretext of the negation of the Cultural Revolution."[701]

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[700] Beijingzhichun, August 10, 1979, in DXKW, 8: 104.

[701] Ibid.

Some people also questioned the claim that senior cadres were the most innocent victims of the Cultural Revolution. The discussion was inspired by an influential short story "Wound," from which the term "wound literature" originated. The story told how much a female student had suffered due to the wrong verdict of her mother as a traitor. One literature critique raised the question of whether the children of a veteran cadre (and thus veteran cadres themselves) were the social stratum that suffered the most during the Cultural Revolution.[702]

> As a social stratum, they (children of veteran cadres) were far from the most vulnerable ones. How many children of the so-called "five black categories" were maltreated, discriminated against, sent back to the hometowns with their parents, deprived of political and living rights and so on simply because of their pedigree. And they are gradually forgotten after that social conflict. But how about our cadres' children? Once their parents came back to their offices, they soon regained their superior standard of living and advantageous social status.[703]

This comment reminds us of Yu Luoke's argument in his essay "The Origin Theory" as we have discussed in last chapter. The problem was, another critique further pursued the argument, most people felt sorry for the girl because her mother was later proved not a traitor. But what would have

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[702] Jintian, June 20, 1979, in DXKW, 7: 274-77.

[703] Ibid.

happened if the girl's mother had been really a traitor, the critique asked.[704] By raising this question, the author moved the focus of the discussion from individual case to that of the principle of justice and the political system. As the author urged, Of importance was to remove the factor causing this social injustice. These discussions manifested the attempt of some democratic activists to clarify the confusion hidden under the common demand for negating the Cultural Revolution.

Fifth, and most importantly, a few democratic activists determinedly asked to affirm some aspects of the Cultural Revolution in opposition to the official call for a "total negation of the Cultural Revolution." This demand provided the strongest evidence that there were in fact very different attitudes and sentiments toward the Cultural Revolution among the people.

While variance and discrepancy were observed under the common demand for the negation of the Cultural Revolution, people opposing the total negation of the Cultural Revolution were remarkably identical in their basic stance. When these people wanted to give some credit to the Cultural Revolution, no one asked to affirm the persecution of the intellectual at the beginning of the Cultural Revolution. No one supported

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[704] Renminzhisheng, September 1979, in DXKW, 15: 218-20.

the campaign of anti-four olds. No one supported the pedigree theory. No one supported the Red Terror. They all condemned the suppressions of the masses at different stages of the Cultural Revolution such as the anti-interference campaign, the February Adverse Current, and the campaign to clarify class ranks. Most appreciated freedom brought by the Cultural Revolution. They supported the criticism of the bourgeois reactionary line. They highly praised the "New Trend of Thought." In light of our previous discussion of two class theories we may now see clearly that the people opposing the total negation of the Cultural Revolution were identical in one stance: they all opposed the old class theory and they all supported the new class theory.

To defend their stance, people opposing the total negation of the Cultural Revolution made a strong argument that the Cultural Revolution was a failure. This was exactly the basic argument of the rebels at the end of the Cultural Revolution as we have discussed in last chapter. Like their predecessors, by claiming the failure of the Cultural Revolution, the democratic activists were able to present a Cultural Revolution they wanted to have. This intention was

best presented in a long essay "A Brief Analysis of the Cultural Revolution" by Liu Guokai.[705]

Liu found three major courses in the Cultural Revolution: the power struggle of the elite, the mass movement against the bureaucrats, and the conflict among the masses. Of these three aspects, Liu found the mass movement against the bureaucrats to be fundamental, the basic reason millions of people threw themselves into the movement. It was around this basic course that the other two courses were involved. Liu argued that the elite, Mao, Lin Biao and the "Gang of Four" took advantage of the mass movement against the bureaucrats to fulfill their political scheme. The conservatives had a strong interest in maintaining the status quo and the rebels wanted to changed it. This was why the masses were often split into two major factions. It was in the rebels' attack on the bureaucrat that Liu found the positive meaning of the Cultural Revolution.

However, the mass movement against the bureaucrat, especially that directed in its spearhead of struggle directly against the bureaucratic system as found in the "new trends of thought," was ruthlessly suppressed by the elite with the assistance of the conservatives. The Cultural

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[705] Renminzhisheng, December 1980, in DXKW, 17: 91-244. For an English version, see Anita Chan, ed., A Brief Analysis of the Cultural Revolution (New York: M. E. Sharpe, 1987).

Revolution that declared a "comprehensive victory" in 1969 was, therefore, not the cultural revolution the people wanted. "They never expected that the 'new order' could be established so quickly," as another democratic activist furiously recalled, "not to mention with such a fascist way to be done."[706] Liu, like Li Yizhe, therefore did not approve of any direct "achievements" of the Cultural Revolution such as the rise of the Lin Biao and Jiang Qing cliques, the "revolutionary committee," the personality cult of Mao, the worker and soldier propaganda teams.

What Liu and his fellows found the most valuable in the Cultural Revolution was what Liu called the role of "enlightenment."

> During the Cultural Revolution, the people broke down the highly bureaucratic and undemocratic social order that previously existed. The mass movement dealt a deserved blow at bureaucrats and broke down the spiritual shackles imposed upon the people.[707]

By affirming the Cultural Revolution on the basis of its attack on the bureaucrats by the masses, Liu and his fellows took a stand squarely opposite to the argument that the Cultural Revolution should be negated because of its assault on senior cadres. In contrast to criticism of the "left class theory" based on its struggle against the senior cadres, Liu

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[706] Renminzhisheng, October 1979, in DXKW, 16: 118-9.

[707] Ibid., 235.

reserved some credit for the new class theory precisely because of that thrust. As Liu said,

> Theoretically, the revolutionary Red Guards movement originated from the theory of class struggle. However, the difference was that instead of the classical theory of class struggle, the movement was based on a theory Mao had further developed. The classical theory had as its targets of struggle the landlord, rich peasant, counterrevolutionary, bad element, and Rightist. The expanded theory added to the hit list bourgeois representatives in the party, or power holders who followed the capitalist road. And according to the theory, the newly added categories constituted the principal danger in support of capitalist revisionism.[708]

The "classical theory of class struggle" Liu used here is obviously what we call the old class theory in this thesis. The "expanded theory" he used was what we called the new class theory. Liu firmly opposed the "classical theory of class struggle," but he reserved judgment on the "extended theory" because of his suspicion that Mao's intention in initiating some basic arguments of the "extended theory" was not to attack the bureaucrats as a class, but only to remove his personal rivals. This did not mean, however, that Liu did not support the new class theory as such. The difference between Liu and the pioneers of the new class theory such as *Shengwulian* and Li Yizhe lay in the fact that the latter tried to put their arguments under the aegis of Mao's authority, while the former wanted to draw a line between the

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[708] Renminzhisheng, December 1980, in DXKW, 17: 113; also in Chan, 32.

arguments of the mass and that of the elite. In other word, Liu did not support a new class theory by the elite. He wanted to support only a new class theory by the mass. This stance was also found in a series of essays on the Cultural Revolution by another democratic activist Yen Zhen. [709] Yen made clear that there were two kinds of mass movements during the Cultural Revolution. One was manipulated by the elite. The other was a "democracy movement out of the very soul of the masses."[710] The latter directed its spearhead of struggle against the Party cadres due to their bureaucratic behavior before the Cultural Revolution. This was the Cultural Revolution Yen, Liu, Li Yizhe, and others wanted to defend.

An important issue closely connected with the reevaluation of the Cultural Revolution was the reevaluation of Mao. This is, of course, due to Mao's prominent role in making the Cultural Revolution. The evaluation of Mao and the Cultural Revolution inevitably led to the discussion of Mao's class theory because the class theory had played a leading role during the Cultural Revolution. In addition, it was once considered to be Mao's most important contribution to Marxism.

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[709] Ibid., June 1979, in DXKW, 14: 188-195; 15: 82-91; 16: 115-9.

[710] Ibid., June 1979, in DXKW, 14: 192.

As seen in Liu's essay, by this time many people had already lost their loyalty to and respect for Mao. Few people were now willing accord Mao any credit in making the Cultural Revolution. Still fewer would do so for his class theory. As a result, the total negation of the Cultural Revolution became a total negation of Mao and his class theory in many people's minds.

However, by taking a closer look, one may easily see that most democratic activists did not oppose Mao's class theory as such. As seen in Liu's essay, they opposed Mao's "classical theory of class struggle," that is, the old class theory. Of the "extended theory," the new class theory, most controversy lay in Mao's intention rather than in the theory itself. This tendency is typically demonstrated in two articles by Gu Jinjun and Wang Xizhe.[711]

Gu's article was entitled "Some Valuable Ideas of Comrade Mao in His Last Years." Gu lauded the masses' criticism of privilege in the current democracy movement. He connected this with what had happened in the Cultural Revolution and Mao's role in it, asking

> Isn't it the greatest aspect of Mao that he holds a critical attitude toward the state he has personally established and attacks a party by which he is called chairman? How many people could do this in the world and in history?[712]

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[711] Xueyou tongxin, 1980, in DXKW, 14: 303-9.

[712] Ibid., 308.

In response to Gu's article, Wang Xizhe wrote a long essay entitled "Mao Zedong and the Cultural Revolution." Wang depicted Mao as the worst type of Stalinist. Although Mao did criticize the bureaucratic behaviors of some Party officials and even attacked the bureaucrat stratum as a whole, this did not make him a revolutionary. Because, Wang argued, the intention of Mao's criticism and attack was not to overthrow the bureaucratic stratum and turn the power over to the people, Mao's efforts should not be applauded. Mao's evil motivation was to build a Mao dynasty. Mao was not satisfied with the situation because the degree of power and dictatorship concentrated in the state and the Party was too low, rather than the reverse. Mao launched the Cultural Revolution in order to remove his political rivals and strengthen his personal power. As such, his antibureaucratic rhetoric and deeds were reactionary rather than revolutionary.

Here we can see once again that Wang, like Liu, did not oppose Mao's class theory as such. He opposed only Mao's evil motivation behind his rhetoric and deeds. As Wang acknowledged, and as it was manifested in the Li Yizhe poster, Mao's class theory had been the most important theory that led the rebels in radical directions during the Cultural Revolution and inspired the people in their struggle for

democracy immediately after the Cultural Revolution. But Wang now found that Mao had cheated the people. Or, as Liu argued, Mao "exploited the mass resentment of the bureaucrat class." Wang thus felt an obligation to oppose Mao because he wanted a sincere antibureaucratic theory. That is, he wanted a real new class theory. The mixed feelings toward Mao and confused judgment on his class theory would become clear in light of the differentiation of the two class theories. Most democratic activists opposed Mao because they opposed the old class theory. Other democratic activists supported Mao in order to champion the new class theory. By final analysis, they actually stood on the same theoretical basis laid out by the Cultural Revolution rebels more than a decade earlier.

Some observations

On the basis of our survey of the literature of the Democracy Movement of the late 1970s and the early 1980s, three observations can be made. First, the old class theory had almost completely vanished from the public opinion by this time. This was just the opposite of the situation at the beginning of the Cultural Revolution when the Chinese people as a whole were dominated by the old class theory. This

change can been seen in the fact that, despite the diversity of political thought manifested in the unofficial publications, there is not a single argument that really supported the old class theory. In contrast, there were numerous fictional works which exposed the horrible consequences of the old class theory and many essays denouncing its theoretical error. However, the strongest evidence indicating the change in public attitudes toward the old class theory lies not in the voices we have heard but in the silence of the majority of the people at this time, for a basic fact about the democratic movement of the late 1970s and the early 1980s was the public apathy toward the movement. Most people remained uninvolved in the movement. This unconcerned attitude was a great contrast to the enthusiasm of the people at the beginning of the Cultural Revolution. At that time even a mild criticism of a Party official could arouse the outrage of the public. Party officials had little difficulty in mobilizing the masses to attack anyone who dared to criticize them as a "class enemy." As a matter of fact, in many cases the masses initiated the counterattack to defend their "beloved leaders." But this was no longer the situation during the democratic movement. At this time, most people kept silent, ignoring even the most open attack on the Party and the government. It is true that

democratic activists did not get general support from the people, but neither were they actively opposed by the people. No other social phenomenon than the public apathy suggested more clearly the almost complete disappearance of the old class theory. Having abandoned the old class theory, people no longer considered the offenders of the Party and the government their class enemies. They thus felt no obligations to defend the Party and the government.

The disappearance of the old class theory from the public opinion showed that the Chinese people had experienced an important ideological transformation since the beginning of the Cultural Revolution. This transformation had historical significance because the change had not occurred in a single mind but was experienced by the Chinese people as a whole, or at least by the most active of them. More importantly, by abandoning the old class theory the Chinese people had abandoned not only a class theory but also the official ideology as a whole. To a great extent, this also meant abandoning their basic political belief. This abandonment thus foreboded a fundamental ideological transformation of the Chinese people.

Second, there was a close connection between the new class theory and the demand for democracy in the late 1970s and the early 1980s' China. At that time China was not yet

very open to the outside world, and foreign influence was limited. Many Western concepts were catalysts, but they were not decisive in forming the theory for democracy in China. The demand for democracy mainly came from a self negation of the wrong past and a recognition of the significance of the past revolution. In this concern the new class theory was extremely important since it helped to reject the old class theory while providing a theoretical basis for the demand for a democratic reform. As I have discussed in this chapter, there was a historical and theoretical connection between the new class theory and the demand for democracy. It is, therefore, not by accident that most democratic activists were former rebels of the Cultural Revolution. In this sense, we may say that China's democracy movement of the late 1970s and the early 1980s was largely the result of both the continuation of and a reaction to the Cultural Revolution.

Third, the new class theory had a limited impact on the Chinese people as a whole. This point could first be observed in the extreme isolation of the Democracy Movement itself. As pointed out before, the democracy movement at this time was never a popular movement. Very few people really got involved in it. If there was a close connection between the new class theory and the demand for democracy, then the fact that the

movement never got the popular support revealed the limited impact of the new class theory.

The limited impact of the new class theory could also be observed in the general acceptance of the official call for a total negation of the Cultural Revolution and the popular indifference toward two very different interpretations of class theory. To most Chinese there was only once class theory which led to the Cultural Revolution. And there was only one Cultural Revolution which brought about horrible consequences. This popular mood suggests that most Chinese were never radicalized by the new class theory.

The limited impact of the new class theory throws light onto the cause of the failure of the Cultural Revolution. The Cultural Revolution failed not only because of its confused theories and practices in particular, but also because of its underdevelopment in general. It seems that many Chinese simply did not go through different stages of the event. In most places in the countryside, the different stages of the Cultural Revolution had never been presented. The dominance of the old class theory had not been shaken. Most people in other places were engaged in armed conflict before they were fully exposed to the ideological reorientation led by the Maoists in the early stages of the Cultural Revolution. The new class theory had not prevailed over the old. Even in some

schools and in a few urban areas where the different stages of the Cultural Revolution had been presented, too many people became the victims of the class theory, old or new, during the zigzag course of the movement. Some of them had been deprived of the right to participate in the movement. Some had never been able to recover from the tribulations brought by the movement.

As a result, very few people actually went through the different stages of the Cultural Revolution.[713] Still fewer followed through the whole course of ideological reorientation and radicalization which I described in previous chapters. The people who reached the radical interpretation of the class theory were therefore extremely rare. The Cultural Revolution sought by the radical rebels was doomed to fail.

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[713] A good example is Cheng Nien, the author of Life and Death in Shanghai. She virtually knew nothing about what was going on outside her house. See Cheng Nien, Life and Death in Shanghai (New York: Grove Press, 1986).

Chapter Six

Conclusion and Speculation: The Cultural Revolution as an Abortive Chinese Enlightenment

Through the previous pages this thesis has surveyed the development and application of class theory before, during and shortly after the Cultural Revolution. It suggests that the two class theories are the key for understanding the complex and bewildering events of the Cultural Revolution. The old class theory was an ideology used by the state to transform society before the Cultural Revolution. The new class theory was an ideology used by society to reform the state since the Cultural Revolution. The factional conflict among the masses during the Cultural Revolution was essentially the embodiment of the competition between the old and new class theories. The new class theory represents the most precious spirit of the Cultural Revolution. The rise of the new class theory changed the political consciousness of the Chinese people and this was one of the most important factors contributing to the great changes in China since the late 1970s.

As simple, even naive, and as prejudicial, even arbitrary, as it may be, the new class theory does,

nevertheless, possess remarkable merits, especially when it is compared with other theories of a similar kind. Although the new class theory of the Cultural Revolution was an attempt to build a system on a realistic basis in a spirit similar to Italian elite theory, it does not, however, lead to a pessimistic finale as do the works by such scholars as Pareto, Mosca or Michel which find the necessity of the elite for management and have often become ideological sources for anti-democratic forces.[714] Instead, in the new class theory of the Cultural Revolution, the discovery of a "privileged" stratum or class in socialist society serves as the major argument for a demand for democracy. Attacking bureaucracy in socialist societies in the same fashion as the European Communist critique of bureaucracy, the new class theory of the Cultural Revolution avoids the fate of the works by such leading Communist theorists as Luxemberg, Kautsky, Trotsky, Bukharin, and Djilas. It is a historical tragedy that these Communists' critique of bureaucracy in socialist societies contributed little to the real cause of socialism. On the contrary, their works have been mainly used by Western media to assault the cause to which these people had devoted their

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1 Robert A. Nye, *Anti-democratic Sources of Elite Theory* (London: Beverly Hills, 1977).

entire lives.[715] It is here that one may find the unique role of the new class theory of the Cultural Revolution. Its major contribution was not to theory but to practice. It produced no great thinkers or theorists but it did produce genuinely revolutionary people. It has no written masterpiece. It created real history, the Cultural Revolution.

It is in this sense the Cultural Revolution can be seen as another Chinese enlightenment. Although in terms of direct cultural achievements the Cultural Revolution cannot compared with the May Fourth Movement about half a century earlier, which is often offered as the first enlightenment in modern China, but in terms of scale and depth of inspiring and mobilizing ordinary people, the May Fourth Movement cannot be compared with the Cultural Revolution. For the Cultural Revolution aroused not a handful of intellectuals but, to a great extent, the whole nation. Unfortunately, the Cultural Revolution came to a premature end. Because of its abortiveness the Cultural Revolution did not leave a positive legacy to the people of China but brought rather confusion and deep spiritual crisis.

This chapter will explore the nature of the Cultural Revolution as an ideological movement, identify the meaning

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[715] With perhaps the exception of late Djilas.

of the ideological transformation through the Cultural Revolution, discuss how the revolution failed, and offer some thoughts on the theoretical implications of this study.

The Cultural Revolution as an Ideological Movement

The first conclusion of this thesis is that the Cultural Revolution was first and foremost an ideological movement. Throughout this essay I have argued that class theory, new and old, is a key understanding the multi-faceted and kaleidoscopic Cultural Revolution. The dominance of the ideological dimension of the Cultural Revolution is evident in the motivations, the main contents, the major features, and the lasting impact of the movement.

In reference to motivation, we discuss first the intentions of the elite. The Cultural Revolution has often been described as a power struggle between Maoists and their alleged opponents. This common belief does reflect the fact that there were differences and conflict between Maoists and other Party officials. But it is not true that there was an open and intentional contest for power between Maoists and other Party officials. In retrospect, a striking fact about the movement is not the stubborn resistance of the

Party officials at different levels, the "capitalist roaders," but their easy compliance to the Maoist center. It is true that, as pointed in the Sixteen Articles, one of the most important Party documents about the movement, most Party officials did not understand the movement. But until this day there has been no evidence to suggest that there was any intentional or organizational effort by Party officials to contest with Mao for power. For example, what the infamous "February adverse current" in which a few high Party officials aired their complaints of the Cultural Revolution has demonstrated was that those high officials strongly disapproved of the deeds of the Cultural Revolution. It was not, however, a bid for power per se. As a matter of fact, the first thing that Tan Zhenglin, the main actor in this event, asked for, was to resign from his post.[716] We also know today that in no sense was the sensational Wuhan incident in which a leading Maoist was besieged by some PLA soldiers, a military coup. Chen Zaidao, the chief of the Wuhan military district, had not the slightest intention to oppose Mao, let alone to kidnap him.[717]

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[716] *Renmin Ribao*, February 26, 1979; *Jiefangjunbao*, February 26, 1979, in *WGZL* 1: 295-311.

[717] Chen Zaidao, "Wuhan 'qierling shijian' chimo," *Zhongguo Laonian* 1-5; in *WGZL* 1:508-525.

We also now know that at the beginning of the Cultural Revolution both Peng Zhen and Liu Shaoqi repeatedly begged Mao to come back to Beijing to take charge of the movement. The truth about the movement is that what frustrated the majority of Party officials most was not whether they were willing to follow Mao's line but the fact that they did not know what Mao wanted them to do. The frustration was so extreme that Jiang Hua, the first Party secretary of Zhejiang Province, even asked the security officials to emptied Mao's wastepaper basket when he stayed in Hangzhou in early 1966 in order to know what plan was in his mind.[718] The simple truth is that Party officials during the Cultural Revolution tried their best to keep in step with Mao. Whether they were merely following "strategies for survival," as has been suggested by Paris Chang and T. J. Mathews, or whether they were simply blindly obeying Mao's center, as Andrew Walder has argued, is not the issue.[719] The point here is that during the Cultural Revolution Party officials were in the first place mostly concerned with

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[718] Forster Keith, Rebellion and Factionalism in a Chinese Province (New York: M. E. Sharpe, 1990), 20.

[719] See, for example, Frederick C. Teiwes, "Provincial Politics in China: Themes and Variations," in J. Lindbeck, ed. *China: Management of a Revolutionary Society* (Seattle: University of Washington, 1971), ?; Andrew Walder, *Chang Ch'un Chiao and Shanghai's January Revolution* (Michigan Papers in Chinese Studies, No. 32 (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1978).

their own safety, and few, if any, had any intention to contest Mao's power. In any case, the Cultural Revolution was not an open contest for power between Maoists and other Party officials.

It is true that Mao's personal power reached its apex at the height of the Cultural Revolution. But it is also true that Mao did not stop promoting his radical ideas after that. Thus, a power struggle for power is insufficient in explaining a series of radical actions promoted by Mao. Mao's ambition was to transform the mentality of the Chinese people as a whole. What we find most in the Cultural Revolution was not how Mao pursued his personal power through his radical programs but how much the radical programs of the Cultural Revolution relied on his personal power. As we know today, the Maoists were actually extremely isolated among the Party hierarchy. Had Mao had no such personal power there would not have been a Cultural Revolution.

During the Cultural Revolution the discussion of political power was very open. Maoists frequently reminded the people to "never forget political power." However, it is precisely this open discussion of power which demonstrates that the goals of the movement went beyond the concern for personal power itself. For what was highlighted in this

discussion was the nature of power. The key question of inquiry was how to guarantee that power would be, not in form but in essence, controlled by the people. This open discussion can hardly be explained in terms of a pure power struggle. The increase of Mao's power is more properly seen as a consequence of the movement rather than the ultimate goal of the paramount leaders of the movement.

Turning from the elite to analysis of the activism of the masses of people, we must understand that the Cultural Revolution was not a class war in which different social groups fought for their own interest. Self-interest was not the fundamental principle upheld by the Chinese people during the Cultural Revolution.

To many Western scholars the principle of self-interest is a self-evident truth in understanding human behavior in general and mass movements in particular.[720] As Lynn White puts it, "If Chinese people are like others (and an opposite assumption would end most hopes of understanding), they act for themselves as well as for their groups."[721] And Hung Yung Lee finds that in the rebels' actions "resembled those of an 'interest group' in the West.[722] In the minds of these

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[720] For alternative views, see Jane J Mansbridge, ed., *Beyond Self-interest* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990).

[721] White, 42.

[722] Lee, 341.

scholars, self-interest is defined in terms of immediate material benefit.

The problem with such a view is that it is difficult to understand many phenomena of the Cultural Revolution in terms of a narrowly defined self-interest. First, self-interest was never advanced as a goal of the movement. Instead, from beginning to end, the watchword of the movement was "fight selfishness, criticize revisionism.(*dousi, pixiu)*" Chanting this slogan, hundreds of millions of Chinese threw themselves into the movement. It is very difficult, therefore, to totally discredit the self-declared motivation of the movement unless one can prove that most Chinese were hypocrites at the time. But the fact is that even today many participants of the movement continue to testify to the appeals of self-sacrifice and the vision of a better world for joining the movement.[723] The self-interest interpretation cannot adequately explain this.

Second, most issues in the Cultural Revolution were abstract and remote from the daily life of ordinary people. It is difficult to explain, therefore, the enthusiasm these issues aroused by invoking the principle of self-interest. It becomes even more difficult to apply this interpretation if one recalls that during the movement it was students

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[723] See, for example, Yu Hui, ed., *Hongweibing milu* (Inside stories of Red Guards)(Beijing: *Tuanjie chubanshe, 1993)*.

themselves who demanded the abolishment of the examination system, resulting in tens of millions of them being sent to the countryside after the movement.[724] It was workers themselves who asked that the bonus system be canceled, resulting in many workers not only losing their benefits but also actually having their salaries cut.[725] It was peasants themselves who asked to return the private plots for gardening to the commune with the result that they lost an important part of their incomes. The self-interest interpretation cannot explain these phenomena.

Third, the general mood of the public during the Cultural Revolution was contrary to the self-interest principle. This can be seen in the fate of some temporary and contract workers, and the sent-down youth. These groups did raise concrete demands to improve their conditions such as increases in salaries, more fringe benefits or demands to return to the cities and so on. However, these groups were never the mainstream of the movement. As a matter of fact, once these groups revealed their tendencies to pursue self-interest, they often immediately lost support from the public. This is why these groups often tried very hard to

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[724] *Renmin Ribao*, June 6, 1966.

[725] For example, see *Jinji Pipan*, June 5, 1967; in *RGP*, 3:0338; *Beijing Gongren*, December 1, 15, 1967; in *RGP*, 10: 3204, 3208.

conceal their true motivation. As Lee correctly observes, an important rule in the Cultural Revolution was the prohibition of "anyone from pursuing narrowly defined interests, be they private, factional, or institutional."[726] This popular mood was directly antithetical to the self-interest interpretation.

The public disdain of the pursuit of self-interest is perhaps most evident in the absence of a clear economic or even political program for the movement. Most people began to be involved in the movement as a result of responding to the call from the Maoist center. Their participation in the movement was first of all a political performance to show their loyalty to Mao and the Party. As such, to participate in the revolution was not seen as to get a chance for personal gain. On the contrary, to participate in the revolution was seen as an opportunity to get rid of selfishness. In this regard, the Cultural Revolution was perhaps unique in political history. For the fundamental task of the revolution was defined not as a struggle against any specific social group or individuals but to criticize selfishness in every one's soul - "Having a revolution in one's very soul," as it was said at the time. This is why while engaging in serious political debates and even armed

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[726] Lee, 344.

conflict, people at the same time were also engaging in self-cultivation to criticize themselves. Self-criticism and open confessions became prominent features of the time. This seems to make little sense if examined from the perspective of political struggle. But this was what happened during the Cultural Revolution.

In saying this, however, I do not mean that the Chinese became selfless people during the Cultural Revolution. Or that they participated in the movement without any personal consideration whatsoever. What I want to point out is that during the Cultural Revolution the majority of ordinary Chinese demonstrated an amazingly noble spirit in restraining themselves from pursuing the narrowly defined self-interest. The decisive factor contributing to the factional conflict among the masses was not a calculation of immediate personal gain in material goods. Ideological orientation, including people's moral preferences and social experience seemed to play a more important role than the intention of pursuing personal material goods.

The predominance of the ideological dimensions of the Cultural Revolution is even more fully borne out by an analysis of the main contents and features of the movement. We must understand that violence was neither the main content nor the major feature of the movement. A basic fact

about the movement is that most people spent most of their time during the movement not engaging in physical torture or armed conflict, but in reading, listening, singing, thinking, arguing and writing. The most common scenes of the movement were not battles but public spaces pasted with big character posters, self-printed handbills and newspapers, large demonstrations and rallies, and unending debates. Never before in human history were there so many people spending so much time, using so many ways, involving in such serious political engagement. As Mao observed:

> There has never been such a broad and deep mass movement as this. In the factories and the countryside, in the schools and the army units, in the whole nation, everyone is talking about the Cultural Revolution and feeling involved in national affairs. Before, when families came together, they wasted a lot of time in small talk. Now, everything is different. As soon as they meet, they talk of great problems: father and sons, brothers and sisters, husbands and wives, even adolescents and grandmothers, all join in the discussion.[727]

A brief examination of some statistics give us some idea of the scope of this mass political engagement. During the Cultural Revolution class instruction in middle schools and colleges was suspended for two and a half years, from the second part of 1966 to the end of 1968. As a consequence, in the whole country more than 534,000 students in 434 universities and 6.4 million students in 56,000

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[727] Cited in K. S. Karol, The Second Chinese Revolution, 455.

middle schools became, theoretically and, in many cases in reality, full time participants of the movement.[728] During this period, most workers, especially those in the central areas, spent most of their leisure time either participating in or observing the movement. This broad involvement could be seen in the mushrooming of the mass organizations and their publications. For example, there were 70 such organizations in the Beijing Foreign Language Institute with a student body of 4000.[729] And 200 new periodicals appeared in Beijing by the end of 1966.[730] The intensive engagement in political study and debate could be seen in the length and size of the so-called "study sessions of Mao Zedong Thought" popular at the end of the movement. One such session was held in Beijing for leading Party officials, army officers, and representatives of mass organizations from Sichuan province. This meeting lasted from March to the end of May and the number of participants increased from 1000 to 5000 people by the end of the session![731]

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[728] Julia Kwong, Cultural Revolution in China's Schools, May 1966-April 1969 (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1988), xv.

[729] Ibid., 33.

[730] Ibid., 34.

[731] "Dangdai Zhongguo de Sichuan" bianxiezhu, *Dangdai Zhongguo de Sichuan* (Contemporary Sichuan Province of China) (Chengdu: Shichu renmin chubanshe, 1989), 158.

It is true that there was much violence during the Cultural Revolution and this has received the most serious condemnation from the public today. What we should keep in mind is that violence was not the intention of the leaders of the movement. On the contrary, the wild spread of violence was the result of loss of control of the Maoist center. We should also keep in mind that there were substantial differences between the armed conflicts of the Cultural Revolution and real war. For these conflicts in the movement never developed into a full scale war. The "war" in the Cultural Revolution was nationwide but not national. In most cases, it was moderate and limited. Even while engaging in armed conflict most people still spent most their time and energy in political debate, especially in propaganda. That is, the most important activities in the armed conflict were actually nonviolent. Pens were therefore more important than guns. As a matter of fact, this point was understood by all parties. They knew too well that victory was not to be won on the battleground but in the political arena. In short, violence was not the dominant dimension of the movement. This can be further seen in the application of new nonviolent tactics which developed in the course of the Cultural Revolution.

For the first time ordinary Chinese witnessed such things as sit-ins or hunger strikes. These tactics soon spread across the whole country. For example, in the summer of 1966, the "Red Flag" team from the Beijing Aviation Institute held a sit-in in front of the office building of the Science Committee of the National Defense Ministry for 28 days, forcing the Committee to turn over a Party official to be subjected criticism.[732] In Guangzhou in late 1968, an artist by the name of Xiao Bing staged a one man hunger strike, demanding the dismissal of the commander of the Guangzhou Military District. The persuasiveness of these new methods indicates the non-violent aspect of the movement. Nonviolent elements could even be found in some violent actions. For example, people blocked trains by lying on railroad tracks. The practice of exchanging hostages was also wide spread. Even in such violent action as seizing arms from army units and depots which happened all over the country, few people were killed by the army.

If violence was not the main content and major feature of the Cultural Revolution, then the movement as a whole perhaps be more accurately characterized as a long and intense political debate, with the ideological dimension

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[732] Wang Nianyi, 80.

being most crucial element. Such a characterization is borne out by a brief glance at the impact of the movement.

Many people have complained that the Cultural Revolution actually achieved nothing. Few people, however, would deny the ideological impact of the movement on the Chinese people. As a matter of fact it was a common feeling to many participants of the movement that they were no longer the same people they had been before. This is especially true for youths who were students during the Cultural Revolution. They were later to be called "a lost generation" or "a thinking generation." Good or bad, the name suggests the great ideological impact of the Cultural Revolution on these people. See, for example, how Dai Hsiao-ai[pseudonym], Lingen [pseudonym], Liang Heng, Gao Yuan, Jung Chang - to name but a few who have published books about their experiences during the Cultural Revolution - changed from politically naive and socially inexperienced students to politically sensitive and social mature youths within the space of two or three years. [733]

The ideological impact of the Cultural Revolution will be further discussed in the next section. It is sufficient

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[733] Gordon A. Bennett and Ronald N. Montaperto, Red Guard: The Political Biography of Dai Hsiao-ai (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1971); Ling Geng, *Tianchou*; Liang Heng, Son of the Revolution; Gao Yuan, Born Red; Jung Chang, Wild Swans.

here to conclude that the Cultural Revolution was primary an ideological movement.

The Meaning of Ideological Transformation

Ideological transformation in China since the Cultural Revolution did not mean a change of the dominant ideology only, however. The meaning of ideological transformation was broad and profound. The ideological transformation in tens or even hundreds of million people's minds meant a fundamental change or the beginning of that change. This is the second conclusion of this thesis.

To examine the impact of ideological transformation on post-Cultural Revolution China I will briefly compare the post Cultural Revolution situation with that of pre-Cultural Revolution China. In correspondence with our discussion in Chapter Two, I will examine four topics: the Party leadership, social trends, economic life, and popular minds.

The most profound impact of the Cultural Revolution on the Party leadership was the tarnishing of its image. Not longer could the Party command a position in society which bordered in the sacred. During the Cultural Revolution almost all Party officials had been subjected to criticism

and struggle, people knew too many inside stories of Party officials, including their political mistakes and personal shortcomings. It was impossible for the Party to maintain its former image of incorruptibility and infallibility. For many people, Party officials were no longer beloved leaders but rather people who had made mistakes in the past. More important, they would probably make mistakes again. In fact, according to the new class theory, Party officials by their privileged positions in society posed the most dangerous threat in society to the public interest. This attitude towards Party officials fundamentally changed the political situation in post-Cultural Revolution China.

Many people, including both participants of the revolution and scholars who study it, have complained that the Cultural Revolution did not change the real power structure at all. They have pointed out, for example, that the "revolutionary committees" established during the Cultural Revolution were new only in form, not in essence. This criticism is correct if it means that the revolution failed to establish a true democracy. But it is off the mark if it means that the revolution did not affect the real political situation. As a matter of fact, the complaint itself is a strong evidence indicating the loss of Party's political power. Because the complaint shows that many

Chinese people were no longer satisfied with the existing political system. As we have discussed in Chapter two, the Party's power vested greatly on the trust of the people it ruled. Once ordinary people altered their attitude towards the Party, the real power structure could never be the same. This change was fully evident in post-Cultural Revolution China.

Never before had the Party leadership faced such serious challenges as it did after the Cultural Revolution. The new revolutionary committees never regained the authority enjoyed by the Party before the Cultural Revolution. Disorder, unrest, chaos and even armed conflicts were not stopped by the establishment of these new institutions. In most places, it took one or two years to restore basic social order. The Maoist center had to issue strongly worded orders to do the job. In many places armies were called in for assistance.

Many things unthinkable before the Cultural Revolution now took place. For example, there was what Li Yizhe called "a tug-of-war" between local governments and some residents in using wall posters. The government wanted to wipe out all posters while some people continued to put up new ones.[734]

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[734] This phenomenon was mentioned in the famous "Li Yizhe Poster." For an English translation of the poster, see Anita Chan and others, *On Socialist Democracy and the Chinese Legal System: The Li Yizhe Debates* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1985).

What is specially interesting here is that to resist Party control people resorted to methods and ideas directly derived from their Cultural Revolution experience. For example, in Wuhan, there were several attempts to use the Workers' Congress to compete with the new revolutionary committee.[735] In March, 1974 the chief Party officials in the province were abducted by a mass organization for questioning.[736] A month later, six judges were kidnapped by a group of former rebels with an ultimatum demanding the immediate release of the rebels remaining in prison.[737] In January, 1975, a group of people occupied a downtown hotel, fought physically with the police, blocked traffic and demanded the provincial and municipal authorities to publicly apologize.[738] Two months later another group twice broke into meetings of the Provincial Party Committee and raided its office building.[739] In Hangzhou the unrest was so serious that more than 30,000 soldiers were sent there to restore order.[740]

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[735] Wang, 622, 638, 649.

[736] Ibid., 752-3.

[737] Ibid., 757.

[738] Ibid., 808.

[739] Ibid., 828-9.

[740] Forster, 214-9.

The open defiance of Party leadership climaxed in the so-called "April Fifth Movement" in 1976. In the name of commemorating the deceased premier Zhou Enlai many people expressed their anxiousness, discontent or hatred of some of Mao's associates and even Mao himself. In Nanjing, protest slogans against Zhang Chunqiao and Yao Wenyuan, two leading Maoists, were painted on the trains that passed through the city. In Beijing millions of people went to the Tiananmen Square and numerous poems and essays were presented. Among them some indirectly attacked Mao. The April Fifth movement indicated that the existing political system had been shaken. A fundamental political change or reform was badly needed.

The impact of the Cultural Revolution on society is most clearly observable in the suddenly prevalent of the so-called "winds of going through the back door" immediately after the Cultural Revolution. The "winds of going through the back door" referred to the practice of abusing one's position for his benefits. For example, a butcher may reserve good meat for himself, his relatives, his friends, or someone whose position could help him. In exchange his relatives, his friends or people who received his favors may do the same thing for him. Such exchanges could extend through relatives' relatives and friends' friends. This

practice became so widespread that people seeking public service had to heavily rely on personal relationships and "going through the back door" elicited the most public complaints.

What is most interesting in this phenomenon is the co-existence of this common practice and the strong complaints about it. On the one hand, the "winds of going through the back door" as a practice seeking self interest was obviously contrary to the avowed goal of the Cultural Revolution to eliminate selfishness. It is precisely because of this that the practice was the subject of so much criticisms - many Chinese people had yet totally abandoned the ideals of the Cultural Revolution at that time. On the other hand, however, having been awakened by the Cultural Revolution, people now not only were aware of how Party officials had abused their power for their own benefit in the past but found that the practice continued in new forms in post-Cultural Revolution China. As Li Yizhe angrily complained, "nearly every one of those realms known to people as 'newborn things' (referring to the reforms during and immediately after the Cultural Revolution) can turn into grounds where special privileges work their miracles."[741] As

[741] Anita Chan, Stanley Rosen, and Jonathan Unger, eds., On Socialist Democracy and the Chinese Legal System: the Li Yizhe Debates (New York: M. E. Sharpe, 1985), 78.

such, people felt compelled to protect their own interests by any means available to them. When this practice spread, it became "winds of going through the back door."

What this phenomenon manifested was, in fact, a historical change in society. As some scholars observed, an informal society emerged in post-Cultural Revolution China.[742]As we found in the "winds of going through the back door," the opening of the back doors meant closing the front doors. In other word, people turned their backs on state laws and government regulations and used extralegal ways to better their own lot. In this process, official channels were blocked and social networks arose to take their place. As a wide-spread practice of the masses, the significance of the "winds of going thorough the back doors" went beyond individual pursuit of benefit. It was, in effect, a societal self-defense mechanism. At the same time, the complaints about this practice indicated the raised social consciousness of the people. Many people were not contented with gaining benefit through illegal ways. They also demanded to gain benefits on their own rights. The informal society was asking to become a formal society. This social

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[742] For a discussion of an informal society in China, see Susan L. Shirk, Competitive Comrades: Career Incentives and Student strategies in China (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982); David Strand, "Protest in Beijing: Civil Society and Public Sphere in China," Problems of Communism(May-June, 1990): 1-19; and articles in Modern China 19:2 (April 1993).

trend was seen clearer in some people's open demands for more material rewards and better benefits which I will discuss immediate below.

The emergence of the informal society had a great impact on the economic system. The work ethic promoted by the old class theory, extremely crucial to the pre-Cultural Revolution economic system, began to be weakened. This was seen in the loosening of work discipline, slow downs and even strikes. Along with these there was also a strong demand from the people for more material rewards and better benefits.

Desire for more material rewards and better benefits was present in pre-Cultural Revolution China, of course. The difference is, however, that before the Cultural Revolution this demand was generally considered by most people to be selfish and bad. Even those people who raised this demand often felt ashamed themselves. That is, this demand received little support in public opinion. After the Cultural Revolution, however, this demand not only became stronger and stronger, but also, more importantly, defended publicly.

This was evident in the Li Yizhe poster. Li Yizhe complained that since the end of the Cultural Revolution "the laboring masses in industry and agriculture have been stripped of many of their rightful economic benefits under

the slogan of the so-called 'principle of public property.'" The workers had not had a wage increase for years. Their reasonable bonuses, which were really part of their salary, had been abolished. The peasants had also suffered great damage. Li Yizhe then argued:

> During the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, we opposed high salaries, high awards and high compensation, but should we absolutely negate the function of awards? Why should a comparatively active, serious, and responsible worker who has over fulfilled his tasks or who has invented something not receive more appropriate awards than the salary of his own level? Why can't a worker, a peasant, or a revolutionary intellectual who engages in writing in his spare time or has contributed a new discovery or invention in a specialized profession received appropriate material encouragement?
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> The principle of "from each according to his ability, to each according to his work" with proletarian politics in command is the principle of allocating and protecting the socialist enthusiasm of the masses. More over, seriously putting this principle into practice is also the most effective system for limiting special privileges![743]

In this statement, the meaning of the principle "from each according to his ability, to each according to his work" was altered. Before the Cultural Revolution, the principle was used in official ideology to ask people to devote all their energy to their work, "according to one's ability." In Li Yizhe's statement, the principle was cited to ask rewards for people "according to [their] work." The new application of the old principle reflected how work

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[743] Anita Chan, Stanley Rosen, and Jonathan Unger, 83-84.

ethic had changed in public consciousness. This change had a profound impact on the economic system. The government found it more and more difficult to rely on people's enthusiasm to boost production. Party officials were obliged to seek other means. As has acutely observed by Madsen, shortly after the Cultural Revolution, political morality took on a decidedly utilitarian cast even when the Maoists were still in power. To be an activist now became less and less a matter of being a leader and more and more a matter of being an administrator.[744]Although large scale economic reform began only after Mao's death, signs of change appeared much earlier.

The ideological transformation of the Cultural Revolution brought comprehensive change to China. But the most profound change was found in the change of the mentality of the Chinese people themselves. This was seen in the separation of the official ideology and the dominant ideology.

Before the Cultural Revolution official ideology was no doubt the dominant ideology in society. At that time, government sponsored role models were accepted by most people as heroes while the officially labeled enemies were considered by most people as their really enemies. That is,

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[744] Madsen, 198, 205.

society was basically identified with the state. This was why the Party leadership was extremely powerful because it was generally supported by the people. This wide spread support of official teaching is what made the Party so powerful before the Cultural Revolution.

But this was no longer the situation after the Cultural Revolution. Now, official heroes were often viewed by people as laughingstock. On the other hand, officially designated "enemies" no longer were automatically accepted by society as "the enemies of the people." In many cases, these people even became the heroes in many people's minds.

A few people did continue to study Mao's works. However, the focus and the implications of studying Mao's works were very different from those before the Cultural Revolution. Before the Cultural Revolution, studying Mao's works was mainly to memorize Mao's words and to conduct a moral self-cultivation. Mao's works were served first and foremost a moral teaching. After the Cultural Revolution, however, people began to read Mao's works as a political theory. The focus was now on interpretation. As such, people inquired not only what Mao had said, but the reasons and logic behind his pronouncements. In reading Mao's works in this way, many people soon found it was not enough to read his books. They began to read Marx, Engels, Lenin, and

Stalin. From there some began also to read Feuerbach, Hegel and other Western thinkers. A road to the modern world was opened. An ideological revolution had occurred in many people's minds. It is in this sense we claim the Cultural Revolution as a Chinese enlightenment.

The Tragedy of the Cultural Revolution

Nevertheless, the Cultural Revolution was a gross failure. The revolution failed not because it did not fulfill its profound goals. Few revolutions, if any, have fully realized their ideals. We conclude that the Cultural Revolution was a gross failure because it not only did not fulfill its direct goals but also, on the contrary, at the end of the movement it denied almost everything the revolution once promoted. The revolution abandoned not only its ideal but also its theory.

With the establishment of the new revolutionary committees, large numbers of old cadres returned to office. The Party organizations soon resumed their former activities without essential changes. The big character posters and unofficial publications were not only not encouraged but in fact prohibited. The mass organizations were disbanded. Many of their leaders, especially the most radical, were put in

jail. Most middle school and college students, the most active members of the movement, were sent to work in the countryside where they were not asked to rebel but subjected to "reeducation."

The tone of the official media was now in harmony with the old class theory. The emphasis of class theory thus theory moved from the political front back to the ideological front. Moral self-cultivation regained its central place in the official interpretation of class theory. The differences between Mao's thought and the Party organization were no longer mentioned. Instead, the new revolutionary committees were now put under the protection of Mao's authority. People were exhorted to "sincerely support and firmly defend" the new leadership to show their support of the Maoist center. The relationship between the authority of the masses and the Party leadership was then reversed. People were not allowed to educate themselves, let alone to self-liberate themselves. What was emphasized now was "united will, united ideas, united action, united steps" under Mao and the revolutionary committees at different levels. The revolution retreated from an "all-around class struggle" back to a "cultural revolution," to the reforms on education and other parts of "superstructure" except its

major part, the political structure. The Paris Commune model was forgotten.

This repudiation of many of the most revolutionary aspect of the Cultural Revolution did not appeal to anyone, however. On the contrary, it made the Cultural Revolution a common object of hatred for many Chinese people. Some people, especially senior Party officials and political activists before the Cultural Revolution, hated the movement because they believed the revolution was wrong in the first place. Other hated the movement because they felt that it had failed to fulfill its promise. In short, they felt betrayed.

The failure of the Cultural Revolution marked the beginning of the death of Mao Zedong Thought. Mao and his close associates were too closely related to the events for them to extricate themselves from taking responsibility for the Cultural Revolution. The popular hatred of the Cultural Revolution brought the first deep alienation between Mao and his followers. Without sincere disciples, Mao's thought began to lose its vitality.

This situation was most evident in the failed attempt of the Maoists to mobilize the masses to rebel again from late 1973 to Mao's death in 1976. Facing threats from inside and outside the Party to negate the Cultural Revolution,

Maoists sought help by using the same old trick of the Cultural Revolution by asking the people "to go again the tide."[745] As at the beginning of the Cultural Revolution Maoists gave many signals to the public to incite people to rebel again. An elementary school student, Wang Shui, was praised for her criticism of her teacher.[746]A middle school student's suicide was attributed to the revival of the "revisionist education line." Two operas, "Three Visits to Tao Mountain" and "The Song of Teacher," were criticized as evidence of the resurgence of the old political line.[747] Then there was the "blank test sheet" hero Zhang Tiesheng.[748] And finally there was a campaign against the "right deviationist wind."[749] To the dismay of the Maoists, their efforts were no avail. Public enthusiasm for these campaigns was very low. Without public support, the political campaigns they sponsored became farcical. Furthermore, Many people began to wax nostalgic for the days before the Cultural Revolution.

The failure of the Cultural Revolution struck the death knell for Mao Zedong Thought. The withering away of Mao Zedong Thought, was, in turn, the clearest indication of the

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[745] *Renmin Ribao*, September 2, 1973, in WGZL, 3: 11.

[746] Ibid., December 28, 1973, in WGZL, 3: 56.

[747] Ibid., February 28, August 4, 1974. WGZL, 3: 125, 162.

[748] Ibid., August 10, 1973, in WGZL, 3: 12.

[749] Ibid., March 10, 1976, IN WGZL, 3: 396.

total failure of the Cultural Revolution. By abandoning Mao Zedong Thought, the Chinese people abandoned not only the means and deeds of the Cultural Revolution but also hope for an ideal society. This was the biggest strategy of the Cultural Revolution.

As has been discussed in the preceding chapters, Mao Zedong Thought, as seen in class theories, old and new, played so important a role that it was inseparable from the heroic efforts and great achievements of the Chinese people in the past decades. But the role of Mao Zedong Thought was even greater than this in a longer historical perspective. When the Chinese people faced a great ideological crisis after they had experienced the fundamental change from a pre-modern society to a modern society, Mao Zedong Thought was not only conceived by many Chinese of as a comprehensive expression of modern thoughts but also of as a uniquely Chinese ideology. Mao Zedong Thought had become the symbol of a revolutionary China, the symbol of an independent China. To abandon Mao Zedong thought therefore, meant to negate the past revolution and to abandon fine Chinese traditions. To many Chinese, especially those fanatical disciples of Mao Zedong Thought, the meaning of this abandonment was equal to that of the death of god for the Christians. As a result, these people no longer believed in

any principles. They could trust no one. They gave up all hope for an ideal society. This is why the generation of the Cultural Revolution, referring mainly to the youth at that time, was later to be called "a lost generation." It is not surprising, therefore, that the Chinese people, especially its youth, have almost completely surrendered to Western ideologies when China opened itself to the outside world since the late 1970s. This trend was quite evident in the TV series the "River elegy" which was a cultural crusade against everything Chinese. As such, in their reforms the Chinese often adopted the worst part of Western economics and the most vulgar part of Western Culture.

Some Theoretical Speculations

The main purpose of this study is to offer a new perspective on the history of the Cultural Revolution whose essential part and basic spirit are, as I have argued in this thesis, still missed by most people, including both participants of the revolution and outside observers, both scholars and the general public. By providing a new interpretation of this very unusual event in human history this study raises some theoretical speculations which may help to highlight the significance of this study.

In this essay I have used the conventional paradigm of state and society to access the history of the Cultural Revolution. By applying these paired concepts, I have discovered some of the limitations and problems of this paradigm. As seen in the preceding pages, what has been found in the development of class theory was not only a distinction between state and society but also a blurring of the two. The new class theory was developed by both the Maoists and the rebels which provided the basic momentum for changes in Mao's China. This conclusion thus raises a general concern necessitating a new conceptual approach. In particular, it raises a challenge to both theories of totalitarianism and theories of civil society that have been applied to studies of Communist countries, including China. The former was popular in the 1950s and 1960s. The latter has become fashion in recent years.

For this writer, the theory of totalitarianism has been proven wrong, not by theoretical debate but by history. In 1984 the Communist countries of the world were not the grey society tightly controlled by a vast inhuman network in which tepid people lived tepid lives, repeating mindlessly whatever doctrine was manufactured by the authorities, as Orwell predicted. No matter whether we look at the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe or China, the 1980s was an era of

great change. The reform wave swept almost the entire Communist world. What we witnessed was anything but a static and deadly world. What has been evident from this profound change in the Communist world is that the dynamic for change was generated mainly internally, not externally. Totalitarian theory cannot explain this. For it believes that a totalitarian regime means a full penetration of state into society with the result that, society would disappear. A totalitarian state therefore, in the final analysis, is a monolith in which any chance for change is precluded. This prediction was already proved wrong by history.

The revival of the theory of civil society in recent years can be seen, therefore, at least partially, as an effort to readdress the problem confronted by totalitarian theory. Faced with the historical changes in the Communist world since the 1970s, scholars have been compelled to find internal factors that led to change. They thus rediscovered a civil society in the Communist world. Advancing this new finding, some scholars most recently have introduced the concept of the public sphere.[750]These scholars find that the

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[750] For a discussion of civil society and the public sphere, see, John I. Keane, Civil Society and the State: New European Perspectives (?, 1988); Craig Calhoun, ed., *Habermas and the Public Sphere*; articles in *Modern China* 19:2 (April 1993); and David Strand, "Protest in Beijing: Civil Society and Public Sphere in China," *Problems of Communism* (May-June 1990), 1-19.

Communist countries were not completely dominated by the state, as totalitarian theory suggested before. Society had yet totally disappeared.

What should be pointed out here is that although historically speaking the rediscovery of civil society is a recent trend, at least one important scholar had done so in the 1960s. Witnessing the momentous mass movement of the Cultural Revolution, Franz Shurmann instantly realized its significance to his theoretical system. Most importantly, he recognized the limitations of the state in Communist China and thus found the reemergence of society as he stated in the preface to the second edition to his book *Ideology and Organization in Communist China*, about what he had learned from the Cultural Revolution,

> Most important of all has been my awareness that ideology and organization are not so all-powerful as I had thought them to be. Chinese society, particularly in the form of its social classes, is asserting itself against the state, and showing that it cannot be manipulated at will.[751]

The problem is that, as I have pointed out in Chapter One, Schurmann in 1960s, as well as today's scholars supporting the theory of civil society, share a common theoretical premise with totalitarian theory. That is, they

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[751] Schurmann, *Ideology and Organization in Communist China*, vii-viii.

all uphold the conventional paradigm of state and society. They look at the relations between state and society as ones of separation and antagonism. They see ideology as belonging to the state only. Bound by this premise when they search for elements for change, their sight is blocked. They cannot see many obvious factors and have to find trivial elements. Their explanations are therefore problematic.

In the first place, the theory of civil society is not sufficient to explain the profound changes taking place in China. For what these scholars have found at most is but a "nascent civil society." It is extremely weak, as is seen in independent organizations outside of state control. It is shapeless as is seen in the so-called "solidarity at the barricades," - "a sudden, massive spread of civil society." It is remote, as is found in the "resurfacing" of the local authority in the late 19th century. How can these tiny, uncertain and marginal factors explain the fundamental change today in China and in other Communist countries?

In the second place, the theory of civil society is simply incorrect when it hints that the newly emergent civil society has come from the past. For the society which has imposed the demand for reform is not the old society. It is a new society which was born out of Communist revolution. As seen in China, the student protest movements since the late

1970s are obviously the direct continuation of the Cultural Revolution. Wei Jingsheng is clearly a son of Mao's China rather than an offspring of Confucian China. The *Sitong* (Stone) Corporation, a famous new enterprise which has arisen in the wake of the recent reform, is more a company of today's China rather than one of late nineteenth and early twentieth century China. This is to say, The newly emergent society as observed by theoreticians of civil society theory are not the outcome of the revival of traditions. The leading social forces pushing change in China today are mainly the products of relatively recent revolutions, and not of the old society.

In light of this we may find an important reason for the failure of the Cultural Revolution. As I have demonstrated through this essay, the vital force of the movement was generated by official ideology. The rebel forces were stronger where the influence of official ideology was stronger. As such, the underdevelopment of the rebel forces during the Cultural Revolution can be seen as a limitation of the influence of official ideology. The failure of the Cultural Revolution is therefore due not only to the overwhelming power of the state over society but also due to the limitations of the state. The Cultural Revolution failed not only because of the penetration of state into

society but also because of the boundaries of that penetration. The underdevelopment of the new class theory was due not only to the persistence of the old class theory but also due to its limited spread.

As was painfully discovered by many Cultural Revolution veterans after the movement had died down, especially those students who were sent to work in the countryside, what they faced was not a post revolutionary society with many ideals unfulfilled but simply a pre-Revolutionary society without ideals at all. The failure of the Cultural Revolution further reinforced their conviction that and a good society could exist only in dreams. What these people lacked was not an ideal society, but the ideals themselves. Many people, especially those who lived in remote areas and were less influenced by official ideology, never truly experienced an ideological transformation through the indoctrination of the old class theory as we discussed in Chapter Two. These people accepted social inequality as an unchangeable law in human history. As such they could never be inspired by the new class theory which was derived from the criticism of the old class theory.

Calling this phenomenon a "feudalist legacy," the reformers in China since the late 1970s have quite correctly pointed out that the resistance to the reform came not only

from the state but also from the legacy of ancient China. People who still live under the shadow of the China's past can hardly dream of a democratic society, let alone to initiate a reform movement for it. In any case, it is clear that the reform force in China since the late 1970s may come from anywhere but the old society. The old society was to an obstruction to rather than a source for the reform in China since the 1970s.

Scholars of theories of civil society are correct, however, in their observation of the important role of society in China's recent reforms. The emergence of an active society indicates a historical change has indeed taken place in China.

Until the late 1970s all important reforms in modern China had been initiated by the elite and sponsored by the state and they all had ended in failure. In the final analysis, all these reforms were suffocated by a conservative society. This is why the need for a transformation of society has been a common preoccupation of all of modern China's greatest reformers, from Liang Qichao to Sun Yatsen, from Jiang Jieshi to Mao Zedong. The Communist demand for a transformation of society was unique only in its special form, not in the demand itself.

However, the reforms after the Cultural Revolution not only received more and more positive responses but were also more and more initiated by society. Although at first the reformers in the 1970s and 1980s were still quite isolated, they were no longer the "enemies of the people" in its true sense. It did not take long for the dissidents to become heroes for many Chinese. The state was then under great pressure from society for further and deeper reforms. The relationship between state and society in modern China had been fundamentally reversed. Society has become a force for change. This is the profound cause of the success of the current reforms in China.

What we want to argue with the scholars of theories of civil society is therefore, not the important role of society played in recent reforms in China. This is beyond the question. What is crucial here is how Chinese society has been transformed from a deeply conservative society to such an energetic, opened minded rational society which has pushed the great reforms in China since the late 1970s.

The answer to this question is the main theme of this thesis. Through our discussion of the Cultural Revolution and class theory we have documented how the Chines people as a whole, have been revolutionized mainly through the ideological transformation to which the state had

contributed no less than society. Ideology was found to be an independent, irreducible force on which both state and society relied on to express their wills and fulfill their programs.

If ideology belonged to state and society, it never totally disappeared in Communist China. The soul of society was reserved in ideology. The spread of ideology meant therefore not only the penetration of state into society but also the penetration of society into state. The ideological struggle was thus extremely important. It generated the dynamic for change.

On the basis of above discussion, I would suggest that ideology was the public sphere in the sense that in the field of ideology public issues transcended its own limits. Ideology was the place for state and society to exchange opinions. As a result, it became a rational-critical debate about public issues conducted by private persons willing to let arguments and not status determine decisions. This feature can be seen especially in the works detailing the new class theory during the Cultural Revolution.

The abortiveness of the Cultural Revolution made the Chinese people abandon not a school of ideology but ideology itself. By abandoning ideology as such, they abandon logical argument and rational thinking. Without a solid moral

foundation the Chinese people could only be subject to the domination of an unrestrained market economy. In order to find an alternative the Chinese people are desperate to find new sources. One way to this goal is to reevaluate our past. This study is an attempt to that. Nearly three decades have passed since the beginning of the Cultural Revolution. It is a long journey in a person's life but only a short span of a nation's history. It may be too early to conclude that the revolution has failed. If that is the case, it is up to us to complete it now.

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